Routledge Studies on the Arab-Israeli Conflict

THE RUSSIANS IN ISRAEL

A NEW ETHNIC GROUP IN A TRIBAL SOCIETY

Majid Ibrahim Al-Haj

The Russians in Israel

This book constitutes the first systematic and critical discussion of questions of immigration and society in Israel from a global perspective.

The comprehensive study covers the 30-year period since the beginning of the immigrant influx from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s and incorporates data based on a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods. It provides an important opportunity to examine identity and patterns of adaptation among immigrants, with the added perspective afforded by the passage of time. Moreover, it sheds light on the Russians' cumulative influence on Israeli society and on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Considering all groups within Israeli society, it covers Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel, who have almost never been included in analyses addressing questions of Jewish immigration to Israel. Multiculturalism is the central theoretical framework of this study, alongside specific theoretical considerations of ethnic formation, political mobilization among ethnic groups, and immigration and conflict in deeply divided societies. However, while Jewish-Arab relations in Israel are typically analyzed in the context of majority-minority relations, this book offers a pioneering approach that analyzes these relations within the context of a *Jewish majority with a minority phobia* and an *Arab minority with a sense of regional majority*.

Addressing existing and anticipated influences of Russian immigrants on politics, culture, and social structures in Israel, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *The Russians in Israel* will be useful to students and scholars of Middle Eastern politics and society, as well as Israel, Russian, and Ethnicity Studies.

Majid Ibrahim Al-Haj is a Professor Emeritus of Sociology and the founding director of the Center for Multiculturalism at the University of Haifa, Israel. He is the author of *Immigration and Ethnic Formation in a Deeply Divided Society: The Case of the 1990s Immigrants from the FSU in Israel* (2004).

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The Russians in Israel

A New Ethnic Group in a Tribal Society

Majid Ibrahim Al-Haj

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This book is based on data I accumulated over 30 years (since the arrival of Russian immigrants in the 1990s). The book is a longitudinal comparative research study. Thus, some of the findings are also compared with those that appeared in my previous publications, especially my book *Immigration and Ethnic Formation in a Deeply Divided Society*: *The Case of the 1990s Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004). I am grateful to Mr. Joed Elich, the Publishing Director of Brill, for his cooperation and gracious permission to use the original material I published before.

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Majid Ibrahim Al-Haj

Introduction

Immigration, diversity, and conflict

Migration flows and their economic, political, and sociodemographic implications are core elements of global processes. Students of migration maintain that these flows have some major and unique elements that differentiate them from traditional population movements. These flows are becoming more global in the sense that more countries and people are involved in such processes, mainly at the level of the sending countries. Faster and cheaper transportation possibilities and rapid technological changes have facilitated migration processes and enabled more people to join long-distance migration movements (see Bloch, 2017). Moreover, these rapid changes have enhanced the creation of "transnational communities" in which immigrants maintain cultural and socioeconomic networks both with their home and host countries and with groups of their compatriots elsewhere. This new sociodemographic complexity has been framed by Vertovec as "super diversity" (Vertovec, 2007: 1026). These flows have deepened the social, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the receiving countries and have considerably affected both the countries of origin and interstate relations. Hence, these trends are considered one of the most significant developments on the contemporary global scene (see Eisenstadt, 2009: 29). They have far-reaching repercussions for the entire global order because of their economic, political, and sociocultural impact on public spheres, collective identities, and new inter-civilizational relations (ibid.).

Against the background of these immigration trends, some major questions arise: What are the main patterns as far as identity and ethnic formation among immigrants are concerned? What are the repercussions of immigration on the demographic, social, and political structure of the receiving societies? How do these immigration flows affect ethnic relationships and the potential for ethnic conflict in the host societies? What are the typical strategies that the receiving countries have adopted in order to deal with immigrants and ethno-cultural groups? What is the state of immigration policies in the wake of the aforementioned "super diversity"?

Finally, what are the implications of these immigration flows on the collective identity of postmodern nation-states?

Israel constitutes an ideal setting for studying the dynamic relationship among immigration, multiculturalism, and ethnic conflict because it is a country that is heavily based on immigration and constantly preoccupied with immigrant absorption. At the same time, demographic processes and considerations are a cornerstone for the shaping of Israel's internal and external policies (see Goldscheider, 2015). Yet Israel is a deeply divided society in which ethnicity and nationalism constitute basic social and cultural features and serve as central elements in the stratification system. It is a dual system distributed across two levels—Jews and non-Jews—with internal clusters among the Jewish population determined by ethnicity, religious orientation, and length of time in the country. The central groups among the Jewish population are as follows: *Ashkenazim* (of European and American origin) and *Mizrahim* or *Sephardim* (of North African and Asian origin); religious and nonreligious; and recent immigrants and veteran Israelis. The Palestinian-Arab population as well is not homogenous and is divided by religion (Muslims, Christians, Druze) and other social categories.

The 1990s immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) have added immensely to this complex structure. These immigrants constitute 39% of all immigrants who came to Israel since its establishment (see Chapter 4). Together with the Russian immigrants who arrived in the 1970s, they constitute nearly 16% of Israel's general population and 21% of its Jewish (or non-Arab) population. Within the relatively short period since their arrival, these immigrants have greatly affected Israeli society, not only regarding its sociodemographic structure but also in its economic, cultural, and political spheres.

This monograph deals with the 1990s immigrants from the FSU (hereafter, the Russians in Israel, Russian-Israelis, or Russian immigrants) in terms of their social, cultural, and political integration during the three decades since their immigration to Israel. Based on a variety of quantitative and qualitative data, I provide a detailed analysis of the formation of this group’s ethnic boundaries, the directions in which its members have been drawn politically, and the dynamics of social distance and relations between the immigrants and the central groups in Israeli society, including the Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel. These issues are analyzed against the background of historical developments both in Israel and in the countries of origin and within the broader context of political, economic, and sociodemographic changes that have taken place in Israel over time, in addition to regional developments, in particular as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned.

This monograph

This monograph comprises seven chapters, concluding remarks and a list of references. **The first chapter** reviews the theoretical framework for the study of immigration and ethnicity and discusses the repercussions of large-scale immigration upon a deeply divided society that on the one hand must cope with a continuing external regional conflict and on the other faces a number of internal tensions stemming from its deep ethnic, religious, and national rifts. In this chapter, we address issues of transnationalism, immigration, and the reconstruction of ethnic identities, multiculturalism, tribalism, and tribal identities.

The second chapter sketches the historical background and evolution of Israeli society with reference to the various sociological approaches to issues of immigration, ethnicity, and the rifts in Israeli society—ethnic, religious, and national.

The chapter also deals with the impact of the Israeli-Arab conflict on Israeli society, mainly on Jewish-Arab relations within Israel, the shaping of the political culture in Israel, and the collective identity of Israeli society. At the same time, the chapter considers the main impediments for the development of multiculturalism and all-encompassing civil identity and the evolution of "tribal" identities in Israel.

The third chapter discusses the background of the Jewish community of the FSU, the successive waves of immigration from this community, and the special characteristics of the 1990s immigrants as compared to other waves of immigration to Israel.

The fourth and fifth chapters address patterns of identity and ethnic formation among the Russian immigrants and their location on the ethnic map in Israel. My analysis in the fourth chapter focuses on the characteristics, orientation, and collective behavior of these immigrants and their identity patterns. The data are juxtaposed with the theoretical literature on ethnicity in an attempt to answer the following basic and important questions: Have Russian immigrants been assimilated within the formal existing ethnic structure in Israel or have they challenged this structure and formed their own ethnic group? What are the implications of the Russians in Israel on the dual *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* ethnic structure that until now has been exclusively maintained in Israel?

The fifth chapter discusses ethnic mobilization and political organization among the Russian immigrants. It traces the main trends in their political behavior in the national Knesset elections, from the arrival of the first wave in the early 1990s up to the recent elections in 2015. These trends are analyzed with respect to the characteristics and orientation of the Russian immigrants as well as to contextual factors that have shaped the political system in Israel.

The sixth chapter is devoted to the Russian immigrants who are not Jewish according to *Halakha* (Jewish religious law). I discuss the growing numbers of those belonging to this category among the Russian immigrants over three decades and the impact of this phenomenon on the collective identity and Jewish character of Israel as well as its repercussions on issues of citizenship and nationality in Israeli society.

The seventh chapter discusses the relations between the immigrants and the other main groupings in Israeli society that are considered non-Western/Oriental groups, namely the *Mizrahim* (*Sephardi*, North African Jews) and the Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel. The chapter examines the existing and expected impact of these immigrants on the social map and the political culture in Israeli society. My analysis also addresses the regional impact of Russian immigrants as far as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned. This chapter considers in detail the immigrants' attitudes regarding the cardinal issues connected with this conflict, in particular attitudes toward possibilities of conflict resolution, territorial compromise, war and peace, settlements in the Palestinian territories, and Israeli-Palestinian relationships.

The eighth chapter is devoted to concluding remarks. It considers a number of cardinal questions: Nearly three decades after their arrival in Israel, are Russian immigrants being assimilated into the existing ethnic structure of Jewish society in Israel, or are they emerging as a new ethnic group in their own right? What are the implications of this immigration on the political culture in Israel? Does this group reinforce the existing ethno-national exclusionary system in Israel, or does it create pressure to expand the boundaries of legitimacy on a civil-multicultural basis? How does the massive immigration from the FSU to Israel affect the prospects for peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? And in general, what impact does immigration have on a deeply divided society that has evolved in the shadow of an external political conflict alongside serious internal conflicts?

Methodology

The current study

The methodology utilized in this study combines a broad variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, including field surveys of immigrants and of the general veteran Israeli population, focus group discussions, official statistics and reports, and other secondary sources. In what follows, these methods are described in more detail.

The major data used for my analysis in the present study are based on a detailed survey of the immigrants conducted in 2010 alongside a survey of the general population conducted simultaneously with the immigrants' survey. These quantitative methods were enriched through qualitative methods, mainly discussion groups conducted at the beginning of 2018. In addition, I have made extensive use of secondary sources, including official statistics and reports, as well as content analysis of the Russian, Hebrew, and Arabic press.

The immigrants' survey

The study population for the 2010 survey was defined as all immigrants from the FSU to Israel since 1989 aged 18 and up. A representative sample of 605 was selected for interviewing. The sample was selected using stratified sampling, with strata defined by the following criteria:

- Republic of origin (classified into European and Asian republics)
- Year of immigration (beginning with 1989)
- Community of residence (geographical region and type of community of residence as classified by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics)
- Gender
- Age

Data were collected via telephone interviews using a structured questionnaire. Interviews were conducted between December 15 and 21, 2010. The maximal sampling error was ±4.0%.

Survey of the general population

A separate survey conducted simultaneously with the aforementioned survey examined the views of Israel’s general adult population (aged 18 and up), excluding 1990s immigrants from the FSU. A representative sample of 500 was interviewed (400 Jews and 100 Palestinian-Arab citizens). The sample was selected using stratified sampling, with strata defined by the following criteria:

- Community of residence (geographical region and type of community of residence as classified by Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics)
- Gender
- Age

The maximal sampling error was ±4.4%. Fieldwork for both surveys was conducted by the Dahaf Institute headed by Dr. Mina Zemach.

The goal of the survey of the veteran population was to explore the attitudes of the local population regarding central subjects as compared with those of the Russian immigrants. The shortcoming of this survey lies in the limited number of questions we could ask, since it was part of an omnibus survey that examined various subjects in a number of spheres.

Focus groups

In addition to these surveys, we organized three focus groups in the period January–February 2018. The focus group technique was used as a *‘supplementary source’* of data and a follow-up data collection method in order to further explore the meaning of the survey data. In particular, it enabled us to better understand puzzling data. The advantage of a focus group also lies in the very fact that it provides the opportunity to observe a large number of interactions on a topic within a limited period of time. Moreover, it allows the exploring of controversial issues and complex and sensitive subjects. The discussion in the focus group gives group members the possibility to react and build on the responses of other members. In addition, the results were easy to understand and interpret since we could ask respondents to elaborate and further explain their statements. (For reviews on the focus group technique, see Smith 1954; Morgan 1988, 1998; Krueger 1994; Litosseliti, 2003.)

Naturally, the focus groups do not constitute a representative sample and have a number of limitations (for limitations of focus groups, see Litosseliti, 2003: 21). Nevertheless, we sought to select groups representing a full spectrum of experiences. In addition, we made sure that the participants selected were affiliated with the main categories of the studied groups.

In composing our focus groups, we followed the principle of homogeneity in the sense that the participants belong to the same groups as defined by our study. The focus groups included three categories of participants. The first consisted of Russian-speaking students who study at the University of Haifa. The participants in this group were all young, ranging in age between 21–35 years old. The second group was composed of older immigrants between the ages of 45–67 years old. The third group was a mixture of younger and older generations of immigrants, with ages ranging between 20–65 years old. In deciding upon the size of each group, we sought to follow the principle that each group should be small enough for every participant to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions. (For a detailed discussion of these principles, see Morgan, 1988; Litosseliti, 2003.)

Recruitment of the participants went through several stages. First, we published an advertisement in Russian stating that participants were needed for focus groups and presenting the main goal. People who applied were required to fill in a questionnaire, including personal details and specific experience. After a short interview with applicants, the final list of participants was carefully selected, taking into consideration the aforementioned principles.

The size of each group ranged between 10–12 participants and the discussions of each focus group lasted 90–120 minutes. The groups were moderated by professional moderators, with whom we held a detailed conversation about the aims and contents of our study and the main principles to be watched upon the group discussion (for skills required by the moderator, see Litosseliti, 2003: 42). We made every effort to maintain a comfortable, flexible, and open atmosphere during the discussions, and to facilitate the contribution of all participants.

We designed unstructured open-ended questions that were carefully prepared according to specific topics. These discussions were recorded and subsequently transcribed and analyzed. We used strictly qualitative methods for data analysis through direct quotation from the discussions.

Comparison with the earlier study

The findings of current study were systematically compared with the relevant data from an earlier study conducted between 1999 and 2001. The data from the earlier study were based on the following methods: a detailed survey of the Russian immigrants conducted in 1999, a decade after the onset of the 1990s wave of immigration; and a small-scale survey of the general population that was conducted simultaneously with the detailed survey, as noted earlier. In addition, we held three focus groups in 2001. These findings of the earlier study formed the basis of my book *Immigration and Ethnic Formation in a Deeply Divided Society*: *The Case of the 1990s Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Part of the earlier study is used here with the kind permission of Mr. Goed Elich, the publishing director of Brill Academic Publishers.

The 1999 immigrants' survey was conducted by this author and Professor Eli Leshem under the auspices of the Center for Multiculturalism at the University of Haifa. Fieldwork for this survey was conducted by the Geocartography Institute headed by Prof. Avi Degani and Dr. Rina Degani (see Al-Haj and Leshem, 2000).

The survey was conducted in August and September 1999 and included a total of 707 participants, constituting a representative sample of the adult (18 and over) population that immigrated from the FSU between January 1990 and July

1999. The statistical error in such a sample is ±3.7%, at a significance level of 0.95. The fieldwork was in the form of face-to-face interviews in the immigrants' homes, conducted by Russian-speaking interviewers who used an open-ended questionnaire written in Russian.

In order to make sure that the sample was highly representative, the following variables were controlled for in selecting the respondents: year of immigration, republic of origin in the FSU, gender, age, and district of residence in Israel. That is, the sample was designed to provide a distribution of the population according to the aforementioned variables, corresponding to the figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics for 1990–1997 and by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and the Department for the CIS of the Jewish Agency for 1998–1999. The fieldwork, carried out by the Geocartography Research Institute and reported here, indicates a close approximation to the sampling guidelines, which correspond to the distribution of the general population (see Al-Haj, 2004a: 6–11).

The same structured questionnaire was used in both the 1999 and the 2010 surveys, except for minor changes in the second survey. Two identical versions of the questionnaire were presented to respondents, one in Hebrew and one in Russian, and they could choose to complete either version.

Like the detailed 2010 survey, the 1999 detailed survey on immigrants was also accompanied by a small-scale representative national survey of the veteran population of Israel (including Jews and Arabs and excluding immigrants). The survey on the veteran population was conducted simultaneously with the aforementioned surveys of Russian immigrants. The survey of the general population took the form of a telephone poll of a representative sample of the Israeli adult population (18 years and over), comprising 506 participants—406 Jews and 100 Arabs. The questions were identical to those in the immigrants' survey. The sample error is ±4.4% at a significance level of 0.95. This survey was also carried out by the Geocartography Research Institute in September 1999.

In addition to the surveys, and based on the same aforementioned methodological principles, three focus groups composed of Russian immigrants, students, and mixed young and old generations were held in the period May–November 2001. Each group included 10–12 carefully selected participants according to the aforementioned principles. The analysis of the discussions of these focus groups followed the same methods indicated earlier.

1 Theoretical framework

Current immigration flows have created ‘*transnational communities*,’ which are significant to understanding adjustment and identity patterns among immigrants (Faist, 2000; Portes, 2000; Staring, 2000; Eisenstadt, 2009). One of the pioneering definitions of ‘transnational communities’ which is often cited is that of Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton (1994: 6; cited by Portes, 2000: 255). This definition maintains that ‘transnationalism’ is

> the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders … An essential element is the multiplicity of involvement that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies…

Thus, international migrants are becoming ‘transmigrants’ who are involved in various individual and group activities with their home countries as well as with groups of their diasporas elsewhere. Such transnational communities retain ‘dual homeness,’ having two homes, the original ‘homeland’ and the new one, which is often termed a ‘hostland’ (Remennick, 2009). While this phenomenon is not quite new, and it has always existed along with international migration flows, it might have an added importance in the current era because of the new political and technological globalization (Ben-Rafael and Sternberg, 2009; Vertovec, 2009). Therefore, the sociological analysis of this phenomenon is multidimensional, as it involves, in many cases, multiple identities and multiple citizenships among immigrants, whose activities and organizations extend beyond nation-states boundaries. Such analysis includes all actors and state policies and their impact on pre-immigration experiences and motives for immigration (Bloch, 2017: 1517).

Vertovec indicates that since the 1990s, we have witnessed the rise of transnationalism as a central framework for the analysis of global migration. As such, theorists have emphasized different forms and typologies of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009: 18). For example, researchers differentiated between '*transnationalism from above*,' which is reflected in global capital, media, and political institutions, and '*transnationalism from below,*' which is expressed in grassroots activity (see Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; cited by Vertovec, 2009: 18). Alejandro Portes, who mainly focuses on the economic aspect of transnationalism, considers the rise of 'transnational communities' as a 'globalization from below.' This involves a wide range of economic enterprises at the level of ordinary immigrants, not only of big corporations, although they are fueled by the needs of capitalist First World economies for investment and labor force (Portes, 2000). Also, '*broad transnationalism*' has been used by Portes to describe "regular and occasional activities," while '*strict transnationalism*' only relates to "regular participation" (Portes, 2003). In addition, '*core transnationalism*' relates to activities around one area of social life, whereas '*expanded transnational activity*' described occasional practices in a wider array of spheres (Levitt, 2001; cited by Vertovec, 2009: 18).

Czaika and Haas mention a number of factors that explain the growing diversification of immigrants over the past decades as far as countries of origin are concerned. The central among these factors are the lifting of restrictions of former communist countries and developing countries on emigration of their citizens. Also, the acceleration of migration capabilities as a result of rapid media and technological developments increased the awareness of people of the possibility to move elsewhere and materialize their aspirations. One central factor is also connected to the decrease in significance of the ‘postcolonial immigration pattern’ and the shift toward ‘skill-selective’ immigration policies (Czaika and Haas, 2015: 314–315).

However, while there has been increasing diversification of immigration in terms of origin, more and more migrants are concentrating in a ‘shrinking pool of prime destination countries’ (ibid.: 315). Indeed, Bloch indicates that between 2000 and 2015, two-thirds of international migrants lived in just 20 countries and 71% of them in high-income countries (Bloch, 2017: 1511). The concentration of recent immigrants in a relatively small number of receiving countries has far-reaching repercussions in terms of the retention of ethnic identities and the creation and reconstruction of ethnic communities throughout the world, as well as the development of the aforementioned ‘super diversity’ of the receiving countries (see Vertovec, 2007). This phenomenon, which has been accompanied by increasing populist nationalism in many countries, presents serious challenges to the nation-state regarding citizenship issues, national identity, and multicultural policies (Banks, 2017: 366).

Immigration and reconstruction of ethnic identity

One of the crucial issues at the center of the study of contemporary immigrant flows has to do with the immigrants’ ethnic identity and cultural orientation. There is abundant evidence that globalization has strengthened, rather than weakened, ethnic identities and organization on an ethnic basis. The drastic changes in communication, transportation, and other technologies that marked the twentieth century, including the creation of global markets, brought the people of the world closer, redrew traditional socio-geographic boundaries, and created more interest in ethnic and racial boundaries (Banton, 1998: 235).

Students of immigration tend to employ several terms for the options available to new immigrants in the host society (see, for example, Goldlust and Richmond, 1974; Hurh and Kim, 1984; Alba and Nee, 1997; Berry, 1997; Castles and Miller, 1998; Berry, 2001; Vertovec, 1996, 2009; Cohen, 2011). Berry's model of '*acculturation*' has been widely cited as an important analytical framework of the adaptation and orientation of immigrants, on the one hand, and national policies of host countries toward immigrants, on the other. This model was published in various versions (see Berry, 1974, 1997, 2001; Berry et al., 2006).

Acculturation was defined by Berry as "the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact." Cultural changes include alterations in the group's customs and economic and political life, while psychological change includes changes in attitudes toward the acculturation process, identity patterns, and social behavior with others (Berry, 2003 cited in Berry et al., 2006: 305).

For a long time, researchers mainly focused on nondominant groups (in particular, immigrants and indigenous groups), under the assumption that contact experiences with the receiving societies have asymmetric change that solely affects nondominant groups. There has been a shift over time where acculturation research started to focus on both dominant and nondominant groups, with the emphasis on 'mutual change' (Berry, 2001: 616).

Berry's model includes two main facets: one that represents the attitudes of the nondominant group (immigrants in our case), and the second, the attitudes of the dominant group (the receiving society), whereby these attitudes vary between 'positive' and 'negative' toward each possibility.

As far as immigrants are concerned, there are four possibilities:

1. Assimilation: when individuals do not wish to maintain their culture and are seeking interaction with other cultures.
2. Integration: when individuals seek to maintain their original culture and at the same time seek to engage in daily interactions with other groups.
3. Separation: when individuals seek to maintain their original culture and at the same time avoid interactions

with others.

4. Marginalization: when individuals are not interested in maintaining their original culture and at the same time have little interest in having relations with others.

It should be noted that the most common possibilities among immigrants are ‘*assimilation*’ and ‘*integration.*’ ‘*Separation*’ and ‘*marginalization*’ are much less salient among immigrants, mainly among recent waves of immigration. ‘*Separation*’ may characterize refugees or rather ‘psychologically and socially’ isolated migrants (Cohen, 2011: 10). Also, in the era of globalization and transnationalism, it would be difficult to find immigrants who chose ‘*marginalization*’ as a strategy in the new society. This option seems more suited to isolated individuals or to those who consider themselves ‘cosmopolitan’ (ibid.: 12).

Therefore, the first two options—‘*assimilation*’ and ‘*integration*’—are most central among immigrants. Assimilation is generally defined as “the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it” (Alba and Nee, 1997: 863). The term usually relates to the assimilation of minority groups within the dominant majority. But there are cases in which an immigrant minority assimilates into another and larger minority, as the case of the assimilation of earlier Caribbean black immigrants into the African-American minority in the United States (ibid.).

In his article “Toward a Theory of Assimilation and Dissimilation,” Milton Yinger argues that the strength of assimilation in any given setting is a function of the strength of four interdependent subprocesses: “amalgamation (biological), identification (psychological), acculturation (cultural), and integration (structural).” The stronger these processes are, the faster and stronger is the assimilation. However, these occur in various combinations and sequences, not in a fixed order. No less important, these processes are reversible. Despite the strong powers that drive toward assimilation in most contemporary societies, mainly regarding immigrants, other processes may increase the tendency toward ethnic formation and the reconstruction of ethnic boundaries (Yinger, 1981: 256).

Two major types of assimilation are usually emphasized: structural assimilation and cultural assimilation. Structural assimilation refers to the large-scale entrance of immigrants into the institutions, social networks, and primary groups of the host society (Reitz, 1980: 101). Cultural assimilation, on the other hand, refers to changes in the immigrants' cultural patterns made to bring them closer in tune with those of the host society—and is usually referred to as "acculturation" (ibid.). Gordon (1964: 77; cited by Reitz, 1980: 102) argues that cultural assimilation may occur without structural assimilation, that is, without acceptance by the host society.

Van den Berghe argues that immigration facilitates assimilation because the immigration process tends to reduce intra-ethnic network ties. In addition, immigrants are dependent on the native population; yielding to pressures to learn native ways is directly related to the immigrants' survival and successful adjustment (1981: 218). At any rate, Van den Berghe emphasizes that ethnic assimilation of immigrants should not be taken for granted, since ethnic sentiments, which are an extension of kin selection, tend to endure (1981: 216). People tend to resist assimilation unless its benefits are overwhelming. Hence, assimilation is largely the outcome of cost-benefit considerations by the members of the group (ibid.: 257).

Van den Berghe offers a model for assimilation that delineates the conditions favoring ethnic assimilation, based mainly on cost-benefit considerations. According to this model, the greater the phenotypic and cultural resemblance between the groups, the more likely is assimilation to take place. Likewise, smaller groups and those that are territorially dispersed are more likely to assimilate, because they have fewer resources relative to the rest of society and because territorial dispersion reduces the benefits of nepotism. In addition, groups of lower status are more likely than high-status groups to assimilate since assimilation has more potential benefits to offer them (ibid.: 218).

Whereas Van den Berghe noted the conditions that facilitate assimilation, other students of ethnicity have inversely highlighted the conditions that facilitate integration or ethnic formation and the maintenance of ethnic cohesiveness (see Reitz, 1980). Large demographic concentration in specific areas and biological distinctiveness facilitate the survival of ethnicity (ibid.). Rapid technological globalization, including a wide range and relatively cheap tools of communication, all facilitate the continuing connectedness of immigrants with home countries and with their diaspora communities and, eventually, enables them to maintain ethnic cohesiveness. Also, as noted by Vertovec, intensive contact of immigrants with their home countries enables them to retain strong bonds of emotion, loyalty, and affiliation with families, traditions, institutions, and political organizations in their homelands (Vertovec, 2009: 14).

Three major points are worthwhile emphasizing in this regard. First, the transition from 'assimilationist' to 'diversity' in the policies of receiving countries is not a straightforward process and by no means 'irreversible.' In their article about "assimilation in super-diverse times," Alba and Duyvendak provide a detailed analysis of pressures for assimilation as a result of macro-sociological and demographic processes, and in the wake of pressures exerted by the dominant-native groups. They argue:

> When we take macro-processes into consideration, we see that in countries of Western Europe such as the Netherlands the native majority draws sharper immigrant/native boundaries than before … Yet, despite the boundary intensification, many immigrants and their children still assimilate according to mainstream standards in terms of both conduct and convictions, though this is not always enough to bring them truly into the mainstream…
>
> (Alba and Duyvendak, 2017: 17)

Second, assimilation and ethnic formation-reconstruction should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Immigrants always have the option of integrating elements of both processes at once. Eaton spoke about "controlled acculturation" as

> a process by which one culture accepts a practice from another, but integrates the new practice into its own existing value system. It does not surrender its autonomy or separate identity, although the change may involve a modification of the degree of autonomy.
>
> (Eaton, 1952: 338)

By the same token, Rosenthal (1960) spoke about "*acculturation without assimilation*," which means accepting new cultural forms without giving up one's own ethnic identity and culture. A similar approach was presented by Hurh and Kim, who spoke about "*adhesive adjustment*" as a pattern of acculturation, in which immigrants acquire new components of the culture of the host society while maintaining the core of their own culture. In their words:

> Adhesive adaptation is conceptualized as a particular mode of adaptation in which certain aspects of the new culture and social relations with members of the host society are added on to the immigrants' traditional culture and social networks, without replacing or modifying any significant part of the old.
>
> (Hurh and Kim, 1984: 188)

As noted by Portes and Rumbaut, traditional ideologies of assimilation and acculturation are unable to describe the complex situation of identities among immigrants. Instead, they suggested the term '*selective acculturation*' as an alternative way of understanding identity formation among the second generation of immigrants (2001: 274). Such selective acculturation combines components of the ethnic identity (connected with the country of origin) and the national identity (related to the receiving society), including the preservation of bilingualism and biculturalism. They added that "children who learn the language and culture of their new country without losing those of the old have a much better understanding of their place in the world" (ibid.). However, for identity formation to be 'selective acculturation,' it needs to be voluntary and supported by the host society, rather than a reactive process imposed by nativist policies. The latter situation might even bring a far more “problematic outcome” where immigrants can abandon their hybrid identities (composed of ethnic and national components, i.e. Mexican-American) in favor of a purely nationalist stance (i.e. Mexican) (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001: 275). On the other hand, even if new immigrants maintain or reconstruct their ethnic boundaries, they have to find a way to place their group in the new social and cultural fabric as a part of their adaptation. Such act involves several levels, among them the cognitive-knowledge and the evaluation-normative. At these levels, immigrants are expected to acquire reasonable knowledge of the social structure, norms, and values of the new society. Immigrants who maintain a continuity of their ethnic and institutional structure are also required to find a counterbalance between their desire to be different and the pressure exerted by the host society to assimilate within the new system (see Goldlust and Richmond, 1974; Hurh and Kim, 1984; Moran, 2011).

Third, ethnic formation among immigrants is a dynamic process, one which is not only determined by *primordial* and cultural factors but also by *instrumental* needs of immigrants. Hence, in the era of globalization, ethnic formation among immigrants is becoming more complex, with the emergence of multiple, multidimensional, and multifaceted types of ethnic identities (see Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2012). The extent of potential or actual conflict between the various identity types affects how these identities develop over time. Gans (1996: 152) emphasized that ethnic behavior, attitudes, and even identity are determined not only by the wishes of ethnic groups but also by developments and reactions in the wider community, as well as “the costs it will levy and what benefits it will award to them as ethnics” (ibid.; see also Gans, 1979). Therefore, in an era of ‘anti-immigrant’ atmosphere in many of the receiving countries (see Facchini and Mayda, 2008), immigrants’ identities are constructed through a process of ‘negotiation’ between immigrants and the native-born citizens based on how immigrants perceive and respond to social boundaries of the host society (see Massey and Sanchez, 2010). A successful negotiation of bicultural or multiple identities is often motivated by pragmatic considerations. It does not necessarily depend on whether they are perceived by the individual as compatible with each other but rather on the possibility of a coherent self-narrative of belonging to both cultural worlds (Ozyurt, 2012).

The aforementioned analysis leads to the conclusion that when analyzing ethnic formation and identity patterns among immigrants, we should take into consideration formal policies of the receiving society and the dynamic relationships between immigrants and the host society. According to Berry's model, the reaction of the receiving society involves four main possibilities:

1. Melting pot: the dominant group seeks to 'assimilate' immigrants. In most cases, this is accompanied by the receiving society's pressure on immigrants to adopt the values of the dominant group, and to desert their original culture.
2. Multiculturalism: involves 'mutual accommodation,' where both the dominant and nondominant groups accept the right of all groups to live culturally different within the same society. This strategy requires immigrants to adopt the basic values of the receiving society, and at the same time, expects the receiving society to adapt national institutions (education, justice, etc.) to better meet the needs of immigrants.
3. Segregation: separation is demanded and enforced by the dominant group.
4. Exclusion: marginalization is enforced by the dominant group (Berry, 2001: 618–620).

Kymlicka emphasizes that at one point or another in their histories, most Western democracies (except Switzerland) aspired to be a 'nation-state.' In this sense, there was a clear dominant national group that used the state to privilege its religion, language, history, culture, and other components that were defined as an expression of its statehood to fulfill their projects of '*national homogenization*' (Kymlicka, 2007a). In modern states, a strong link has been forged between citizenship and a particular national identity (see Smith, 2003). As a result, some ethnic minorities, including immigrants who do not belong to the dominant national identity, might be excluded, even in democratic regimes (see Abbey, 2002: 107).

Indeed, Jacob Levy mentions that most modern states have had the tendency to seek uniformity, in particular as far as cultural and linguistic uniformity is concerned (2000: 40). To this end, nation-states used various state nation-building policies that secured its dominance and its identity while suppressing identities of other nondominant or minority groups. Kymlicka gives a sample of such policies, including the adoption of language laws that guarantee the exclusive dominance of the language of the dominant group, by declaring this language a 'national language,' while considering language and culture of indigenous groups as inferior; the construction of a national education system that perpetuates the cultural hegemony of the dominant group; the centralization of the political power that eliminates preexisting forms of local sovereignty/autonomy historically enjoyed by minority groups; the adoption of exclusive state symbols of the dominant group; and the adoption of 'demographic engineering,' which promotes changing the demographic facts through the settlement of members of the dominant group in the homeland of indigenous/minority groups, so as to swamp these indigenous groups even in their historic homelands (Kymlicka, 2007a: 62–63).

However, an increasing number of Western democracies have abandoned these policies in favor of a more 'multicultural model' of the state (ibid.). Delineated in the following are the basic elements of multiculturalism and the main disputes connected with it.

Multiculturalism

The origins of multiculturalism can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century over the arguments regarding the policy that should be adopted toward immigrant ethnic groups (Banks, 1981). This debate became stronger in the wake of the failure of the “melting pot” strategy that long prevailed in the United States. Some American philosophers and writers defended the right of immigrants living in the United States to be culturally different, arguing that political democracy should also be accompanied by cultural democracy. The main term used at the time to defend this argument is the “salad bowl,” based on the idea that each ethnic culture would contribute and enrich the overall fiber of cultures in the American society (ibid.: 8).

Cultural pluralism started to gain more support after the Second World War with the shift of attention to internal ethnic conflicts (Banks, 1981). After the war, many societies faced a sharpening of internal conflicts as a result of the competition over the local stratification system and the attempts by disadvantaged groups to improve their status. The dispute over issues connected with multiculturalism gained further impetus in the United States with the Black protest movement of the mid-1960s, with its demands for community control of schools and revision of the curriculum so as to take into account the Blacks’ history and unique culture. Later, other ethnic groups demanded the inclusion of their culture in textbooks, moving the curriculum in the direction of multiethnic education (Banks, 1981, 2001).

Since the 1970s, we have been witnessing an increased interest in multiculturalism, both as a concept and as a strategy for legitimizing diversity, empowering minorities and disadvantaged groups, and dealing with problems of equality and equity (see, for example, Banks, 1981, 1997; Lynch, 1986; Kymlicka, 1995, 2007a; McLaren, 1995; Sleeter, 1996; Giroux, 1997; Wieviorka, 1998).

Multicultural policies have developed in different historical and political contexts. As indicated by Joppke, American multiculturalism developed in response to the oppression of African-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics, whereas in Britain and Germany, multiculturalism is the response to immigration (Joppke, 1999; cited by Solomos and Schuster, 2000: 77). One of the main reasons for the rise of multiculturalism is connected to the global labor migration, which brought many challenges to receiving countries. In many cases, immigration is the result of ethnic conflict in the home country and at the same time a catalyst for other ethnic conflicts in the receiving society. Newcomers may increase the competition for available resources and, in turn, raise the potential for tension between themselves and other competitive local groups (Portes and Stepick, 1985). Immigration may also affect the power system in the receiving society by altering its ethno-demographic structure (Richmond, 1988; Goldscheider, 1992). However, immigration is also synonymous with ethnic diversity, which is an increasingly recognized dimension of the political, cultural, and social policies of countries all over the world (see Young, 1998). These challenges have led to the rise of multiculturalism both as an indicator of social structure and as a formal policy (see Goodstein, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Sleeter, 1996; Miller, 2006). As stated by Charles Mills, one of the main aims of multiculturalism has been to redress the legacy of racism and ethnic exclusion, the older hegemonic European norm of *monoculturalism*, and the view that non-European cultures are inferior to the European ones and thus "should be abandoned for assimilation to the superior 'civilized' white European standard" (Mills, 2007: 91–92). At any rate, while multiculturalism as a state policy can clearly be a necessary part of an anti-racist agenda, it would be an illusion to believe that multiculturalism alone would be able to deal with all forms of racism (ibid.: 93).

While multicultural models differ from one country to another, they include some basic important components. In his book *Theories of Multiculturalism*, G. Crowder (2013) places the principle of *recognition* as a cornerstone of multiculturalism. He argues that multiculturalism means that most contemporary societies are diverse and composed of multiple cultures, which are normatively approved and given positive recognition in public policy and public institutions (see Crowder, 2013, reviewed by Law, 2014: 1964). Therefore, in order for a state to be considered as a 'multicultural state,' the following principles should be promoted: First of all, a state must be considered as belonging to all citizens. As a result, there is a need to abolish all policies that assimilate or exclude members of nondominant groups. At the same time, members of these latter groups should be able to equally access all national institutions while manifesting their ethno-cultural identity. The state, on its part, accepts the obligation to accommodate and recognize the history, language, and culture of nondominant groups. No less importantly, the multicultural state should acknowledge the injustice that was done to nondominant groups through the aforementioned policies of assimilation and exclusion while also offering some sort of remedy for these historical injustices (Kymlicka, 2007a: 66–67).

Multicultural policies toward indigenous groups, national minorities, and immigrants

Before dealing with the main characteristics of liberal multiculturalism, it might be useful to distinguish between various types of minority groups through the historical context in which they evolved. Such distinction is of major importance, since the needs and rights of these groups have been defined differently by Western democracies, and accordingly they have been accommodated through different models of multiculturalism. Also, the demands and expectations of these groups from the nation-state are considerably different. In this regard, Kymlicka differentiates between three groups: the ‘indigenous people,’ ‘national minorities,’ and ‘immigrant groups.’ He calls the first two groups ‘*old minorities*’ that were settled in their territories prior to the independence of the said country. The third group is defined by Kymlicka as ‘*new minorities*’ that came to the country as immigrants (ibid.: 77).

Ogbu (1991) gives a more detailed account regarding the types of minorities, classifying them into two main categories: ‘*voluntary*’ and ‘*involuntary*’ *minorities*. Immigrant minorities have been defined by Ogbu as “voluntary” minorities because they left a home in order to find a new home, with the hope of improving their economic well-being, their standard of living, and/or greater political freedom. In contrast, “involuntary minorities” are defined as “people who were brought into their present society, through slavery, conquest or colonization. They usually present the loss of their former freedom, and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression” (1991: 9). Immigrant minorities perceive whatever barriers they face as a temporary problem which stems from the fact that they are “foreigners” and do not know the language. Thus, they believe that they can face such problems through education and hard work. At the same time, they have a dual frame of reference, their group in the home country and the host society. Involuntary minorities, on the other hand, perceive discrimination against them as a continuing fact that is connected to their exclusion as “outsiders” and as a subordinate group. They have only one reference group, the members of the dominant group. The survival strategy developed by involuntary minorities is not only limited to individual efforts; it is also based on collective efforts and group mobilization.

One of the central differences between voluntary and involuntary minorities has to do with types of identity. Voluntary immigrants bring with them their social identity and their culture, which most likely are maintained at least by the first generation. Thus, social identity of an immigrant does not develop as a reaction to that of the dominant group in the host society. Involuntary minorities develop a new sense of peoplehood, or social identity, after their involuntary incorporation into the society in which they currently live. Thus, because they perceive the discrimination and exclusion that they experience as collective and enduring, they have an “oppositional identity.” This results in a continuing distrust between involuntary minorities and the dominant group (ibid.: 15–16).

Ogbu emphasizes that immigrant minorities

> perceive the cultural and language differences as barriers they have to overcome, they do not go to school expecting to be taught in their own language and culture. Rather, they usually expect and are willing to learn the school culture and language, although they do not necessarily do so without difficulties….

(1991: 21)

Kymlicka refers to three types of multicultural policies concerned with three major minority groups. Indigenous peoples or natives, who are classified by Kymlicka as ‘old minorities’ (and would fit the classification of Ogbu as ‘involuntary minorities’), exist in every country which was subsequently conquered and settled by Western white peoples, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and others. The policies toward indigenous peoples have been radically changed since the 1970s. In any event, the extent of rights, and even the terminology usually used to describe them, are perceived differently by the dominant and indigenous peoples. In the ‘Multiculturalism Policy Index’ suggested by Banting and Kymlicka (2006), they included the following policies:

> recognition of land rights; recognition of self-government rights; upholding historic treaties and/or signing new treaties; recognition of cultural rights; guarantees of representation in the central government; constitutional legislation of a distinct status of indigenous peoples; support/ratification for international instruments on indigenous rights; and affirmative action for members of indigenous peoples.

(see Kymlicka, 2007a: 67)

Of the numerous cultural-rights claims, Jacob Levy argues that self-government claims are most visible and most widespread. Ethnic, cultural, and national groups all around the world usually seek a political space that they can rule and that is controlled by their own group. These units might be in the form of confederation with other groups, cantons, states, or provinces in a federal system, or they might be totally independent (Levy, 2000: 137).

The second form of policies has to do with *national groups*. These groups exist in various Western countries, such as the Quebecois in Canada, Catalans in Spain, and the Flemish in Belgium. These groups are regionally concentrated and recognize themselves as nations within a larger state. In the past, these states made every effort to erode any sense of nationhood and suppress any expression of substate nationalism among these groups because they were perceived as threatening to the state. These policies have eventually changed, and there has been an increasing tendency among these countries to accommodate in this or another way nationalist aspirations of these groups within the form of ‘multination and multilingual federalism.’ In addition, in most cases, languages of these groups are recognized as official state languages, within the region of these groups or in the country as a whole (see Kymlicka, 2007a: 69).

The third form of policies concerns ‘immigrant groups.’ For a long time, immigrant receiving countries adopted cultural assimilation policies toward newcomers, where those who failed to do so were subjected to sanctions, including rejection of their requests to enter the country or to become citizens. Since the 1960s, these policies have radically changed, and a more ‘multicultural’ concept of integration has been adopted in most countries toward immigrants.

Among the most common policies in the framework of ‘multiculturalism’ toward immigrants are the following:

> allowing dual citizenship, adoption of multicultural education in the school system; inclusion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in the public media; funding of ethnic group organizations; affirmative action to disadvantaged immigrant groups; and constitutional affirmation of multiculturalism at various levels.
>
> (Kymlicka, 2007a: 73)

In his article about the Canadian model of diversity in a comparative perspective, Kymlicka referred to these rights as “*multicultural citizenship.*” In this sense, he concluded that the Canadian model is distinctive, has been a success, and other countries could learn from it (Kymlicka, 2007b: 67).

Immigrants usually seek modest demands in terms of cultural diversity, while the historic national minorities and indigenous peoples usually seek a much wider level of recognition, including land claims, language rights, self-government powers, educational and cultural autonomy, and in some cases, even separate legal systems (Banting and Kymlicka, 2006: 8). However, immigration has been a catalyst for the debate over cultural rights, which should be granted together with individual rights in order to ensure incorporation of these immigrants into the wider society. As stated by Stephen Castles:

> Immigrants cannot simply be incorporated into society as individuals. In many cases, a large proportion of immigrants and their immediate descendants cluster together, share a common socio-economic position, develop their own community structures, and seek to maintain their languages and cultures. This is partly an issue of cultural affinity, but it is above all a reaction to experiences of racism and marginalization. Culture and ethnicity are vital resources in the settlement process, which will not just disappear if immigrants are granted full rights as individuals. This means that immigrants cannot become full citizens unless the state and the national community are willing to accept—to some extent—the right to cultural difference.
>
> (Castles, 1996: 54–55; cited by Solomos and Schuster, 2000: 77)

The retreat of multiculturalism

While the 1970s and 1980s symbolized the progress of multicultural policies in various Western democracies, since the 1990s there has been increasing criticism of multiculturalism in both the United States and Europe. One of the central arguments against multiculturalism is connected to the ethnocentric belief that it undermines the Western civilization and denies the uniqueness of the Western culture. Huntington expressed his fears of the perceived dangers to the 'American-Western,' 'Anglo-Protestant' identity of the United States on different occasions. Among the most dangerous factors, he indicated Hispanic immigration, as well as identity politics and cultural relativism stemming from multicultural policies (see Huntington, 2004; cited by Citrin et al., 2007: 31–32). In this regard, Huntington had this to say:

> Some Americans have promoted multiculturalism at home; some have promoted universalism abroad; and some have done both. Multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world. Both deny the uniqueness of Western culture. The global monoculturalists want to make the world like America. The domestic multiculturalism wants to make America like the world. A multicultural America is impossible because a non-Western America is not America. A multicultural world is unavoidable because global empire is impossible. The preservation of the United States and the West requires the renewal of Western identity. The security of the world requires acceptance of global multiculturality.
>
> (Huntington, 1996: 318)

A central argument against multiculturalism is that a rapid growth of diversity endangers the coherence and unity of society. In this sense, cultural diversity has been described as "the enemy from within" (Cummins and Sayers, 1996: 4). Over time there has been increasing criticism against multiculturalism from conservative scholars and public figures alike regarding group rights of immigrants who were considered 'bad immigrants' or immigrants from 'illiberal cultures,' mainly Muslims (Kymlicka, 2007c).

One of the striking examples is the Netherlands, where the 1983 Minorities Memorandum marked this country as one of the leading multicultural regimes in Europe. This memorandum pledged addressing socioeconomic inequalities of minorities, including immigrants, together with the recognition of their right to maintain their cultural identity (Phillips, 2007: 6). Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a considerable retreat in multicultural policies in the Netherlands, with the excuse of combating Islamic practices as far as the treatment of women are concerned (ibid.: 7).

The trend of withdrawal in multiculturalism was greatly intensified worldwide after 9/11. Kymlicka indicated that the 'fear from multiculturalism' has been widely strengthened in the wake of the 9/11 events and the perceived risk connected with Muslim immigrants. In his words:

> fears that Muslim immigrants will seek to use multiculturalism to perpetuate illiberal cultural practices within the country are now combined with fears that multiculturalism will be used to shelter the local nodes of militant international political movements that seek to overthrow liberal democracy. Thus we see the 'securitization' of relations between Western states and their immigrant Muslim communities
>
> (Kymlicka, 2007c: 55)

Multiculturalism that had never been so profound in Europe has eventually witnessed a deep crisis (see Chin, 2017, "The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe—A History," reviewed by Moussa, 2018). The lobbying of the extreme right in Europe against multicultural policies, on the background of atmosphere of the perceived 'threat' from Muslim migrants, has become much more vocal after 9/11 and other terrorist acts. Such atmosphere has undoubtedly affected policy makers in various European countries. In 2008, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued a report which stated "that multiculturalism has failed in Europe, and indeed that it has proven to be as harmful as the assimilationist approach it replaced" (Kymlicka, 2010: 265).

The aforementioned anti-multiculturalism statement of the European Council has been followed by similar declarations by a number of European political leaders. The German Prime Minister, Angela Merkel, said that the "country's attempts to create a multicultural society have 'utterly failed'"—and she declared the "Death of Multiculturalism." "Speaking to a meeting of young members of her Christian Democratic Union party, Merkel said the idea of people from different cultural backgrounds living happily 'side by side' did not work. She said the onus was on the immigrants to do more to integrate into German society. 'This [multicultural] approach has failed, utterly failed,'" … "Those who want to take part [in our society] must not only obey our laws, they must also master our language," she said (The Guardian, International edition, October 17, 2010).

A similar approach has also been taken by the former British Prime Minister David Cameron. In his speech at a Munich security conference on radicalization and the causes of terrorism, he strongly criticized multiculturalism. He declared that multiculturalism "will no longer be adopted as a formal policy and instead efforts will be made to strengthen national identity in order to fight all kinds of extremism" (BBC news, February 5, 2011).

Most critiques of multiculturalism argue that such policies tend to foster separate communities and encourage these communities to maintain nondemocratic values and lifestyles that run against those wider societies, and thus they will prevent identification with the broader society and lead to hostility and radicalization. Hence, it will deepen the distrust between the minority and the majority (see Heath and Demireva, 2014: 162). However, a central assumption of these critics is that "the problematic consequences of multicultural policies will apply particularly to Muslims" (ibid.).

It should be noted that recent empirical studies on the impact of multiculturalism on the orientation and integration of immigrants in the receiving societies do not lend support to the aforementioned critics of multiculturalism (see Kymlicka, 2010; Moran, 2011; Heath and Demireva, 2014). Focusing on multiculturalism and nation-building in Australia, Anthony Moran (2011: 2153) argues that "inclusive national identity can accommodate and support multiculturalism, and serve as an important source of cohesion and unity in ethnically and diverse societies…."

In their comprehensive study on the impact of policies of pluralism and diversity on sociopolitical aspects of integration of immigrants, Wright and Bloemraad (2012: 88) indicate that "the most important rationale for the political backlash against multicultural policies—that they impede or hurt socio-political integration—appears unfounded empirically." They added that, "given that Canada scores by far the highest on multicultural policy index, this finding could be taken as evidence for the idea that multiculturalism promotes hyphenated or nested identities rather than exclusive ethnic identities….”

In the same vein, Heath and Demireva (2014: 161) conclude that “no evidence that rates of intergenerational change have been slower among ethno-religious groups that have made successful claims for multicultural recognition. In contrast, lower levels of integration are associated with perceptions of individual or group discrimination.”

‘Multiculturalism without culture’ and ‘individual multiculturalism’

There has been also criticism from a number of scholars against multiculturalism in the name of the rights. As ‘liberal individualists,’ they asserted that the “individual is morally prior to the community; the community matters only because it contributes to the well-being of the individuals who compose it” (see Kymlicka, 2007c: 27). Accordingly, these critics maintained that “justice required state institutions to be ‘color-blind.’” To ascribe rights on the basis of membership in groups was seen as inherently morally arbitrary and discriminatory, necessarily creating first- and second-class citizens (ibid.: 42).

On this background, some scholars suggested ‘new forms of multiculturalism.’ For example, Rex suggested a “limited multiculturalism,” which has been adopted in Britain. He argued that this approach can strengthen democracy and the integration of minority immigrants without provoking racism in the wider society and without threatening the integrity of society, as in the case of radical forms of multiculturalism. Such a formula involves equal opportunities at the individual level combined with a limited recognition of minority culture, that is, “limited multiculturalism.” Such an approach, according to Rex, would promote ‘successful’ integration of minorities without such hostility that might occur from the host societies (see Rex, 2000).

Others have even gone further, completely denying group oriented multiculturalism that defends rights of ethno-cultural groups. In her book *Multiculturalism without Culture,* Anne Phillips speaks about "multiculturalism without groups"—that is, a type of 'multiculturalism' which is limited to individual rights. In her words:

> The multiculturalism defended in this book is grounded in the rights of individuals rather than those of groups. None of what I have argued implies that cultures have rights—to respect, funding, or survival—only that individuals do. I do not see cultures as all- inclusive ways of life that can be categorized according to their core beliefs or traditions, and I do not see multiculturalism as a way of distributing power and authority between different cultural groups. The literature on multiculturalism has been hampered by an overly holistic understanding of culture, which partly reflects its starting point in a literature on minority and indigenous rights…
>
> (Phillips, 2007: 162)

In the same vein, Christian Joppke focuses on the new 'multiculturalism of individuals,' which has evolved after the decline of 'group multiculturalism' in Europe (Joppke, 2017). This type of multiculturalism "is based on the recognition of individual differences in a world where geocultural displacements are the norm and where they determine polycultural encounter of people…" (Joppke, 2017, reviewed by Imbert, 2017: e61).

Interesting as it might be, it would be difficult to understand the aforementioned argument regarding 'multiculturalism without culture' or 'individual multiculturalism,' since any type of 'multiculturalism' devoid of group diversity and group pluralism is simply *non-multiculturalism*. Also, such arguments that back 'individual multiculturalism' distort the main foundations of multiculturalism, which are based on the promotion of the 'politics of difference' and 'politics of recognition' of group identities and cultures.

At any rate, Banting and Kymlica argue that, unlike the general impression that there has been a retreat in multiculturalism, there is a steady trend of growing multicultural policies over time. However, while there has been a clear trend of recognition of collective rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities, there has been a backlash and retreat from multicultural policies to postwar migrants in some Western democracies. Even such retreat in multiculturalism with regard to immigration is limited to specific immigrant groups defined as "bad immigrants" and is still far from being uniform across countries (2006: 7–8).

In this regard, Kymlicka concludes that "these very same factors also make the *rejection* of immigrant multiculturalism a high-risk move" (Kymlicka, 2007c). By the same token, Myles and St-Arnaud (2006: 354) conclude that in the era of the growing diversity in European countries, as a result of substantial population decline and increasing immigration, there is a need to redefine the collective identity and borders of legitimacy in an encompassing manner. They add that "social 'solidarity' in plural societies is contingent on redefining who 'we' are, a shift from a fictive ethnic identity to a civic national identity…."

Tribalism and tribal identities

The aforementioned approaches toward multiculturalism have greatly contributed to understanding the status of minorities in Western democracies and the dynamic minority-majority relationships in these societies. However, these approaches have a number of shortcomings. First, they mainly focus on minority groups, immigrants and indigenous groups in particular, and the relationships of these groups with nation-states. In most cases, these approaches overlook the internal diversity of the majority, and the dynamic relationships between minorities and dominant groups. Second, the status and rights of minorities are often understood as a byproduct of the type of state policies regarding multiculturalism and the minorities' orientation. Third, these approaches usually overlook the difficulties and barriers to the development of multiculturalism that are connected with the political culture of both minority and majority groups in the same society. In this sense, one of the major barriers to the development of multiculturalism and the nurturing of all-encompassing shared civility in contemporary societies have to do with the reemergence of ‘tribal identities’ and, in particular, ‘*political tribalism*’ among both minority and majority groups. Following, I relate briefly to the emergence of ‘tribalism’ in modern societies and its impact on state and society.

The traditional anthropological approach defines tribalism as “the way groups of people live in a form of cohesive affiliation and narrowed community of interest, systematically including all members of that community and excluding all others as outsiders” (Plater, 1990: 2). In this sense, tribalism is characterized by quasi-closed and clear-cut social borders, traditional allegiances, and narrow identities that are centered around the loyalty to the ‘tribe’ or ‘tribus’ (as known by the Latin term). Also, tribalism is instinctual and exclusionary, with a strong distinction between the ‘in-group’ and the ‘out-group’ and a perception of all forms of group competition as a ‘zero-sum game’ (see Rosen, 2018).

Notably, tribalism had been basically analyzed in the context of Third World societies (mainly in Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim societies) and indigenous groups in Western countries (see for example, Williams, 2014; Kaplan and Costa, 2015; Dawes, 2016). However, since the 1980s, the notions of ‘tribalism’ or ‘neo-tribalism’ have been increasingly used to describe the reemergence of quasi-archaic values and modes of loyalties, political behavior, and social identities in both developing and postmodern-Western societies (Esenova, 1998; Bennett, 1999; Cova and Cova, 2002; James, 2006; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010).

The concept of modern tribal societies originates in the work of the French social theorist Michel Maffesoli (1996; see also Hamilton and Hewer, 2010). Maffesoli adopts the perspective of Durkheim (1961) and his followers, who placed the greatest weight on the “sacredness of social relationships” (ibid.: 21). He concludes that we are witnessing the resurgence of tribal forms in the everyday life of modern societies. In his words, “there are many examples in our everyday life to illustrate the emotional ambience exuded by tribal development. Moreover, it is noteworthy that such examples are no longer shocking to us: they are part of the urban landscape….” (Maffesoli, 1996: 11). In this regard, the notions emphasized by Durkheim concerning traditional societies are becoming once again very obvious in postmodern societies and cultures, in particular archaic forms of social life and collective conscience. These forms go hand in hand with modernity, in which the individual plays a central role—that is to say, “the person (persona) plays roles, both within his or her professional activities, as well as within the various tribes in which the person participates” (ibid.: 76). In a more recent article entitled ‘From Society to Tribal Communities,’ Maffesoli argues that emerging communities, although *post*modern, are not entirely new but are archaic and rooted in *pre*-modernity, and that these tribes are further facilitated by new technological developments such as social media (see Dawes, 2016: 734; Maffesoli, 2016). Neo-tribalism includes the reemergence of local solidarities, rigid identities, fanaticism and group narcissism, and tribal allegiance, with diminished concern for the interests of “outsiders” or the nation (Plater, 1990; Cova and Cova, 2002; Hamilton and Hewer, 2010). These postmodern tribes are held together through shared emotion and passion (Maffesoli, 1996).

Since the 2016 elections in the United States, a large number of American intellectuals have spoken openly about their deep concern regarding the rise of a dangerous form of ‘*political tribalism*’ in Western societies, with special emphasis on the United States. This form of political tribalism has resulted in growing political activism and polarization, political intolerance, and political violence. Lawrence Rosen (2018) noted that

> from an anthropological perspective, Western politics has, it may be argued, become more tribal. Tribes are distinguished from other human groups by their relatively clear social boundaries, often defined by kinship and demarcated territory. It’s clear that our political groups are increasingly based on single aspects of common identity with unambiguous boundaries, such as race and educational status.

In the same vein, Amy Chua (2018) emphasizes that this ‘tribalism’ is tearing apart the American society, which has become deeply divided through racial, ethnic, religious, and social fragmentation. The major factor behind the emergence of this ‘tribalism’ is the weakening of the civil culture and the increasing sense among the various groups regarding the “lack of recognition,” being “threatened” and “discriminated against.” In the words of Chua (2018: 2):

> When groups feel threatened, they retreat into tribalism. When groups feel mistreated and disrespected, they close ranks and become more insular, more defensive, more punitive, more us-versus-them. In America today, every group feels this way to some extent. Whites and Blacks, Latinos and Asians, men and women, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, straight people and gay people, liberals and conservatives—all feel their groups are being attacked, bullied, persecuted, discriminated against.

In an article that was published in the *New York Magazine* September 18, 2017 issue, Andrew Sullivan (2017) speaks about two “major coherent tribes” in the United States, which also coincide with political affiliation of Democrats and Republicans: “one contains most racial minorities and the other is disproportionately white.” In his words, these political tribes are fighting “not just to advance their own side but to provoke, condemn, and defeat the other.” This tribalism has brought to an increasing political polarization and political violence that threatens the whole American society (ibid.).

However, Sullivan differentiates between ‘*healthy tribalism*’ and ‘*dangerous tribalism.*’ The first type of healthy tribalism is reflected in the sense of belonging and ‘unconditional pride’ in ‘our’ community, and ‘our’ ethnic and social identities that are unified through a shared civility, under the umbrella of the “*Über*-tribe that constitutes the nation-state, a mega tribe that unites a country around shared national rituals, symbols, music, history, mythology, and events, that forms the core unit of belonging that makes a national democracy possible.” The dangerous tribalism, on the other hand,

> destabilizes a democracy when it calcifies into something bigger and more intense than our smaller, multiple

loyalties; when it rivals our attachment to the nation as a whole; and when it turns rival tribes into enemies. And the most significant fact about American tribalism today is that all three of these characteristics now apply to our political parties, corrupting and even threatening our system of government.

2 Israel as a deeply divided society

Multiculturalism versus tribalism

By the end of 2017, about 8.8 million people resided in the State of Israel. Among them, 74.6% are Jews, 20.9% Arabs, and 4.5% who are classified as “others” (mainly non-Arab Christians, other religious groups, and those lacking religious classification; see CBS, December 31, 2017, press release).

Israel is a deeply divided society in which the fissures form a continuing source of conflict and instability. On the one hand, it is a country heavily based on immigration and constantly preoccupied with the absorption of immigrants. On the other hand, ethnicity and nationalism constitute basic social and cultural features and central elements in the stratification system of its society. This is a two-level system of Jews and non-Jews, complicated by internal clusters within the Jewish sector that are defined by ethnicity and religious orientation and by length of stay in the country.

What are the main divides within Israeli society? What has been the impact of immigration on the formation of the collective identity, ethnic boundaries, and class structure in Israel? What is the origin of the major clusters in the Jewish population? What are the factors affecting Jewish-Arab relations in Israel? Are these relations characterized as typical ‘majority-minority’ relations? In this chapter, I attempt to answer these questions. I first relate to the Jewish-Arab divide; afterward, I address immigration and the formation of social boundaries; then I discuss the origins of the internal ethnic and religious-nonreligious divisions within the Jewish population. In conclusion, I deal with the state of multiculturalism in Israel in light of the basic following issues: the nature of the collective identity of Israel; the future orientation of Israeli society on the background of the internal conflicts within this society; the external-national Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict; and the formal policy that has been adopted over time.

The Jewish-Arab divide

The national division—that between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel—is probably the deepest as compared to other divides in Israel. These two groups differ in nationality, national goals, religion, language, and other cultural attributes. There is extensive segregation between Arabs and Jews with regard to residence, education (through high school), and other social environments. Presented following is the background of the Palestinian citizens in Israel, who became an 'involuntary minority' after the 1948 Israeli-Arab war. I briefly analyze the main trends in their economic and sociopolitical developments and attempt to delineate the main factors underlying the status of the Palestinians in Israel and their location in the social structure and collective identity of Israeli society.

Background

After the establishment of Israel, only 156,000 Palestinians remained in its territory and became Israeli citizens. They constituted 13% of the total Israeli population. The Arabs were a weak and isolated group, cut off from their kin who became refugees in the Arab countries. The vast majority, 80% of those remaining, were villagers. The bulk of the urban Arab middle and upper class—merchants, professionals, and the clergy—evaporated as a result of the war and the exodus (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld, 1990: 24). Only 6% of the 200,000 Arabs who formerly lived in cities remained there after the war (Lustick, 1980). In addition, some 20% of the Arab population in Israel were "internal refugees," forced to relocate to new communities when their original villages were destroyed during and immediately after the war (Al-Haj, 1988).

Since the establishment of Israel, the number of its Palestinian citizens has increased more than tenfold, thanks to high fertility and decreasing mortality rates. In 2017, there were over 1.8 million Palestinians in Israel (or 20.9% of the population) (CBS, a press release, December 31, 2017). Among the Palestinian Arabs, 83.3% are Muslims, 9.1% Christians, and 7.6% Druze (CBS, a press release, September 6, 2017).

Policy toward the Palestinian Arabs in Israel

Four main factors have affected official policy toward the Palestinian citizens of Israel: the democratic character of the state; the Jewish-Zionist nature of the state; the 'Western' nature of the core cultural identity of Israel; and the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict. The democratic character of Israel is stated in its Proclamation of Independence, Basic Laws, and institutions. Free, democratic, and proportional elections are conducted at both the local and national levels. This has given the Palestinians in Israel room for political organization and activity, through which they have sought to improve their status and bargain for the advancement of the Palestinian case. Their collective struggle for equality and peace has become an integral part of the citizenship and national components of their identity.

The Palestinians in Israel have experienced conspicuous social changes, reflected in various fields. The rise in the level of education may be the most salient development. Whereas the median schooling among the adult Arab population (15 years and over) was 1.2 years in 1961, by 1999 it was 10.8, and in 2016, 13.3 (CBS, 2000: 22.12; 2017, table 8.71). At the same time, there has been a steady increase in higher education, with the number of college and university students per 1,000 increasing from 0.2 in 1965 to 6.3 in 1996, to 12 in 1999, and to 15.7 in 2015 (Al-Haj, 2001; CBS, 2017, table 8.56).

The quantitative change was coupled with one of quality. The educational increase encompassed the different Arab religious groups, the urban and rural population, and men as well as women. In 2001, women outnumbered men in institutes of higher education and for the first time constituted over 51% of Arab university students. The representation of women among Arab students in the universities continued to increase, reaching 59.2% in 2009 (Knesset, 2009: 8).

Contact with the Jewish population, which constitutes the Arabs' reference group in terms of socioeconomic development, has increased gradually. Arabs in Israel have experienced profound processes of bilingualism and biculturalism. This has facilitated their exposure to the mass media and mass communication in both Arabic and Hebrew (see Smooha, 1989).

The Palestinians in Israel have also experienced a process of politicization, accompanied by a deep shift in their identity: from a local traditional identity to a national consciousness (see Mari, 1988). In addition, the traditional, Hamula-based leadership has been replaced by an educated and politically sophisticated leadership (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld, 1990). As a result, they have become strongly aware of their national identity and citizenship rights, not only at an individual level but also as far as national collective rights are concerned (Miari, 1987; Ghanem, 2016).

However, the "modernization" process among the Palestinians in Israel has been only partial and, to a large extent, also selective. Although education is considered to be one of their main achievements, the returns from it have been relatively low. Educated Arabs have not found employment in senior government positions or in the Jewish private sector (see Ben-Rafael, 1982; Rekhess, 1988; Al-Haj, 2001; Yonay and Kraus, 2018). The relatively rapid growth of education among Arabs, coupled with the much slower expansion of the Arab economy, has resulted in fewer appropriate job opportunities for the educated and highly skilled (Lewin-Epstein, 1990: 31; Bental et al., 2017). In addition, military service and security considerations form a screening mechanism that has been used to exclude Arab candidates from senior positions in the Jewish sector. While social change has increased the aspirations for socioeconomic mobility, ethnic stratification has set a mobility ceiling for the Arabs (see Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986; Yonay and Kraus, 2018).

Despite the improvement in the standard of living among the Arabs, the gap between them and the Jewish population has remained constant and in some ways has even grown wider (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986; Cohen, 2015). The economic gap between Arabs and Jews is reflected, inter alia, in the unemployment percentage, which has always been higher among the Arabs, and this in addition to lower wages among Arabs as compared to Jews because of the steady concentration of Arab workers in lower ranked economic branches. This gap is evident also in the very low participation of Arab women in the labor force (see Yonay and Kraus, 2018). According to official statistics, in 2014, the participation of Arab women aged 15 and over in the labor force was only 27.6%, as compared to 65.8% among Jewish women (CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel (SAI), 2016: 139). As a result, there is a considerable gap between Arabs and Jews as far as participation in the labor force is concerned; the percentage in 2015 was only 46% among Arabs as compared to 67.9% among Jews (CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2015: table 12.1).

The Arabs' weak economic status comes to expression in their overrepresentation regarding poverty rates. According to official statistics for 2015, one out of every two poor children in Israel was an Arab. In addition, 53.3% of Arab families in Israel were below the poverty line, while the national average for that year was 19.1% (Israel, National Insurance Institute. Annual Report on Poverty, 2016: 5).

It should be noted that the advantage given to the Palestinian citizens through Israeli democracy has been very limited. In addition, the rights given to the Palestinian citizens are basically at the individual level and are not extended to the collective level (Kimmerling, 2001). Palestinian citizens are not recognized as a national minority, and they are not permitted to build their own national institutions. The existing institutions established by the Palestinian citizens, such as the Supreme Arab Committee, are not officially recognized by the state, although in some cases Israeli officials meet with the committee's leadership, mainly upon the emergence of crucial national events. Moreover, Israeli democracy is not always compatible with the ethno-national character of the state. It has been argued that the ongoing Judaization of the country and the vagueness of its political borders have shaped the Israeli polity, and has formed a basic element that placed its Palestinian citizens outside of the national consensus in Israel (see Yiftachel, 2016). In addition, Israel was established by Jews to be the national home of the Jewish people, not a state for all its citizen (Yonah, 1998; Kimmerling, 2004; Ghanem, 2016; Smooha, 2016). Several factors have negatively affected the quality of Israeli democracy, resulting in an inferior type of democracy as compared to Western democracies. In the words of Smooha:

> The quality of Israel's liberal democracy is degraded by the absence of constitution, the permanence of emergency regulations, religious coercion, and the pivotal idea that Israel belongs to all Jews in the world and not to its citizens and its nature as a Jewish state is a permanent and unchangeable system….
>
> (Smooha, 2016: 686)

Moreover, the Palestinian citizens have no chance of being included as a legitimate part within the collective cultural identity of Israel. This identity has been based on two main components: the Jewish-Israeli and the Israeli-Jewish. The order and emphasis of the two components by various groups among the Jewish population reflect basic contradictions and conflicts between these groups. While the order Jewish-Israeli reflects the orientation of the religious groups among the Jewish population, the Israeli-Jewish order mirrors the orientation of the nonreligious groups (see Ohana, 2016; Shavit and Shavit, 2016). In their article on the Israeli culture today, Zohar Shavit and Yaacov Shavit argue that the religious Jewish-Israeli component forms only a small part while the Israeli-Jewish sphere occupies the greater portion (2016: 37). David Ohana (2016) agrees with Shavit and Shavit that the core identity of Israel is based on the simultaneous existence of two major components, the Jewish and the Israeli. However, he presents a completely different conclusion than that of Shavit and Shavit. Ohana concludes that various developments and factors have brought to "the victory" of the Jewish component over the Israeli component. In his words:

> The sociological, ideological and political changes that took place in Israel, particularly from the 1960s to the 1980s—Six-Day War in 1967 which reconnected the Israelis to the sacred sites in the history of the Jewish people; the fall of the secular Left and the rise of the political right in the elections of 1977; the rising power of the Oriental Jews, most of whom were traditional; the strengthening of the religious element, the Ultra-Orthodox and the "Shas" party—all of these factors, and the others, contributed to what has been called "the victory of the Jews over the Israelis."
>
> (Ohana, 2016: 40)

However, no matter how the two components in Israel's cultural identity are ranked, the simultaneous existence of these basic components at the heart of the shared values and identity of all Jewish groups places the non-Jewish groups, in particular the Palestinian citizens, on the margins of Israeli society and outside its national consensus.

In addition to the ethno-national character of the collective identity of Israel, also noteworthy is the "Western" character of the cultural identity of Israel, which is usually overlooked when speaking about the factors behind the marginalization of the Palestinians in Israel. According to Uri Ram (2016: 72), although the Middle Eastern or Arab culture has affected the Hebrew-Israeli culture to some extent, it remained very marginal in the cultural identity of Israeli society, as both *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim* alike feel close to the "West" culturally, much more than to the surrounding Arabic world (see also Hermann and Yuchtman-Yaar, 2013). Despite the modernization process experienced by the Palestinian society in Israel, this has been only "partial modernization," which is mainly restricted to the individual level rather than the collective level. Also, the core culture of the Palestinian community is basically a Muslim-Arab culture and not of a Western character.

The ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict has served to deepen the schism. Because of the link between the Palestinians in Israel and those in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring countries, Jewish Israelis tend to perceive the former as constituting a "hostile minority" and "security risk." This perception has had a major influence on relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel and on the official policy of surveillance and control (Lustick, 1980; Smooha, 1989, 2016; Goldscheider, 2002). In the shadow of the ongoing conflict, security has come to occupy the center of the political, social, and cultural experience and has legitimized militaristic tendencies in Israel at the expense of its civilian character (Ben-Eliezer, 1998). Therefore, the principle of security considerations has ethnocentric meaning, intimately associated with the Jewish-Zionist character of the state as well. This principle serves the Jewish majority, whereas the Palestinian population is considered to be part of the "security problem" and a "fifth column," and as "non-Jews in a Jewish state" (Goldscheider, 2002: 83).

The problematic overlapping identity of the Arabs in Israel between their national and citizenship affiliations came to the forefront with the first Palestinian *Intifada* (1987–1992). This *Intifada* deepened the problematic citizenship and national status of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Al-Haj was the first to frame this complex status of the Palestinians in Israel as a "double periphery," being located simultaneously at the margins of both Israeli society and the Palestinian national movement (Al-Haj, 1993: 73; see also Al-Haj, 1989). In the words of Al-Haj:

> The Arabs' unequivocal identification with, and support of, the Intifada, although within the confines of law, were perceived by large segments of the Jewish Israeli population as being anti Israeli action. Since loyalty of the Arab citizens to the national cause is considered by most Jews as contradictory to their loyalty to Israel. Thus the image of the Arab citizens as a 'hostile minority' has been strengthened, pushing them even further to the periphery of Israeli society. On the other hand, the political behavior of the Arabs highlighted their marginal

> role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the fact that they are placed at the periphery of the Palestinian National Movement.
>
> (Al-Haj, 1993: 73)

The peace process between Israel and the Palestinians and the signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 have not changed the disadvantaged status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel. Unlike the common misconception, the peace process has not improved the status of the Arabs in Israel and has not significantly altered the ethnic-national culture of the Jewish majority (see Al-Haj, 2004b). What is most conspicuous to date is that precisely the struggle by the Jewish majority on behalf of the Jewish-Zionist identity of the state has been reinforced (ibid.).

The main motivation for peace on the Israeli side is the need for separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, so as to preserve the Jewish-Zionist character of the state and prevent its conversion to a binational state. This argument has been voiced by Jewish leaders of both the Zionist Right and Left. Hence, the start of the implementation of the Oslo accords, and later, the acceptance of these accords by Netanyahu's Likud government have diminished significantly the differences between the Zionist Right and Left in Israel. This has been strongly affected by the fact that the Zionist Left in Israel crystallized through its stance on issues connected with the external conflict, in particular the principle of territories for peace. After this principle was accepted by the 'Center-Right,' the Left lost the core of its identity. In other words, the Oslo accords increased the confusion and distress of the Zionist Left, since it has no clear social agenda. Social issues (associated with class gaps, women, Arab citizens, etc.) have never been a main interest of the Israeli Left. Moreover, the Israeli Left has always seen citizenship issues, freedom of expression, democracy, and other topics linked to human rights through the lens of 'ethnocratic considerations' connected to the state's security and the maintenance of the Jewish-Zionist character of Israel; it has never questioned the contradiction between the democratic character and the Jewish-Zionist character of the state.

As a result, the Israeli Left's lobbying on behalf of peace has been devoid of any social-citizenship content. Moreover, peace is not perceived as a condition for the construction of a civil society in Israel, but as the only means to achieve security (for the Jewish population) and maintain the Jewish character of Israel (to keep Israel from turning into a binational state).

Issues connected to the Palestinian population in Israel have been overlooked by the Palestinian national movement as well. For most Israelis, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)'s acceptance of the principle of "two states for two peoples" means acceptance of the principle of a Palestinian state alongside a Jewish state. This principle has been accepted by the Palestinian leadership without concern for the status of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. As a matter of fact, the Oslo accords make no mention of the Palestinians in Israel. When the refugee issue was raised, the Palestinian "internal refugees" in Israel were overlooked. The message for the Palestinian population of Israel has been that they are not on the agenda of the Palestinian national movement; their problems are their own and should be solved within the framework of the Israeli context. Needless to say, this conclusion perfectly fits the Israeli point of view (ibid.).

In this sense, it is safe to argue that the Oslo process has reinforced the status of the Palestinians in Israel as a "double periphery." However, this has not decreased their support for the process. On the contrary, they view peace as an essential strategy that will eventually work to the benefit of all parties (Al-Haj et al., 1993).

On September 28, 2000, a Palestinian demonstration, including Arab Knesset members, was organized to prevent (then-MK) Sharon from entering the Al-Aqsa mosque. Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa (the Temple Mount), which the Palestinians considered to be a provocation, was the trigger for large-scale clashes between Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line and the Israeli security forces. These events have further deepened the Jewish-Arab fissure in Israel, because they amplified each side's fear of the other and increased the existing alienation.

It seems that the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* has deeply strengthened the feeling of a “society under siege” among Israelis and has further reinforced radical rightist attitudes among the Jewish public. This fact was reflected in a nationwide survey, which was conducted in 2002 on a representative sample of the Jewish population in Israel by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (see Arian, 2002). The findings of this survey show that Israelis were worried to an unprecedented degree regarding both their personal security and about the state of Israel’s national security, “with 92% of the respondents expressing fear that they or a member of their family would fall victim to a terrorist attack” (ibid.: 9). This has further strengthened rightist attitudes among the wide Jewish public in Israel and brought to a dramatic drop in the support of the wide Jewish public to the Oslo peace process, and in the percentage of those who believe in the possibility for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Arian, 2002: 10). These radical developments were utilized by right-wing leaders to further establish their claims and delegitimize the Oslo process altogether. This situation accelerated the collapse of Barak’s government and paved the way for Sharon’s crushing victory in the prime ministerial elections held on February 6, 2001. Since then, the Israeli Zionist Left has not been able to return to power.

The Al-Aqsa *Intifada* has also affected Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. The unrest spread to various Arab localities and mixed Jewish-Arab cities. These protests were met by a violent reaction on the part of the Israeli security forces, leading to the killing of 13 Arab citizens; hundreds were wounded or arrested (see Al-Haj, 2004b). Those events have further deepened the Jewish-Arab fissure in Israel, because they amplified each side’s fear of the other and increased the existing alienation. This was reflected in a poll of a representative sample of the Israeli adult population, conducted on October 4, 2000, and published in *Ma’ariv* two days later. Some 50% of the respondents thought that the Arabs in Israel were acting in solidarity with the Palestinians; 32% thought the protests were the result of discrimination; and 13% believed that both factors were at work. The harsh response of the Jewish population was reflected in their wide support for the idea of "transferring" the Arabs out of Israel: 60% of the Jewish respondents expressed their preference that the Arabs be moved to outside of Israel, while only 33% were opposed to the idea (*Ma'ariv*, October 6, 2000).

In any event, in the years since the Oslo accords, the Palestinians in Israel have placed citizenship issues at the center of their struggle. This might be the result of feeling left behind by these agreements or of their sense that they have but minor impact on the process. Therefore, even though both national and citizenship issues are important for the Arabs in Israel, it is the latter that increasingly preoccupy them because they are directly connected to their daily life and they see their future as linked to the State of Israel even after the establishment of a Palestinian state (Al-Haj, 1993a). This trend has been described by Eli Rekhes as a "*localization of the national struggle*" of the Arabs in Israel (Rekhess, 2007: 71).

Immigration and ethnic divide among the Jewish population in Israel

Ethnic relations are a central issue in Israeli sociological discourse and research, addressed in most discussions of the country's social, cultural, political, or economic structure (see, for example, Eisenstadt, 1954; Bar-Yoseph, 1968; Smooha, 1978; Weingrod, 1979, 1985, 2016; Swirski, 1981; Ben-Rafael, 1982; Herzog, 1983; Shamir and Arian, 1983; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986; Goldscheider, 1995, 2015; Lissak, 1999;). Most students of ethnicity, regardless of their sociological approach, have usually seen ethnicity as bound up with immigration and absorption even though there is a profound controversy between the establishment-Zionist approach, which perceives ethnicity as an integral part of nationalism, and recent critical approaches, which emphasize that such a relationship is not self-evident (see for example Kimmerling, 1992; Shenhav, 1999; Semyonov et al., 2016).

It is worth noting that ethnic relations in Israel are usually handled from one perspective only, in which the Oriental communities (*edot hamizrah*) are the object of study. When scholars speak about ethnicity (*adatiyut*), they usually mean

Oriental communities, whether they discuss ethnicity as a whole or referring to a specific topic such as ethnic culture, ethnic identity, ethnic music, and the like (Swirski, 1981: 74). Swirski emphasizes that the problem is not only a matter of categorization. It is both evidence of a concrete historical situation of discrimination and dependency and of a mechanism that perpetuates its existence (ibid.; Swirski, 2016).

Historically, there were three main subdivisions among Jews: Oriental Jews, who never left the Middle East and North Africa; *Sephardim*, whose language (Ladino) and ethnic culture derived from Spain before the 1492 expulsion; and *Ashkenazim* (originally from central Europe), whose language was Yiddish (Shamir and Arian, 1983).

The establishment of Israel was followed by a redefinition of ethnic relations as a whole and of ethnic divisions in particular. The three categories have been reduced to two: *Ashkenazim* of European-American origin and *Sephardim-Mizrahim* or *Edot hamizrah*, the Jews of Asian and North African origin (see Smooha, 1978). In the mid-1970, official statistics in Israel started classifying ethnic origin according to the father’s country of birth, creating three categories: Asia-Africa, Europe-America, and Israeli-born. At the start of the 1990s, official statistics automatically counted all former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants in the American-European category. Beginning in 1996, however, they were divided into two groups: those from the European republics (constituting some 79.7% of the immigrants) were counted as *Ashkenazim*, while those from Central Asia and the Caucasus (20.3% of the immigrants) were counted as *Mizrahim* (CBS, SAI, 2000: 5.4; for the breakdown of former Soviet immigrants by republic, see Israel, Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1999: 8).

My analysis relates to immigrants from Muslim and Arab countries as *Sephardim*, Orientals, or *Mizrahim*, and to those from Western countries as *Ashkenazim*. Immigrants from the FSU will be treated as an independent third category. When dealing with official statistics, however, I have no choice but to stick to the official classification of ethnic groups.

Ethnicity as a sociocultural rift

It has been argued that the meaning of ethnicity in Israeli society is structured by basic Zionist ideological codes (Lewis, 1985: 149). Based on the conception that the ingathering of Diaspora communities aims at creating “one nation,” the Zionist paradigm rejects ethnicity as an ultimate reality while acknowledging it as a de facto attribute of social life (Lewis, 1985: 149; Weingrod, 1985). In this sense, the mass immigration of Oriental Jews in the 1950s posed a real challenge to the Zionist idea (ibid.). No less important, the *Mizrahi* immigration from Arab and Islamic countries constituted a serious cultural challenge to the hegemony of the European-Western ethnocentric Zionism (Smooha, 1978; Swirski, 1981). It has been also argued that the *Ashkenazi* elite feared that “the ‘backward’ Orientals would dilute the Western culture and upset the political democracy of the newly founded state” (Smooha, 1978: 260).

The aforementioned issues strongly affected the approach of the veteran *Ashkenazi* elite toward immigrant absorption and thereby eventually determined the ethnic structure and stratification in Israel (Halper, 1985). The approach which was adopted by the *Ashkenazi* elite toward *Mizrahim* has been framed as the “establishment-modernization approach.” It is based on two interconnected processes: the modernization-westernization of Oriental Jews and their fusion within the *Ashkenazi* melting pot. In the following section, an attempt is made to delineate the basis and the main ideology behind this approach.

The modernization-establishment approach

The sociology of immigration and ethnic relations in Israel has long been dominated by the approach developed by Eisenstadt and his students. Critical sociologists tend to call it the modernization-establishment approach, because it is identical to that of the dominant *Ashkenazi* establishment (Swirski, 1981, 2016; Smooha, 1984; Shenhav, 2006).

According to the establishment approach, immigrants remain “external” to the social system until they have learned the roles expected of them by the absorbing society and thus become “fully functioning members of the society.” After reaching this point, they can enter the different spheres of the absorbing society through a process that Eisenstadt called “institutional dispersion.” He summarized this process in his widely cited book, *The Absorption of Immigrants* (1954: 9):

> The process of absorption, from the point of view of the individual immigrant’s behavior, entails the learning of new roles, the transformation of primary group values, and the extension of participation beyond the primary group in the main spheres of the social system. Only insofar as these processes are successfully coped with are the immigrant’s concept of himself and his status and his hierarchy of values re-formed into a coherent system, enabling him to become once more a fully functioning member of society.

Eisenstadt adds that the *institutionalization* of the immigrant’s behavior takes place within a given social structure. Within this structure, certain demands and expectations develop toward immigrants, just as immigrants have a particular image of the new society (ibid.). The following conditions must be fulfilled for a group or an individual immigrant to be fully absorbed in the new setting: acculturation; satisfactory personal adjustment; and full dispersion of the immigrants as a group within the main institutional spheres of the absorbing society (Eisenstadt, 1954: 11).

This model assumes that successful and complete absorption takes place only when the immigrants stand as individuals, learning and acquiring the values and the culture of the new society and abandoning his/her own former identity. In other words, cultural assimilation is a precondition for successful and full absorption. Therefore, Eisenstadt emphasizes, “it is assumed that full absorption has not taken place unless the migrant group ceases to have a separate identity within the new social structure” (Eisenstadt, 1954: 13). Based on this conception, any tendency among immigrants to organize as a group is considered to be "disintegrative" and "deviant behavior" (ibid.).

A similar approach is expressed by Eisenstadt's student, Rivka Bar-Yoseph (1968). In her article "Desocialization and Resocialization: The Adjustment Process of Immigrants," Bar-Yoseph delineates the basic characteristics of successful absorption, according to the "melting-pot" ideology. She argues that the process of immigration and absorption in the new society involves the disintegration of the person's role system and the loss of social identity. Therefore, "the absorption process is then the successful resocialization, and the establishment of a new identity and role system" (ibid.: 27–28). But in order to have a smooth "resocialization" process, immigrants must first experience a "desocialization" process that eliminates the former value system. Thus, a successful adjustment is seen as "a dynamic balance of desocialization and resocialization, where the desocializing tendencies are slowly eliminated while the resocializing forces expand" (Bar-Yoseph, 1968: 43).

The melting-pot ideology

The school of thought presented earlier formed both the intellectual basis and legitimizing force of the melting-pot approach adopted by the Israeli absorption system. Based on the conception that sociocultural differences among Jewish communities are a symbol of "diaspora existence," it was expected that the demographic transition of Jewish Diasporas to Israel—the ingathering of exiles—should be followed by a cultural-psychological *mizzug galuyot* or fusion of exiles (Ayalon et al., 1985).

Behind the *mizzug galuyot* concept lies the belief of the Israeli-Zionist establishment that cultural elements of Diaspora origin are part of a "false diaspora identity" that should be replaced by an "authentic" Israeli one, so as to turn the ingathered exiles into a unified Jewish society in Israel (Halper, 1985: 114). Therefore, adherence of new immigrants to their original culture was perceived as negating the principle of Jewish-Israeli solidarity.

It is obvious that the melting-pot ideology is not aimed at creating a new culture or at creating a blend of elements from all contributing cultures. It clearly meant the melting of all Oriental groups into the veteran Western-*Ashkenazi* culture (Halper, 1985; Lissak, 1999). As such, it is based on a paternalistic-Eurocentric *Ashkenazi* orientation that perceives Oriental culture as “primitive,” “backward,” and “inferior.” This approach was inspired by the Western-colonial model. Patai highlighted this issue in his “*Israel between East and West”* (1970: 27):

> The old-fashioned and shortsighted view, which unfortunately is expressed only too often both orally and in writing in Israel, holds summarily that the Oriental Jews are in need of a complete re-education, that their entire being and thinking must be reshaped in the European Jewish image, and that, where this cannot be achieved by suasion and example, the situation calls for legislative measures.

The ethnocentric stand toward Orientals was not restricted to the ruling political elite. It was supported by the Israel establishment at all levels: policy makers; absorption agencies; mass media; and members of the mainstream academic community (Halper, 1985: 115).

A widely cited text that exemplifies how the Oriental Jews were perceived by the veteran *Ashkenazim* in the 1950s is from an article by Arye Gelblum, which appeared in the highly respected Hebrew newspaper *Ha’aretz* on April 22, 1949 (see Patai, 1970: 294–296; Halper, 1985: 116; Lissak, 1999: 65):

> A serious and threatening question is posed by immigration from North Africa. This is the immigration of a race the like of which we have not known in this country. It would seem that certain differences exist between the immigrants from Tripolitania, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, but I cannot say that I was able to discern the quality of these differences, if they exist at all…
>
> Here is a people whose primitiveness reaches the highest peak. Their education level borders on absolute

> ignorance. Still more serious is their inability to absorb anything intellectual. How many obstacles have to be overcome in educating the Africans. …
>
> In the living quarters of Africans in the camps you will find dirt, card-games for money, drunkenness and fornication, … not to mention immorality and stealing. Nothing is safe in the face of this asocial element, and no lock can keep them out of anywhere.
>
> (Gelblum, April 22, 1949, cited by Patai, 1970: 294–296)

Note that the writer uses the expression “Africans,” not “North African,” as would have been more appropriate to their countries of origin. It might be argued that he used this expression in order to link Oriental Jews with a clear-cut race while speaking about the distinction between East and West. More striking are the racist expressions the writer used to describe how the Oriental immigrants “lacked … all requirements” to adjust to life in Israel (as a Western country):

> But above all these there is a basic fact, no less serious, namely, the lack of all the prerequisites for adjustment to the life of the country, and first of all—*chronic laziness and hatred of work*. All of them, almost without exception, lack any skill, and are, of course, penniless. All of them will tell you that in Africa they were “merchants”; the true meaning of which is that they were small hawkers. And all of them want to settle “in the town.”

What, therefore, can be done with them? How to “absorb” them?

> … Has it been considered what will happen to this country if this will be its population? And to them will be added one day immigration of Jews from Arab countries! What will be the face of the state of Israel and its level with such a population?
>
> (Gelblum, April 22, 1949, cited by Patai, 1970: 294–296)

This position reflected the mainstream approach of the *Ashkenazi* elite, both political and intellectual (Halper, 1985).

This group, which claims to its credit that it was the leading force in the establishment of the Jewish community (*Yishuv*) in Palestine and later in the establishment of Israel, perceived the Oriental mass immigration as a threat to its political and cultural dominance. Hence, warnings were voiced about the "danger" of the "*Orientalization and Levantization of the Yishuv*" and the need to instill into these oriental immigrants the spirit and culture of the veteran *Ashkenazi* group.

Ya'akov Zerubavel, one of the leaders of the Po'alei Zion-Left and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, wrote:

> The great spiritual entity produced through arduous labor and pioneering effort, along with all the rest of the basic enterprises of the Zionist movement, may come to naught if it does not have successors who act in the spirit of the Pioneers. The mass immigration now flowing in from backward, primitive countries to Eretz Israel may inundate all our work. Work therefore has to be done now to pass on the experience and will of the Pioneers. How can we bequeath to them the Pioneers' experience so that they feel themselves to be pioneers through their actions?
>
> (cited by Lissak, 1999: 65)

Policy makers, too, adopted this paternalistic perception. Ben-Gurion, who was one of the key Israeli leaders in the shaping of the official absorption policy in the 1950s, argued that this policy would benefit both these immigrants and the State of Israel (see Lissak, 1999). His "optimistic view" was presented, however, in a paternalistic and arrogant way, since in Ben-Gurion's eyes, the main challenge was how to turn this "human dust" into a "civilized nation." In his introduction to the *Israel Government Yearbook* (1960/61: 25), Ben-Gurion wrote:

> The vast majority of [the Oriental] Jews are destitute. They are bereft of the property and capital that were taken from them, and they are oppressed in the sense of the education and culture that were not provided to them.… But a large proportion of the immigrants come to us without knowing the alphabet, without a trace of Jewish or humanistic education.… The spiritual

> absorption, blending, and molding of these immigrants, turning this human dust into a civilized, creative, independent nation with a vision, is no easy job, and the difficulties are no less than the difficulties involved in the economic absorption. A tremendous effort, moral and educational, is needed—an effort accompanied by pure, profound love for bringing together these castaways—to impart to them the nation’s assets and values, to implant these distant, oppressed exiles in our society, our culture, our language, and our creative endeavors, not as benefactors—but as partners in destiny.
>
> Even the success that we, the *Yishuv* old-timers, have produced, the material and spiritual success, we did not really achieve with our own hands. Rather, we, too, received a valuable heritage from our fathers’ fathers and stood on the shoulders of the generations that came before us. This inheritance of ours is the inheritance of the entire Jewish people, and only as the inheritance of the entire nation will it survive. Latent in the educationally deprived immigrants are all those special qualities and potentials that have so far made the builders of the *Yishuv* what they are, and none of what we have done until now—economically, politically, militarily, and spiritually—will eventually be inaccessible to these immigrants, too, if we give them the assistance and care that we once received from our parents and our communes.

The implementation of the melting-pot principle, especially toward immigrants of Asian-African origin, was obvious in all spheres, including types of occupation, settlement, family planning, education, and even personal hygiene (Lissak, 1999: 69). Policy makers presented the process as essential for modernizing and westernizing the Oriental immigrants and promoting mobility opportunities for the new generation of these immigrants (Kleinberger, 1969).

Based on this approach, the establishment depicted ethnic socioeconomic inequalities in Israel as a natural result of the persistence of cultural differences between Oriental and *Ashkenazi* Jews and the failure of the former to modernize and adjust to the norms of the wider society (Lewis, 1985: 145–146).

Counterapproaches to ethnic relations

Already in the early 1950s, the modernization-establishment approach was criticized by a number of social scientists who suggested that the cultural uniqueness of each group should be recognized (see for example Frankenstein, 1953: 21; Kleinberger, 1969: 51). However, this idea of recognizing the relative values of different cultures was a minority view amid the massive support for the melting-pot strategy, which also directed educational policy.

It was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that broad criticism of the establishment modernization-cultural approach started to be voiced by a number of sociologists. Although they were affiliated with different schools of thought, they shared a number of basic assumptions: The disadvantaged status of Oriental Jews and the wide disparity between them and the *Ashkenazim* are not the outcomes of the former's cultural inferiority or inability to modernize. The true reason is to be found in the absorption process itself, which was designed and implemented by the veteran *Ashkenazi* elite in order to maintain and reinforce its dominance (Smooha, 1978; Bernstein, 1981; Swirski, 1981; Shenhav, 2006).

Despite the similarities in the critical sociologists' rejection of the establishment modernization approach, there are a number of cardinal differences among them, which may be classified as the dependency-class approach and the pluralistic approach.

Based on a neo-Marxist center-periphery model, the dependency approach concentrates on analysis of the historical processes of social formation and division of labor. Accordingly, it questions the concept of "social gaps," which is a basic element in the pluralistic approach. The dependency school focuses on the division of labor, not the gaps per se, since the latter are only a consequence of the former (Swirski, 1981: 11; see also Swirski, 2016). Its advocates maintain that the absorption process created a close dependency between

Oriental immigrants and the ruling *Ashkenazi* elite, which persisted despite the relative improvement in the *Mizrahim's* conditions and status (Bernstein, 1981; Swirski and Bernstein, 1993; Swirski, 2016).

As to the overlap between class and ethnicity, the dependency approach recognizes the basic class division of labor in Israel. It argues, however, that the Israeli structure is unique, the result of the unique development of the Israeli economy, which has left the Jewish bourgeoisie mainly *Ashkenazi*, and the Jewish proletariat overwhelmingly *Mizrahi*. Hence, the class struggle is not simply that of the proletariat, but that of the *Mizrahim* (Swirski, 1981: 356–357).

The dependency approach rejects as fallacious the assumption of the modernization approach that the *Mizrahi* protest is a temporary phenomenon and will disappear in the wake of increasing modernization and decreasing social gaps. On the contrary, it can be expected to expand, as the emergence of a cultural division of labor creates a *Mizrahi* identity that will be translated into a major political factor (ibid.). Indeed, over time, inequality in Israel has just grown wider, although a few *Mizrahim* joined the "layer of grand capitalists, for the first time since the start of the Zionist project in Palestine" (Swirski, 2016: 278).

The pluralistic approach falls somewhere between the dependency and the establishment-modernization approaches (see Smooha, 1978) and attempts to bridge between them. Thus, whereas the dependency approach speaks of a system of domination controlled systematically by *Ashkenazim*, which leads to perpetuation and even intensification of the ethnic conflict, the pluralistic approach speaks of two contradictory but coexisting systems—inequality and solidarity—with the first intensifying and the second weakening ethnic conflict. The former is manifested in the wide gaps between the dominant *Ashkenazim* and the disadvantaged *Mizrahim* in all spheres of life. The *Ashkenazi* dominance is first and foremost political; through their control of the political system, they control other fields (economics, mass communication, education, etc.). At the same time, Israeli society has developed a systematic mechanism of solidarity that includes a formal ideology of integration and national solidarity, a subsidized economy that provides opportunities for mobility, and the readiness of the *Ashkenazi* elite to pay the price of co-optation so as to prevent *Mizrahi* ethnic organization. Another consolidating factor stems from the Israeli-Arab conflict and the preference given to *Mizrahim* over the Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinians in the territories (Smooha, 1978, 1984, 2008). The pluralistic approach argues that the two systems are at work simultaneously, so that the potential for ethnic conflict is somewhere in the middle. Ethnicity is expected to weaken in the future and the ethnic dominance is gradually being eroded (Smooha, 1984: 195).

The dependency and pluralist approaches agree that the characteristics of the absorption process are responsible for the marginalization of the Oriental Jews. However, while the dependency approach postulates that discrimination and exploitation of *Mizrahim* by the *Ashkenazi* apparatus are the responsible factors (Bernstein, 1981; Swirski, 1981), the pluralistic approach holds that, in addition to discrimination, there are a number of other objective factors (such as the weak starting point of the Oriental Jews and the state's urgent priorities) that should be taken into consideration when dealing with social gaps between the two groups (Smooha, 1984: 200).

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing debate about establishment versus critical sociology (see Kimmerling, 1992; Ram, 1995; Lissak, 1996; Hever et al., 2002; Shenhav, 2006). A cursory review of the arguments and counterarguments advanced in this debate generates confusion about the classification of sociologists in the "establishment-engaged" and the "critical-non-engaged" camps. Moreover, there are almost no scholars today who overtly champion the establishment approach and the melting-pot ideology.

There has been a growing diversity of sociological approaches toward immigration and ethnicity since the early 1990s. The debate is no longer exclusively between the establishment and critical approaches. Several scholars who take an eclectic approach have seconded the criticism of the "mistakes" made by the absorption authorities during the mass immigration in the 1950s and suggested reconsideration of the paradigmatic approaches (see Shuval and Leshem, 1998; Lissak, 1999). There is also broad agreement among sociologists that there has been an increasing improvement in the socioeconomic status and political integration of *Mizrahim*. Furthermore, there has been an erosion of the ethnic element through a considerable percentage of *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* intermarriage. However, despite the improvement in the *Mizrahim's* status, even in the second generation there remain disparities between them and the *Ashkenazim* (in favor of the latter) in almost every conceivable field (Hertman and Ayalon, 1975; Peres, 1976; Smooha and Kraus, 1985; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986; Shavit, 1990; Cohen, 1998; Peled and Shafir, 2000; Swirski, 2016).

The most recent approach in terms of Jewish ethnic divide in Israel is the postcolonial approach, which developed in the 1990s (see Shenhav, 2006; Shohat, 2017). One of the outspoken researchers of this approach is Yehuda Shenhav, who wrote extensively on "Arab Jews," originating from Arab countries, thus rejecting the notion of "*Mizrahim*," which is commonly used by students of ethnicity in Israel (Shenhav, 2006). Using a postcolonial framework, Shenhav develops a research strategy that locates the Arab Jews in the broader Middle Eastern context, and thus challenges the Zionist epistemology (ibid.: 185). Shenhav postulates that the Zionist movement started to show interest in Arab Jews only in the 1940s as potential immigrants to Palestine. This encounter between Arab Jews and the Zionist movement was mediated by "colonial practices suffused with Orientalist assumptions about color, race, and ethnic subjugation" (Shenhav, 2006: 190). However, the Zionist movement sought to integrate *Mizrahim* within its project while turning them into an *eda* and through the denial of their Arabness. In the words of Shenhav:

> In the framework of the national and colonial epistemologies within which Zionism imagined itself, the Arab Jews had a liminal, hybrid, and shifting status. On the one hand, they were perceived in the Zionist discourse as an integral element of the national community and as the expression of its primordial

> foundation. On the other hand, they were subjected to a colonial epistemology, and within this epistemology, they were orientalized and racialized. Zionism had difficulties accepting into its ranks Jews who were also Arabs….
>
> (ibid.: 192)

Although addressing the identity of Arab Jews from a different angle, Shohat adopts a similar approach to that of Shenhav in terms of the collective identity of this group. She emphasizes that the identity of Oriental Jews should be placed within a wider Middle Eastern context that takes into consideration the linkage of Arab Jews with the Muslim-Middle Eastern culture, of which they have been a part (see Shohat, 1988). Shohat argues that within Israel, European Jews, who constitute a "First World elite," have dominated not only the Palestinians but also Oriental Jews. In this sense, "the *Sephardim*, as a Jewish Third World people, form a semi-colonized nation within-a-nation" (2017: 38). Shohat adds that the dominant elite in Israel has imposed on the Arab Jews a separation between the "Jewish" and "Middle Eastern" elements in their identity in order to crystallize Oriental Jews according to the Zionist Euro-Israeli paradigms (Shohat, 2017: 104).

While stressing the role of Orientalism as a basic element in shaping the inequality among Jews in Israel, Khazzoom argues that exclusion of *Mizrahim* or Middle Eastern Jews, originated in the encounter of Orientalism with Western European colonialism much before their immigration to Israel, where they had been stigmatized as Orientals. The Middle Eastern Jews, through a complex process, had accepted this stigma, and "they arrived in Israel deeply invested in developing the new country as "*Western"* and uncomfortable with anything identified as "*Eastern"* (Khazzoom, 2003: 481). In this sense, *Ashkenazim* used the previously existing east/west dichotomy and "Orientalized" *Mizrahim* as one way of acquiring their domination over Israeli society (ibid: 482).

Ethnicity and the religious-nonreligious divide

The historical basis of the religious-nonreligious divide among Jews goes back to the second half of the eighteenth century and the start of the process of secularization and emancipation. It began in Western Europe and later expanded to Eastern Europe; taken together, the two regions were home to some 80% of world Jewry until the late nineteenth century (Shapiro, 1998). Jews, especially the young generation, started to neglect Jewish traditions in favor of the urban secular lifestyle (Friedman, 1989, 1990). Among the *Mizrahim*, the process of secularization (which lasted more than three centuries among *Ashkenazi* Jews) did not begin until the early twentieth century (Smooha, 1978). As a result, Oriental Jews have remained more religious and traditional than the *Ashkenazim* (ibid.).

The religious groups, however, are not monolithic; they are split by two main factors: their attitude toward Zionism and their ethnic (*Ashkenazi-Mizrahi*) division. The relationship between ultra-Orthodox (*Haredi*) groups and the Zionist movement, and later the state of Israel, has always been complex and problematic. Ultra-Orthodox Jews reject the basic secular ideology of the Zionist movement and hold that the Jewish people are beyond all bounds of history. The creation of a Jewish state by secular Zionism effaces this uniqueness and sows the seeds of social and religious corruption (Levi, 1990). Hence, ultra-Orthodox Jews are not only non-Zionist but even anti-Zionist (Friedman, 1989). National-religious Jews, on the other hand, thought it preferable to take part in the building of the Jewish state and work to strengthen the religious-Jewish character of Israel from within the Zionist system (Smooha, 1978). As a result, they have adopted a strategy of participating in the institutions of the state, including military service.

For pragmatic reasons bound up with the very existence of the Jewish community in Eastern Europe, however, ultra-Orthodox groups had to find a modus vivendi with the Zionist movement (Friedman, 1990). Pragmatism has also shaped the behavior of the *Haredi* leadership after the establishment of Israel, especially the decision to sit in the Knesset and join government coalitions, in order to share power and maintain their autonomous organizations (Peled, 1998).

Ethnic differentiations within religious groups have become more obvious over time. For a long time, the religious elite, both the ultra-Orthodox and national-religious, was mainly *Ashkenazi*. *Ashkenazim* dominated organizations of these groups and *Mizrahim* were relegated to the status of clients or junior partners. The governing rabbinical council of Agudat Yisrael—the Council of Torah Sages—had no *Mizrahi* members. This was the background for the establishment of Shas in 1983. Within a few years, the new party became a leading force among Oriental Jews. According to its religious orientation, Shas should be located somewhere between religious-traditional and *Haredi* (Friedman, 1989). While exploiting *Mizrahi* grievances and ethnic pride, Shas has chosen to follow a pragmatic-instrumental rather than a reactive-primordial strategy (Peled, 1998). Also, one of the major reasons for the success of Shas has to do with the success of its leadership in giving their claims an ethno-religious and cultural character, instead of a general civil, sociopolitical nature (see Amor, 2002: 265). This trend goes hand in hand with the efforts of the *Ashkenazi* elite to redefine the "Israeliness" in a way that places "Jewishness" as a central factor of the Israeli collective identity, thus marginalizing the civil character of Israel and further pushing the Palestinian-Arab citizens behind the legitimate borders of Israeli consensus (see Amor, 2002; Peled, 2002).

Religious-nonreligious relations

In a survey conducted in 2014 by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research on a representative sample of Israeli Jews, 20.6% defined themselves as *Haredi* or religious; 34.3% defined themselves as traditional; and 45% defined themselves as secular (cited by Etzioni-Halevy, 2016: 246). The relations between religious and nonreligious (secular) Jews in Israel are complex. Religious and nonreligious groups differ in their lifestyles, orientation, and attitudes on cultural and social issues (Weller, 1991). There is significant residential and social segregation between the two groups (Ezioni-Halevy, 2016). The existence of separate education systems for the religious groups widens the social distance between religious and nonreligious youth (Friedman, 1989). Despite the fact that they are a numerical minority, the religious do not admit their minority status or behave like a minority group, because they believe that they represent what Jewish society and culture ought to be (Dan, 1997). The majority of *Haredim* do not serve in the army and even manifest animosity toward military service, although the army stands at the center of the national consensus in Israel (ibid.). This creates a strong potential for tension and conflict between the two groups (Gordon, 1989).

The state of Israel has created a unique system to alleviate religious-nonreligious conflicts, based on the inclusion of religious groups in the national consensus. This step was an integral part of the redefinition of the collective identity of Jews as congruent to that of the State of Israel (Sheleg, 2000; Cohen and Susser, 2003). The Zionist socialist leadership, which was secular, worked to define this identity in a way that combined the national with the religious components (Shapiro, 1998: 669).

The inclusion of the religious groups within the Israeli consensus was based on the creation of "status quo-consociational" arrangements (Cohen and Susser, 2003). These arrangements were fortified by a number of laws which embodied concessions made by both groups, although some argue that the secular groups conceded more (ibid.).

The religious groups, for their part, used the status quo to establish their institutional autonomy, reflected in part in autonomous control of the religious groups' own educational systems. Thus, while such autonomy was denied *Mizrahi* immigrants and Arabs, it was granted to the religious *Ashkenazi* sector of the Jewish population. The 1949 Compulsory Education Law and the 1953 State Education Law recognized three separate Jewish school systems: state schools, state-religious schools, and the independent school system run by the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael (Kleinberger, 1969: 118–124).

As can be appreciated from the foregoing, religious-nonreligious relationships walk a tightrope. The attempt by the secular leadership to include the religious groups within the redefinition of the Jewish collective identity after the establishment of Israel has created a sort of national consensus, which, though fragile, has survived several challenges. However, Yair Sheleg (2000) notes that, whereas in the 1950s and 1960s, the religious groups mainly defended their status, since the mid-1970s they have been much more active than the secular groups with the aim of determining the nature of their relationships and the character of Israel. He concludes that “the religious offensive” has been motivated by the historic political change in the 1977 elections with the victory of the Likud (headed by Menachem Begin). In this sense, the transition of the political system from one major ruling party (Mapai-Labor party) to two dominant parties (Mapai-Likud) has opened the way to the religious and mainly ultra-Orthodox parties to become a decisive political power and thus determine the government composition for many years to come (Sheleg, 2000: 290). This fact has been continuously used by religious groups to strengthen their status. Ultra-Orthodox parties have gone even further in their attempt to change the “status quo,” increase their share in the public budget, and build their religious and educational institutions. The third stage, since the late 1990s, was described by Sheleg as the “stage of seclusion and segregation,” in which each group seeks to fortify its identity and lifestyles and minimize the impact of the other group as far as possible (ibid.: 297).

Cohen and Susser (2003) reach a similar conclusion. They argue that over time, both secular and religious groups have moved from “politics of accommodation” into “politics of confrontation” with the aim of determining the character of the collective identity of Israel (ibid.). In this sense, the “status quo,” which in the beginning with the establishment of Israel reflected the desire of both groups to find a reasonable coexistence between them, has been replaced by a strong inclination of these groups to reach a clear-cut determination in terms of their status and the nature of the collective identity of Israeli society (Cohen and Susser, 2003).

To the aforementioned analysis can be added the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the transition of the Palestinian-Israeli relations from a state of “continuing conflict” to a state of “conflict resolution,” and, subsequently, to a state of “conflict management.” This factor has usually been overlooked when it comes to the analysis of internal divisions in Israel, despite the strong and dynamic relationship between internal and external conflicts.

The external conflict has created a mythical solidarity and overshadowed social and ethnic divisions in Israeli society. Also, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its implications for the central issue of “security” in Israeli society have brought to de-emphasizing internal conflicts among the Jewish majority, particularly the *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* ethnic conflict (see Al-Haj and Ben-Eliezer, 2003).

In addition, the occupation of Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem in 1967, created a new agenda for the Israeli population as a whole and for the religious sector in particular, and thus mitigated religious-secular tensions, at least until the transition to the conflict resolution with the Palestinians in the early 1990s. Like the European colonizing powers, who exported their internal conflicts through a large-scale ‘outside’ territorial occupation (see Smith, 1981: 393), Israel also used the occupation of the Palestinian territories for exporting internal conflicts and reshaping and recrystallizing national cohesion. Thus, religious groups, with support from the secular leadership of Labor and later, from the Likud, sought to fulfill the historical dream of “Greater Israel” (Goldberg and Ben-Zadok, 1986). Since the Likud regime in 1977, the Palestinian territories became officially known by their Biblical names of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, which reflects the desire of Israeli governments since then to create a symbolic connection between Israel and these territories (Goldscheider, 2002: 250). For radical religious groups, bringing all of mandatory Palestine under Jewish control provided a means for releasing them from their tie to the state, with its secular meaning, and opened the door for the reestablishment of an authentic Jewish bond (Friedman, 1989: 66). The secular elite, for its part, evidently exploited the new situation as a means for manipulating religious and ethnic tensions within Israel.

The signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 radically altered the aforementioned equilibrium between religious and secular groups in Israel. The peace process has also laid bare the major rifts within the Jewish society itself—religious, ethnic, and immigration-related—because the resolution of external conflicts sharpened the internal conflicts within the state. National, ethnic, and religious divisions, long overlooked, came to the surface and presented a real challenge for the internal stability of Israeli society (Al-Haj, 1997).

In the new situation, the religious-nonreligious divide becomes sharper. The most radical faction among the religious, led by the settlers, perceived territorial compromise with the Palestinians as the strongest challenge to their ideology since 1967. Also, the core of religious-secular division has shifted from the debate over religious-social boundaries to political issues over the future of the State of Israel and its ultimate geo-political boundaries. This has created a radical change in the political map and in the national consensus in Israel. As a result, instead of the mere religious-secular division, new coalitions have been formed over the essential issue of supporting or rejecting the basic issue of territorial compromise, and eventually the issue of a "two-state solution."

Jewish religious-fundamental sectors argued that the policy of the Rabin government is "illegal" and endangers the existence and future of the State of Israel. This argument was voiced not only on the basis of the perceived danger of territorial compromise but also because the Rabin government was based, for the first time since the establishment of Israel, on the support of Arab parties, which gave this coalition a majority in the Knesset when Shas left the coalition (Kimmerling, 2004: 218–219). Therefore, fundamentalist sectors sought to change this reality by all means, including illegal ones. The campaign peaked with the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on November 4, 1995 (Cohen and Susser, 1998). This act seriously jarred the state-and-religion consociational arrangements and accelerated the pressure by both groups for a clear-cut decision on the state-religion issue (ibid.).

It should be noted that when speaking about the religious-nonreligious divide, we should keep in mind that secular groups among the Jewish population in Israel differentiate between the ultra-Orthodox *Haredi* population and the national-religious groups. In this sense, the *Haredi* groups have always been perceived by secular groups as the most threatening to the character of Israel as a Zionist-Jewish democratic state. On the other hand, national-religious groups are perceived as closer to the national consensus, because they are Zionist, they serve in the army, and they share more values with the secular regarding the Jewish-Zionist character of Israel. Therefore, when speaking about the "danger" that by 2030, Israel is expected to become a "religious state," once again, it is the ultra-Orthodox who are perceived as the major danger (see Bystrov and Soffer, 2012: 86–88). It is argued that one of the expected threatening scenarios is that ultra-Orthodox groups might initiate legislation in the Knesset that would undermine the democratic character of Israel, hasten the departure of secular people from Israel, and would drag Israel deep down into the Third World while becoming "overloaded with relatively poor ultra-Orthodox and Bedouin (Arab) children" (ibid.: 86). Therefore, it was suggested by Bystrov and Soffer that only "a secular coalition of all the secular and national-religious parties will facilitate in practice the formation of a majority" that is able to prevent such a threat (Bystrov and Soffer, 2012: 88).

The perception indicated earlier has been behind the practice of secular-rightist parties a long time ago. In the 2003 elections, Shinui, led by Tommy Lapid, increased its power and paved the way for radical secularism as far as political attitudes are concerned, mainly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the citizenship status of the Arab minority in Israel (Cohen and Susser, 2003: 146–149). However, with the fading peace with the Palestinians, relationships with the ultra-Orthodox sector, in particular mandatory military service for *Haredim*, were raised by Tommy Lapid as a pivotal issue. As a matter of fact, military service formed just one component of differentiation between *Haredim* and the other rightist Jewish sectors; the other component was placed on the axis of Zionist-non-Zionist affinity. This axis formed the basis for the formation of the government after the 2013 Knesset elections. The coalition which was formed after these elections did not include any ultra-Orthodox party. In addition to the Likud, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, two other parties, led by new politicians were the main winners; the Yesh Atid party, led by Yair Lapid (Tommy Lapid's son), received 19 seats, turning it into the second largest party (after the Likud, 31 seats), and HaBayit HaYehudi, led by Naftali Bennett, received 12 seats (the fourth largest party). There are major differences in the composition of these new parties; while Yesh Atid has a clear secular orientation and is situated in the "center" regarding the attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, HaBayit HaYehudi is situated in the extreme right, as it includes prominent leaders of the settlers. However, both parties have some major things in common, in particular, their Zionist orientation and their strong desire to change the "status quo" connected with the *Haredim*.

Lapid continued the line initiated by his father Tommy Lapid as far as the exclusion of the *Hardi* parties is concerned. Yesh Atid, with the support of other partners in the coalition, initiated a number of laws aimed at changing Israel's religious policies. This included a mandatory military draft of the *Haredim*, a law encouraging the teaching of math and English in government-funded *Haredi* schools, and other laws that cut the subsidies to *Haredi Yeshivas* (religious schools) and large families, which included large segments of the *Haredi* population (Sales, 2015).

However, after the 2015 Knesset elections, the aforementioned picture has, once again, changed radically. The *Haredi* parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism, were back in power—the first received seven seats and the second six seats. These achievements, on the background of the weakening of both Lapid and Benet, gave the ultra-Orthodox groups an outstanding chance to join the coalition as a central partner. The coalition agreement, which was signed between the Likud party, led by Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the ultra-Orthodox parties, included a clear commitment to dismantle the aforementioned legislations, which were passed by the previous government (Sales, 2015).

The Arab Spring and the social rift in Israel

On December 17, 2010, Mohammad Abu Azizi, a Tunisian unemployed university graduate, set fire to himself out of despair. This tragic event was the catalyst of protest movements in various parts of the Arab world, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, and other countries. The main protest of the people who took part in mass demonstrations was directed against the ruling regimes, demanding democracy, employment, civil rights, and liberties, and an end to corruption. The main slogan of the Arab masses was '*Ashaab Yurid Taghier el-Nitham—People demand to change the regime*' (see Hassib, 2013; Danahar, 2015; Matar, 2016).

The fate of these uprisings is controversial, and it is still unclear whether they will lead to genuine democracy (see Inbar, 2013). Ben-Dor rightly concludes that we may speak about "democratization" processes aimed for by the mass protest movements in a number of Middle Eastern countries, but the outcome of these movements is yet to be explored. Since the introduction of an authentic democracy necessitates changing not only the regimes but also the old rules of the game, the political norms, and the ways of thinking as far as relationships between rulers and people under control (see Ben-Dor, 2013: 52–53). However, several studies have pointed out some important, far-reaching changes that have already taken place. Central among them is probably the break from the long-standing citizens' "barrier of fear" of dictatorship authorities and military elites in the Arab world (Hassib, 2013). No less important is the wide participation of independent educated youth, combined with political parties and unions, which together formed the emerging "social movements" that place the struggle for civil rights as the central issue (Hanafi, 2013: 22).

The unrest in the Middle East caused by the Arab Spring has radically affected the Palestinian issue and the stand of Israel toward the peace process. The Palestinians recognized that the Arab Spring has shifted the world's interest from the Palestinian issue to the new developments in the Arab world.

On the other hand, Israel has utilized the new situation in order to cast doubts regarding possibilities of reaching any agreement with the Palestinians under the real and potential political instabilities in the region (Sandler, 2013: 194–195).

The Arab Spring has had its effect also on the ‘social rift’ in Israel, mainly among the Jewish majority. During the summer of 2011, mass demonstrations erupted in Israel on the background of social issues, such as the high housing prices and the existing wide educational and socioeconomic gaps (Sandler, 2013: 198). Between July 14 and October 29, 2011, Israel witnessed an unprecedented wave of social protest in which hundreds of thousands took part, with the main slogan “*Haam Dorish Zedeq Hevrati—the people demand social justice.*” This wave gained wide coverage by the Israeli and international media and evoked a very active discourse among Israelis on socioeconomic issues. However, this wave was short-lived and ended after a couple of months, although its impact is still evident in the discourse at the political and public levels (Ram and Felk, 2013).

A number of reasons are responsible for the radical decline of the mass protest in Israel within such a short period. One central reason is, undoubtedly, the immediate democratic steps that were taken by the Israeli government in order to minimize the repercussions of these demonstrations. Among other things, the government established a formal committee (the Trakhtenberg Committee) which prepared a detailed report, including recommendations regarding a concrete policy to bring down the housing prices and bridge the social gaps within Israeli society. The concrete outcome of these formal steps is controversial, and there is a wide belief that they failed to cause any concrete changes. Another reason for the fading of the mass social protest is the internal divisions within Israeli society. The main support for and participation in this protest came from the *Ashkenazi* middle class, the political Left, and the Labor party. Two groups that are identified with the political Right never took part in these demonstrations, the *Haredi* and the Zionist-religious groups, and only a negligible number of Russian immigrants showed an interest in them (ibid.: 23).

Interestingly enough, just a marginal number of Palestinian Arabs in Israel have taken part in the social wave, mainly those in mixed Jewish-Arab cities. This might be because the Jewish organizers made no significant effort to create any partnership with the Arab leadership in Israel. In addition, social awareness among the Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel has remained very limited compared to the radical change in their national consciousness since the establishment of Israel. Also, this might result from the fact that Palestinian citizens perceive their disadvantaged status and the wide socioeconomic gaps that exist between them and the Jewish majority as the outcome of national discrimination rather than a class-based oppression. On the other hand, the Arab leadership itself also remained passive as far as mobilizing the Arab population through a social agenda. This leadership has been strongly divided over political attitudes connected to regional issues, such as the stand regarding the upheaval against Assad's regime in Syria, the ousting of the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt, the dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and other disputes within the Arab world. The Follow-Up Committee, which is the major political organization of the Palestinians in Israel, also failed to take any stand regarding the Arab Spring or the participation of the Palestinian citizens in the social protest of the Jewish population. The role of the Follow-Up Committee was restricted, as usual, to moderating the relationships between the various parties and movements among Palestinian Arabs in Israel, without presenting any strategy for social or political action.

Multiculturalism versus tribal identities in Israeli society

As can be seen from the foregoing analysis, Israel is a society rent by deep ethnic, religious, national, and social divides. One of the main factors behind the increasing potential for conflict is undoubtedly the wide gap between the social structure and the official culture of Israel. Despite its deep cultural pluralism, as described earlier in this chapter, no multicultural policy has developed in Israel, whether at the level of Jewish-Arab relations or of intergroup relations within the Jewish majority. The ethno-national structure of Israel and the lack of separation between state and religion have retarded the emergence of an all-inclusive civil circle (see Kremnitzer and Fuchs, 2016, on the impact of the lack of separation between religion and state in Israel). Lissitsa et al. (2002) related to a number of other factors that obstruct multiculturalism among the Jewish population in Israel. One major factor has to do with the Zionist myth of the "new Jew," who is expected to go through a deep cultural and psychological transformation from a "*galut*" Jew into a "sovereign Jew." This myth, which has been used to blur ethnic differences between Jewish Eastern European communities (Polish, Romanian, and even German), has been applied later to the *Mizrahi* Jews (ibid.). Despite the Western orientation of Israel, and unlike Western countries, Israel has adopted a "Republican approach" that obligates one homogenous, Hebrew-Zionist, basically secular culture. As such, it perceives the other cultures as inferior and rejects diversity and multiculturalism (see Smooha, 2007). While agreeing with these arguments, in what follows I discuss more in detail additional factors that deeply affected intergroup relations in Israel, and not only retarded the development of multiculturalism, but rather contributed to the rise of 'tribalism' based on anti-multicultural ideology.

Militaristic culture

In his article on "war and ethnicity," Anthony Smith argues that continuing conflicts and wars have a powerful impact on state and society, and in the shaping of ethnic community and nationhood (Smith, 1981). In this sense, prolonged wars both create and reinforce military elites that become very dominant in a state and in a society, in view of their security function and their mass participation in war (ibid.: 377). In addition, warfare is manipulated for ethnic mobilization, and through intensive propaganda that constructs 'favorable' self-images and negative enemy stereotypes. In Smith's words:

> In modern ideological era, this trend is greatly enhanced, because ethnic sentiments and national cohesion can be strongly influenced by the propaganda of 'populist'

> ideologies and the impetus they provide for further wars, which in turn requires mass mobilization … War propaganda furthers the community's ethnocentrism, the belief in the centrality and superiority of one's group and its culture. Ethnocentrism inevitably devalues outsiders and their cultures, breeding solipsism or in some cases hostility….
>
> (Smith, 1981: 390–391)

The dominance of the militaristic culture in Israel is, undoubtedly, a major barrier to the development of a multicultural ideology. Despite the different approaches that exist regarding the strength of militarism and its impact on the civil society in Israel, there is wide agreement that the existing militaristic culture in Israel comes at the expense of its democratic character (see Barzilai, 1992; Ben-Eliezer, 2000; Kimmerling, 2016; Sheffer and Barak, 2016: 590). A central factor has to do with the fact that Israel was created as a result of war and is still engaged in a continuing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with blurred boundaries with its neighbors and an ongoing state of emergency (Sheffer and Barak, 2016: 605). This has created a culture of a "nation-in-arms" (Ben-Eliezer, 1998) and a continuing belief among the wide Jewish public that Israel is facing existential threats, which necessitate a strong military and continued preparation for the coming war (ibid.; Kimmerling, 2016). Many generals in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also continue to play a major role in the civil political, social, and economic spheres after they finish their military service (see Ben-Eliezer, 1998; Peri, 2016; Sheffer and Barak, 2016).

In addition to the impact of the Israeli-Arab conflict, Kimmerling indicates that "existential anxiety," which is deeply rooted in the collective identity and collective memory of the Jewish majority, has been one of the major factors that strengthened civilian militarism in Israel. In Kimmerling's words:

> The existential anxiety built into Israel collective identity and collective memory simultaneously fuels civilian militarism and reinforces "military militarism" and the

> military-cultural complex, creating a vicious circle that always leads to self-fulfilling "worst case" prophecies. Even the main motives for peace-making are driven either by xenophobic feelings of separateness or instrumental manipulation of improved control over "the other side" and preservation of "our" ultimate military might.
>
> (Kimmerling, 2001: 228)

A majority with a 'minority phobia'

Another central factor that retards the creation of multiculturalism and civil society, which is usually overlooked by students of Israeli society, is connected to the complex status and orientation of the Jewish population as a majority. On the one hand, the status of the Jewish population as a majority is so obvious and clear, both in terms of numbers (within the Green Line), and in the massive power of Jews in Israel at all levels. On the other hand, the collective identity of the Jewish population in Israel includes a "*minority phobia*" as a central component. This complexity is exacerbated by a continuing fear among the Jewish majority of 'becoming a demographic minority,' in other words, a status of "*a majority with a minority phobia.*"

This complex status is reflected in the continuing discourse among both the Jewish leadership and the wide public regarding "demographic danger," or the anxiety that Jews might become a minority in the historic Eretz Yisrael/Palestine. Indeed, the demographic issue, and in particular the changing Arab-Jewish population ratio, has always had powerful political, economic, and ideological implications for the Israeli-Arab conflict and for the emerging Jewish state. This demographic issue has become even more crucial after the 1967 war, with the inclusion of the Palestinians in the West bank and Gaza under the Israeli occupation (see Goldscheider, 2002: 67). Therefore, many important domestic and foreign policy issues in Israel are formulated and determined under the pressure of demographic considerations (Cohen and Susser, 2009: 57).

Arnon Soffer (1988), an Israeli geographer, has been one of the most vocal voices regarding the demographic issue and its crucial impact on the existence and future of Israel. Later, together with his students, he continuously warned Israeli politicians and policy makers alike regarding what he termed as "*the demographic danger*" caused by the changing demographic "balance" between Jews and Palestinian Arabs in the historic Palestine-Eretz Yisrael (see Soffer, 1988; Soffer and Bystrov, 2006; Bystrov and Soffer, 2013; Soffer, 2016).

In 1988 (right after the first Palestinian *Intifada* broke out in the occupied territories—1987), Soffer published a report entitled *On the Demographic and Geographic Situation in Eretz Yisrael: Is It the End of the Zionist Vision?* In this report, he stated that "the demographic problem is the key issue for the future of Israel and one of the basic factors of our national security…" (Soffer, 1988: 2). He projected that by 2020, the Palestinians in the territories and Israel would outnumber the Jewish population in the historic Palestine/Eretz Yisrael. Such a situation was described by Soffer as "the end of the State of Israel" (ibid.: 36).

The "demographic danger" is not restricted only to the total Jewish-Arab balance in Eretz Yisrael but also to the geographic dispersal of Jews and Arabs in peripheral regions, along Israeli borders. In a report entitled "*The Tel-Aviv State: A Threat to Israel*," Soffer and Bystrov spoke about the "fears" from the tendency of the Jewish population to leave the periphery and crowd into the city of Tel-Aviv, what they termed "The State of Tel-Aviv" (Soffer and Bystrov, 2006). They concluded:

> The continued concentration of the Jews in the Tel-Aviv core is tantamount to a challenge to the State of Israel. If this process is not stopped, its end will be appalling turmoil for the entire Zionist enterprise because "Tel-Aviv State," that state between Hadera and Ashqelon, and into the Jerusalem corridor, will not be able to exist for long without a hinterland.
>
> (Soffer and Bystrov, 2006: 9)

In another report, which was published in 2013, they even warned about a gradual creation of a “Palestinian” state in the Galilee, as a result of the increasing number of Palestinian citizens in that region, and the intensive movement of the Jewish population from that region to the “Tel-Aviv State” (Bystrov and Soffer, 2013: 78–79).

The discourse on the “demographic danger” at the leadership and public levels has had far-reaching sociopolitical implications on Jewish-Palestinian Arab relations in Israel and the territories. First, it has deepened the Jewish population’s existing fears of the Palestinians and has legitimized their image as “enemies” and a “security risk” that endangers the future of Israel and its Zionist project.

The aforementioned discourse has resulted in dramatic plans to counterbalance this “demographic danger,” through the increase in the number of Jews and the decrease in Arabs, mainly in the northern part of Israel—the Galilee. This has been implemented through intensive building of Jewish settlements and other national plans that aimed at directing newly arrived Jewish immigrants to this region. These plans already started in 1949, right after the establishment of Israel, through massive efforts in evacuating Palestinian villages along the northern borders of Israel and in the center of the Galilee, and of building Jewish settlements (Yozgov-Orbach and Soffer, 2016: 10). In the 1970s, the official plans of expanding the Jewish settlements at the expense of the Palestinian villages were implemented under the name of “development of the Galilee,” but after they were strictly termed as “*Judaization of the Galilee*” (Soffer and Fenkel, 1988; Yozgov-Orbach and Soffer, 2016). The building of Jewish settlements and *mitzpim* in the Galilee involved wide expropriations of Arab lands and heavy restrictions on the construction plans of Arab localities. The official measures that were taken to implement these plans restricted the potentiality of developing Arab localities at all levels. Eventually this heightened the tensions between Jews and Arabs and increased their mutual alienation. The peak of this alienation came to expression in the general strike declared by the Palestinian citizens in Israel on March 30, 1976, as a protest against the “Judaization of the Galilee.” This strike was called the “Land Day” and has become one of the central national events of all the Palestinian people.

The spread of the discourse over the “demographic danger” has resulted in legitimating of both the ideology of “separation” and that of “transfer.” As a matter of fact, the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians was based on the idea of “separation” between Israel and the Palestinians in the territories, in order to prevent the so-called demographic danger and maintain the character of Israel as a Zionist-Jewish-democratic state. In other words, it was meant to get rid of a large part of the Palestinian territories in order to prevent the situation in which the Palestinians become a majority. However, this has been the idea raised by the Zionist Left. The Zionist right, on its part, used the ‘demographic fear’ as a catalyst in reviving the idea of “transfer”—that is, to get rid of the Palestinian population as a means of preventing the “demographic danger.” Rahaba’am Zeevi was a leading figure in this direction. In 1988, he established the “Moledet-Homeland” party and ran in the elections to the Knesset on the ticket of transfer as a way of solving the demographic problem.

The “demographic fear,” which is the by-product of the perception of “*a majority with a minority phobia*,” has been adopted by Israeli leaders from both left- and right-wing parties, and has accelerated the geopolitical decision of building the ‘separation wall’ (in 2002) between the State of Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank. This wall, which is 766 km long, is parallel to the Green Line (but two and a half times longer), with many modifications that are adjusted to the Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories and the security needs as defined by Israeli authorities (see Arieli, 2016). This decision was taken after the collapse of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians in the wake of the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* in the year 2000. At the beginning, security considerations were declared by the Israeli officials as a central motivation for building the wall. However, it has subsequently become clear that demographic-ethno-national considerations played a major role in determining the building of the separation wall (ibid.). As noted by Soffer and Polak already in 2003, the Palestinian population in the historic Palestine/Eretz Israel is expected to become a majority of the total population in 2020, while the Jewish population is expected to become a minority (only 39%) (see Soffer and Polak, 2003: 8). Such a situation was described, once again, as the end of the Jewish State of Israel (ibid.). Thus, upon the presentation of his government in the Knesset on May 4, 2006, Olmert declared that "the separation wall was the salvation rope of Zionism" (cited by Arieli, 2016: 160).

Another basic element that both creates and strengthens the perception of a "*majority with a minority phobia*" is connected to the belief that Israel is under continuous physical danger of destruction, at least, a danger of destruction as a "polity," and only through massive military power can Israel secure its existence in the region (Kimmerling, 2004: 151). Baruch Kimmerling emphasizes that according to this perception,

> the Holocaust is not only a traumatic event that crystallizes to a large extent the collective memory and consciousness, but an existential situation that could happen again. In this sense, the Holocaust is the past, and that which might happen again are a central part of the parcel of the concealed activation of the Zionist hegemony.
>
> (ibid. translated from Hebrew, M.A.)

In his book *The Holocaust Is Over; We Must Rise From Its Ashes*, Avraham Burg (the former Knesset speaker) relates in detail to the manifestations of the Shoah (Holocaust) and its continuing profound impact on the Jewish people at the various levels, including the politicians; the education system; the official institutions; the media; and the public at large. He had this to say:

> The list of Shoah manifestations in daily life is long. Listen to every word spoken and you would find countless Shoah references. The Shoah pervades the media and the public life, literature, music, art and education. These overt manifestations hide the Shoah's deepest influence. Israel's security policy, the fears and

> paranoia, feeling of guilt and belonging are products of the Shoah. Jewish-Arab, religious-secular, Sephardi-Ashkenazi relations are also within the realm of the Shoah.
>
> (Burg, 2008: 23)

Magal et al. (2016: 1219) emphasize that the perception of the Jewish majority that Israel lives under a continuous threat of destruction has far-reaching repercussions on the political culture of Israel and has the potential to develop an antidemocratic atmosphere. In such a situation, the use of military force, and even oppression against both the Palestinians in the territories and the Palestinian citizens in Israel, is perceived by the wide Jewish public as necessary for survival. Thus, all of these means are perceived as "prudent, justified, and in accordance with moral standards…." Also, the perceived "existential fear" serves as an important factor in the delegitimization of Arabs, especially Palestinians, who are stereotyped by large segments of the Israeli-Jewish public as 'violent' and 'untrustworthy' with 'continuous intention to harm Jews.' No less important, these perceptions are a hotbed for the development and justification of antidemocratic values and practices by Israeli leaders and the wide public alike (Magal et al., 2016: 1227–1231).

A minority with a 'sense of majority'

Contradictory to the aforementioned complex status of the Jewish population in Israel as a '*majority with a minority phobia*,' the Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel may be defined as a '*minority with a sense of majority*.' In other words, there is a gap between the objective status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel as a vulnerable minority, and their subjective 'sense of majority' or at least 'regional majority.'

There are several factors that explain this complex status. First, it took the Palestinians in Israel many years to realize that their new status as a minority in a Jewish state seems to be 'permanent.' Studies indicated that the first, and even the second decades after the establishment of Israel were perceived by the Palestinian citizens as the 'waiting and expectation' period (see Al-Haj, 1988). During this period, Palestinians 'waited' for a change in their status, whether by Arab countries, by the UN or whatever external changes might help them regain their '*majority status*.' Only after the 1967 war did the Arabs start to recognize that their minority status seemed to be lasting (see Rekhess, 1976: 13).

Second, the remaining Palestinians in Israel are considered an '*involuntary minority*.' As defined by Ogbu (see theoretical framework, Chapter 1), "such minorities are brought to their present status through conquest and/or colonization. They usually perceive the loss of their former freedom, and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression" (see Ogbu, 1991: 9). Like natives elsewhere, even if they have been relegated to such 'minority status,' they relate to themselves as rather a 'nation,' 'peoples,' and even in some countries such as Canada, as the 'first nation' (see Kymlicka, 2007a; Cornell, 2015).

As Cornell puts it:

> These are peoples whose present or historical links—spiritual, cognitive, cultural, economic—to specific lands and places are perceived as fundamental aspects of nationhood. Those links typically long precede the coming of colonial powers, and, by virtue of that fact, Indigenous peoples often see themselves as entitled to a certain standing within contemporary states. Their argument is that the land was and, in at least a moral and spiritual sense, remains their land.
>
> (Cornell, 2015: 4)

Indeed, '*land*' has had a special meaning within the political culture, the identity, and the collective memory of the Palestinian people in general, and, of the Palestinians in Israel in particular. Its meaning, therefore, is much beyond its economic importance. It is a basic component of the historical narrative of the Palestinians that as the original people of this country, who lived here for generations long before it was conquered by the state of Israel, they are deeply rooted (see Khalidi, 1997).

The '*defense of land*' also forms one of the central components of the national struggle of the Palestinians in Israel. For this purpose, a national committee was established in 1975, by the Palestinian citizens in Israel, '*the Committee of the Defense of Lands*.' One of the most prominent events in the political struggle of the Palestinian citizens in Israel is called '*Yom el-Ard—the Land Day.*' It was organized on March 30, 1976 as a response to the intentions of the Israeli authorities to confiscate Arab lands in the framework of the aforementioned national plan, 'Judaization of the Galilee.' In their various declarations, prior to and after the '*Land Day*,' the Arab leaders widely used the following slogans: '*Nahno Ashab el-Ard—we are the land owners*.' The expressions used by the leadership to address the Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel also reflect a '*native identity*' of a '*nation—not a minority.*' The basic notion was '*al-Jamahir al-Arabiya—the Arab peoples,*' never the 'Arab minority'" (see the report on the Land Day by Rekhess, 1977). This event, which was initiated by the Palestinian citizens in Israel, has eventually become a *national day* for all Palestinians, including the West Bank, Gaza, and the Palestinians in the diaspora.

Various regional developments that took place since the late 1960s have reinforced the sense of the Palestinians in Israel as a '*part of a regional majority*' (see Reiter, 2009). The renewed contact between the Palestinian citizens in Israel and their Palestinian brethren in the territories, which were occupied by Israel in 1967, has strengthened their 'Palestinian identity' and revived their sense of belonging to the Palestinian people. Also, the Jewish settlements in the West Bank have obliterated the 'Green Line' that separated Israel and the Palestinian territories until 1967. The contact between the Palestinians in Israel and the territories became much stronger toward the late 1970s; the October 1973 Israeli-Arab war (which was perceived by Arabs as a victory over Israel's superiority) and the increasing international recognition of the PLO revived the Arab-Palestinian pride (see Rekhess, 1976; Al-Haj, 2004b). The peace with Egypt, and later with Jordan, and the 'silent normalization' with a number of Arab countries (such as Morocco and a number of Gulf states), and the opening of the gates of Saudi Arabia to Palestinian-Israeli Muslims to perform the Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca), have all strengthened in the Palestinians in Israel the sense of belonging to a large, national and religious majority in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the continuing discourse on the demographic danger has paradoxically revived the sense of '*majority belonging*' among the Palestinians in Israel. As discussed earlier in this chapter, it has been argued by Israeli academics and public figures alike that the Palestinians in Israel together with their brethren in the territories are expected to outnumber the Jewish population, and thus, to become a majority by the year 2020 (see Bystrov and Soffer, 2012; Soffer, 2016). On this background, the idea of 'territorial exchange' has been raised as a possible solution. In the framework of this idea, it was suggested annexing a large part of Wadi Ara (currently a part of Israel largely populated by Arabs) to the Palestinian Authority together with Arab localities there, in particular Umm El-Fahm, which is the second largest Arab town in Israel and the headquarters of the Islamic movement in Israel. In exchange for such annexation, the Palestinians were expected to agree to the annexation to Israel of a large number of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. This idea is still being considered and has been raised by Avigdor Lieberman, the head of the Yisrael Beiteinu party and former Minister of Defense, as a main strategy for a future resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Lieberman raised this idea once again on December 10, 2017 after the violent demonstrations in Wadi Ara in the wake of the declaration of President Donald Trump that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel (see Ynet, December 10, 2017). This idea has been totally rejected by the vast majority of the Palestinian citizens in Wadi Ara and by the Palestinian leadership in Israel and by the Palestinian Authority. However, for the Palestinians in Israel, it means that their status as citizens of Israel is "still pending" and that their final status is tightly connected with that of the rest of the Palestinian people.

This complex status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel as *a 'minority with a sense of a majority*,' while it bears some important elements that might help promoting multiculturalism, also adds some difficulties to Jewish-Arab relations. On the one hand, the sense of a ‘regional majority’ increases the cultural and social confidence and openness of the Palestinian citizens toward the acceptance of new cultural values and other patterns of social behavior without the ‘existential fear’ that such values might present to the Palestinians’ culture and national identity. Indeed, the Palestinian Arabs in Israel have experienced a conspicuous bicultural and bilingual process. While maintaining their cultural uniqueness, Arabs have been deeply exposed to the culture and lifestyles of the Jewish majority. This might explain the fact that at the beginning of the 1990s immigration from the FSU, the majority of the Palestinian citizens in Israel expressed no concern regarding the cultural impact of these immigrants (Al-Haj, 1992: 102). The main concern manifested by the Palestinians in Israel was connected to their group status and the potential land expropriation. Also, as ‘*Ashab Elard—original land owners*,’ the Palestinian citizens perceive every new immigration flow to Israel as a source that would increase their “unjustified” exclusion (ibid.: 96).

On the other hand, the status of ‘a minority with a sense of majority’ raises the expectations of the Palestinian citizens regarding collective rights in terms of culture, language, and a distinct national status. Also, it increases their sensitivity to issues of discrimination and exclusion. Like other “involuntary minorities” (see Ogbu, 1991: 15–16), the Palestinian citizens perceive the discrimination and exclusion that they experience as collective and enduring. In addition, this complex status bears a continuing ‘sense of loss’ as far as their previous status as a majority and their expectations are concerned as compared to the real situation. As a result, the Palestinians in Israel have developed an “opposition identity” and a continuing distrust vis-à-vis the dominant Jewish population.

Ideology and orientation of religious groups

In addition to barriers affecting the creation of a multicultural reality at the level of Jewish-Arab relations, there are factors that prevent the development of multiculturalism as far as internal, Jewish-Jewish relations are concerned. One of the major barriers relates to the ideology and orientation of religious groups. In his detailed analysis on this issue, Dov Schwartz concludes that the various elements that unite the Religious-Zionism in Israel, including the aim to establish a state ruled by *Halakha* (Jewish religious laws), the ideological foundation of this movement, the ideological institutions, and its "Esotericism," all form major barriers to accepting multiculturalism by this movement. This is because these elements are antithetical to multiculturalism, which involves the acceptance and respect of diversity and the legitimacy of narratives of other groups (Schwartz, 2009: 200–201).

A similar barrier is also connected with the *Haredi* ultra-Orthodox ideology. However, here differentiation between the *Ashkenazi-Haredi* and *Mizrahi-Haredi* groups should be made (see Leon, 2010, 2016). The first emphasizes the importance of seclusion and distance from the majority society and rejection of the secular life as a way of protecting its own values, which are perceived as the right and authentic Jewish values. The *Mizrahi Haredim*, on the other hand, seek to emphasize a more integrative orientation and connection to other Jewish sectors "out of a desire to take the initiative in repairing the religious reality and restoring the crown of tradition" (Leon, 2016: 131). In any event, this difference between the *Haredi* groups applies to the internal Jewish-Jewish discourse and has little to do when addressing general issues of diversity and multiculturalism that are connected to non-Jewish minorities in Israel. In this sense, both *Haredi* groups reject the basis of multiculturalism and the liberal-democratic values connected with it (see Rubenstein, 2017: 238).

Anti-multicultural policy

Not only has there been a lack of a multicultural policy in Israel, but various components of the established policy are also directed toward anti-multiculturalism. One of the major issues has to do with the continuing efforts aimed at preserving the dominance of Hebrew and the Zionist narrative. The strong desire to impose Hebrew as both the hegemonic language and cultural identity has prevented the development of diversity and linguistic pluralism. This fact has mainly marginalized and alienated minority groups, including the Palestinian-Arab citizens, the ultra-Orthodox population, and new immigrants, whose mother tongue is not Hebrew.

In her article on “language as a core value of minorities in Israel,” Michal Tannenbaum (2009) focuses on the linguistic policy regarding the indigenous Arab minority and new minority-immigrant groups, the Russians and Ethiopians in particular. She concludes that the linguistic situation in Israel has become more pluralistic and permissive over time, as compared to Zionism’s early days when immigrants were forced to speak Hebrew and were prohibited from using their original language. Yet, formal policies in Israel still focus mainly on the significance of acquiring Hebrew and Jewish tradition and give little chance for genuine multilingual and multicultural discourse.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has deeply affected the formal and semiformal education. Like other countries involved in continuing conflicts, typically defined as “intractable conflicts,” in Israel, too, education has been used as an important tool for ideological and national recruitment (Bar-Tal, 1996). Under this conflict, the school curriculum has been used to create social beliefs and values that together form a national ethos used by nation-states to consolidate the nation and raise its morale while forming a catalyst for the continuation of the conflict (ibid.). In addition, one of the main goals of the Israeli-Hebrew education system is to prepare students for military service, which most of them are supposed to do after completing high school (Ben-Amos and Bet-El, 2003).

It should be noted that some changes have been introduced into the education system in the 1980s in Hebrew schools with the aim of enhancing democratic values and civil society (Resnik, 1999). By and large though, the main content of school curricula has remained ‘particularistic’ and very much loaded with nationalist-religious content (ibid.). This conclusion is based on a comprehensive analysis of curricula in public (nonreligious) Hebrew schools since the establishment of Israel which was conducted by Julia Resnik. After a thorough analysis of the Bible, history, literature, and civics in school curricula, Resnik concludes:

> The picture that emerges from this description is a gloomy one from the standpoint of democracy and the rule of law. The idea of a civil society in the construction of the national subject is mere flotsam in a sea of Jewish religious particularism….
>
> (1999: 507)

The rise of ‘tribalism’

In his speech at the Herzliyya conference on June 6, 2015 (which has been described as the ‘*speech on tribalism*’), Israeli President Rivlin spoke about four sectors who form the ‘basic tribes’ of Israeli society: the secular Jews, the national-religious Jews, the *Haredi* Jews, and the Arabs (Israel, The President’s Office, 2015). President Rivlin highlighted the fact that the first-grade classes today (2015) are composed of about 38% secular students (“state”), around 15% national-religious students (“state religious”), around a quarter Arab students, and close to a quarter *Haredim*. This situation has been termed by President Rivlin as “*a new Israeli order*,” in which there is no clear majority and no clear minorities. President Rivlin emphasized that “the mutual ignorance and lack of common language between these four sectors, that are gradually resemble each other in their size, only increases the tension, the fear, the hostility and the competition between them” (the speech was originally given in Hebrew—translated to English. M.A.) (Israel, The President’s Office. 2015. “The Keynote address of the President in Hertzilya Conference,” June 7, 2015-www.president.gov.il/Pages/TermsOfUse.aspx (Hebrew)).

As a result of the aforementioned barriers, the potential for an umbrella identity based on a shared civility has remained extremely weak (see Sagi, 2009). In this situation, the identities of the different groups in Israel have developed as mutually contradictory. What is more, in most cases, the legitimization of one identity automatically means the delegitimization of the counter-identities (Mautner et al., 1998).

This situation has reinforced sectarian orientation in Israeli society that may be termed as *tribalism*. Each group increasingly concentrates on its own interests and constructs its mobilization strategy and relationships with other groups and the national authorities accordingly. Thus, since the 1980s, we have been witnessing a struggle over sectarian rights rather than a dialog between the different groups. Each group is preoccupied with defending its own territory (ibid.: 69). One manifestation of this is found in the annual Knesset budget debate, in which the various parties lobby for the sectors they represent (ultra-Orthodox, Soviet immigrants, development towns [which are populated mainly by *Mizrahim*], etc.) and show no interest in an all-encompassing social agenda. As Sagi (2016) concludes, the main discourse in Israeli society is that of “rights discourse,” not of “identity discourse.” That is to say, various groups in Israeli society seek to secure their exclusive interest through frequent recourse to the legal system and to arguments for legal language, rather than through a cultural dialogue. Therefore, the Israeli public discourse is mainly monologic, “where each side talks to itself, rather than to the other. Although it assumes a dialogical garb, it casts doubt on the very possibility of dialogue….” (Sagi, 2016: 143).

It should be noted that since the signing of the Oslo Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements, there has been an increasing trend of ‘tribalism’ in the Israeli political culture, with more emphasis on the determination of an Israeli collective identity based on the Jewish-Zionist components at the expense of the democratic component. At the same time, there has been an increasing emphasis on the Western component in the state’s culture, and rejection of any cultural dialogue with the surrounding region.

This situation came to expression in a conference sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliyya, with the participation of some 300 distinguished personalities, all of them Jewish and the vast majority *Ashkenazim*, representing various Israeli elites—the military, academic, business, education, humanities, social sciences, and political—plus representatives from the Diaspora (see Arad, 2001).

The discussions of this conference, which were published in what came to be known as “The Herzliyya Document” (ibid.), certainly merit more detailed examination. Here, I confine myself to the main points related to the earlier analysis. The discussions focused on the crucial question of the best ways to deal with the challenges facing Israel and safeguard its future and its national security. Although different points of view were presented, they all pointed in one major direction: strengthening the Jewish-Zionist-Western ethnocratic structure of Israel at the expense of its democratic-civil-multicultural structure.

The report highlights the need to safeguard the character of Israel as a Jewish-Zionist and democratic state (a state for all its citizens, as the report indicates; p. 41), but there is no mention of any contradiction between the two principles. The participants do not see that such a contradiction exists, and when the different principles are juxtaposed, the ethno-national character of Israel combined with national security gain the upper hand (see Arad, 2001: 11–47). Accordingly, Israel’s security is intimately connected with the Zionist ethos. In this sense, “The security of Israel without the Zionist ethos is a security without Israel” (a statement by Efraim Halevy, reported in Arad, 2001: 42).

The demographic issue received special attention in the conference proceedings. According to the report, the “demographic danger” lies in the “natural increase” in Arab citizens in Israel. A number of measures were suggested for minimizing the Arab population and maximizing the Jewish population. They include preventing any repatriation of Palestinian refugees to Israel, a “voluntary” transfer of the Arab citizens, and “suggesting that the Arab residents of the ‘Little Triangle’ join the Palestinian state” (p. 27). In addition, a number of restrictions on Arabs were suggested (such as a connection between military service and citizenship) in order to drive at least some of them to renounce their Israeli citizenship (p. 358). That is to say, two forms of transfer were suggested: a “physical transfer of citizens” or a “political transfer of citizenship.”

A number of steps to increase the Jewish population were suggested, including enhancing “qualitative” Jewish immigration from Western countries, mainly the United States, the integration of expatriate (Jewish) Israeli citizens by granting them the right to vote for the Knesset members and prime minister, enshrining in law the right of Diaspora representatives to take part in major decisions concerning the Jewish-Zionist character of Israel (and denying this right to the Arab Knesset members) and taking economic and educational measures to encourage (Jewish) fertility (p. 357).

The conference envisioned a clear Western orientation for Israel in terms of social, economic, and cultural relationships. Thus, according to the conference, peace should be aimed first and foremost at strengthening the Jewish-Zionist character of Israel and ensuring its security with nothing to give Israel a bridge to any kind of integration into the Middle East. One suggestion was to “stop talking about peace arrangements” and start talking about “political arrangements.” In the framework of such a peace, economic relationships are important, not economic integration. Of course, “cultural integration” is out of the question. The document emphasizes, “There is no need for us to have a syndrome of ‘embracing the Arabs.’ A cold peace reflecting mutual strategic interests is enough” (Arad, 2001: 47).

In order to implement the recommendations stated by the Herzilyya Document, which are aimed at strengthening Israel’s national security and national cohesiveness of Israel, it was suggested to “secure a Jewish-Zionist strong basis that relies mainly on Jewish-Zionist governments”—that is, governments that are not dependent on Arab parties. Hence, it was suggested that every effort should be made to ensure “governments that are mainly Jewish-Zionist.” “Second-best” would be the formation of a “joint political forum, composed of Jewish-Zionist Knesset members,” to reinforce the vital internal basis of “national security.” In a footnote (no. 50), it was clarified that there is no contradiction between this recommendation and the possibility to include Arab ministers in such governments (Arad, 2001: 362–363).

The “Herzliyya Document” has undoubtedly reflected the nationwide atmosphere among the Jewish majority of antidemocratic and anti-multicultural atmosphere that already started in the late 1990s. This trend was mentioned in a number of studies and nationwide surveys. Based on a detailed survey of the written Hebrew press in Israel on the usage of racist expressions toward the Palestinian citizens in Israel, from the establishment of Israel until the year 2000, the authors conclude that over time racism has become an institutionalized and a comprehensive phenomenon among political leaders, officials, and among the wide public. Through this discourse, the Palestinian citizens have been presented, among other things, as “enemies, subversive, and murderers” (Hertzog et al., 2008).

This trend has become more evident in recent years with the increasing power of the right-wing and religious parties. As a result, a series of bills targeted against Israeli Arabs have been presented in the Knesset (Kremnitzer and Fuchs, 2016: 189). Kremnitzer and Fuchs provide a number of examples, among them,

> the first cluster of bills that demanded a ‘loyalty oath’ to the ‘Jewish and democratic character of the state’ from Israeli citizens at several crossroads of their lives: not only for naturalization, but also for acceptance to the civil service, getting a driver’s license or a passport, etc.

This would further push the Arab citizens out of the national consensus in Israel, since they perceive the Jewishness of the state as a source of discrimination against them (ibid.). At the same vein, Avi Sagi adds that the question of Jewish identity and Jewish nationality of the State of Israel emerges as central in the public discourse and is reflected in a number of attempts by Knesset members from the ruling right-wing parties to promote laws and initiatives seeking to determine the primacy of Israel’s national character (Sagi, 2016: 178).

The trend indicated earlier peaked with the most recent (July 2018) approval of the Knesset of the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, otherwise known as the '*Nationality Law.*' According to the Knesset press release (dated July 19, 2018), the law enshrines in a Basic Law the status of

> Israel as the national home of the Jewish people and states that the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people. It also declares that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, sets Hebrew as its official language, indicates that the state will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of exiles, and formalizes the status of the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays. Furthermore, the law determines that the state views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value, will strive to ensure the safety of the members of the Jewish people in trouble or in captivity due to the fact of their Jewishness or their citizenship, and will act within the Diaspora to strengthen the affinity between the state and members of the Jewish people and to preserve the cultural, historical and religious heritage of the Jewish people among Jews in the Diaspora. The law establishes the legal status of the Hebrew calendar as the official calendar of the state and recognizes Independence Day, days of remembrance, Jewish holidays.

(http://main.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/Pages/press19.07.18.aspx)

In practice, the '*Nationality Law*' provides additional reinforcement for the ethnocentric Jewish-Zionist character of the State of Israel while totally overlooking its democratic character, even at the declarative level. The law disregards completely the existence of the Palestinian citizens of Israel and of other non-Jewish groups. This law annuls the status of Arabic as an official language. Instead, it declares that "the Arabic language has a special status in the state" though it does not define this special status. Not only does the law secure the privileges of the Jewish majority; it also totally ignores the principle of equality for the non-Jewish minorities, even as a statement. Furthermore, in its press release announcing the law, the Knesset noted that the clause referring to Israel as a “Jewish and democratic state” in the spirit of Israel’s Declaration of Independence was removed from the final version of this law that has been formally issued by the Knesset (ibid; see also Yisrael Hayom, “The Nationality Law: The Full Version,” July 24, 2018).

What have been the implications of the 1990s wave of immigration from the FSU for the aforementioned divisions in Israel? How does this background affect Israeli attitudes toward these immigrants? What is the effect of the ethno-national structure of Israel on the identity and adjustment strategy adopted by them? Will immigrants from the FSU assimilate within the bipolar ethnic structure (*Ashkenazim-Mizrahim*) or rather present a challenge to the Zionist project? What has the impact of Russian immigrants been on the collective identity of Israel? Can this influx of Russian immigrants be expected to increase the pluralistic-civil culture in Israel or deepen its tribal ethno-national character?

These questions will be examined in the following chapters, through the analysis of the data derived from the field surveys, the focus groups, and the secondary sources. I begin with a historical background of the immigration and the background of the Jewish community in the FSU.

3 Jewish immigration to Palestine-Israel and the waves of immigration from Russia and the former Soviet Union

A background

By the end of the nineteenth century, Russia was the home of the largest Jewish community in the world. Since the 1880s, many of these Jews migrated to several countries and were among the founders of the most predominant centers of the world Jewry in Palestine/Israel and in the United States (Gitelman, 2001; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006: 21). Between 1881 and 1912, 1,889,000 Russian Jews emigrated, 84% of them to the United States. As such, Russian Jews were over 70% of all Jewish immigrants in America in 1881–1910 (Gitelman, 1995: 11).

It has been argued that the basis for autonomous organizations, created by Jewish settlers in the pre-state period, were laid by the second wave of Jewish immigration from Russia to Palestine (see Shilu, 1997: 117). These organizations included the nucleus of the socialist labor parties (Ahdut Ha'avodah in 1919, Mapai in 1930, and the Labor party in 1969), labor associations (the Histadrut), collective settlements (such as the kibbutz), and the first stages of the Hebrew press and military organizations (Goldscheider and Zuckerman, 1984; Ratzabi, 1993: 299). In addition, the social thought brought by this wave became the cornerstone of the Zionist ideology among the Jewish settlers (Shilu, 1997).

Since the establishment of Israel and until 2011, over three million immigrants came to Israel. Among them, the largest group, or 39.3%, were from the former Soviet Union (FSU), 32.4% were of European-American origin, and 28.3% were of Asian-African origin (based on the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012, publ. no.

1483). Moreover, ex-Soviet immigrants are most distinct, since they came from various republics of a single major country, have a shared language and culture, and for most of them, also a shared history.

What has been the status of Jews in Russia and the FSU? What has been the formal policy regarding this community and its relationships with the surrounding majority and other minorities in the Russian empire? What are the main factors that affected the formation of ethnic, religious, and national identity of these Jews over time? What are the characteristics of the various waves of Jewish immigrants from Russia and the FSU? How unique is the immigration wave of the 1990s? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions by providing a historical background and by analyzing the main changes within the Jewish community in the FSU over time.

A background of Jews in Russia and the FSU

In the Soviet Union, the Jews were defined as a nationality, one among 110 legally recognized as such (Gitelman, 1995: 23). Nationality in the Soviet Union was not determined by language, territory, or subjective preference, but by the national origin of one's parents (ibid.). Jews constituted the sixteenth-largest nationality (Hirszowicz, 1991: 274).

According to the Soviet census of 1989, the Jewish population of the USSR numbered 1,480,000, based on the aforementioned formal Soviet definition of a Jew as the child of two Jewish parents. The number of non-Jews according to *Halakha* (Jewish religious law) who were nevertheless eligible to come to Israel under the Law of Return ("*aliya* eligibles") was estimated at 888,000 (making a total of 2,368,000 prospective immigrants under the Law of Return; see the reports of the Institute for Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, cited in Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1999: 11). In 1998, there were 1,046,000 *aliya* eligibles in the FSU: 540,000 '*halakhic*' Jews and 506,000 non-Jews (ibid.). By 2010, only about 327,000 Jews remained in the FSU, and most of them (205,000) were in the Russian Federation (Tolts, 2016: 35). Thus, the pool of potential immigrants to Israel has decreased dramatically since 1989, due to emigration and negative natural increase.

Official policy toward Jews in the Soviet Union

The official policy toward Jews in the Soviet Union changed substantially during the decades of the country's existence, starting with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. At the outset, the new regime followed a complex policy toward the Jews. On the one hand, Jewish religious identity and institutions were suppressed. On the other hand, the regime encouraged secular Jewish culture, including support for Yiddish schools, theaters, and literature (Jacobs, 1981: 3).

From the 1930s on, Soviet-Jewish policy was directed toward assimilation. It was one example of the policy toward groups that were classified as extraterritorial minorities—that is, minorities that had lost their national attributes (the most conspicuous were the Germans and the Jews; see Pinkus, 1991). At the same time, Soviet Jews were permitted to preserve some aspects of their culture until their "natural assimilation" could be completed. The autonomous cultural institutions included various forms of Yiddish culture (Chernin, 1995: 234). From the early 1930s on, only Jewish culture in Yiddish had a legal right to exist. Publications in Hebrew were considered to be Zionist propaganda and were outlawed (Kelner, 1991: 23).

Thus, the Jews of the Soviet Union came to be described as the "Jews of silence." They were defined by their Jewish identity, but this definition was only formal, since they were not permitted to develop their own social and cultural institutions (Markowitz, 1995).

The Jewish community in the Soviet Union experienced several changes in its identity and national-religious orientation. Gitelman (1988) notes several events that played a major role in the formation of Soviet-Jewish identity in the twentieth century. After the Bolshevik revolution, the Jewish community made a conspicuous transition from a strong Jewish cultural-religious identity to one deeply acculturated in Russian culture and society.

Later, however, the collective memory of the Holocaust reinforced the perception of the uniqueness of Jewish identity and of the shared destiny of the Jewish people. Immediately after the Second World War, there was a revival in religious activity among Soviet Jews, reflected in the increasing activity of synagogues and Jewish community institutions, initially treated with relative apathy by the authorities (Ro'I, 1995). This attitude, however, was short lived; by the early 1950s, the pre-war assimilation process had resumed (ibid.).

The establishment of Israel offered additional substance to their Jewish identity. Israel's international activity on behalf of the Soviet Jews (direct or indirect through lobbying in Western countries) strengthened Jewish consciousness among Soviet Jews (Pinkus, 1984a).

The reform that began in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s also inspired a revival of Jewish life, including cultural organizations, theaters, musical ensembles, and periodicals (Kelner, 1991). In 1990, there were around 55 Jewish periodicals and newspapers in the Soviet Union in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian. This included official periodicals (such as *Birobidzhaner Stern and Sovietish Heymland*) and underground publications (such as the *Leningradsky evreisky almanakh*) (Beizer, 1990, cited by Kelner, 1991: 23).

A survey of the Jewish press in the Soviet Union at the start of the 1990s found that the Jewish newspapers and magazines had systematically supported the reforms because they were in keeping with their own interest and the Zionist cause. One of the main features of this press was support for Zionism and full understanding and support for emigration to Israel (Kelner, 1991: 29). But the Jewish revival in the waning years of the Soviet Union came too late to prevent a deep acculturation process, as reflected in various domains. Intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews peaked in the 1970s and the 1980s. In 1978, the intermarriage rate was 43% among Jewish women and 58.3% among Jewish men (ibid.: 32). This increased to 62.8% and 73.2% (respectively) in 1988. In the latter year, of every 100 marriages in which one partner was Jewish, there were 81 intermarriages and only 19 Jewish-Jewish marriages (Altshuler, 1992: 32). Kupovetsky (2000: 135) reports that, despite the strengthening of Jewish identification in the FSU in the 1990s, official statistics show that the rate of mixed marriages there was 80–90%.

Over time, the acculturation process among Soviet Jews has become assimilation, as reflected in minimizing their link to Jewishness and a deep sentimental connection to the Russian language and culture (Remennick, 2007). At the same time, this assimilation led to alienation from the Jewish national culture and tradition (Pinkus, 1984b: 15).

Various studies have found that the Soviet-Jewish community was among the most assimilation-oriented of all minorities in the USSR. In the 1979 census, for example, only 14.24% of Soviet Jews claimed a Jewish language (mainly Yiddish) as their mother tongue;

an additional 5.35% claimed one as their second language. The same census revealed that 97.03% of Soviet Jews knew Russian, “making them the most Russified minority in the USSR” (Hirszowicz, 1991: 275). The passive state of Yiddish was also reflected in its feeble use in literature. In the period 1981–1986 (when there were 1,800,000 Jews in the Soviet Union), only 41 books were published in Yiddish, with a total print run of 61,000; by comparison, the Baskirs, whose population was almost the same (1,751,000), published 798 books in their national language, with a total print run of 6,991,400 (ibid.: 281).

The deep acculturation of Soviet Jews was the outcome of the long-standing official policy aimed at strengthening the national-Russian identity and co-opting the elites of other national groups, abetted by the active participation of the Jewish elite itself (see Altshuler, 1992). The Soviet-Jewish intelligentsia, based mainly in the large cities of Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, was a success story in terms of economic and social achievements (Friedgut, 1980, 2000). For the most part, its Jewish identity was diffuse and weak (ibid.). A 1992–1993 study of the meaning of being Jewish for the Jewish population of three Russian cities concluded that “Judaism plays a very small role” in the respondents’ concept of Jewishness. It also found that the Jews’ culture and consciousness were largely Russian (Chervyakov et al., 1997: 280). The researchers added that “at present, not more than 6 percent of adult Jews can be called, with a reasonable degree of certainty, believers in the Jewish faith” (ibid.: 295). Interestingly enough, this was the picture among Russian Jews “at a time when ethnic consciousness is increasing among the many nationalities of the Russian Federation and religions seem to be reviving institutionally and gaining new adherents” (ibid.: 281). The researchers conclude:

> to the extent that religious rituals are observed, they are manifestations of ‘symbolic ethnicity.’ Many do not ‘feel’ Jewish because their culture and consciousness are largely Russian. Nevertheless, they are interested in learning more about Jewish traditions and culture. A Jewish ‘civil religion’ may emerge in Russia. Jewish identities have varied over space and time, and a uniquely Russian Jewish identity may evolve in the coming years.
>
> (Chervyakov et al., 1997: 280)

These results may be better understood against the background of the unique meaning of Jewish identity in the FSU, which is detached from religion (Gitelman, 1995: 24). According to Gitelman,

> Jewish identity was and is understood differently in the FSU from the way it is understood in most other places: it was and still is official- and state-determined; it has nothing to do with religion; it is defined very much by society and by the individual.
>
> (ibid.)

Because Soviet Jews lacked factual knowledge and intellectual insight into Jewishness, many Soviet Jews had "only dim emotional memories of their Jewish identity, which [was] sometimes maintained chiefly because of external pressures" (Friedgut, 1980: 7).

It should be noted that the Jewish communities in the Central Asian republics were always much more committed to Jewish religion and tradition than those in the European republics (Gitelman, 1988). For the Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus, like their Muslim and Christian neighbors, life in a traditional atmosphere facilitated the maintenance of theological values and traditions (ibid.: 88).

Starting in the late 1980s, however, FSU Jews experienced two parallel processes: mass emigration to Israel and the West, and adjustment and Jewish revival in their home countries (Rivkina, 2000: 221). The second trend is reflected, among other things, by the establishment of national Jewish organizations, notably the Russian Jewish Congress, the Federation of Jewish Organizations in Russia (the *Va'ad*), and various religious organizations (ibid.). At the same time, Jews are eagerly and gradually finding their way into senior positions in the various levels of public life and government. Unlike the Soviet period, when Jews were found mainly in academic, scientific, and cultural life, since the early 1990s they have been penetrating politics and business, too (Rivkina, 2000: 224).

Emigration by Russian/Soviet/FSU Jews

The first waves to Palestine

In 1881, the Jewish community in Russia was subjected to waves of pogroms, which first erupted in Yelizavetgrad in the Ukraine. Supported by Jewish organizations (such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, based in France), thousands of Russian Jews emigrated to Western Europe and the United States (see Laskov, 1989: 351–352).

The Alliance refused to see Palestine as a possible destination since it was not convinced that Jews who moved there would be able to support themselves (ibid.). Nevertheless, a sizable number of Russian Jews (estimated at 25,000), mostly those who could not go elsewhere, moved to Palestine, in a disorganized way, without support, and mostly without any ideological motivation (Goldscheider, 1992: 6). This wave doubled the size of the Jewish community that existed in 1880 (ibid.).

Laskov notes that, after the pogroms, some Jewish youths in Russia concluded that there was no hope for any change or equality in the circumstances that prevailed there. This inclined them toward the revolutionary parties, a proclivity that took them away from Judaism. This group served as a major focus of the search for a challenging new life in Palestine and was the core of the second and the third waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine (Laskov, 1989: 354–355).

The same increasing tendency to move to Palestine could be found among religiously observant groups in Russia after the pogroms. In addition to those who advocated immigration to Palestine, there was a rival group that supported the movement to the United States. This group believed that if as many as 60,000 Jews moved there and concentrated in one area, there was a good possibility of creating a Jewish state there (ibid.: 357–358, based on article by Ludwik Zamenhof, who saw that as an alternative to the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine; there was also a movement named *Am Olam* that promoted Jewish colonies in the United States).

Tzur (1997: 282) estimates that some 35,000 immigrants came to Palestine in the second wave of immigration between 1904 and 1914. It included about 5,000 pioneers who were inflamed ideologically and carried with them the idea of the “Zionist revolution.” They came as individuals, without families, because they sought a drastic change in their lives. It was during this decade that the foundations of Jewish settlement in Palestine were laid.

The first group came in 1903–1905, in the wake of the political instability in Russia, where political parties and movements, including the Zionist movement, proliferated (ibid.). Increasing numbers of young Jewish adults combined the Russian revolutionary idea with the Zionist dream (Tzur, 1997: 282).

The second group of immigrants came after the failure of the Russian revolution of 1905 and the retreat of many parties and movements. Many members of this wave (such as Alexander Zeid, Aaron David Gordon, Berl Katznelson, and others) became symbols of the Jewish settlements in Palestine (ibid.: 283). They affected the settlers' ideology, ethos, and way of life.

The local Palestinian population opposed the immigration of Russian Jews. Initially this reaction was disorganized, led by peasants who had been dispossessed of their land and as a reaction to the Jewish campaign for "Hebrew labor" (Yassin, 1981: 28). As early as 1891, Arab leaders organized a public demonstration against Jewish immigration and land purchases in Palestine (Al-Kiali, 1970).

The opposition to Jewish immigration gained momentum in the early years of the twentieth century, when Arab leaders exerted pressure on the Ottoman government to ban it. The protest was joined by the Arab press, political groups, and intellectuals, who composed the elite of the Palestinian community (Yassin, 1981). The Arabs' campaign was motivated chiefly by their fear that the Zionists intended to expand Jewish settlement in Palestine, alter its sociodemographic structure and compete for economic resources (Al-Kiali, 1970).

The resistance to Jewish immigration intensified after the First World War and the establishment of the British Mandate. The Balfour Declaration of November 1917—issued in the name of the British government, which viewed "with favor" the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish People in Palestine and promised to facilitate its achievement—set off demonstrations and strikes by Palestinian Arabs and clashes with Jewish settlers (see Porath, 1977; Al-Hut, 1979).

Thus, we see that although the first waves of Jewish immigration from Russia to Palestine were basically motivated by "push factors," with a small group who were ideologically inflamed, they eventually formed the organizational basis that served as the framework for the implementation of the Zionist project in Palestine and the building of a Jewish national home. In addition, the political value system adopted by the elite of these waves served as a framework for the creation of the ethno-class system after the establishment of Israel (as discussed in the previous chapter).

At the end of the Mandatory period, in 1947–1948, Palestine had a population of about two million—two-thirds Arabs and one-third

Jews (see Gilbar, 1987: 43, 56). Of the 630,000 Jews, 110,000 were Russian speakers; that is, one out of every six Jews was of Russian origin. However, they behaved as a "Jewish," rather than a "Russian," group. Consequently, they did not establish "Russian" cultural organizations and there was no Russian-language press (Ben-Ya'cov, 1998a: 2).

Immigration after the establishment of Israel

The establishment of Israel and the swapping of minority-majority status by Palestinian Arabs and Jews in the wake of the 1948 Israel-Arab war gave the Zionist project and its ultimate goal, the "ingathering of the exiles," an added impetus. The declaration in the Proclamation of Independence that Israel opened its gates to Jewish immigration (*aliya*) symbolizes the major importance this issue has for Israeli nation-building (Hacohen, 1998: 57). For this purpose, Israel enacted the Law of Return (*hoq ha-shvut*) in 1950. This is one of the most important laws on the books, since it is intimately bound up with the Jewish-Zionist character of Israel and was enacted in order to secure and further reinforce this character.

It is an ethnocentric law that applies exclusively to immigrants of Jewish origin. It allows every Jew, "except for one who acts against the Jewish people or is liable to endanger public health and state security," to settle in Israel and automatically acquire Israeli citizenship (Horowitz, 1996; Shuval, 1998).

The Law of Return was amended in 1970 because of the lack of clarity about the definition of "Who is a Jew" in the Population Registry. This vagueness had led to a number of court cases and one coalition crisis during the 1950s and another in the late 1960s (Weiss, 2001). The amendment expanded the Law of Return and stipulated in paragraph 4a that the right of return applied also to the non-Jewish child, grandchild, or spouse of a Jew, as well as to the children's and grandchildren's spouses. In this way, the right of return and citizenship was extended automatically to many who were not Jewish according to *Halakha* (Jewish religious law) or some other criterion (ibid.). Decisions about eligibility under the law are usually based on documentary evidence or testimony (DellaPergola, 1998: 53).

Relying on this law, all Israeli governments have actively promoted the value and possibility of immigration to Israel throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Consequently, "such activity has become a foreign policy value rather than just another foreign policy objective" (Jones, 1996: 10).

This value system extends to the definition of the relationship between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. The dominant approach holds that the establishment of the State of Israel created a new bipolar situation: a sovereign Jewish polity in Israel and Jewish communities in the Diaspora (Goldscheider and Zuckerman, 1984; Horowitz, 1996). Immigration to Israel (making *aliya*) is a major and indispensable component of being a Zionist. Arye Dulzin, treasurer and later chairman of the Jewish Agency executive in the 1970s, defined the difference between a Jew and a Zionist as follows:

> "What is Zionist?" That is, what are the obligations and the practical commandments which the Jew, as a Zionist, should be ready to assume, of his own free will, in addition to the three commandments to which most Jews in the world are ready to subscribe: love for Israel, concern over Israel's fate, and financial contributions for Israel. Among the additional commandments I see two whose performance is a test for anyone who calls himself Zionist: the obligation of *aliya* and the obligation of giving his children a Jewish and a Zionist upbringing. Without assumption of these obligations, being a Zionist is merely so much lip service.
>
> (Dulzin, 1975: 11)

Later, however, Dulzin softens his definition of a Zionist to include those who have at least one family member "who makes *aliya*" (ibid.).

Immigration and the proportion of Jews in Israel as compared to the world

Immigration has been the main source of demographic growth among the Jewish population in Palestine and after in Israel. Since the establishment of Israel, nearly 3.2 million immigrants came to Israel (between 1948 and 2016) (CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2016: 36). Among the immigration flow to Israel, two major waves have been of crucial importance and are usually defined as "mass immigration." The first was right after the establishment of Israel, 1948–1951, in which nearly 687,000 immigrants came and doubled the Jewish population in Israel. This wave was almost equally divided as far as ethnic origin of immigrants. Among the immigrants of European/American origin who came from Eastern Europe, two-thirds of them came from Poland and Romania, and formed the core of these communities in Israel. Among the immigrants of *Mizrahi* origin, the vast majority came from Asia; over 52% came from Iraq, and 44% came from Yemen, Iran, and Turkey, also forming the core of these communities in Israel (see CBS, Special Report, June 2012). After the mass immigration of the early 1950s, the stream of Jewish immigrants to Israel continued with ups and downs until the early 1960s, bringing to Israel about half a million immigrants; of them, 230,000 came within three years, between 1961 and 1964, mainly from North Africa, with the vast majority from Morocco, constituting the hard core of the North African community from Arab countries (ibid). Thus, the first mass wave of Jewish immigration to Israel spread between the early 1950s and early 1960s and brought over one million immigrants, almost equally divided between *Mizrahi* immigrants (from Arab-Islamic countries) and *Ashkenazi* immigrants (mainly from Eastern Europe).

Avi Picard (2013) argued that right after the mass immigration of the early 1950s, there was a serious discussion among policy makers in Israel and representatives of the Jewish Agency regarding the increasing demand from Jews of North Africa, mainly from Morocco, to immigrate to Israel. Eventually, Israeli authorities decided to slow down the immigration stream of North African Jews. As a matter of fact, this decision was based on the orientation and needs of the *Ashkenazi* establishment in Israel, rather than the needs and the desire of the Jewish communities of North Africa. That is to say, there was a strategic decision among policy makers in Israel to return to the traditional Zionist "selective immigration" policy which characterized the Zionist project in the pre-state period. During that period, about two-thirds of the candidates among Jews from North Africa were rejected because of the selectivity measures (Picard, 2013: 355). One of the major reasons for this strategic decision was the "demographic fear" of the dominant *Ashkenazi* elite in Israel of a situation in which Jews from Islamic countries, Morocco in particular, might become the majority among the Jewish population in Israel (ibid: 354).

The second wave of immigrants to Israel considered a "mass immigration" came in the 1990s, mainly from the FSU, and also brought nearly one million immigrants (see Figure 3.1).

With the establishment of Israel in 1948, there were 11.5 million Jews throughout the world; of them, only 650,000, or 6%, lived in Israel. There has been a continuing increase in the absolute number and percentage of Jews who moved to Israel over time (Figure 3.2). However, over half of the world Jewry still lives abroad; in 2013, there were 14.2 million Jews in the world, among whom 8.1 million (or 56.4%) lived outside of Israel—with the largest number living in the United States (5.7 million, or 40%) (see CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 2014: 115).

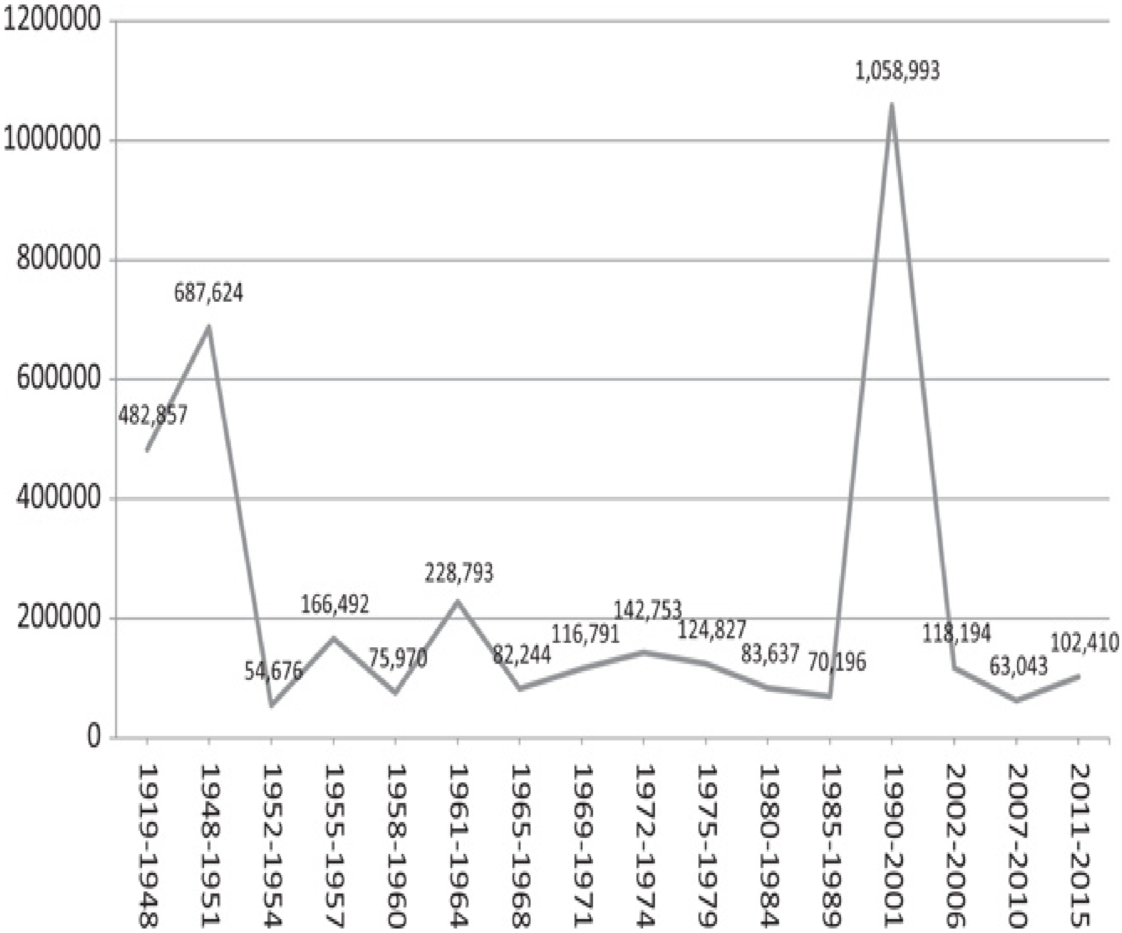


Figure 3.1 Jewish Migration to Palestine/Israel by Periods: 1919–2015.

Source: Based on the Central Bureau of Statistics. 2016. Statistical Abstract of Israel (Shnaton). "Olim according to period of immigration and continent of birth," Table 4 (Chapter 2).

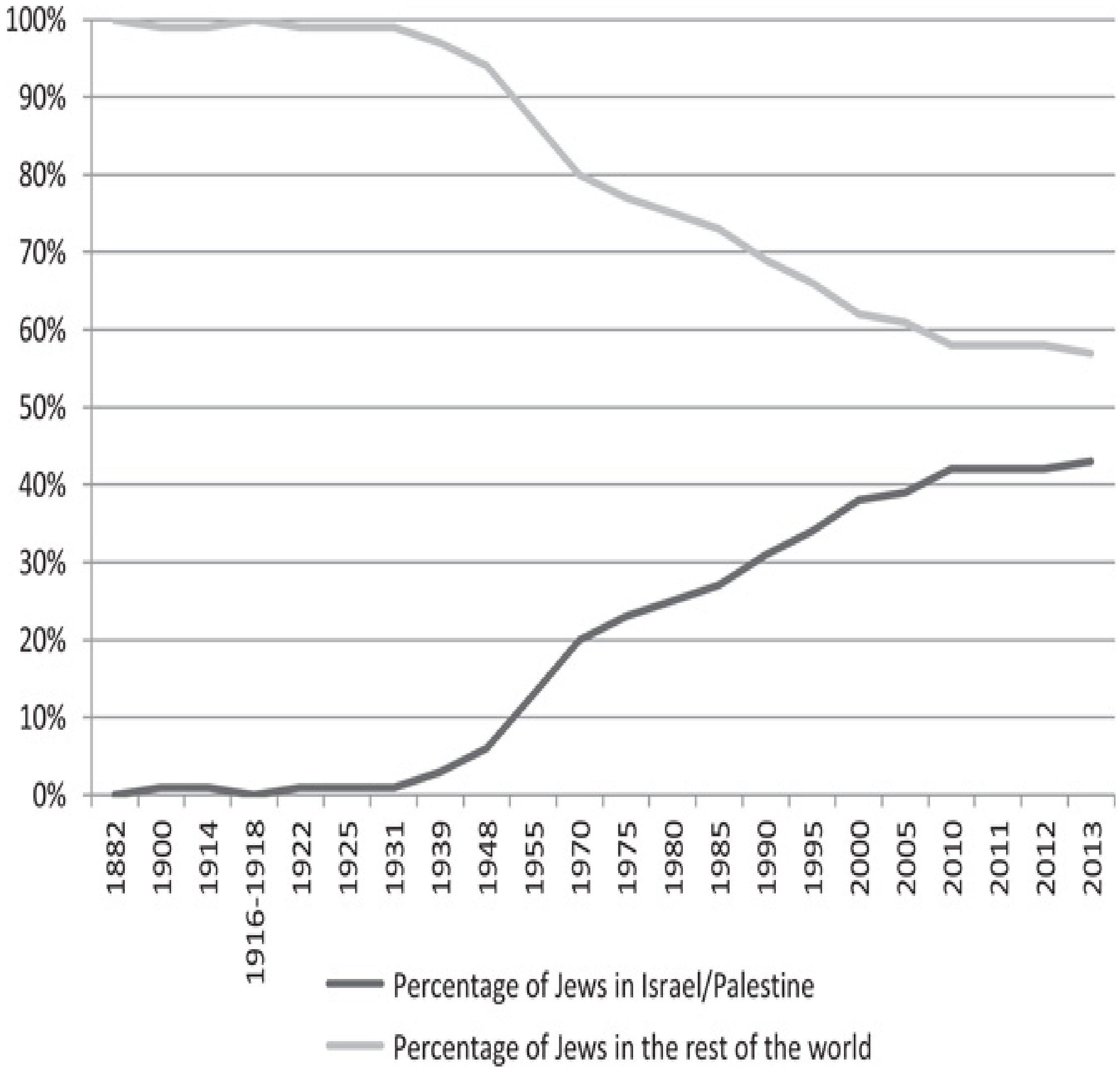


Figure 3.2 Percentage of Jews in Palestine/Israel and the Rest of the World over Time.

Source: Based on the Central Bureau of Statistics. 2017. Jewish population in the world and in Israel, Table, 2.11 (published September 6, 2017).

Immigration and ethnic divisions

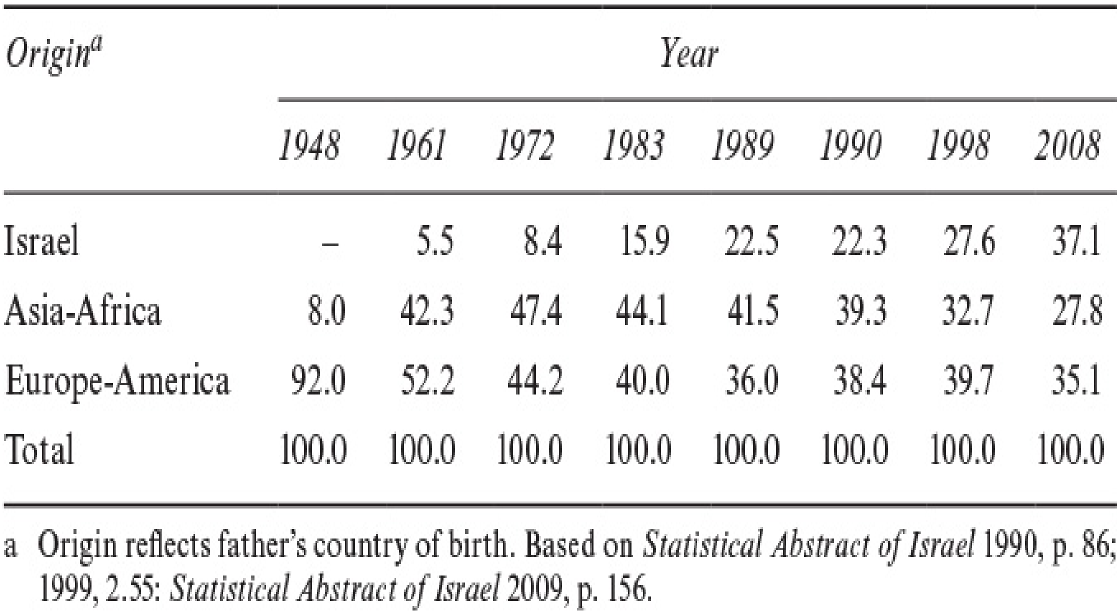
When Israel was established, most of the Jewish population was of European (*Ashkenazi*) Western origin (92%); only 8% was of Asian-African (*Mizrahi*) or Middle Eastern origin (Schmelz et al., 1991). This was because most of the pre-1948 Jewish immigration to Palestine originated from Eastern and Central Europe.

Between 1919 and 1948, 61.3% of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine came from Eastern Europe and the USSR, 24.1% from Central and Western Europe and America, 4.2% from the Balkans, and only 10.4% from Asia and Africa (Bachi, 1966, col. 669, cited by Kleinberger, 1969: 17). This picture changed after the establishment of Israel, thanks to the mass immigration of Jews from

Islamic and Arab countries in the 1950s (Goldscheider, 1992). By the mid-1970s, their higher rate of natural increase had expedited the *Mizrahim* to counterbalance the *Ashkenazim* (Schmelz et al., 1991). Before the 1990s influx from the FSU, 41.5% of the Jewish population in Israel was of *Mizrahi* origin and 36% of *Ashkenazi* origin. In the aftermath of this immigration, the ethnic composition has changed radically. By 2008, only 27.8% of the Jewish population in Israel was of *Mizrahi* origin, with 35.1% of *Ashkenazi* origin, and the largest group, 37.1%, was Israeli born (Table 3.1).

However, this division is concomitant with the official classification of ethnicity in Israel, where Russian immigrants from European republics have been classified as *Ashkenazim*, whereas those from the Asian republics have been added to *Mizrahim* of Asian-African origin. This formal division I will discuss further on; in what follows, I give a background of the main waves since the 1970s from the FSU and other major countries, including that of the Ethiopian immigration.

Table 3.1 Jewish Population of Israel by Origin, 1948–2008



Origin[a]	*Year*							
	1948	*1961*	*1972*	*1983*	*1989*	*1990*	*1998*	*2008*
Israel	–	5.5	8.4	15.9	22.5	22.3	27.6	37.1
Asia-Africa	8.0	42.3	47.4	44.1	41.5	39.3	32.7	27.8
Europe-America	92.0	52.2	44.2	40.0	36.0	38.4	39.7	35.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

a Origin reflects father's country of birth. Based on *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 1990, p. 86; 1999, 2.55: *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 2009, p. 156.

Waves of immigrants from the Soviet Union

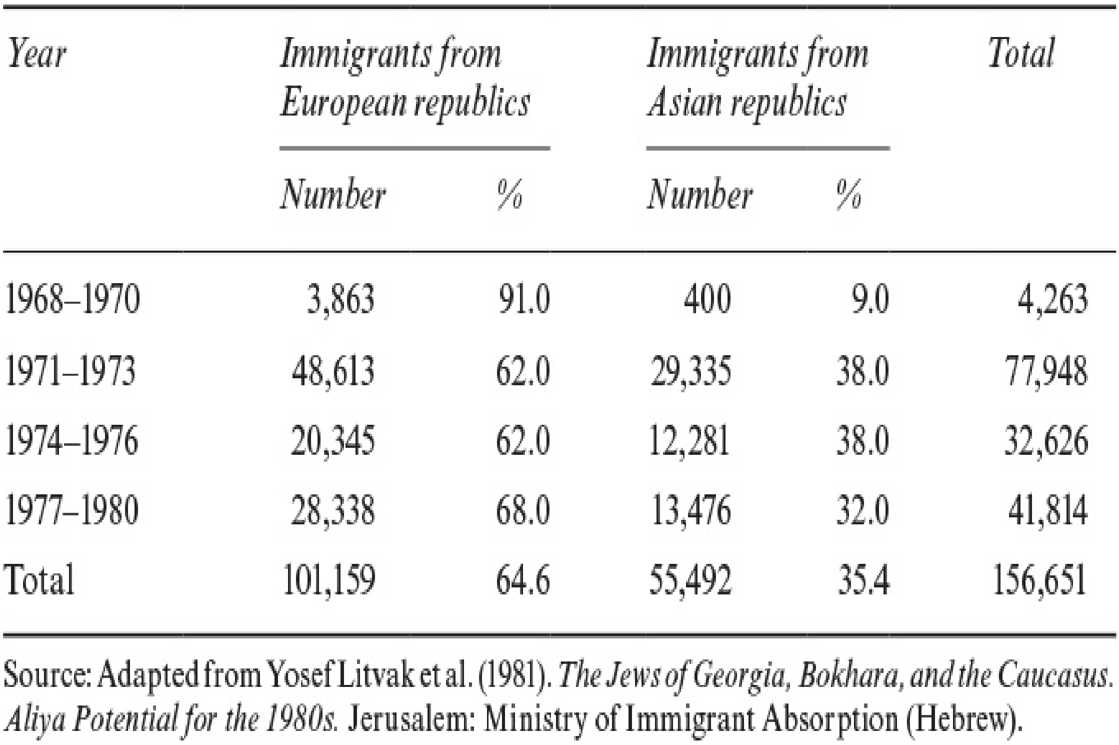
The 1970s wave

Students of Soviet-Jewish emigration distinguish three post-1948 waves: after the 1967 war (more specifically in 1969–1974)—hereafter the 1970s wave; between 1975 and 1989, mainly to the United States; and since 1989—hereafter the 1990s wave—mainly to Israel (see Gitelman, 1995: 16; Lissak, 1995: 4). About one-third of the third wave went to the United States or Western European countries (DellaPergola, 1998: 51). In this sense, the 1967 War was a catalyst that raised the Jewish national consciousness among Soviet Jews and spurred many of them to question their status in the Soviet system. Also, the stunning Israeli victory in this war formed a source of a national Jewish identity pride among Soviet Jewry. This was one of the major “pull factors” of Soviet Jews immigration to Israel (Gitelman, 1988: 276; see also Shuval et al., 1975).

The 1970s wave brought 156,651 immigrants from the Soviet Union to Israel. An analysis of its trends and composition reveals some interesting facts. First, more than 50% of these immigrants came during the three years before the 1973 Israel-Arab war. Right after the war, there was a drastic drop in the number of immigrants, down almost to zero in 1980. Second, more than one-third of these immigrants came from the Caucasian and Asian republics; during the early 1970s, they accounted for nearly 40% of the total.

The Jews from the Caucasian and Asian republics are classified as *Mizrahim*; those from the European republics are *Ashkenazim* (see Litvak et al., 1981). The former are traditional communities who feel a strong bond to Jewish religious observance and values and a strong pull to Israel (ibid.) (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 The 1970s Immigrants from the Soviet Union to Israel by Republic of Origin



Year	*Immigrants from European republics*		*Immigrants from Asian republics*		*Total*
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*	
1968–1970	3,863	91.0	400	9.0	4,263
1971–1973	48,613	62.0	29,335	38.0	77,948
1974–1976	20,345	62.0	12,281	38.0	32,626
1977–1980	28,338	68.0	13,476	32.0	41,814
Total	101,159	64.6	55,492	35.4	156,651

Source: Adapted from Yosef Litvak et al. (1981). *The Jews of Georgia, Bokhara, and the Caucasus. Aliya Potential for the 1980s.* Jerusalem: Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (Hebrew).

Ideology has been viewed as one of the main reasons for the 1970s wave from the Soviet Union to Israel (see Lissak, 1995). Even among those immigrants, however, there were internal differences; a considerable number came because of pragmatic rather than ideological reasons. Therefore, the 1970s wave dried up almost completely after the 1973 war. Israeli officials were deeply disturbed by this fact. By 1977, more than 50% of Soviet Jews chose not to go to Israel, and in the 1980s, more than two-thirds "dropped out" at the Vienna transit point and immigrated to North America, Australia, and West Europe (ibid.).

The dramatic decrease in the number of Soviet Jews to Israel may be because Israel was "licking its wounds" (Lissak, 1995: 4). In addition, Israel's economic and security difficulties after the 1973 war and the worsening of the moral and political climate in Israel played a major role in Soviet Jews' preference of North America over Israel as a destination (Gitelman, 1977).

Pinkus (1984b: 26) notes that there was a transition among the Soviet Jewry from *aliya* (the ideological Zionist term for Jewish immigration to Israel) to typical immigration in the years 1973–1974. This symbolized the transition from a "Jewish immigrant" with a strong ideological consciousness to a "regular immigrant" orientation. Gitelman (1995) reports that, to judge on the basis of four representative surveys that he conducted among Soviet immigrants in Israel over two decades starting in 1972, the ideological-Zionist motive decreased from central in the early 1970s to marginal in the 1990s (ibid.).

As a result, after 1973 most Soviet-Jewish emigrants went to the United States—66,252 between 1973 and 1979 (Gilios, 1981: 31). Those who moved to the United States were strongly motivated by expectations of better economic and social opportunities. For them, Israel was an "endangered land" because of continuing wars and economic risks (Jacobs, 1981: 8).

The period from the mid-1970s to the early-1980s also witnessed an increasing rate of "dropouts"—Jews who left the Soviet Union on Israeli visas but proceeded to other destinations (mainly the United States) instead of Israel. Pinkus reports that while the dropout rate was only 2.1% in 1968–1973, it increased to 23.1% in 1974–1975, to 59.7% in 1976–1979, and to 70.6% in 1980–1982 (1984b: 23).

Ethiopia: a new reservoir of immigrants

With hopes for large-scale immigration from the Soviet Union and Western countries seemingly unrealistic, the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency sought an alternative in Africa. The situation recalled to some extent that of the early 1950s, when Israel and the Zionist organizations encouraged Oriental immigration after the *Ashkenazi* reservoir had been depleted. The Jews of Ethiopia, who had been an almost-forgotten community of dubious Jewish origin, became a main target for immigration agencies (see Chapter 2).

Government and Jewish Agency emissaries were dispatched to Ethiopia and other countries to prepare a mass *aliya* (Herzog, 1998). Some 20,000 Ethiopians immigrated to Israel during the 1980s, including nearly 8,000 in the secret Operation Moses. Official efforts to bring Ethiopian immigrants continued in the early 1990s. They culminated in Operation Solomon, which airlifted more than 14,000 Jews to Israel in one weekend in 1991. Since 1992 and until the end of the 1990s, the number of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel decreased, whereby every year only between 1,000 and 3,000 came to Israel. Between the years 2000 and 2009, the number of Ethiopian immigrants was 28,429. Altogether, between 1984 and 2013, the number of Ethiopian immigrants who came to Israel was 87,793. This number continued to decrease and in 2015, only 91 Ethiopian immigrants came (CBS, 2017, The Ethiopian Population in Israel—A press leaflet on the occasion of the Ethiopian holiday—“Seged,” November 28, 2017). By the end of 2016, the number of Ethiopians in Israel was 144,100; of them 85,500 were born in Ethiopia and 58,600 were Israeli born (ibid.) (see Figure 3.3).

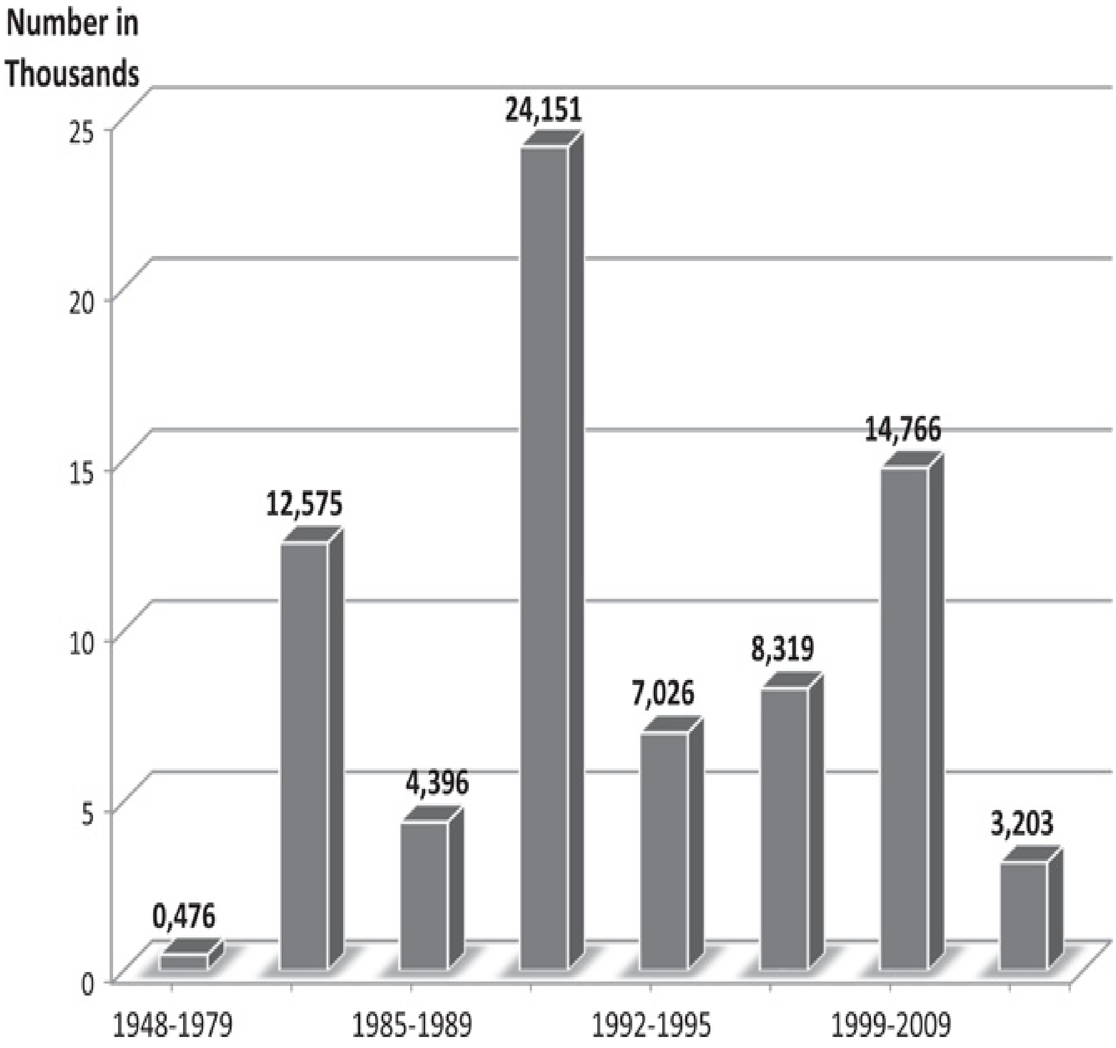


Figure 3.3 Trends in Ethiopian Immigration to Israel: 1948–2013.

Source: Based on Central Bureau of Statistics 2000. Immigration to Israel 1998. Publication No. 1132, pp. 40–41. Jerusalem; Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel. 2014. Table 1. Immigration of Ethiopia, by period of immigration, sex, and age at immigration time, 1984–2013.

Ethiopian immigration was vital to Israel because it filled a number of functions. The immigrants were relatively easy to manipulate and direct according to the authorities' perception of "national needs" (Halper, 1985). They occupied the bottom rungs in the Israel stratification system as manual workers in services, agriculture, and other blue-collar jobs (Ellenbogen-Frankowitz and Levy, 1997; Schwarzwald and Tor-Kaspa, 1997). No less important, the Ethiopians accepted, at least at the beginning, the "socialization" and "re-education" methods imposed on them (Weinstein, 1985). They were given Hebrew first names, new birthdates, and Western clothing. They were pressed to undergo token conversion and assimilate into the religious Jewish community (Halper, 1985: 126). Thus, an entirely new identity and appearance were imposed on them (ibid.).

But the Ethiopians could not satisfy the establishment's desire for "quality" immigration. They came from a traditional African society, with a cultural background that has been described as "backward" and even "primitive." As a result, many veteran Israelis developed a negative stereotype of Ethiopians and relate to them as "outsiders" (Goldberg and Kirschenbaum, 1989: 53). The Ethiopians' dark skin, too, exacerbates their integration difficulties (Weinstein, 1985). In addition to stigmatization because of racial background, their 'Jewishness' has also been widely questioned, in particular by the ultra-Orthodox groups (Mizrachi and Zawdu, 2012: 439).

Aspirations for *aliya* from the West

With the radical slowdown of immigration from the Soviet Union and the continuing decrease in the fertility rate among Israeli Jews, many voices began to be raised in the late 1980s, calling attention to the demographic situation. From the perspective of the dominant Zionist-*Ashkenazi*-secular elite, there were two parallel demographic trends of concern: the increasing percentage of Palestinians both in Israel and in the territories and the ethno-religious balance in the Jewish sector, where *Mizrahim* have become the majority, and especially in light of the increasing power of religious groups (mainly Shas) among the *Mizrahim*.

On the Jewish-Arab level, the situation was described a "demographic danger," as discussed in Chapter 2 (see Soffer, 1988, 2016). The fear was that the Jews would lose their majority status, which is one of the bases of the Jewish-Zionist state. Geographer Arnon Soffer, one of the loudest voices on this issue, used every available means to express his ideas, including a policy paper entitled "On the Demographic and Geographic Situation in Eretz Yisrael: The end of the Zionist Vision?" (Soffer, 1988).

One of the main elements of Soffer's demographic projection was that the "expected mass Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union is not coming." In order to prevent the "catastrophe" of the "demographic danger," the solution should be "maximum security and minimum Arabs" (ibid.: 36). Hence, in addition to considering ways to minimize the Arab population in Israel, including "voluntary transfer," Soffer also suggested an Israeli withdrawal from large parts of the occupied Palestinian territories (Soffer, 1988: 37).

The first Palestinian *Intifada*, which began in 1987, merely increased the confusion and sense of insecurity within the Jewish society in Israel. A survey conducted by the Guttman Institute (March 1990) found that 58% of the Jewish population reported that their fears had increased since the start of the *Intifada* (Katz et al., 1991).

Against this background, the expectations that mass immigration from the USSR could alleviate these fears increased. As indicated in Chapter 2, immigration had always been perceived as a remedy for Israel's problems and has always been used by the ruling elite according to the needs and priorities of the state. As a primarily secular and non-*Mizrahi* group, Soviet immigrants were especially important because they could treat two other fears of the dominant *Ashkenazim*: the fear of "*Levantization*" of Israel society (a *Mizrahi* majority and dominance) and the fear of its "*Haredization*" (in which ultra-Orthodox groups dominate its culture and political system).

In the late 1970s, Israeli officials spoke of the need to increase Jewish immigration from Western countries in order to balance the increasing number of *Mizrahim*. The *Ashkenazi*-Western elite has always perceived *Mizrahi aliya* as a burden, which it shouldered paternalistically in order to "save" the *Mizrahim* from physical and spiritual danger; Western immigrants, by contrast, have been perceived as an asset to Israel. A good example can be found in the attitude of Pinhas Sapir, who was chairman of the Jewish Agency executive in the 1970s. He thought that Israel's survival, development, and quality of life could be only provided through Western immigration:

> Fully 60% of Israel's population consists of Jews from oriental origins. Interested as we are in a full-fledged ingathering of the communities of Israel, we have devoted tremendous efforts to gather in Jews from Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, and other oriental states, and we have thereby saved them from physical and spiritual oppression. We are proud of the fact that the great majority of these Jews has been ingathered and is now living in Israel.
>
> At the same time, while the children of these immigrants are being given the benefits of modern education and upbringing, the parents themselves are in no position to contribute to the country's quality of life. This can be provided only by having in Israel more and more university-education *olim* from the West.
>
> (Sapir, 1975: 7)

As noted earlier, in the late 1980s, the *Levantization* of Israeli society started to take on an added dimension with the rise of Shas and the fears of the Jewish secular group (which is mainly *Ashkenazi*) that it might lose its dominance. These fears are reflected in Soffer's paper mentioned earlier. Alongside his warning against the "demographic danger" posed by Arabs, Soffer also warned against the cultural-political danger posed by Jewish *Haredi* groups:

> The frustration, and the sense of no way, the escape of youth [emigration by secular young Israelis], and the high natural increase among the *haredi*, the semi-*haredi,* and the traditional groups at different levels … will shift the trend in Israeli society from secularism to religiosity, and those who dominate the society will be the fanatic. This development may lead to a harsh culture war within the Jewish society [its interns we see already today]. This war will push more and more secular people from Israel and eventually extreme religious groups will take over the Jewish community in Israel. Their achievements will lead to further disengagement from Israel by non-Orthodox Diaspora Jewry and the crystallization of a society that adheres more to the Middle Ages and less to the twenty-first century.
>
> (Soffer, 1988: 54)

The 1990s wave

The mass immigration of Soviet Jews started in 1989 with the new open-door immigration policy brought by Mikhael Gorbachev, with his *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reconstruction) (see Gitelman, 2016: 21; Tolts, 2016). In 1989, about 71,000 Soviet Jews left the country. However, 82.9% of these immigrants dropped out at the transit stations and eventually did not come to Israel (Dominitz, 1997: 119). As a matter of fact, most Jewish-Soviet immigrants in the period 1987–1989 preferred the United States to Israel, as they had in 1974–1980 (Jones, 1996: 51). Jones indicates a number of pragmatic and value-linked reasons for this phenomenon, including the low levels of Jewish cultural identity among these immigrants, the negative image of Israel and Zionism conveyed by the Soviet media, and the fears of the economic and social hardships associated with immigration to Israel (ibid.).

The dropout phenomenon was very disturbing for officials of the Zionist movement, a number of Jewish organizations and communities, and for the Israeli government and Knesset members (Dominitz, 1997). On June 6, 1988, a Knesset committee devoted a special meeting to discuss the way to formally request that the United States abolish the “status of refugee” which was given by the American authorities to Jews who left the Soviet Union (The Knesset, Special meeting number 441 of the 11th Knesset, Jerusalem, June 6, 1988—Mimeographed-Hebrew). After Israeli pressure, the United States changed its policy toward Jewish immigrants coming from the FSU, and new entrance restrictions were introduced (Trier, 1996; DellaPergola, 1998). Also, the transit station in Vienna, where most Soviet immigrants dropped out, was closed and Jewish-Soviet immigrants left by direct flights to Israel (Dominitz, 1997).

After the gates of the Soviet Union were opened for Jewish emigration and Israel became a major destination for emigrants, the momentum intensified and was maintained through the intensive activity of the Jewish Agency, which deploys *shelihim* (“emissaries”). These emissaries help increase the motivation of Jews to leave the FSU and choose Israel as their destination (Jones, 1996).

In Israel, the activity of these *shelihim* was criticized after the economic and social burden caused by the mass movement became evident. These *shelihim* were accused of inflating both the real threat to FSU Jews posed by anti-Semitism and the economic benefits that immigrants would receive after arriving in Israel (ibid: 121).

Main trends

Between 1989 and 2009, more than 1.6 million Jews and their relatives emigrated from the FSU, about 61% or one million went to Israel, the rest went to the United States (estimated at about 326,000) and Germany (estimated at about 224,000) (Tolts, 2016: 23–24). About 920,000 immigrants from the USSR/FSU arrived in Israel between 1989 and 2001 (based on the statistics of the Liaison Division, cited by Demirski-Ziglman, 2002: 98). Some 40% of them came within only two years—1990 and 1991. Since then, the average annual number has been around 60,000, and even less in recent years (see CBS, 2015. “Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union on the Occasion of 25 years Later. A special report,” p. 3).

The main factors behind the 1990s wave included the economic and political instability of the disintegrating Soviet Union, the change in exit policy, the relative unavailability of alternative destinations, and the growing nationalism and anti-Semitism (DellaPergola, 1998). But there was no persecution or expulsion of

Jews in the FSU. On the contrary, prior to the 1990s wave, Jews experienced increasing participation in the various spheres of public life (Konstantinov, 1995: 5). Thus, FSU immigrants manifest no alienation toward the society and culture in their country of origin, which continues to play a major role in their life (Leshem and Lissak, 2000).

This conclusion is reflected in a 1990–1997 series of surveys conducted in ten republics of the FSU, including Russia, at the request of the Russian Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee. These surveys explored the potential of "aggressive anti-Semitism" and "anti-Judaism" and accordingly estimated the expected Jewish emigration from the FSU (Goodkov, 2000: 231).

The findings revealed that, on the whole, Russians manifest positive attitudes and tolerance toward Jews. The impact of the anti-Semitic activities of some nationalist Russians at that time was very limited among the general public (ibid.: 233). A review of the results of these surveys indicates that over time there was even a slight increase in the Russian public's positive image of Jews. For example, while 62% of the respondents in 1990 agreed that "Jews are people with education and culture," in 1997, 75% agreed. Whereas in 1990, 68% agreed that "there are many intelligent people among Jews," in 1997, 80% agreed (Goodkov, 2000: 237). In addition, the Russian public's positive attitudes toward Jews is reflected in its willingness to have close relationships with Jews: In the 1997 survey, 88% said they were favorable to having a Jewish family live in their neighborhood, 22% were favorable to the possibility of a Jew being elected president of Russia, and 55% said they did not oppose intermarriage with Jews (ibid.: 241–245). Only a small minority (6%–10%) presented extreme anti-Jewish attitudes (Goodkov, 2000: 234).

Differences between the 1970s and the 1990s waves

It has been argued that one of the main differences between the 1970s and the 1990s waves of immigration was motivation—the earlier being inspired chiefly by ideological and Jewish motifs, the latter, by pragmatic cost-benefit considerations (see Leshem and Shuval, 1998; Shuval, 1998).

Despite the fact that most studies relate to the 1990s wave as normal immigrants, some studies insist that they should be considered as *olim*—that is, ideologically motivated. For example, Mittelberg and Lev-Ari (1995) conclude that even though immigrant respondents reported motivations similar to those of normal immigrants, in the future they will undoubtedly resemble *olim* rather than "immigrants." In a similar vein, Rosenbaum-Tamari and Damian (1996), who studied the first five years of absorption of FSU immigrants, concluded that the findings cast doubt on the argument that these immigrants are "normal immigrants" who lack a Jewish identity and came to Israel because of the absence of alternatives. According to them, the immigrants indicate commitment to their Jewish identity as part of their motives for coming to Israel. However, this conclusion seems to be affected by their definition of the distinguishing features of *olim* and normal immigrants. They found that the strongest factors for immigration to Israel included the desire to secure the future of children, discrimination against Jews in the FSU, and the desire to live as Jews in a Jewish state (ibid.: 1). As a matter of fact, the first two factors should be considered to be typical of normal immigrants, since they reflect "push factors" connected with the country of origin rather than "pull factors" connected with Israel.

To judge by a literature survey and the findings of our field study, it can be argued that neither wave was homogenous in its motive for immigration. Pragmatic factors moved many of the 1970s immigrants, and ideological elements were not totally absent among those of two decades later.

Another difference between the two waves is that the first was led by activists and ordinary people who had fought to leave the Soviet Union. They formed a cultural and ideological elite that influenced thousands more in the Soviet-Jewish community. The 1990s wave had no leadership promoting emigration because the lifting of restrictions on emigration eliminated the need for one (Lissak and Leshem, 1995). The organizational role was played instead by formal or semi-formal Jewish and Israeli organizations, mainly the Jewish Agency and the Liaison Bureau (ibid.). Nudelman (2000: 68) concludes that the main contribution of the 1970s immigration was individual (through its leadership), while that of the 1990s wave was collective and cultural.

Some studies have found that the 1970s immigrants contributed to the development of sports, science, musical life, and the arts in Israel, but their rapid integration into Israeli society lowered their visibility as a group (Gitelman, 1995: 21). Their political impact was minimal; they formed no political parties and no immigrant from that group entered the Knesset until 1988 (ibid.).

Nevertheless, as Kimmerling (1998) and Shumsky (2001) correctly noted, the two waves complemented one another. Prominent members of the elite of the 1970s wave laid the ideological and institutional basis for ethnic organizations among the 1990s immigrants (see detailed discussion of the political organization in Chapter 5).

One of the main cultural characteristics of the 1990s wave is its strong Russian orientation. It was largely aloof from Jewish education in the home countries and was part of the Soviet middle class, which served as the agent of Russian culture in different parts of the empire (see Ben-Rafael, 1995; Gitelman, 1995; Zilberg and Leshem, 1999).

In addition, a large proportion of the 1970s immigrants were traditional—mainly Georgian Jews. This group was less educated than Jews from the European republics of the Soviet Union and had strong community and family orientations (Gitelman, 1981: 14).

What is the impact of this background on the Russian immigrants' orientation, ethnic formation, social, economic, and political adjustment, and relationships with Israeli society? Based on our field study, I address these questions in the following chapters, beginning with patterns of identity and ethnic formation.

4 The politics of identity among immigrants and their location within the ethnic map of Israel

Theoretical framework

Immigration has always been a major source for the development of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in receiving societies (see Berry, 1974, 1997, 2001; Richmond, 1988; Zolberg 1989; Goldscheider, 1995; Castles and Miller, 1993, 1998; Rex, 1999; Berry et al., 2006; Banton, 2008; Audebert and Dorai, 2010; Stone and Harris, 2017). Countries worldwide are facing the major question of how to deal with migration and its implications for development, society, and ethnic diversity (Olzak, 2006; Banting and Kymlicka, 2006; Kymlicka, 2007a; Castles, 2010; Van Hear, 2010; Moran, 2011). This issue has become even more crucial in the twenty-first century, in which globalization, transnationalism, and ethnicization seem to go hand in hand. In this sense, a puzzling process of globalization is apparent, accompanied by the resurgence of local identities (see Banton, 2008; Eisenstadt, 2009; Thiel and Coate, 2010; Stell and Fox, 2015).

A central question that should be addressed first is the issue of what ethnicity and ethnic identification are. This question is of major importance in determining whether an immigrant group has undergone a process of ethnic formation in the new society or whether it has chosen other options. Addressing this question requires defining the term “ethnic group” as well as the main characteristics a group should manifest to maintain its ethnic boundaries. Also, as emphasized in the theoretical chapter (Chapter 1), any analysis of ethnic formation among immigrants should simultaneously include the immigrants’ attitudes and behavior and the contextual factors connected both with the policies in the host country and with the homeland connections.

Definition of ethnic group

Ethnicity evolves and derives its significance through intergroup interaction within the framework of dynamic social processes and construction. Therefore, "cultural markers are imbued with social significance as a means of distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups" (Doane, 1997: 377). Most definitions of ethnic group involve one or more of the following components: objective elements, subjective ethnic consciousness, and behavioral elements (see Weber, 1922; Barth, 1969; Schermerhorn, 1970; Hannan, 1979; Yinger, 1981; Brass, 1991; Eriksen, 1996; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Jenkins, 1997; Gurr, 2000).

One of the most widely cited definitions of ethnic group is that of Schermerhorn (1970: 12):

> An ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity [as in localism or sectionalism], religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypic features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group.
>
> (cited also by Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 6)

This definition involves both objective elements (shared historical memories, cultural focus, and group affiliation) and subjective feeling, as reflected in ethnic consciousness. The importance of this definition lies in its perception that ethnicity can have a flexible basis, so that a group's "common ancestry" can be real or putative.

Milton Yinger adopts a similar definition but adds an important element that is connected to *otherness*. According to Yinger (1981), an ethnic group is defined by the perception of its members and/or of others regarding common origin and other ingredients that designate this group as different. In his words, an ethnic group is a

> …segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or by others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture, and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients. An ethnic group perceives itself and is perceived by others to be different in

> some combination of the following traits: language, religion, race, and ancestral homeland with its related culture….
>
> (ibid., 1981: 250)

According to Yinger, there are three main elements that should be present in order for "full ethnicity" to exist: "self-identification," "identification by others," and "shared activities" (ibid.).

In his classic work, Max Weber (1922; reprinted in Guibernau and Rex, 1999: 18–19) indicated that *subjective ethnic consciousness* and *behavioral-instrumental elements* reflected in the activation of an ethnic group as a political community are extremely important for ethnic distinctiveness and ethnic formation. According to Weber, *subjective ethnic consciousness* might be the outcome of "similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation or migration" (Weber, 1968: 389, cited by Ratcliffe, 2013: 305). In this sense, Weber emphasized that construction of ethnic consciousness might be created by various physical and/or cultural elements in the present, in addition to shared collective memories from past experience.

In a detailed analysis of the contemporary sociology of ethnic relations, Michael Banton argues that Weber's approach provides the "micro-foundations, constituting the core theory of ethnic relations" (Banton, 2008: 1284). Fredrik Barth adopted a similar approach regarding the importance of ethnic consciousness and the social significance of ethnic boundary. According to Barth, an ethnic group is first and foremost a social organization. The features emphasized are those considered to be significant by the actors themselves, rather than the sum of objective cultural differences (Barth, 1969: 14). Following Barth's model, Sandra Wallman perceives ethnic formation as a process, in which the sense of *'us'* in contrast of *'them'* are basic elements in forming ethnic boundaries. These boundaries are dynamic and changeable, and as the 'sense of *us* changes,' so the boundaries between *'us'* and *'them'* shifts (see Jenkins, 1997: 19–20).

Joan Nagel (1996) postulates that ethnic identity should be viewed as a dialect between internal identification and external ascription. In this context, Nagel emphasized that ethnic identity is a socially negotiated and socially constructed identity and thus may be presented in different forms according to various circumstances and interests of the group and individuals. Thus, Nagel suggested the notion of *multilayered ethnicity* (1996: 21) according to which

> the individual can be seen to carry a portfolio of ethnic identities that can be selected among, depending on the restrictions imposed by various social settings and constituencies. The result is an array or layering of ethnicities, with different identities activated at different times….
>
> (ibid.)

Nagel depicts ethnicity as a “rational choice” of individuals and identities as “socially negotiated” (Nagel, 1996: 23). An individual’s ethnic presentation of self might entail different identities in different social settings, depending on the “calculations of the worth, appropriateness, or credibility of a particular ethnic identity….” Thus, successful ethnic identity selection requires matching individual and societal definitions of ethnicity (ibid.). Yet Nagel also emphasizes that ethnic choice has its limits (Nagel, 1996: 26): “We do not always choose to be who we are; we simply are who we are as the result of a set of social definitions, categorization schemes, and external ascriptions that reside in the taken-for-granted realm of social life” (ibid.). In some cases, individuals hide ethnicity as a strategy of dealing with costly ethnic identities (see Goffman, 1963 cited by Nagel, 1996: 24).

Similarly, Gans (1996: 152) emphasizes that ethnic behavior, attitudes, and even identity are not determined only by the desire of ethnic groups but also by developments in and reactions of the wider society:

> The costs it will levy and what the benefits it will award to them as ethnics. Consequently, external forces exist to complement internal identity needs, and unless there is a drastic change in the allocation of costs and benefits with respect to ethnicity, it seems likely that the larger society will also encourage the persistence of symbolic ethnicity.

Hence, the maintenance of ethnic identities among immigrants depends both on the ethnic group and on the host society. The response of the host society to immigrants’ ethnic behavior has been identified as a major factor in determining their status and the extent of their adjustment. Castles and Miller (2003) differentiate between two main types of status emerging from ethnic formation among immigrants: *ethnic communities* and *ethnic minorities.* Ethnic communities emerge when the host society is open toward immigrant settlement, citizenship rights, and cultural diversity. At the other extreme, ethnic minorities emerge when the receiving society is characterized by a denial of settlement reality, refusal of citizenship rights, and rejection of cultural diversity (ibid.: 32). However, while the status of ethnic groups and their position in the stratification structure is determined to a large extent by dominant groups, ethnic identity is the outcome both of *self-definition* and of *other definition* (Castles and Miller, 2003: 33).

Studies on migration emphasize the importance of *sense of belonging* among immigrants and its effect on their identity patterns. These studies emphasize that it is crucial for immigrants to feel they have arrived at a new home where they belong (see Chow, 2007; Marcu, 2012). Accordingly, most definitions of sense of belonging among immigrants include the components of feeling at home and feeling one is in a place of belongingness (see Capra and Steindl-Rast, 1991: 14; cited by Chow, 2007: 512; Antonsich, 2010; Amit and Bar-Lev, 2015; Raijman and Geffen, 2017).

It should be noted that a strong *sense of belonging* to the receiving country is not necessarily incompatible with a sense of belonging to the home country. Using a large national representative sample in Canada of 7,000 immigrants from over 100 countries, Hou et al. (2017: 16) found that 69% of all immigrants had a strong sense of belonging both to Canada and to the source country. After applying Berry's model of acculturation (see Chapter 1 regarding Berry's model), they concluded that immigrants most prefer the "integration" option (that combines elements of both cultures, the original and the receiving societies) (see also Noels and Berry, 2016; Sam and Berry, 2016). Therefore, they suggested that formal policy toward immigrants should include the following components: "a culturally and economically secure place for both newcomers and members of the larger society; opportunities for mutual engagement and social interaction; and support for establishing and maintaining multiple identities and social interactions during and after the settlement process" (Hou et al., 2017: 16).

In the examination of identity, it might be useful to take into consideration the term suggested by a number of scholars, namely multiple identities (Calhoun, 1994; Porta and Diani, 1999). In the current era of globalization, ethnic identities are becoming more and more complex, *multiple*, *multidimensional*, or *hybrid* (see Bhabha, 1994; Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2012; Marcu, 2012). In this sense, identity formation is perceived as a process. It is rare that one central identity is capable of integrating all others. It is more common for identities to have a polycentric rather than a hierarchical structure so that relating to identity as "a source of coherence often leads to the neglect of the importance of forms of multiple identity" (Porta and Dianin, 1999: 100).

How to rank the different elements of identity according to their importance for ethnic formation is a matter of controversy. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, theoreticians highlight the simultaneous existence of various elements in the process of ethnic formation. Even when one element is said to be the most important in this process, it does not eliminate the others since, as Brass emphasized, each of these sets of elements has its own shortcoming (Brass, 1991, reprinted in Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 85–90; Hou et al., 2017). The problem of an objective definition, which assumes the existence of basic cultural elements that distinguish among different ethnic groups, lies in the difficulty of determining the boundaries of ethnic categories in this way. A subjective definition is hindered by the difficulty in determining how groups of people achieve this type of subjective consciousness. Behavioral definitions, which emphasize that cultural differences are expressed exclusively by the dynamics of interaction with other groups, fail to explain how ethnic groups can establish their unique identity without a distinct code of behavior (ibid.: 85).

My analysis adopts an eclectic approach to the definition of "ethnic group" that includes three main sets of elements: The first is composed of *objective elements*, the second includes *subjective elements* (mainly ethnic consciousness), and the third comprises *behavioral elements*. These elements are interconnected, and it would be difficult, and even impossible, to rank them a priori according their importance. Yet the existence of any ethnic group primarily emerges through its behavioral elements, including activation of the group boundaries as a framework for social and/or political mobilization. Ethnic mobilization is engaged in a two-way relationship with ethnic consciousness. Whereas ethnic consciousness forms the glue that connects group members and drives them to act as a distinct group, ethnic mobilization strengthens ethnic consciousness and turns it into a meaningful factor (see Olzak, 2006; Cunningham, 2012). This ethnic consciousness should be measured by *self-definition* (as perceived by individuals and group members) and *other definition* (as perceived by others) (see Jenkins, 1997; Castles and Miller, 2003; Brubaker et al., 2004).

Ethnicity in Israel

Ethnic relations are a central issue in Israeli sociological discourse and research and are addressed in most discussions of the country's social, cultural, political, or class structure (see Eisenstadt, 1954, 1984; Bar-Yoseph, 1968; Smooha, 1978, 2008; Weingrod, 1979, 1985, 2016; Swirski, 1981, 2016; Ben-Rafael, 1982; Herzog, 1983; Shamir and Arian, 1983; Smooha and Kraus, 1985; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986; Schmelz et al., 1991; Goldscheider, 1992, 1995, 2015; Lissak, 1999; Khazzoom, 2003; Shenhav, 2006). Lewis (1985: 149) argued that the meaning of ethnicity in Israeli society is structured by basic Zionist ideological codes. Based on the conception that the ingathering of Diaspora communities (*mizug galuyot*) aims to create "one nation," the Zionist paradigm rejects ethnicity as an ultimate reality while at the same time acknowledging it as a de facto attribute of social life (see also Ben-Rafael, 1982; Lewis, 1985; Weingrod, 1985, 2016).

Most scholars of ethnicity in Israel, regardless of their sociological approach, have usually seen ethnicity as bound up with immigration and absorption (see Eisenstadt, 1954; Schmelz et al., 1991; Smooha, 2008; Goldscheider, 2015; Semyonov et al., 2016). The establishment of Israel was followed by a redefinition of ethnic relations as a whole and of ethnic divisions in particular. According to the new formal definition, ethnic origin among Jews in Israel has been categorized in terms of the individual's place of birth (and for the Israeli-born, the father's place of birth) (Goldscheider, 1995: 119) going back three generations. Thus, a native-born individual with native-born parents is not classified ethnically (ibid.: 121). Based on this principle, ethnic structure among the Jewish population, which was categorized far more broadly before the establishment of Israel, has been formally reduced into two exclusive groups: *Ashkenazim* of European-American origin and *Sephardim*, *Mizrahim* or Orientals (*edot hamizrah*)—the Jews of Asian and North African origin (see Peres, 1976; Smooha, 1978; Cohen, 1980; Eisenstadt, 1993).

This formal recategorization of ethnicity in Israel has undoubtedly affected lines of self-identification and contributed to the institutionalization of ethnic divisions in Israel. Such state ethnic categorization is a well-known policy in modern states worldwide. In their article titled "Ethnicity as Cognition," Brubaker et al. (2004) highlight the significance of official categorization practices, employed by the state through censuses and official statistics, in shaping and reshaping lines of group identification. In their words,

> even when census categories are initially remote from prevailing self-understandings, they may be taken up by cultural and political entrepreneurs and eventually reshape lines of identification. Especially when they are linked through public policy to tangible benefits, official census categories can have the effect of 'making up people.'
>
> (Brubaker et al., 2004: 34; see also Hacking, 1986, cited by Brubaker et al., 2004)

When Israel was founded, most of the Jewish population was of European (*Ashkenazi*) origin (92%) while only 8% were of *Mizrahi* origin. Over time, this picture has changed as a result of the mass immigration of Jews from Islamic and Arab countries in the 1950s (Goldscheider, 1992). By the mid-1970s, *Mizrahim* outnumbered *Ashkenazim* thanks to their higher rate of natural increase (Schmelz et al., 1991). Before the 1990s influx from the former Soviet Union (FSU), 41.5% of the Jewish population in Israel was of *Mizrahi* origin and 36% was of *Ashkenazi* origin. Since the 1990s mass immigration from the FSU, the Jews of European-American origin once again outnumber those of Asian-African origin (Figure 4.1).

One of the central arguments among Israeli researchers postulates that despite its existence before the establishment of Israel, the *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* division became salient and meaningful only after Israeli statehood (Smooha, 1978; Eisenstadt, 1993; Lissak, 2000; Shafir and Peled, 2002). Scholars who adopt different approaches agree that this division is based mainly on a cultural-ideological basis derived from the Western (*Ashkenazim*) and Eastern (*Mizrahim*) classification (see for example Eisenstadt, 1993; Shafir and Peled, 2002; Khazzoom, 2003; Shenhav, 2006). The institutionalization of this division was initiated by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, which in the 1950s used a division of ethnicity with two main categories: newcomers of European-American origin (*Ashkenazim*) and newcomers of Asian-African origin (*Mizrahim*). This division was eventually adopted by ethnicity researchers in Israel and also served the trend toward a dichotomous perception of Israeli society as composed of "Europeans" and "Middle Easterners" (Weingrod, 1979) or *West* and *East* (Eisenstadt, 1993).

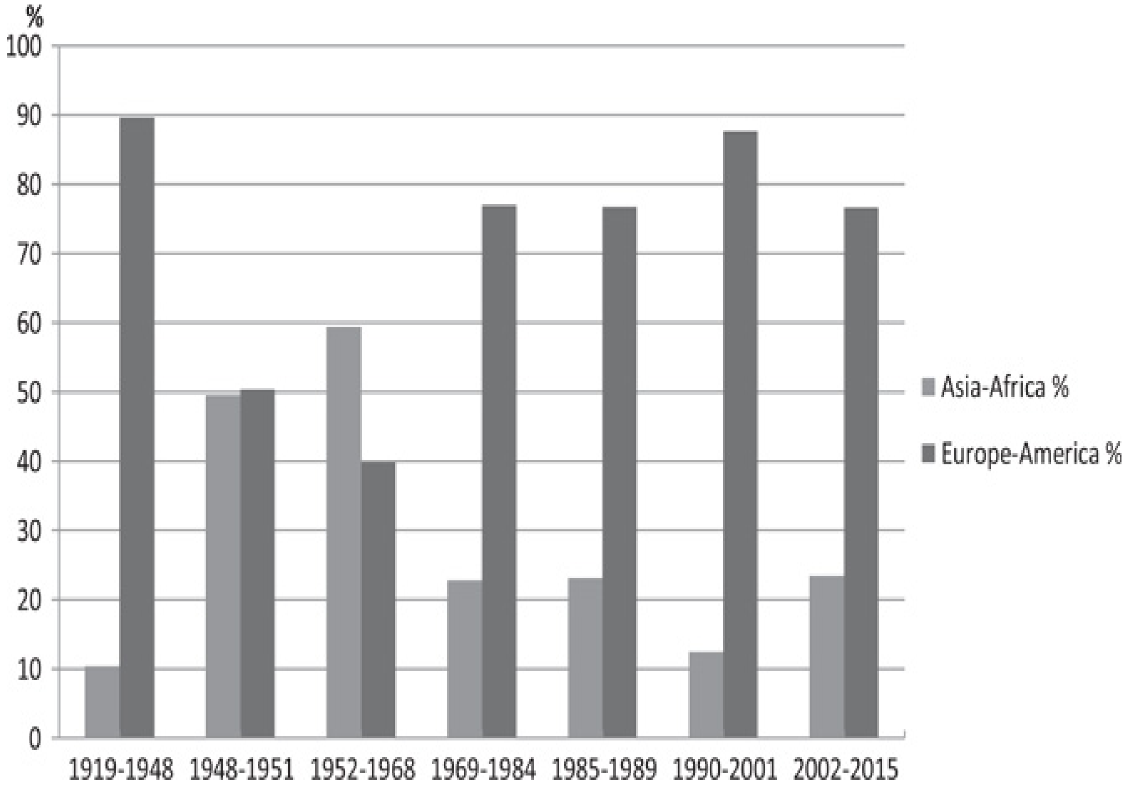


Figure 4.1 Migration of Jews into Palestine (before 1948) and into Israel (after 1948) by Country of Origin.

Source: Based on the Central Bureau of Statistics. 2016. Statistical Abstract of Israel (Shnaton). "Olim according to period of immigration and continent of birth." Table 4 (Chapter 2).

The Western orientation of the dominant *Ashkenazi* group deeply affected the absorption policy toward *Mizrahim*, mainly during the first two decades following statehood (Eisenstadt, 1993). Accordingly, and based on the melting-pot conception of the state (for a detailed discussion of this point see Chapter 2), the *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* ethnic division was expected to diminish over time as a result of a process of modernization (Westernization) that Jews of Asian and African origin were expected to undergo (see Eisenstadt, 1954: 9). Therefore, any tendency among *Mizrahi* immigrants to organize as a group was considered to be disintegrative and deviant behavior (ibid.). Moreover, the *Ashkenazi* group's strong need to be seen as Western has led it to perceive any manifestation of a different Eastern cultural orientation as a threat (Khazzoom, 2003: 504). Such a perception lies at the heart of the Zionist movement, which was a "European movement in its goals and orientation" and shared the Orientalist outlook of Europe (Shafir and Peled, 2002: 75; Shenhav, 2006: 185). Indeed, the ethnic term "Orientals" (*Mizrahim*) was first used by Jewish immigrants of European origin and reflects an ethnocentric European approach and negative cultural images vis-à-vis immigrants who originated in North Africa and the Near East

(Eisenstadt, 1954). Veteran Europeans categorized Oriental Jews using a wide range of negative images, describing them as "primitive," "inferior" (Patai, 1970: 314) and coming from "backward" and "Levantine" cultures (Cohen, 1980: 149). Hence, as noted in Chapter 2, Europeans were afraid that *Mizrahi* immigrants might transform the cultural character of Israel and "Levantinize" the country (Shokeid and Deshen, 1982; Yonah, 2004: 16; Shenhav, 2006: 191).

As a result, the incorporation and integration of *Mizrahim* by the old-timer *Ashkenazim* was conditioned by the elimination of the Oriental culture of the former group, to be replaced by a Western-modern culture (see Shafir and Peled, 2002; Khazzoom, 2003). This conception was eloquently expressed by Rivka Bar-Yoseph (1968; see Chapter 2).

The strong pressure exerted by the dominant *Ashkenazi* group on *Mizrahim* to assimilate within the "Western" Israeli culture has been relatively successful as far as cultural aspects are concerned (Weingrod, 1979; Shenhav, 2006). *Mizrahim* have gradually lost their original Judeo-Arabic culture and have assimilated into the Israeli-Hebrew culture (Smooha, 2008: 10). The remaining part of their home culture is restricted to what has been termed "subculture" (see Smooha, 2008) or "symbolic culture" (see Weingrod, 1979: 59). Shavit and Yuchtman-Yaar (2016: 320–321) reiterate the conclusion of various studies that *Mizrahim* have continuously attempted to dissociate themselves from their Arab heritage by becoming part of Israeli Jewish solidarity (see also Peres, 1976, who was the first to raise this argument). Shenhav agrees with this argument but adds that *Mizrahi* Jews cooperated with the Israeli-Zionist project of "modernization" and "de-Arabization" because of the negative image of Arabs among the Israeli-Zionist public. Nevertheless, their connectedness to their Arab origin has never been completely erased (Shenhav, 2006: 109).

The position of Soviet immigrants within the ethnic map in Israel

The mass influx of immigration from the FSU in the 1990s has made ethnic map in Israel even more complex. Between 1989 and 2016, nearly one million immigrants arrived in Israel, changing the social, demographic, and cultural structure of Israeli society. Together with Russian immigrants who arrived in the 1970s (approximately 200,000), immigrants from the FSU constitute nearly 16% of Israel's general population and 21% of its Jewish population (these percentages were calculated according to the official figures in the 2017 Statistical Abstract of Israel).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, since the establishment of Israel, nearly 3.2 million immigrants came to Israel (between 1948 and 2016) (Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel* (SAI), 2016: 36). The division of these immigrants according to home countries reveals an interesting picture that sheds light on ethnic map in Israel: 39.3% of immigrants (or nearly 1.2 million upon immigration) originated from the FSU, making them the largest group in Israel according to country of origin (see also Al-Haj and Leshem, 2000). This group is larger by far than the second largest group that originated in North Africa (namely, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia) and that constitutes 12.8% of the population (nearly 391,000). The other sizable groups (constituting at least 1.5% of immigrants) are ranked as follows: Romania, 9% (277,000); Poland, 5.6% (174,000); Iraq, 4.3% (131,000); the United States, 3.1% (95,000); Ethiopia, 2.8% (86,000); Iran, 2.6% (81,000); Turkey, 2% (63,000); Argentina, 1.9% (60,000); Yemen, 1.7% (51,000); and France, 1.7% (51,000) (Based on CBS, 2012. Publication No. 1483, P.9).

According to the formal ethnic division in Israel, 70% of these communities would be classified as of European-American origin and nearly 30% of Asian-African origin. Yet this formal division is both based on and fueled by the traditional Western-Eastern cultural distinction. Let us first deal with the complex categorization of *Mizrahim* and *Ashkenazim*, and then turn to the position of the 1990s Soviet immigrants on the ethnic map in Israel. As Figure 4.2 shows, the dual-binary division of *Ashkenazim-Mizrahim* overlooks important differences among both groups. *Mizrahim* originated in two different geographical and cultural areas—the Middle East (primarily Iraq and Yemen) and North Africa (mainly Morocco) (see also Shafir and Peled, 2002: 78). The groups from these separate regions also display major differences in family patterns and orientation toward Israeli society (Weingrod, 1979; Eisenstadt, 1993). No less important, this formal division overlooks basic objective elements that an ethnic group should have in order to be defined as such. For example, one might wonder about the objective ethnic elements common to people originating from Morocco, Ethiopia, Iran, Turkey, and India, all of whom are categorized as *Mizrahim* yet spoke different languages in their home countries and had different histories and collective memories. In addition, important differences exist in the histories of Jewish life in the three major communities of *Mizrahim* or *edot hamizrah*, namely Moroccans, Yemenites, and Iraqis that cast doubts regarding their joint ethnic classification (see Goldberg, 1985). In this sense, Jewish groups who arrived in Israel from non-European countries had no joint historical basis of an existential nature (see Amor, 2002: 267). Moreover, some social scientists include Balkan and Greek Jews among the *Mizrahim* (see Smooha, 1978: 79), even though they are Europeans and share no common language or other important objective elements of ethnicity with *Mizrahim*, the majority of whom came from Arab-Islamic countries.

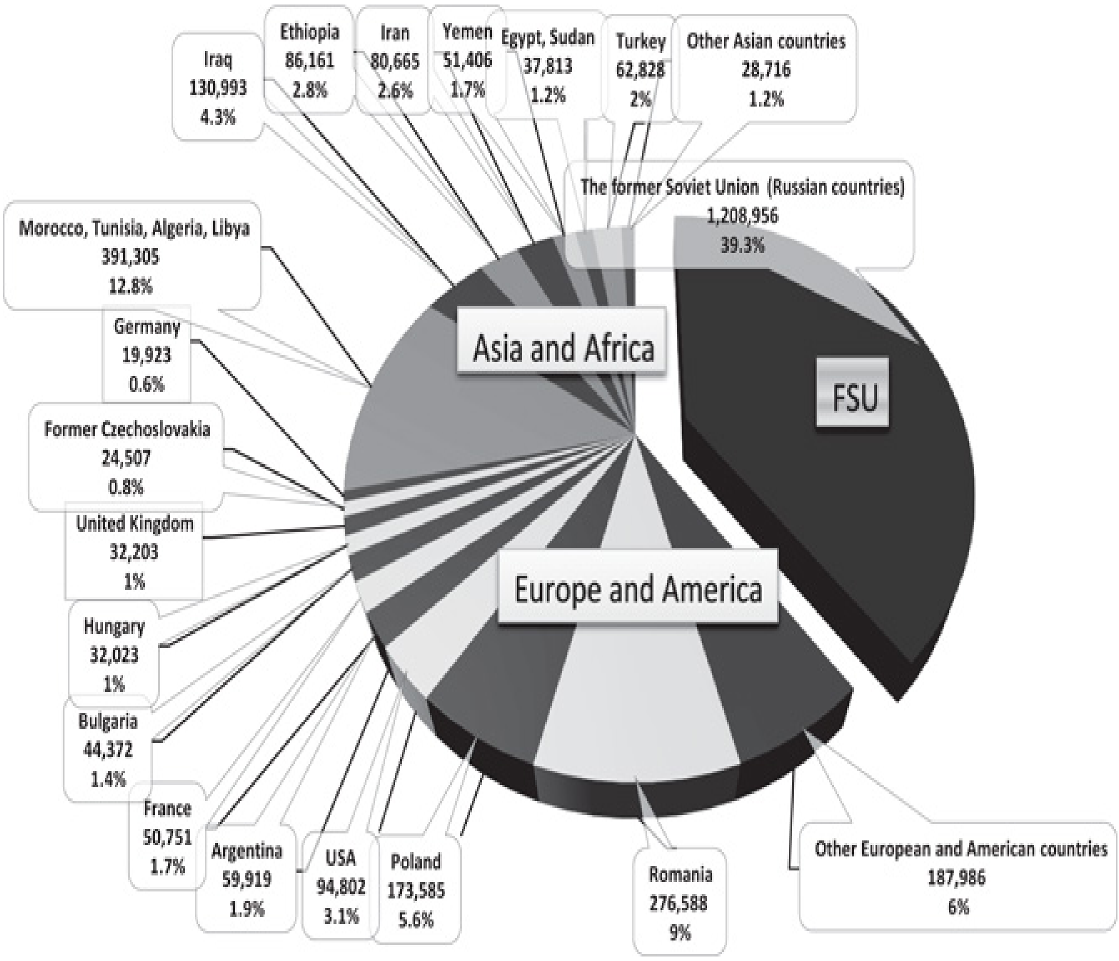


Figure 4.2 Ethnic Map of Immigrants in Israel.

Source: Based on the Central Bureau of Statistics. 2012. *Immigration to Israel*. Publication No. 1483. P.9. www.cbs.gov.il (Hebrew). Prepared by Ilat Cohen-Castero.

The categorization of immigrants of European-American origin into one ethnic group (*Ashkenazim*) is also problematic. Weingrod (1979: 57) maintained that European ethnicity among *Ashkenazim*, which is linked to their country of origin, had decreased immensely since the 1960s. Furthermore, the rapid social mobility of European immigrants has been accompanied by the relinquishing of separate ethnic cultures and symbols (ibid.: 58). Like *Mizrahim*, among *Ashkenazim* as well the expansion of their definition on the basis of their European-American origin has overlooked internal differences among them based on objective elements of ethnicity. For example, according to this definition, immigrants from Romania, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, and the United States are all considered *Ashkenazim*, although they have different home languages, home ethnic belonging, and different social and cultural lifestyles. Therefore, Schmelz et al. (1991: 8) contended that the generic classification of ethnic groups in Israel into Western-*Ashkenazim* (European-American) and Eastern-*Mizrahim* (Asian-African) overlooks the geographic realities of the Diaspora and creates confusion. For example, according to this classification, the *Sephardim*—the descendants of exiles from Spain and Portugal who moved to various parts of Europe after their expulsion in 1492—were originally included in the wider definition of *Mizrahim*. In addition, whereas the Jews of South Africa are included among the *Ashkenazim*, Turkish Jews are included among the *Mizrahim*, even those who came from the European part of Istanbul (ibid.).

The earlier analysis leads to the conclusion that no overall acceptable definition of *edot* (ethnic communities in Israel) exists (Schmelz et al., 1991: 7). The conclusion, therefore, is that "…the term *edot hamizrah* may be best seen, in its initial usage, as a way of labeling a bewildering medley of 'others'…." (see Willner, 1969, cited by Goldberg, 1985: 192). Ben-Rafael (1982: 60) offered a similar conclusion, postulating that despite the cultural traditions and socioeconomic differences between *Ashkenazim* and *edot hamizrah*, neither constitute ethnic groups but rather sociocultural categories, that is, "nominal classes of people differing from each other by given broad, cultural and/ or social features." Moreover, ethnic groups (plural—*edot*, or ethnic group, singular—*eda*) that are group-defined as Orientals (Moroccans and Yemenites in the case study of Ben-Rafael) exhibit "ethnic identity as a source of pride" at the level of each (*eda*), but not at the collective level as "Orientals" (ibid.: 134). Arnold Lewis clearly described the state of "*imagined ethnicity*" among *Mizrahim*:

> The ethnic category Oriental Jews is not rooted in the cultural tradition and life ways of concrete living people. It has no tangible ethno-history, rarely delineates an existentially meaningful identity, and lacks vigorous defenders…. Indeed, the ethnic category Oriental Jews is a *phantom*, a figment of collective Israeli imagination, a symbolic vehicle by which

> cultural differences capable of masking socioeconomic inequality is explained….
>
> (Lewis, 1985: 150)

Yet despite its problematic basis and vagueness, the *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* ethnic division has been institutionalized and become widely accepted by both groups (Goldberg, 1985: 193). This ethnic division continued to be salient in terms of the socioeconomic and geographic locations of both *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim* and the ethnic stereotypes held by the former about the latter (see Weingrod, 1979, 2006; Cohen, 1980; Goldberg, 1985; Ben-Rafael and Sharot, 1991; Anson, 1993; Smooha, 2008). Within Israel's clear and long-standing ethnic stratification, *Ashkenazim* form the majority of the middle and upper classes and *Mizrahim* the majority of the working class (Smooha, 1978, 2008). *Mizrahi* Jews are disadvantaged in terms of education, income, and other economic resources (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1986; Shavit, 1990; Nahon, 1993; Shafir and Peled, 2002; Goldscheider, 2015; Swirski, 1989, 2016).

The influx of immigrants from the FSU in the 1990s has made Israel's ethnic map even more complex. Since the beginning of the 1990s immigration wave, official statistics in Israel automatically put FSU immigrants together with those of American-European origin. Starting in 1996, however, immigrants from the FSU were divided into two groups: Those from European republics (constituting some 79.7% of immigrants) were classified as *Ashkenazim* (of European-American origin), while those from Central Asia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia (20.3% of the immigrants) were classified as *Mizrahi* Jews (Asian-African origin) (see SAI, 2000: 5.4). In doing so, policy makers have manipulated ethnic Russian identity, once again subjecting it to the exclusive dual-binary ethnic division in Israel.

This raises the question of whether or not this formal division reflects the sociocultural reality of these immigrants. What option has been adopted by the 1990s immigrants from the FSU vis-à-vis Israeli society as far as their ethnic identity is concerned? Have they assimilated within the existing ethnic structure in Israel or have they formed their own ethnic group? Are they entitled to be considered an ethnic group according to the aforementioned universal-theoretical definition? In the next sections, we attempt to answer these questions, first by examining the existing literature and then through a detailed analysis of our research findings.

Identity patterns among Soviet immigrants

Most studies deal with Soviet immigrants' identity and orientation as an independent issue or as a part of their absorption and adjustment processes (see Horowitz, 1994; Lissak, 1995; Lissak and Leshem, 1995; Damian and Rosenbaum-Tamari, 1996; Ben-Rafael et al., 1998; Kimmerling, 1998; Shuval, 1998; Leshem and Lissak, 2001; Adler, 2004; Kranzler, 2004; Lissitsa, 2008, Lissitsa et.al, 2008; Raijman and Geffen, 2017). By and large, though, the assumption is that immigrants from the FSU will eventually become integrated—absorbed into the existing ethnic structure in Israel as part of the *Ashkenazi* group while preserving their cultural uniqueness by forming a cultural enclave (Lissak, 1995; Rosovsky and Almog, 2010; Rosovsky, 2012), a Russian bubble (Kimmerling, 1998), a social enclave (Elias and Caspi, 2007), or a subculture (Smooha, 1994, 2008).

The aforementioned conclusion might be affected by the traditional Zionist assimilationist model toward immigrants to Israel, as described by Lissitsa (2008). She postulated that the Israeli absorption authorities initially expected the 1990s immigrants to resemble those who preceded them and would thus inevitably assimilate into Israeli society. This conception also guided most Israeli researchers, who assumed that these immigrants had only one alternative—to choose between their original (Russian) culture and that of the host (Israeli) society. The thinking was that the more they adjusted to the new culture, the less linkage they would maintain to the original culture (ibid.). Shamai and Ilitov (2001: 692) reached a similar conclusion. They emphasized that veteran Israelis expect immigrants to assimilate and thus reject the possibility that they might maintain their original Russian culture. As a result, and contrary to declared policy, immigrants have been subjected to very strong assimilatory practices on the part of the education system (ibid.).

It should be noted that despite the broad agreement among most of the aforementioned studies regarding retention of Russian culture and identity among the 1990s immigrants, they did not address the Russian immigrants as a new ethnic group or as a group in the process of ethnic formation that presents a challenge to the traditional binary *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* ethnic division. Indeed, even when researchers used significant ethnic terms such as "Russian-speaking immigrants" (Khanin, 2007), "Russian-speaking collective" (Lerner, 2011), "Russian-speaking Jews" (Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, 2007) or "Russian-speaking Israelis" (Lissitsa, 2007a) to distinguish Soviet immigrants for other ethnic groups in Israel, these researchers have been quite cautious when it comes to concluding whether or not these immigrants form a new ethnic group. In fact, these terms have been used as neutral fact-telling terms that have no determining weight regarding the ethnic identity of these immigrants.

Main approaches regarding ethnic formation among Russian immigrants

The literature reflects four main approaches regarding ethnic formation and classification among Soviet immigrants in Israel: the *assimilation thesis*; the *dual segregation-integration* approach; the *transnational Diaspora* approach; and the *instrumentalized ethnicity* approach.

The *assimilation thesis* postulates that Russian immigrants from the 1990s will eventually assimilate into the *Ashkenazi* group rather than form a separate ethnic group (Smooha, 1994, 2008). This thesis is based on the following developments and assumptions: First, Russian immigrants and their leaders did not have any goal of creating a separate community. Second, no institutional arrangements were instituted to preserve a separate heritage and culture among these immigrants, in particular as far as the education system is concerned. Third, the high potential among these immigrants to enter the middle class as a group thanks to their aspirations and human capital will require advanced assimilation within the dominant *Ashkenazi* group, and based on their past record in the Soviet Union, Russian immigrants seem to be willing to pay the price of such assimilation. Fourth, due to the close cultural and socioeconomic ties shared by these groups, the *Ashkenazi* old-timers are prepared to assimilate with the Russian immigrants and their offspring and to marry them (Smooha, 2008: 16–17). Nevertheless, Smooha also contends that while "the ethnicization thesis is more valid for the adult foreign-born generation and the non-Jewish immigrants among them, the assimilation thesis is more plausible for the Israel-born and Israel-raised generation…" (ibid.: 17).

Although foreseeing different scenarios in terms of the expected ethnic formation among immigrants, Kimmerling (1998) arrives at a conclusion similar to that of Smooha. He maintains that the immigrants from the FSU are very similar to the *Ashkenazi* middle class in terms of their human capital and other characteristics. From an economic perspective, this immigration is being rapidly absorbed into this class, which is searching for partners in a coalition against the other competing groups within the Israeli society. Both the Russians and the *Ashkenazi* middle class feel threatened by the same groups (the Arabs, the national-religious, and the ultra-Orthodox) in competing for a position in the symbolic and stratification systems. There is no guarantee, however, that the Russian bubble will disappear in the next generation (Kimmerling, 1998: 291).

The *segregation-integration* approach has been adopted by a large number of Israeli researchers examining Soviet immigrants (see for example, Horowitz, 1994; Lissak, 1995; Damian and Rosenbaum-Tamari, 1996; Leshem and Lissak, 2001). Although this approach resembles the assimilation thesis, it simultaneously emphasizes the segregation indicators in the immigrants' orientation along with the assimilation-integration components. Moreover, it perceives the current segregation-integration orientation among immigrants as a transitional phase, with the ultimate stage yet to be determined. Horowitz (1994: 90) concludes that the cultural absorption of immigrants from the FSU is problematic because immigrants range between integration and cultural separation. A similar trend was reported by Damian and Rosenbaum-Tamari (1996), who studied FSU immigrants' assessment of their absorption in Israel after five years. They concluded that the immigrants live in two worlds: their will to preserve their own original culture and their desire to be open, to some extent, to Israeli society.

In their detailed analysis of immigrant identity and cultural orientation, Leshem and Lissak (2001: 69) emphasize that Russian immigrants have adopted a strategy vis-à-vis the surrounding receiving society that ranges between integration and segregation. The segregation pole finds expression in maintaining the Russian home culture while simultaneously rejecting the culture of the surrounding Israeli society. The other end of the spectrum—integration—is manifested in emphasizing the home culture while at the same time recognizing the importance of the receiving culture and the desire to be integrated within the wider society. Being in Israel longer does not lead, per se, to becoming closer to Israeli culture. Sometimes the opposite is the case (ibid.: 66). In any event, Leshem and Lissak (2001) conclude that despite the basic social and cultural differences between the Russian community in Israel and its surrounding society and the immigrants' retention of their culture, it is too early to predict whether the consolidation of this community is stable or whether it is a transitional stage toward assimilation within the *Ashkenazi* component of Israel.

A number of researchers have defined Soviet immigrants in Israel and other host countries as a *transnational community*. Building on the theoretical meaning of transnational diasporas, Larissa Remennick (2002, 2009) defined the big *Aliya*—the massive wave of immigration to Israel in the 1990s—as a clearly transnational community and as a Russian Street that has retained its ethno-cultural characteristics and its connections to the home country and to Russian co-ethnics abroad. Following a detailed analysis of the characteristics of Soviet immigrants in Israel, and the factors facilitating their retention of ethno-cultural elements, Remennick concludes, "the bottom line is that the thriving cultural and economic life on the 'Russian Street' will surely persist during the lifespan of the current adult generation of former Soviets, and will perhaps linger for several decades among their children…." (Remennick, 2009: 290).

Sabina Lissitsa (2007a: 241) reached a similar conclusion. She emphasized that according to their types of identity and identification, the 1990s immigrants from the FSU in Israel fit the theoretical model of *transnational Diasporas*. These immigrants have maintained a multidimensional identity that reflects "dual homeness" and "dual loyalty" marked by a sense of loyalty for both their home countries and Israeli society. Therefore, Lissitsa terms these immigrants as Russian Israelis. No less importantly, Lissitsa concludes that while the Russian component of the immigrants' identity is authentic and reflects cultural pride, the Israeli-Jewish components are mainly instrumental: "The Russian identity is perceived by its carriers as something innate or 'natural,' whereas the Jewish and Israeli identities are learned phenomena and constitute deliberate means for integrating into Israel" (ibid.).

Lerner suggests analyzing the Russian collective in Israel within a framework that involves both a Soviet past and a post-Soviet present (Lerner, 2012: 21). She concludes that Jewish immigrants from the FSU in Israel continue to define themselves as Russians and remain part of the multiethnic Russian-speaking diaspora around the world. At the same time, "this Russianness is neither 'national' nor 'ethnic'; nor is it 'civic'. Its linguistic boundaries are evident, but they do not exhaust the meanings and practices of Russianness beyond Russia" (ibid.: 30). That is to say, the main factor defining the "Russianness" of 1990s immigrants from the FSU in Israel is socio-cultural rather than ethnic.

Although the transnational approach adds a very important aspect to understanding the multidimensional identity of Soviet immigrants within a global context, it steers clear of dealing with the question of whether FSU immigrants in Israel form a new ethnic group or whether the complex identity they have adopted reflects any process of ethnic formation that expands the existing binary (Ashkenazi-Mizrahi) ethnic division in Israel.

The *instrumentalized ethnicity* approach has been exclusively suggested by Majid Al-Haj (1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a). This approach maintains that the Soviet immigrants clearly form a new ethnic group in Israel alongside the *Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim*. Al-Haj has traced the 1990s immigrants for almost three decades now, and from the outset he contended that these immigrants were in the process of forming a distinct ethnic group in Israel. According to this approach, ethnic formation among Russian immigrants is not only socially and culturally motivated. To a large extent, it is an instrumental ethnicity that is used as part of their adjustment strategy and reflects their desire to integrate into Israeli society, as a group, from a position of strength rather than to assimilate from a position of weakness (Al-Haj, 1996: 147). Al-Haj (2004a: 210), later reiterated his initial conclusion, adding

> that the FSU immigrants' ethnic identity is not a temporary phenomenon that can be expected to decline or disappear in the future. Instead, it seems likely that they will intensify their instrumentalized ethnicity while reducing the contradiction between the ethnic and Israeli components of their identity.

In the following section, I apply the basic components of the universal-theoretical definition of ethnic group to Soviet immigrants in Israel over time according to the findings of our field study. More specifically, based on the literature, I examine the *objective elements* of the immigrants' identity, as reflected in their background in the home country, shared history and collective memory. Based on the data of our 1999, and 2010 surveys, and the discussion groups conducted on 2018, I also examine the following elements: The *behavioral elements* of these immigrants over time after their arrival in Israel; the *subjective elements* that find expression in their self-identification; and the *other identification* as these immigrants are perceived by the veteran society in Israel.

Objective elements: history and collective memory of Russian immigrants

The Jewish community in the Soviet Union experienced several changes in its identity and national-religious orientation. Gitelman

(1988) noted several events that played a major role in the formation of twentieth-century Soviet-Jewish identity. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Jewish community made a conspicuous transition from a strong Jewish cultural-religious identity to one deeply acculturated in Russian culture and society. Later, however, the collective memory of the Holocaust reinforced the perception of the uniqueness of Jewish identity and of the shared destiny of the Jewish people. Immediately after the Second World War, religious activity revived among Soviet Jews, reflected in the increasing activity of synagogues and Jewish community institutions, initially treated with relative apathy by the authorities (Ro'I, 1995). This attitude, however, was short-lived, and by the early 1950s, the pre-war assimilation process had resumed (ibid.).

Over time, Soviet Jews adopted an acculturation process of assimilation, reflected in minimizing their link to Jewishness and in a deep sentimental connection with the Russian language and culture. At the same time, this assimilation led to alienation from the Jewish national culture and tradition (Pinkus, 1984b: 15).

As noted in Chapter 3, various studies found that the Soviet Jewish community was among the most assimilation-oriented of all minorities in the USSR (see Hirszowicz, 1991: 275). In the 1979 census, for example, only 14.24% of Soviet Jews reported a Jewish language (mainly Yiddish) as their mother tongue; an additional 5.35% reported one as their second language. The same census revealed that 97.03% of Soviet Jews knew Russian, "making them the most Russified minority in the USSR" (ibid.). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the strong Russian-assimilationist orientation among Jews in the FSU is also reflected in the very high rate of mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews. Official statistics show that the rate of mixed marriages has increased since the 1970s. In 1988, 81% of marriages were intermarriages and only 19% were Jewish-Jewish marriages (Altshuler, 1992: 32).

As a result of this deep acculturation, Jews of the FSU developed a unique Jewishness over time. Studies examining Russian and Ukrainian Jews after the collapse of the FSU revealed that although their Jewishness was strong, it differed dramatically from that of Jews elsewhere (Gitelman, 2012). In his detailed study on Jewish identities in communist Russia and Ukraine, Gitelman postulated that many of the Jews in these countries are uncertain of the meaning of their Jewishness (ibid.). Yet Jews in the various republics of the FSU had created "latent communities" with shared memories and destinies that "cut across class, education, gender, and, for the most part, geographical lines" (Gitelman, 2012: 331).

Behavioral elements of immigrants in Israel

The findings of our 2010 survey show that according to basic behavioral elements with regard to geographic milieu, social networks, social relations, and sources of information and entertainment, immigrants from the FSU form a distinct ethnic group with strong social and cultural borders.

Despite a slight decrease in demographic concentrations of immigrants over time, the vast majority of immigrants still live in highly homogenous neighborhoods: 77% of the respondents in our 2010 survey said that they lived in neighborhoods where FSU immigrants accounted for at least one-third of the residents (as compared to 84% in our 1999 survey). A report on "urban neighborhoods with high concentration of Russian-speaking immigrants" by Almog (2009) indicates that these immigrants have established "Russian neighborhoods" in a number of Israeli cities that may be called Russian town, comparable to Chinatown, Little Italy, and other ethnic enclaves established elsewhere. These Russian neighborhoods have distinct Russian symbols and community life and carry the trademark of these immigrants (ibid.).

Demographic concentration is accompanied by relatively closed social networks among immigrants: In the 2010 survey, 62% of the respondents (as compared with 66.3% in the 1999 survey) reported that all five of their closest friends were immigrants from the FSU. Similar findings were reported by Lissitsa, who concluded that although social relations between Russian immigrants and veteran Israelis were perceived as good or very good by both parties, these relationships were mostly instrumental and limited to formal day-to-day interaction. The immigrants' primary social networks were limited mainly to the same group and a very low percentage among them reported having local Israelis among their close friends (Lissitsa, 2007b: 37).

The sources of information among immigrants are also still relatively closed and mainly produced within the group borders or derived from the home-Russian culture. According to Elias and Caspi (2007: 193), a distinction should be made between two types of Russian-language media in Israel, reflecting two competing conceptions of immigrant absorption. The first is media for immigrants, reflecting the melting pot conception. This type has been created by the establishment to speed up the integration and even assimilation of immigrants into mainstream Israeli society. The second type is media by immigrants, which is highly autonomous, connected only by weak ties to the dominant media and leads toward a multicultural model of immigrant absorption (ibid.).

In any event, the two immigration waves from the FSU to Israel, that of the 1990s and of the 1970s, have unified to form a Russian cultural enclave reflected in the establishment of their own newspapers and media (Ben-Ya'cov, 1998b; Rosovsky and Almog, 2010). Toward the late 1990s, more than 120 Russian-language newspapers and periodicals were being produced in Israel. Since 2000, the number of Russian newspapers in Israel has decreased, mainly due to economic difficulties and competition from the electronic media. In 2008, there were six nationwide Russian-language newspapers in Israel (ibid.). Immigrants from the FSU have also established their own radio and TV stations. The most famous among them are Radio Reka (radio for immigrant absorption), Radios Radio, and Israel-Plus or TV 9. In addition, a number of cable TV stations that are broadcast from Russia and other FSU countries are very popular among the Russian immigrants. These media have become very popular among Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel and are their main source of news and entertainment (Gilfert, 2012). In addition, immigrants have established a large number of Russian-language websites providing advertisements and entertainment (ibid.).

According to the 2010 survey, 57.8% of respondents reported regularly watching cable television broadcasts from Russia (compared to 77.2% in the first survey—1999 survey); 53.8% regularly listened to or watched the Russian-language immigrant stations in Israel (compared to 40.2% in the first survey); and only 22.4% reported watching Hebrew-language programs on Israeli television (compared to 25% in the first survey). The only difference over time was that immigrants had become less connected to the home-Russian sources and more to the Russian sources produced in Israel. The same picture applied to newspapers: 54% reported reading Russian-language newspapers (compared to 59.7% in the first survey) and only 17% reported reading Hebrew newspapers (compared to 8.9% in the first survey).

The Russian-language media fulfill two main roles: preserving ethnic identity and ties to the original-home culture, and addressing issues and problems encountered during immigrants' integration into Israeli society (Elias and Caspi, 2007: 177).

The findings of the 2010 survey show that Russian was still the immigrants' main language of interpersonal and group communication: 77% of the respondents reported using Russian primarily or exclusively when meeting a Russian-speaking acquaintance, whereas 22% reported using both Russian and Hebrew, and only 1% reported using Hebrew exclusively (these questions were not asked in the first survey).

These findings reiterate the picture reported by other studies regarding continued usage of Russian among the FSU immigrants (see Elias, 2008). Follow-up studies on the immigrants' adjustment point to an interesting situation: the percentage of immigrants who do not use Hebrew at all as their day-to-day language has increased over time. Those who arrived in recent years reported the lowest use of Hebrew. At the same time, immigrant groups from all waves expressed extremely positive attitudes toward maintaining Russian in Israel (Damian, 2008: 128). In a study of immigrants from the FSU between 1990 and 2005, Leshem reported that their feeling of Israeli identity increased the longer they had been in Israel. Yet even though they mainly used Hebrew in the workplace, the dominant language among these immigrants is still Russian (Leshem, 2010: 3–11).

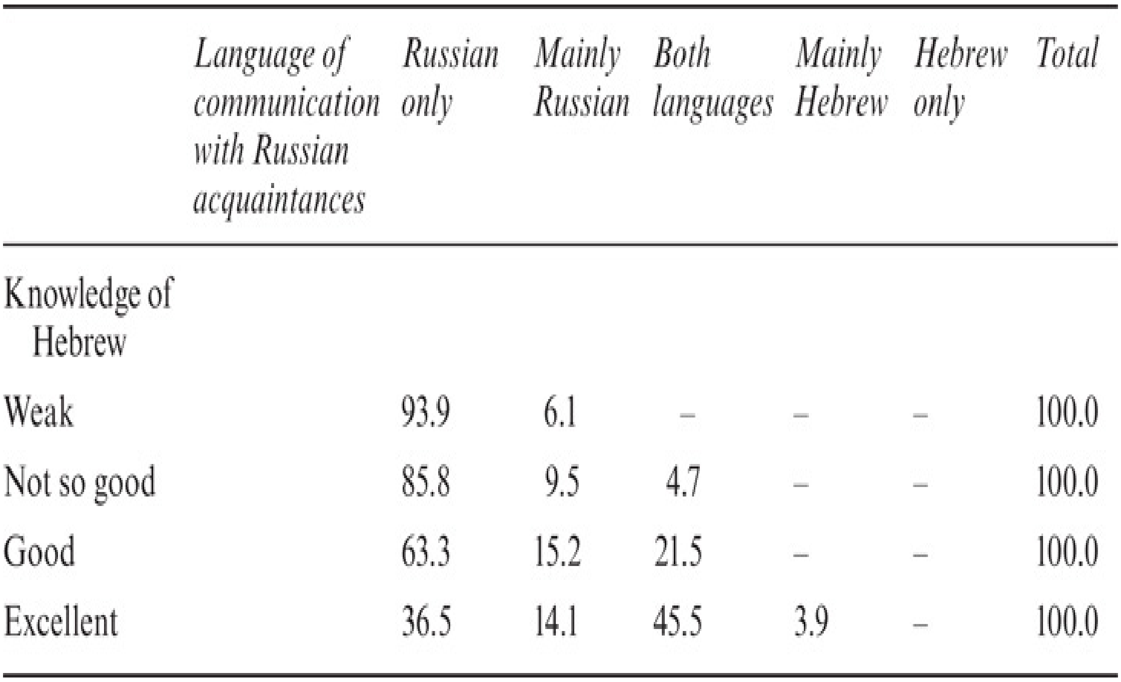
It is worth noting that even when immigrants have a good or excellent command of Hebrew, they naturally use Hebrew more often, but they do not stop using Russian (see Table 4.1).

As Table 4.1 shows, the more proficient immigrants are in Hebrew, the more they used both languages. Furthermore, even when their command of Hebrew was good, 78.5% used only or mainly Russian.

Pride in the Russian component of the immigrants' identity is also reflected in the dominance of Russian names among Soviet immigrants. Based on national data, Kranzler (2004) examined the cultural orientation of the 1990s immigrants by analyzing the names they gave to their children. The findings revealed that while immigrants who came in the early 1990s tended more to give Israeli names to their children, those who arrived later on were more likely to give their children Russian and international names. The researcher concluded that the immigrants have not assimilated within Israeli society and that they tend to maintain a different cultural community.

Table 4.1 Hebrew-speaking Proficiency by Language of Communication with Russian Acquaintances (Percentages,

the 2010 Survey)



	Language of communication with Russian acquaintances	*Russian only*	*Mainly Russian*	*Both languages*	*Mainly Hebrew*	*Hebrew only*	*Total*
Knowledge of Hebrew							
Weak		93.9	6.1	–	–	–	100.0
Not so good		85.8	9.5	4.7	–	–	100.0
Good		63.3	15.2	21.5	–	–	100.0
Excellent		36.5	14.1	45.5	3.9	–	100.0

It should be noted that the hypothesis that FSU immigrants will soon manifest a desire to assimilate within the existing ethnic structure in Israel has proven to be false. Therefore, an increasing number of researchers have clearly concluded that the Russian component in the identity of the 1990s immigrants from the FSU is still strong and forms a major component of their identity and identification alongside the Jewish and Israeli components (see for example Leshem and Lissak, 2001; Remennick, 2002, 2009; Al-Haj, 2004a, 2015; Lissitsa, 2007a; Niznik, 2009). In addition, while on the one hand, Soviet immigrants are very determined to preserve their own culture, on the other hand, they reject any form of assimilation within the host Israeli society. As indicated by Marina Niznik (2009: 291), although the Russian community in Israel is very diverse, among the things its members have in common are “their hesitant attitude toward the local culture, a certain cultural arrogance, and the almost total lack of melting intentions” (see also, Niznik, 2003). Thus, Little Russia has become a salient phenomenon in Israeli social life. Among other things, it is reflected in the Russian media, Russian cultural institutions, Russian coffeehouses, and pubs that constitute a place of meeting and entertainment for Russian youngsters, widespread Russian-language classes in junior high and high schools in Israel, hundreds of new Russian-language books published every year in Israel and Russian theaters (Niznik, 2009: 291).

Leshem and Lissak (2001) mentioned a number of factors that have helped the Russian immigrants retain their home culture and identity. One of these is that the 1990s immigrants are basically an immigrant community who came to Israel mainly because of push factors rather than due to pull factors that have to do with Israel as a Jewish state. In addition, this community is highly educated with strong human resources. Also, immigrants form a strong and large Russian-speaking community in Israel, are highly exposed to the Russian media in Israel and in the home countries, have weak control of the Hebrew language and use it on a limited basis, and benefit from open borders and relationships between Israel and the FSU countries. Lissitsa (2007a: 239) adds another central factor that has helped preserve the boundaries of diaspora among Russian immigrants related to their *cultural pride* and common *Russian language.*

Leshem and Lissak cite the change in the formal absorption policy in Israel as a major factor that has facilitated the retention of the home culture among these immigrants. They emphasize that for the first time the absorption policy is marked by less control and involvement of formal authorities in Israel. Moreover, the increasing pluralism and multiculturalism in Israeli society allows continuing diversity and collective organization of different groups (Leshem and Lissak, 2001). Elias and Caspi (2007: 194) reached a similar conclusion. They contend that Israeli society seems to have witnessed a transition in recent years as far as the absorption of immigrants, from

> the unequivocally active and militant absorption policy of melting pot, seeking to accelerate fusion of all immigrants into a national entity, with a uniform linguistic and cultural identity, to a multicultural conception of the society in which diverse social groups receive a high degree of cultural autonomy.

Shamai and Ilatov (2001), who examined this issue through the attitudes of students among the longtime Israeli population and the educational practices of the school system, reach a completely different conclusion. They emphasized that despite the positive attitudes and openness of these students toward immigrants from the FSU, their views were largely assimilatory. The same applies to the education system, where contrary to the declared policies, in practice the education system adopted a strict policy of assimilation toward immigrants who “were expected to blend in, abandoning their past, heritage and culture” (Shamai and Ilitov, 2001: 681). In this sense, Israel has never adopted a pluralistic or multicultural approach (ibid.: 684). Traditionally, the education system has adopted a policy of desocialization (in the sense of erasing immigrants' former culture) and resocialization (implanting a new culture for immigrants compatible with the existing dominant *Ashkenazi* culture) (see Bar-Yoseph, 1968). This orientation has continued over time, where the dominant culture in Israel has always emphasized a unifying attitude toward Jewish immigrant groups in perspective of Jewish nation-building (see Goldscheider, 2015).

Likewise, Isakova (2000: 89) postulates that formal Israel does not tolerate ethnic diversity and very much fears the pressure of organized ethnic groups. One of the main reasons has to do with the "doctrine of the Israeli-Hebrew culture, which is itself an ethno-centric culture" (ibid.: 90). According to Isakova, the first loophole in the dominant culture of the *Yisraelitiot* (Israel elite) appeared in the 1950s in the form of the *Mizrahim*, who came with an Arabic cultural background, but there were no other groups to enlarge this loophole since the cultural uniqueness of the Eastern European Jewish communities had been already erased by the Zionist establishment (Isakova, 2000: 91).

The 1990s Russian immigrants did enlarge this loophole, though they did so spontaneously without any previous plans. Nevertheless, the Israeli establishment was unable to delegitimize the demands of this group, as it had done with other immigrant groups in the past (ibid.: 92). Isakova (2000: 95) adds that Soviet immigrants feel a need to identify themselves as Russian Jews, and thus they seek a cultural partnership with Israelis. She postulates that this Jewish-Russian cultural partnership has broad implications for the fate of Jewish secular culture as whole and may form a basis for the unity of contemporary Jewry.

Lissitsa et al. (2002) reach a conclusion similar to that of Isakova. They contend that the melting-pot ideology is still dominant in Israeli society, but the totality of this ideology has decreased immensely. Today, veteran Israeli society still demands that Russian immigrants adjust to its norms, without any clear requirement that the immigrants give up their original culture (2002: 200). This is because the ideology of the melting pot did not fit the Russian immigrants. They did not accept the cultural superiority and dominant norms of the longtime residents, did not show any signs of adjusting to the expectations of veteran Israeli society, and some even did not want any dialogue with it (Lissitsa et al., 2002: 190).

Indeed, based on a detailed analysis of the folk culture of the Russian immigrants in Israel, Fialkova and Yelenevskaya (2007) concluded that these immigrants were “the first group who actively opposed assimilation policies and showed determination to preserve the culture of the old country. Having gone through assimilation in the USSR, Soviet Jews were not ready to repeat the experience in Israel.” Based on their analysis, the authors emphasized that these immigrants are better termed “*ex-Soviets in Israel*” who form a Soviet “*Russian diaspora*” (ibid.: 300).

Thus, as concluded by Niznik (2012), the 1990s immigrants from the FSU pose a greatest challenge to the “one language-one nation policy” that dominated the absorption strategy of the Israeli authorities for a long time. These immigrants very soon established their own Russian-language media, produced an independent educational network with Russian contents, and created their own cultural institutes and literature. In fact, Russian immigrants have forced decision makers to treat the Russian language differently than any other foreign language in Israel and to accept the continuity of this language in the education system and throughout the media (ibid.: 196).

Subjective factors: ethnic consciousness and sense of solidarity

The immigrants’ ethnic-cultural consciousness was manifested in their ongoing (even growing) and sweeping support for Russian culture and in the continued significance of ethnic organizations: 93% of the respondents in the 2010 survey (compared with 91% in the first survey—1999) considered their children’s knowledge of Russian to be important or very important. Similar to the first survey, 88% considered their children’s familiarity with Russian culture to be important or very important; 83% (compared with 80% in the first survey) deemed the continued existence of Russian cultural institutions in Israel to be important or very important; 73% (compared with 60% in the first survey) considered the continued existence of informal education programs in Russian to be important or very important, even when parallel programs existed in Hebrew.

Support among the Soviet immigrants in Israel for the continuity of the Russian language was very evident in the focus group discussions (conducted January–February 2018) among younger and older participants alike. When the moderator asked the participants of the younger group whether they think it is important that their children know Russian, the participants simultaneously answered: “Yes, for sure.” The moderator then asked: “Why do you think it is important for your children to know Russian?” Here, participants mentioned a variety of reasons. Among the typical answers were:

> “It is important to learn another language…”; “It opens many possibilities for the future…”; “It is an important international language…”; “Another language is a freedom”; “A second language is a treasure….”

After hearing these universal answers, one of the participants (we will refer to her as Alexandra) seemed a bit confused. She soon intervened by saying:

> These are not my reasons. For me, Russian is first of all my mother tongue…. This way it is easier for me to speak with my child. Secondly, there are my relatives from Russia. Otherwise, how would he [my child] speak with his grandma, with my friends, I very much want my children to know my friends who live in Russia….

Support for the continuity of the Russian language was also reflected in the answers of the older immigrants ranging between 45 and 67 years old. Note, however, that the older participants not only expressed their attitudes but also referred to concrete examples to support their assertions about maintaining the Russian language in Israel. Following are some typical answers to the moderator’s question: “Why do you think it is important for your children to know Russian?”

Yulia, who arrived in Israel 20 years ago, had this to say:

> Yes, of course, we want to keep our [Russian] language. Among those [immigrants] who arrived in the 1990s and afterwards, many do not know Hebrew well. Even if they do, they want to preserve their Russian language. First, because it [Russian] is our central language, and second, we have to take into consideration that there are some [immigrants] who do not want to learn Hebrew at all….

Marta, who arrived in 1996, added:

> When my daughter arrived here [Israel] she was nine years old. Now she speaks a mixed Russian-Hebrew with her husband. He [her husband] is Russian, but this is how they speak. I always quarrel with them, because my granddaughter is in first grade and already it is difficult for her to speak Russian. But I read my granddaughter folklore books in Russian…. I am always in

> a ‘war’ with them [daughter and her husband]. They wanted to register their daughter to a local kindergarten, and I told them, no way, you have to send her to a Russian kindergarten because Russian is another important language. Today my daughter works in a tourist school, and I told her that without Russian she would not have been able to work there…. Language is simply an advantage…. It [Russian] is also our history…. It is our language, our grandfathers’ language….

Diana, who arrived in 1996, added:

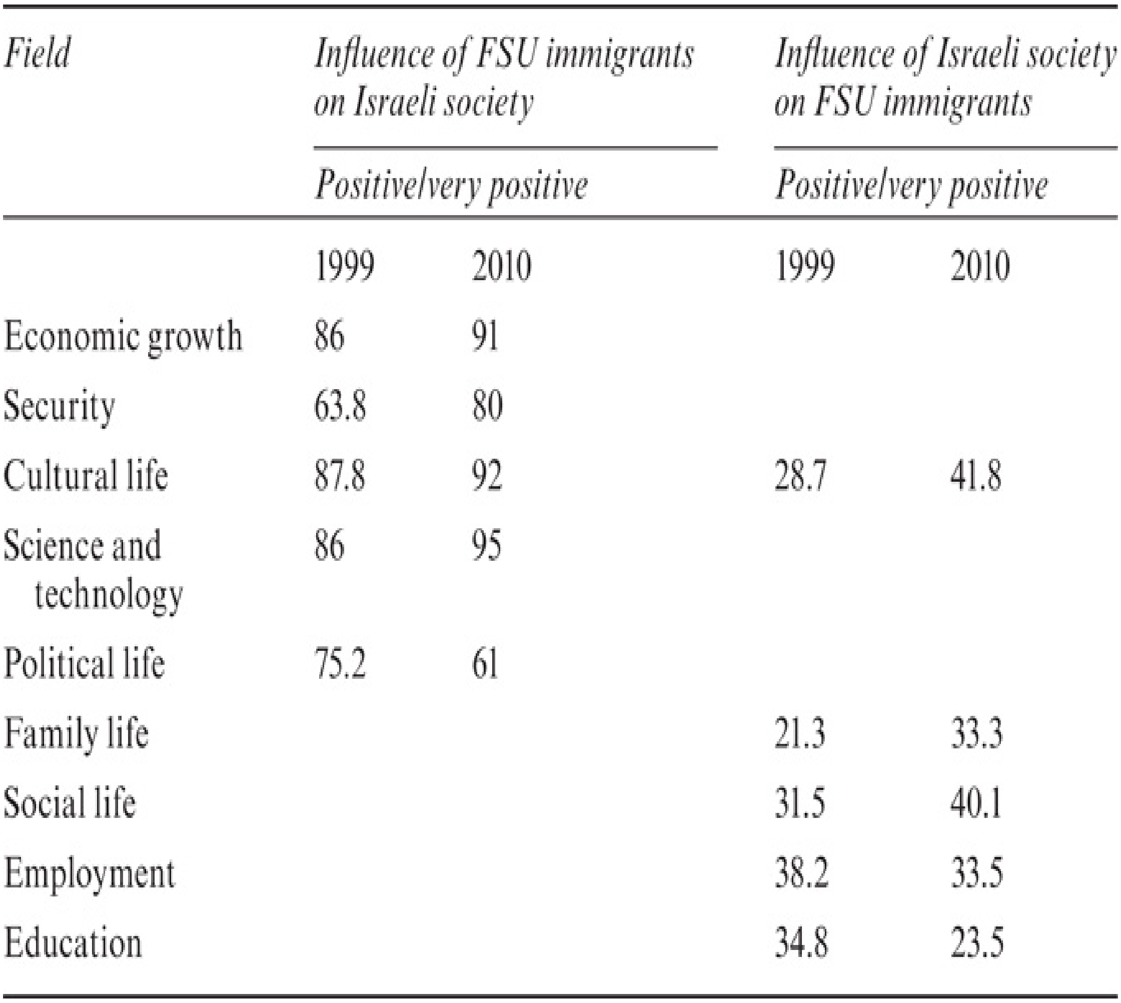
> I had a similar experience…. My son, who arrived in Israel at age seven, absorbed Hebrew very fast. Later on, he himself asked me to send him to study Russian, in order for him to be able to read books in Russian. At the time he spoke Russian but could not read Russian. So he wanted to learn Russian in order to absorb the Russian culture. Just think about the [Russian] books we brought with us—we cannot at all be separated from them….

Alex, who arrived in 2010, enthusiastically concluded:

> I always thought Russian is desirable in any case. The homeland might be ugly but it is a homeland [Russian joke]…. I was born there and grew up there….

The immigrants’ cultural condescension toward Israeli society is evident in their perception that their own influence on Israeli society in various areas is far more positive than Israeli society’s influence on them (see also Adler, 2004). This trend, already prominent in the 1999 survey, has become even more pronounced over time. The respondents believed their own influence on Israeli society to be its most positive in the following areas: Israeli culture (92% of the respondents in the 2010 survey, up from 87.8% in the 1999 survey, rated the immigrants’ influence as positive or very positive); science and technology in Israel (95% in the 2010 survey, up from 86% in the earlier one); economic growth (91% and 86%, respectively); and security (80% and 63.8%, respectively). The only area in which the immigrants’ assessment of their positive influence on Israeli society has decreased over time was politics—although most respondents (61% in the 2010 survey, down from 75.2% in the earlier one) still perceived the immigrants’ influence as positive or very positive (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Evaluation of Mutual Influence of Israeli Society and FSU Immigrants (the 1999 and 2010 Surveys, Percentages)



Field	*Influence of FSU immigrants on Israeli society*		*Influence of Israeli society on FSU immigrants*	
	Positive/very positive		*Positive/very positive*	
	1999	2010	1999	2010
Economic growth	86	91		
Security	63.8	80		
Cultural life	87.8	92	28.7	41.8
Science and technology	86	95		
Political life	75.2	61		
Family life			21.3	33.3
Social life			31.5	40.1
Employment			38.2	33.5
Education			34.8	23.5

The immigrants' belief regarding their strong positive impact on Israeli society was reflected in the focus group discussions, even though most participants thought the impact has been in two directions, with both Israelis and Russians affecting each other in various ways. One interesting finding is that those who thought one group's impact on the other has been clearly stronger were more vocal than those who supported a more complex two-way impact.

The following examples of young participants of the focus groups depict the voices of those who thought the Russian impact on Israeli society has been stronger than the other way around. Maksim had this to say:

> We brought with us many cultural values, our traditions, even our holidays like celebration of the [Gregorian] New Year, our values on how to behave toward old people and many other things… and not only culture, we brought with us a vision, the Soviet way of life, societal life, yes, the way of behaving in society. Also, we have had an impact on the [Israeli] army for sure…. I personally have known many Russian officers in the

> [Israeli] army and got to know Israeli officers, and they represent completely different types…. For Russians the army is a serious matter, while for the others [Israeli officers] it is… like a casual summer camp….

Masha added:

> I agree with Maksim…. Yes, Israeli culture has affected Russian culture, and Russian culture has affected Israeli culture…. First of all the Russian *aliyah* was a huge *aliyah*. You hear a lot of Russian in Israel. It is present almost everywhere. This is understandable…. This is the way it should be. When I go to Ashkelon to visit my father, I feel I am like visiting Russia. All the people there [in Ashkelon] speak Russian. You simply get on a bus and hear everybody speaking Russian…. It is so obvious that when I enter an Israeli store, the Israeli saleswoman speaks to me in Russian. Of course it is broken Russian, but at least she tries [all the participants laugh]….

As far as perceptions of the immigrants' impact on Israeli society, the discussion with the older group revealed a picture similar to that of the young participants, though with one major difference—the old generation feels more superiority toward Israelis than the younger generation.

Irina, who arrived in 2015, had this to say:

> I think the Russian-Soviet *aliyah* has very much affected Israeli society. Israel is no longer the same as it was twenty-five years ago [when the Soviet immigration wave began]…. Many intelligent people arrived with this wave, people with highly needed professions. For example, here [in Israel] there were almost no music teachers. Also, so many physicians arrived…. Of course this immigration has had a major impact….

In a similar vein, Sonya (arrived in 1997) added:

> I also think the Soviet *aliyah* has very much affected [Israel]. I think that today Israelis do not dress the way they used to twenty years ago. Now Israelis dress in much more elegant and beautiful clothing. [Israeli] men no longer take out garbage—excuse me—dressed in their underwear—almost none….

A number of participants mentioned reciprocal effects between the immigrants and Israeli society. Diana (arrived in 1996) had this to say:

> I think it is 50/50. Israelis have also, undoubtedly, affected us…. The Israeli style of dress is more casual and free. Perhaps coming to a wedding wearing sports shoes is an Israeli style that is more easy going…. It is an Oriental style…. After all we know where we are now. The Orient is a sensitive issue [a famous expression from a Russian movie]. They [Israelis] have also greatly affected our cuisine. Israeli cuisine is well known worldwide as the best and the healthiest cuisine. Did we know anything at all about olive oil in the Soviet Union?

Tatiana (came in 2001) interjected:

> Yes, they [Israelis] behave freely…. They do not have *an inferiority complex.* Every woman thinks she is the most beautiful….

Diana:

> In any event, what I like the most here is the *ceremony surrounding food,* the idea that you should serve food to everybody, feed everybody respectfully…. I very much like this way….

Although the overall trend toward feeling superior vis-à-vis Israeli society has remained unchanged over time among the immigrants, their assessment of the positive influence of Israeli society on themselves has increased in the following fields: cultural life (from 28.7% in 1999 to 41.8% in 2010); social life (from 31.5% in 1999 to 40.1% in 2010); and family life (from 22.3% in 1999 to 33.3% in 2010). At the same time, the immigrants' assessment of the positive influence of Israeli society has decreased in the fields of education (from 34.8% in 1999 to 23.5% in 2010) and employment (from 38.2% in 1999 to 33.5% in 2010).

A number of older participants in our focus group, although a minority, thought that the impact of Israelis on Russians is much more than the other way around. Galina had this to say:

> It's difficult for me to determine who affected whom? But Israel as a state and the mentality [of Israelis] have very much affected Russians in Israel. Whether this was in a positive or a negative direction remains a matter of personal opinion, but this is what happened….

Another participant (Anatoli) added:

> I agree with Galina regarding the effect of Israel on the Russians…. As to the effect of the Russian-speaking

> community on Israel, we must ask what is considered an effect. Can the fact there are many Russian stores in Hadar [a neighborhood in Haifa, largely populated by Russians] be considered a Russian impact? On balance, I agree that the effect of Israel on Russians is more than the other way around….

Self-identification

Several questions in the survey explored the central components of self-identification among the respondents. One of the key questions was: "When you define your own identity, to what extent do you or do you not feel Israeli, Jewish, Zionist and Russian?" A comparison between the findings of the two surveys shows that 20 years after their arrival in Israel, the 1990s immigrants from the FSU formed a complex, multiple, Russian-Israeli identity that is largely secular-Jewish in character and marked by increasingly nationalist-Zionist elements.

These data show that the Jewish component of the immigrants' identity has remained stable over time (with 79% of the respondents feeling "Jewish" to a large or very large extent, compared with 78% in the 1999 survey). The Israeli component, however, has increased in importance: 66% of the respondents (compared with 44% in the 1999 survey) reported feeling Israeli to a high or very high degree. The data indicate that the ethnic-Russian component has remained relatively stable over time, with a slight decrease: 57% of the respondents (compared with 66% in the first-1999 survey) reported feeling Russian to a large or very large extent. It is noteworthy, however, that the wording of the question was changed slightly: the 1999 survey referred to "immigrants from the FSU," whereas the 2010 survey referred to "Russians" more directly. Finally, the data indicate that the Zionist component of the immigrants' identity has grown in importance, with 43% of the respondents (compared with 21% in the earlier survey) self-identifying as Zionist to a large or very large extent (see Figure 4.3).

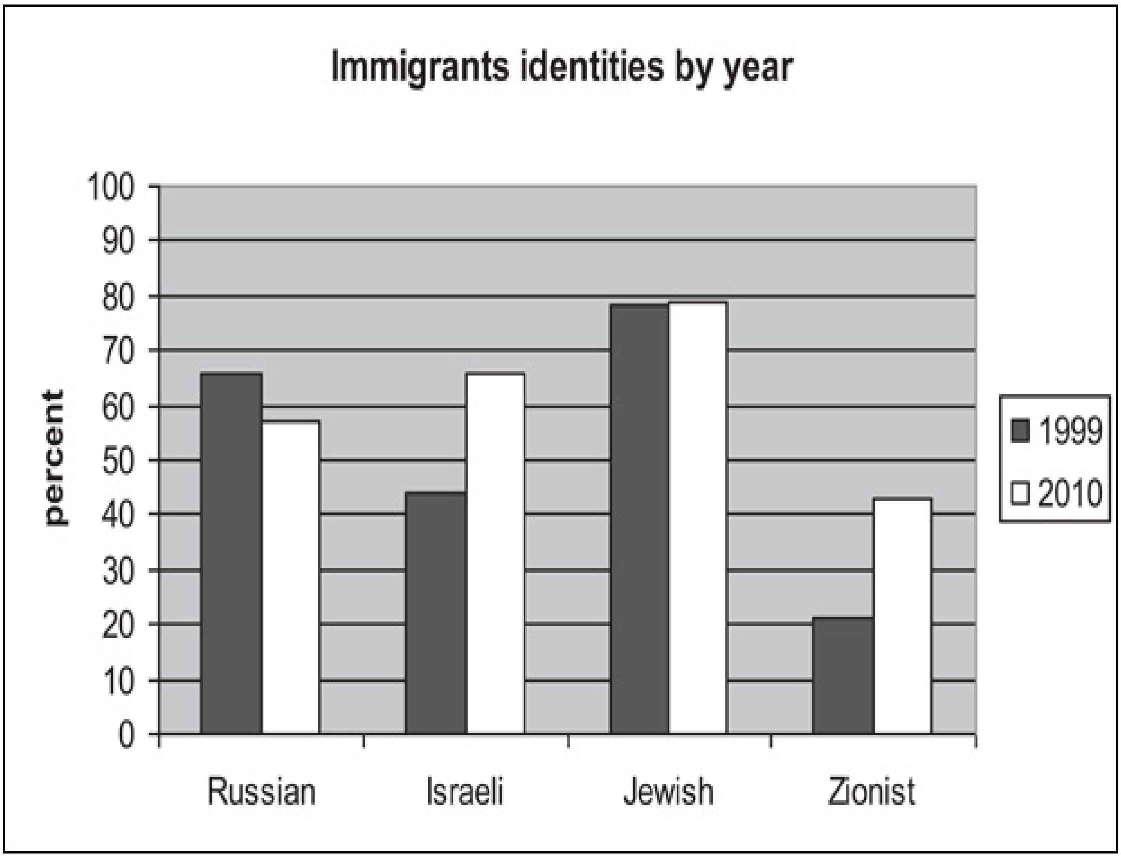


Figure 4.3 Types of Identity among Russian Immigrants over Time (the 1999 and 2010 Surveys, Percentages).

The discussions in the focus groups (2018) clearly reflected the aforementioned hyphenated type of identity among the immigrants, as reflected in the findings of the 1999 and 2010 surveys. This multiple identity simultaneously includes two basic components: the home society and the host society, namely *Israeli-Russian identity* or *Russian-Israeli identity.*

Following are selected quotations of young participants in the discussion group in answer to the moderator's question: "How do you define your identity?"

Vladimir (came in 2009):

> I have an answer that immediately came to my mind—I define myself as a Russian-speaking Israeli. Oh … without any religious implications….

Roman (came in 2008): "I am Israeli-Russian…."

Yulia (came in 1998):

> I would consider myself as Russian, and formally, according to the documents, as Israeli. But only according to documents….

Natalya (came in 2001):

> I am not sure, I consider myself as more Israeli, let us say without any national or religious implications. Because, on the one hand I left at the age of eight, so to say that I have a strong connection to Russia, I don't know. But I continue to watch news from Russia and many other programs in Russian. So, I haven't lost contact with what is happening in Russia. However, generally speaking, I can't say that I am more connected to Russia or to Israel…. It is somewhere in between….

Alek (came in 1995):

> I don't like to define my identity through any country, so I won't say I am more Russian or more Israeli. I am a man of the world…. True, now I live in Israel, obey its rules, without any religious connotations. But I may become a citizen of another country. Yes, I am more Israeli than Russian, but with many Russian aspects….

Boris (came in 2010):

> When I think of Israeli society, I don't exactly feel a part of it, but I am also not part of Russian society…. I can define myself as Jewish, but without any religious implications, it is more a historical and cultural meaning, as I felt in Russia….

Alisa (came in 2009):

> It seems that my identity is 50/50…. I live here but I feel strongly connected to Russia because a large part of my family is still there. In addition, I celebrate a number of Jewish holidays here together with my adoptive family in the framework of the Naale program.

Mila (came in 2012):

> I am very impressed by the expression 'a citizen of the world'. In fact I can't affiliate myself to one country or another…. I am a citizen [with emphasis] of this country [Israel] and my former country [Russia]. But I don't feel any connectedness to Israel in terms of culture and religion… So I am neither 100% Israeli nor 100% Russian…. I am something in between….

As these responses show, most participants manifest *a multiple identity* that simultaneously includes three main components; Israeli, Jewish, and Russian-ethnic. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that as the participants themselves emphasized, the Jewish component has basically a secular meaning for them, the Israeli component mainly reflects citizenship content while the Russian-ethnic component reflects ethno-cultural content. Another interesting point that should be considered is that a number of participants spoke about themselves not only as Israeli citizens but also simultaneously as Russian citizens. This is quite a new phenomenon that was absent among focus groups conducted in the wake of the first survey in 1999. This may reflect the dual sense of homeness that is part of the identity of Russian immigrants as a transnational community (see also Lissitsa, 2007a; Remennick, 2009). Such identity is also affected by the fact that most participants in the focus group mentioned that they kept their Russian passport along with the Israeli one. It should be noted that dual citizenship has become increasingly salient among immigrants worldwide. In this sense, Russian immigrants represent a central global type of current international immigrants who have utilized the increasing tolerance for dual nationality in home and destination countries (see Faist et al., 2004). The maintenance of dual citizenship has contributed to the strengthening of complex, multiple or hybrid identities among immigrants, which is also a well-known global phenomenon (see Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2012).

In addition, the identity mentioned by some participants of being a *citizen of the world* or a *man of the world* is also new. This type of global identity reflects an open orientation toward the possibility of having a third citizenship by moving to another country in the future.

The older participants of the focus groups seemed a bit surprised in response to the moderator's question, "How do you define your identity?" It was so natural for them to introduce themselves using the two major components: the ethnic component of Russian or Russian-speaking and the citizenship component of Israeli. That is, the dominant identity among both groups, the young and the old, was hyphenated*: Russian-Israeli, Israeli-Russian, or Russian-speaking Israeli.*

Following are selected answers of the participants:

Marta (arrived in 1996): "Russian-speaking Israeli."

Irina (arrived in 2015): "I would define myself the same—Russian-speaking Israeli."

Sergei (arrived in 1996): "Russian-Israeli."

Egor (arrived in 1990): "Russian-speaking Israeli."

Tatiana (arrived in 2001): "I myself sit on two chairs—Unfortunately, I am Israeli, and at the same time I have some nostalgia toward Moscow and Russia!"

The answers of the older group also reflect a multiple type of identity, although among them the ethnic-Russian component was presented in a more salient way as compared to the younger participants.

Other identification

The retention of ethnic identity among immigrants is affected not only by immigrants' identification but also by how the receiving society identifies them (see Gans, 1996; Kibria, 1997; Zimmerman et al., 2007; Amit, 2012; Daha, 2013). In this sense, the receiving society's categorization of newcomers according to their ethnic origin plays a central role in the emergence of "reactive ethnicity" among immigrants. Although this reactive ethnicity reinforces ethnic identity, it also leads to estrangement and alienation among immigrants and fuels prejudice against them (Phinny et al., 2001; Kosic and Phalet, 2006).

Based on the 2007 Ruppin survey data, Karin Amit highlights the significant impact of identity as perceived by veteran Israelis on self-identity among recent immigrant groups in Israel, including immigrants from the FSU (Amit, 2012: 1304). Amit indicates that "the most significant correlation was found with perceived Israeli identity by others, indicating that the more the immigrants feel that veteran Israelis define them as Israeli, the more Israeli they feel." In a recent nationwide study on sense of belonging and life satisfaction among post-1990 immigrants in Israel, Raijman and Geffen (2017: 12) conclude that their findings support those in the literature indicating that immigrants' perception of how they are defined by the receiving society affects their extent of life satisfaction and sense of belonging to the host society. In this regard, immigrants who realize they are perceived by Israeli society according to their ethnic origin (and not according to their national identity, Israeli or Jewish) report lower levels of life satisfaction and of sense of belonging to Israeli society (ibid.).

Different studies have indicated that Israel is an "ethnicizing" society in the sense that people are basically categorized by their ethnic origin (see Al-Haj, 2004a; Raijman and Geffen, 2017). This fact was evident in the attitude toward the mass immigration of *Mizrahim* in the 1950s, who were primarily perceived by the veteran dominant *Ashkenazim* as ethnically different (Eisenstadt, 1984, 1993). The same trend also applies to the mass immigration from the FSU. Shamai and Ilitov (2001) concluded that these immigrants have been labeled by veteran Israelis as Russians and their integration has been linked to their cultural assimilation within the dominant Israeli culture (ibid.). Therefore, the encounter between Russian newcomers and veteran Jewish Israelis has been characterized by continuing conflict and social alienation. Russians failed to meet the expectations of old-timers in that they were more pragmatic than Zionist and more Russian than Jewish in their lifestyles and cultural orientation (Remennick, 2012: 2).

The present study lends support for the aforementioned conclusions. The findings show that the majority of immigrants believe that veteran Israelis identify them, first and foremost, according to their ethnic origin as Russians (66.9%) and only a minority believe they are identified as Israelis (18.5%) or as Jews (9.7%). These findings are similar to those of the 1999 survey, with a slight increase in "other identification" as Israelis and a decrease in identification as Russians (see Figure 4.4).

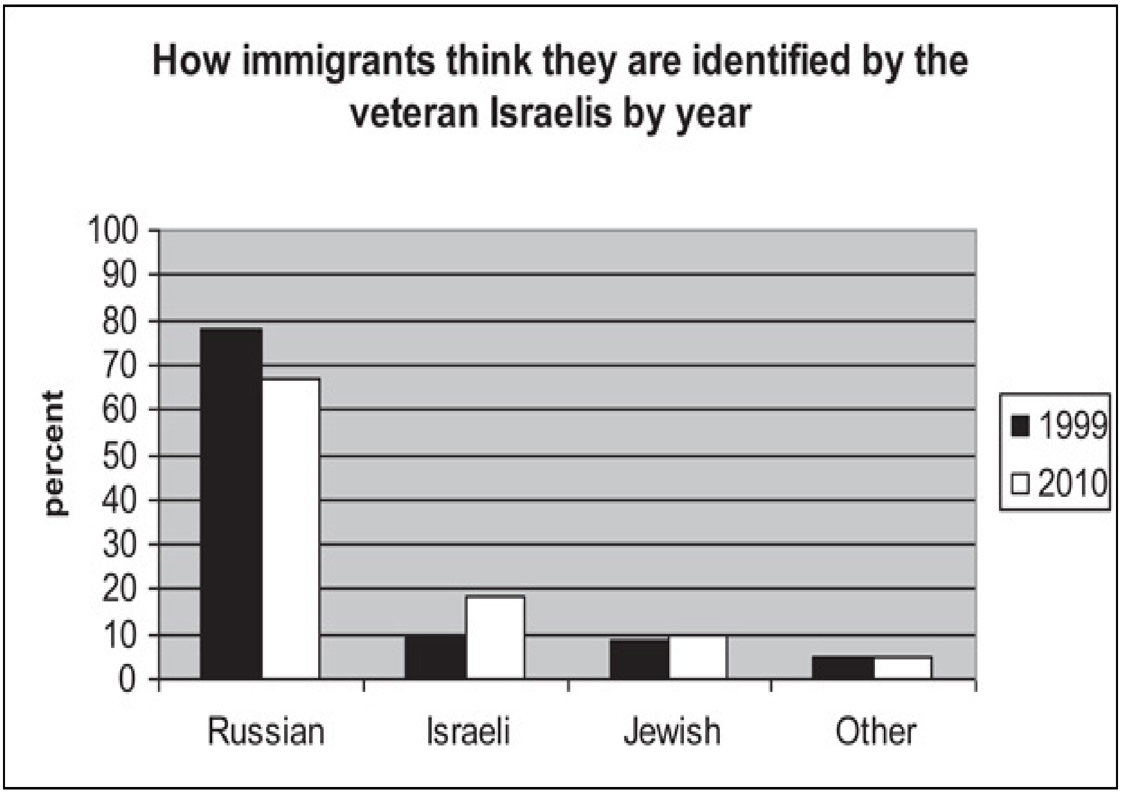


Figure 4.4 Immigrants' Perceptions of Their Identification by Veteran Israelis (the 1999 and 2010 Surveys, Percentages).

Most participants in the focus groups indicated that the *Sabras* (old-timers) basically identify them as Russians, whether because of their accent or because of their outer appearance. One of the participants in our focus groups (a 31-year-old student who we will refer to as Alina) spoke in detail about the “other identification” she has experienced:

> I have had a difficult experience regarding how Israelis relate to me. I have always been perceived by them as Russian. I encountered situations which were even insulting to me. A year and a half after our arrival in Israel my father passed away. At the time I was working in a store as a salesperson, and one of my Israeli colleagues knew about it. I had an argument with her that was not connected whatsoever to my ethnic origin, but very soon she started to say “go back to your home country, and it would even be better if you went to the place where your father is resting now….” Alina added that this woman was an Israeli of Moroccan origin.

A similar picture emerged among older participants. When the moderator asked them how they think veteran Israelis relate to them, most participants said that the *Sabra* old-timers see them first and foremost as “Russians or Russian immigrants.” Note that all participants used the word *us* when speaking about Soviet immigrants and *they* when speaking about veteran Israelis. These expressions clearly reflect in-group and out-group perceptions.

Sergei (came in 1996) had this to say:

> We’ve been here about twenty years, even more. The time has come for *them* [veterans] to see *us* as Israelis. In schools, classmates do not see our children as Israelis, they see them as immigrants despite the fact that our children were born in Israel….

Alisa (came in 1996) added:

> Indeed, in Russia they related to us as *Jews,* and here [in Israel], they relate to us as *Russians*….

Irina (came in 2015):

> I also think they [veterans] relate to *us* differently…. I heard about many incidents of negative treatment of *Russian speaking citizens*….True, I still speak very bad Hebrew. Of course they [veterans] would see me as a new immigrant. But also as Israeli. They [veterans] always ask: now things are good in Russia, so why did you come?

Angela (came in 1997) added:

> *We* came from different countries [in the FSU], and *they* also came from various countries like Yemen and Morocco, but they form a group, exactly like us. *We* are Israeli, but at the same time from the former Soviet Union….

Diana (came in 1996):

> What is important is not how they see *us* but rather how *we* see ourselves. If we always live just with our group, in our milieu, and speak mainly Russian, so excuse me, what kind of Israelis are we? But if we try to understand them, to enter their society, understand their attitude….

Somebody interrupts her: "It seems that *they* (Israelis) even see Lieberman as Russian."

The moderator asked: "And how do you want Israelis to see you?"

There was almost a consensus among participants that they want veterans to see them as "Israelis or Israeli citizens, as equals." The emphasis was on equal citizenship. This was well reflected in Irina's words:

> I want *them* [veterans] to relate to us as they relate to themselves … as Israelis, as equal, as citizens of the same state…. When we say we want them to see us as Israelis as a matter of course, we are hinting that we want to be treated as equals.

Most focus group participants agreed with Irina. A large number of participants wanted such identification as part of their desired feeling as equal Israeli-citizens. One participant (27-year-old Yavgeni) had this to say:

> Yes, I want them [*Sabras*] to relate to me as an Israeli. Because this is important to me, it means that I am equal, that I have fulfilled my duties as a citizen, that I have served in the army, that I pay taxes, and that I have 100% done something important for this country, and that I am loyal to the State of Israel.

In this chapter, we have dealt with identity patterns and ethnic formation among Russian immigrants. Utilizing the 1999 and 2010 surveys' data and discussions of focus groups (conducted in 2018), we applied three main sets of elements of ethnicity and ethnic identity; *objective elements*, *subjective elements*, and *behavioral elements*. In addition, throughout our analysis of the immigrants' identity patterns, we explored *self-definition* (as perceived by immigrants) and *other definition* (as immigrants believe they are identified by veteran Israelis).

In the next chapter, we will analyze an important additional element of ethnicity, which is reflected in political orientation, political mobilization, and political collective action among these immigrants.

5 Political behavior and the activation of ethnic boundaries

Theoretical framework

Migration is usually viewed as an integral part of broader social transformations and processes at the local and global levels (see Castles, 2010; Oudenhoven and Ward, 2013). This view notwithstanding, migration also has its own dynamics, which in turn affects social change, ethnic structure, and power hierarchies in both home and host societies (Van Hear, 2010: 1531). As a result, the "age of immigration" has already changed the world and the social structure of many developed and developing societies and has had far-reaching repercussions for their national identity, political orientation, and political structure (Castles and Miller, 2003: 286).

The role of ethnic groups as "political interest groups" (see Brass, 1991) continues and has even been strengthened in light of globalization. According to Anthony Smith, processes connected with globalization have accelerated and broadened preexisting political trends, including ethnic politics (Smith, 2001: 138). In their analysis of "identity politics and political identities," Markus Thiel and Roger Coate (2010) indicated that in the era of globalization, there is a paradoxical resurgence of ethnic identities, not only to respond to cultural-primordial needs of the group but also to fulfill instrumental needs. In this sense, most identity markers are assumed or instrumental in that "even ethnic or racial characteristics can be (de)emphasized or played up/down" (see also Benhabib, 2007, cited by Thiel and Coate, 2010: 10). This type of identity is often defined as "situational ethnicity" (Castles and Miller, 2003), "circumstantial ethnicity" (Scott, 1990), or "instrumental ethnicity" (Jones, 1997). Despite their differences, all these terms treat ethnic identity as a pragmatic tool used by a certain group for political and social mobilization and to increase its access to the national resources and opportunity structure (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Jones, 1997; Castles and Miller, 2003).

Several perspectives have attempted to explain ethnic mobilization. The most central are the reactive approach, the competition approach, and the political opportunity structure (POS) approach. The reactive perspective postulates that ethnic mobilization is fueled by people's grievances about their disadvantaged status and their determination to redress it and pursue their political interests (see Gurr, 1993, cited by Zoltan, 1998: 310). This approach assumes a direct relationship between reported discrimination and ethnic mobilization, where the disadvantaged group tends to form a segregated ethnic framework in order to change the rules of the game set up by the dominant group (Hechter, 1975).

According to Hechter, the maintenance of an ethnic group in the periphery forms a weapon in that it offers the possibility of socialization as well as political mobilization (Hechter, 1975: 137). In this sense, Hechter emphasizes that "the greater the economic inequalities between collectivities, the greater is the probability that the less advantaged collectivity will be status solidarity, and hence, will resist political integration" (ibid.: 43). As far as immigrants are concerned, the feeling of insecurity in an unfamiliar environment might strengthen ethnic solidarity and allegiances (see Heribert and Giliomee, 1979). In addition, the rejection by the dominant group and the stigmatization encountered by immigrants might enhance the retention of ethnic identity. Hence, the rise, decline, or disappearance of ethnic affinity depends primarily on the policies of the dominant group (Heribert, 1989).

The competitive approach maintains that ethnicity and ethnic boundaries are used as an instrument for mobilization with the aim of increasing a group's access to economic, social, and political resources, regardless of its location in the stratification system. In other words, ethnic mobilization might exist among both disadvantaged and well-established groups (Olzak, 1982, 2006; Goldenberg, 1989; Gurr, 2000). The competition approach postulates that ethnic solidarity and mobilization might actually increase in the presence of improvement in the socioeconomic standing of an ethnic group and a decrease in the ethnic division of labor (Olzak, 1982; Ben-Rafael and Sharot, 1991). In this sense, ethnic mobilization is fueled by a group's desire to improve its status and circumstances vis-à-vis other ethnic groups when new competitive opportunities are introduced or when a dominant group attempts to impose its dominance over newly competing groups (Olzak, 1998, 2006; Zoltan, 1998).

The competitive perspective rejects the "primordial models" according to which ethnic identity is based mainly on primordial attachments that are involuntary and coercive (Scott, 1990). Instead, the competitive approach emphasizes that ethnicity is an important framework for mobilization because it combines group and individual interests with effective ties. In this context, Daniel Bell (1975: 171) maintains that ethnicity "is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities have to reemerge, but as a strategic choice by individuals." In other words, ethnicity should be viewed as an "instrumental phenomenon" that "gains social significance mainly when ethnic symbols are invoked and manipulated by political entrepreneurs in response to threat or opportunities" (Gurr, 2000: 6).

Scholars advocating the competitive approach believe that collective action plays an important role in strengthening ethnic consciousness and ethnic identification. On the other hand, they also contend that these factors are important for the success and endurance of collective action (Olzak, 2006: 35). Thus, Olzak concludes that group identity is both an important mobilizing strategy and a consequence of mobilization (Olzak, 2006: 49). In this sense, we may borrow Al-Haj's analysis of "*instrumentalized kinship*" according to which the kinship group is viewed as being "*individual centered*" and is utilized by its members for social and political mobilization (see Al-Haj, 1995: 324). Therefore, "*instrumentalized ethnicity*" functions as the outcome of practical considerations made by the group members and is based on "pragmatic needs, rather than ideological commitment" (ibid.).

The POS perspective was developed mainly in the context of the analysis of social movements and the conditions that affect their likelihood to succeed. The POS perspective delineates the formal and informal political conditions that may facilitate or hinder the activation of ethnic borders as a framework for political mobilization, including the institutional environment, the presence or absence of elite allies, the shift in political alliances and other contextual factors (see literature review by Vermeersch, 2011). In the words of Sidney Tarrow:

> by political opportunity structure, I refer to consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent or national—dimensions of political environment which either encourage or discourage

> people from using collective action … Social movements form when ordinary citizens, sometimes encouraged by leaders, respond to changes in opportunities that lower the cost of collective action.
>
> (Tarrow, 1994: 18)

In this regard, changes in the POS create incentives for collective actions. But in order for political action to endure, there is a need for a mobilizing leadership that acts through social networks and utilizes identifiable symbols drawn from cultural frameworks of meaning (ibid.: 6).

Various studies have highlighted the important role of the state in ethnic revival and mobilization as a basis for understanding the phenomenon of ethnicity (Nagel, 1982; Nielsen, 1985, Adam, 1989; Banton, 1998; Smith, 2001). Enloe (1981: 132) argues that the state may become a critical factor in generating ethnic mobilization. At the same time, Enloe emphasizes that

> ethnic identification may be a mix of both internal generated dynamics and pressures from the external environment. Ethnic group mobilization, on the other hand, virtually never occurs without some crucial external stimulus. The actions of state authorities frequently provide that necessary stimulus. Sometimes it is intentional; most often it is unintentional or even contrary to the state's intent.
>
> (ibid.)

The impact of the state on internal social, economic, and political issues is becoming even more relevant in the wake of the shift of state functions and powers from external sovereignty into internal-domestic control (Smith, 2001). As noted by Anthony Smith, "in the name of its national character and the welfare of its citizenry…, the national state is becoming much more centralized, coordinated and powerful" (2001: 124–125). This is especially true in countries heavily based on immigration, where demographic patterns reflect ideology, politics, and group conflict (Goldscheider, 2015). The legitimization—and in many cases the support and encouragement—that the state provides for ethnicity as a basis of mobilization enhances ethnic identities and perpetuates ethnic divisions (Nagel, 1982; Nielsen, 1985; Brass, 1991; Gurr, 2000). The role of the state can be especially significant in determining the success of ethnic mobilization (Zoltan, 1998: 319). As noted by Gurr (2000: 6), the impact of *ethnicizing states* is crucial in mobilizing group consciousness and mobilization. "Treat a group differently, by denial or privilege, and its members become more self-conscious about their common bonds and interests, minimize differences, and communal identification becomes less significant as a unifying principle" (Gurr, 2000: 6). In addition, ethnicity can be easily manipulated by governments and leaders of the group itself (Adam, 1989: 19).

Ethnic mobilization can take different forms of collective action, including the establishment of social movements, participation in protests, membership in political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations, and voting in local and national elections (see Tarrow, 1994; Chandra, 2004; Vermeersch, 2011). In this chapter, I focus on political mobilization as reflected in the voting patterns in the national elections for the Israeli parliament (the Knesset) among Russian immigrants.

Note that the term "ethnic party" has several definitions (see Horowitz, 1985; Chandra, 2004, 2011). These definitions take into consideration one or more of the following characteristics of the party under analysis: orientation-platform, supporters-voters, and leadership-candidates. Chandra's (2011: 157) comprehensive definition uses eight indicators for identifying a party as "ethnic": the party name, the categories and issues explicitly advocated in the party's campaign, the implicit campaign message, the groups that vote for the party, the composition of the party's votes, the composition of its leadership and its arena of contestation. These indicators are based on the Constructivist Dataset on Ethnicity and Institutions (CDEI). According to these indicators, one can determine whether a party should be defined as "ethnic," "multiethnic," or "non-ethnic."

In connecting between the aforementioned theoretical considerations and the essence of this study of political mobilization among Russian immigrants in Israel, I raise the following questions: What are the main patterns of political behavior among Russian immigrants over time? Do these patterns reflect ethnic mobilization or assimilationist orientation within the existing veteran parties? What are the factors behind these patterns? I attempt to answer these questions by using the data of the 1999 and 2010 surveys and the focus groups conducted in 2018. My analysis concentrates on the 2009 Knesset elections in comparison with the 1999 elections, while also referring to the recent 2013 and 2015 elections.

Background: ethnic politics in Israel

Ethnic parties have always been an integral part of local and national politics in Israel. Already in 1942, immigrants from Germany established the Aliya Hadasha (New Aliya) party chaired by Pinhas Rozen, who served as a minister in the 1950s. Furthermore, since the first Knesset elections in 1949, a number of Sephardic parties have been established. Of these, the most central was the Ihoud Arzi of *Sephardim* and Bnei Edot Hamizrah (the National Federation of *Sephardim* and Jews from Arab countries), which received four seats but was short-lived.

Yet for a long time immigrant or ethnic parties were unsuccessful in Israeli politics. The basic ideology in Israel had been based on the notion of "*kibbutz galuyot*" (ingathering of exiles), which rejects the preservation of ethnicity among immigrants. Moreover, until the late 1970s, the dominant Labor Party succeeded either in co-opting or in displacing the leadership of ethnic communities. Therefore, only in the early 1970s when the melting pot ideology began to erode was an ethnic party of Sephardic Jews (Tami) established, but it was short-lived (Gitelman, 1995). Tami (Tnuat Masoret Yisrael), chaired by Abu Hatzira, was established in 1981, when it won three seats (see Herzog, 1983). Its representation decreased to one seat in the 1984 elections, and subsequently the party disappeared from the political arena (see Epstein, 2006). The most successful *Mizrahi* attempt at political representation was in 1984, when the Shas party was established and won four Knesset seats. Shas reached its peak in the 1999 elections when it won 17 seats. Since then it has lost power, but it still remains one of the two major *Haredi* parties, with seven Knesset seats (2018).

Galili and Bronfman pointed out that the Yisrael Ba'aliya party was inspired by the model setup by Shas (2013: 94). Similar to Shas in the *Mizrahi* community, Yisrael Ba'aliya sought to realize the power of the Russian-speaking community in Israel. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Shas was established by the third generation of *Mizrahi* immigrants, though with the support of the *Ashkenazi* ultra-Orthodox leadership. Unlike the *Mizrahim*, the first generation of 1990s immigrants from the FSU already formed their own parties a few years after their arrival in Israel (see also Kimmerling, 1999), perhaps due to differences in the adjustment of the two groups within Israeli society. In this sense, the adjustment process among *Mizrahim* has been much longer and by far more difficult than among Soviet immigrants (see Smooha, 2008). A study based on a nationwide sample of Soviet immigrants conducted a decade after the arrival of the first wave of these immigrants to Israel revealed that, overall, some 80% were satisfied or very satisfied with their absorption in Israel (Al-Haj and Leshem, 2000: 13).

According to Katz (2000: 155), the decision of Russian immigrants to penetrate the political system also has a psychological aspect. While until 1996, these immigrants felt a great deal of alienation, their rising political power and the fact they have managed to influence the national political structure have considerably increased their feelings of being "at home."

In addition, the starting point of political organization among these two groups to a large extent reflects the differences in their position in the Israeli stratification system. As a group, the Soviet immigrants were much closer to the national power system. Thus, they began with national politics and moved down to local politics, while *Mizrahim* started from the peripheral-local politics at the community-municipal level and moved up to the national Knesset level (see also Horowitz, 2003).

In what follows, we attempt to shed light on the main factors underlying the voting behavior of Soviet immigrants and the new phenomenon of Russian parties.

The voting behavior of Russian immigrants

From the outset, Russian immigrants identified the political arena as a main field in which they could realize their potential power, as reflected in their large numbers, their human capital, and their cohesiveness as a group (see Goldstein and Gitelman, 2004; Khanin, 2012; Shapira, 2012; Galili and Bronfman, 2013). Since the 1992 Knesset elections, the Israeli public and politicians alike have strongly believed that the Soviet immigrant vote can swing the results of elections (Fein, 1995). This belief is based on several factors. The large number of Soviet immigrants coupled with their high voter turnout (similar to that among veteran Jewish Israelis) plays a major role. Moreover, other factors related to Israel's ethno-national nature and to its ethnic-tribal sociopolitical structure have increased the power of the Russian immigrants' vote.

First, the nature of Israeli immigration law (Hok Hashvut, or the Law of Return) facilitates access to the political system as soon as FSU immigrants arrive in Israel. This law allows Jewish immigrants to acquire full citizenship from the moment they arrive in Israel, including suffrage and the right to be elected in national elections (Horowitz, 1998). Having quickly grasped their potential political impact, Russian immigrants have made effective use of these rights. As early as the 1992 elections, the majority they gave to the Labor Party and Meretz played a major role in enabling the left-wing bloc led by Yitzhak Rabin to form the government coalition (Pinis, 1996). Nevertheless, it seems that the two traditional major parties, the Labor party and the Likud, overlooked the political aspirations of the 1990s immigrants. At least during the first decade, and despite the arrival of the first million immigrants, these two parties related to Soviet immigrants as potential voters rather than as political partners. Therefore, neither the Labor party nor the Likud included even a single Knesset member from among these immigrants (Epstein, 2006: 15). Yet the Soviet immigrants had completely different intentions. They sought to take the lead rather than to serve as a reservoir of voters. Arriving in Israel in 1986, Natan Sharansky took full advantage of this. Already in 1996, he established an ethnic-Russian party called Yisrael Ba'aliya. The party won seven Knesset seats and Sharansky became a minister in Netanyahu's government (see Arian and Shamir, 1998). The establishment of Yisrael Ba'aliya, only a few years after the arrival of the first waves of mass immigration from the FSU in the 1990s, was a unique phenomenon. Three of the party's Knesset members were recent immigrants who did not even speak Hebrew. This evoked criticism among some veteran Jewish intellectuals regarding the nature of the Israeli immigration law and the full citizenship rights it grants to Jewish immigrants upon arrival in Israel (see Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 102–103).

The second factor is related to changes in Israeli society that have served as an impetus for ethnic mobilization among Russian immigrants. Several studies have indicated that Israeli society is becoming less collectivistic and more individualistic and pragmatic than in the past (Horowitz, 1996: 513–514). The Jewish political center is more open to pluralism than previously (Ben-Rafael et al., 1998: 354). What is more, in the wake of the failure of the melting pot ideology, cultural continuity among new immigrants has gained increasing legitimacy (Gitelman, 1995). According to Kimmerling, the political success of Soviet immigrants is related to their characteristics as well as to the failure of the original Zionist model. In this sense, Soviet immigrants

> carry the image of themselves as cultural elites, carriers of a 'Great Culture' that has arrived in a society characterized by an 'inferior culture'…. The new immigrants are a constant 'protest

> group' in Israeli society, and tend to continue their cultural, social and economic relations and links with the 'motherland.'
>
> (Kimmerling, 1999: 38)

On the other hand, the strengthening of various sectarian groups in Israel as clearly reflected in the 1996 elections and the successful formation of the first Russian party have been facilitated by the "increase of individualism and hedonistic materialism, and the decrease of the power and mobilization capabilities of the Israeli state" (ibid.: 42–43).

Along the same vein, Nudelman (2002: 105) also notes that the 1990s Russian immigration arrived in an Israeli society that was experiencing a deep ideological crisis. This crisis resulted from the fact that the hierarchy of the long-standing dominant groups and the subordinated groups was gradually being replaced by a new set of horizontal relationships. In this new setting, the national power system is shared by various social ethnic groups. The power struggle of these ethnic groups, which is motivated by group and sectarian interests, has assumed a national character since it develops under conditions of crisis in the Israeli collective identity. Nudelman (2002: 106) adds that this crisis has been exacerbated by deep contradictions that have emerged at the foundations of Israeli democracy, which attempted to be a Jewish and a democratic state at the same time. Such a combination was impossible, since the Jewish character of Israel contradicts its democratic character as far as collective rights of the non-Jewish minorities in Israel are concerned. Moreover, the state's professed democratic-liberal character does not fit the goals of the ultra-Orthodox *Haredi* groups, who aspire to turn Israel into a *halakhic* state (based on Jewish law). Furthermore, the failure of the classic Zionist project emerging from sociodemographic and cultural changes in Israel has served to deepen the aforementioned crisis (ibid.). In this sense, the basic ideology of Zionism to build Israeli society based on one dominant culture by fusing all Jewish groups within the melting pot and thus creating a "new Jew" has failed. Indeed, this ideology callously overlooked the unique cultural and social characteristics of the nondominant ethnic groups (Nudelman, 2002: 108).

A third factor contributing to the rising power of the Soviet immigrant vote is related to the gradual political radicalization of Israeli society since the early 1970s. This has resulted in the demise of the Zionist left and the rise of the right. Not only have Russian immigrants joined this trend, but they have also played a leading role in institutionalizing the secular right. In their detailed analysis, Arian and Shamir note that the right already began to gain power after the 1967 war, a trend that considerably increased after the 1973 war. This trend eventually led to the historic political upheaval in the 1977 elections in which the Likud replaced Labor, the ruling party since the establishment of Israel. The only period in which the power of the Israeli left increased was in the early 1990s during the short-lived peace process period, until the assassination of Rabin in November 1995. Since then, the Israeli public has moved radically to the right, in particular after the second Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000. This trend has increased over time, peaking in the 2009 elections when the Likud came to power with the support of Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party, which won 15 seats and became the Knesset's third largest party. Led by rightist leader Eli Yishai, Shas won 11 seats while the Labor party chaired by Ehud Barak won only 13 seats. These facts were reflected in a series of surveys conducted by Arian and Shamir. Their 2009 survey revealed that the ratio between right and left in the general public was 72% right as opposed to only 28% left (Arian and Shamir, 2010: 28).

Thus, the traditional voters of the Zionist left, comprising the middle class, secular, educated *Ashkenazim*, moved toward the center of the Israeli political map (see Shamir and Arian, 1999, cited by Abo et al., 2010). The bulk of these voters no longer identify with the slogan "*security, peace and prosperity*" that was promoted by the left in the 1992 elections (Abo et al., 2010: 96).

A fourth major factor that has thus far been overlooked by scholars of FSU immigration is associated with the ethno-national-tribal character of political culture in Israel. Three large sectors display strong group cohesiveness in Israel: the Palestinian-Arab citizens, the *Haredi* or ultra-Orthodox Jews, and the immigrants from the FSU. Among other things, the group cohesiveness of these communities is reflected in ethnic political mobilization based mainly on group boundaries. This mobilization generates a tendency to vote for ethnic parties and to provide massive support for the prime ministerial candidate backed by the recognized leadership of the group. These three groups have almost equal voting weight, with each constituting 11–12% of the electorate. In theory, all three should have a strong bargaining position thanks to the aforementioned stalemate between the major political blocs. In fact, only the ultra-Orthodox and FSU immigrant groups have managed to benefit from the situation. Although prior to elections the three groups are ostensibly of equal importance and although the mainstream parties make every effort to attract their voters, the situation changes totally after election day, when power-sharing becomes the issue at hand. The Arabs quickly discover that, once again, they have been used as a “reservoir of votes” and can now be ignored, whereas the other two groups join the haggling for coalition status (see Al-Haj, 2002b).

From the outset, Arabs as citizens of Israel were granted the right to vote for the Israeli Parliament in free and democratic elections. Nevertheless, the share of Arabs in the national power center has been restricted. Since the early 1970s, the Palestinians in Israel have undergone a deep politicization process accompanied both by national awakening and by an increasing struggle for citizenship equality. These simultaneous trends are a reflection of the collective identity among the Palestinians in Israel with its national (Palestinian-Arab) and citizenship (Israeli) components. As a result, most of the Arab parties have shifted their campaign from the “politics of protest” into a pragmatic approach of “power sharing” (see Chapter 2).

Yet despite the politicization process and the increasing pragmatic orientation among the predominantly Arab parties, the Arab population has remained outside the legitimate borders of Israeli political culture. Arabs have been denied any access to the national power center. Since the establishment of Israel, no Arab party has ever been allowed to be a full partner in a government coalition, including those based on Labor and the left wing. A good example is the situation of the predominantly Arab parties during the period of the Rabin-Peres government (1992–1996). Even though these parties’ support for the government was a crucial component in its parliamentary majority, they were only permitted to support it “from the outside” as part of the “blocking majority” that made it impossible for the Likud to form a government. This situation actually turned the predominantly Arab parties into a “blocked minority,” permanently denied access to any share in the benefits of the power center, which is exclusively Jewish (Al-Haj, 1997).

This fact has not been changed over time, even with the unification of all Arab parties in the 2015 Knesset elections. After the electoral threshold was raised to 3.25% of the total valid votes (instead of 2% since 2004), all Arab major parties became unified into one list known as the Joint (Arab) List, mainly to secure their representation in the Knesset. This has increased the voter turnout among the Arab population to 56% as compared to 46% in the 2013 elections. Ultimately, the Joint List won 13 seats in the current

Knesset (2018). Yet it has remained outside the government coalition and its members do not hold any influential positions in the Israeli parliament. True, the moving of the Israeli political system to the right and even the extreme right, as indicated earlier, has merely served to increase the marginalization of the Arabs' political power. Nevertheless, such exclusion is not only the outcome of the extreme rightist nature of the current government coalition. Avi Gabbai, the newly elected chairman of the Zionist Camp (in which the Labor party is the core party in what has been defined as the Left camp in Israel), has already declared that should his party win the next election, the Arab Joint List will not be included in his coalition (*Maariv*, October 14, 2017).

In the wake of the 2013 elections, the *Haredim* have been added to the "exclusion list." Two of the major partners in the government coalition (Yesh Atid, a largely secular party headed by Yair Lapid, and Habayit Hayehudi, a national-religious party headed by Naftali Bennett) placed strong pressure on Prime Minister Netanyahu to form a government without non-Zionist parties (*Haredim*). The main excuse for this exclusion was the intention of the leaders of the two aforementioned parties to change the status quo that exempts the *Haredim* from compulsory military service (see Ynet news, February 7, 2013). This act also contributed to the disproportional political strength of Russian immigrants up to the most recent (2015) elections, when *Haredi* parties once again joined the government coalition (see Chapter 2).

Voting patterns among FSU immigrants are dynamic and change according to their perceived interests. During the first decade after their arrival in Israel (the 1990s), they tended to vote against the party in power, probably because they deemed it responsible for whatever difficulties they encountered in the absorption process. The hope that a change of government would improve their status and conditions also played a considerable role (Neri Livneh's interview with Anna Isakova, *Ha'aretz Weekend Magazine*, May 14, 1999). Thus in 1996, many Russian immigrants shifted their support from the Labor party to the Likud and 53% supported its candidate for Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu (Pinis, 1996). In the 1999 elections, immigrants once again favored the opposition candidate, Ehud Barak, who was elected Prime Minister (Katz, 1999). However, whereas in the first decade after their arrival, immigrants sought to improve their socioeconomic status through absorption in the various areas of society (mainly employment, housing, and education), in the second decade, they sought to make a major contribution to Israel in their own way and to be involved in consolidating its future and collective identity (Galili and Bronfman, 2013).

The efforts of Russian immigrants to increase their impact on the Israeli political system have extended to the group level. After an abortive effort in 1992, when a Russian party polled less than 12,000 votes, in 1996, former Prisoner of Zion Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky spearheaded the formation of Yisrael Ba'aliya, which won seven Knesset seats (at a time when the Russian vote corresponded to 11 seats) (Pinis, 1996).The leadership of Yisrael Ba'aliya comprised veteran Soviet immigrants with the active participation of members of the new wave of immigration in the 1990s. To dilute the party's purely ethnic image, a local Israeli *Ashkenazi* professor (Zvi Weinberg) was included in the list of its leading members (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 95).

In the wake of its large success in the Knesset elections, Yisrael Ba'aliya decided to run in the local elections conducted in 1998. This decision greatly affected local politics in many Israeli cities with large concentrations of immigrants. Indeed, Galili and Bronfman refer to the achievement of the Russian party, Yisrael Ba'aliya, in the 1998 municipal elections as "*the Russian revolution.*" In these elections, 195 representatives of Russian-speaking immigrants were elected to different municipalities in Israel, among them 105 affiliated with Yisrael Ba'aliya. Moreover, 29 Russian immigrants were elected as deputy mayors across the country. Galili and Bronfman emphasize that these achievements were even more significant than the achievement of Yisrael Ba'aliya in the 1996 Knesset elections (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 104).

Another power that emerged in these municipal elections has greatly affected the Israeli political system for years to come, as reflected in the large number of lists which ran with the direct support of Avigdor Lieberman (Katz, 2000: 149). Lieberman, who immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union in 1978, began gaining power after his appointment by Benjamin Netanyahu as Director-General of the Likud in 1995 and later as Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office. In a press conference on January 3, 1999, Lieberman announced the establishment of Yisrael Beiteinu. This was an opportune moment for Lieberman, since Yisrael Ba'aliya had begun to decline and two of its prominent Knesset members (Yuri Stern and Michael Nudelman) left the party in favor of Yisrael Beiteinu (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 118). Three Russian parties ran in the 1999 elections: Yisrael Ba'aliya won six seats, Yisrael

Beiteinu won four seats, and Nadezhda/Tikva failed to pass the threshold.

The ethnic-cultural debate between ultra-Orthodox *Mizrahim* and Russian immigrants dominated the 1999 elections, ultimately helping Shas mobilize its constituency on ethnic grounds and win an all-time record of 17 Knesset seats. On the other hand, Yisrael Ba'aliya's main propaganda motive in the 1999 elections was to gain control of the Ministry of Interior (Nash Kontrol—our control of the Interior Ministry). This was of major importance for immigrants, many of whom (mainly non-Jews) had been subjected to many difficulties due to Shas's control of the Interior Ministry until that time (Katz, 2000).

In their interesting book on the 1990s immigrants from the FSU in Israel, Galili and Bronfman postulate that the political patterns of these immigrants have changed over time, from a purely ethnic pattern in the first decade to an integrative-nationwide pattern with an ethnic orientation in the second decade (2013). This latter pattern is often called "*integration through isolation*" (see Epstein, 2006). In any event, these immigrants have changed their tactics, and their main desire has become "to lead, not just to wait in line" (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 206). The change in the political orientation of the Russian immigrants over time has been reflected in their voting patterns. Whereas in the first decade (1990s), Sharansky's Yisrael Ba'aliya was the leading party among this group, in the second decade, they shifted their support to Yisrael Beiteinu (led by Lieberman). Indeed, as Olena Bango postulates, Yisrael Beiteinu is a "catch-all party" with ethnic characteristics. In this sense, it has always represented broad national interests while simultaneously using ethnic practices for political mobilization (Bango, 2010: 41).

As a result of the aforementioned change, in 2003, the power of the Russian parties began to decline. Yisrael Beiteinu joined the National Union party (Ihud Leumi)—a coalition of religious rightist parties. On the other hand, Bronfman, who was affiliated with Yisrael Ba'aliya, joined Meretz (a Zionist left-wing party). Nevertheless, Yisrael Ba'aliya continued to be an ethnic party but decreased in power, and in the 2003 elections it won only two seats. Directly following these elections, Yisrael Ba'aliya merged with the Likud and eventually vanished from the political arena (Bango, 2010: 42).

The overlap between the pragmatic-secular-rightist and ethnic orientations of immigrants was clearly manifested in the 2003

Knesset elections. True, these elections did see a considerable decrease in the direct vote for ethnic-Russian parties. But this does not mean that ethnic considerations were absent in the immigrants' voting. As indicated earlier, the Yisrael Beitenu party, which had run in the 1999 elections as a separate immigrant party, merged into a bloc of three parties from the extreme right called the National Union (and led by Avigdor Lieberman, head of Yisrael Beitenu). This party can be considered at least partly ethnic-based. It received most of its votes from Russian immigrants, even though only three out of the seven seats of the National Union were occupied by FSU immigrants (see Konstantinov, 2008: 147).

Some major political changes occurred before the 2006 Knesset elections. Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan and the withdrawal from Gaza resulted in a split within Likud and Sharon's establishment of a new party (Kadima). Yisrael Ba'aliya was also split. Two of its Knesset members, Sharansky and Edelstein, remained in the Likud, while the other two (Solodkin and Elkin) joined Kadima (Konstantinov, 2008). Yet the partnership between Yisrael Beiteinu and Ihud Leumi did not last long; the former lost its appeal to a large group of supporters from the secular right (Galili, 2006, 2013). This led Yisrael Beiteinu to break up the partnership and run alone in the 2006 Knesset elections as the only Russian-oriented party. It won 11 seats, most of which were based on the massive support of Russian immigrants (Phillipov, 2009). According to a poll conducted by ISPR Motagim, Yisrael Beiteinu received 48% of the Russians votes (Konstantinov, 2008: 150).

Russian immigrants also voted for veteran Israeli parties in the 2006 elections. Kadima (which was established by Ariel Sharon, who has Russian roots and was especially popular among immigrants) set up a special campaign in Russian and via the Russian media. This campaign differed from its Hebrew campaign targeting general Israeli voters. In the Russian campaign, Kadima focused on issues particularly relevant to Russian immigrants. Among other things, Kadima promised to resolve the problem of non-Jewish immigrants, who are unable to marry in Israel, by institutionalizing civil marriage (Mazin, 2006: 24). According to the assessment of ISPR Motagim, Kadima received approximately 20% of the Russian votes (Konstantinov, 2006: 151), and Likud received approximately 15% of the immigrants' votes (Mazin, 2006: 150).

In the 2009 Knesset elections, Yisrael Beiteinu was the only party with a large number of Russian candidates. According to different polls, this party received about half of its votes from Russian immigrants. With its 15 Knesset members, Yisrael Beiteinu became the third largest party in Israel, thus becoming a major element in the government coalition (Khanin, 2009).

Many of the Russian supporters of Yisrael Beiteinu saw it as a "full-fledged nationwide party, but with a 'Russian accent.'" Moreover, a large segment of its supporters actually cast their votes for Lieberman and the party's platform without any ethnic connotations (ibid.: 9). Indeed, Yisrael Beiteinu's propaganda in the 2009 elections was carefully designed to reflect a national perspective. Thus, the main issues the party raised in these elections focused on general Israeli subjects, reflecting its secular right-wing attitudes (Bango, 2010). Two main issues were particularly salient, reflecting Yisrael Beiteinu's strategy of building upon the fears of the Russian immigrants by emphasizing security issues: personal security, national security, socioeconomic security, and security through education (ibid.: 47). Throughout its 2009 election campaign, Yisrael Beiteinu used a number of slogans. Some of these were based on praising Lieberman's persona as a strong and trustworthy leader (Bango, 2010). Others also focused on Lieberman's persona as a leader to be relied on in dealing with the Arab threat: "Only Lieberman understands Arabic," implying that only Lieberman is capable of dealing properly with Arabs. Another particularly controversial slogan was directed toward the Arab citizens of Israel: "No citizenship without loyalty" (ibid.: 49).

In the 2013 elections, Yisrael Beiteinu merged with the Likud and ran under the new name of Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu (often referred to in the media as Likud-Beiteinu). This union was important for the survival of both parties—Likud (chaired by Netanyahu) and Yisrael Beiteinu (chaired by Lieberman). The merger secured Likud's status as the largest party, with Netanyahu as the next prime minister. The union also resolved a dilemma for the majority of Russian voters. Previously divided in their support for both parties, they were now offered Netanyahu and Lieberman on a single ballot. In addition, through this unification with Likud, Lieberman sought to expand the political borders of Yisrael Beiteinu beyond its ethnic-Russian identity to a central position as a nationwide Israeli party (see Galili and Bronfman, 2013).

Yet some have argued that this unification went hand in hand with Lieberman's attempts to blur the ethnic-sectarian component of Yisrael Beiteinu in order to establish himself as a national leader and pave his way to the post of prime minister. To this end, it seems that major issues connected with the immigrants' needs, such as public housing and civil marriage, were marginalized in the party's agenda and replaced by radical nationalist slogans connected with the harsh approach Lieberman adopted toward the Arab citizens, the Palestinians, and the Israeli left (ibid.). Therefore, some activists among the Russian immigrants felt that the unification with the Likud in the 2013 elections was a mistake. The dissatisfaction of these immigrants also found expression in the considerable drop in the turnout among Russian voters in the 2013 elections (Philippov, 2013).

Since then, Yisrael Beiteinu has gone through a difficult period. A number of its Knesset members were accused of bribery, and some of its prominent leaders (among them Yaer Shamir, Ozi Landau, and Yizhak Ahronovitz) decided to resign after disputes with Lieberman. The aforementioned factors have negatively affected Lieberman's power. In the 2015 elections, Yisrael Beiteinu ran as an independent party that included Russian-Israeli candidates and other candidates from different veteran Jewish groups, in addition to a Druze candidate. The party won only six seats, less than half of its representation in the previous elections (13 seats).

Findings of the 1999 and 2010 surveys

As noted earlier, the findings of the 1999 survey referred to the 1999 Knesset elections, whereas the 2010 survey covered the 2009 elections. As shown in Figure 5.1, in 2009, the immigrant voters gave their main support to ethnic-Russian parties, mainly Yisrael Beiteinu (53.2%). The right-wing parties, in particular Likud (27.5%), were their second choice, and a negligible percentage (0.6%) voted for Ihud Leumi. Center-oriented parties (mainly Kadima) were ranked third, receiving 15.1% of the immigrants' votes. Only 1.7% of immigrants reported voting for left-wing parties (mainly the Israeli Labor party and Meretz) and the same percentage voted for the religious parties. Arab parties (Ra'am-Taal and Balad) and Jewish-Arab parties (Hadash-DFP) received no immigrant votes. The turnout rate among FSU immigrants in the 2009 elections was 77.6%, much higher than the overall national turnout (64.72%) but similar to the turnout among the Jewish population.

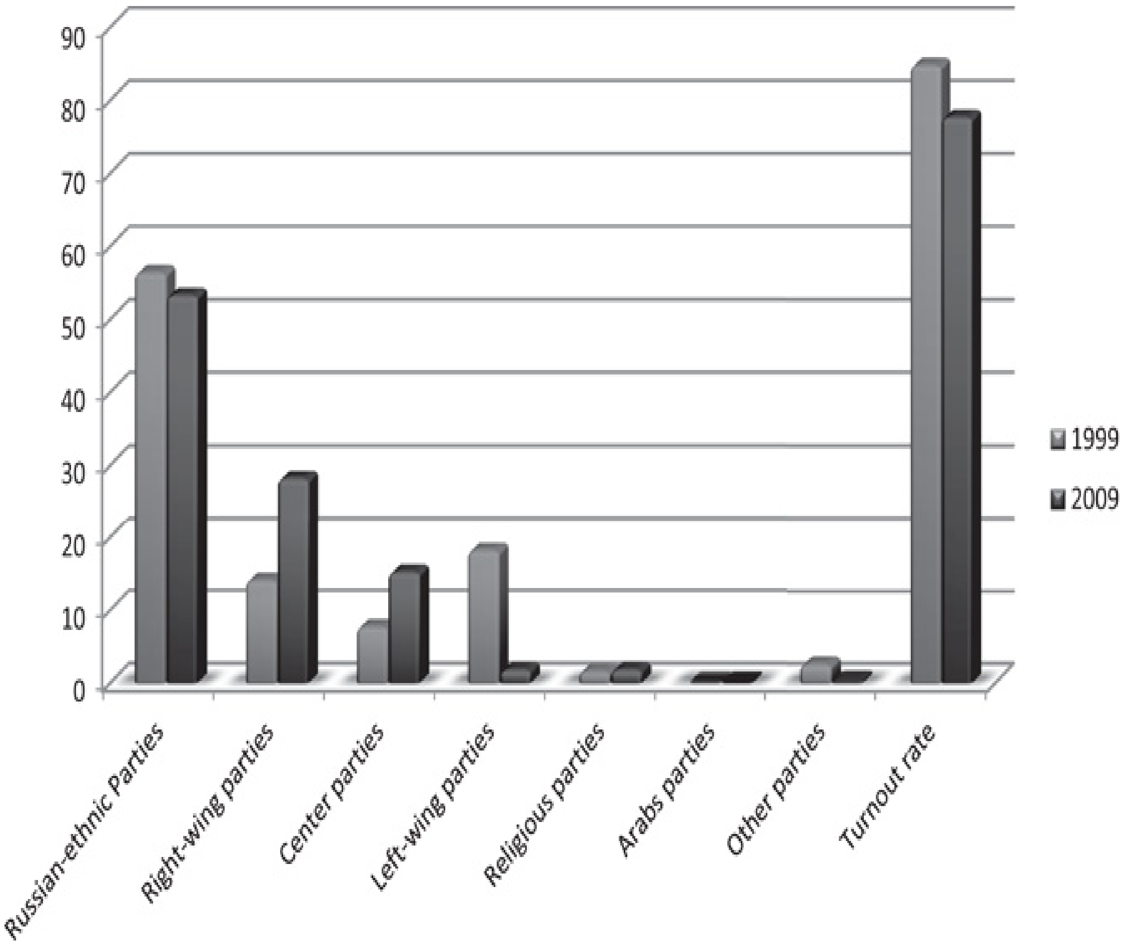


Figure 5.1 Voting Patterns of Russian Immigrants in the 1999 and 2009 Elections (the 1999 and 2010 Surveys, Percentages).

A comparison between the immigrant voting patterns in the 1999 elections and in the 2009 elections (Figure 5.1) revealed similar political behavior as far as ethnic voting is concerned. Despite a slight decrease in the support for the ethnic-Russian parties (from 56.3% to 53.2%), these parties received the highest percentage of Russian immigrant votes. This slight decrease may be explained by two main factors: First, one of the major Russian parties (Yisrael Ba'aliya, headed by the popular leader Sharansky) had ceased to exist. In addition, in the 1999 elections, the system of casting two separate ballots—for the prime minister and for the Knesset—was still in place. This system, which was introduced in 1996 and eventually abolished in 2003, enabled the population to express its sectarian identity by voting for parties composed of members of their own group without forfeiting direct influence over the choice of prime minister. One major trend emerging from the comparison was the sharp decrease in voting for left-wing parties (from 18.1% down to 1.7%) along with increased (almost doubled) support for right-wing and center parties (from 21.6% up to 43.2%). FSU immigrants' support for religious parties (mainly Shas, whose little support from Russians comes from traditional-religious immigrants originating from Asian republics) has remained as low as before. That is to say that, 20 years after their arrival in Israel, Russian immigrants have situated themselves within a clear ethnic-rightist voting pattern, with the center-oriented parties in second place.

A major question is yet to be answered: Do Russian immigrants perceive Yisrael Beiteinu as an ethnic-Russian party or as a national-Israeli party? The findings of the 2010 survey suggest a complex answer. The majority of these immigrants (66%) perceived Yisrael Beiteinu primarily as an Israeli party, whereas 34% viewed it as an ethnic-Russian party. This is to say, on the whole respondents perceived Yisrael Beiteinu tool for integrating into Israeli politics, with maintaining ethnicity as one of its important characteristics. Our findings reiterate Khanin's conclusion that many Russian supporters of Yisrael Beiteinu saw it as a "full-fledged nationwide party, but with a Russian accent" (Khanin, 2009: 9).

Factors affecting voting behavior

As stated at the beginning, the primary aim of this chapter is to identify and analyze the main factors behind the voting behavior of immigrants from the FSU. For this purpose, I created a new dummy variable in which I divided the immigrant vote into two large categories: "Russian parties" and "veteran Israeli parties."

Various studies have indicated a positive correlation between the length of time that immigrants have lived in the host society and the extent of their economic, social, and political integration (see for example Reitz, 1980; Rose, 1989). New immigrants are usually more inclined to emphasize their group attachment than those who have been in the country longer, and are accordingly more likely to support ethnic-based organizations. The findings of the present study only partially support this conclusion. Whereas immigrants' support for Russian cultural institutions has remained very high, their support of ethnic-political parties, although still high, has decreased over time.

The findings of the 2010 survey show that 83% of the respondents (compared with 80% in 1999) deemed the continued existence of Russian cultural institutions in Israel to be important or very important; 73% (compared with 60% in 1999) considered the continued existence of informal education programs in Russian to be important or very important, even when parallel programs exist in Hebrew. At the same time, the rate of support for immigrant-based political parties has dropped somewhat. Nevertheless, a majority of the respondents—57% (compared with 73% in the 1999 survey) still considered the continued existence of such parties to be important or very important. In addition, immigrants' perception of their own influence on Israeli society in various areas (especially culture, science, and technology) was much more positive than their perception of Israeli society's influence on them. This trend, already prominent in the 1999 survey, has become even more pronounced over time (see Chapter 4; Al-Haj, 2015).

The discussions of the focus groups (2018) lend support to the basic trend that is reflected in the surveys' data. As a whole, young participants support Russian representation in Israel in the Knesset and the government. Yet they were divided over the question of whether this representation should be through ethnic-Russian parties or through national-mixed parties. Most of the young participants support mixed Israeli-Russian parties comprising both *Sabras* and members of the Russian-speaking community. In other words, they prefer "Israeli parties with a Russian accent." A minority still supports the existence of Russian-dominated parties, though with different leadership than the current one. A third group between these two groups opposes ethnic-Russian parties because they believe these parties are no longer efficient. This group advocates a transition toward full integration within the existing large Israeli parties. The following quotations reflect the attitudes of these three groups.

Nina:

> I think the best would be to have Russian representatives within the existing Israeli parties. In principle, I support the right of each ethnic group to have its own representatives in the government, but I am not sure that the Russian-speaking community needs its own separate parties. Every time I see them [Russian Knesset members of Yisrael Beiteinu], I say to myself, my God! What things do I have in common with them—Almost nothing. We consider ourselves, at least we try to, as Israelis. We, or our parents, arrived here because we have some affiliation to the Jewish people, so why divide our society more to have our party, and the Ashkenazim with their party, and probably the Africans [the Moroccan Jews]. If we were *beyachad* [together], our situation would have been much better.…

Maksim, on the other hand, represents those who think there is a need for a Russian party, but with a different leadership. Here is what he had to say:

> I can say that Yisrael Beiteinu is not that effective as a Russian party in Israel. It does not sufficiently understand Russian people. It should exist, but it should not be led by the same representatives who head it today—not with Lieberman and similar other people who lead this party today. They [the leadership] should be new young Russian leaders who understand Israeli society and culture, and should have a detailed political program, and not such a closed agenda like they have today….

Alex represents the group that thinks there should not be any ethnic-Russian party today:

> I think this [Russian party] has exhausted its role in the [previous] period. Today, its goals and, in general, its existence in the Knesset, have arrived at a dead end. They [the Russian leaders of this party] do not represent [our interests] any more. First of all, there are many newcomers today who differ from those of the 1990s, and therefore the interests are different, and… I can say that I have never voted for a Russian party….

The voices of the older participants in discussion group completely differed in this regard. The vast majority thought there was a need for ethnic-Russian parties in Israel. Participants gave a number of reasons for this. Egor (67 years old, arrived in 1990) had this to say:

> As long as Russians consider themselves Russians, there will be a need for a lobby to protect them. Therefore, it is essential to have such a Russian party now.

Marta (47 years old, arrived in 1996) added:

> Yes, of course there is a need [for a Russian party]. Because we are a large group.… There are many Russians and they need representation, Lieberman or another [Russian] party….

Diana (52 years old, arrived in 1996):

> Of course we must have [a Russian party]. It gives a sense of security, at least visual security, that there is somebody who can take care of your problems, who can protect you….

Irina (46 years old, arrived in 2015):

> I think we must have such a [Russian] party. It should represent the interests of the Russian-speaking population. If you have representatives against formal authorities, then nobody will consider you as a minority….

Sergei (52 years old, arrived in 1996) added: “Yes, they (Russian representatives) are ours….”

Nevertheless, a minority among the older participants expressed a different view and thought there was no need for Russian parties. This group’s main argument was that Russian parties provide an excuse for excluding the Russian-speaking community and further discriminating against its members. Angela (51 years old, arrived in 1997) explained:

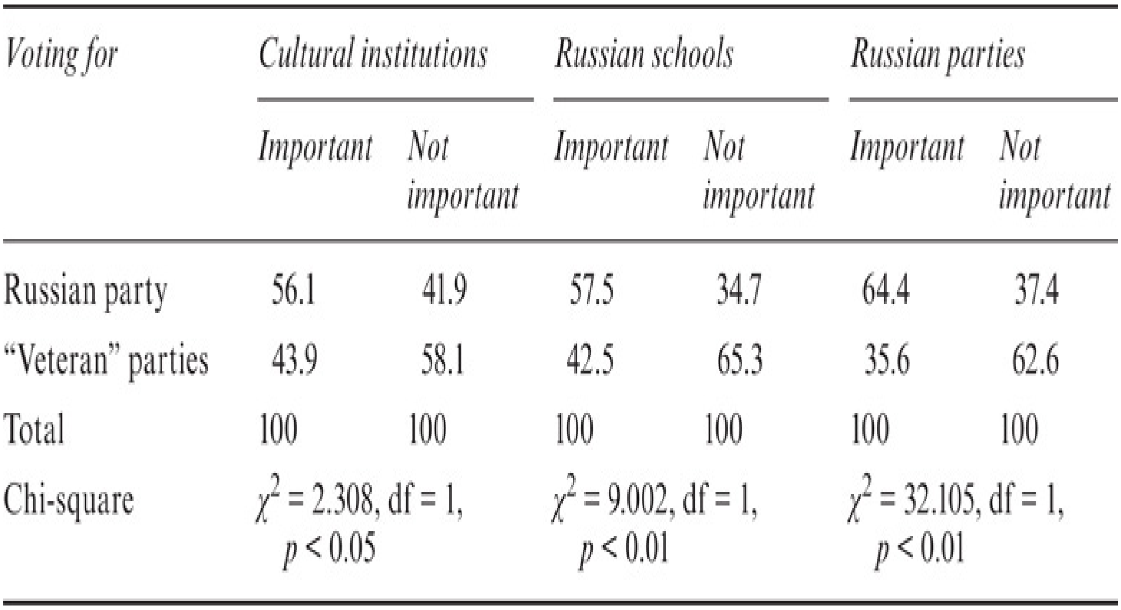
> I think as long there is a separate Russian party like this, nobody will see us as Israelis. Representatives of the Russian speaking community must be in all [veteran] parties, then we can decide what direction we want to choose, left or right. But as things stand today, this separates us…. Clearly, as long as we continue to think this way, we will never be 100% Israelis….

Unlike Angela, Irina thought that Russians should integrate into Israeli society as a group, not as individuals. She said the following:

> We are speaking about our integration, that of the Russian-speaking population, within Israeli society. I do not understand why when we speak about culture we think we should keep our culture. But when we speak about politics some think that we should completely assimilate into Israeli society, in order not to have separate politics. I think that also in politics we have to behave as a group, because we have not been here for a very long time. Maybe some time in the future, after decades or centuries, like in the United States, then we will have a mix, and then there will be one nation. Meanwhile, we do not have such a situation. Thus, I am convinced that it is not bad to have a specific party that represents each group on condition that it truly represents the group, not only with slogans….

Our analysis, which is based on the 2010 survey, reveals that voting for ethnic-Russian parties among immigrants is a strategic decision that goes hand in hand with their support for maintaining their own ethnic organizations. An examination of the relationship between ethnic voting and support for ethnic-based organizations reveals strong consistency between attitudes and actual behavior. As can be seen from Table 5.1, there is a significant difference in the voting behavior of supporters and opponents of ethnic organizations, with supporters exhibiting a much stronger tendency toward ethnic voting.

Table 5.1 Voting for Parties by Attitudes toward Maintaining Ethnic Russian Institutions in Israel (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)



Voting for	*Cultural institutions*		*Russian schools*		*Russian parties*	
	Important	*Not important*	*Important*	*Not important*	*Important*	*Not important*
Russian party	56.1	41.9	57.5	34.7	64.4	37.4
"Veteran" parties	43.9	58.1	42.5	65.3	35.6	62.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 2.308$, df = 1, $p < 0.05$		$\chi^2 = 9.002$, df = 1, $p < 0.01$		$\chi^2 = 32.105$, df = 1, $p < 0.01$	

Is ethnic voting among Russian immigrants a reaction to their alienation from Israeli society and their dissatisfaction with their absorption? Or is it part of their ethnic mobilization strategy, regardless of their perceived adjustment? Data emerging from the present study indicate that the immigrants are, in general, highly satisfied—and increasingly so over time—with their adjustment in Israel, be it structural adjustment (such as housing and employment) or psychological adjustment as reflected in feeling at home in Israel (see Chapter 4).

Table 5.2 Voting for Parties by Extent of Adjustment (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)

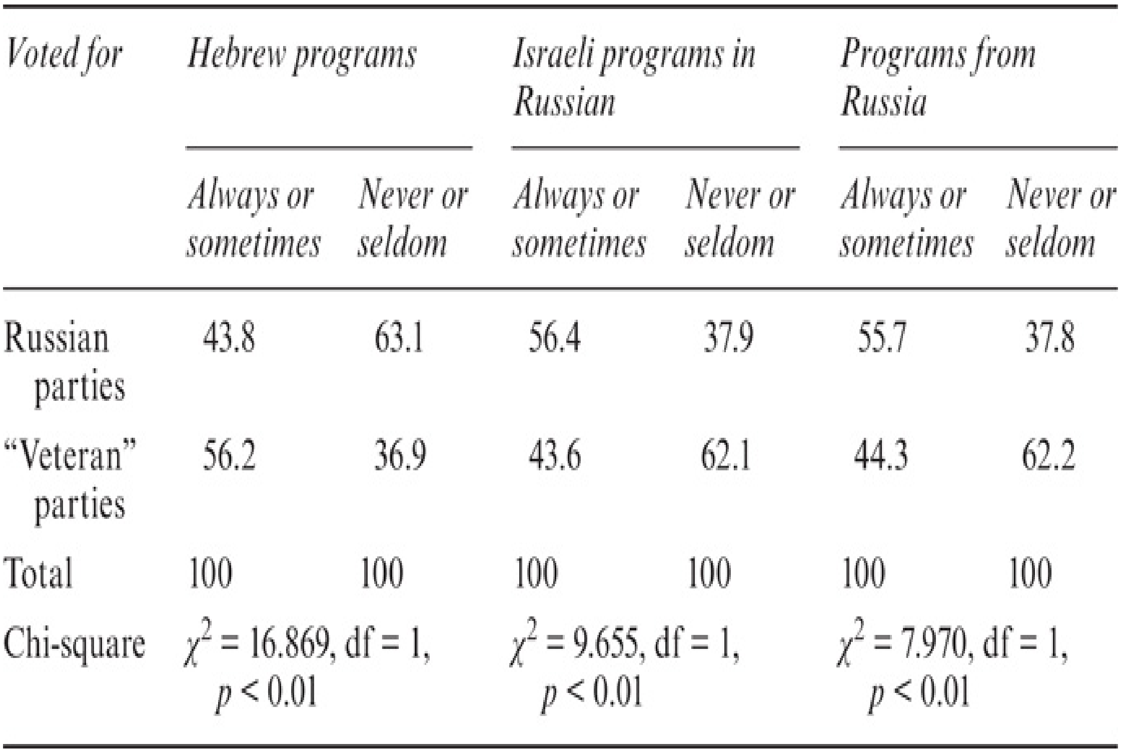
Voted for	*Satisfaction with workplace*		*Satisfaction with living conditions*		*Feel at home in Israel*	
	Satisfied	*Not satisfied*	*Satisfied*	*Not satisfied*	*Yes*	*No*
	Very satisfied	*Not at all satisfied*	*Very satisfied*	*Not at all satisfied*		
Russian parties	47.5	58.2	53.1	54.1	51.7	75.9
“Veteran” parties	52.5	41.8	46.9	45.9	48.3	24.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 2.841$, df = 1, $p > 0.05$		$\chi^2 = 0.021$, df = 1, $p > 0.05$		$\chi^2 = 6.324$, df = 1, $p < 0.05$	

As shown in Table 5.2, no significant relationship was found between voting patterns and structural adjustment. The relationship with psychological adjustment was a bit more complex. In general, there was a significant relationship between the two variables. Yet this relationship stems from those who were deeply alienated. Although there was almost no difference between those who reported feeling at home in Israel (51.7% voted for Russian parties and 48.3% for veteran parties), there was a major difference in voting patterns among those who reported not feeling at home in Israel (75.9% voted for Russian parties as compared to 24.1% who voted for veteran parties). Also, among those who do not feel at home in Israel, the voter turnout rate was only 69%, as compared to 87% among those who feel at home in Israel. That is to say, among the alienated group 31% abstained. The 1999 survey indicated no relationship between voting patterns and all forms of adjustment, including the psychological aspect.

These findings generally indicate that ethnic voting among Russian immigrants is not a reactive behavior connected to the extent of their perceived adjustment, but rather an ethnic mobilization pattern. Indeed, the dramatic increase in their psychological adjustment (from 53% in 1999 to 84% in 2010) has sharpened the difference between those who have adjusted and those who have not. Twenty years after their arrival, the immigrants were divided between the vast majority of those who had “adjusted” and the "alienated" minority. The alienated group manifests a very strong ethnic orientation, which is expressed in various fields, including voting behavior.

Due to the central role of Russian media in the immigrants' ethnic orientation, I examined the relationship between ethnic media and ethnic political behavior among immigrants (Table 5.3). As indicated by Elias and Caspi, the Russian-language media fulfills two main roles: (1) preserving ethnic identity and ties to the original home culture and (2) addressing issues and problems encountered in the process of immigrants' integration into Israeli society (2007: 177). As far as politics is concerned, Elias and Caspi contended that Russian communicators and politicians share the same interest and fate. Although they have to adopt the rhetoric of inclusion, full political and cultural integration could potentially endanger their status and interests. Therefore, they have adopted alternative formula, in which they preserve the cultural field as a political resource. This formula is translated as "cultural segregation along with political integration" (Elias and Caspi, 2007: 194).

Table 5.3 Exposure to Media and Voting Behavior (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)



Voted for	*Hebrew programs*		*Israeli programs in Russian*		*Programs from Russia*	
	Always or sometimes	*Never or seldom*	*Always or sometimes*	*Never or seldom*	*Always or sometimes*	*Never or seldom*
Russian parties	43.8	63.1	56.4	37.9	55.7	37.8
"Veteran" parties	56.2	36.9	43.6	62.1	44.3	62.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 16.869$, df = 1, $p < 0.01$		$\chi^2 = 9.655$, df = 1, $p < 0.01$		$\chi^2 = 7.970$, df = 1, $p < 0.01$	

As indicated in Chapter 4, the present study reveals that almost three decades after the arrival of the FSU immigrants, their sources of information are also still relatively closed and are produced mainly within the group borders or derived through cables from

Russia. This fact has a strong impact on the voting behavior of immigrants (see Table 5.3).

As shown in Table 5.3, there is a strong relationship between the media programs to which respondents are exposed and their voting patterns ($p < 0.01$). Ethnic voting for Russian parties was high among those exposed to Israeli programs in Russian (56.4%) or to programs from Russia (55.7%), while it decreased to 43.8% among those exposed to Hebrew programs on a regular basis (similar findings were found in the 1999 survey).

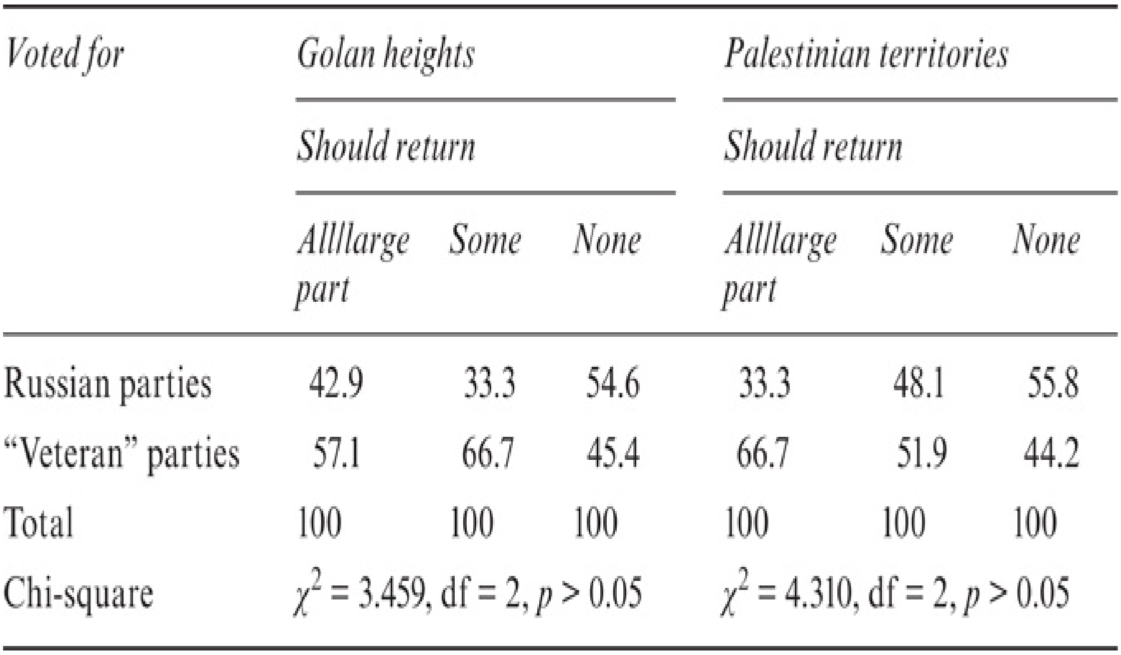
As to the demographic variables, the findings of the 2010 survey were similar to those of the 1999 survey. No significant difference was found between the voting patterns of men and women. Unlike the case of gender, a significant relationship was found between immigrants' age and voting ($p < 0.01$). The median age of voters for the Russian parties was higher than among those who voted for the veteran Israeli parties (53.86 and 48.2, respectively). The only difference that changed over time was linked to the relationship between education and voting behavior. The findings of the 1999 survey showed that ethnic voting was the dominant pattern among the educated elite of FSU immigrants, while those who were less educated were more likely to have voted for veteran Israeli parties. In the 2010 survey, no relationship was found between education and voting behavior.

As far as political and ideological attitudes are concerned, the present study data reiterate the findings of other studies that immigrants from the FSU tend to be hardliners in their attitudes toward territorial compromise. According to our 2010 survey, only 5% of the respondents were willing to make any territorial concessions on the Golan Heights in return for comprehensive peace with Syria, and only 13% were willing to make any concessions in the Palestinian territories in return for comprehensive peace with the Palestinians (see also Fein, 1995; Pinis, 1996; Epstein, 2006). However, while studies agree regarding the hard-line rightist political attitudes of Soviet immigrants, the relationship between the political orientation and the voting patterns of these immigrants remains a controversial issue. In his article on the impact of the Israel-Arab conflict on the political identity of Soviet immigrants, Epstein concludes that this conflict has been the major factor shaping political orientation and voting behavior among the Russian community in Israel. Therefore, during the 1990s, the shift from conflict to conflict resolution and the sense of "the weakening conflict" served as an impetus for the rise of sectarian parties among

Russian immigrants. After the outbreak of the second Palestinian *Intifada*, the conflict once again became the focus of the public arena and eventually led to the decline of the sectarian-Russian parties. On the other hand, in 2006, Yisrael Beiteinu, which combines radical political views regarding the conflict together with a practical orientation toward the unique problems of the Russian community, received about half of the Russian votes (see Survey of ISPR Motagim, cited by Konstantinov, 2008: 150).

We used our data to examine the aforementioned issue in depth. As shown in Table 5.4, no significant relationship was found between immigrants' attitudes toward territorial compromise and their voting patterns. The data show that immigrants who are opposed to any territorial compromise in the Golan Heights and the Palestinian territories have a greater tendency to vote for Russian parties, while those who support territorial compromise have a greater tendency to vote for the veteran Israeli parties. Yet these differences are insignificant (findings similar to the 1999 survey). That is to say, while the voting behavior of Russian immigrants is affected by their attitudes regarding the Palestinian-Israel conflict, it is mainly determined by domestic issues rather than regional or international matters. At the same time, a significant difference emerged within the extreme leftist group of immigrants (who support returning all/a large part of the Palestinian territories). Two-thirds of this group voted for veteran parties and only one-third for Russian parties. Nevertheless, this group constitutes only a very small minority of the immigrants.

Table 5.4 Voting Patterns by Attitudes toward Territorial Compromise (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)



Voted for	*Golan heights*			*Palestinian territories*		
	Should return			*Should return*		
	All/large part	*Some*	*None*	*All/large part*	*Some*	*None*
Russian parties	42.9	33.3	54.6	33.3	48.1	55.8
"Veteran" parties	57.1	66.7	45.4	66.7	51.9	44.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 3.459$, df = 2, $p > 0.05$			$\chi^2 = 4.310$, df = 2, $p > 0.05$		

As to the theoretical implications, my analysis sheds light on two major issues: the definition of "ethnic party," and the approaches toward "ethnic mobilization." As to the first issue, a new term for the definition of the ethnic character of parties can be suggested: a "hybrid-ethnic party." This means that a party might be defined as "ethnic" in some respects, as "multiethnic" in others, and as "non-ethnic" in certain aspects. A hybrid-ethnic party is concomitant with the hybrid ethnic identities that coincide with globalization and the instrumental nature of ethnicity (see Thiel and Coate, 2010). In this sense, a hybrid-ethnic party minimizes the price of exclusion and the activation of ethnic boundaries for political and social means, maximizes the gains of the ethnic group, and allows more flexibility in terms of changing political conditions and in the formation of political coalitions with other groups (see Al-Haj, 2015).

As far as the approaches to ethnic mobilization are concerned, my analysis supports the competitive perspective. In this regard, ethnic mobilization among Russian immigrants is not the result of despair or of the failure of their adjustment to Israeli society. On the contrary, by and large, the desire of these immigrants to penetrate the Israeli political system is a strategic decision and integral part of their *instrumentalized ethnicity* (ibid.).

However, the competitive and reactive approaches are complementary, rather than contradictory. As a heterogeneous group, the voting or the lack of voting, of at least part of these immigrants, is the outcome of alienation and lack of identification with the dominant system. In this sense, while analyzing political behavior, we should take into consideration not only those who vote but also those who do not. Abstention should also be considered a political behavior, which is no less significant than voting. In addition, this analysis shows that the understanding of the POS, including the role of the national state in diverting ethnic competition and ethnic conflict, is a central part of my explanation, which is based on the competitive approach. It may be concluded, therefore, that POS should not be perceived as an independent perspective, but should be incorporated within a multidimensional model, which combines the competitive and the POS perspectives. Such a multidimensional model will contribute to in-depth understanding of the complex issues connected with ethnic mobilization and the factors that facilitate or hinder competitive opportunities and the activation of ethnic borders as a framework for social and political mobilization (see Al-Haj, 2015).

This chapter has dealt with political mobilization among Russian immigrants in Israel. Based on the findings of our two nationwide representative surveys and the discussion groups, together with secondary sources, I have traced the voting behavior of these immigrants since their arrival in Israel. My analysis shows that the voting behavior of these immigrants is dynamic and changes mainly according to domestic-internal issues and the perceived interest of these immigrants. This behavior reflects an ethnic mobilization pattern that builds on the immigrants' advantages and points of weakness in the Israeli political system.

In the following chapter, I address the issue of non-Jewish Russian immigrants and the challenges they pose to the collective identity of Israel and its Jewish character.

6 Non-Jewish immigrants and the dilemma of collective identity and citizenship in a Jewish state

Background

Avnies (1995: 250) classifies the non-Jewish immigrants into four main categories: those who identified themselves as Jews in the former Soviet Union (FSU) but were Jewish only on their father's side; family members of Jews, but who do not consider themselves to be Jewish; relatives of non-Jews whose family members are Jewish; and those who immigrated with forged papers. People who belong to the first category were considered as Jews in the FSU, and after arriving in Israel realized that they are not Jewish according to *Halakha* and were required to go through a lengthy process of conversion (Raijman and Pinsky, 2012: 127).

The aforementioned confusion regarding the Jewish origin of Russian immigrants has its roots in the formal definition of the Soviet regime for the Jews, who were defined in terms of nationality rather than religion. As noted by Chervyakov et al. (1997: 285):

> The debate about the nature of the Jewish entity continues within and outside it. The Soviets settled the issue 'from above' when they classified Jews as a nationality and divorced it from religion. Thus, to be a Jew in the Soviet Union and its successor states has meant to be a member of an ethnic group [in Soviet terms, 'nationality'], with no implications for one's religious affiliation or lack thereof. Jewish identity was established exclusively by descent – if both one's parents were registered as Jewish, one had no choice but to be registered as such on the internal 'passport'. Consequently, one could be fully Jewish by Soviet lights without having any attachment at all to Judaism. Indeed, one could practice a religion other than Judaism and still be classified as a Jew.

In the available literature, a number of labels have been used to identify non-Jewish Soviet immigrants: Prashizky and Remennick (2014) relate to them as ‘*partial Jews and gentiles*’; Cohen and Susser (2009) define them as *‘non-Jewish Jews’*; and Raijman (2009), like most studies on this group, simply calls them *‘non-Jews*.’ This latter label will also serve in my analysis.

The estimated number of non-Jews among Soviet immigrants has continuously increased over time, from 300,000 in 2008 (Cohen and Susser, 2009) to 330,000 in 2013 (Prashizky and Remennick, 2014). Based on the report of the Central Bureau of Statistics, by December 2017, the number of those defined as “Others” (including non-Arab Christians) was 400,000, or 4.5% of the total population of Israel (CBS, December 31, 2017, press release, Selected Annual Data, 2017). It should be noted that there is some confusion in these numbers, since some do not include non-Arab Christians (who are part of the ex-Soviets, but are usually combined with the Christian population in Israel).

According to official Israeli statistics, the percentage of non-Jews among the immigrants rose from 6% in 1989 to 39% in 1998, 56.4% in 2001, 58% in 2006, and as high as 80% among Soviet immigrants who came in 2017 (see Figure 6.1).

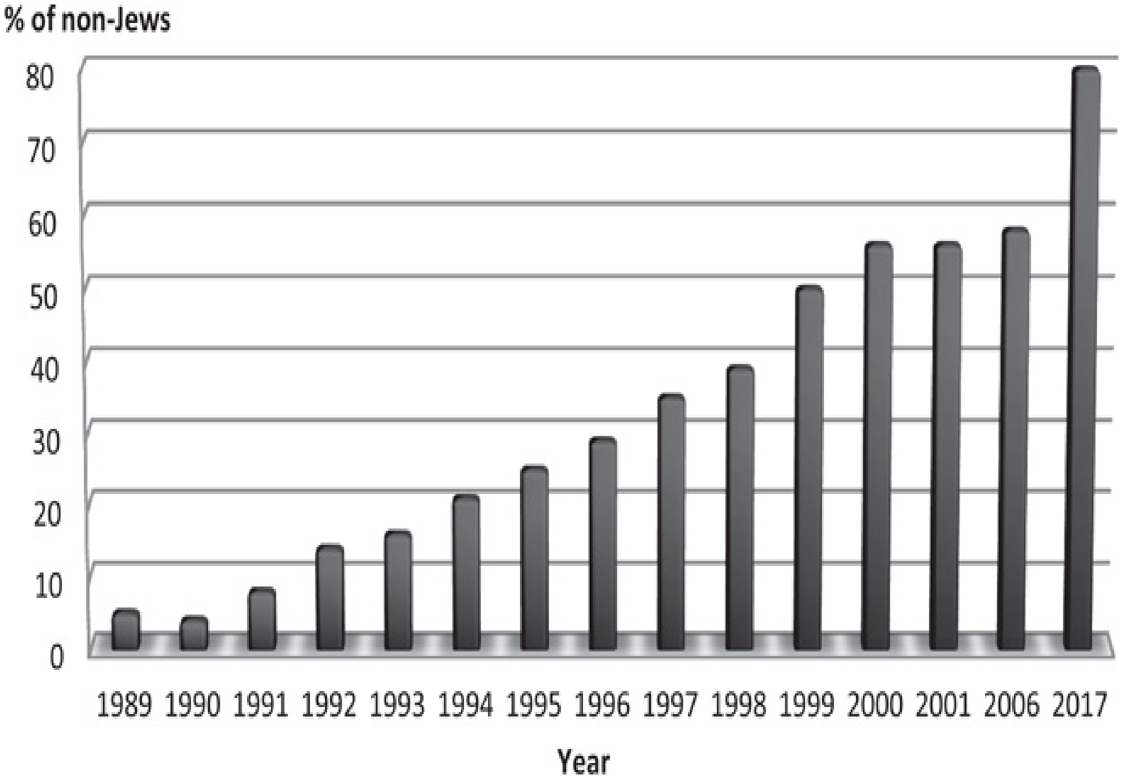


Figure 6.1 Non-Jews among Soviet Immigrants 1989–2017.

The percentage for 2017 has been calculated from a press release that was published by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (December 31, 2017). Based on this press release, the total number of immigrants who came to Israel in 2017 was 27,000, 14,202 of whom came from Russia and the Ukraine (52.6% of the total). Of these immigrants, the number of others was 11,400 (since, according to this report, the total number of demographic increase among others was 14,900 in 2017, of which 77% or 11,400 was from immigration). According to previous years, "others" mainly originated from the FSU. Therefore, the calculated percentage of non-Jews was 80% of the total number of Soviet immigrants in 2017.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics. 2000. *Immigration to Israel 1998,* Publication No. 1132 (June), p. 17. Statistics for the years 1999–2001 are based on the Liaison Division, cited by Demirski-Ziglman, 2002: 98; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004 table 13; CBS, 2006; cited by Rivka Reijman, 2009; the percentage for 2017 was calculated from the press release of the Central Bureau of Statistics, press release of the CBS on December 31, 2017).

The gradual increase in the percentage of non-Jewish Soviet immigrants reflects the fact that over the years the pool of Jews among potential FSU immigrants has decreased and more non-Jews are immigrating to Israel under the Law of Return and acquiring Israeli citizenship.

Problems posed to Israeli society by non-Jewish immigrants

The increasing number of non-Jewish Soviet immigrants in Israel has caused serious confusion regarding the character of Israel as a "Jewish state." In his article "Israel as a non-Arab state," Lustick (1999: 430) describes in detail the confusion caused by the official classification used by the CBS for the non-Jews among Russian immigrants, since some of them are strictly defined as non-Arab Christians, some as "unregistered" as far as their religious affiliation is concerned, and some are defined as "non-Jewish." Therefore, when designing the 1995 census (the first census after the mass influx from the FSU), the CBS chose to omit altogether any question in the census about religious affiliation or national identity of those polled. The main distinction in the reported official statistics of the CBS became "Jews" versus "Arabs and others" (Lustick, 1999: 430). Thus, all the "non-Jewish" categories among Russian immigrants were officially marked as "others." In terms of demographic structure, this group has raised the argument regarding maintaining the Jewish majority in Israel. Lustick argues that the large number of immigrants from the FSU, who by virtue of the Law of Return become Israeli citizens, though they are neither Arabs nor Jews, greatly complicates the demographic, cultural, statistical, and political landscape of Israel and raises a major question about the future of Israel not only as a "Jewish" state but as a "non-Arab" state (ibid: 417).

The fear from the impact of the increasing number of non-Jewish immigrants on the Jewish character of the state has also evoked a wide dispute among secular Israeli politicians and intellectuals. For example, Lily Galili (a journalist for the prestigious Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz*), wrote of the "threat" non-Jewish immigrants pose to the Zionist-Jewish character of Israel:

> The presence of hundreds of thousands of non-Jews, who come [to Israel] under the Law of Return, will sharpen the question of Israel's identity as a "Jewish State" or as "a state of all its citizens." Even without a political alliance, the natural expectation is that immigrants will join the demand of the Arab population to turn Israel into a state of all its citizens. However, while it is still easy to block the demand of the Arab population by national or nationalistic arguments, those answers will not be valid for those who came by the Zionist consensus, according to the Law of Return. But upon their arrival they [immigrants] will find a hostile reception for their existence here
>
> (*Ha'aretz,* September 30, 1999)

Yfaat Weiss (2001) raised a similar argument about this phenomenon, made possible by the 1970 amendment to the Law of Return, which allowed the non-Jewish family of those eligible to immigrate (those with at least one Jewish grandparent) to accompany them to Israel and obtain Israeli citizenship. Weiss highlighted the discriminatory repercussions of this amendment against the indigenous Arabs, who are not covered by the Law of Return and totally excluded from the dominant (non-Arab) ethnos in Israel (ibid.: 66; see also Lustick, 1999).

A special symposium was organized by Israeli secular intellectuals to discuss the implications of the expanding phenomenon of non-Jewish immigrants for the *hoq ha-shvut* (the Law of Return). The discussions were published in detail in the journal "The Jews of the Former Soviet Union in Israel and the Diaspora" Vol. 20–21, 2002 (edited by David Prital (Prinzental)). Following, in brief, are some of the ideas raised in this symposium.

In his introduction, Moshe Lissak, a well-known Israeli sociologist, emphasized that the main reason for the demand for reform in the *hoq ha-shvut* has to do with the fact that the current nature of this law has made it possible for many non-Jewish immigrants to come to Israel and automatically obtain Israeli citizenship. This phenomenon became very common in the 1990s mass immigration from FSU to Israel. If in the mid-1990s the number of these non-Jewish immigrants was relatively small, today they actually constitute the majority of them (Lissak, 2002: 24). This issue raises critical questions regarding the "definition of the components of the Jewish identity on the one hand, and on the other, the ways to join the Jewish collective" (ibid). Lissak added that there are a number of aspects in such discussion: the symbolic-historic aspect, the question of the components of the Jewish identity, the aspect which deals with the criteria of joining the (Jewish) collective, the aspect defining Israeli citizenship, and the aspect that has to do with the control over the quantity and quality of immigrants to Israel (Lissak, 2002: 25).

Alexander Etterman (an academic and writer who immigrated from Moscow to Israel in 1985) called for the abolishment of *hoq ha-shvut* and its replacement by a normal immigration law (2002: 31–32). He emphasized: "A state ruled by law cannot safeguard forever the unlimited right for a certain religious or national group…."

Professor Ruth Gavison sees the discussion over *hoq ha-shvut* as a part of a wide discussion on the character of Israel as a Jewish state (as the Jewish majority wants to maintain) vis-à-vis 'a state of all its citizens' (as the Arab minority wants to see). As to the implications for *hoq ha-shvut,* Gavison thinks that

> we should be strict regarding the attempt to preserve a Jewish majority, and this Jewish majority should be a bit wider than that of the *halakhic* character, but this Jewish majority should be Jewish. It should not just be civil … therefore, the solution for *hoq ha-shvut,* from both the ethical and political aspects-should be to aspire to minimize the immigration of people on whom there is no dispute of their being non-Jewish and that they do not want to come here for motives of Jewish identity.
>
> (Gavison, 2002: 41 Translated from Hebrew, M.A.)

A.B. Yehoshua, a famous Israeli writer, said:

> since there is a new situation in which there are people who take advantage of the *hoq ha-shvut*, not because they are persecuted Jews, but because they want to become Jews in order to utilize the possibility that we have a Western state, which easily grants passports, and they can escape from their difficult economic situation, there should be a barrier against such kind of people … *hoq ha-shvut* should be converted into a citizenship law, that is, to a law that grants shelter to every Jew,

> according to the criteria of 'who is a Jew.' To become a citizen should mean the need to pass specific exams, should take some time, in which we can see that a person has a sincere intention to remain in Israel, that he/she learns Hebrew, that he/she serves in the army, that he/she takes part in the Israeli experience….
>
> (2002: 46 Translated from Hebrew, M.A.)

The issue of non-Jewish immigrants came again to the forefront in 2007 on the background of media reports on anti-Semitic phenomena among this group. In September 2007, Israeli police arrested eight Russian youngsters, who were accused of brutal actions against homosexuals, religious Jews, and foreign workers, based on the neo-Nazi doctrine (Ynet, 9 February, 2007). This group was based in the Jewish city of Petah Tikwa (near Tel-Aviv). It was first discovered in 2006, when its members painted swastikas on the walls of a synagogue and wrote in big red letters, "death to Jews" (Ynet, 4 May 2006). This phenomenon was evident in other Israeli cities where youngsters among Soviet immigrants were suspected of committing neo-Nazi actions. However, it remained marginal and the Israeli authorities tried to underplay or overlook this phenomenon in the fear that its recognition might delegitimize the combat against anti-Semitism in the world (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 177).

The committee of "Aliya, Absorption and Diasporas" in the Knesset conducted a special discussion on this phenomenon on May 27, 2008 (Knesset, 2008). A large part of the discussion was focused on the controversial question, whether those youngsters involved in this act were Russian Jews or non-Jews? Here after, we present a number of relevant quotations of this discussion (Translated from Hebrew M.A.).

Avigdor Leviatan, who was at the time responsible for *giur* (conversion) in the Ministry of Absorption, had this to say:

> The difference between Jewish and non-Jewish children in schools is zero—almost there is no difference. Also, among the seemingly Jewish children there is no Jewish identity, no knowledge, nothing… and when you try to see who is a Jew and who is not, you cannot tell. I meet with school principals, as somebody responsible for conversion, and there is no difference. Sometimes even teachers and principals do not know how to differentiate between the two groups, and in their day-to-day behavior there is no difference. So let us not categorize, and say "non-Jews…"

Knesset Member (KM) Moshe Gafni (ultra-Orthodox—Degel Hatorah):

> On the contrary, we are not categorizing, we are saying, they are "non-Jews."

KM Avraham Michaeli (ultra-Orthodox Shas):

> It is even worse, Jewish [children] are affected by the non-Jews.

KM Kolet Avital (Labor Party):

> I think we should not hide facts, because this phenomenon did not exist before. Ten years ago, nobody here was speaking about the phenomenon of alienated, anti-Semitic children….

KM Moshe Gafni:

> As KM Kolet Avital said, this is a phenomenon which exists among non-Jewish immigrants….

Avigdor Leviatan:

> There is no proof, nobody made sure that they are….

KM Kolet Avital (addressing Avigdor Leviatan):

> I want to ask you, OK, let us assume that we accept your determination that there is no proof that these children were non-Jews, despite the fact that we had statistics, but let us assume these statistics are fake and we have no way to prove, but we have seen the internet web-sites, more or less we know what we are speaking about, but let us say we agree with your assumption, don't you think that non-Jewish children who arrive here without any background, need a little bit more education and preparation than Jewish children?

Avigdor Leviatan:

> I am saying there is no difference between Jewish and non-Jewish children….

KM Kolet Avital:

> There is a large difference. There is a big cultural difference….

Non-Jewish immigrants face negative attitudes also among the wide public. Various studies indicate that non-Jewish Soviet immigrants are rejected by both the veteran Israelis and by Jewish immigrants alike. In a study on the attitudes of the Israeli population regarding the rights of Jewish and non-Jewish Soviet immigrants, Zahavi-Katz (2009) found that veteran Jewish Israelis support the exclusion of non-Jewish immigrants from political rights. Cohen and Susser (2009) differentiate between the attitudes of secular and religious Jews toward the "non-Jewish Jews." For secular Israeli Jews, who constitute the majority in Israel, ex-Soviet immigrants are Jews, regardless of their formal *Halakhic* status. For religious Jews, *Halakha* is the exclusive determinant of Jewishness. Therefore, they [the non-Jews] are considered as a threat to the Jewish character of the state (Cohen and Susser, 2009: 56).

The rejectionist attitude of veteran Israelis toward non-Jewish immigrants is also shared by Jewish immigrants themselves. While non-Jewish immigrants do not aspire to develop a separate community of their own in Israel, but rather to integrate within the Jewish immigrants, out of the belief that this would promote their status in Israel, Jewish immigrants are not interested in accepting them to their community and oppose the idea of giving rights to non-Jews (Polonsky, 2007). Thus, shared national background (by country of origin) does not necessarily guarantee solidarity and close social relations between immigrants (Raijman and Pinsky, 2012).

Cohen and Susser (2009), however, perceive non-Jewish immigrants or "Others" from a different angle. They call this group "non-Jewish Jews." They argue that while a large number of this group are non-*Halakhic* Jews, they did go through what they describe as a "sociological conversion" as far as the practice of a Jewish life in Israel is concerned. In this sense, the "sociological Jewishness" of the non-Jewish Jews is reflected in their strong desire to integrate within the Jewish life: "they celebrate Jewish holidays, attend Jewish/Israeli educational institutions, support Jewish/Israeli interests in foreign policy issues, serve in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), live by the Jewish calendar, use Hebrew as their daily language and so forth…." (2009: 56). Cohen and Susser argue that

> the reality 'on the ground' continues to deepen the distress of non-Jewish Jews. In opposition to the dictates of the *Halakha* and even in disregard of the specifics of the Law of Return, the sociological conversion of the non-Jewish Jews is becoming an undeniable reality.
>
> (ibid: 63–64)

Therefore, Cohen and Susser emphasize that the most important contribution of 'non-Jewish Jews' lies in the fact that they reinforce the Jewish character of Israel and help the state in retaining the 80-20 relationship between the percentages of Jews and Arabs. Thus, “Israel is sorely in need of non-Jewish Jews to bolster its Jewish majority” (2009: 64).

In the same vein, Ian Lustick argues that national-religious groups, like the Israel right showed no opposition, but even sympathy, toward the phenomenon of mass immigration of non-Jews among Russian immigrants. This is because immigrants from the FSU as a whole, including both Jews and non-Jews, served to alleviate the perceived “demographic danger,” which has been a major factor behind the willingness of the left-center groups in Israel to achieve separation between Jews and Arabs, which involves a territorial compromise with the Palestinians and giving up substantial parts of the territories to Palestinian rule (Lustick, 1999: 425).

It should be noted that Russian immigrants, as a whole, and mainly the non-Jewish immigrants, have influenced the day-to-day Israeli lifestyle patterns—mainly as far as Kosher food is concerned—in particular regarding pork products. The fact that this group differs significantly from religiously observant and traditional communities has already led to harsh conflicts, especially in development towns, where many new immigrants live alongside religious and traditional veteran Israelis of *Mizrahi* background (Sheleg, 2004: 74).

Therefore, it is no wonder that Orthodox leaders constitute the main opposition toward the admission of non-Jewish immigrants. Usually, they offer higher figures than the authorities when speaking about the percentage of non-Jews among immigrants. Rabbi Ravitz, a Knesset member representing the ultra-Orthodox Degel Hatorah party, estimated that 30% of the FSU immigrants in 1994 were non-Jews according to *Halakha* (Avnies, 1995: 249). Other estimates indicate that as high as 85% of the young immigrants are non-Jews (see Kemer, 2016).

Response of veteran Israelis

Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox (*Haridim*) leaders alike have voiced strong opposition to the increasing number of non-Jewish Soviet immigrants. Rabbi Shilo demanded that the certificates brought by FSU immigrants to Israel be treated with extreme caution, in particular those obtained right before the emigration to Israel of which a large number is fictitious (Raphael, 1991: 90). Rabbi Mendelovitch went so far as to establish an organization “for the Jewish character of Israel,” with the aim of fighting against the entry of non-Jews to Israel (Avnies, 1995: 249). Ultra-Orthodox politicians led by Eli Yishai, at the time the minister of interior, even demanded removing the clause in the Law of Return that grants non-Jewish grandchildren of Jews to immigrate to Israel and automatically become Israeli citizens (see *b-Hadri Haridim*, June 13, 2002). In an interview to Russian language newspaper, Eli Yishai suggested that these immigrants should convert to Judaism according to the Orthodox way or rather they should leave the country (cited by Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 158).

The Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox opposition to the high percentage of non-Jews among the FSU immigrants is motivated by both religious and pragmatic reasons. Consider, for example, what the rabbi of Qiryat Ata (a Jewish town near Haifa) told a local newspaper (*Arei Hamifratz*, June 22, 2001):

> The Russians' capital is Ashdod. I heard Jojo Abutbul, who is from Ashdod, on Kol Yisrael [Israel Radio], saying that there are already eight churches in the Het neighborhood. I wrote a letter to warn the mayor of Qiryat Ata: If you don't get rid of the pigs, the pigs will get rid of you…. The day is not distant when the mayor of Qiryat Ata will be named Timoshenko-Makarenko-Korolenko-Ivanenko…. The gentiles get drunk and go on murderous rampages. You can't live in a city of pogroms whose heroes have inherited the genes of centuries of anti Semitism…. They say that Qiryat Ata is becoming an Ultraorthodox town. The truth is that the city is becoming porcine. At once the chorus started shouting and Yisrael ba'Aliya wants to have me fired.

What do you want the mayor to do?

> I don't have to teach him what he should do. He should do everything so it won't be good for the Russians here.

He should screen people out at the gates of the city?

> I won't say any more. He knows what to do. What I do say is that the reservoirs of secular people were empty, so in order to balance us and the Arabs, they are simply bringing white gentiles [Russians] and black gentiles [Ethiopians] to the Holy Land.

Attempts to convert non-Jewish immigrants

Faced by the increasing phenomenon of non-Jewish Soviet immigrants, the Israeli religious establishment made intensive effort to convert this group. However, these efforts have not been that successful. In a detailed report entitled “Not *halakhically* Jewish,” Yair Sheleg (2004) addresses the issue of conversion to Judaism of the non-Jewish immigrants. He concludes that most of these immigrants oppose such possibility. Therefore, “even liberalization of the conversion process will not lead to a significant increase in the number of those seeking to convert to Judaism” (Sheleg, 2004: 73). Indeed, it was estimated that between 1989 and 2011, only 22,000 non-Jewish immigrants (or 7%) converted to Judaism, out of 350,000 (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 154). The vast majority of this group is not ready to consider such option, which is perceived by them as unnecessary, or even insulting (see Prashizky and Remennick, 2014). Also, because conversion to Judaism has increasingly come under the ultra-Orthodox (*Haredi*) control, who have imposed a very strict measures on conversion procedure, most non-Jewish immigrants preferred not to go through this process. Instead, “the majority of non-Jewish immigrants have become part of the non-Arab, non-Jewish minority of Israelis” (Gitelman, 2012: 333).

The aforementioned picture in terms of the reluctance of non-Jewish immigrants to go through a conversion process was also reflected in discussions in our focus groups, by both the young and the old participants.

First, I will refer to the young participants. The moderator asked a direct question to participants: “I assume that all of you are here by virtue of ‘ *hoq ha-shvut*—The Law of Return.’” All participants agreed. The moderator continued: “Do you mind telling us, who among this group is considered ‘Jewish according to the *Halakha*’ and who is non-Jewish?” When discussing the problems faced by non-Jewish immigrants in Israel, everyone among the non-Jews wanted to say something about his/her own experience. Then those defined as Jewish commented.

A non-Jewish participant (24 years old; I will refer to her as Zurina) had this to say:

> Before I came here [to Israel] I learnt in a Jewish school one day a week. I think that you might be surprised for what I am going to say now…. When I studied there [in the Jewish school] they taught us that non-Jews are not allowed to work [in Israel].

Another student, surprised, said, “What?!”

Zurina once again emphasized:

> “for non Jews it is forbidden to work here….” The moderator, “In Israel?”, Zurina “Yes, and they told me that if I want to work there, in Israel, I had to go through a conversion, because I am ‘non-Jewish’, Just my father was Jewish. I did not know anything, I was only 12 years old, and I believed everything…” Another student said: “I also attended a Jewish school, but they never told us such a thing….” Zurina said: “In [—– the name of the town], Jewish teachers were very rigid!”

All participants laughed … Zurina continued:

> I arrived in Israel while thinking that I have to go through a conversion, this is what is needed, and everybody does so in Israel, because I have to be a Jew if I want to live here. Therefore, I already arrived with a plan in mind; first, I do the army service, then I convert, then…. But when I arrived in Israel, I found my first job already before serving in the army. I understood … what these foolish things I learnt? They had lied to me. Today, I understand that in principle being a non-Jew does not make any problem for me. True, for me it does not matter where to have my marriage….

Another participant (25 years old; I refer to him as Alex) added:

> “I think the only people in Israel who, not only mind regarding the issue of ‘non- Jews,’ but are even ‘hysteric’ are the members of the extremist religious group. I remember that not a long time ago, they came to Akko and Nahariya and went down the streets and checked, ‘who looked like a Jew and who did not,’ and if they, God forbid, saw any couple with a ‘non pure blood’ they almost attacked them by **sticks**.”

A student asked: “Do you mean Lahava?” Alex answered: “Yes, Lahava—an extremist national-religious organization based mainly in Jerusalem.” A student asked: “Nationalist?” Alex: “Ultra nationalist.”

The moderator asked:

> Do you think Israeli society treats Jews and non-Jews among immigrants equally?

Zoya had this to say:

> I think that unless we speak about marriage and if we do not come to the “*Rabbanot*” nobody speaks about it [a number of participants agree]… She continues: “Maybe just one time they asked me during my military service if I was Jewish. I do not remember other incidents….”

Alina:

> There is another subject connected to Jewishness, it is connected with burial, and as long as things do not reach such issues [marriage and burial] you never encounter such questions…. There are some people who care where they celebrate their marriage … and want to do it here, in the country where they live—but I really do not care about this issue…..

The issue of ‘non-Jewish’ immigrants was raised also among the older participants of the second discussion group. Interestingly, they were more willing to speak about it, and they spoke in detail about their own experiences.

The moderator asked the participants who of them were ready to tell how they were defined as Jews or non-Jews. There was no problem with that, and those defined as ‘non-Jewish’ did not hesitate to speak about themselves openly. The second question of the moderator was if non-Jewish immigrants faced any specific problem by veterans or by Israeli authorities, and if they are ready to share it with others. Here, too, participants were very enthusiastic to speak.

To summarize, most participants indicated that almost the only place they encountered the issue of ‘Jewish identification’ was with the Israeli Rabbinate. But, surprisingly, those who brought documents regarding their Jewish origin were also requested to prove again that they are ‘of Jewish descent.’

Roman (Jewish according to *Halakha*) had this to say:

> When we arrived in Israel, through ‘Chabad-Hassidic sect’, there was a need to have a circumcision ceremony for our child, who was then five years old. They [Chabad representatives] brought three or four immigrant families and took us to Bet Hadassa in Jerusalem. When we arrived there, a Rabbi came and asked my wife, not me, “Are you Jewish?”. She said, “Of course—these are the documents!” He [the Rabbi] said: “I do not want to see these documents, all of the documents that you brought from there [Russia] are fabricated.” Then he asked [my wife]; “Do you know Yiddish?”. She answered: “No, I do not

> know Yiddish—But my aunt knows and my grand mom knows —but they are not here [in Israel], they stayed there" [in Russia]. The Rabbi said: "Do you have a telephone number?". Yes. she said. The Rabbi called right away and spoke in Russian: "We are calling from Israel…." Luckily, the aunt was available and answered the call. The Rabbi asked something in Yiddish, and she [the aunt] answered without hesitation. Then the Rabbi said: "This is it, I do not need anything else, nothing, not documents, because I do not believe your documents…."

Boris asked: "Why do they (Rabbinate) not believe documents?"

Egor: "Because there were many fictive documents…."

Angela (non-Jewish according to *Halakha*):

> I think today nobody pays attention to this [Jewish descent], because it makes no difference if I am Jewish or not. In any event, nobody [among veteran Israelis] thinks I am Jewish. The only place they required this [information about Jewish descent] was the 'military industry' where I work. In the factory, they required that I fill a form, in which I verify that I am Jewish. In other cases, it really does not matter—For them [veterans], we are always 'Russians' - [a number of participants agree…].

The moderator asked: "Did they—in the factory treat you differently after you filled the form?"

Angela:

> No, not at all. In those places where I worked, some 80% were Russian speaking people. Everybody knows very well that among immigrants from the FSU there were many mixed marriages, and very few are 'pure Jews according to *Halakha*'….

Egor (not sure if he is Jewish according to *Halakha*):

> Unfortunately, many people [Russian immigrants] do have to prove they are Jewish. When my friend's daughter planned to marry, she had to prove in the Rabbinate that her grandma and grandpa were Jewish. She had to go through a lengthy and hard process. She was lucky that she had pictures that proved their Jewish descent….

Angela: "It is a humiliating process…"

Egor:

> Of course—maybe for us it is humiliating, but for them [the Rabbis], there is a need to prove [our Jewishness].

Irina:

> So why is that same girl 'good' for military service, but in order to marry she has to prove it [Jewish descent]. In the military they accept them [immigrants] happily…

Some participants noted that also in the military immigrant soldiers might face these problems. Some chose to go through conversion, but very soon realized how long and cumbersome this process is, and many quit before they complete it.

Alisa (non-Jewish immigrant—came in 1996) spoke about her daughter's experience:

> My daughter did military service here [Israel]. She began to do this course [conversion] in order to avoid any claims against her. She began, and truly wanted to complete this course. Naturally, she lived with a religious family who preserve/keep Shabbat. But she [daughter] was unable to finish the process of conversion. She said to me: "Mom, why I should lie? If I do not have it here [she pointed out to her heart]. I eat sausage with pork—why I should give it up? I would simply fool myself!—It should be inside…."

Boris (Jewish, came in 1997) gave a similar example of 'fake conversion':

> I have a friend who lives in…. His wife is a non-Jewish Russian. Once he said to me, we have to do convert. I thought he was Jewish, but later on I realized that his mom was not Jewish. So both, he and his wife had to go through '*Giur*'. In fact they went through the whole process of *Giur* in a Synagogue in ——….

Egor (laughs): "So now he can eat pork!" (Everybody laughs).

Boris:

> No! he was wearing a *Kippa*. I asked, Lev [who completed *Giur*], are you having lunch today [at your father's house], and they eat pork over there. He answered "You know what is acceptable to say [maybe according to religious tradition]," If I go to my mom, and she does not say no—So I can eat [pork]. You see, it's not so terrible. Once we went for a tour, I saw, him [Lev] goes without a Kippa! His wife wears very short pants. This is it—you see what kind of 'belief' it is! They [Lev and

> his wife] registered their children as Jewish, and that's it. But this incident really is not that nice, why you should fool yourself? Whom do you want to cheat? Boris continues: "This is exactly why they [veteran Jews] are suspicious to us. It is simply a cheat! A cheating by Russian speaking people. They [veteran Jews], of course, have encountered a large number of liars!…."

Galina (non-Jewish, came in 1997) spoke about a similar incident:

> I had a similar personal incident. When my daughter served in the [Israeli] army she said: "I am going to complete *Giur*". As a matter of fact, I was very pleased to hear that. But she [daughter] did not complete it—she even did not do the exam. She lived with a religious family, and this is all that they need to do…. But after a couple of months my daughter came to me and said: "you know mom, I do not like it [*Giur*] anymore!" I asked: "What do you mean, I do not like it?" At the beginning you were like in euphoria, what happened?…. She said: "Mom, it seems this [Giur] is not for me. I did the course and I can do the exam anytime—maybe I'll do it one day!…." But until this day, she has never done it—She is almost 30 years old now—when I asked her, she told me: "I cannot lie- If I do not have it inside … it is not worth it."

Similarities and differences between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants

When analyzing ethnic identity and orientation among Russian immigrants, the fact that large numbers are not Jewish according to *Halakha* (Jewish religious law) must be taken into consideration. Studies show that the "non-Jewish" sector among Russian immigrants is more alienated from Israeli society than the Jewish immigrants, because of the restrictions imposed on them by state and religious authorities in Israel (including restrictions regarding marriage, family reunification, and burial in a Jewish cemetery) (see Lissak, 1995; Al-Haj, 2004a, Raijman and Pinsky, 2013). Because of the obstacles they face in Israeli society, including the lengthy Orthodox conversion process, many of them eventually leave Israel for other Western countries, mainly Canada and the United States (see Fabzner-Bashan, 2016).

The extremist expression of alienation of non-Jewish immigrants may be reflected in the establishment of "*Ha Brit Haslavet*—The Slavic Association" in 2001. One of the founders of this association is Alexi Korpopov, whose grandfather (from his mother's side) was Jewish. This affiliation had granted him the right to immigrate to Israel through *hoq ha-shvut*. He came to Israel with his non-Jewish wife and their son. In a detailed interview that was published in *b-Hadri Haridim*—which is a well-known *Haredi* website, he clearly presents his ideology and demands a "Russian autonomy in Israel." He had this to say:

> True, Israel is my home now, but in fact I am in Diaspora. I am not Jewish at all, we never spoke about Jews or a Jewish culture at home. I am a Russian, has been raised as a Christian, and Russia is my national home…. You are afraid that there are 'ethnic Russians' here who have no linkage to Judaism. The state behaves like all Russians are relatives of Jews. If they write about me in the press, I want them to indicate that I am Russian, and somebody else is Ukrainian…. We are 'ethnic Russians' and we differ from Jewish Russians. I am not less equal than any Jewish Russian. I am an Israeli citizen, and pay all my dues, but for the state I am less equal. There is no formal discrimination, but in fact this is what happens….
>
> (*b-Hadri Haridim*, 12 August, 2002)

In June 2002, Korpopov sent a letter to the Russian president, in which he asked Vladimir Putin to take care of the Russians in Israel. Among other things, he wrote:

> The Russian citizens who live in Israel are discriminated against. In the independence declaration of Israel there is a clause that speaks about equality regardless of national or religious affiliation, but this is only on paper. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union suffer from discrimination and humiliation. Even the idea of national-cultural autonomy to Russians in Israel is viewed as subversion against Israel. It is possible just to dream about [Russian] cultural centers. There are few Russian schools, and only accessible to those who can pay. Most of the Russian children have to study in public schools, where the emphasis is on Jewish studies….

Therefore, Korpopov requests that Putin help Russian immigrants in Israel to achieve cultural autonomy, in order to preserve their Russian culture (ibid).

The Christian Church made use of the rejection of non-Jewish immigrants by the Israeli establishment. The Greek Orthodox Church, which had only 40,000 members (largely Arab Christians) before the Soviet immigration, tripled this number in the aftermath of this immigration (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 36). In their research on Soviet Christian immigrants in Israel, Raijman and Pinsky (2013: 1702) emphasize that the church does not only embrace these immigrants, but "it assumes an anti-Israeli political position, which might further deter immigrants from integrating into Israeli society." Therefore, these immigrants, who are defined by the researchers as '*transnational*,' manifest a strict ethnic-Russian identity with a strong nationalist-Russian sense of belonging (ibid).

However, Raijman and Pinsky (2013: 1693) present another group of non-Jewish immigrants, whom they defined as 'patriots.' They argue that patriotic identity is mainly found among *halachically* Jewish immigrants (both parents are Jewish) and half-Jewish immigrants (mostly a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, or a Jewish grandfather). This identity manifests a strong affinity to the Jewish people, and to the Land of Israel. Some members of this group identify as "Jewish-Christians," whereby the first component reflects the national affiliation and the second the religious one.

As a whole, the non-Jewish sector among immigrants displays a greater propensity toward segregation (see Lissak, 1995: 18). No less important, this group manifests the strongest ethnic-Russian identity among immigrants, since, rather than religious identity, ethnic identity forms the main unifying factor with other Russian immigrants (see Al-Haj, 2002a).

I examined the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants in various issues through the findings of the 2010 survey. First, I will refer to identity patterns, then to social distance both groups feel toward other national and ethnic and religious groups among veterans, and will end with the political attitudes and orientation of Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants. To facilitate the discussion, I created a new dummy variable—nationality, from the original variable on religious origin of immigrants. The new variable has two categories: 0—non-Jew (includes 1—non-Jew and 2—non-Jew according to *Halakha*, but has Jewish roots and did not convert to Judaism); 2—Jew (includes 3—converted to Judaism and 4—Jew according to *Halakha*).

The distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants in terms of identity patterns revealed an interesting picture (Table 6.1).

Significant differences were found (2010 survey) in all identity types (according to the chi-square test). Among the Jews, the Jewish component is the most central, the Israeli type is the second in importance, the Russian type is the third, and the Zionist type is the least important. However, all the identity types characterize a majority of the Jewish respondents to a large or very large extent. In comparison to 1999, the Jewish type has remained the most central and even became stronger, the Israeli type became stronger and moved from the third to second place, the Russian type became weaker and moved from the second to third place and the Zionist type became much stronger, but remained the least important.

Table 6.1 Identity Patterns among Jews and Non-Jews (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)

"The following identities describe me to a large or very large extent"	*Jews*	*Non-Jews*
Israeli	67.8	56.7*
Jewish	91.4	46.6**
Russian	53.5	66.9**
Zionist	52	32.8**

$*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$.

Table 6.2 How Jewish and Non-Jewish Soviet Immigrants Think That They Are Perceived by the Veteran Israelis and How They Want to Be Perceived (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)

	Jews	*Non-Jews*
Jewish	12	3
Israeli	18.2	18.8
Immigrant from the FSU (Russian)	65.1	73.7
Other	4.8	4.5
How Jews and non-Jews want to be perceived by the veteran Israelis (%)		
Jewish	31.5	12.1
Israeli	49.6	53.4
Immigrant from the FSU (Russian)	10.7	21.6
Other	8.2	12.9

Among the non-Jews, the Russian type is the most central, the Israeli type is the second in importance, the Jewish type is the third, and the Zionist type is the least important. The Russian and the Israeli types characterize a majority of the non-Jewish respondents to a large or very large extent, but the Jewish type characterizes less than half and the Zionist type characterizes a minority of the non-Jews. In comparison to 1999, the Russian type became a little weaker, but remained the most central, the Israeli type became stronger and moved from the third to second place, the Jewish type became weaker and moved from the second to third place, and the Zionist type became stronger but remained the least important. The Israeli, Jewish, and Zionist types characterize the Jews more than the non-Jews, and the Russian type characterizes the non-Jews more than the Jews. At the same time, no significant differences were found in the way both groups think they are perceived, but there are significant differences in the way they wanted to be perceived (see Table 6.2).

As shown in Table 6.2, both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants think that veteran Israelis perceive them first and foremost as Russian, and only a minority think they are perceived as Israelis or as Jews. However, among the non-Jews, a higher percentage (73.3% as compared to 65.1% among Jews) thinks they are identified by veterans by their ethnic-Russian origin.

I found a significant difference between Jews and non-Jews in the way they want to be perceived by the veteran Israelis (according to chi-square test $p < 0.01$). Approximately half of the immigrants in both groups want to be perceived by veterans as Israelis and only a minority wants to be perceived as Jews or as Russians. However, among the non-Jews, the ranking of the desired perception by veterans is as follows: Israeli, Russian, and then something else, or Jewish. The ranking for Jewish immigrants is as follows: Israeli, Jewish, Russian, and then something else. That is to say, both groups realize that they are perceived by veterans through their ethnic-Russian origin, whereas they want to be perceived first as Israelis. At the same time, they differ in terms of the importance they give to other categories of identification; for non-Jews, the ethnic component is second in importance while the Jewish is the least important. For the Jewish immigrants, the Jewish component is the second, and the ethnic-Russian component is third in importance.

To summarize, non-Jewish immigrants are a driving force in the maintenance of ethnic-Russian identity, while Jewish immigrants highly rank their ethnic-Russian identity, but only after their Jewish and Israeli components. Both groups, however, believe they are identified by veterans mainly as Russians, whereas they want to be perceived as Israelis.'

As to their location within the social map of Israeli society, similarities were found together with some differences between Jews and non-Jews. In terms of similarities, both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants feel closer to secular-*Ashkenazi* Jews, than to *Sephardic* Jews, and most distant to Muslims and homosexuals. The second part of the social map among both groups is quite different. In terms of differences, Jews first rate closer to all Jewish groups, than to others. Unlike Jews, for the non-Jewish immigrants, Christian Arabs are rated closer than ultra-Orthodox Jews and immigrants from Ethiopia.

The ranking among Jews (from closest to most distant) is as follows: (1) secular-*Ashkenazi* Jews, (2) *Sephardic* Jews, (3) ultra-Orthodox, (4) immigrants from Ethiopia, (5) Christian Arabs, (6) foreign workers, (7) Muslim Arabs, and (8) homosexuals. For the non-Jews, the rating is as follows (from the closest to the most distant): (1) secular-*Ashkenazi* Jews, (2) *Sephardic* Jews, (3) Christian Arabs, (4) ultra-Orthodox Jews, (5) immigrants from Ethiopia, (6) foreign workers, (7) Muslim Arabs, and (8) homosexuals.

As far as their attitudes toward Arabs are concerned, no significant differences were found between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants. Both immigrant groups manifest radical attitudes against Arab citizens, who are perceived by them as basically Muslims. Thus, both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants have very few relationships with Arabs and reject any close social ties with them, whether as neighbors or for marriage. The only significant difference between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants in terms of attitudes toward giving rights to Arabs was found regarding the issue of 'transfer' or reduction of the number of Arabs in Israel ($\chi^2 = 9.589$, df = 2, $p < 0.01$). The majority of Jews and non-Jews think that the number of Arabs in Israel should be reduced; however, the percentage of immigrants who support 'transfer' is higher among the Jews (66.1% among Jews as compared to 53.6% among non-Jews).

As to political attitudes, both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants manifest, by and large, secular-rightist attitudes and behavior, although the Jews could be located a bit more to the right than the non-Jews. However, no significant difference was found between Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants in voting for Russian parties. In the 2009 Knesset elections, 44.8% of Jewish and 41.1% of non-Jewish immigrants voted for Yisrael Beteinu (Avigdor Lieberman) At the same time, 25.3% of the Jewish immigrants reported voting for the right-wing parties (mainly for Likud), as compared to 16.3% among non-Jews. The major difference though is in the turnout among both groups (according to chi-square test: $\chi^2 = 23.809$, df = 6, $p < 0.01$); while 86.7% of the Jewish immigrants reported voting in the 2009 Knesset elections, this percentage was only 69.8% among the non-Jews. This pattern is similar to what was found in 1999.

This chapter focused on non-Jewish Russian immigrants according to the *Halakha*. We traced the main trends in this phenomenon over time and discussed its implications on the characteristics, identity, and the challenges that this group presents to Israeli society. In the next chapter, we deal with immigrants (both who are defined as Jewish and non-Jewish) vis-à-vis Israeli society. We concentrate on the location of these immigrants on the social map of Israel and their impact on the political culture, group conflict, and multiculturalism in Israel.

7 Immigrants, conflict, and the social map in Israel

Theoretical framework

Ethnic conflicts have become one of the main sources of social and political instability in the twenty-first century. While the twentieth century was characterized by major international conflicts (the First World War, the Second World War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and others), internal conflicts (on the basis of ethnicity, religion, race, and the like) have become a matter of major concern to today's nation states (see Gurr and Harff, 1994; Stein, 2017). As noted by Stein, most political violence in the present global political and economic setting occurs within countries and takes the form of intercommunal conflict that endangers internal and international stability (Stein, 2017: 2021).

One of the major sources of ethnic conflicts is connected to migration and population movements (Oudenhoven and Ward, 2013; Zamora-Kapoor et al., 2017). As Richmond (1988: 42) indicates, "population movements can arise from conflicting situations in sending areas and can generate conflict in receiving societies, particularly where different ethnic and racial groups are involved." This is especially true in deeply divided societies, where ethnicity is used both as an identity and as a tool for social and political mobilization (Durham, 1989: 139). In such situations, not only are ethnic boundaries maintained; they are also manipulated (see Doane, 1997; Leman, 1998; Oberschall, 2000; Cunningham, 2012).

A number of approaches are used to explain the causes of conflicts in general and of ethnic conflict with immigrants in particular. One well-known model in this field is the *integrated threat theory* of Stephan and Stephan (2000: 25). This theory refers to the factors behind the conflict between the local group (which Stephan and Stephan call the in-group) and the new group (the out-group). According to this theory, four types of threats cause prejudice and conflict: *realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes*. Realistic threats include threats to the political and economic power of the in-group and to its physical or material well-being, while symbolic threats involve perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitudes. These threats arise, in part, because the in-group believes in the rightness of its value system. Intergroup anxiety, which also serves as a major factor in conflicts, occurs when people feel personally threatened in intergroup interactions because they are concerned about negative outcomes to the self (Stephan and Stephan, 2000: 27). Out-group negative stereotypes were also mentioned as a central factor in intergroup conflict. These stereotypes embody threats to the in-group because of fears of negative consequences (ibid.).

Most scholars who study immigration claim that ethnic conflict between immigrants and locals stems mainly from ethnic competition over scarce resources. Banton (1998), one of the leading scholars of rational choice theory, contends that conflict arises out of individuals' attempts to maximize their net advantage through rational calculation. The various mobilization theories agree that large flows of migration increase levels of ethnic competition and ethnic collective action (Olzak, 2006) that usually results in ethnic conflict. In addition to competition over resources, ethnic conflict may also arise from cultural and ideological contradictions. In his book Immigration and Ethnic Conflict, Richmond (1988: 42) emphasizes that ethnic conflict

> may arise out of competition for scarce resources, the differential distribution of power within society, fundamental opposition of basic value systems and inherent contradictions in the values held and the institutions serving them. Such conflict may coexist with countervailing forces promoting greater order and stability….

Yet David Cunningham claims that ethnic boundary formation and emergent conflicts are suppressed "when groups inhabit separate, spatially distant, or complementary niches in labor markets and political systems. But when competing groups occupy similar positions, thus exhibiting considerable niches overlap, ethnic solidarities intensify and contribute to increased competition-based conflict" (Cunningham, 2012: 507). That is to say, as the perceived intergroup economic and/or political threat increases, the ethnic boundaries and conflicts between them become more salient.

Ethnic conflicts have been also addressed through approaches that combine both the definition and the implications of ethnicity. Among the central approaches are the *primordial* and the *instrumental* models. According to the primordial approach, ethnic attachments and identities are a cultural given and a natural affinity, like kinship sentiments. Therefore, they have overpowering emotional and nonrational qualities that strongly affect ethnic relations and conflict (Oberschall, 2000: 982). According to the instrumental view, ethnic sentiments and loyalties are manipulated by political leaders, intellectuals, and states for political ends (ibid.: 983; see also Rosens, 1989, cited by Oberschall, 2000: 983).

The role of the state in ethnic stratification and conflict has begun to receive increasing attention (see Brass, 1991, 1996; Zoltan, 1998; Brubaker et al., 2004). As noted in Chapter 5, states may play a crucial role in political mobilization. Moreover, the state can to a large extent determine the access of different ethnic groups to the national opportunity structure. In his book *Ethnic Groups and the State*, Paul Brass (1985) analyzes the role of modern states in ethnic formation and ethnic conflict. He emphasizes that the state is both a resource and a tool for the distribution of resources among different ethnic, religious, and other social groups. All modern states have a legitimating ideology or political formula that provides a minimum basis of popular support for their actions. Such a legitimating ideology may exclude ethnic groups that do not fit or do not comply with it. This ideology may also pose a threat to traditional controllers of symbols and values in society (ibid.: 27). Indeed, the state may use *demographic engineering* as a technique of ethnic conflict management by means of space control and population redistribution (see McGarry and O'Leary, 1994; McGarry, 1998; Yiftachel and Segal, 1998). A typical case of such engineering involves moving ethnic groups loyal to the state into peripheral regions populated by minorities that are not favored (McGarry, 1998: 613). As McGarry argues,

> state-directed movements in the modern era have been shaped by the development of nationalism, and in particular, the tendency of many nationalist movements to be based on specific ethnic groups. As a result a number of states have become 'ethnicized', that is, governed by regimes which are associated with the state's dominant ethnic group and which are ethnocentric in nature….
>
> (ibid.: 615)

Two issues have received very little attention by scholars of immigration and ethnic conflict. The first is the relationship among immigration, multiculturalism, and civil culture in the host society. In this sense, it is of major importance to explore not only the impact of the host society on the cultural orientation of immigrants but also the influence of immigrants on the structure and political culture of the receiving society. The second is the issue of the impact of newcomers on the indigenous groups in an ethno-national state that has developed a strong exclusionary system. Thus, the following question arises: What type of relationship exists when the newcomers (who are supposed to be the out-group) belong to the national consensus, while the indigenous group (which is supposed to be the in-group) is positioned beyond the borders of legitimacy?

In the following sections, we examine these complex issues. In addition, we analyze the impact of immigrants on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which (as noted in Chapter 2) over time has become, at least partially, an internal conflict that affects the political culture, the dynamics of collective identity, and Jewish-Arab relations in Israel.

The impact of immigrants on the character of Israeli society

We found that the 1990s immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel are overwhelmingly secular. This is reflected in their answers to a series of questions that explored their attitudes toward religion and religiosity. Responding to a general question regarding religiosity, 72% of these immigrants defined themselves as secular in the 2010 survey (as compared to 73.6% in the 1999 survey). Moreover, most FSU immigrants support secularization of the state. A majority is opposed to the religious-Jewish character of Israel, believing that religious laws should be reduced or eliminated. The 2010 survey shows that 20 years after their arrival, the Russian immigrants continue to exhibit a secular orientation in most areas of life that diverges from and challenges the extant legal relations between religion and state in Israel: 89% of the respondents (93% in the earlier survey) either agreed or strongly agreed that Israeli law should permit civil marriage and divorce, 73% either agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to maintain separation between state and religion in Israel (not asked in the earlier survey), and 63% (69% in the earlier survey) believed the sale of non-kosher products should be permitted.

Nevertheless, the immigrants' support for the secularization of Israel is not based on an all-encompassing civil perception; it is restricted mainly to the internal Jewish-Jewish discourse. This is manifested in their responses to the following question: Which of the following descriptions suits the State of Israel, in your opinion: A state of the Jewish people or a state for all its citizens, regardless of religion and national origin? In the 1999 survey, FSU immigrant respondents were almost equally divided over this question, with a slight majority supporting the Jewish character of Israel—51% versus 49%. In the 2010 survey, a slight majority of immigrants (52%) thought Israel should be a state for all its citizens.

In any event, these findings show that FSU immigrants adhere to the basic consensus among the Jewish majority in Israel regarding the ethnocentric political culture of the state—which leaves Arabs outside its legitimate borders—and favor a political culture based on an exclusive, Jewish/non-Jewish dichotomy. That is to say, the unifying factor for most immigrants is not the state's Jewish character in line with the Orthodox perception of Judaism, but a Jewish state in which Judaism has a secular ethno-national meaning. At the same time, such a character is clearly 'non-Arab' in the sense that it places Arabs on the outside while including other groups, even the non-Jews among them, within the legitimate borders of Israel's political culture (see also Lustick, 1999; Shumsky, 2001).

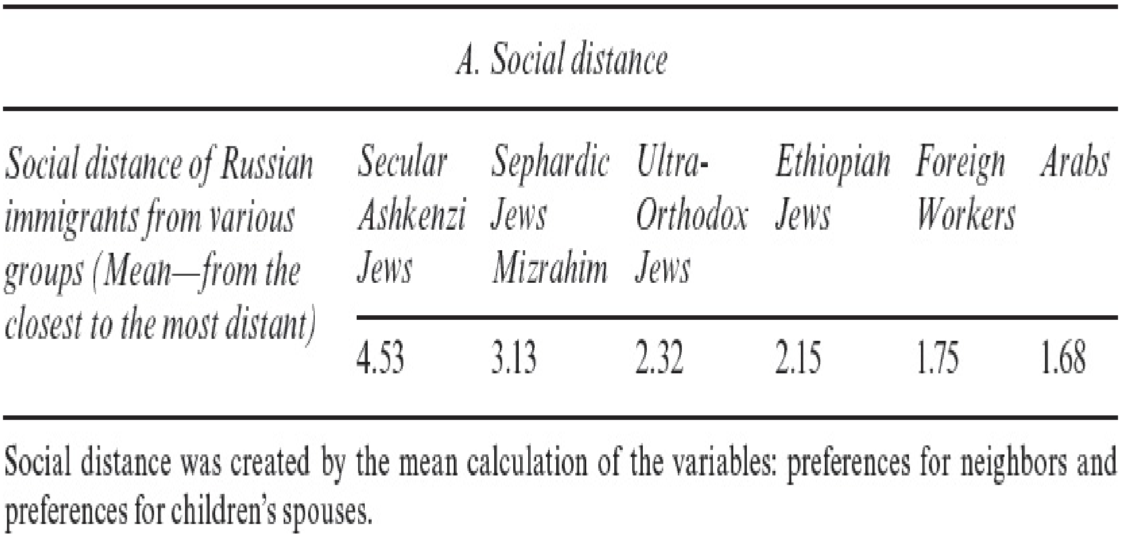
Russian immigrants and the social map in Israel

How do FSU immigrants position themselves in the Israeli social fabric? Have they already consolidated their orientation toward the complex national, ethnic, and religious divisions that mark Israeli society? To examine these points, the survey asked a series of questions about the immigrants' willingness to enter into social relationships with people from the major sectors of Israeli society: Secular *Ashkenazi* Jews (Jews of European or American origin), *Sephardim-Mizrahim* (Jews of Asian and North African origin), ultra-Orthodox Jews, immigrants from Ethiopia, and Arabs. We specifically asked respondents whether they would be willing to accept members of these groups as neighbors, as their children's friends, as their children's spouses, and as their superiors at work.

The immigrants' position within Israel's social fabric has remained stable over time. In the earlier survey (1999), the respondents ranked the groups by social distance (from the nearest to the most distant) as follows: Secular *Ashkenazi* Jews; Sephardic

Jews; ultra-Orthodox Jews; Ethiopian Jews; and Arabs. That is, the respondents perceived themselves to be closest to secular *Ashkenazi* Jews and most distant from Arabs, with Ethiopians ranked very close to the Arabs and Sephardic Jews ranked midscale. In the 2010 survey (20 years after the immigrants' arrival), the immigrants' social distance rankings for the most part have remained unchanged, though their social map has become more complex. The ranking in the 2010 survey, from the closest to the most distant group, was as follows: Secular *Ashkenazi* Jews; Sephardic Jews; ultra-Orthodox Jews and Ethiopian Jews (almost equal distance); and Muslim Arabs and foreign workers (almost equal distance, though Arabs are placed slightly behind foreign workers. We did not ask about foreign workers in the 1999 survey; see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Social Distance Immigrants Feel toward Various Groups in Israel and Factors behind the Attitudes toward Arabs (the 2010 Survey, Percentages)



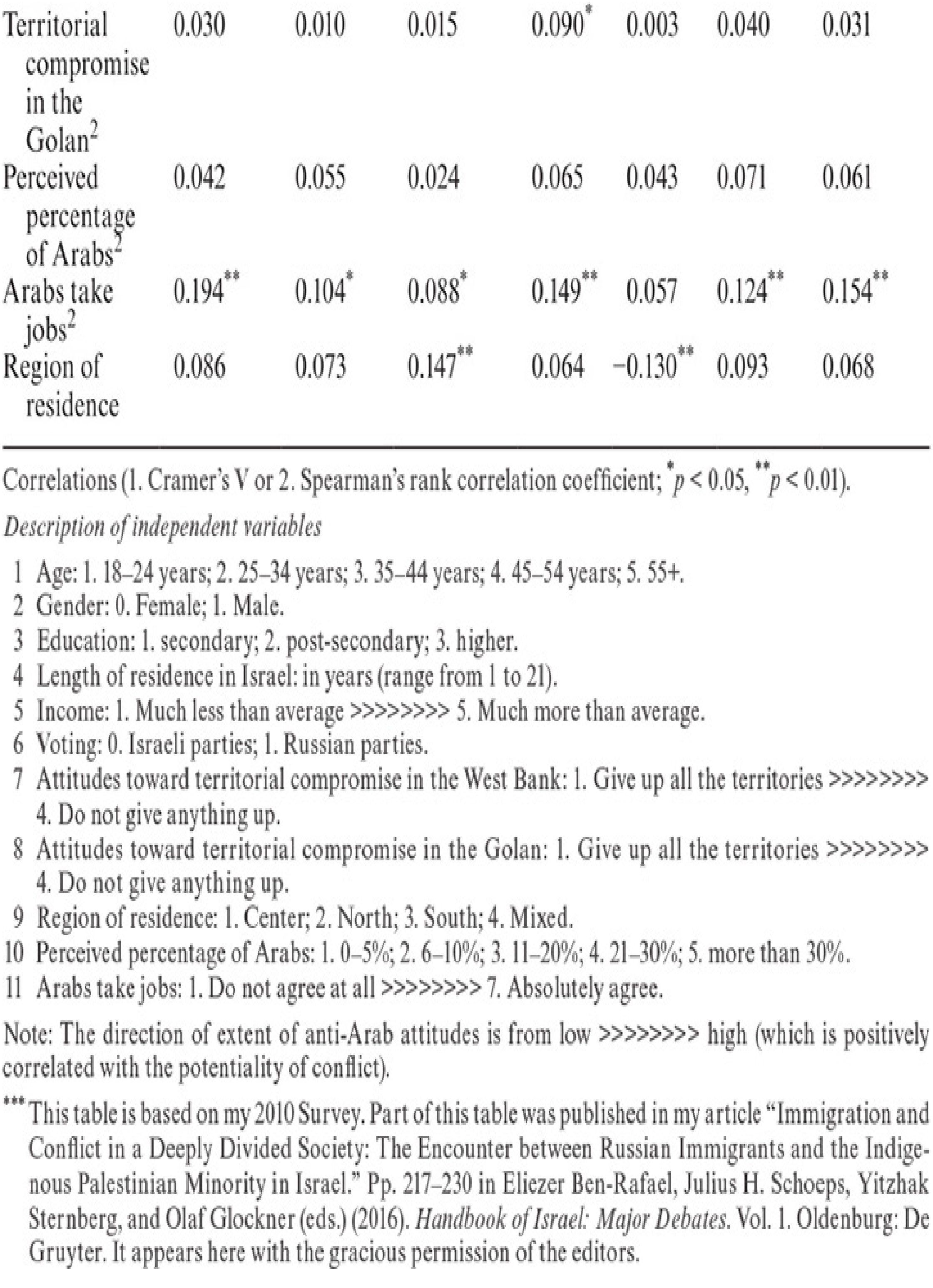
A. Social distance

Social distance of Russian immigrants from various groups (Mean—from the closest to the most distant)	*Secular Ashkenzi Jews*	*Sephardic Jews Mizrahim*	*Ultra-Orthodox Jews*	*Ethiopian Jews*	*Foreign Workers*	*Arabs*
	4.53	3.13	2.32	2.15	1.75	1.68

Social distance was created by the mean calculation of the variables: preferences for neighbors and preferences for children's spouses.

B. Factors behind the attitudes towards Arabs

	Readiness to receive Arabs at home	*Readiness to have Arabs as neighbors*	*Acquain tance with Arabs*	*Attitude toward giving Arabs full rights*	*Arabs are security risk*	*The number of Arabs should be reduced*	*Attitude toward the character of Israel*^{1}
Age^{2}	0.086^{*}	0.028	0.198^{*}	0.114^{**}	0.064	0.117^{**}	0.098
Gender^{1}	0.095	-0.114^{*}	0.167^{**}	0.076	0.060	0.094	0.056
Education^{2}	-0.090^{*}	-0.086^{*}	−0.019	−0.081	−0.049	0.090^{*}	−0.085
Length of residence in Israel^{2}	0.034	0.103^{*}	0.053	0.028	0.123^{**}	0.189^{**}	0.218^{**}
Income^{2}	−0.078	−0.079	-0.245^{**}	−0.018	0.021	0.093^{*}	0.106
Voting^{1}	0.134^{*}	0.070	0.159^{**}	0.075	0.059	0.069	0.063
Territorial compromise in the West Bank^{2}	0.105^{*}	0.005	0.063	0.142^{**}	0.005	0.026	0.018



Territorial compromise in the Golan^2	0.030	0.010	0.015	0.090*	0.003	0.040	0.031
Perceived percentage of Arabs^2	0.042	0.055	0.024	0.065	0.043	0.071	0.061
Arabs take jobs^2	0.194**	0.104*	0.088*	0.149**	0.057	0.124**	0.154**
Region of residence	0.086	0.073	0.147**	0.064	−0.130**	0.093	0.068

Correlations (1. Cramer's V or 2. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient; $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$).

Description of independent variables

1 Age: 1. 18–24 years; 2. 25–34 years; 3. 35–44 years; 4. 45–54 years; 5. 55+.
2 Gender: 0. Female; 1. Male.
3 Education: 1. secondary; 2. post-secondary; 3. higher.
4 Length of residence in Israel: in years (range from 1 to 21).
5 Income: 1. Much less than average >>>>>>>> 5. Much more than average.
6 Voting: 0. Israeli parties; 1. Russian parties.
7 Attitudes toward territorial compromise in the West Bank: 1. Give up all the territories >>>>>>>> 4. Do not give anything up.
8 Attitudes toward territorial compromise in the Golan: 1. Give up all the territories >>>>>>>> 4. Do not give anything up.
9 Region of residence: 1. Center; 2. North; 3. South; 4. Mixed.
10 Perceived percentage of Arabs: 1. 0–5%; 2. 6–10%; 3. 11–20%; 4. 21–30%; 5. more than 30%.
11 Arabs take jobs: 1. Do not agree at all >>>>>>>> 7. Absolutely agree.

Note: The direction of extent of anti-Arab attitudes is from low >>>>>>>> high (which is positively correlated with the potentiality of conflict).

***This table is based on my 2010 Survey. Part of this table was published in my article "Immigration and Conflict in a Deeply Divided Society: The Encounter between Russian Immigrants and the Indigenous Palestinian Minority in Israel." Pp. 217–230 in Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Julius H. Schoeps, Yitzhak Sternberg, and Olaf Glockner (eds.) (2016). *Handbook of Israel: Major Debates*. Vol. 1. Oldenburg: De Gruyter. It appears here with the gracious permission of the editors.

The ethnic prejudices of Russian immigrants with respect to Arabs, *Mizrahim*, and Ethiopians are quite apparent. According to a study conducted by Feldman (2003, cited by Remennick, 2007: 67), 30% of Russian immigrants indicated holding prejudices against Moroccans, 40% against Ethiopians, and 80% against Arabs.

These issues were reflected among both the young and older participants in the focus group discussions (January–February 2018). When participants were asked to which group they feel closest, almost all of them answered "*Ashkenazim.*" But when they were requested to explain their attitudes, matters appeared much more complex. One participant (27 years old, I refer to him as Andrei) had this to say:

> Because I imagine that the division here [in Israel] is according to cultural origin, I feel closer to Ashkenazim, also since they [Ashkenazim] are not religious. But when I think about it more, both groups seem quite imaginary. I really do not feel comfortable affiliating myself with one group or another. It is clear that I would never ever go to celebrate the *Mimouna* [a traditional Moroccan celebration after Passover] because I would feel out of place. But I also wouldn't go to many Ashkenazi celebrations, because many of them seem very different and I have no link to them. I really do not feel affiliated to either group [Ashkenazi and Mizrahi], *I feel more like a third group….*

Alisa (31 years old) added:

> Yes this [a third group], as a matter of fact, this is also how I feel….

The moderator then sharpened the question:

> I do not mean which group [Ashkenazim or Mizrahim] do you feel part of, but which group do you feel closer to?

Most participants then returned to their original statement: "To Ashkenazim."

One participant (28 years old, I will refer to him as Vladimir) had this to say:

> In terms of social and cultural way of life, I feel much closer to them [Ashkenazim] than to Mizrahim. Well, Mizrahim lived all of their life here, in the Middle East. Their culture is completely different, true, they [Mizrahim] are Jews, but they are different Jews, for better or for worse, they are simply different….

Mark (26 years old) added:

> I agree with Andrei … the cultural part [of the Ashkenazim] is much closer to me, because I grew up in a culture that is more European in nature, and in this sense I received a European education. And this is why it is easier for me to find much more

> in common with them [Ashkenazim]…. Yes, I feel closer to Ashkenazim….

The social map constructed by the older participants was similar to that of the younger participants. The consensus among older participants was that they feel closer to *Ashkenazim,* although some indicated there was no difference as far as social relationships with Israeli groups. One more thing common to both young and older participants has to do with their arrogant attitudes regarding *Mizrahim*, in particular Moroccans.

Diana (52 years old, came in 1996) expressed this attitude as follows:

> It is a fact, I feel closer to Ashkenazim in terms of culture. If some members of my family speak Yiddish and you want this way or another to recall the language of my parents, it is for sure that I feel closer to Ashkenazim. On the other hand, I always get nervous regarding those Mizrahim and the expressions they use, like *Kapara, Mamy, Oye*. Such Oriental emotions made me depressed at the beginning, until I got used to them….

Sergei (arrived in 1996) said:

> We have affected Israeli society in many areas, in culture… even how to dress. For example, we have reeducated our Moroccan friend. Once we wanted to go to a performance together. When he [Moroccan friend] came to us, my wife looked at him and said: 'What is this? Look how you're dressed!' He answered: "I do not quite understand you, all of my clothes are new!" But he was dressed in rainbow colors. Since then, every time he wants to buy something, we go with him. He no longer buys anything to wear by himself… We can claim victory. We also taught him how to get used to travelling on Shabbat, something he had never done before….

Among the features that Russian immigrants usually ascribe to *Mizrahi* Jews are the following: ignorance, boldness, sloppiness in appearance, and dress. In short, dark-skinned Jews are considered rough and primitive Asians compared to Russian and Ukrainian Jews, who have been constructed as cultured and well-behaved Europeans (Remennick, 2007: 68). This standpoint is based on the Orientalist point of departure of Russian immigrants, who view the gap between East and West as inherent and unbridgeable (Lomsky-Feder et al., 2005, cited by Remennick, 2007: 68).

The Orientalist discourse is a well-known orientation in Israel, used by the dominant *Ashkenazi*-European elite to establish the East-West categorization that forms the organizational basis of the stratification structure in Israel (Shenhav and Haver, 2004). Scholars of the Orientalist approach maintain that as a national movement, Zionism has a European-colonial basis that was brought to Palestine-Israel. This basis forms the cornerstone of the Israeli national identity and, in turn, has crystallized relationships between *Mizrahim* and *Ashkenazim* (Shafir and Peled, 2002).

Based on the aforementioned Orientalist point of departure, most Russian Jews believe that their European cultural heritage is superior to that of the Levantine and provincial culture in Israel (Remennick, 2007: 110; also Lissak and Leshem, 1995; Zilberg, 2000; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006).

The discussions in my focus groups (2018), and the findings of my 2010 field survey reiterate the aforementioned conclusion. Accordingly, the attitudes of immigrants toward Sephardic Jews and Ethiopian immigrants are affected by the perception of these groups as religious and Oriental, while *Ashkenazim* are perceived as secular and Western-oriented. Therefore, the Russian immigrants' relative rejection of the Sephardic and Ethiopian groups derives mainly from the immigrants' cultural orientation, which sees Oriental culture as inferior and backward. This may explain why FSU immigrants from Asian republics feel closer to *Sephardim* and Ethiopians than do those from European republics (see Al-Haj, 2004a).

Immigrants' attitudes toward the indigenous Palestinian-Arab population and the Israel-Arab conflict

This Orientalist perspective emerging from the post-Soviet outlook constitutes the source of the Russians' attitudes not only toward *Mizrahim* but also toward the Palestinian Arabs (Lerner, 2012a: 32). Lerner states that according to such a perspective,

> Arabs should recognize their status as a minority and make the best of it. Mizrahim should strive to toe the line with and incorporate themselves into proper civilization. Moreover, the Islamophobia in the rhetoric of Russian-Israeli Orientalist discourse, according to which Israel, Russia, and the West in general all share the common Islamic enemy, enables Russian Israelis to reinforce their self-image as part of Russian and European cultural spaces.

(ibid.; see also Shumsky, 2004)

Yet in addition to the Orientalist view held by Russian immigrants, other factors affect their attitudes toward the Palestinian citizens in Israel. Immigrants' views concerning Israel's Palestinian citizens are generally more hawkish than those of the longtime Jewish residents. According to the study by Philippov and Knafelman (2012), the political values and behavior of FSU immigrants even 20 years after their arrival in Israel differ significantly from those of the *Ashkenazi* old-timers with similar demographic characteristics. The immigrants' concept of the relationship between ethnicity and citizenship may derive from the model that prevailed in the Soviet Union. According to Lerner (2011: 34), the diachronic perspective explains the dynamic relationship between the Russian collective and Israeli society against the background of the history of these immigrants and the cultural input they brought with them. Such a perspective explains their attitudes and behavior based on their status as "homo-Sovieticus"—a persecuted minority in their home countries—and on the trauma ensuring from this history (Lerner gives a number of examples—Horowitz, 1998; Shumsky, 2001; Philippov, 2008; Merski, 2009). Shumsky points out that the immigrants seek to integrate their post-Soviet ethno-national tradition into the Zionist ethos through dehumanization of the Palestinian national minority. Hence, they see the Palestinian minority as a natural target for discrimination (Shumsky, 2001: 35).

Our findings show that Russian immigrants are by far more hawkish and less liberal toward Arabs and other minorities than are old-time Israelis. Much more than the old-timers, the immigrants support strong leadership, even at the expense of democratic values. Moreover, 77% of these immigrants as compared to 47% of veteran Israelis think that Arab emigration from Israel should be encouraged; 50% (27% among veteran Israelis) think that men are better political leaders than women, and 63% (as compared to 43% among old-timers) hold negative attitudes toward sexual minorities.

Nevertheless, when studying the relations between immigrants from the FSU and Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel, we must distinguish between two main levels of attitudes: attitudes toward the Arab citizens' general status as individuals and as a group, and views regarding personal-social relationships with Arabs.

On the first level, the immigrants were divided regarding their views toward the civil rights of Arabs, with those supporting equal rights slightly dominating. According to the 2010 survey, 48% of immigrant respondents (compared with 54% of veteran Israeli Jews) stated that Israeli Arabs should enjoy equal rights in all areas of life, while 40% stated that Arabs should not enjoy equal rights. At the same time, most immigrants are hostile to Arabs as a national-collective group. This was reflected in the fact that 55% of immigrant respondents (compared to 41% of veteran Israeli Jews) claimed that action should be taken to reduce the number of Arabs living in Israel (a euphemism for transfer). Israel's Arab citizens were largely perceived as a hostile minority posing security risks: 66% of the immigrant respondents (compared with 59% of veteran Israeli Jews) believed that Israel's Arab citizens posed risks to national security. Most were therefore in favor of excluding them from national decision-making procedures. Only 34% of immigrant respondents believed that Israel's Arab citizens should be allowed to participate in national-political decisions that have to do with territorial concessions and the demarcation of Israel's permanent borders.

As far as personal relationships of Russian immigrants with the Palestinian-Arab citizens are concerned, there was almost no change over time. According to the findings of the 2010 survey, the vast majority of these immigrants are not personally acquainted with Arabs and have formed no enduring personal relationships with them. Only 7% of the immigrant respondents (compared to 13% of longtime Jewish residents) reported having two or more Arab friends, and only 5% reported frequently visiting Arab homes. While 52% (compared with 55% of veteran Israeli Jews) reported being willing to host Arabs in their homes, 44% reported feeling uneasy (somewhat uneasy, uneasy, or very uneasy) around Arabs.

What are the factors behind the Russian immigrants' rejection of the indigenous Arab minority? Is the competition for resources a significant factor in this regard, as is typically the case in immigrant receiving societies? What is the impact of national-ideological factors? What impact has Israeli society had on the immigrants' attitudes over the course of their residence in Israel? Does the cultural factor play any significant role?

In order to answer these questions, I analyzed the attitudes of immigrants toward Arabs on two levels: the individual level (as reflected by social distance) and the attitudes at the group-collective level (as reflected by views toward the status and rights of Arabs). The independent variables included the following: demographic variables—age, gender, length of residence in Israel, and region of residence in Israel; socioeconomic variables—education, income;

political orientation—voting for the Knesset, attitudes toward territorial compromise; and perception of extent of threat posed by Arabs—economic threat and demographic threat. The results of my analysis are summarized in Table 7.1.

As Table 7.1 shows, a number of variables determine the social distance between immigrants and Arabs and the anti-Arab attitudes among Russian immigrants. As far as the immigrants' characteristics are concerned, the immigrants differ significantly according to age, gender, religious affiliation, education, and income. The older generation among these immigrants is much more anti-Arab than the younger generation. The older the immigrant, the more he/she maintains social distance from Arabs, supports the Jewish character of Israel and denies the right of Arabs to be equal citizens. The impact of gender is less significant and is mainly evident in terms of social distance. While men have more social contact with Arabs, they are less willing than women to have Arabs as neighbors. Variables associated with socioeconomic status (education and income) have a significant impact. The lower the education and income, the stronger the anti-Arab attitudes at both the individual-social and the collective-group levels.

It should be noted that immigrants with lower socioeconomic status have more relationships with Arabs. This results from the fact that immigrants from middle and lower strata are more likely to live in mixed Jewish-Arab localities and have more chances to meet Arabs in the workplace. Yet as our findings indicate, mere contact with the Arab minority does not guarantee positive attitudes among the immigrants. To the contrary, such contact, which takes place within asymmetric relationships, tends to increase stereotypes and deepen the social distance between the two groups.

Significant differences in social ties with Arabs were found depending on residential region (chi-square = 38.929, df = 9, $p < 0.01$). Residents of mixed localities have more social ties with Arabs than do residents of other regions. Residents of the Northern region have more social ties with Arabs than residents of the Central and Southern regions. Residents of the Central region have more social ties with Arabs than residents of the Southern region. This picture is similar to the findings of the 1999 survey.

The sense of the threat posed by Arabs has yielded a significant effect. The more immigrants perceive Arabs as a threat on these issues, the more anti-Arab attitudes they maintain and the greater the social distance between immigrants and Arabs. The findings show that the majority of immigrants from the FSU think that Arabs are a threat to the national security of Israel (72.6%) and increase the crime level in the country (67.6%). Nevertheless, immigrants tend to evaluate the number of Arabs in Israel quite realistically. Thus, immigrants perceive Arabs as a weak minority and do not perceive them as competitors. Most immigrants do not think that Arabs take jobs away from other Israelis (66.1%). That is to say, immigrants do not perceive Arab citizens as a competitive group in the labor market, nor do they perceive them as an economic threat. But those immigrants who do perceive Arabs as an economic threat tend to develop more negative attitudes toward them.

Length of residence in Israel also has a significant effect on the perception of Arabs as a threat to national security and on support for 'transfer' of Arabs. The more years the immigrants live in Israel, the more they agree with the statement that Arabs pose a threat to national security and that the number of Arabs in country should be reduced. In addition, the longer immigrants reside in the country, the less support they show for equal rights for Arabs.

The discussion of our focus groups (2018) reiterates the aforementioned picture and sheds light on the immigrants' attitudes toward the Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel. Following are selected answers among young participants.

The moderator asked:

> When did you first hear that there is an Arab population in Israel?

Feliks (27 years old) was quick to answer:

> From the very beginning all of us heard about them [Arabs].

Then there was total silence. After that another participant said:

> No, no, we did not know at first….

The moderator then asked:

> Did you learn about them before you came to Israel?

Alina said:

> Already when I was in Russia, before I came to Israel, they [representatives of the Jewish Agency] organized a course for us through the Sunday School. This was one day a week, where they taught us about [Jewish] traditions, Hebrew, history … in short, many silly things they said would be useful for us in Israel…. In particular I want to speak about the history we

> learnt there [in Sunday School], about the establishment of the state [of Israel], the wars that Israel faced and the like…. But eventually I came to realize that the history they taught us was not objective at all. Because after learning this history, the Arab I imagined was somebody with a beard, with a long robe … I don't know what to call it …. probably dishdasheh and that person … his hair was covered, he held hand grenades and threw them in all directions while shouting, 'I'll kill everybody' blah, blah, blah….

She added:

> When I arrived here [in Israel] I went to school and right away I saw two Arabs [students]. Two human beings … exactly like me.

The moderator asked: "In the same class?"

Alina answered:

> No, in another class, but we studied in the same school…. In the whole school there were, like … ten Druze and two Arabs, in short, a total mix of races. There were also many Ethiopians. I watched them, and said to myself, "they are normal human beings, young, like myself, nothing special….

The moderator asked:

> And when you arrived in Israel, where did you encounter Arabs?

Tatiana (23 years old) had this to say:

> Actually, the first time I heard about them [Arab citizens] was from the manager of the boarding school near the city of Eilat, as part of the Naaleh program. He did not allow us to go out to the city [of Eilat]. He told us we should not go into the city [during the holidays] 'because there are many Arabs … and you are still little children … and you have nothing to do there.'" She added, laughing: "Yes this is what I learnt. But when I moved to Haifa, I found a job, and then started to see Arabs…. The impression I had about them [Arabs] at first was not that positive. But later on I did come to know a number of Arabs, most of them girls, and I totally changed my negative attitudes … and I very much liked to speak with Arab girls, also during my studies at the University…

It should be noted that the attitudes of Russian immigrants toward the Arab citizens in Israel became even more radical after the 2000

Al-Aqsa *Intifada* (see Al-Haj, 2016). As noted by Shumsky (2001: 33), immigrant community institutions led by the Russian-language press were very active in reconstructing a unique collective mythology in which Russian immigrants are the vanguard of the Jewish majority for blocking the Palestinian protest. Shumsky adds that the rhetorical technique used in this process involves presenting the Russian community as the main victims of Palestinian terror (ibid.).

The answers of the older participants of the focus groups regarding the Palestinian Arabs were even more radical than those of the young participants. Most older participants fail to differentiate between Arabs in Israel and the Arabs in the territories. They can barely distinguish between the two groups, except for immigrants that had a chance to encounter Arabs more closely, mainly at work. Prior to their immigration to Israel, most participants either heard negative information about Arabs or heard nothing at all. Those who had were informed about the Arab citizens in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Palestinian *Intifada*.

Following are some quotations that exemplify these issues. First, the moderator asked:

> When did you first hear that there is an Arab population in Israel?

Marta (came in 1996) said:

> Before we came here [to Israel] I knew the ratio was 50/50, that the number of Arabs is similar to that of Jews. We heard that from the [Jewish] Agency when we started to study Hebrew. We heard there was a large Arab population. I do not quite remember statistics, but all of them [Arabs and Jews] live together and fight one another all the time, like throughout history….

Egor (came in 1990):

> We did know there was an Arab population before we came, we heard Kol Yisrael [main Hebrew radio station in Israel]. Also, I have a friend who came here several times in the 1980s to visit his parents. When he came back, he told us about the Intifada, etc. So we knew there were Arabs….

Alex (came in 2010):

> Yes, I also knew there were Arabs. My relatives lived in Tel-Aviv, already 30 years here…. One of them told us how once he

> was late for the bus, and the bus exploded…. I then understood things and I began reading newspapers when I still lived in the Soviet Union… So I could imagine how things were here. But despite this I thought there were security forces here and they know how to fight. All the time there has been a conflict here [Israel] between Muslims and Jews [relates to religion].

Despite the stereotypes the immigrants had constructed about Arabs, already before moving to Israel they also heard different voices, though a minority, who had a positive image regarding Palestinian Arabs before they came. This was reflected in Diana's statement:

> I also came in 1996, but we never had any fears of Arabs. We encountered many young Arabs who studied in our country [FSU]. Interesting young Arabs, whom I met in Moscow when they learnt Russian as part of their medical studies.

The second stage of the discussion focused on the immigrants' attitudes after they moved to Israel. At this stage, immigrants began to differentiate between the Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinians in the territories and realized that the first group holds Israeli citizenship. Most participants thought that Arab citizens of Israel have privileges, expensive cars, big houses, and extra rights in Israel.

Boris (came in 1997) had this to say:

> If you ask Arabs who work with me whether they want to move to an Arab country, they answer you 'What! Are you an idiot! I have everything here [in Israel].' Just go to Rambam hospital [Haifa] and see how many Arab doctors there are! Would they have such conditions in an Arab country? Who has the most expensive cars? They [Arabs] drive such expensive cars!

Egor (arrived in 1990) intervened:

> And what about the villas they have in the [Arab] villages? But they [Arabs] think they are not equal [to Jews], and that here [in Israel] they are discriminated against.

DIANA (came in 1996): "They [Arabs] do not even pay [taxes]…."

SERGEI (came in 1996): "They do pay [taxes]."

DIANA: "No they do not pay! Arabs who work with us speak about it openly. How did they get those tall buildings?"

IRINA (came in 2015): "Yes, they have privileges…."

The moderator then asked: “So how do you think the state [of Israel] should treat them?”

Irina:

> I think we should leave things as they are—status quo! It is not worthwhile to start changing things now….

Angela:

> Our society [Israel] is divided into groups. Some of them have privileges, like Arabs and Haridim [ultra-Orthodox Jews]. Both of these groups do not obey the law and the state cannot do anything about it…. So we remain with those who work and have to subsidize them [Arabs and Haridim]. I think this is not good at all. As long as the law does not treat all citizens equally, the problem will never be resolved. The state has allowed them to behave this way. Whenever there is a conflict, they [Arabs] scream that they are being discriminated against, and they do not have rights here, although it is exactly the opposite. They enjoy many more rights than we do. We cannot enter their villages and tour there whenever we want. But look what happens in ‘our’ shopping centers, in ‘our’ playgrounds, in public places, where we go with our children, where we want to spend our leisure time. Look what happens sometimes at the Kiryon or the Grand Canyon [large shopping centers in Haifa]. As soon as you enter you see 80% Arabs, so there’s no room for ‘us’…. But we cannot enter their villages.

Angela:

> Indeed! I don’t feel comfortable [entering their villages] when everything is in Arabic….

The moderator asked the participants: “So what do you suggest?”

Sergei:

> I want to say that like we lived there, in Russia, when we did not like it there, we left and came here. It should be the same for them [Arabs]. If they do not like it here, so all ways are open … Please….

Alex: “This is true!”

One participant (not clear whom) added: “Certainly!”

Boris intervened:

> But this is their land. Simply their land! They’ve lived here for generations. Their ancestors lived here. I’ve encountered some

> [immigrants] who came from Russia, lived here only two years and say: ‘So what is the problem! If they [Arabs] do not like it they should fly away from here.’ And I want to say, this [country] belongs to them! At the same time, of course, they [Arabs] should not say to Jews “You go away from here. Therefore [he addresses the moderator] the question you asked is complex. I wish somebody could give an answer….

Irina (concludes on an optimistic note):

> I think that all of this [the conflict] will disappear in the future. At my workplace, there are Arabs, Jews and Russian-speaking people. We live together, one way or another. True, when Arabs meet their co-nationals, they always speak Arabic. But we have a Russian lady who is married to an Arab and has a child. She [the child] speaks three languages: Arabic with Arabs, Hebrew with Jews, and Russian with Russian-speaking people. Yes, this is how the future should look. The child has assimilated all of this, so the conflict will disappear over time. We simply have not been here for such a long time….

This discussion reflects two major issues that affect the attitudes of the immigrants regarding the Palestinian citizens in Israel: first, the sociopolitical socialization in the FSU, and second the impact of Israeli society. Also, as we indicated elsewhere, we may safely argue that the socialization of the immigrants by the Israeli-Zionist absorption authorities before and after immigration contributed to their negative image of Arabs (see Al-Haj, 2004a).

The impact of Israeli society on the attitudes of immigrants toward Arabs is evident in the significant relationship between length of residence in Israel and views regarding Arabs. Yet, this impact seems to be stronger in terms of attitudes, not in actual behavior. While there was no significant difference between new and old-timer immigrants regarding acquaintance with Arabs, the longer immigrants live in Israel the stronger their anti-Arab attitudes at both the individual and collective levels. The impact of region of residence is complex. While immigrants living in mixed localities with Arabs report more social contact between the two groups, they demonstrate a significant tendency to perceive Arabs as a security risk.

As noted earlier, one important factor underlying the great social distance immigrants feel from Arabs is found in the stereotypes immigrants already held in the home country. Still, the atmosphere in Israel in which Jewish-Arab relations exist under the shadow of conflict merely reinforces and further legitimizes these stereotypes. In the new setting, many immigrants have adopted the Jewish majority's dominant image of the Arab minority as inferior, hostile, part of the enemy, and a security risk (for a discussion of stereotypes among the Jewish majority concerning Arabs, see Cohen, 1985; Hofman, 1988; Smooha, 1989; Bar-Tal, 1996).

Galili and Bronfman see a reciprocal effect between Soviet immigrants and the veteran *Ashkenazi* elite with respect to the erosion of democratic values and the growing racist culture, mainly directed against Arabs. Like the *Mizrahim*, the Soviet immigrants have also perceived hatred of Arabs as their *entrance ticket* to the national consensus in Israel (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 242; Al-Haj, 2016). Another important fact mentioned by Galili and Bronfman (2013: 152) is that some of the 1990s immigrants were directed, whether overtly or covertly, to settle in the mixed Israeli cities (Lod, Ramle, Akko, Nazareth Illit, and Maalot Tarshiha), where Jewish-Arab relations have been always problematic. In these cities, Russian immigrants, usually lower class, established their neighborhoods just overlooking Arab neighborhoods. Such a situation has become continuously explosive (ibid.).

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the study by Erez Tzfadia and Haim Yacobi (2007) about the relationships between Russian immigrants and the Arab community in the Jewish-Arab city of Lod. Based on detailed analysis of documents, media and political declarations, they describe the role played by these immigrants, with the active support of the state, in the project of de-Arabizing and Judaizing Lod. In this sense, Tzfadia and Yacobi emphasize the dynamic correlation between the sentiments and values of the Russian immigrants, which have been transferred from their country of origin, and the state's manipulation of these immigrants that enables them to situate themselves in a higher position vis-à-vis the local Palestinians. In their words:

> The ideology of the new state and its history of settlement and immigration, as well as the local politics of producing new neighborhoods for immigrants, enables the latter to identify and label the local population—the Palestinians—as Ethnicos by means of negative concepts borrowed from the Soviet political culture. By doing so, immigrants resist the status of insiders-outsiders, and endeavor to situate themselves in a higher social position within the new society.
>
> (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2007: 452)

A significant relationship emerged between the political attitudes and behavior of immigrants and their attitudes toward Arabs. The more hardline the immigrants are regarding territorial compromise with the Palestinians in the West Bank, the more anti-Arab their attitudes and the greater the social distance they manifest toward Arabs. The same direction of relationship exists as far as attitudes regarding territorial compromise on the Golan Heights, although less significant than that regarding the Palestinians. The immigrants' voting patterns also reveal a significant difference in their attitudes toward Arabs. Immigrants who vote for Russian parties (which are more hardline than veteran Israeli parties—see Galili and Bronfman, 2013) exhibit a greater social distance from Arabs than voters of veteran Israeli parties and more negative attitudes toward the status of Arabs as a group.

Our findings show that the immigrants' salient secular orientation comes with hawkish political views on territorial issues, as reflected in the findings of the 2010 survey. Compared with the earlier survey (1999), the immigrants' views concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict have moved even further to the right. Only 5% of the respondents (compared with 25% in the earlier survey) were willing to make any territorial concessions on the Golan Heights in return for comprehensive peace with Syria. Only 13% (37% in the earlier survey) were willing to make any concessions in the Palestinian territories in return for comprehensive peace with the Palestinians. In addition, only 11% were willing (somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed) to divide Jerusalem, and only 4% were willing to withdraw from all Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories (24% from small settlements isolated from the main settlement blocks) in return for comprehensive peace with the Palestinians. (No similar question was asked in the earlier survey.)

With respect to the Israeli-Arab conflict, immigrants from the FSU are far to the right of Israel's veteran Jewish population. In our survey of the veteran Jewish population (also conducted in 2010, see methodology section in introduction), 43% of the respondents were willing to make some concessions on the Golan Heights (17% willing to withdraw from all or much of that region), and 58% were willing to make some concessions in the Palestinian territories (27% claiming readiness to withdraw from all or much of these territories) in return for comprehensive peace with the Palestinians. Few of the veteran Jewish respondents (15%, just below the percentage of immigrant respondents) believed that comprehensive peace with the Palestinians could be attained without any territorial concessions.

As mentioned by Galili and Bronfman, while before the 1990s influx of Soviet immigration the nationalist-rightist stream had been affiliated with Jewish-religious nationalism, Soviet immigrants contributed immensely to the secularization of nationalism in Israeli society (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 241–242). This has deeply affected the sociopolitical character of Israel and its political culture, including the increasing trend toward national extremism and racism. Nevertheless, there is a gap between the radical attitudes of Soviet immigrants and their actual behavior. In this sense, and despite efforts made by Israeli authorities, at least at the beginning, to divert immigrants to settle in the Palestinian territories, the percentage of immigrants among the settlers has remained relatively small. Russian immigrants are concentrated in the large cities in the West Bank, mainly Ariel (where they form over 50% of its population) and Maale Adumim. In the other settlements, which are by and large religious, Russian immigrants constitute some 8% (Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 114).

Galili and Bronfman propose two reasons for the relatively small number of immigrants in the settlements. The overt one has to do with the urban nature of Russian immigrants who tend to reside in large cities. The other is even more profound and is connected with the reservations among the settler leadership concerning the Russian immigrants. This leadership is suspicious regarding the Jewishness and the national commitment of these immigrants (ibid.).

We may summarize that the attitudes of Russian immigrants toward both the Palestinian citizens and the *Mizrahim* (including Ethiopians) are strongly affected by the immigrants' Orientalist orientation. In this sense, Russians perceive both groups as traditional-religious and of inferior Eastern culture. However, the rejection—and even the hatred—of Russian immigrants toward the Palestinian-Arab citizens is much stronger than that manifested toward *Mizrahim*. My analysis shows that the attitudes of these immigrants toward the indigenous Palestinian Arabs are affected by three sets of factors. The first has to do with the socialization of immigrants within Israeli society. The impact of Israeli society on the attitudes of immigrants is reflected in the fact that the longer the duration of immigrants in Israel, the more anti-Arab attitudes they have. In this sense, it seems that the Russian immigrants discovered very soon that the rejection and even hatred of Arabs is the 'ticket' to access the national consensus in Israel. Interestingly enough, the findings show that longer residence in Israel does not increase the social contact with Arabs. This is increased through the living in the mixed towns, mainly in the northern part of Israel. At the same time, the findings show that a continuing social contact, in particular if it is not on equal basis, does not guarantee a positive perception of Arabs. On the contrary, those immigrants who live in mixed towns with Arabs (mainly development towns) tend to see them more as a security risk. The perception of Arabs as a hostile minority is reinforced under the continuing national conflict with the Palestinians and Arabs, to which the indigenous Arab minority belongs. Therefore, the findings show that the more hawkish attitudes immigrants have toward territorial compromise, the stronger their anti-Arab stand. Also, the Israeli impact is manifested by the fact that Jewish immigrants are more radical in their views and behavior toward Arabs than non-Jewish immigrants. In this sense, Jewish immigrants more than non-Jewish immigrants have more commitment toward the Jewish character of Israel at the expense of its civic character and, accordingly, they press more for denying the citizenship rights of Arabs and their inclusion within Israeli society.

The second set of factors has to do with the political culture of immigrants themselves, which is affected by the socialization of these immigrants in the FSU. This is reflected in the fact that the older generation among immigrants has stronger anti-Arab attitudes, feels a greater social distance from them, and more strongly supports their exclusion as a group. Also, voters of Russian-ethnic parties more strongly reject the Arabs on both the individual and group levels.

The third set of factors, which is less significant than the first two, yet still important, is the stratification factor. The lower the socioeconomic status among immigrants, the more they perceive Arabs as an 'economic threat' and the stronger their anti-Arab attitudes. In other words, immigrants with higher education and income and those who do not perceive Arabs as 'taking jobs from Israelis' are more tolerant toward Arabs and have less anti-Arab views. However, the socioeconomic factor is less significant since the Arab citizens are not perceived by immigrants as a competitive group in the labor market. Only 20% thought that 'Arabs take jobs from Israelis.' Indeed, studies show that while Russian immigrants are mainly located in the middle and upper-middle classes, Arabs are primarily located at the margins of the Israel economy and mainly employed in lower status jobs (see Al-Haj, 2004a).

As far as the theoretical aspect is concerned, this study shows that the understanding of the relationships between immigration and ethnic conflict necessitates understanding not only the attitudes of the local society toward immigrants but also the attitudes of immigrants toward the various groups in the local society. This is especially important in a deeply divided society, where the national consensus and collective identity of the state are determined through ethno-national factors. In this case, immigrants who are affiliated with the local majority, very soon internalize the national political culture. On the one hand, they reinforce the existing exclusionary system in order to maximize their benefits and join the consensus. On the other hand, immigrants might strive toward the expansion of the existing social and cultural structure, in order to secure their position in the receiving society while reinforcing the ethno-national character of its borders of legitimacy. As a result, immigration may reinforce ethnic conflict in the receiving society and manipulate its 'tribal character' according to the needs and interests of immigrants. In this regard, immigrants do not only maintain their ethnic boundaries but they manipulate these boundaries to penetrate the existing borders of legitimacy, thus further marginalizing the already excluded indigenous minority. In deeply divided ethno-national societies, the mission of immigrants vis-à-vis the indigenous minority is facilitated and continuously supported by the state. This is especially true when the state creates a 'legitimating ideology' that allows immigrants automatic access to it, and at the same time excludes ethnic groups that do not comply with this ideology (see also Brass, 1985).

As to approaches to ethnic conflicts, the "integrated threat theory," suggested by Stephan and Stephan (2000: 25), can serve as a relevant starting point. Yet we must differentiate between two main levels of factors. While the attitudes of Russian immigrants toward *Mizrahim* are mainly affected by perceived *symbolic threats* and *negative stereotypes* at the cultural level, the attitudes of these immigrants regarding the Palestinian-Arab citizens are more complex. In addition to the Russian immigrants' perceived *symbolic threats* and *negative stereotypes* regarding Palestinian Arabs, the *intergroup anxiety* also plays a major role. As we saw from the focus group discussions, this latter factor is manipulated by the absorbing Israeli authorities and was already conveyed to Russian immigrants in their home country prior to their arrival in Israel. Manipulation of this *intergroup anxiety* continues in the host country as well, with active participation from the immigrants themselves. In other words, the anti-Arab attitudes are instrumentalized by the immigrants as a means of penetrating the Israeli national consensus and maximizing the benefits they derive from the existing exclusionary ethno-national system.

8 Concluding remarks

In this monograph, I have discussed the 1990s immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) in Israel (hereafter FSU immigrants, Russian immigrants, or the Russians in Israel) over three decades, since the arrival of the first wave of these immigrants. I have dealt with ethnic formation among Russian immigrants, their location within the ethnic map of Israeli society, and the impact of these immigrants on the traditional bipolar *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* ethnic division. Special attention was devoted to non-Jewish immigrants and the implications of their growing numbers on the Jewish character of Israel and the meaning of "Israeli citizenship." The monograph addressed both the existing and the anticipated influences of these immigrants on politics, culture, and social structure in Israel as well as their impact on regional issues, in particular the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I have analyzed these subjects in the context of the historical development of Israeli society and the demographic, economic, and political changes that have taken place in Israel over time.

This monograph provides the first opportunity for a comprehensive and critical discussion of questions of immigration and society in Israel from a comparative universal perspective. Unlike the existing mainstream approach, which is based on the Zionist paradigm, I have analyzed immigration and ethnicity in Israel from a global perspective that delineates global-universal aspects alongside particular-national aspects connected to the formation and development of Israel. This pioneering approach allows a broader and more in-depth view of the complex ideological and practical incentives underlying Jewish immigration to Israel and their implications both on the ethnic identity of immigrants and on the collective identity of

Israeli society. In addition, my approach takes into account all the constituent groups in Israeli society—including the Palestinian-Arab citizens in Israel, who have almost never been included in analyses addressing questions of Jewish immigration to Israel.

Because the study covers the 30 years since the beginning of the 1990s immigrant influx and incorporates data based on a variety of research methods, it provides an important opportunity both to examine identity and patterns of adaptation among the immigrants, with the added perspective afforded by the passage of time, and to understand the cumulative influence of that immigration on Israeli society. The data also enable an examination of the assumptions and conclusions of other studies regarding the adjustment and orientation of Russian immigrants in Israel—one of the most researched groups in Israeli society over the past three decades.

A basic argument of this monograph focuses on the “tribal” character of Israeli society. As I have shown in my analysis, Israel is deeply divided along national, ethnic, religious, and social lines. At the same time, the social structure in Israel stands in stark contrast to its political culture. Notwithstanding Israel’s deep-seated cultural pluralism (as described in Chapter 2), no multicultural policy has developed in Israel, whether at the level of Jewish-Arab relations or that of intergroup relations within the Jewish majority. Israel’s ethno-national structure, its lack of separation between state and religion, and its militaristic political culture have prevented the development of an all-inclusive and shared sense of common citizenship in Israel. Despite the democratic character emphasized in its proclamation of independence, Israel was founded as a Jewish-Zionist state, not as a multicultural state or a state of all its citizens. Unlike multicultural Western democracies, Israel has no laws whatsoever aimed at protecting the rights of minorities, in particular concerning the Palestinian indigenous population. In this sense, none of the elements of the Multiculturalism Policy Index suggested by Banting and Kymlicka regarding indigenous populations (2006; see also Kymlicka, 2007b:67) has been applied toward the indigenous Palestinian citizens in Israel. As a matter of fact, Israel has never related to the Palestinian citizens as an indigenous minority. To the contrary, a number of laws have been passed to secure Israel's Jewish-Zionist character, all at the expense of its democratic character, thus further marginalizing the status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel (see Kremnitzer and Fuchs, 2016; Sagi, 2016). This trend peaked with the approval of the *Nationality Law* on July 19, 2018, which further reinforces the ethnocentric Jewish-Zionist character of the State of Israel while totally overlooking its democratic character and completely ignoring the principle of equality for the Palestinian citizens and the other non-Jewish minorities in Israel (see Chapter 2).

Not only does Israel lack a multicultural policy, but various components of its established policy reject diversity and are directed against multiculturalism. The continuing efforts aimed at preserving the dominance of the Hebrew and Zionist narrative have placed other cultures in an inferior position and have hampered the possibility of a dialogue based on a multicultural conception, in particular the right to be "different and equal" (see also Smooha, 2007).

Yet the lack of multicultural ideology is not only the byproduct of formal policies in Israel. It is also affected by the lack of clear-cut majority-minority relations in Israeli society. Indeed, not only are the geopolitical borders of Israel undefined, but the social boundaries differentiating between majority and minority groups in Israel are also vague and continuously challenged by the central groups comprising Israeli society. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (2015) has termed this situation "*a new Israeli order*" in which there is no clear majority and no clear minorities (Israel, The President's Office, 2015).

This reality, however, has not only been created by demographic factors (as underlined by President Rivlin) but also by each group's perceptions of its status vis-à-vis the other groups. As I have shown in my analysis (Chapter 2), the persistent *existential fears* among the Jewish population, including the ongoing discourse over the *demographic threat* or the threat of becoming a demographic minority (see Soffer, 1988, 2016) and the feeling among the Jewish public that Israel is under continuous threat of destruction (see Kimmerling, 2001; Burg, 2008; Magal et al., 2016), these factors have resulted in a perception that may be termed *a majority with a minority phobia.* Such a perception undoubtedly constitutes a fundamental barrier to the development of a multicultural ideology in Israel. As indicated in the theoretical framework (Chapter 1), multiculturalism has always been initiated by the majority and institutionalized through official decisions and legislation that is backed by a supporting atmosphere among the broader public, with the aim of protecting and integrating minority groups. The situation in Israel is extremely complex in that the majority itself has ongoing fears regarding its own status as a majority. The deeply rooted sense of being *a majority with a minority phobia* has resulted in a bizarre situation in which the majority group is preoccupied with protecting its own status as a majority rather than with protecting the status of the indigenous-minority group (the Palestinian citizens), which is perceived as potentially posing an existential threat of becoming a majority. Concurrently, due to various factors (see Chapter 2), the Palestinian citizens may be defined as *a minority with a sense of majority* or at the very least as a '*sense* of *regional majority*' (see also Reiter, 2009). While this status partially explains their cultural openness toward the Jewish majority, it also raises their national and citizenship expectations, creates an *oppositional identity* among them, and makes their demands for combined individual-collective rights unbridgeable vis-à-vis the possibilities offered by the state.

The religious-nonreligious schism in Israel is no less problematic. Both the ultra-Orthodox and the national-religious factions comprising the religious groups are at the forefront of deepening the rifts in Israeli society. Despite the differences in their political orientation and their stand toward Zionist ideology (see Chapter 2), neither of these groups perceives itself as a minority or behaves as such. Both believe that their ideology should prevail in any conflict with other competing ideologies in Israeli society, including that of the secular nonreligious groups that constitute the majority of the Jewish population. In the past decade, these groups have aimed at changing the status quo and winning the competition with secular society over the nature of Israel's collective identity (see Sheleg, 2000; Cohen and Susser, 2003).

The aforementioned factors have deepened the major rifts in Israeli society, causing the emergence of what can be termed a *tribal society*. Thus, what we see emerging in Israel are tribal identities—identities of ethnic, religious, and national groups that contradict one another instead of complementing each other (see Mautner et al., 1998). Moreover, due to the nature of these oppositional identities, each group perceives the others not only as *different* but also as *threatening*. Therefore, as Sagi (2016: 179) rightly concludes, the main discourse in Israeli society is that of a "discourse of rights," not of a "discourse of identity."

Against this backdrop of *tribalism* and the increasing power of sectarianism in Israel, the 1990s mass immigration from the FSU arrived on the scene, presenting an additional major challenge to Israeli society. A number of central questions can be raised in this regard: What impact has this immigration had on the condition of tribalism and the major social divisions, including the ethnic map of Israeli society? What impact have these immigrants had on the basic foundations of the Zionist project? Did this immigration meet Israeli policy makers' initial expectations that it would alleviate Israel's existential concerns? (see Al-Haj, 2004a).

In answering these questions, we must first underscore that the Russian immigration arrived in Israel while Israeli society was going through one of the most critical periods in its history. Various demographic and sociopolitical processes taking place in Israel since the late 1970s have raised serious questions regarding Israel's collective identity and challenged the major foundations of the traditional Zionist project. These processes include the fall of the secular political left headed by the Mapai-Labor alliance and the rise of the political right after the upheaval of 1977; the increasing power of the *Mizrahim* as a result of demographic changes; and the strengthening of religious non-Zionist elements through the growing power of ultra-Orthodox groups and in particular the Shas party (see Ohana, 2016). Hence, the hierarchy comprising long-standing dominant groups and subordinated groups was gradually replaced by a new set of horizontal relationships (see Nudelman, 2000). As a result, the hitherto marginalized groups among the Jewish population moved to the political center and imposed a new ethnic-ideological order on the traditional establishment. These developments have shaken the ideological, political, and cultural dominance of the secular-Western-*Ashkenazi* elite and increased its long-standing existential fears regarding the *Levantization* and *Haredization* of Israeli society.

Meanwhile, the breakout of the first Palestinian *Intifada* in 1987 stimulated discourse regarding another major *existential fear* tied to Israel's collective national identity as a Jewish and democratic state. The dramatic events that took place in the occupied Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza) coupled with the expansion of Israeli settlements in these territories have at least partially transformed the Palestinian-Israeli issue from an external conflict into an internal conflict. This transformation has deepened the ideological rift, particularly over the question of territorial compromise and the policy to be adopted vis-à-vis the Palestinians, including the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Moreover, the continuing *Intifada* events further inflamed discourse regarding the *demographic threat*, thus increasing the confusion and feelings of insecurity among Jewish society in Israel and exacerbating the sense of being a *majority with a minority phobia* among the Jewish population.

As I have shown in my analysis (Chapter 3), Jewish-Israeli leaders from the entire political spectrum were already in a state of euphoria when the first waves of this mass Russian immigration arrived in 1990–1991. One of their major expectations from this immigration was related to the demographic issue. The Russian immigrants were expected to counterbalance the natural increase of the Palestinian citizens in Israel and thus lower the perceived demographic threat. The Russian immigrants have indeed met this expectation and have managed to counterbalance the natural increase of the Palestinian citizens in Israel over the past three decades. Therefore, they are perceived as an important source of reinforcing Israel’s Jewish (or non-Arab) character and helping the state retain the 80:20 ratio between Jews and Arabs (see Cohen and Susser, 2009: 64). Indeed, as indicated in Chapter 4, between 1989 and 2016, nearly one million immigrants from the FSU arrived in Israel, and together with Russian immigrants who arrived in the 1970s they constitute nearly 16% of Israel’s general population and 21% of its Jewish population.

Nevertheless, despite the absorption authorities’ attempts to manage and steer the 1990s immigrants on the basis of national needs, these immigrants have chosen to follow their own path. Very few immigrants knuckled under to the pressure to settle in the Palestinian territories (only 1.7% live in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank). Moreover, most of the immigrants settled in urban centers, despite original official plans aimed at directing them to peripheral regions in the Galilee and Wadi Ara, where most of the Palestinian citizens are concentrated (see Al-Haj, 2004a: 156).

The influx of 1990s immigrants from the FSU has also helped strengthen the secular-Western-*Ashkenazi* elite against its continuing fears of *Haredization* of Israeli society. My findings show that Russian immigrants are overwhelmingly secular, support secularization of the state, oppose the religious-Jewish character of Israel, believe that religious laws should be reduced or abolished, and exhibit a secular orientation in most areas of life (see Chapter 7).

Russian immigration has also been a major source of alleviating the fears of the *Ashkenazi* elite regarding the *Orientalization* or *Levantization* of Israeli society. As mentioned in Chapter 4, before the influx of immigrants from the FSU in the 1990s, 41.5% of the Jewish population in Israel was of *Mizrahi* origin and 36% was of *Ashkenazi* origin. Since the mass immigration from the FSU in the 1990s, Jews of European-American origins once again outnumber those of Asian-African origins. My findings reiterate those of other studies indicating that Russian immigrants feel closer to *Ashkenazim* while rejecting *Mizrahim* and their perceived Oriental culture (see also Lissak and Leshem, 1995; Zilberg, 2000; Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Remennick, 2007). Such an approach goes hand in hand with the Orientalist approach used by the dominant *Ashkenazi*-European elite to establish the East-West categorization in Israel (see Shenhav and Haver, 2004).

Yet even though the Russian immigrants have fulfilled a number of the Israeli establishment's expectations, they have also posed far-reaching challenges to the basic foundations of the Zionist project and to the Jewish component of Israel's collective identity. These immigrants have challenged long-standing arguments of the Zionist ideology and of the ruling *Ashkenazi* elite regarding the assumed bipolar ethnic structure of Israel, the melting pot ideology and the ingathering of exiles, and the arguments regarding the unique nature of Jewish immigration to Israel.

Let us first consider ethnic formation among the Russian immigrants and their impact on the ethnic structure of Israeli society. I have traced ethnic formation among the Russian immigrants over 30 years, since their arrival in Israel. My study incorporates a variety of research methods, including surveys conducted in 1999 and 2010, focus group discussions held at two different periods—May–November 2001 and the beginning of 2018—as well as analysis of the wider contextual factors related to the immigrants' attributes and those of the host society. Based on the various theoretical definitions of ethnicity according to an eclectic approach, I examined three sets of elements of ethnicity and ethnic identity: *objective elements* (connected to the home background and social history of the immigrants in the USSR and later in the FSU); *behavioral elements* (after their arrival in the host country—Israel); *and subjective elements* (mainly ethnic consciousness). This ethnic consciousness was measured by *self-definition* (as perceived by individuals and group members) and *other definition* (as perceived by veteran Israelis). (For widely accepted definitions of ethnic group, see Weber, 1922; Barth, 1969; Schermerhorn, 1970; Hannan, 1979; Brass 1991; Hutchinson and Smith, 1996; Eriksen, 2001.)

With respect to objective elements connected to their home country, Russian immigrants are quite distinct and formed a clear ethnic group even before they came to Israel. They have a common homeland (the FSU), a common language and culture, and shared collective memories. At the behavioral level, after arriving in Israel they have continued to act as a group and have maintained their social and ethno-cultural characteristics. Various behavioral and subjective factors have strengthened ethnic formation and the maintenance of ethnic boundaries among Russian immigrants. These include ethnic-cultural pride among the immigrants and even their sense of cultural superiority vis-à-vis veteran Israelis; their common language, Russian; the large number of immigrants; their demographic concentration; the strong ethnic orientation among the leading secular-educated elite; the fact that many of the immigrants are non-Jews whose primarily ethnic identity serves as a unifying factor with the rest of the immigrants; and the major presence and availability of ethnic, social, cultural, and political organizations for immigrants. All of this is facilitated by their ongoing connections with their home countries (for the factors facilitating ethnic maintenance among FSU immigrants, see also, Leshem and Lissak, 2001; Lissitsa, 2007b, 2008; Rosovsky and Almog, 2010). In addition, contextual factors in Israeli society have minimized the costs of ethnic formation and maximized the benefits of ethnic mobilization. In Israel, ethnicity is an asset and a source of power, making the ethnic factor conspicuous in Israeli society. As noted earlier, Israeli society may be termed a *tribal society* with rigid national, ethnic, and religious boundaries. These tribal boundaries are important for political and social mobilization and affect the allocation of state resources (see Ben-Rafael and Sharot, 1991; Shafir and Peled, 2002; Al-Haj, 2004a; Goldscheider, 2015). In addition, ethnic origin constitutes an important and central identifying factor in the eyes of the receiving Israeli society. Indeed, three decades after arriving in Israel, Russian immigrants still feel that veteran Israelis identify them first and foremost through their Russian-ethnic origin rather than through civil Israeli elements or national-Jewish components. Processes connected with political and sociodemographic changes in Israel coupled with the impact of globalization have intensified diversity and cultural pluralism in Israeli society and have reduced the pressure to assimilate, which had been Israel's long-standing formal policy (Goldscheider, 2015).

My analysis leads me to conclude that the *Russians in Israel form a new ethnic group according to every theoretical measure.* Compared with the other recognized ethnic groups in Israel—*Ashkenazim* and *Mizrahim*—we can argue that Russian immigrants form the most salient and cohesive ethnic group in Israel. In addition, they are the largest ethnic community by country of origin (see Al-Haj and Leshem, 2000). It would even be fair to say that they are the only group entitled to be recognized as a full-fledged ethnic entity according to accepted theoretical definitions of ethnic group. Hence, Russian immigrants are pushing toward a redefinition of Israel's national consensus and of its borders of legitimacy. They are challenging the dichotomous ethnic division of Israeli society, which for a long time had been based on an exclusive *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* division, leading toward a tripolar *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi*-Russian division.

This far-reaching conclusion is based on the facts mentioned in our review of the development of ethnic categorization in Israel (Chapter 4). As indicated in this review, the *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* split is ideologically and culturally motivated and has been based on the dominant ethnocentric perception held by veteran Israelis of European origin that Orientals come from a traditional and backward culture. This split was already institutionalized by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics in the 1950s, which categorized ethnicity into two main categories: newcomers of European-American origin (*Ashkenazim*) and newcomers of Asian-African origin (*Mizrahim*) (see Goldscheider, 2015). This division was eventually adopted by ethnicity researchers in Israel and also served the trend toward seeing Israeli society as comprised of Europeans and Middle Easterners (Weingrod, 1979), as a dichotomy of West and East (Eisenstadt, 1993).

This division originated from differences between these groups in terms of modernization and Westernization, rather than from real ethnic factors tied to objective, subjective, and behavioral elements that characterize typical ethnic groups. It has been argued that this division is replete with contradictions and confusions (see Schmelz et al., 1991). No less important, this existing ethnic definition is based mainly on “otherness” (see Goldberg, 1985). That is to say, the existing dichotomous classification into *Ashkenazim*-of-European-American origin (Westerners) vis-à-vis *Mizrahim* (Orientals)-of-Asian-African origin is based mainly on *what each group is not rather than on what each group is*. The factor unifying the different groups comprising the imagined identity of *Ashkenazim* is that they are “non-*Mizrahim*” and vice versa. This ethnic categorization has therefore been termed an “imagined ethnicity” (Willner 1969; Goldberg 1985) or a “phantom ethnicity” (Lewis, 1985).

In addition to the challenge they pose to the long-standing bipolar ethnic categorization in Israel, the Russian immigrants present a serious challenge to the central foundations of the Zionist project. Indeed, the motives for the 1990s Russian immigration present a salient challenge to the “uniqueness” argument that has accompanied the Zionist movement before and after the establishment of Israel. True, this is not the first immigration wave for which push factors, not ideological ones, are the major impetus (see DellaPergola, 1998; Shuval, 1998). But it is undoubtedly the first such wave to acknowledge this fact publicly and from the very beginning. Their pragmatic orientation has been manifested in their attitudes as well as in their behavior. Nor does this wave fit the typical Zionist model of Diaspora and the ingathering of the exiles. In tracing these immigrants over the 30 years since their arrival, we found that the vast majority still maintains a strong sense of nostalgia for and social and cultural ties to their country of origin, deep pride in their original culture and a strong desire to maintain their Russian culture and language. In addition, for many of the immigrants the option of keeping their original passport along with the Israeli one strengthens the sense of being *dual citizens* or *citizens of the world*. Hence, many of those who were part of the 1990s wave should be seen as “typical” migrants who left their home in search of a new one. It can be even argued that considerable numbers of them are better defined as a Russian Diaspora in Israel than as a Jewish Diaspora that has come home again (see Al-Haj, 2004a: 219).

Moreover, the Russian immigrants have challenged the melting pot ideology. They did not accept the cultural superiority and dominant norms of the longtime residents and did not show any signs of adjusting to the expectations of veteran Israeli society (see also Lissitsa et al., 2002: 190; Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, 2007). Instead of assimilation or one-sided acculturation, Russian immigrants have chosen a cultural dialog and cultural partnership, in which they are not only cultural consumers but also cultural producers. Although they wish to take from the local culture, they also want to make their own contribution to creating a broader multicultural setting in which the Russian component is a central and legitimate part (see also Isakova, 2000; Lissitsa et al., 2002). Thus, as Niznik (2012) argues, the 1990s immigrants from the FSU pose the greatest challenge to the *one language-one nation policy* that for a long time dominated the absorption strategy of the Israeli authorities. The Russians have also changed the formula by which the dominant old-timers controlled the value system, allowing them to classify their own culture as "superior" and as the right path to be followed by the newcomers. In the case of Russian immigrants, the newcomers are those who manifest cultural superiority over the old-timer Israelis.

While *Mizrahim* cooperated with the Zionist project in terms of de-Arabization and by dissociating themselves from their original Arab heritage (see Peres, 1976; Shenhave, 2006), Russian immigrants have rejected all possibilities of deserting their Russian home culture. True, the cultural choice of Russian immigrants has been facilitated by the fact that, unlike the original Arab culture of *Mizrahim*, their original Russian culture is not perceived by the veteran *Ashkenazi* elite as hostile or threatening. In addition, the Russian immigrants arrived in Israel during a period in which national collectivism in Israel has considerably diminished.

As far as approaches toward ethnic formation among Russian immigrants are concerned, my conclusion challenges the conventional expectation that immigrants from the FSU would assimilate into the *Ashkenazi* middle class or turn into a *subculture, cultural ghetto, cultural enclave,* or *Russian* *bubble.* At the same time, my findings partially support the transnational approach in the sense that the Russian immigrants have maintained a multidimensional identity that reflects dual homeness and dual loyalty marked by a sense of loyalty both to their home countries and to Israeli society (see Remennick, 2002, 2009; Lissitsa, 2007a). Nevertheless, the shortcoming of the *transnational approach* lies in the fact that it avoids dealing with the question of whether FSU immigrants in Israel form a new ethnic group or whether the complex identity they have adopted reflects a process of ethnic formation that expands the existing binary (*Ashkenazi-Mizrahi*) ethnic division in Israel.

The conclusion of the present study reiterates the *instrumentalized ethnicity* approach exclusively suggested by Majid Al-Haj (1996, 2002a, 2004a). Thus, a hybrid hyphenated Russian-Israeli identity is likely to become an integral and legitimate part of the ethnic structure of Israeli society, expanding the long-standing bipolar *Ashkenazi-Mizrahi* division and adding the Russian group as a central component of this ethnic structure. In this sense, the present study lends support to the previous conclusion raised by Al-Haj (2004a: 210) that

> the FSU immigrants' ethnic identity is not a temporary phenomenon that can be expected to decline or disappear in the future. Instead, it seems likely that they will intensify their *instrumentalized ethnicity* while reducing the contradiction between the ethnic and Israeli components of their identity.

Indeed, in addition to the aforementioned argument that the FSU immigrants form an ethnic group according to every theoretical measure, my findings clearly show that three decades after their arrival in Israel, the *self-identification* of these immigrants places their ethnic-Russian identification as a central component alongside the Israeli-civil component. This multiple identity simultaneously includes two basic components—those of the home society and those of the host society—with a number of variations: *Russian in Israel, Russian-Israeli, Israeli-Russian, or Russian-speaking Israeli.* The reduction in the contradiction between the ethnic and

Israeli components of their identity is also reflected by their growing sense of belonging to Israeli society and of feeling at home in Israel and by modification of their initially negative attitudes toward religious groups. In addition, although Russian immigrants still feel superior vis-à-vis Israeli society, their assessment of the positive influence of Israeli society on themselves has increased over time.

Several characteristics should be emphasized regarding the identity of the Russian immigrants. First, this identity is not a reactive identity, which is mainly generated by alienation. It is by and large a multidimensional, *instrumentalized* ethnicity based on group belonging and pride in their Russian cultural roots as well as on their strong and pragmatic desire to integrate into Israeli society as a group, rather than to assimilate as individuals. Hence, the immigrants' desire to perpetuate their ethnic organizations is the result of a strategic view of their status and interests at both the individual and the collective levels. This also explains the nature of ethnic political mobilization among Russian immigrants, which has been flexible, negotiable, and subject to adaptation according to their perceived interests as a group (see Chapter 5). This is clearly reflected in the political organization among these immigrants. As I have shown in my analysis, political organization of Russian immigrants reflects a transition over time from "predominantly ethnic" parties during the first decade after their arrival to "hybrid-ethnic" parties, along with integration into the dominant national parties since the second decade (see also Khanin, 2008, 2009; Galili and Bronfman, 2013). Second, as an ethnic group the Russian immigrants may be defined as an *ethnic community* rather than an *ethnic minority* (see the distinction between these two types of ethnic formation in Castles and Miller, 2003: 32). This is because, throughout the process of ethnic formation among Russian immigrants, Israeli society has been open toward immigrant settlement, citizenship rights, and cultural diversity. Also, the dominant *Ashkenazi* establishment perceives these immigrants as a legitimate and nonthreatening group. At the same time, Russian immigrants do not see themselves as a minority group. To the contrary, as mentioned earlier, they even have a sense of cultural superiority vis-à-vis veteran Israelis, since they believe they come from an empire with a long and rich cultural history.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that the Russian ‘*tribe’* should be added to the main ‘*tribes’* of Israeli society, namely, Palestinian citizens, Jewish national-religious groups and the *Haredi* population, none of whom see themselves as minority groups.

All of the aforementioned groups manifest a sense of majority, at least in some components of their identity and behavior, though each group comes from a different background and has a different orientation to the collective Israeli identity. Moreover, these groups differ as far as their inclusion within the legitimating ideology of the state of Israel. Russian immigrants and Jewish national-religious groups are fully included within this legitimating ideology since they comply with the Zionist nature of the state and serve in the army, with military service considered a core value and a basic component of the national consensus (see Ben-Eliezer, 1998, 2000). *Haredim* are partial members within the state's legitimating ideology, since most of them do not adhere to Zionism (some are even anti-Zionist) and the vast majority do not serve in the army. At the same time, the Jewish affiliation of the *Haredim* grants them the legitimacy of inclusion within the Israeli national consensus, although it remains a cautious and conditioned inclusion. The Palestinian citizens in Israel remain the only group that is situated outside the national consensus in Israel and is totally excluded by the legitimating ideology of the state (see Chapter 2). Thus, the Palestinian citizens are the most vulnerable group within the Israeli political culture and tribal structure.

Yet while Russian immigrants are included within the legitimating ideology of the state of Israel, the increasing number of non-Jews among them raises important questions regarding a basic element of this ideology, namely the Jewish character of Israel. The presence of hundreds of thousands of non-Jews who came to Israel under the Law of Return will challenge the discourse over Israel's identity as a Jewish State or a state of all its citizens (see also Galili, 1999; Lustick, 1999). Not only do the increasing numbers and percentage of non-Jews (or others) among both the immigrants and the overall population in Israel challenge the definition of 'who *is a Jew*' but also challenge the very definition of '*who is an Israeli citizen*' and what are the criteria for Israeli citizenship. True, immigrants see no contradiction between their preference for a state with an ethno-national-Jewish character and their support for the integration of non-Jewish immigrants within such a state. In order to justify this seemingly contradictory attitude, they emphasize the factors that are common to Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants and that together differentiate them from Arabs. Since immigrants perceive Jewishness as a nationality, it seems natural for them that somebody can be non-Jewish in terms of religion and Jewish in nationality. Such a perception would create a new consensus that defines the legitimate borders of Israel as a *non-Arab, non-Oriental society*.

One of the major questions this monograph has addressed is the following: What impact have the Russian immigrants had on the political culture of Israel and on its tribal structure? Have they intensified multiculturalism and civil culture in Israel, or have they strengthened the exclusionary system in Israel? My analysis shows that the answer to this question is quite complex. As noted earlier, most Russian immigrants are secular and support the secularization of the state. Moreover, the large size of the Russian community in Israel and the commitment of its members to maintaining their ethno-cultural uniqueness have helped enrich and expand the multicultural structure of Israeli society. At the same time, my findings clearly show that the immigrants' support for the secularization of Israel is not based on an all-encompassing civil perception but rather is restricted mainly to the internal Jewish-Jewish discourse. In addition, the Russian immigrants have contributed immensely to the secularization of nationalism in Israeli society. In this sense, they have formed a coalition with the Jewish national-religious groups, thus shifting the debate over religious-social boundaries to political issues regarding the future of the State of Israel and its ultimate geopolitical boundaries. This has generated a radical change in the political map and has further deepened the ideological rift in Israel. It has also affected the political culture of Israeli society, including the growing trend toward national extremism and racism (see also Galili and Bronfman, 2013: 241–242).

As far as the immigrants' attitudes toward Arabs are concerned, three decades after their arrival in Israel, the immigrants have shaped their social map by positioning themselves closest to secular-*Ashkenazi* Jews and furthest from Arabs. Indeed, the position of Arabs is similar to that of foreign workers when it comes to social relationships and readiness to have ongoing social contact at the individual level. At the group-collective level, the indigenous Arab minority is perceived as a natural candidate for discrimination, and the immigrants' perceptions of Arabs as a security risk and a hostile minority merely strengthen their anti-Arab orientation.

We therefore conclude that the Russian immigrants adhere to the basic consensus among the Jewish majority in Israel regarding the ethnocentric political culture of the state—which leaves Arabs outside its legitimate borders—and favor a political culture based on an exclusive, Jewish/non-Jewish dichotomy. That is to say, the unifying factor for most immigrants is not the state's Jewish character in line with the Orthodox perception of Judaism, but a Jewish state in which Judaism has a secular ethno-national meaning. At the same time, such a character is clearly '*non-Arab*,' in the sense that it places Arabs on the outside while including other groups, even the non-Jews among them, within the legitimate borders of Israel's political culture (see also Lustick, 1999; Shumsky, 2001).

It should be emphasized that Russian immigrants are by far more hawkish and less liberal toward Arabs and other minorities than are old-time Israelis. It seems that, like the *Mizrahim*, the Russian immigrants have also perceived hatred of Arabs as their *entrance ticket* to the national consensus in Israel (see Al-Haj, 2016). Yet while Russian immigrants have penetrated the national consensus in Israel and have ultimately become a leading power in the national-secular right, *Mizrahim* have paid the price twice: once when they abandoned their original Arab culture and once when they positioned themselves as part of the exclusion system in Israel while remaining culturally excluded themselves (see also Shenhav and Haver, 2004).

Indeed, my analysis reiterates other studies emphasizing that the Russian immigrants also exhibit rejection and negative attitudes toward *Mizrahim*, who, like Palestinian Arabs, are categorized as having a non-Western Oriental culture (see Remennick, 2007). This anti-Oriental perspective emerging from the post-Soviet outlook constitutes the source of the Russians' attitudes not only toward *Mizrahim* but also toward the Palestinian Arabs (see Lerner, 2012a: 32). This situation contradicts the well-known logic of immigration, according to which new immigrants are usually placed at the bottom of the social ladder and suffer from exclusion and stereotypes on the part of locals. In the case of the 1990s immigration to Israel, Russian immigrants violated the principle of long-time residence as a stratifying principle, replacing it with a more effective stratifying principle in the Israeli case: Orientalism versus Westernization (see Lomsky-Feder and Rapaport, 2012: 186). Hence, from the very beginning, the social status of Russian immigrants was perceived as higher than that of *Mizrahim* because of their affinity to the *Ashkenazi* group that founded Israel (see Kimmerling, 1998; Semyonov et al., 2016).

This analysis leads us to conclude that while Russian immigrants have expanded the ethnic map and the ethno-cultural diversity of Israel, they have enhanced the *tribal character* of Israeli society at the expense of its civic-democratic character. In this regard, they have served as a catalyst for growing sectarianism and have further strengthened the national, ethnic, religious, and ideological rifts in Israel.

These trends in Israeli society have undoubtedly been affected by the rapid changes and fluctuations in the Palestinian-Israel conflict that coincided with the influx of immigrants from the FSU. Since the 1990s, relations between Israel and the Palestinian national movement have shifted from *conflict* to *peaceful resolution* to *conflict management*. This transition began with the Al-Aqsa *Intifada* in 2000 and particularly with the emergence of the Arab Spring in 2010. As noted in Chapter 2 of this monograph, this conflict has shifted, at least partially, from an *external* to an *internal conflict* that has had a profound effect not only on the day-to-day lives of Israelis but also on Israel's collective identity and its internal rifts and divisions. Russian immigrants have been affected by these changes as well and have played an important role in shaping the dynamics of peace and conflict.

In a previous study (2004a: 213–14), I argued that from its inception, the mass immigration from the FSU in the 1990s served as a catalyst for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The transition from conflict to peace was crucial for Israel to achieve economic prosperity and create the sense of security and political stability vital for attracting and absorbing a large number of immigrants from the FSU (given that their motives are mainly pragmatic rather than ideological). During that period, the Israeli government even conceded to President Bush's demand to freeze settlement activity in order to obtain American guarantees for loans to be used to absorb immigrants.

Paradoxically, although the immigration from the FSU was initially a catalyst for peace, these immigrants seem to be pulling toward intensifying the conflict. Our data reiterate the findings of other studies that Russian immigrants in Israel tend to be hardliners in their attitudes toward territorial compromise as a vehicle for peace with the Arab countries and with the Palestinians. This orientation is affected by the immigrants' political socialization in the Soviet Union and by their desire to lead the secular right in Israel. As our analysis shows, since the 2000 Al-Aqsa *Intifada*, the immigrants have become a central force in the radicalization of Israeli society through their political leadership and print media (see Al-Haj, 2004a: 213). The findings of my ongoing study, both those derived from the 2010 survey and from the focus groups in 2018, clearly show that the Russian immigrants' views concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict have shifted even further to the right and are positioned far to the right of Israel's veteran Jewish population (Chapter 7).

This analysis leads to the conclusion that the Russian immigrants have turned the retreat of the Israeli Left, which had already begun in the 1970s, into an irreversible process. Such a situation will most likely perpetuate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, the rightist political-ideological coalition Russian immigrants have formed with the national-religious groups and other traditional right-wing segments in Israel will most likely obstruct any peaceful resolution based on territorial compromise and close the door on the two-state solution.

While this monograph has attempted to answer key questions regarding the Russians in Israel, their ethnic formation, and their impact on tribalism and central issues in Israeli society, the following questions remain open:

As the *Ashkenazi* elite gradually loses its dominance, will it be replaced by the Russian elite, mainly in view of the Russians' growing cultural and political impact in Israel and the fact that they have been legitimized by the *Ashkenazi* group? What will be the repercussions of the increasing number of non-Jewish Russian immigrants on Israel's immigration policy? Will the aforementioned pressures, both from secular intellectuals and from politicians and ultra-Orthodox groups, lead to the redefinition of the Law of Return, including the possibility of abolishing the 1970 amendment to this law that allows immigrants who are not Jewish according to *Halakha* to immigrate to Israel (make *aliyah*) and obtain full Israeli citizenship? What impact will the presence of a large number of non-Arab Christians among these immigrants have on the public discourse regarding other non-Jewish involuntary immigrants in Israel, in particular African refugees and asylum seekers (some of whom are also Christians) who are denied access and citizenship by Israeli authorities? In addition, what is the expected impact of the formation of a large non-Jewish immigrant community in Israel on the character of Israel as a Jewish state? How will this reality affect Jewish-Arab relations, issues of citizenship rights regarding the Palestinian Arab citizens? No less important, as Russians become a central *tribe* in Israel that is strongly committed to its own ethno-cultural heritage and language, will they eventually obtain official group rights, such as a parallel education system and recognition of Russian as an official language?

These open questions and others are topics for future studies.

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