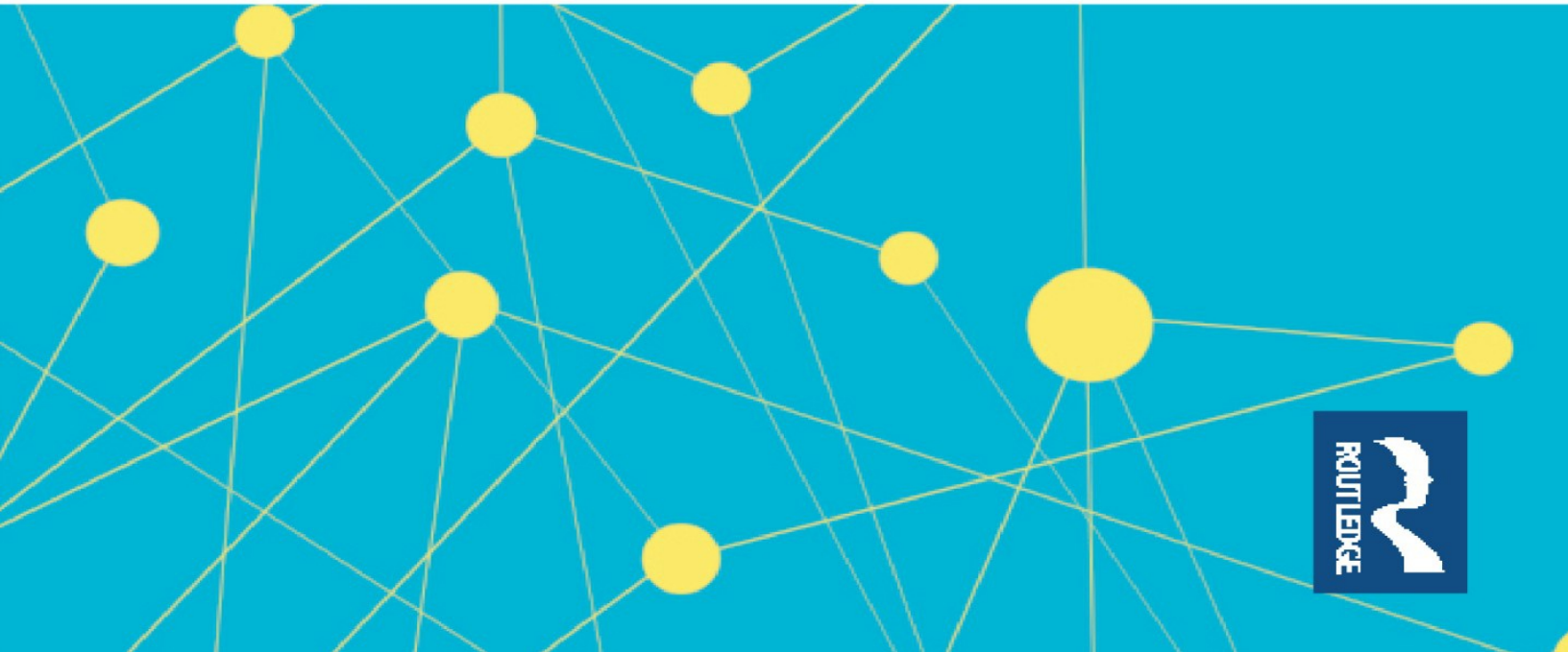
Religion and International Security

ISRAEL'S SECURITIZATION DILEMMA

BDS AND THE BATTLE FOR THE LEGITIMACY OF THE JEWISH STATE

Ronnie Olesker



Israel’s Securitization Dilemma

This book examines how the Zionist movement, and later the state of Israel, have dealt with various longstanding efforts to delegitimize Israel’s standing in the international community, including by the Arab League Boycott, the United Nations, and the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Through historical and archival research, as well as discourse analysis of legal and governmental documents, public statements of Israeli officials, and interviews with Israeli policy makers, this book argues that Israel has constructed perceived and real challenges to its legitimacy as ontological threats that undermine its national security, and has securitized its Jewish identity in response to these threats. As a result, the state has adopted extraordinary measures, often marked by illiberalism. Rather than enhance Israel’s international legitimacy, these measures have undermined it further, especially among liberal audiences in the West, whose support is critical for Israel’s continued international legitimacy. Therefore, Israel is locked in a securitization dilemma—where actions taken to enhance its security through increased legitimacy result in further delegitimization. Highlighting the ways this securitization dilemma is at the heart of Israeli policymaking today—particularly in the context of the recent BDS movement—this book brings into focus key problems that Israel faces as it attempts to combat delegitimization movements against its self-constructed identity as a Jewish state.

This book will be of great interest to students, scholars, and policy makers engaged with critical security studies and delegitimization, Israeli studies and Jewish identity, and policymaking in the Middle East.

Ronnie Olesker is an Associate Professor in the Government Department at St. Lawrence University, USA. She teaches courses on International Relations and Middle East Politics. Her research focuses on securitization studies, with an emphasis on the securitization of ethnic identities.

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To Ilan, who taught me to strive to do better, and Ora, who inspires me to keep up the good fight.

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2.1 Securitizing Laws Passed 2001–2018

Acknowledgments

I came to critical security studies later in my career, and well after the completion of my PhD, but found an academic community that has become my intellectual home. Critical security studies ask not what is security, so much as how does security come to be? By whom? For whom? And at what consequences? These questions have guided the research project that you read today and my identity as a securitization scholar.

I started this project when my third child was only six weeks old and it moved slowly as I tried to work and raise a young family at the same time. It is worth reflecting here on the undue burden female faculty face when trying to "lean in" and succeed in academia. It takes a village, and this project could not have been completed without the support of many colleagues, friends, and family who along the way contributed to its fruition.

As a scholar of Israel studies who regularly teaches on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the issue of BDS is unavoidable. I came to its study with some trepidation, seeking to avoid what I find is mostly an unproductive debate guided by polemics rather than analysis. I realize that this book, like any on controversial topics, might alienate some. My goal here is not to make an empirical determination on the validity, or not, of BDS, or on Israel's legitimacy as a normative discussion. I do not engage in a discussion of whether Israel is or is not an apartheid state, nor do I provide a determination of whether BDS is or is not antisemitic. I realize this may frustrate some of my readers, especially those invested in the politicization of the debate and who would like to know my personal stance on BDS. The goal here, however, is to analytically examine the outcomes of the movement, not engage its or Israel's political validity. Stepping away from these more polemic debates is, I believe, part of the strength of the book that sets it apart from others on the topic. Still, I recognize that one cannot come to this topic without some personal biases. To the extent possible, I have checked those so that I could let the data guide my findings not my personal reflection on BDS.

I have benefited from many conversations with colleagues and friends who have directed me to resources, answered queries or requests for more information, and helped me hone my arguments, improve my ideas, and sharpen my writing. These include Angela Kachuyevski, Daniel Diker, Galia Press-Barnathan, Julia Pascal, Alan Draper, Rita Floyd, Oded Haklai, Daniel Gordis, Cary Nelson, David Hirsh, Gabriel Noah Brahn, Yoram Peri, Paul Scham, and Ole Waever, who at various stages of the project provided important feedback. I also benefitted from presentation of earlier parts of this work at St. Lawrence University, Gettysburg University, International Studies Association, American Political Science Association, British International Studies Association, and the Association for Israel Studies. In all these presentations, critical and supportive feedback helped me advance the ideas presented in the book you read today.

I am deeply grateful for the financial support I received in the form of several small and large grants, as well as a yearlong sabbatical, from my institution, St. Lawrence University. I am also

grateful for the support and advice of colleagues in the Government Department at St. Lawrence University. A small grant from the American Political Science Association helped fund my research travel to Israel where I spent my year sabbatical conducting research for this book. I thank my interviewees, some meeting with me several times and for several hours. I also conducted research at the National Archives, the Zionist Archive, and the Haganah Archive, and I am grateful for the librarians and archive staff who assisted me in identifying and collecting materials that were used in this book. In the early stages of the research, I was assisted by my former student, Tanner McCaskie, who, with generous support from the Patti McGill Peterson Center for International and Intercultural Studies (CIIS), traveled with me to Israel in the summer of 2018 and assisted with the initial collection of data.

Writing can be a very solitary exercise, and this is particularly true with long monographs such as books. My writing practice was transformed with the assistance of writing coach Cathy Mazak and the Momentum co-writing community, and most importantly, my writing group formed out of the Association for Jewish Studies Summer Writing Group. I am particularly indebted to Jessica Roda and Karolina Krasuska who read several versions of the manuscript and provided invaluable feedback and assistance on its improvement. My editor, Christopher Lura, played a large role in improving the tone and structure of the chapters. I am also thankful for the Any Good Writing Thing Challenge and Rebecca Fox who taught me how to write every day, consistently, and with cheerful flexibility as I advanced this manuscript through the most difficult time in my academic career, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that this book would not have been completed had it not been for the love and support of my spouse, James Norminton, who took a step back in his career to take care of our three young children so that I could advance mine, and who has cheered me on even when I was ready to give up. I am also forever indebted to my mother, Ora Olesker, whose support during my sabbatical helped me conduct the research in Israel, and who has supported me throughout my life to achieve everything that I dreamed of.

Thank you all.

Introduction

In October 2018, a young American woman, entering Israel on a student visa she obtained from the Israeli consulate in Miami, was stopped and denied entry into the country. Lara Alqasem was traveling to Israel to start a master's program at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Security and immigration officials refused to honor her visa, claiming that she was a member of the Student for Justice in Palestine (SJP) group and was a known supporter of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. The BDS movement, which officially started in 2005, was increasingly posing challenges to Israel's international legitimacy by presenting the state as an illiberal apartheid regime. The movement was becoming especially popular in U.S. and U.K. campuses, where the majority of activists were located. The decision to deport Alqasem came after the Ministry of Strategic Affairs published a list of organizations whose members would not

be allowed into the country following the amendment to the entry law in 2017 that barred BDS supporters from entering Israel. The list included SJP, which Alqasem was a member of while an undergraduate at the University of Florida (Times of Israel Staff 2018).

Alqasem was subsequently detained for 16 days while appealing the decision all the way to the Israeli Supreme Court. Reversing the lower courts' decisions, the Court ruled that Alqasem had been denied entry due to her political views and not her BDS activity. It ordered that she be released after she committed to not engage in BDS while in Israel, and allowed into the country. Aryeh Deri, the Minister of the Interior responsible for enforcing the new law, called the decision a disgrace, while Gilad Erdan, the Minister of Strategic Affairs, claimed that the court strengthen BDS against the state, implying that Israeli security was at risk (Times of Israel Staff 2018).

The Alqasem case caused outrage both within and outside of Israel. Security experts condemned the change to Israel's entry law and its use here (Hatuel-Radshitzky, Prager, and Eilam 2018) while legal experts argued against the law as a threat to Israeli democracy. Former Justice Minister Tzipi Livni called it "a foolish law which harms Israel and strengthens the boycotters" (Bob 2017). Michael Oren, the former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., stated that "it's clear that the policy currently being implemented is causing us diplomatic harm" (Harkov 2018).

Criticism came from outside too. Despite being self-defined "unhinged Zionists," Bret Stephens and Bari Weiss, the conservative *New York Times* columnists, criticized Israel's actions against Alqasem, arguing that "If the Israeli government takes umbrage — and rightly so — when Israeli academics or institutions are boycotted by foreign universities, the least it could do is not replicate their illiberal behavior" (Stephens and Weiss 2018). The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), J Street (a pro-Israel/pro-peace lobby), the Reform movement in the U.S., who all categorically oppose BDS, condemned Israel's decision as well (TOI Staff and JTA 2018).

Why did the state conclude that detaining and barring individuals, albeit critical of its policies, would serve to combat a movement that seeks to delegitimize it on the basis of its identity? While such a decision may seem peculiar and counterproductive, when contextualized in Israel's long-term process of securitizing threats against its Jewish identity, the underlying logic of such decisions becomes clear. This book explores the ways in which Israel has constructed the new delegitimization efforts against it, and how those constructions yielded policies that, rather than enhance Israeli legitimacy in the international community, undermine it.

Delegitimization then and now

Since its inception in 1948, Israel has faced efforts to delegitimize its right to exist. These efforts are numerous and ongoing: they include the Arab League Boycott which was set up even before Israel's formation and which calls for the boycotting of all diplomatic, economic, and civil contact between Israel and the states of the Arab League. Even today, there is no official diplomatic relationship between Israel and most members of the Arab League (notable exceptions include Jordan and Egypt and more recently—the U.A.E., Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco). Israel has also faced delegitimization efforts from the United Nations, including resolutions identifying it as an apartheid state or referring to Zionism, its founding ideology, as a form of racism.

More recently, the state has been facing growing calls for its international isolation as an apartheid pariah state led by the BDS movement that is increasingly finding support among liberal audiences, especially in Western countries including Europe, Canada, and the U.S. The BDS movement calls for economic, cultural, and academic boycotts of Israeli goods, people, and

institutions. Specifically, it calls for financial divestment from Israel—including the withdrawal of investments in Israel by banks, pension funds, and other large financial institutions as well as divesting from non-Israeli third parties seen to further the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. It also calls for sanctions as punitive actions taken against Israel by other governments or international institutions such as economic sanctions or breaking of diplomatic ties. The BDS movement represents one of the newest incarnations of a much longer history of delegitimization challenges that the state has faced.

Despite improving diplomatic relations with some Arab states, Israel remains insecure about its standing in the international community. Unprecedented support from the Trump administration, including moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, in a break from previous U.S. policy, has not relieved this insecurity. World public opinion polls rating countries' favorable world influence rank Israel among the lowest, only behind North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran. Out of 23 countries surveyed, Israel ranked negatively (in terms of its influence) by 18 of them, suggesting that its favorability rate is low (Globe Scan 2014, 31; Globescan 2017).

The legitimacy of its founding ideology—Zionism—has been questioned. In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly resolution 3379 "determined that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."[1] Since its creation in 2006, the UN Human Rights Council has passed more resolutions concerning Israel than almost all other countries combined. Israel is also barred from a seat on the UN Security Council because it does not belong to any regional group (Dennis 2003; Freedman 2013).

Israel has become a popular case study for the framework of settler colonialism (Rodinson and Buch 1973; Pappe 1999; Penslar 2001; Veracini 2011; Robinson 2013) that is also advanced by the BDS movement. The debate is not purely academic since seeing Israel as a current settler colonial state has ramifications for its international standing and legitimacy of its political structures that are centered on its Jewish identity.

Israel has constructed these delegitimization efforts and BDS specifically, as a national security threat. This book investigates why Israel constructed delegitimization in this way and how this construction impacted its response to the delegitimization efforts against it. The main argument advanced here is that Israel has securitized the delegitimization efforts against it, especially those led by the BDS movement because they were perceived as posing a threat to its Jewish identity. As a result, the state adopted extraordinary measures, often marked by illiberalism, which rather than enhance Israel's international legitimacy, have undermined it further, especially among liberal audiences in the West, whose support is critical for Israel's continued international legitimacy. This process has resulted in what I term as a *securitization dilemma*—where actions taken to enhance its security through increased legitimacy result in further delegitimization. The analysis relies on historical and archival research as well as discourse analysis and interviews with Israeli policy makers. It contextualizes Israeli securitization through a historical lens and thus expands the methodological application of securitization theory.

The rise of BDS

The emergence of the BDS movement in the early 2000s can be traced to the convergence of a number of factors, each of which contributed to the undermining of Israel's image among the international community. Around this time, increasing numbers of people from around the world, including in the U.S. and in other countries allied with Israel, started to participate in the BDS

movement. One of these factors was the eruption of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, an event that brought with it unprecedented levels of violence in Palestine and Israel and resulted in the collapse of the Oslo Peace Process which began in 1993. This event, along with the fact that a disproportionate number of Palestinians were killed or injured during the intifada, brought increased condemnation of Israeli actions. Another factor was the ability of the Palestinian Authority to present interpretations of events that differed from those of Israel. The Palestinian Authority was formed in 1994, and by the time the Second Intifada broke out in September 2000, it had developed the institutional and communications capacity to counter Israel's narrative of the conflict in the media. Israel's international image at this time was further undermined by the continued occupation of territories it had conquered in 1967, and by the negative reactions internationally to the ongoing expansion of Jewish settlements in those territories, which were seen as undermining the two-state solution endorsed by the international community and a violation of international law. Jews too, but especially young American Jews, started to question their relations with, and support for, the state. All of these factors played a role in damaging Israel's image and contributed to the climate in which BDS took root.

Multilateral institutions also played a role in setting up the geopolitical climate in which BDS emerged. In 2001, at the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the NGO forum included a declaration that called for the international isolation of Israel as an apartheid state.[2] Later, in 2009, the Goldstone report, issued by the UN fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict—following direct confrontation between Israel and Hamas there—also served as a further blow to Israel's international reputation by accusing it and Hamas of war crimes, putting the two on equal footing. The rapid rise of social media and other user-driven technology contributed to the ability of individuals and non-state actors, including civil society, to engage in delegitimization activities online. As I noted elsewhere, this period of the 2000s was "a watershed for the new wave of delegitimization acts against the state" (Olesker 2019, 36).

For the most part, the BDS movement had little success in isolating Israel economically or politically for more than a decade. In 2018, for example, more than ten years after the BDS movement began, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Israel peaked at 20.7 billion U.S. dollars (World Bank n.d.). In 2018, according to the Bank of Israel annual report, the Israeli economy grew by 3.3%, and the unemployment rate reached its lowest level in decades. While criticism of Israeli actions continued at the UN and other international bodies, its diplomatic relations, particularly with states from the former non-aligned group, was improving. India's Prime Minister Modi's visit to the country in 2017 was hailed as historic (Ravid 2017). Even more remarkable, at the end of 2018, Idriss Deby, the president of Chad, made a surprise visit to Israel for the first time in the nation's history and 46 years after the two states severed their diplomatic ties (Landau 2018). Additionally, Israel's relations with the Gulf States experienced unprecedented warming during these years. So much so, that in the 2014 Gaza War, while many BDS activists were loudly condemning Israeli actions as war crimes, it took the Saudi King three long weeks to issue a lukewarm condemnation of the state (Hamid 2014). More recent reports indicate tacit cooperation between the two states in curtailing Iranian regional power (Heer 2018), and in 2020, Israel signed normalization agreements with the U.A.E., Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

Despite these diplomatic and economic developments, around a decade after BDS began, Israeli leaders began to identify delegitimization—and the BDS movement specifically—as a strategic threat to Israel's medium to long-term security, on par with other kinds of major physical threats, such as an Iranian nuclear bomb, or terrorism. But this begs the question: if a

movement, led mostly by civil society and some actors within international organizations was having such little impact in achieving its stated goals, why did the Israeli state begin to see it as such a threat? The reason for this—and which I discuss throughout this book—is that Israeli leaders decided that the BDS movement was posing a threat to the state's Jewish identity, namely because of the movement's growing adherents among nations who have historically been important supporters of the state as the home for the Jewish people. As a result, the BDS movement became a target of Israel's securitization because they perceived it as introducing ontological insecurity of the Jewish people.

Conceptual framework of the book

The argument in this book centers on Israel's response to challenges to its Jewish identity through the securitization framework. The concept of securitization, which was first developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations (CS), offers a particularly important analytical tool to understand Israel's historic efforts to respond to delegitimization challenges like the BDS movement and other actions that challenge the security of the Jewish identity of the state. Securitization refers to the process by which actors construct issues as existential threats that require immediate responses that allow for the suspension of normal politics and for the use of extraordinary tools to respond to the perceived threat. By constructing an issue as central to a state's existence, any threat to that issue is seen as posing a risk to the entity's existence and thus requires extraordinary actions in response (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 24). Those extraordinary actions—which could include anything from extraordinary legal to military or police action—become legitimate when the intended audience, whether it be domestic or international—accepts the construction of that existential threat (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 31, 34). In democracies, this may include the suspension of democratic norms for the sake of perceived security gains. In the case of Israel, the securitization of the Jewish identity of the state took effect with the very formation of the Zionist movement and the founding of Israel, which sought to address the acute ontological and physical insecurity of the Jewish people. Since that time, Israel has responded to threats it perceives to its ontological security with the same responses that it has to other kinds of existential threats, including military, legal, and political actions.

Securitization always carries with it a risk of loss of legitimacy when securitization acts suspend normal politics in the direction of more illiberal action that is constructed as a "necessary evil" in response to the threat. Israel's responses to the BDS movement, which is one of the most prominent and popular delegitimization efforts active today, is a good example of this. Israel makes a good case study for understanding what happens when a state moves to securitize delegitimization not only because securitizing legitimacy is an understudied topic in the field but also because many of the securitization strategies that Israel has pursued in the face of these delegitimization efforts have not necessarily helped it achieve a stronger security. Indeed, in many cases, the securitization efforts of Israeli policy makers actually enhance the impact of the BDS narrative by framing it as in illiberal repressive state.

Ontological security refers to the security of the self. Unlike traditional security which focuses on survival, ontological security focuses on being (Laing 1960; Giddens 1991). It is achieved by individuals through the construction of an affirming autobiographical narrative, the development of a sense of home and belonging, and routinization of relations with others that give individuals a sense of certainty, which is vital for the establishment of ontological security (Giddens 1991).

Translating these concepts to the state level, Mitzen argued that states too seek ontological security through the construction of self-narratives that give them their raison d'être (Mitzen 2006). In the case of Israel, this was achieved through the construction of Jewish nationalism and the birth of the Zionist movement. However, when a self-narrative is undermined—for example, when Zionism is constructed as a form of racism or apartheid—ontological security is threatened. Recognition also plays an important role in this process since states, like people, require recognition from others of their self-constructed identity in order for that identity to take effect (Ringmar 2002). When such recognition is denied—for example, by denying Israel's legitimacy as a rightful member of the international community—a state's ontological security may be undermined. Similarly, when routinized relations are disrupted—for example, by seeking to deny Israel the ability to function and engage in normalized political and economic relations—ontological security is also threatened.

For all states, including Israel, ontological security is tightly connected to notions of legitimacy since our self cannot be secured without acknowledgement from others of its legitimacy. In general, a power may be said to be legitimate if it is valid in terms of the law, if it is justifiable in terms of the beliefs and values in the given society, or if there is evidence of given consent to the relations of power (Beetham 2013, 13). Questions of legitimacy are inherently political. As a result, they are closely connected to issues of power. Power may have multiple sources that include "ideas, beliefs, norms and rules, and by institutional structures and communicative processes that embed and mobilize them" (Reus-Smit 2007, 162). Moreover, the source of material power itself derives from the social meaning that is established through a process involving the interchanging of ideas, beliefs, and norms that actors attribute to that power (ibid.). Thus, though legitimacy "is possessed objectively," so that we can empirically review it, it is "created subjectively" (Suchman 1995, 574). It is dependent on social exchanges between actors, developed when an audience socially constructs meaning into an organization's actions and identity (ibid., 579). Securitization is the process by which the audience constructs this meaning into power by providing it with the ability to act extraordinarily with minimal costs (Olesker 2018, 315). It is a crucial resource for the exercise of power itself (Reus-Smit 2007, 162). Securitization thus both requires and produces further legitimacy to act and therefore enhances the securitizing actor's power (Olesker 2018, 315).

The securitizing actor must use rhetorical devices, images, and threat constructions that will *speak* to the audience. Those same rhetorical devices, however, might alienate a different audience who is equally important for the legitimacy of the state. Sometimes, there is tension between how domestic and international audiences view a specific issue; for example, it is possible for a given rule to have domestic legitimacy, but for that same rule to not be seen as legitimate internationally. In the case of Israel, legitimacy has been constructed as an asset of national security where threats to the legitimacy of its Jewish identity are viewed as existential to the state's survival, not just its power. Israeli officials often equate Israel's Jewish character with its existence so that without being Jewish, they conclude, Israel will seize to exist. Rhetorical devices that speak strongly to Israelis, such as legislating the exclusive character of the state as Jewish (as Israel did in 2018 when it passed the controversial "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People" law), serve to alienate a different yet critically important audience—Israel's non-Jewish citizens and liberal and progressive audiences in the West who view the exclusive religio-ethnic character of the state as antithetical to democratic norms.

The Arab boycott was not constructed as posing an ontological threat to Israel despite its potential to harm the state because it was led by those whose hostility was a given. Israel's

legitimacy as a Jewish state did not rely on Arab support. The modern delegitimization movement, however, operates in what Israel has traditionally considered "friendly" spaces—among Western liberal audiences. Therefore, the movement creates vulnerabilities for Israel by generating uncertainty and attempting to disrupt its ability to operate in the international system (Olesker 2019).

Despite having little impact on Israel's economic and diplomatic international standing, it would be a mistake to dismiss BDS as ineffective. BDS has had discursive impacts by normalizing language that changes the narrative around the state to construct it as an apartheid illegitimate regime through "the South Africanization" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Susser 2011). In progressive spaces, and increasingly, even liberal ones, this South Africanization narrative is taking effect especially on British and American campuses that can become hostile to Israelis and Jews alike (Amcha 2017, 2018). The election of Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, two progressive Democratic members of Congress who are supportive of BDS, is another example of the changing political climate in the U.S. Accusations of antisemitism against the UK Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn have become mainstream in part because of the impact of the delegitimization campaign in the U.K. In fact, already in 2010, London was identified as one of the critical hubs of the delegitimization movement (Reut Institute 2010, 48).

These events—along with the emergence of BDS—all intersect in critical ways with Israel's long-term projects in the securitization of its identity and legitimacy. When the BDS movement first began to gain more traction, Israel began to see it as a national security threat. If followed to their logical conclusion, two of the three stated goals of the BDS movement, to end the colonization of "all" Arab land (this includes Israel's recognized international borders) and provide the right of return to all Palestinian refugees, are viewed by Israelis as a direct threat to the Jewish character of the state. The BDS's long-term goals in creating one democratic state that would deny Jews the ability to exercise exclusive self-determination rights is thus seen by many Israelis as an ontological threat. The Israeli fear of BDS is not that it will force it to give up some of the privileges Jews enjoy in the country or give up its settlement projects in the West Bank or even force it to agree to the formation of a Palestinian state. The fear, as constructed by Israeli policy makers, is that BDS and the broader delegitimization efforts will force it to give up on Zionism, understood as Jewish self-determination, and eliminate the state from being a Jewish homeland.

Therefore, in order to understand Israeli policy making in response to delegitimization, we must first understand the securitization processes that took effect from the inception of Zionism as a political movement to address Jewish ontological insecurity. While such securitization moves were perhaps necessary in the formation of Zionism as a political movement, they have nevertheless had counterproductive outcomes with regard to Israel's current response to delegitimization by further undermining its international legitimacy. Israel's securitization of its Jewish identity in the face of delegitimization efforts has led the country to adopt extreme and often illiberal actions that enjoy high domestic legitimacy but further erode its international legitimacy, thereby fueling the same BDS movement it seeks to undermine. This tragic result is what I refer to as the *securitization dilemma*. States suffering from a securitization dilemma may find themselves locked in a policy loop where actions taken to combat the threat wind up contributing to it. In the Israeli case, actions taken by the state to counter its delegitimization result in the opposite effect, exacerbating its ontological insecurity and, in turn, further justifying extreme responses. This book explores how Israel got into this dilemma and ways in which states

can get out of securitization dilemmas such as the one explored in this book.

Contributions and structure

Highlighting how the securitization dilemma is at the heart of much of Israeli policy making today—particularly in the context of the recent BDS movement—this book brings into focus the key problems that Israel faces in its efforts to maintain legitimacy while combatting broader delegitimization movements against it. In doing so, the book contributes to the field of Israeli studies and to the study of legitimacy within securitization studies—an aspect of the theory that remains under-theorized. Israel, a state that has experienced an acute sense of insecurity even from before it was formed, is a particularly good case to study the effects of securitization. As I explore in much more detail in the following chapters, securitization appeared in Israeli policy making from inception. Yet, interestingly, the state has remained understudied in securitization studies despite scholars previously identifying it as engaging in deep securitization (Abulof 2014) or meta-securitization (Lupovici 2014). My own work has begun to fill this lacuna; however, there are other important securitization dynamics that we can learn a lot more about from the study of Israel.

In Chapter 1, I present the theoretical framework that guides my analysis, developing the concept of the securitization dilemma, particularly in the context of Israel. I explain how the securitization dilemma may undermine the objectives of the securitization process—resulting in counterproductive outcomes of disempowerment through delegitimization. This chapter connects the distinct yet interrelated concepts of ontological security, recognition, legitimacy, and securitization, all of which play a role in the securitization dilemma framework.

The case of Israel demonstrates the applicability of securitization theory to historical studies. The concept of securitization emerged as a post-Cold War theory of international relations, which sought to expand the parameters of what we consider "security." As a result, the empirical application of securitization studies has mostly focused on contemporary critical studies of security dynamics in the post-Cold War era. In Chapter 2, I argue that one can trace these dynamics back to the 19th century through historical analysis, specifically in my framing of the Zionist success story as that of establishing legitimacy through the process of securitizing the Jewish identity.

Internal narratives, developed within a society, certainly influence the sense of self, but the understanding of ontological security as an intersubjective, interaction-generated, social concept guides my analysis.[3] This book also explains and empirically demonstrates that ontological security is a primary motivation for state behavior. While the literature lacks a consensus on this point (Zarakol 2010, 3), Israel clearly exemplifies the ways in which ontological insecurity frames the discourse, debate, and ultimately its actions in its response to the delegitimization phenomenon. The chapter focuses on the ways in which the Israeli reflexive self-narrative played a role in shaping its response to delegitimization. The rest of the empirical chapters focus predominantly on how the intersubjective demands on Israel from the international community shaped the state's response to delegitimization.

In Chapter 3, I examine how Israel had constructed and then responded to the Arab boycott which began in 1946, even before the state was formed. I argue that Israel never securitized this boycott because it was not seen as a threat to its ontological security despite the Arab boycott having the potential to have a larger economic and political impact on the state, at least in its first three decades.

While the Arab boycott was not securitized, the treatment of the BDS movement, examined in Chapter 4, was much different. I argue that because the BDS movement was operating in friendly places, that is, it was impacting audiences that were previously supportive of Israel in the West, the movement was viewed as more threatening. The movement's success is found in its ability to increasingly normalize discourse that constructs Israel as an apartheid state among previously friendly liberal Western spaces—especially in the U.S. Such normalization of delegitimizing discourse presents a difficult challenge to policy makers confronting the movement. Moreover, the BDS movement's demands present an ontological challenge to the state's identity in a way the Arab boycott did not and the difference between the response to the Arab boycott and the BDS movement is explained.

While Chapter 4 focused on the emergence of the BDS movement, and how it was constructed by the Israeli state, Chapter 5 focuses on the specific Israeli responses to delegitimization more broadly and BDS specifically. Here, I trace how Israel treated the delegitimization movement from the early 2000s through current policy making. Given the highly sensitive nature of this topic, it is unlikely that this book identifies all Israeli actions taken to combat the delegitimization efforts against it. However, more than any other previous study, this book provides a comprehensive treatment of the Israeli response to the delegitimization phenomenon.

In the conclusion to this book, I provide a way out of the securitization dilemma by arguing for a process of settling the contested identity of the state as an internal dialog between Israel's citizens, both Jews and Palestinians, and between Israel and its Jewish diaspora. Such a process will address Israel's original legitimacy deficit—in the absence of an agreed upon understanding of the meaning of the "Jewish" identity of the state. Such a process of constituting meaning to the unsettled identity of the state will go a long way in alleviating Israel's ontological insecurity. By doing so, the state may reconstitute the BDS not as an existential security threat, but rather a political challenge and thereby desecuritize it. This process begins internally, but its implications extend externally to the state's standing in the international community.

To the extent possible, I avoid the black-and-white positions in the literature debated by supporters on both sides of the delegitimization phenomenon; I do not paint BDS as wholly antisemitic or Israel as exclusively a settler colonial state. Here, I provide a more nuanced argument examining both the analytical frames used to understand the BDS movement and the assumptions and understandings that guided Israeli response and self-defeating consequences. My objective in this work is to create an empirical record of the political decisions of the securitizing actor and to identify the effects of those decisions. The goal is neither to claim that all ontological insecurity is securitized nor is it to conflate ontological with physical security. I do not aim to justify nor explain away Israeli actions. However, I demonstrate how ontological needs guided much of Israel's policies that resulted in the securitization dilemma.

There is some risk in writing about securitization as it may contribute to reifying traditional frameworks of security when studying ontological security. I do not seek to contribute to a survivalist understanding of identity that at times dominates the securitization literature (Rumelili 2015) nor am I prescribing ways for Israel to improve its image or defeat the BDS movement. My goal here is to provide the reader with an understanding of the function of the securitization process in Israel, to reveal how Israel's policies developed in response to the delegitimization process, and to conceptually develop a way to resolve securitization dilemmas once they develop.

Notes

1 This determination was later repealed in resolution 46/86 in 1991 ahead of the Madrid Conference, which was initiated by the first Bush administration to begin an Arab-Israeli peace process after the end of the first Gulf War.

2 Article 425, NGO Forum Declaration at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, 3 September 2001. https://www.i-p-o.org/racism-ngo-decl.htm.

3 Steele critiques this approach by arguing not only that constructivism relies too heavily on intersubjective understandings of state behavior but also that identity can be generated through self-biography (Steele 2008). Nonetheless, Steele agrees with Mitzen that the driving force of state behavior is the need to secure an established identity and that states may come to prefer their identity to other material or physical interests.

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1 Israel's securitization dilemma

Since the country was first formed, the notion of legitimacy has been central to Israel's security. This can be seen throughout Israel's history, and politicians, academics, intellectuals, activists, and citizens consistently express their understanding of the state and its existential security through the notion of legitimacy for the Jewish identity of the state. Many of the key laws and acts relating to the formation of the state—including The Balfour Declaration, the establishment of the British mandate over Palestine, and UN Resolution 181 from 1947 (which suggested the partition of Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab)—all played a role in legitimizing the Jewish character of the state. Because of this historically central role legitimacy has played in Israel, it has long been part of Israel's policies.

As a matter of empirical fact, Zionism has achieved its political objective—the establishment of the national homeland for the Jewish people. But the legitimacy of this home remains in question, and the existential anxieties of Jews in Israel regarding the legitimacy of their claims remain acute. Consequently, legitimacy continues to be front and center in discussions of security, something that can be seen, for example, in the country's recent legislation. In July 2015, several Members of Knesset (MKs) introduced the bill: Israel—The Nation State of the Jewish People, which aimed to anchor, in constitutional law, the exclusive national rights of Jews in the state of Israel. The MKs that introduced the bill argued that it was necessary, particularly in times when there are those who seek to deny the right of the Jewish people to a national homeland in their own country. By introducing and passing this law, Israel demands of its enemies to recognize it as the national state of the Jewish people and asks of its supporters the backing for this demand.[1] By anchoring this demand in its own laws, Israel is seeking to underline the legitimacy of its claim that Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people.[2]

Similarly, as noted in the introductory chapter to this book, in 2015, the Knesset introduced an amendment to the Entry Law of Israel (the amendment was later passed in 2017) to allow the Minister of the Interior to deny entry to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) activists and supporters. In the explanatory notes to the law,[3] legislators argued that Israel was facing a new campaign in the war against it, and that until the law was introduced, the state was prevented from preparing for this campaign adequately. Moreover, legislators argued that letting BDS activists into the country would expose Israeli citizens to harm (Harkov 2018).

These laws represent only some of the manifestations of Israel's approach to responding to delegitimization efforts against it. The BDS movement is seen as a growing threat to Israel's Jewish identity. As a result, and similar to how Israel has responded to other threats to its Jewish identity in the past, Israel's response to BDS is characterized by a securitization process which constructs legitimacy as a national security asset and, in turn, the delegitimization movement as a national security threat. However, Israel's securitization of legitimacy has led to contradictory outcomes. This securitization, although widely supported among the Israeli-Jewish population, is

not supported by all international audiences. Since some of those international audiences are essential for Israel's legitimacy, the securitization of delegitimization has often paradoxically led to increased insecurity for Israel and undermined its legitimacy as a democracy in the eyes of certain international groups, especially Western liberal audiences, who play key roles in Israel's successful response to delegitimization. This paradoxical outcome may be called *Israel's securitization dilemma*.

The objective of this chapter is to orient the reader to the main theoretical claims and their application to the Israeli case. The argument presented throughout this book is that securitization was used as a tool to resolve Israel's ontological insecurity through the conceptualization of legitimacy as a national security asset and the securitization of the delegitimization movement as a national security threat. The first section of this chapter therefore introduces the reader to securitization theory. In Israel, I argue later in this book, securitization of the Jewish identity was used by Zionists as means of legitimizing their national claims. Next, I discuss the meaning of ontological security and how it impacts states' behavior. In the Israeli case, ontological security of Jews was resolved through the securitization of the Jewish identity of the state. I explore the meaning of legitimacy in the securitization process and how legitimacy itself may be securitized, as was the case with Israel's response to BDS. The main theoretical contribution of this chapter is in conceptualizing the securitization dilemma model which results in increased *insecurity* even when the securitization process is completed successfully. By highlighting the tension between domestic audience acceptance of securitization strategies and external audience rejection, the model of the securitization dilemma can bring into focus and conceptually clarify how securitization can be successful and increase insecurity at the same time. The use of legitimacy as a referent object of security is at the heart of this paradoxical outcome that is captured in the securitization dilemma model.

Securitization theory and practice

With the goal of broadening the agenda of international security studies, the leaders of the Copenhagen School of International Relations—Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde (1998)—developed "securitization theory." The concept of securitization refers to a process by which actors who are credibly able to "speak security"[4] present an issue as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures that fall outside of "normal politics" (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 24); that is, of routine policy making via existing institutions and processes. Securitization is an intersubjective and socially constructed process (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 31). It requires the creation of a new social fact—a threat—through a process of intersubjective reasoning (Balzacq 2012, 63), which involves an exchange between securitizing actors and their audiences. It also emerges from social processes—the speech acts—that allow the state to suspend normal politics and adopt extraordinary measures (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 24). Since securitization is based on speech acts—that is, utterances that are performative—they create reality (Austin 1955). Actors must be in a position to discuss security issues with their audiences in ways that are convincing. Politicians are in obvious positions to securitize, but other actors in the system, such as the media, may also contribute to securitization (Croft 2012).

By referring to an existential threat that cannot be met within the confines of the "usual" procedures and actions (Huysmans 2011, 373), security rhetoric legitimizes policy makers' authority to move from normal political and governmental procedures to exceptional political

measures. Thus, securitization theory has a practical application: policy makers, especially in democracies, find the process of securitization appealing because it stretches the boundaries of normative political action, affording them greater power.

During securitization, state actors (politicians, media, etc.) will sometimes identify something or someone as a threat to the state merely as a result of the way the state is being referred to in speech (Balzacq 2012, 63).[5] Nevertheless, those speech acts are often sufficient for a state to argue that something or someone poses an existential threat to the state, allowing the state to propose decisive exceptional actions to address that threat. This study is particularly concerned with securitization that comes through observable changes in the securitizing agent's behaviors that are explained (in words) in the context of the identified threat (Floyd 2016). Exceptional action is evident, for example, when new executive powers are authorized by new laws. These actions must not exhibit fundamental changes or require new institutions. As Floyd notes, "existing institutions and policies may simply gain new dimensions" (2016: 684). Once the intended audience accepts that construction of the threat and the proposed response as necessary, the securitization process is complete.

The Israeli government's securitization response to the BDS movement—such as denying BDS supporters entry into Israel and framing the movement as a threat to Israel's Jewish identity—is a good example of this securitization. Other examples include the way Israeli politicians construct other boycott attempts as threatening the state's existence. For example, in 2015, following a Palestinian Authority's campaign to ban Israel from the international soccer federation (FIFA), Likud party Member of Knesset (MK) Anat Berdo likened the move to terrorism stating that:

> The real meaning behind this delegitimization and boycott campaign is a call for our destruction. … [W]hat happened in FIFA was **terrorism** no matter how you look at it. …I consider that to be nothing less than an **extension of the massacre** of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. It is diplomatic terrorism, but it is still terrorism in every sense of the word, since it undermines the most basic aspects of Israel's existence.
>
> (emphasis added Mualem 2015)

Such rhetoric constructs diplomatic, non-violent Palestinian international initiatives as akin to "terrorism." Indeed, the very notion of "diplomatic terrorism" is an oxymoron, yet accepted as legitimate through securitizing speech acts. Because Israel has identified delegitimization as posing a security threat to its security as the Jewish state, it has adopted numerous securitization strategies in response to those delegitimization efforts, which, as I explain further in subsequent chapters, has caused Israel to enter into a securitization dilemma where its efforts to combat delegitimization are frequently counterproductive.

Securitization scholars have emphasized the social aspect of securitization through the importance of audience acceptance. For second-generation securitization scholars such as Thierry Balzacq, securitization is audience-centered, and it is a pragmatic approach in which the power of both the speaker and listener is at play (Balzacq 2005). The audience in the securitization process is not merely a passive receiver of the constructions of the securitizing actor. Rather, the audience is an active participant in a two-way process in which it can choose to accept, reject, or modify the construction of threat and the proposed actions to address it. In other words, the audience is an active negotiator of security (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 26). However, securitization is context-dependent. Articulations that might work on one audience might not convince another, and this tension will become critical in later discussions of Israel's

securitization dilemma.

Israel's securitization dilemma is the result of the ongoing securitization processes that relate to the identity of the state. Securitizing its Jewish identity as existential to the survival of the state and its people has allowed Israel to adopt policies, which overtly exclude members of its polity—non-Jews—from the national ethos (Olesker 2014a, 2014b); it afforded it the ability to securitize demography (Abulof 2014) and to introduce new demands into the peace process with the Palestinians such as the demand for recognizing Israel's Jewish identity as a pre-condition for continued negotiations (Olesker 2018a). These securitizations were justified through an intersubjective process of constructing an understanding of the Jewish past. They build on ontological demands related to the Jewish identity of the state as a prerequisite for the survival of the state and its people. Threats to the superiority of this Jewish identity are thus constructed as threats to the national security of the state. These constructions are accepted as legitimate by the intended audience—Jewish Israelis—but increasingly rejected by international audiences. Before I discuss the tension between domestic and external audiences, it is first important to understand how ontological security provides the social grammar for Israel's securitization of its identity that is at the heart of Israeli policy making.

Ontological security and the Jewish identity of the state

Ontological security refers to the security of the Self. That is, the security that people feel in *being* themselves, as opposed to merely existing. Psychiatrist Ronald Laing first developed the concept to explore the anxieties that accompany human existence (Laing 1960). Ontological security as a basic need "begins with the proposition that actors fear deep uncertainty as an identity threat. Such uncertainty can make it difficult to sustain a self-conception" (Mitzen 2006, 345). Bringing the concept into the societal level, sociologist Anthony Giddens argues that ontological security is achieved through the building of relationships with others—relationships performed through routinized and home-making practices (Giddens 1991).

For centuries, Jews experienced ontological insecurity because their identity and autonomy were always in question.[6] Nevertheless, Jews maintained varying degrees of trust within their societies. For Giddens, trust plays a central role in establishing ontological security; trust allows an individual to gain confidence in others (1991, 38–39). However, for Jews as a collective, any degree of trust that might have existed in those societies (both in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa) was broken irrevocably in the aftermath of World War II. Certainly, the state of Israel was formed as a means of providing Jews with physical security. However, the raison d'etre of the state is based on ontological demands—the ability of Jews to exist and prosper *as* Jews rather than despite their Jewishness. Consequently, as Israel sought ontological security both as a state and for its function as a secure home for the Jewish people, these issues merged together into the state's security policy. As a result, once Israel was formed, it developed a national security and foreign policy that sought to guarantee the state freedom of action that would limit its dependency on other actors, or the international community, which was regarded as an unreliable ally (Maoz 2006, 8).

The growing literature on ontological security remains divided on whether ontological insecurity is brought about exogenously or endogenously. In other words, do interactions with other actors in the international system establish ontological insecurity, or do insecure interactions result from the state's own anxiety about its sense of self? My analysis adopts the environmental approach, focusing on the international system as a major source of the Israeli

state's ontological insecurity. Much like Mitzen, I argue that a state's identity is "constituted and sustained by social relationships rather than being intrinsic properties of the states themselves" (2006, 355). Even more, I agree with the scholars who argue that others' recognition of one's identity is a key feature in one's own sense of security (Ringmar 2002; Mitzen 2006).

Today's international political system of nation-states is marked by uncertainty as a result of the lack of an overall sovereign to regulate state and non-state behavior. One way to mitigate this uncertainty is to routinize behaviors in the interactions with other actors in the system (Mitzen 2006; Zarakol 2010; Lupovici 2012; Rumelili 2015; Subotić 2016). Such routines may also consist of negative, if predictable, relations with other states, such as the one Israel has formed with the Palestinian leadership. Actors become attached to routines as a way to guarantee certainty—or at least to overcome the fear of uncertainty. At times, states may prefer their conflicted but routinized relations with others above the uncertain outcomes of peacemaking (Mitzen 2006, 342). In other words, as conflict and confrontation come to frame the ontological security of states, those states may reject conflict resolution and peacemaking because such activities seem detrimental not only to the state's physical security but also to its subjective sense of self (Rumelili 2015).[7] Israel is able to manage its conflict with the Palestinians, including the level of violence, and this seems preferable to any diplomatic processes which may alleviate some of the international pressure on it, but at the same time, bring with it tremendous uncertainty about the outcome of the process. Moreover, confrontation with perceived threats is part of the Israeli modus operandi, and this can explain in part, Israel's aggressive response to the delegitimization movement.

Nevertheless, we must also recognize that "internalized self-notions can never be separated from self/other representations" (Kinnvall 2004, 748). Internal narratives, developed within a society, certainly influence the sense of self, but the understanding of ontological security as an intersubjective, interaction-generated, social concept guides my analysis.[8] This is not to say that the Israeli reflexive self-narrative does not play a role in shaping, in some way, its response to delegitimization. When fundamental questions related to the meaning of the Jewish identity of the state become a part of the "discursive consciousness" of the state (Ejdus 2018, 388), it may experience ontological insecurity. This is because the fundamental character of the state is still contested from within, and this contestation is exacerbated by pressure from outside. I account for this internal uncertainty in later chapters, but for now, it is important to note that the focus of this study is on the ways in which the intersubjective demands on Israel from the international community, through the BDS movement, shape the state's response to delegitimization.[9] Internal questions of identity are part of the story, but they are not the sole driver of Israel's ontological insecurity.

As noted earlier, ontological security is threatened when routines are broken or disrupted, or when a sense of "home," of belonging, is questioned. Critical situations, defined as circumstances that radically disrupt, or rupture the routines of daily life, can fundamentally undermine a state's ontological security. Such ruptures break down the system of established beliefs, triggering existential fears (Ejdus 2018, 888). For Jews, this kind of "critical situation" developed toward the end of the 19th century and through the first half of the 20th century with the rise of antisemitism, particularly in Europe. The modern delegitimization efforts against Israel, which in part question its legitimacy to exist as a Jewish-democratic state, also serves as a critical situation. It is not surprising therefore, that Israel has constructed the movement as a modern manifestation of age-old antisemitism and as a threat to its ontological security.

When facing intangible anxieties, such as the ones caused by the delegitimization campaign, a

number of securitization scholars have noted that actors may find the temptation to securitize virtually irresistible (Steele 2008; Rumelili 2015; Browning and Joenniemi 2017). This is because securitization provides societies with a way to deal with anxieties about the unknown by turning them into "manageable certainties of objects of fear to physical security" (Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 38). Such articulation of anxieties (through securitizing speech acts) is likely to generate ontological security. Take for example Prime Minister Netanyahu's contextualization of the conflict with the Palestinians. In a speech in 2014, Netanyahu argued that the conflict with the Palestinians was

> not over these territories; it is not about settlements; and it is not about a Palestinian state either…. But this conflict has gone on because of one reason: the stubborn opposition to recognize the Jewish state, the nation state of the Jewish people.
>
> (Miskin 2014)[10]

In a weekly cabinet meeting in 2015, Netanyahu, speaking of the BDS movement stated that: "We are in the midst of a great struggle being waged against the state of Israel, an international campaign to blacken its name. It is not connected to our actions; it is connected to our very existence" (Deitch 2015). At an emergency summit on BDS in Las Vegas, organized by Billionaire Sheldon Adelson in 2015, Netanyahu announced that the BDS is "not about this or that Israeli policy. It's about our right to exist here as a free people" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). Such articulations allow Netanyahu, as the representative of the state, to construct Israeli anxieties over demands from the delegitimization movement into understandable pieces of information for the Israeli domestic audience. However, the delegitimization movement, which consists of multiple and often unknown actors that reject any interaction with the state as the basis of their tactic, makes it difficult for the state to establish routines with regard to the movement. Indeed, the goal of the BDS movement is to disrupt Israel's diplomatic and economic routinized activity on the world stage by normalizing a narrative that sees the state as illegitimate. Thus, securitization serves as a solution to the problem of ontological insecurity because it provides the means for collective actors to perform outbursts of anxiety through public discourse (Ejdus 2018, 887). The speech act that begins the securitization process "brackets out" fundamental questions on security (Kinnvall 2004, 759; Steele 2008, 51; Ejdus 2018, 887) and provides societies with a clear path to address those problems while in the process offering new patterns of behaviors that are often quickly institutionalized and routinized, as the study of Israel demonstrates.

Aside from routines, states also seek to establish ontological security through the development of autobiographical self-narratives by state representatives that tell convincing, if often imaginary, stories about the self and the nation (Kinnvall 2004; Mitzen 2006; Steele 2008; Croft 2012; Subotić 2016). Such narratives empower the individual (and by extension the state) to act. As I discuss in further detail in the following chapter, Zionism provided this retelling of the Jewish story as a story of national liberation, whereby Jews could see themselves as a sovereign people rather than the history that plagued them as victimized religious minorities. Zionism afforded Jews the ability to reimagine themselves as a nation, entitled to self-determination through sovereignty. The hope was that such reimagination through a new self-narrative would change how others in the international community saw and treated Jews—no longer as powerless minorities but as an independent nation-state. While Jews would engage with the international community as a sovereign nation, they would no longer rely on the international community for security. For this to manifest itself, the Jewish identity of the future state was vital for its

survival, and it is for this reason that this identity was securitized—as a solution to ontological insecurity. The delegitimization movement, however, attempts to disrupt the Israeli narrative as a democratic state for the Jewish people by constructing it as an oppressive apartheid-like regime. The emergence of BDS has further triggered ontological threats to the state, which, in turn, resulted in further securitization, this time of legitimacy itself as a referent object of state security.

In sum, ontological security can provide the normative justification for the securitization of identities (Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 38), and this is what happened in Israel. The emergence of the delegitimization movement and BDS specifically, however, triggered new ontological anxieties for Israel because of the movement's ability to produce discursive interventions that may disrupt Israel's routinized relations with others in the international community and undermine its self-constructed narrative as a liberal democracy. The response again was found in securitization strategies which both use legitimacy as a means of securitization and securitize legitimacy itself as a referent object of state security.

Legitimizing securitization and securitizing legitimacy

From inception, Zionism, the ideological foundation of the Jewish state, sought to legitimize Jews as a nation, rather than a Jewish minority entitled to equal rights within other nation states. Securitization, the process of turning an issue into security, is also anchored in legitimacy. Securitization cannot be completed unless the securitizing actor, the construction of the threat, and the proposed response are viewed as legitimate. Despite this centrality, the literature on securitization does not clarify the meaning of legitimacy or how it may be operationalize within the securitization process. While the term is repeatedly used in securitization scholarship, it is rarely defined in the context of the securitization process (Olesker 2018b).

To understand the role of legitimacy in securitization in general, and specifically in Israeli policy making, I begin the following discussion by exploring the meaning of legitimacy in international relations. Specifically, I adopt David Beetham's three-layered approach to legitimacy since it most aligned with the three-stage process of securitization itself: the speech act, the securitizing action, and the audience acceptance. Legitimacy is needed for securitization to take effect, but securitization also produces more legitimacy to act. And so, the meaning of legitimacy in securitization theory specifically is discussed next. Finally, I explore how legitimacy can be constructed as an element of national security and subsequently securitized, as was the case in Israel. The tension between domestic audience acceptance and external audience rejection of this construction rounds up this discussion.

The meaning of legitimacy

By legitimating the Jewish identity as a national one, the Zionists could hope to operate in the international system as equal members. It is for this reason that the Zionist leadership quickly moved to establish the legitimacy for their claims among the Great Powers of the time, as discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. In many ways, gaining this legitimacy early on gave the Jews a great advantage over the Arabs in the region. Legitimacy is important not only because it confers the right to rule (Gilley 2009[11]; Beetham 2013) but also because it expresses "rudimentary social agreement about who is entitled to practice in international relations, and also about appropriate forms in their conduct" (Clark 2005, 2). Thus, actors in the

international society are constantly engaged in legitimation processes to present themselves and their actions as legitimate (ibid.). But what do we mean when we say an entity is legitimate?

Multiple approaches to the study of legitimacy exist, often tied to a disciplinary lens. For example, for lawyers, legitimacy requires legal validity, while for political philosophers, legitimacy consists of rules that are justifiable according to defensible, normative principles (Buchanan 1999; Beetham 2013, 5). For social scientists, questions of legitimacy are largely empirical. We do not ask whether legitimacy is deserving or right; instead, we assess how it emerges and identify its effects on political behavior. Legitimacy becomes a variable in explaining political behavior (Steffek 2003, 252–53; Clark 2005, 18; Beetham 2013, 6). Max Weber's definition of legitimacy as the *belief* in legitimacy on the part of the relevant actors (Weber 1968, 213) is no longer sufficient. If legitimacy is simply a matter of belief, then the acquisition of legitimacy would be reduced to a mere good public relations campaign, while ignoring the ways in which processes of socialization and structures of knowledge and power impact how ideas come to be and how values are acquired and reproduced. Weber's definition dissolves legitimacy into a matter of opinion which undermines the social scientific method that he championed. It also ignores the elements of legitimacy which have nothing to do with the beliefs such as legal validity and the ability to enforce the rules through demonstrable actions that make it clear that the audience gives consent to the rule. As Beetham notes, a regime is not legitimate because people believe it is but rather because it can be "*justified in terms of* their beliefs" (Beetham 2013, 11). In other words, rather than merely reporting on people's beliefs, according to Beetham legitimacy is assessed on how a rule aligns with and is justified in terms of peoples' beliefs, and how it conforms with their values and normative expectations (Beetham 2013, 11). However, Beetham seems to consider only internal systems of rules; yet, his conceptual framework allows for the empirical analysis of both domestic and international legitimacy, as my research in this book does. For Beetham:

> power can be said to be legitimate where it does not breach established rules; where its acquisition and exercise are normatively validated in terms of socially accepted beliefs about rightful authorisation and due performance; and where it is confirmed through appropriate acts of recognition and acknowledgment.
>
> (2013, xiv)

The analysis of the BDS movement later in this book suggests that it is precisely on these three pillars: legal validity, justifiability, and consent (through recognition and acknowledgement) that BDS seeks to deny Israel legitimacy. This three-dimensional approach guides my analysis as it mirrors the three-step process of securitization. Securitization produces legitimacy by creating legally valid rules that are justifiable in terms of the values of the domestic system (but perhaps not the international one), and where the consent to relations of power is evident, through the audiences' acceptance of the construction of threat and the proposed actions.[12] Delegitimization, by contrast, is the attempt to undermine one or all three of these pillars.

Legitimacy in securitization

Gaining legitimacy is not a guarantee of successful securitization, and securitization attempts are not a guarantee of gaining legitimacy either. But legitimacy is the first necessary condition for a successful securitization. It confers the securitizing actor the right to act (legally) in the name of security, and the speech act can contextualize the proposed action in the value system of the

respective society. When the actor, the construction of the threat, and the proposed responses are viewed as legitimate by the intended audience, we can say that securitization is successful. However, the legitimacy established among one set of audiences might undermine the legitimacy among a different set of audiences whose values differ. For example, actions that were seen as necessary to secure a homeland for the Jewish people to solve their plight in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa were fundamentally regarded as illegitimate by the indigenous population in Palestine and indeed among groups of other Jews as well (Klein 2005).

Securitization is a particularly effective tool to establish legitimacy. Legal validity may be established by actors arguing their case for the necessity of the new rule or behavior to address the threat. Since securitization cannot be imposed, some degree of convincing is required (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 25). In the speech act, the securitizing actor seeks to convince the intended audience that a new response is required to address the perceived threat.

Thus, as Figure 1.1 suggests, legitimacy is both required for successful securitization to take effect, and the securitization process produces more legitimacy to act. My goal here is not to suggest that the process is always linear. When legitimacy is produced for the securitization process, it can feed back into the ability of the securitizing actor to act. In Israel, securitization occurs in all levels of society and has become of permanent feature of its politics (Abulof 2014). Given the history of the Jewish people, plagued by exile, persecution, and violence, securitization can almost always be justified "in terms of the shared beliefs and norms of a given society" (Beetham 2013). It might therefore come as no surprise that according to the 2018 Israeli Democracy Index, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) is the most trusted institution by Israelis, well above the Supreme Court or the Police (Israeli Democracy Institute 2018). This can also explain why so many of Israel's prominent political leaders first serve as high-ranking commanders, including the Chief of Staff in the IDF. Such positions allow politicians in Israel to easily become securitizing actors as their illustrious military careers provide them with the necessary legitimacy to act on behalf of Israeli security once they enter the political scene.

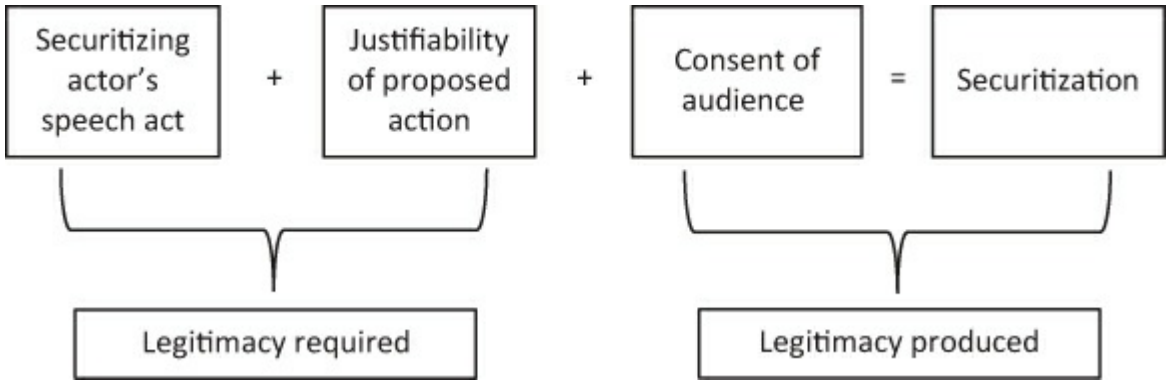

Figure 1.1 Legitimacy in Securitization.

Carl Schmitt distinction between the political and politics, which greatly influenced the Copenhagen School's understanding of normal and exceptional politics (Williams 2003, 515), is worth considering in the context of Israeli politics. *Politics* refers to the "liberal democratic and pluralist procedures of internal political negotiation and calculation" (Williams 2003), while the *political* refers to a radical break with politics creating a new, exceptional political order. Schmitt saw the state of exception as preferable, but the Copenhagen School sees securitization in largely negative terms, preferring desecuritization, or the move back to normal politics (Waever 1995;

Ejdus et al. 2009).[13] In this regard, Israel presents an interesting case in which there is very little day light between politics and the political. In Israel, the exceptional has been routinized because Israel has been in a declared state of emergency since 1948. Because Israel is in a constant state of exception—in the political—routinized, even mundane actions can also securitize (Katz 2006; Amoore and de Goede 2008; Ciuta 2010; Basaran 2011; Roe 2012; Bourbeau 2014; Olesker 2014a; Floyd 2016), and the society is already primed for such constructions.

Exceptional action can manifest in new executive powers or bureaucracies authorized by new laws (Floyd 2016, 684), as was the case with Israel's creation of a "BDS ministry" in the form of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs. These new executive powers or bureaucracies are often created in the "normal" political process, or part of the politics, without suspending the existing political order. As with the case of Israel, these new powers are both open to debate and accepted as legitimate by the majority of the intended audience (in this case—Knesset Members and by extension—Jewish Israelis).

Thus, securitization is a legitimization creation process, but it is one that is both context- and audience-dependent. Reifying biographic narratives that are used to strengthen and stabilize identities are also used to justify the move into the exception even when that state of exception is routinized, as it has been in the case of Israel. In Schmittian terms, biographic narratives that are used to establish ontological security, such as the retelling of the Jewish story as a national one by Zionist in the 1880s, are part of politics. Their use in the securitization process to justify exceptional action, such as the expulsion of Palestinians in the 1948 War, moves them into the political, often necessitating a threatening "Other" against whom exceptional action may be taken. Such constructions may be accepted by one set of audiences, but not by another. As noted earlier, this is a prominent issue for Israel today since its securitization of BDS is accepted by the domestic audience of Jewish Israelis, but increasingly rejected by important audiences internationally.

Domestic vs. external audiences

Because of the intersubjective nature of securitization theory, scholars now understand audience as an integral and active component of the securitization process (Cote 2016). Audiences do not merely receive speech acts and securitizing action, but rather are active negotiators of the construction of the security threat in a given society (Balzacq 2005; Stritzel 2007; Cote 2016).[14]

By actively participating in the securitization process, audiences provide the legitimacy to act by lending consent to the securitizing actor. Consent can be observed through oaths, participation in election, voting in favor of laws, opinion polls, or swearing of allegiance, to name a few. Although Beetham's framework focuses on internal legitimacy, the argument may be extrapolated to apply to external legitimacy as well. Legitimacy is important not only because it confers the right to rule, as Beetham notes, but also because it expresses "rudimentary social agreement about who is entitled to practice in international relations, and also about appropriate forms in their conduct" (Clark 2005, 2). Thus, actors in the international society are constantly engaged in acts of legitimation in order to present themselves and their actions as legitimate (ibid.). Indeed, Beetham recognizes that NGOs also play a role now as "a kind of global civil society, which constitutes both an audience for, and an adjudicator of, the legitimacy claims of international institutions" (2013, 271). Recognition and endorsement by other states is another important aspect of a state's internal legitimacy (Beetham 2013, 268), but recognition of rightful membership in the international society is also a condition for legitimacy (Clark 2005). These are

actively denied from Israel by the BDS movement. This tension, between internal and external audiences, that has not been deeply investigated by the literature previously is important for the argument presented in this book.

To resolve this tension, we must first understand who is the securitizing audience. Cote notes that the securitizing audience is context-dependent, based on the different capacity of groups "to authorize security speech and legitimize the actions sought by the securitizing actor" (Cote 2016, 546). In other words, audiences can be defined by their ability to provide the securitizing actors with whatever they need to accomplish the securitization (Balzacq 2005; Vuori 2008; Balzacq, Léonard, and Ruzicka 2016). Such constructions define the audience by what it is able to do in the securitization process rather than by any set of characteristics (Cote 2016, 548). It also recognizes that there may be multiple sets of audiences at work in a single case of securitization and that securitizing actors must engage with multiple audiences who can challenge their threat constructions (Roe 2008; Vaughn 2009; Salter and Piché 2011; McInnes and Rushton 2013; Cote 2016).

This would suggest that, in the case of legitimacy, we must look at two sets of audiences, without whom the securitizing actor cannot accomplish its objective of treating the referent object (in this case legitimacy) through a security practice. We know that the audience can often reject securitization attempts or force the securitizing actor to modify their securitizing moves or speech act (see for example, Roe 2008; Salter 2008; Watson 2009; Floyd 2010; Lupovici 2016). However, by its own activity, the audience can affect its capacity to influence the securitization process (Cote 2016, 552). This is particularly relevant to the analysis of the BDS movement who actively rejects Israel's construction of its Jewish identity as existential to its survival. However, by resisting Israeli securitization and targeting international audiences that are seen as vital for Israel's legitimacy, the BDS movement also engages in building its capacity to influence the securitization process.

In the case of legitimacy, the securitizing actor must receive consent from the domestic audience for the proposed securitizing action to move forward. However, because of the ways in which Israel has securitized its legitimacy, it now also relies on another separate set of audiences —those who have the capacity to confer on it the recognition and cooperation to act in the international system—and those audiences must also agree to the securitization. In the case of Israel, those audiences are liberals in the West, and particularly in the U.S., because of their capacity to provide Israel with legitimacy for its international standing as a liberal democracy. The U.S. may also provide Israel with the necessary shield against international sanctions. These audiences include publics but also epistemic authorities—those who given their position in society can influence the narrative, discourse, and opinion of others (Michael 2007). Yet, the literature does not provide us with the analytical tools to examine what happens when one set of capable audiences accepts the securitization, but another equally capable audience does not. This tension, between domestic audience acceptance of securitization and external audience rejection, is at the heart what may be termed, Israel's securitization dilemma.

Israel's securitization dilemma

In many ways, the Lara Alqasem case discussed in the previous chapter represents the dilemma Israel faces. On the one hand, it constructed the delegitimization efforts and BDS specifically as a national security threat to the state and its people. In particular, Israel sees the BDS demands that Israel accept Palestinian refugees and end its "colonization of all Arab land" as targeting its

ontological security. Its solution has been to securitize delegitimization with the adoption of extraordinary measures to respond to the challenge of delegitimization and BDS specifically. But, as the case of Alqasem demonstrated, such securitization moves are often marked by illiberal actions that undermine Israel's legitimacy with external Western audiences, even while enjoying domestic support.

In 1997, Fareed Zakaria warned of the rise of illiberal democracies. At the time he was focused on democracies in Asia, Latin American, and the Middle East, but has since noted that the rise of illiberalism has also plagued older and well-established democracies (Zakaria 1997, 2007). More recently, scholars have focused on the rise of illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) where illiberal democratic parties have gained power. In ontologically insecure states, populism, including rightist illiberal populism that allows for fringe groups to become mainstream, is on the rise (Steele and Homolar 2019). The rise of populist nationalism has increasingly becoming a pan-European phenomenon (Krastev 2007; Rupnik 2016; Cianetti, Dawson, and Hanley 2018; Krekó and Enyedi 2018; Szent-Ivanyi and Kugiel 2020).

In an age of democratic hegemony, where only democracies enjoy international legitimacy (Feinstein and Ben-Eliezer 2019), securitization becomes even more important for policy makers. Securitization scholars have long focused on illiberalism that can be justified, legalized, and thus normalized through the process of securitization. Indeed, the majority of empirical studies in securitization focus on Western democracies where this practice is prevalent.

A similar process has taken effect in Israel since the 1990s, with increased attempts to use exceptional politics in the name of security. In many ways, the exceptional has become banal (Olesker 2014a) since Israel has used its constant state of emergency to legitimize and legalize illiberal policies, especially against Palestinians (Mehozay 2017). The same mechanisms are used in response to the delegitimization movement, as I illustrate later in this book. However, these illiberal actions are rejected by external audiences who are necessary for Israel to maintain its international legitimacy in the face of delegitimization campaigns against it. The study here focuses particularly on American audiences as the bearers of Israeli legitimacy but is not to say that Western audiences are the arbitrators of international legitimacy as a whole. As I note earlier in this chapter, the identity of the audience in the securitization process is determined by their capacity to authorize and legitimized the desired action of the securitizing actor. The audience of legitimacy is context and case specific. For Israel, Western publics, but especially U.S. publics, are the audience that matters for its securitization of delegitimization.

The U.S. is the most important strategic ally of Israel. Not only does Israel rely on billions of dollars in U.S. aid annually but also the U.S. uses its position in the international community to shield Israel from international actions against it. Under the Trump administration, the U.S. has moved to legitimize Israel's permanent hold on the territories in the West Bank. Without U.S. support for Israel, BDS could be much more effective. This is why BDS too targets the public opinion of American audiences who have previously favored Israel. Thus, American audiences are critical for Israel if it hopes to successfully combat the global delegitimization movement against it. However, the increased alienation of previously friendly audiences, especially those in the U.S., results in further insecurity. This paradoxical cycle, where the securitization of delegitimization results in further delegitimization, is captured by the securitization dilemma (Figure 1.2).

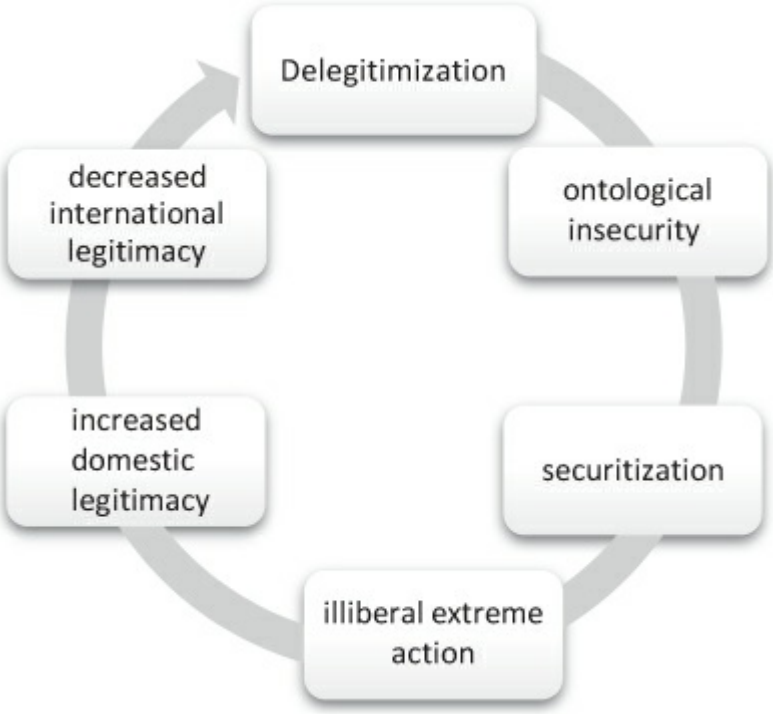

Figure 1.2 Securitization Dilemma Cycle.

The securitization dilemma, which has only recently appeared in the literature (Watson 2013; Olesker 2018b; Van Rythoven 2020), remains underdeveloped. It refers to actions, taken in an attempt to securitize a referent object, that result in the decreased security of that object. The dilemma occurs when a choice must be made. If the actor does not securitize, the threat may materialize to the referent object. But if s/he does securitize, the referent object may still remain insecure, not because the securitization wasn't successful, but because it was.[15]

Much like the traditional security dilemma that marked Cold War politics,[16] the securitization dilemma is characterized by tragedy, uncertainty, and fear.[17] Tragedy, because actions taken to securitize result in insecurity; uncertainty, because the outcomes of a successful securitization process are unknown and may result in unintended consequences (Van Rythoven 2020); and fear, because there exists a potential for disempowerment—of losing the political power to act. Yet, rather than focus on security as survival—the foundation of the traditional security dilemma—the focus here is on the security of being.

BDS targets the legitimacy of the Israeli state as the referent object of securitization. Like in this case, when legitimacy is targeted, actors may respond with further securitization as a tool to legitimize their own actions. The dilemma appears when actors' intentions are unclear and when the consequences of their actions are difficult to predict. Such anxieties are channeled into securitizing actions, which have no guarantee of success. The securitization dilemma is therefore marked by uncertainty of action and its consequences and therefore can exacerbate the ontological insecurity of the securitizing actor.

Table 1.1 Features of the Securitization Dilemma

	Security dilemma	*Securitization dilemma*
Tragedy	Increased security moves result in insecurity	Increased securitization moves result in insecurity
Uncertainty	Of the motives and intentions of others	Of the outcomes of securitization

Fear	Of exploitation	Of disempowerment

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The BDS movement is an unstructured network of activists, including, in some cases, those with ties to organizations that Israel, the U.S., and the European Union have defined as terrorist organizations that use violence (Diker and Shay 2019; Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy 2019). But the movement also includes Jewish human rights organizations and even some Israelis who call for a boycott from within. The BDS movement does not make clear its preferred solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sparking Israeli and in some cases, Jewish anxieties over Jewish self-determination in Israel. Its stated goals, as well as some statements by the movement's leaders, give rise to perception of threat to Israel's Jewish identity by arguing, for example, that a Jewish state should not continue to exist.[18]

Thus, Israeli policy makers operate in a climate of uncertainty, exacerbating the effects of the securitization dilemma. Because of this, they have made a conscious choice to construct the movement as an extension of Palestinian warfare (Diker 2016) or "terrorists in suits" (Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy 2019). They fear that if they do not respond aggressively to any and all questioning of the Jewish democratic character of the state, Israel's legitimacy will erode. And this again is typical of a securitization dilemma. However, their aggressive response contributes to the erosion of Israel's international image as a democratic state.

As Table 1.2 illustrates, the referent object of securitization in this case is Israel's legitimacy to exist as a Jewish state—its ontological security. Israel views political challenges to its Jewish character and Zionist ideology as existential threats. The uncertainty lies in the effectiveness of BDS to change the international standing of the state or even the intended goals of the movement. The tragedy may lie with the Israeli response to the perceived threat; a response that contributes to the loss of its legitimacy among otherwise sympathetic publics.

Table 1.2 The Securitization Dilemma in the Israeli Context

Referent *object*	*Fear*	*Uncertainty*	*Tragedy*
Legitimacy of Jewish state	Delegitimization as existential (ontological) threat	Effectiveness and Goals of BDS campaign	Extraordinary actions result in delegitimization

A similar (but not identical) table was previously published in Olesker (2018b).

As noted earlier in this chapter, states that experience high levels of distrust are unable to establish ontological security in the international system. In this case, the securitization of identities becomes tempting as a solution to ontological insecurity. Ontological security is concerned with identity preservation. States may come to prefer their ontological to their physical security (Mitzen 2006; Steele 2008; Zarakol 2010) and therefore engage in actions that seem illogical, perhaps even hysterical (Zarakol 2010; Ejdus 2018), but they understand their actions to be advancing their security of being. However, despite the temptation securitization offers as a prescription for ontological insecurity, its potential for undesirable outcomes, especially increased insecurity as captured by the securitization dilemma, offers a cautionary note to actors facing such temptation.

Conclusions

I have made four important conceptual claims in the chapter. First, that securitization can be used

as a tool to resolve ontological insecurity, and this was the case in Israel. Second, that legitimacy is both required and is further produced by the securitization process. Third, states can construct legitimacy itself as a national security asset and securitize delegitimization as a threat, and fourth, that those constructions may be accepted by one set of audiences but rejected by another.

In the case of Israel, the delegitimization efforts against it threaten its ontological security by undermining the certainty that the international community will accept Israel as it sees itself—a Jewish homeland; by questioning the legitimacy of its self-narrative, as a Jewish state; and by attempting to break established routines of diplomatic and economic relations with the international community. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, the delegitimization campaign remains predominantly a discursive challenge for Israel. However, the BDS movement is increasingly able to change the image of the state and undermine its narrative from a liberal democracy and instead present it as an apartheid regime. This "South-Africanization" of Israel (Susser 2011) serves to generate intangible anxieties around the identity of the state and its place in the international system. In this case, securitization becomes appealing because it is able to routinize new practices of self-preservation. Such practices include legislation which bars BDS activists from entering the country but also anchors in constitutional law the exclusionary identity of the state. These actions uphold domestic legitimacy yet undermine its international legitimacy, thereby making the BDS campaign more effective than it would otherwise need to be. Since Israeli policy makers have constructed delegitimization as an existential threat to the state, any perceived "win" for the BDS campaign further justifies extraordinary responses. At the same time, the process of securitization denies the legitimacy of opposing claims and actors, often to the detriment of Israel's policy objectives. In the end, the existential framing of delegitimization, combined with an uncertainty about where the process will eventually lead Israel, results in a securitization dilemma. The next chapters offer empirical analyses of the securitization dilemma in Israel and highlight the counterproductive outcomes of an otherwise successful securitization process.

Notes

1 Preliminary Introduction of bill Basic Law: Israel the State of the Jewish People. Available at: https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=565913.

2 Throughout this book, when I speak of "Israel," unless otherwise noted, I am referring to the Jewish political establishment of the state.

3 Available (in Hebrew) here: https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=565532.

4 By "speak security" I mean actors who, given their position in society or their expertise, are able to discuss security in ways that are perceived as credible to their audience.

5 Although the analysis here largely focuses on traditional discourse in the form of the spoken and written utterances by policy makers, it is not my intention to argue that other forms of speech act are not relevant to the process. Speech acts may include non-verbal communication such as photos, songs, images, even protests (Hansen 2000; Williams 2003; Wilkinson 2007; McDonald 2008). More recent studies have emphasized the behavioral change that needs to accompany the rhetoric of the securitizing actor (Floyd 2010; Floyd 2011).

6 When identity and autonomy are in question, individuals suffer from ontological insecurity (Laing 1960, 42).

7 For this reason, I have argued elsewhere, Israel rejected U.S. State Secretary Kerry's peace initiative in 2014, when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) refused to recognize Israel's Jewish identity as part of the settlement to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For Israel, this demand was not merely a political ploy to stall, or even to end the peace process during the Obama Administration, but an attempt to guarantee its ontological security. A move that was neither effectively articulated by Netanyahu nor understood by the Palestinians and Americans (Olesker 2018a).

8 Steele critiques this approach by arguing not only that constructivism relies too heavily on intersubjective understandings of state behavior but also that identity can be generated through self-biography. Nonetheless, Steele agrees with Mitzen that the driving force of state behavior is the need to secure an established identity and that states come to prefer their identity to other material or physical interests (Steele 2008, 2).

9 Conceptually, I accept Kinnvall's (2004) and Zarakol's (2010) middle ground, which sees ontological security as both a reflexive internal process and a social exchange with others. Zarakol's analysis of both the internal and external sources of ontological security (that at times conflict with one another) is not dissimilar to my argument regarding internal and external legitimating audiences of securitization. In the case of Zarakol's study, she notes that "the state's own narrative of self is trumping the demand from the international community, ultimately undercutting the kind of respectful treatment the state desires to obtain from its partners" (2010, 8). This is similar to the process I describe here, where the demands on the domestic audience (for exceptional action against delegitimization) undermine the demands of the external (mostly Western) audience of the international community, namely that Israel adhere to internationally established democratic norms.

10 Ontological security may provide an alternative explanation to Israel's demand that the Palestinians recognize its Jewish character as a condition of the negotiation process (Olesker 2018a). According to the Peace Index of 2014, 77% of Jewish Israelis believed that it was important for the Palestinian to recognize Israel as a Jewish homeland. Furthermore, 41% stated that this is important because it would provide a recognition of Zionism's basic principle of a Jewish homeland. A further 29% stated that Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state would rebuff pressures to transform into a "state for all its citizens." These explanations relate to the preservation of the "self" in the Jewish identity of the state (Israeli Democracy Institute 2014).

11 Gilley's more recent work has taken a disturbing turn towards defending colonialism which I do not endorse nor use in this study.

12 The observance of or compliance with norms alone cannot be evidence of legitimacy because compliance can come as a result of fear or punishment or from a pure calculation of cost and benefit (Steffek 2003, 255).

13 Later, scholars included positive aspects of securitization in the development of normative securitization, that is, securitization may be seen to have positive outcomes if it elevates issues that are morally desirable (Floyd 2011; Roe 2012).

14 In its original articulation, the role of the audience in securitization theory remained "radically underdeveloped" (Williams 2011, 212) or "radically underdetermined" (Salter 2008, 324) in securitization studies. In his development of the social aspects of securitization theory, Balzacq critiqued the Copenhagen School for "negating" the audience altogether (Balzacq 2005). Floyd more recently argued that the audience is not an analytical element of securitization at all (Floyd 2010) and that change in the behavior of the securitizing actor is what matters as an empirical question (Floyd 2016). Cote's review of the empirical literature reveals that the audience is an active and integral part of the securitization process. In order to truly live up to its intersubjective nature, securitization theorists should therefore give room in their analyses for the central role audiences play in the process (Cote 2016, 543), and this is the approach adopted here. In later chapters, I both account for audience in the securitization process (following Cote's approach) and emphasize the changing behavior of the securitizing actor (Floyd's approach).

15 The majority of studies on securitization have focused on success stories—situations where the securitization benefits the securitizing actor (Amoore and de Goede 2008; Roe 2008; Vuori 2008; Basaran 2011; Croft 2012), and some scholars have demonstrated cases where the securitization failed (Salter 2010; Olesker 2014a; Stritzel and Chang 2015). Here, I demonstrate what happens when securitization is successful, but the actor is left less secure than would otherwise be necessary.

16 The security dilemma occurs when the actions of one state, taken in an attempt to advance its own security, cause insecurity in another state, which responds in kind. As a result, the states are locked in a cycle where each of their actions results in their further insecurity (Herz 1965; Butterfield 1951).

17 The Tragedy results from actors who, despite seeking to avoid conflict, bring it about via their own actions (Butterfield 1951, 19–20). Uncertainty results from not only actors' inherent inability to know the true intensions of others but also the great risk of mistakenly identifying a malevolent actor as benign (Herz 1965, 235; Jervis 1978, 185; Mearsheimer 2001, 33; Booth and Wheeler 2007, 4). As a result, states are always fearful of others who may develop aggressive intentions toward them (Jervis 1978, 185).

18 See, for example, "BDS in Their Own Words" (Jewish Virtual Library n.d.).

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2 Ontological insecurity and the securitization of the Jewish identity of the state

In July 2018, Israel passed the controversial Nation State Law, defining the state as the homeland of the Jewish people and asserting that "the realization of the right to national self-determination in Israel is unique to the Jewish people." The law also states that a united Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and that Hebrew is the official language, downgrading Arabic from an official language of the state to one that has special status. It caused outrage among Israel's Arab population and sparked several demonstrations throughout the summer of 2018. Ayman Odeh, chairman of the Joint List, the leading Arab party at the time, stated that Israel "declared it does not want us here" and that it had "passed a law of Jewish supremacy and told us that we will always be second-class citizens" (Lis and Landau 2018). Even Israel's Druze population, considered most Zionist among Israel's non-Jewish minorities, objected to the law on the grounds that it overtly excluded them from the national ethos. Israel's Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu on the other hand, had a different view, noting that "122 years after Herzl made his vision known, with this law we determined the founding principle of our existence. Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people, and respects the rights of all of its citizens." The rationale for the law was also clear, and it was to rebuff those who would question Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. "In recent years there have been those who have tried to undermine that and question the principles of our existence. Today we made it into law: This is the country, the language, the anthem and flag," Netanyahu said (Lis and Landau 2018).

Arab MKs ripped the bill on the Knesset floor after its passing. But it was also rejected by Israeli leftist parties who saw it cementing in law the second-class status of Arabs in Israel. Israel's president Reuven Rivlin, himself from the Likud party who introduced the bill originally, stated that the law "was bad for Israel and bad for the Jews" (Times of Israel Staff 2018). Additional opposition came from the EU and Jewish groups in the U.S., some saying that the law was tantamount to apartheid (Beaumont 2018).

This chapter seeks to explain why Israel has adopted such measures as the Nation State Law and other legislation that construct the exclusive right of self-determination in Israel to Jews, by tracing the securitization process of the Jewish identity from early Zionist thought to contemporary policy making. Actors in the international society are constantly engaged in legitimization processes to present themselves and their actions as legitimate (Clark 2005, 2). Yet, despite the fact that Zionism was effective in achieving its stated objective—the creation of a Jewish state—it failed in two important ways that contribute to Israel's delegitimization. First, it was unsuccessful in legitimizing the Zionist narrative among the indigenous Arab population in the area. Second, it was unsuccessful in legitimizing the meaning of the Jewish-democratic identity of the state, which is still internally and externally contested. These failures in legitimation processes directly relate to the internal divides between Arabs and Jews in Israel and among Jews in Israel and the diaspora on the meaning and character of the Jewish identity of the state. It also contributes to the modern delegitimization movement and the difficulty Israel faces when trying to develop an effective response to it.

I begin by retelling the story of the birth of Zionism as one of Jewish ontological insecurity for which securitization was the solution. The rise of antisemitism in the 19th century in Europe presented not only a question of physical security but also ontological, which required an extraordinary response. While initially there were different options for Jewish existence in Palestine, the exclusionary vision that guides the state's identity and actions today was adopted by 1948, following the extreme circumstances Jews faced after World War II, the Partition Plan, and the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. I then explore the ways Zionists engaged in internal and external legitimation processes. The lack of internal and external legitimacy for the Jewish

identity of the state is reflected in the analysis of current legislative tools. These legislative acts further exemplify the securitization of the Jewish identity by the state.

Zionism as a solution to ontological (in)security

Given their history, marked by exile, persecution, and extermination, it was nearly impossible for Jews to have trust in the international system. This break of trust resulted from the acute ontological insecurity they have felt throughout their existence, but particularly as violence toward them rose in the 19th and through the 20th centuries in Europe. Zionism was the attempt to address the anxiety and uncertainty of Jews whose identity, autonomy, and eventually existence were questioned. Therefore, we should reimagine Zionism not as merely another nationalist movement motivated by the fervor of nationalism in Europe, but rather as a very specific policy choice to address an acute identity problem that manifested for the Jews in Europe and later in the Middle East and North Africa as well.

Ironically, it was the enlightenment and secularization that brought about modern Jewish ontological insecurity. Prior to enlightenment, Jews were considered a religious minority. With Enlightenment and secularization, Jewish understanding of their self-identity began to change, increasingly adopting national characteristics rather than religious ones (Avineri 1981, 11).[1] But this resulted in an increased sense of insecurity of the self—how could Jews be a nation if they lacked the main features of nations—a territorial homeland?

Actors who suffer from ontological insecurity often invoke biographical narrative of self-identity to retell their story, allowing them to locate themselves in a particular time and space, and relating to others who are significant for the self-identification (Browning 2018, 339). For Jews, this re-telling of an autobiographical narrative began in the mid-1880s. Inspired by their European counterparts, Jews began to reimagine their narrative—the story about the Jewish self—as a national story, thereby rupturing Jewish existence in Europe by offering a new narrative that "normalized" them among other nations (Dowty 1998, 1) when so much of their existence, according to this retelling of the story, has been abnormal. Such reimagination saw the Jews as a nation, stripped from their ancestral homeland but maintaining the features of other nations. Why would a nation, so distinct in its history, result in a people that remained so powerless?

Prior to the birth of Zionism, there were two prevailing yet contradictory approaches to the Jewish existence. The first, prevalent among Eastern European Jews, may be called the "Ghetto mentality" in which Jews sought security within their own community and to separate as much as possible from others, while remaining dependent on their mercy to survive. The second approach, which was more prevalent among Western European Jews, saw Jewish salvation in their assimilation among Europeans as integral members of their society (Ben Gurion 1970, 7). By the end of the 19th century, it became clear that neither approach could provide for Jewish physical security. Zionism sought to have Jews identify with a broader community not of other nations, but rather of other Jews as a distinct nation, essentially merging the two approaches into one.

By the end of the 19th century, Theodore Herzl, an assimilated Jew considered the "spiritual father" of political Zionism, was disillusioned with the assimilation approach after the trail of Dreyfus in France. Alfred Dreyfus was an officer in the French army who was charged with treason and convicted predominantly based on antisemitic sentiments. He was later exonerated, but the trial, which Herzl covered as a journalist, cemented his conviction that Jews, even assimilated ones, would always suffer persecution without their own land. As a result, he

authored his book *Der Judenstaat*, commonly referred to as "The Jewish State" though the literal translation means The Jews' State. In this book, which became the foundational text of the Zionist movement,[2] Herzl noted that the

> Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.
>
> (Herzl 1904, 4)

By "civilized nations" Herzl of course meant European nations whose power was recognized by Jews as discussed here later.[3]

Herzl argued for the internationalization of Jewish ontological insecurity by constructing the Jewish question as one of nationality. And indeed, Herzl and the Zionist movement were able to elevate Jewish individual insecurity to a question that needed to be settled by the international community rather than individual Jewish communities. As Mitzen wrote and Herzl understood, "a society must be cognitively stable in order to secure the identities of individuals, and as such individuals will become attached to these stable group identities" (Mitzen 2006, 352).

Though the organized movement for Jewish nationalism rose in the mid-to-late 19th century, Jews had exhibited many of the features of nations well before then. This included a strong sense of community that required collective expression (Avineri 1981, 3; Kimmerling 1984, 263; Dowty 1998, 2) for example, through autobiographical narratives. Even before Herzl, Leon Pinsker identified the solution to the Jewish ontological insecurity noting that:

> nations live side by side in a state of relative peace, secured by treaties and international law, but based chiefly on the fundamental equality between them.
> But it is different with the people of Israel. There is no such equality in the nations' dealings with the Jews. The basis is absent upon which treaties and international law may be applied: mutual respect. Only when this basis is established, when the equality of Jews with other nations becomes a fact, can the Jewish problem be considered solved.
>
> (Pinsker 1882)

Pinsker and Herzl's writing reflected an understanding that Jewish ontological security could not be achieved at the individual level through "emancipation." Thus, Zionism became the ideological substitute for the emancipation of Jews among European nations (Halpern 1969, 15; Avineri 1981, 75). It was created to resolve Jewish ontological insecurity through the creation of the national homeland that is manifested in the Jewish character of the state—its raison d'etre. A Jewish state would normalize Jews by anchoring their existence in stable national identities that can be routinized by practice and recognized by others, thus resolving the ontological security problem. A state would allow Jews to retell a national narrative and give them a vehicle through which they could reestablish new routines while engaging with others. Therefore, the conceptualization of Jews as a nation was a key factor in justifying their quest for a homeland since nations are afforded a sovereign home in ways religious minorities are not. But home is important for another reason. It is a key feature of ontological security. As Pinsker noted, the Jews were "everywhere as guests, and are nowhere *at home*" (1888, 6). For individuals, home "provides a sense of constancy of environment by offering a space in which the routines of existence can be performed, but also a set of meanings that demonstrate important elements of

making oneself ‘at home’ that may create homelessness for others” (Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen 2018, 253; see also Kinnvall 2004; Browning 2018; Ejdus 2018). Indeed, in the process of establishing their Jewish ‘home’ in Palestine, most Palestinians living in what became the state of Israel were turned homeless during the war of 1948. But for polities, belonging to the international society provides them with a sense “of place in the international order and therefore a certain degree of cognitive control over their regional and international environment” (Ejdus 2018, 888). In order to establish this sense of belonging, polities must acquire membership in the international society, where their identity is recognized by other members. This process, however, first requires that these polities be viewed as legitimate in their claims.

In sum, Zionism was a solution to Jewish ontological security. We see that early Zionists first moved to establish a new empowering self-narrative for the Jewish people. No longer would they be viewed as religious minorities but as a nation. They also sought to secure a sense of belonging —to other Jews and to other nations as equals. This could only be established through the legitimization of their national claims among the community of nations.

The Zionist legitimization process

The case of Israel supports the argument that legitimacy affects actors’ behavior in the international community (Hurd 1999; Clark 2005). The Zionists moved to establish the legitimacy for their claims by first institutionalizing their ideas into a movement. The first Jewish Congress gathered a year after the publication of “The Jewish State” in 1897 and there, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) was formed as an institution for the advancement of Zionism. These institutions facilitated the Zionists’ objective to secure legitimacy for their national claims from external actors. They did so because such legitimacy would express an agreement for their participation in international relations with others (Clark 2005, 2). It would also confer on them recognition by others, an important element of ontological security. Recognizing, rightfully or not, that it was the normative values of the powerful that emerge as legitimate in the international society, the Zionists first appealed to the Great Powers of the time, presenting themselves as a movement of national liberation, even de-colonization (from the British empire)[4] (Klein 2005, 244–45).

An entity can be said to be legitimate if it is accepted as such by members of the international society (Philpott 2001, 15, cited in Clark 2005, 26). It is not surprising then that the Balfour declaration was a watershed moment in this regard as it provided international legitimacy for Jewish (but not Palestinian) national rights in Palestine (Maoz 2013, 32; Susser 2018). In the Balfour declaration, the British government acknowledged that it “viewed in favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” and promised to “use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.” This was further emphasized with the declaration of the British mandate in 1922 which noted that recognition had “thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country” (“The Mandate for Palestine” 1922). These two achievements helped elevate the international legitimacy of the Jewish national claims in Palestine. By recognizing Jewish claims to a home in Palestine, the first feature of ontological security—home—was established.

However, the legitimacy for the establishment of a Jewish *state* in Palestine was not a given, even after the Balfour declaration and the establishment of the British mandate. It is for this reason that Zionists not only sought to secure an international commitment to the establishment

of a state in Palestine, but that this state would be recognized as *Jewish*, thereby conflating the Jewish self with the identity of the state. However, it took four more decades and the Holocaust, when global sympathy for the Jews was at its highest (Maoz 2013, 35), for the Jewish state to come into being. Moreover, only after the Holocaust, did Zionism become a mainstream political ideology in the Jewish world (Abulof 2014, 522). Until then, Zionist focused on gaining legitimacy for their claims from external actors. It was only after the establishment of the state that the internal debate about the meaning of its Jewish identity began to surface, and it was quickly suppressed for the sake of unity in the face of ongoing war with the Arabs (Klein 2005, 244). However, internal legitimation is important because a community cannot exist without a sense of its own legitimacy (Clark 2005, 80).

Failure of legitimation processes

As a secular nationalist, Herzl envisioned a state for the Jews, as the literal translation of his famous book indicates and not necessarily a Jewish state. For example, he didn't support the adoption of a national language of Hebrew, nor did he support a religious element to the state (Klein 2005; Abulof 2014; Shumsky 2018). For Herzl, the security of the self, Jewish selfhood, remained separate from the identity of the state so that the creation and maintenance of securitized identities was not seen as central for Jews' ontological security.

In Altneuland, Herzl's utopian novel, the new polity is not Jewish but rather cosmopolitan. It is an open, multiethnic and pluralistic society that is secular, where Hebrew is only used by Jews for prayers and funerals (Elon 1975; Klein 2005). Moreover, next generation Zionist leaders were willing to accept a state that was multiethnic, or even an entity within a federalist system structure similar to the U.S.. Jabotinski and Ben Gurion, for example, were both willing, at least early on in the Ottoman period, to recognize the need for a bi-national or multi-national state, where Arabs could exercise both individual and national rights, just as Jews would (Shumsky 2018, 208–10).[5] In fact, Ben Gurion's vision for the desired characteristic of the Jewish state was not one in which the state would be governed by a single sovereign nation but rather he noted that:

> in such a country [Palestine] with such a great multiplicity of races, ethnicities, religions, international political connections, and socio-cultural doctrines, it is impossible that there could be one law and one arrangement that would be adequate for all the country's residents.

Later, in the same speech, he notes that the goal of Zionists is to be autonomous in Palestine to have their self-rule and not to "rule over others, not to be a ruler nation like all the other ruler nations, our goal is to be masters of our own fate" (cited in Shumsky 2018, 196–97). Whether by intentional design or not, this vision never materialized. In part, the failure was in the inability to legitimize the Jewish identity of the state.

The move toward an exclusionary identity construction can partly be explained by the failure of legitimation processes. First, the Zionists failed to establish legitimacy for their national project among the local Arab population, whom the Jews either ignored initially, or merely tried to appease by highlighting the expected benefit from Jewish immigration to and colonization of Palestine. Second, the Zionists and the Israeli state later, failed to establish internal legitimacy within the Jewish community in Palestine as to the meaning of the term "Jewish" in Jewish state. Third, international attempts to resolve rising conflicts between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, namely the Peel Commission's and the UN's Partition Plan, which was eventually adopted by the UN in Security Council Resolution 181 as the international solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, actually drove Israelis to a more nationalistic agenda and to the adoption of the exclusionary vision of its identity.

Initially, the Zionists attempted to appease the local indigenous population in Palestine as a way to legitimize their political project. For example, in his correspondence with Youssef Zia al-Khalidi, the former mayor of Jerusalem, in 1899, Herzl noted that al-Khalidi's concerns about violence erupting in resistance to Jewish immigration was unfounded because the Zionist would only bring benefits to the local population (Penslar 2005, 67).[6] In 1932, Walter Preuss, the then

director of the bureau of statistics of the Palestinian (Zionist) Federation of Labor, argued that the Jewish immigration to Palestine gave advantages to the Arabs by raising the standards of living through the development of the land and increased production.[7] Others have argued that it would have been difficult to gain legitimacy for Jewish self-determination while denying Arabs the same rights (Gans 2008). Several have documented the intents of Zionists in expelling the indigenous population in favor of Jews (Said 1979; Masalha 1992; Pappe 1999; Morris 2004; Robinson 2013). However, the initial vision on the Zionists was not necessarily exclusionary and could have included Arab (and others) self-determination within the new state (Shumsky 2018).[8] What is clear is that the Zionist spent little effort in establishing legitimacy among the local population, preferring instead to sell them the argument that the development of Palestine by Jews would have also benefitted the Arabs. But the Zionist made a mistake in ignoring the resistance of Arab inhabitants to becoming a minority in this new state as a result of Jewish immigration (Shumsky 2018, 209).

Not surprisingly, increased Jewish immigration into Palestine in the 1930s was met with violent Arab resistance, especially between 1936 and 1939. The Peel Commission, formed by the British and led by Lord Peel, was charged with investigating the unrest in Palestine and to suggest a resolution to the tensions. The Commission proposed an end to the British Mandate in Palestine; dividing the territory into two independent states: Jewish and Arabs. It is after the publication of the Commission's report that we begin to see a change in Zionist attitude and policy making. But even in 1937, Ben Gurion was very clear that the partition of Palestine into two states was not the ultimate realization of the Zionist aim but rather one step closer to it since the aim was to establish a state (but perhaps not a nation-state) in all of Palestine. Five short months before the Peel Commission published its recommendations, Ben Gurion lectured before the Zionist Labor Federation Council, where he reiterated the need for a "Jewish state" but where Arabs deserved all the civil and political rights, not just as individuals but also as a *national collective* (emphasis added), just like Jews in Palestine" (cited in Shumsky 2018, 207). Elsewhere, Ben Gurion noted that "the Jewish state will need to behave towards its Arabs citizens *as if they were Jews*" (emphasis in the original, cited in Shumsky 2018, 210). But in this speech, while Ben Gurion states that the Jewish state must give its Arab citizens equal rights and take steps to equate their economic and cultural conditions to those of the Jews, he no longer mentions national rights (ibid.).

It can be said that the Peel Commission and later the UN's resolution in favoring partition, elevated national sentiments of both Jews and Arabs. By preferring to create nationally cohesive states, with small minorities in each, the partition plan served to undermine the need for the two sides to build consensus and compromise with one another. Each group would exercise their own national self-determination in their respective state. The logic for internal legitimation among the Arabs disappeared completely for the Jews. However, when the Arabs rejected the plan, and the Arab state did not emerge alongside Israel, all that was left was a Jewish nation-state in which Arabs could not exercise national rights and for the first two decades were placed under military rule. Thus, after the publication of the Partition Plan, the need for internal legitimation and the Zionist preference for the decentralized federal state in which both Jews and Arab could exercise self-determination rights all but disappeared.[9] By the time Israel's declaration of independence was proclaimed, the national rights of the Arabs were replaced by a commitment of the state to:

> Ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex: It will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education,

> and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

It was clear that by the time the state was established, the Zionists anchored their legitimacy in the international community, adhering to "principles of the Charter of the United Nations." In other words, they were drawing legitimacy from the values of the international system and not from the need to reach consensus and receive consent from the local (Arab) population. Nonetheless, the declaration is an internally legitimating document which narrated the claims of Jews to self-determination in Palestine:

> The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance... In the year 1897 the First Congress, inspired by Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish state, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national revival in their own country. This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and re-affirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine, and their right to reconstitute their National home.

Israel's acceptance of the Partition Plan enhanced its international legitimacy (Maoz 2013; Susser 2018)[10] while also moving it toward a more exclusionary nation-state model that was eventually adopted with the formation of the state. What remained unresolved was the meaning of the Jewish character within this nation-state.

Legitimacy of "Jewish" in the Jewish state

Many had hoped that the establishment of the state of Israel would have resolved the question of its Jewish identity. However, having never adopted a formal constitution, the meaning and legitimacy of the Jewish character of the state remains a contested issue among Jews, inside and outside of Israel (Waxman 2006, 2016). Israelis have never quite reached an internal consensus on the epistemic (rather than ontological) meaning of the Jewish identity of the state. Disagreement remains on the cultural, political, and religious aspect of this identity (Stern 2017, 4). What developed was a contradiction in both thought and practice on the meaning of the 'Jewish' in Jewish state. Zionism's failure to develop and maintain a stable national identity, I argue, in large part undermined its ontological security and allowed for the erosion of democratic principles for the sake of territorial and ideational expansionist policies. Moreover, it increased the ability of the delegitimization movement to question the character of the state, which is not coherent even to its residents.

The discussion of the multiple of competing streams of Zionism that emerged far exceeds the scope of this chapter. It is important to note that the political strand of Herzl, which emphasized Jewish identity as national, was not the only one conceived. Cultural Zionism, for example, led by Asher Ginsberg who later was known as Ahad Ha'am (One of The People) emphasized the cultural and spiritual (yet secular) aspects of Hebrew culture as a unifying force for Jews.[11] Rabbi Kook and Rabbi Raines were both influential in the formation of religious Zionism and the Mizrahi and Agudat Yisreal, representing Jewish Orthodox movements, which emphasized religion as the primary identity marker of Jews. By 1950, Israel had legislated its Jewish identity through the Law of Return and the Citizenship Law of 1952, which granted automatic citizenship

to all Jews who emigrated to Israel. The same right was not granted to Palestinians residing in Palestine prior to 1948. While the original Law of Return did not define who was a Jew, a 1970 amendment included a religious definition, according to which, "'Jew' means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion."[12] The capitulation to a religious criteria of the meaning of "Jew" indicated the growing political power of religious Zionism in the Israeli political system.[13]

The debates that grew out of those early competing strands of Zionism reverberated in the decades to come, and as they did so, they influenced the way Israel conceived of key elements in the country's domestic and foreign policy narratives. All through the 1950s,1960s, and 1970s—as Israel confronted diplomatic boycotts from Arab states, and other external delegitimization efforts grew, and which I discuss in the next chapters—those debates became increasingly integrated with a mentality of securitization, particularly as those debates on Israel's "Jewishness" were influenced by the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. These issues also directly intersected with Israel's continued need to maintain both internal and international legitimacy for its Jewish identity, something that remained complex on both the international stage and internally. This complexity was highlighted in the rhetorical and theoretical difficulty in articulating its Jewish and democratic characteristics. In 1985—nearly four decades after the country's declaration of independence—for the first time, the word democratic was added to the definition of the state with the addition of article 7A to Basic Law: The Knesset, which prevented any party from running for election if it: (1) denied the existence of Israel as the state of the Jewish people; (2) denied the democratic character of the state; or (3) incited to racism.[14] By including the Jewish and democratic elements of the character of the state in two separate articles, the Israeli legislature was suggesting that they are indeed ontologically separate. At least in theory, the state could remain democratic even if its Jewish identity were to change. By 1992, however, this was no longer possible as the Jewish and democratic elements of the identity were combined into one article of Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty and Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation, which define the state as a "*Jewish and democratic* state (emphasis added)."[15]

The understanding of the democratic character of the state as ontologically inseparable from its Jewish one is significant and responds to a debate that dominated the scholarship at the time regarding the meaning of the Jewish character of the state (see, for example, Smooha 1997; As'ad Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel 1998; Gavison 1999). Rouhana (1997) proposed four possible interpretations. First, we can regard the term "Jewish" as a descriptive one to imply that the character of the state is defined by the majority of its population, which is Jewish, but the state is otherwise neutral with respect to the treatment of its ethnic minorities. Another interpretation sees the state as belonging to the Jewish people and resulting in their preferential treatment over non-Jewish population. However, the preferential treatment is reserved to Jewish citizens of the state, but not to the Jewish population as a whole. The law of return, however, which provides automatic citizenship to all Jews, negates both of these interpretations. A third possibility is that the state gives preferential treatment to Jews with regard to immigration but nothing else. A quick scan of leading scholarship on the treatment of minorities in Israel may refute this interpretation as well (Lustick 1980; Kretzmer 1990; Rouhana 1997; Rattner and Fishman 1998; As'ad Ghanem 2001; Peleg 2004). We are left with one possible interpretation that the meaning of the term Jewish is exclusionary in nature, giving preferential treatment to Jews, including those outside of the state boundaries, over non-Jews.

Thus, Israel's political culture does not neatly align with that of stable liberal democracies (Neuberger 2019, 71). Because fundamental issues, such as the character of the state, which is

closely tied to its continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, lack a broad consensus, the democratic nature of the state remains vulnerable to abuse. This vulnerability became evident with the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000.

Contemporary legislation and the Jewish identity of the state

Since 2001, the Israeli legislature has enacted several laws that have adopted an even more exclusionary interpretation of the meaning of 'Jewish' identity of the state that render previous debates in the scholarship moot. As the discussion below suggests, these laws, culminating with Basic Law: Israel The Nation State of the Jewish People, entrench the exclusion of non-Jews from the national ethos, narrative, and symbols of the state. Given, however, that this interpretation and exclusion was prevalent in earlier legislation and policies, why did Israeli legislators feel it necessary to increasingly adopt such legislative acts that challenge the democratic identity of the state even further? The answer can be found in the increased sense of ontological insecurity brought about by new conditions that emerged after the eruption of the Second Intifada.

Several events coalesced around 2001 to bring about a "critical situation" in which routines, identities, trust structures, and a sense of social stability were all disrupted; in other words, when Jewish ontological security in Israel was undermined. These events triggered a securitization process in response. Failure of the peace process followed by the Second Intifada (also known as the al Aqsa intifada) brought about unprecedented violence. As Lupovici noted, "the terror attacks and the *Second Intifada* and Israel's initial response to them reawakened a sense of threat to the Israeli Jewish identity" (Lupovici 2012, 810). The Second Intifada in particular, was perceived by Jewish Israelis as not merely a physical threat, but an ideational one as well (Olesker 2011; Lupovici 2012, 822) because it was constructed by policy makers as an attack on Israel's Jewish identity. For example, in 2009, shortly after his election, Benjamin Netanyahu, while articulating his vision for peace, nevertheless contextualized the conflict as one over identity.

> [T]he root of the conflict has been and remains—the refusal to recognize the right of the Jewish People to its own state in its historical homeland… Whoever thinks that the continued hostility to Israel is a result of our forces in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza is confusing cause with effect.[16]

In 2014, he noted that, "this conflict has gone on because of one reason: the stubborn opposition to recognize the Jewish state, the nation state of the Jewish people" (Miskin 2014).

The intifada threatened the ontological security of Israelis by disrupting their daily routines through the use of violence. At its height, the Second Intifada claimed over 1,000 Israeli lives, approximately 700 of which were civilians (Schiff 2004) while over four times as many Palestinians were killed during the same time period. Nonetheless, for Israelis, the violence symbolized not the rejection of the parameters of the peace plan, but rather their right to exist. Internationally however, criticism of Israeli actions—its use of excessive violence and the unwillingness to engage in diplomatic talks—increased. While the Israeli government reacted with military measures, it also adopted ideational ones as discussed below.

Other events also triggered increased insecurity of Israel's national "self" as a legitimate member of the international community. Following the eruption of the Second Intifada, the first

call for Israeli isolation as an "apartheid state" came during the NGO forum of the UN World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa. In 2002, the first call for the academic boycott of Israel began, and by 2005, the call to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) was issued. The BDS call was particularly challenging since it included the demand to end Israeli occupation and "colonization of all Arab land" understood to include Israel's recognized international borders, not just land it conquered in 1967, and to recognize the Palestinian right of return, which would effectively end the Jewish character of the state. By 2009, Israel had formally introduced the demand that it be recognized as a Jewish state as a condition for the continuation of the peace negotiations with the Palestinians, but the argument of entrenching this demand in the peace process appeared as early as 2001 (Olesker 2011, 2018), when challenges to the identity of the state, including from Israel's non-Jewish citizens, were constructed as posing an existential security threat to the state.

With the increased BDS movement against it, the first signs of Israel's securitization dilemma began to appear. Israeli policy makers responded to the threat to its ontological security through legislative acts. From 2001, we can observe a sharp turn to securitize the identity of the state through legislation (Olesker 2014a, 2014b). Recall that securitization occurs when political elites use speech acts to construct issues as threats, requiring a response that breaks away from normal politics (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998). Once the construction of the threat and the proposed response are accepted by the intended audience, the securitization process is complete. Legislation is a particularly effective tool to trace securitization since it includes all three elements of the securitization process. The legislation, in the form of a bill, is introduced and negotiated by those who have the political and legal authority to act. The bill represents the speech act in which the issue is constructed as a threat. Once passed, the legislation represents a securitization act that changes the behavior of the securitizing actor in the context of the identified threat (Floyd 2016). The legislative process produces legitimacy through the building up of consensus. The audience (in this case Parliament Members) is an active participant in this process and can veto the securitization by rejecting the bill. If, however, the legislation passes, the securitization process is completed.

Table 2.1 includes a list of relevant legislation passed between 2001 and 2018 that breaks away from previous "normal politics" with regard to Israel's Jewish identity. With the eruption of the intifada, the legislature first ensured that any concession regarding the right of return of Palestinians (one of three fundamental demands of the BDS movement) must be approved by a majority of MKs and cannot be decided by the government alone as part of the peace process. The Palestinian citizens of the state, already seen as a fifth column, were reconstructed as posing an existential identity threat, especially after the October 2000 riots which ended with 13 Israeli-Palestinian citizens killed by Israeli police (Olesker 2011). An influx of Palestinians into Israel would threaten the Jewish character of the state and so it was seen as critical that the Knesset would be allowed to approve such measures.

Similarly, the Citizenship and Entry into Israel (Temporary Provision) Law—2003 is another example of the attempt to control the demographic composition of the state. The Knesset barred family unification between Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. In the bill's notes, the Minister of the Interior, Abraham Poraz, explained that:

> In normal circumstances it would be appropriate for a state to allow family unification on a humanitarian basis. However, due to the wave of terror and because many of those executing the attacks were holders of blue (Israeli, r.o) ID cards, and abused their freedom

of movement given to them to execute attacks, **we have no choice** but to enact this law (emphasis added).[17]

Table 2.1 Securitizing Laws Passed 2001–2018

Legislation	*Adopted measure*
Basic Law: Israel—The Nation State of the Jewish People—2018	Defines Israel as the historic national home of the Jewish people where only they can exclusively exercise self-determination; de jure downgrades Arabic from official language to a language with special status; the development of Jewish settlement is recognized as a national value
Entry to Israel (Amendment No. 28) —2017	Bans the entry of foreign supporters of boycotts against the state, including boycotts of settlements
Basic Law: The Knesset (Amendment No. 44)—2016	Allows 90 MKs to oust sitting MK if they deny the Jewish and democratic character of the state; incite to racism; support armed struggle by an enemy state or terrorist organization against the state
Law for the Prevention of Harm to the State of Israel Through Boycotts—2011	Damages may be imposed on those who call for economic, cultural, or academic boycotts against Israel
Amendment 40 Budget Principals Law (Reducing Budgetary Support for Activities Contrary to the principals of the State)—2011	Denies budgetary allocation of public funding to those groups who commemorate the 'Nakba' instead of Israeli independence
Citizenship and Entry into Israel (Temporary Provision) Law—2003 (renewed annually)	Denies residency or citizenship to Palestinian spouses of Israelis on a temporary basis but renewed annually since 2003
Knesset Members (Immunity Rights and Duties) (Amendment No. 29) Law—2002	Removal of MK immunity for acts, including statements that reject Israel as a state of the Jewish people, its democratic nature, incite racism, or support armed struggle of enemy state or terrorist organization
Basic Law: The Knesset (Amendment No. 35)—2002	Disqualification of candidacy for election of candidates who reject state as Jewish and democratic, incite racism, or support an armed struggle of an enemy state or terrorist organization against the state
Political Parties (Amendment No. 13) Law—2002	Disqualification of registration of parties for elections of candidates who reject the identity of the state as Jewish and democratic
Knesset and Prime Minister Elections Law (amendment No. 46)—2002	Disqualification of candidacy for elections who rejects Israel as Jewish and democratic, incites racism or supports (by legal means) an armed struggle of enemy state or terrorist organization against the state
Ensuring Rejection of the Right of Return Law—2001	Requirement of an absolute majority vote for right of return of Palestinians

Here, we find securitization language par excellence. The legislator is making a Schmittian distinction between 'politics'—"normal circumstances" in which the legislators would not resort to these types of measures—and the 'political'—extraordinary cases that require a different response that breaks away from normal politics.

Though not directly tied to Israel's Jewish identity, other measures targeting the Palestinian citizens of the state were adopted.[18] Such measures include amendment No. 9 to the Citizenship law (2008) which allows for the revocation of citizenship of those found disloyal to the state; amendment 39 to Basic Law: The Knesset (2008) which disqualifies a candidate from election if they visit an enemy state, a practice that was previously exercised by Palestinian Israeli representatives in the Knesset. In addition, the legislature eliminated MKs' immunity from prosecution for entering an enemy state on a diplomatic or service passport without a permit. In Amendment No. 29 to Knesset Members (immunity rights and duties)—2002, the legislature eliminated MKs' immunity from prosecution for certain acts, including statements that reject the state as that of the Jewish people, deny its democratic nature, incite to racism, or support the armed struggle of an enemy state or terrorist organization, thereby limiting their freedom of

speech.[19]

Other measures can be defined as “political” in that they address the political threat of changing the identity of the state. Amendment 35 to Basic Law: The Knesset, Amendment 13 to Political Parties Law—2002, and Knesset and Prime Minister Election Law (Amendment 46)—2002 all introduced new criteria on which parties could be disqualified from running for elections. First, it combined the denial of the Jewish and democratic character of the state into one criterion to indicate that the Jewish identity cannot be separated from the democratic one, reinforcing the legislative move of introducing this definition of the state in the two Basic Laws from 1992, discussed earlier in this chapter. It also introduced the support for the armed struggle of enemy states or terrorist organizations as a criterion for disqualification thus limiting the ability of MKs to demonstrate support for the struggle of the Palestinians.

For non-Jewish citizens, therefore, the meaning of voting for the Knesset is limited not only by the power to disqualify those parties who attempt to change the ideological basis of the state, but also by requiring them to accept (in a sort of ‘take it or leave it’ attitude) that the state in which they are voting is not theirs. In order to have the chance to be represented in the parliament, they first must accept that the state belongs to others—the Jews, both in and outside of Israel.

In 2016, the Knesset amended Basic Law: The Knesset again, this time to allow 90 MKs to expel another MK if he or she deny the existence of the state as a Jewish and Democratic state; incite to racism; or support an armed struggle on an enemy state or terrorist organization against the state. The amendment therefore allows the Knesset to oust a sitting MK if she or he supports the elimination of the Jewish character of the state.

Two laws were enacted to combat boycotts directly. The first law, the Law for the Prevention of Harm to the State of Israel Through Boycotts, was passed in 2011 and allows Israeli courts to impose damages on those calling for the economic, cultural, and academic boycott of Israel. The law was used to rule against several teenagers from New Zealand who launched a successful campaign to pressure the pop singer Lorde to cancel her concert in Israel. Though the decision cannot be enforced in New Zealand—it served as an important symbolic step empowering individual Israelis to combat the BDS movement. Moreover, the Israel Supreme Court had ruled that the law was constitutional since democracies had a right to defend themselves.

In 2017, the state amended its Entry into Israel law, discussed earlier in this book, allowing it to deny entry to foreigners who support or are members of organizations who support the BDS movement (Amendment 28). The effects of this law are discussed more extensively in Chapter 5, but for now, it is important to note that it fits within a pattern of actions taken by the state to protect its Jewish identity from internal and external challengers.

The culmination of the securitization of the Jewish identity of the state is found in the legislation of Basic Law: Israel—The Nation State of the Jewish People, discussed in the beginning of this chapter. The law, which has a constitutional status, defines Israel exclusively as the national homeland of the Jewish people. The law outraged the non-Jewish citizens of Israel, who see themselves as relegated to second-class citizenship. It officially writes out all non-Jews from the national ethos of the state. Although it only represents a symbolic rather than practical change in Israeli policy making, it served to outrage Israel’s non-Jewish citizens and was widely condemned even by sympathetic audiences both in and outside of Israel.

The Nation State law promotes a narrative of the land in which *only* Jews can exercise self-determination. It follows a similar move to deny public funding from groups who commemorate the Nakba, or the catastrophe, which tells the story of Palestinians in the war of independence

and the destruction of their national aspiration with the formation of the state of Israel.[20] The Nakba is seen as a threat since it directly challenges the Jewish narrative of national rejuvenation in the land of Palestine. Both laws, however, challenge the democratic character of the state in which non-Jews can exercise equal rights and celebrate their language and national narratives along those of the Jews. In other words, these laws seek to write out the non-Jewish experience from the Israeli collective as a response to threats of delegitimization of the Jewish identity of the state.

Conclusion

Ontological security of individuals is achieved by daily routinized practices that build trust for individuals in their social and material environment that fends off existential anxieties. In the case of Israel, the establishment of the state did not relieve those anxieties since the social and material environment of Jews at the time remained unstable. Ironically, Zionism emerged to solve the ontological insecurity of Jews through the construction of a national identity. But the prioritization of that national identity today is the source of Israeli ontological insecurity in the form of delegitimization. Browning and Joenniemi warned against the "reduction of ontological security down to the perceived need to uphold particular understandings of identity, a move that results in identity being prioritized over self" (2017, 35). Yet, this is precisely what has occurred in Israel, resulting in the securitization dilemma.

The turn to legislation that securitizes the Jewish identity of the state in the early 2000s was not a coincidence but rather the Israeli response to increased ontological insecurity brought about by the failure to establish internal and external legitimacies for the national identity of the state. A weak democratic political culture (Neuberger 2019) makes Israel particularly susceptible to securitization processes which further erode its democratic character and undermine its international legitimacy, fueling a sense of existential anxiety over its place in the international system. Not surprisingly, then, by 2018, Israel's ranking in the V-DEM democracy index was downgraded from liberal democracy to a more limited electoral democracy (V-DEM Institute 2018).

The failure to establish the legitimacy for the Jewish identity of the state contributes in part to the growing delegitimization movement against Israel today because there is a lack of consensus on the meaning of the Jewish identity of the state. However, boycotts against Israel are not a new phenomenon. Even before its independence, Israel was confronted with an Arab boycott. Its response to that boycott, however, was vastly different than its responses to the modern delegitimization movement. The following chapter examines these differences to explain why Israel did not securitize the Arab boycott when it did the BDS movement.

Notes

1 Religious Judaism as a source of Zionism was developed by Rabbi Kook during the period of the British Mandate in Palestine and has gained strength since, especially after 1967 (Abulof 2014, 527–28). Yadgar argues that the secularization of Zionism, which alienated it from its Jewish history yet at the same time was not independent of its religious identity, rendered Israel in a "Jewish identity crisis" (2020, 9).

2 A few years earlier, Leon Pinsker authored "Autoemancipation," a pamphlet in which he made similar claims to those of Herzl (Pinsker 1882). The latter had noted in his diary that had he known about Autoemancipation before writing "The Jewish State" he would not have completed his own work (Herzl 1956, 96). Pinsker's work has been mostly analyzed in the shadow of Herzl (Shimoni 1997, 87).

3 Although, today, we recognized the inherent racist structure of the international system in the 19th and 20th century and indeed even into the 21st century, which granted Western (predominantly white) nations an elevated status and undue

power, the references to "civilized nations" as synonymous with Europe, was prevalent at the time.

4 Today the BDS movement challenges this narrative by presenting the Jews as colonizers themselves.

5 However, as Shelef notes, by 1949, Ben Gurion changed his tune and argued that Arabs could exercise self-determination in Transjordan (Shelef 2010, 34), leaving Palestine to exclusive Jewish self-determination, now echoed in the Nation State Law discussed earlier in this chapter.

6 In this letter, al-Khalidi acknowledges that Zionism is "natural …. And just" and that the Jews do have historical rights in Palestine but argued that the land now is inhabited by Arabs, and there was no space for the Zionists to immigrate. Thus, he warned against violence between the groups (Maoz 2013, 33).

7 Report on the Effects of Jewish Immigration on Arabs and Jews. File F28\1293. Central Zionist Archives.

8 Robinson's (2013) study contradicts this option, arguing that the majority of Zionists sought an exclusionary Jewish state from the beginning.

9 For more on the shift in Ben Gurion's attitudes toward the Arabs in the 1930s and 40s, see Shumsky (2018, 211–16), and later his change in attitude following World War II see 217–19.

10 Susser connects the erosion of Israel's legitimacy to its expansion of settlements into the West Bank and Gaza since it undermines the principle of partition on which Israel's legitimacy was established in the first place (2018, 226). Klein strengthens this point by arguing that before 1967, the legitimacy of Zionism was not directly connected to the Israeli-Arab conflict. Since the expansion of settlements, however, Zionism's legitimacy has degraded as it is tied to these policies (Klein 2005, 246). Maoz too notes that Israel's international legitimacy is directly tied to the two-state solution and the Israeli policies to evade such a solution explain the erosion of its international legitimacy currently. I address these claims later in Chapter 5 and in the conclusions (2013).

11 The distinction between "cultural" and "political" Zionism was somewhat artificial as both had components of the other (Shumsky 2018).

12 Law of Return (Amendment No. 2) 5730-1970. Available at: https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm.

13 While this exceeds the discussion here, the limited definition of who is a Jew and the recognition of only orthodox conversion for the purpose of the law has been one of the factors contributing to the growing divide between Israel and the Jewish diaspora (Mazie 2006; Waxman 2016). For a more recent analysis of this divide, see Gordis (2019). The role of religion in the state was never formalized and dates back to the "status quo" agreement between Ben Gurion and the ultra-Orthodox community in 1947. Back then, Ben Gurion wanted to ensure the support of the ultra Orthodox for the state and did so by committing that the state would take into consideration Jewish law (Halacha) in matters relating to the Sabbath, personal status matters, including dietary rules, and separate education for religious schools. The status quo agreement became the determining instrument of the balance between religion and state in Israel.

14 Amendment 9, Basic Law: The Knesset (in Hebrew): https://fs.knesset.gov.il/%5C11%5Claw%5C11_lsr_211657.PDF.

15 https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic3_eng.htm.

16 The full text of Netanyahu's foreign policy speech at Bar Ilan is available at: http://www.haaretz.com/news/full-text-of-netanyahu-s-foreign-policy-speech-at-bar-ilan-1.277922.

17 Explanatory notes in the first reading of Citizenship and Entry into Israel (Temporary Order)—2003 Bill available at: Knesset.gov.il.

18 These measures are not included in Table 2.1, which is limited to legislation that addresses identity threats to the state.

19 Although Israel lacks a formal constitution, the right to freedom of speech was recognized by the Supreme Court in its capacity as the High Court of Justice in HCK 153/83 Alan Levi and Yaheli Amit vs. Southern District Police Commander. Available at: http://versa.cardozo.yu.edu/sites/default/files/upload/opinions/Levi%20v.%20Southern%20District%20Police%20Comn

20 Though not legislated into law, another manifestation of this move was evident with the introduction of the demand that the Palestinian recognize Israel as a Jewish state as a pre-condition to continued negotiations as part of the Peace Process. Here too, the Israeli government sought to secure international recognition from the international community, through the Palestinians, for its Jewish identity as a way to protect it from the threats of the delegitimization movement (Olesker 2018).

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3 The Arab boycott and early Israeli debates on the threats of delegitimization

The securitization dilemma that Israel has entered into over the last two decades has its roots in a number of specific aspects of its history. Early failures in efforts to gain legitimacy for the state's Jewish identity and their ensuing problems, as discussed in the previous chapter, have played a role in the way this securitization dilemma has developed. However, the specific political contexts and external threats that have prompted Israel to securitize its Jewish identity over the course of its existence have also been notably associated with the boycotts that the country has faced, particularly, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in recent years. These boycotts against the state of Israel, however, are not a new phenomenon, and they go back to well before the formation of the state. Indeed, early boycotts were used by the Arab population in Palestine in the 1890s and against Jews in Europe in the 1920s. Looking at the long history of these boycott efforts is essential for understanding the larger trajectory of Israel's securitization dilemma. This chapter, along with the next, documents some of the key ways that the debates over the response to these boycotts have contributed to the development of that securitization dilemma. The next chapter looks closely at the role of the BDS boycott, which represents the most recent incarnation of the boycotts against Israel and which began in the years immediately following the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, while this chapter brings into view the larger evolution of this tradition of boycotts prior to BDS, back to the consolidated Arab diplomatic and economic boycott of Israel which began more or less at the same time as the state was first founded in the 1940s and that continues to this day.

The Arab boycott was announced by the Arab League on January 1, 1946, two years before Jews in Palestine declared an independent state. The League created a Permanent Boycott Committee and later established boycott offices in each member state. The Boycott Committee declared in Resolution No. 16 that, "products of Palestinian Jews are to be considered undesirable in Arab countries. They should be prohibited and refused as long as their production in Palestine might lead to the realization of Zionist political aims" (Losman 1972, 100).

The initial goal of the Arab boycott was to endanger the existence of the state by preventing Arabs and non-Arabs from contributing to Israel's economic—and by extension—military strength (Turck 1977, 472). As discussed later in this chapter, for some Jewish Israelis, the boycott recalled anti-Jewish boycotts in Europe during the interwar period. However, unlike the boycotts in Europe, which effected deep anxiety among the Jewish populations and contributed to growing violence and stigmatization, in Palestine, the Arab boycott did not have the scope of effect it was aiming for, and it did not significantly economically undermine the Jewish populations in Palestine nor stop Zionist effort at creating an independent state. Most importantly, as I argue later in this chapter, the Arab boycott was not contextualized as posing an ontological threat to Israel. Arabs were never seen as agents of Israel's legitimacy, and as a result, they could not threaten the ontological security of the state in the same way other, more friendly external actors, such as U.S. or European powers, could. Because of the early separation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, Jews developed independent economic practices from the Arab population. They did not rely on them to legitimize their national project in Palestine, and their routines and national narratives were not tied to economic or diplomatic relations or cooperation with Arabs inside Palestine and outside of it. For these reasons, voices that called for more aggressive response to the Arab boycott and its securitization did not prevail.

Unlike the modern delegitimization movement led by BDS, the Arab boycott never received continued attention from top political leaders and was mostly resigned to secondary committees within existing institutions. Though the Arab boycott presented economic challenges to the state, and at times demonstrated antisemitic undertones, Israel never adopted a policy which

constructed it as a threat to the ontological or physical security of the Jewish people or state. Some attempts, however, were made in the 1950s and 1960s to convince European and North American governments of the dangers and discrimination of the Arab boycott, but the response was limited to particular cases and firms affected by the boycott, and later, to counter-boycott legislation that was only successful in the U.S. in the 1970s.

This chapter highlights the tensions between those who sought to adopt more militant approaches to the boycott as either threats to national security or as antisemitism, including counter-boycotts of third parties, and those who wanted to adopt less visible responses, opting to operate behind the scenes and in silence. By looking at the historic debate between these two approaches, in favor and against the construction of the Arab boycott as a threat to national security and/or the Jewish people, we are able to learn more about the contours of the debate today, and why the securitization response is not the only one available to Israel when facing an organized boycott campaign. Arguably, the Arab boycott could have posed a much more serious threat to Israel than BDS, yet the state was consciously avoiding securitizing it. This chapter explains the events that resulted in this approach.

In elucidating this history, this chapter draws on materials from the Jewish Agency's External Relations Department (ERD), the Jewish Agency Treasurer, and the Department of Commerce and Industry files in the Central Zionist Archives (CZA). Additional materials were collected from supporting literature on the Arab boycott and Israel's response to it as well as news items pertaining to the boycott and its impact, also collected at the CZA.

The Arab boycott and its consequences

Because of the context of Israel's founding, the dynamics of any delegitimization efforts such as the Arab boycott and the BDS movement are specific to the case of Israel. However, the use of economic boycotts as part of a political struggle was not new to Jews in the middle of the 20th century. The term 'boycott' was coined in 1880 in Ireland, but the use of boycotts can be traced even earlier to the 18th century, including in the events that led up to the American Revolution (Feldman 2019, 4–5).

The use of economic boycotts against Jews began in Europe as early as the late 19th century as part of the rise in antisemitism there (Krzywiec 2019), but by the 1920s, especially as National Socialist Party was rising, their practice became widespread (Ahlheim 2010, 149; Kreutzmüller 2019, 101–7). Boycotts were used to bring about the economic and social segregation of Jews from German society, but boycotts had another impact: they were able to undermine the self-perception and self-esteem of Jews themselves (Ahlheim 2010, 150).

The first Arab boycott in Palestine was declared in the 1890s. Though largely declaratory and ineffective, the boycotts were used as a political tool to convey Arab dissatisfaction with Zionism, particularly relating to the Jewish immigration into Palestine during the Ottoman period in the late 1880s through the 1920s (Feiler 1998, 21). Frustrated by the Balfour Declaration, and the recognition of the Jewish homeland in Palestine by the British mandate, the Arabs of Palestine declared another boycott against economic transactions and selling land to Jews during the fifth Palestine Arab Congress held in Nablus in 1922. After the outbreak of violence between Jews and Arabs in the summer of 1929, the policy was implemented more feverously, going so far as attacking other Arabs who did not implement the boycott against Jews (Feiler 1998, 22). It was not until the establishment of the Arab League in 1945, however, that an organized apparatus was developed to implement a coordinated boycott campaign. As it became clear that

the growing Jewish population in Palestine, now solidly supported by major world powers, would declare their own state, the Arab regimes quickly legislated prohibitions against imports of Israeli goods from Palestine (Losman 1972, 100).

Uncertainty is a main feature of ontological insecurity and while the BDS movement does not make its goals clear, and thus causes uncertainty for Israel, the Arab boycott was not marked by the same uncertainty. Since its declaration, the goals of the Arab boycott changed overtime, but it was fairly clear to Israel what they were. As noted above, in the early manifestations of the boycott, the Arabs of Palestine were expressing their frustration with the growing Jewish immigration into Palestine. Once the state was established, the boycott was used as a way to cripple the state economically into collapse. When it became clear that this objective would not be achieved, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Arabs began to focus on disrupting Israeli trade relations to weaken the state as much as possible. But, by the 1970s, and into the 1980s, the goal of the boycott shifted again to focus on extrapolating Israeli concessions in the Middle East peace process as it began (Feiler 1998, 264).

Still in effect, the Arab boycott of Israel is now nearly 75 years old. Aside from being the longest imposed economic boycott in modern history, the Arab boycott has a few additional distinguishing features that are important to note, as they intersect directly with Israel's long-term debates regarding how to establish and maintain its ontological security and the legitimacy of its Jewish identity. As noted earlier, the original goal was to eliminate the Zionist entity rather than affect its behavior in a certain way. Despite this, the state never moved to institutionalize a construction of the boycott as an existential threat. Unlike BDS, the Arab boycott was centralized and state-led, and it was executed by those whose approval Israel never relied on for its ontological security. Even when the primary boycott was expanded to include a secondary boycott of third parties who, in the eyes of the Arab League, significantly contributed to Israel's economic or military strength, the perception of the boycott among Israeli policy makers did not change. While there were attempts to securitize the secondary activities of the League and adopt a more aggressive counter-boycott response, those attempts failed precisely because the boycott did not target Israeli-Jewish ontology.

Before assessing the Israeli response, it is important to first discuss some of the expanding features of the Arab boycott that were introduced through the secondary and tertiary boycotts and to explain why they did not threaten Israel's ontological security in the same way the BDS movement does. The Centralized Boycott Office (CBO) was established by the Arab League in Syria in 1951 to help coordinate and create blacklists of companies and entities with whom the Arabs would not deal as a result of the former's connection with Israel. The objective was to use third parties to limit Israel's access to the global market. While in some cases, these succeeded; in others, they failed. For example, in 1966, Coca-Cola Corporation was blacklisted as a result of its licensing a bottling plant near Tel Aviv. Coca-Cola reversed its decision to close its plant in Israel only after heavy lobbying from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the U.S. As a result, it was denied access to the Arab markets for years to come (Reuters 1988). On the other hand, the French car company Renault had cancelled its contracts with the Kaiser-Frazer plant in Haifa, where some of its cars had been assembled, after it was blacklisted by the CBO (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 1959).

A third, tertiary boycott was developed in 1954, which called on the Arabs to refuse to do business with companies that did business with blacklisted entities, thus expanding the secondary boycott even further. Though it was difficult to implement, one example of this extension of the boycott was when an American manufacturer had his contract to manufacture buses in Saudi

Arabia threatened when it was discovered that the bus seats were manufactured by another American blacklisted firm that did business in Israel (Turck 1977, 477).

Assessing the economic impact of the Arab boycott is difficult, if not impossible, since there is nothing to compare the loss in trade and investment to (the boycott precedes the establishment of the state after all). Because Israel's economy did not rely on Arab markets, these secondary boycotts had the potential to be much more damaging for the Israeli economy than the primary Arab boycott. However, despite their potential, the actual impact is more questionable. Indeed, the fact that the CBO compiled blacklists of thousands of companies they deemed to have violated the Arab boycott by dealing with Israel suggests that, despite Arab threats,[1] in practice, they were unable to keep Israel out of the global market, and Israel's economic engine was thriving.

Further, there is evidence that the boycott might have benefitted the development of the Israeli economy by forcing it to become more self-reliant. For example, *Haboker* newspaper reported on January 10, 1946, only ten days after the official start of the boycott, that the government decided to develop the Tel Aviv port so that the Jews in Palestine would not depend on Arabs to export their goods (Haboker 1946). A report on the economic consequences of the Arab boycott from 1965 concluded that the boycott failed in its goal to endanger the existence of the state, yet it distorted production and investment in Israel and hampers economic relations between Middle Eastern economies and other economies. However, the fact that the boycott didn't have a strong negative impact on the Israeli economy does not mean that it was a failure. As Rolef noted, the boycott was an important "symbol for the Arabs states … to demonstrate, both externally and internally, their refusal to accommodate themselves to Israel's existence, or to have any dealings with it off the battlefield" (Rolef 1989, 5). The Israelis were less concerned with the economic impact of the boycott than with the "atmosphere of terror which the Arabs were trying to create around investment in Israel" (ibid., 15).

While the Arab boycott did not have much impact on the Israeli economy, it did have two potentially important consequences, particularly relating to Israel's urgent need to maintain ontological security and legitimacy during this time. The boycott contributed to the separation of Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and as a consequence, it allowed Israel to develop a more exclusionary identity that did not have to be constructed in consultation or accommodation of the Arab minority in the state or the neighboring countries. As with the partition plan discussed in the previous chapter, this economic separation meant that the Jews of Palestine, and later Israel, could thrive even without the economic or diplomatic support of the Arabs, and without engaging in legitimacy building among the Arabs of Palestine or the surrounding states. Thus, the Arab boycott contributed to the disconnect between Israel's legitimacy and its accommodation of Arab grievances. This justified even further the exclusionary character of the identity of the state that today fuels the claims levied against it by the BDS movement.

Though it is not entirely clear whether the Arabs would ever accept a Jewish national project in Palestine, the boycott did motivate some Jews to move out of Arab neighborhoods and into Jewish towns. Commercial, medical, and other economic exchanges all but disappeared, contributing to the disconnect between the two communities in Palestine. As a letter from Hans May, a Jewish physician in the Arab town of Jenin indicates, opportunities for mutual community building were obstructed by the boycott. After spending five years in Jenin, Hans May was forced to move away when his Arab patients could no longer come to him, and he could not get any Jewish-made medicines at the local pharmacist.[2] These acts of separation had serious consequences for Israel's identity. It meant that Israel did not draw its legitimacy from

the support of the local Arab population, and this impeded Jewish-Arab relations and the ability to establish a consensus around the identity of the state. This lack of consensus contributed to Israel's continued ontological insecurity, which is still manifested today. As a result of this ontological insecurity, Israel adopted exclusionary policies that sit at the heart of the claims made by the BDS movement against it. Yet, when it came to the Arab boycott, the securitization policies that feature in the response to BDS were not adopted.

The Israeli response

Despite the lack of obvious impact of the boycott on Israel's economic well-being, some key figures in Israel perceived the boycott as a threat to Israel's legitimacy and security. But there were others who pushed back against characterizing the Arab boycott in this way, a political decision that ultimately had significant consequences and helped Israel avoid the kind of securitization dilemma that it has found itself in today with the BDS movement.

The move to construct the Arab boycott as a national security threat followed two lines of argumentation, and these are prevalent today when it comes to the BDS movement as well. The first connected between the boycott and Arab warfare and the second constructed the boycott as a form of antisemitism, against "world Zionism and the Jewish people as a whole."[3] Encapsulating both arguments, on July 23, 1957, the Zionist General Council adopted a resolution which read in part: "The Zionist General Council declares that the Arab Boycott, which has developed into an anti-Jewish campaign, is an act of aggression, immoral and unlawful, constituting a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations."[4]

Today, policy makers attempt to directly connect between Palestinian militants and BDS activists. In the first two decades of the Arab boycott, this was done by connecting it more widely to Arab warfare. For example, in 1956, in his analysis of the affect the boycott has on the U.S. "and the free world" Meir Sherman, who later became the economic minister noted that:

> [T]he Boycott and Blockade conducted by Arab dictators and governments are nothing less than a continuation of the war of aggression which they waged unsuccessfully against Israel in 1948. The destruction which they could not achieve on the field of battle, they have been trying since 1948 to accomplish by means of Boycott and Blockade. These two evils, the Boycott and Blockade, should therefore be recognized for what they truly are: aggressive form of warfare, economic warfare, creating tensions and unrest, causing untold damage no less than a shooting war, keeping the Middle East in a state verging on war, and thus threatening the peace of the world.[5]

In the lead up to the Suez crisis, when Israeli ships, or ships carrying Israeli goods, were denied access through the Suez Canal by Nasser in Egypt, Abba Eban, Israel's ambassador to the UN, brought the issue to the Council. In a report from 1956 by the External Relations Department (ERD) of the Jewish Agency, which was charged at the time with responding to the boycott, defined it as, "a form of the cold war"; it expands the area of the present conflict in the Middle East; it aggravates the relations between States; and it "will continue to occupy a primary role in their actions to destruct Israel, especially after the lessons learn from the Sinai war."[6]

The same report also characterized the boycott as containing "elements of Anti-racial discrimination" and this characterization typifies the second argument used to try to frame the boycott as a threat to national security. Today, Israeli policy makers construct BDS as a modern

form of antisemitism, but this frame was also evident in some discussions when it came to the appropriate response to the Arab boycott.

The efforts to connect between the Arab boycott against Israel and the discrimination against Jews appears mostly during the period of 1956–1959, when the ERD of the Jewish Agency was in charge of the response. In 1956, at the 24th World Zionist Congress, the ERD was tasked with developing a response to the Arab boycott.[7] It formed a counter-boycott committee led by Meir Grossman, the head of ERD and a leading Zionist, and at one time member of the Revisionist movement, who had spent most of his life as a journalist, having co-founded the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, a bureau for the gathering and distributing Jewish news in the media (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 1964). The counter-boycott committee also included members from the economic department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), representatives from industry, manufacturing, and the World Jewish Congress (WJC).[8]

In a letter to Samuel Caplan, the editor of the Congress Weekly, Grossman lamented about the ineffective Israeli response that was limited to "a defensive position." More than anything, Grossman wanted to declare a formal Israeli and Jewish counter-boycott on Arab goods and on third parties that acquiesced to the boycott demands of the Arabs. Grossman exposed his frustration with Jewish organizations, noting that Jews have "not shown a particular keenness in fighting the Arab boycott, believing probably, that it does not harm Israel too much, and still less Jews throughout the world. Of course, this is a faulty point of view."[9] For Grossman, the connection between the Arab boycott and Jewish ontological security was clear. Much as Israeli policy makers do today when it comes to BDS, Grossman repeatedly constructed the threat of the Arab boycott as one to the Jewish people as a whole.

Documents in which the Arab governments explicitly asked European firms to report on whether they had Jews as "employees, managers, or laborers" or whether they had "Jewish connections or Jewish members on their board"[10] contributed to this framing. The ERD claimed that the Arabs considered the state of Israel and Jews as one of the same and therefore "allow themselves to prohibit any contact with Jews in a way that is discriminatory based on race beyond the contours of the Arab-Israeli conflict."[11]

Israelis made explicit connections between early 20th-century boycotts of Jews and the Arab boycott. In the WJC in 1956, Israel Dunsky, the chairman of the Zionist Conference argued that the Arabs "learned a great deal from the Nazis, and everyone knows what consequences such a policy can produce."[12] During the same time, David Porter, one of the editors of *Haboker* newspaper, produced a pamphlet titled "Racialism Endangers International Relations" in which he connected between the Arab boycott and pre-war relations between the Arabs and the Nazis, going so far as to argue that if the U.S. accepted the racialized aspects of the boycott, it would "mean the return of Nazism."[13] Of course, slogans of the Arab boycott committee of "12 million Jewish customers or 80 million Arab buyers" didn't help alleviate the concerns, harking back to more dark times in which slogans such as "Germans, don't buy from Jews" or "Germans only buy from Germans" were commonplace. A report of the ERD on the boycott paints the boycott purely in antisemitic terms:

> While attempts are being made of late to adapt the anti-Jewish boycott to current conceptions of the civilized world, by ostensibly directing the campaign against Israel as a State, its propagators cannot, and for home consumption do not, hide the racial character of the boycott. In local phraseology and in Pan-Arab broadcasts, the boycott has always been and still is anti-Jewish in word and deed.[14]

Even more remarkably, the report goes on to cite an agreement on mutual cooperation between Haj Amin al Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem during World War II, and the Nazi government, though there is no evidence that the Grand Mufti had any role in the initiation or implementation of the Arab boycott by the Arab League after World War II. Still, the report concludes, "it is now an established fact that the boycott stems from Nazi elements within the Arab leadership, and has always remained as such, in spite of recent attempt to camouflage and hide the racialist stings."[15]

But even before then, and perhaps more subtly, the Jewish Agency submitted a report to the UN Conference on Trade and Employment in Geneva on April 11, 1947, where they connected between the boycott, past boycotts of Jews, and world peace noting:

> past history has shown that such discrimination, though at first enacted against a small group, may finally, if allowed to go on unchecked, become an instrument of aggression. Organized economic warfare in the international field must be regarded as a potential threat to world peace and is therefore the concern of all peace-loving nations.[16]

Given these constructions, it is even more remarkable that securitization of the Arab boycott and the adoption of more aggressive actions did not prevail even in the face of direct evidence of cases in which individual Jews were targeted by the boycott. For example, in Britain, Lord Mancroft was asked to resign from his position on the board of Norwich Union Insurance Companies in response to pressure from Arab governments. The case received negative media attention after two additional board members resigned in protest and sparked the British government to condemn the move.[17] Lord Mancroft was later offered his position back, which he refused to accept (JTA 1963).

In 1966, three American Jews, who were part of a trade union tourist group traveling to Syria, were denied tourist visas by the country. The trade union group indicated that it would not again travel to any country that discriminates against their members from visiting based on "such indignities and religious prejudice" (*Jerusalem Post* 1966). In the 1960s, the U.S. State Department excluded Jews from posts in Arab countries. MacArthur admitted that while normally the State Department would not consider a person's religion in their decisions, it could not control this practice of Arab countries even if it disagreed with them (Spiegel 1966).

What the discussion here reveals is that there were plenty of attempts and cases to support the construction of the Arab boycott, through securitizing speech, as a threat to national security of the Jewish state. First, as an extension of Arab conventional warfare and second, as a form of antisemitism that draws parallel to similar boycotts of Jews in Europe prior to World War II. Yet, despite these connections, Israel ultimately avoided treating the boycott with the same sense of urgency and extraordinary measures that featured in its response to BDS. The boycott remained a secondary issue for policy makers, never rising to the direct attention and action of the Prime Minister's Office. Though actors and policies regarding the boycott fluctuated throughout the decades, ultimately, Israel adopted a subdued response to the Arab boycott, repeatedly avoiding securitizing it. In fact, for the first few years of the boycott, Israel did not deal with it systemically but deliberately avoided declaring an official counter-boycott on Arab goods (Rolef 1989, 13) despite calls for it. For example, the defense committee which was first established by the Yishuv to deal with the Arab boycott in 1946 considered a counter-boycott of certain products that Jews should not buy from the Arabs, especially fruits and vegetables from Syria and Lebanon. More importantly, the Yishuv appealed to the British Mandate government in

Palestine to adopt counter measures against the boycott though the defense committee recognized that these efforts would not bear fruit.[18] And indeed, in 1946, J.V.W. Shaw, the Chief Secretary of the Government of Palestine, sent a letter to the executive of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem where he admitted that the British government objected to the boycott but that retaliatory economic actions should not be taken because, "inter alia, such actions would be highly detrimental to the interests of the Jewish community in this country." A similar letter was sent to the President of the Manufacturers Association of Palestine in Tel Aviv on February 25, 1946. The letter also states that the British government in Palestine saw the boycott as inconsistent with the draft charter of the International Trade Organization (ITO). It therefore referred the matter to the ITO in Geneva, but refused to initiate a counter-boycott in Palestine.[19]

In an interview between Dr. Shmorak, head of the Trade and Industry Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine with Mr. Palmer of the AP from 1946, he noted that the government of Palestine has done nothing in regard to the boycott and that the Jews have not yet enacted counter measures though they were in a good position to do so since there was a trade surplus between Palestine and the Arab countries.[20] Yet, such counter actions were ultimately not invoked.

More than any other actor in Israel's various institutions charged with responding to the Arab boycott, Meir Grossman of the ERD in the Jewish Agency was the most adamant that Israel should move from a defensive posture to an offensive one. Repeatedly, he had attempted to construct the boycott as the threat to Israeli and Jewish security but was rebuffed along the way. In his statement on the Arab boycott, Grossman argued that the Arabs seek Israel's destruction, and the boycott was a way to strangle the economy as well as a means of "arousing anti-Semitic feelings and using them for political purposes."[21] To drive support for a counter-boycott, especially by Jews in the West, the ERD sought to connect between the Arab boycott and a Soviet agenda to undermine and subvert western democracies. Rose Halprin of the Jewish Agency in the New York dismissed this line of argument off hand, calling this approach "farfetched" since the boycott preceded the Arab-Soviet alliance.[22] Grossman's attempt to establish a counter-boycott alienated him from Halprin, who adamantly objected to his approach as she viewed a centralized counter-boycott by Jews as harmful to Israeli and Jewish causes.[23]

By 1959, the Central Committee in ERD dissolved, and the responsibility for the boycott was moved to the economic department in the MFA. Grossman was sidelined though the ERD dabbled in anti-boycott policies until his retirement in 1961 (Rolef 1989, 23). In a letter from 1959, Grossman noted that he was unable to achieve much because of the Israeli government's refusal to adopt a boycott of Arab goods.[24] In 1960, the responsibility to deal with the Arab boycott moved to a new department within the MFA—the *Matmach*—acronym for Machlacka Letichnoon Medini Vekalkali (Department for Political and Economic Planning). While there were some, especially from the political right, who still called for more aggressive responses to the boycott in the 1960s, such as Arie Altman from the Herut Party, for the most part, by the end 1960s, Israel treated the boycott as more of a nuisance than a threat (Rolef 1989, 31). Things changed slightly in the mid-1970s with the initiation of the Arab oil embargo. By 1973, the Israelis began to shift gear to speak openly about the boycott and raise awareness for its detrimental impact, but avoided aggressive actions such as counter-boycotts. The oil embargo prompted Israel to establish the Economic Warfare Authority (EWA) in the ministry of Finance even though at this time, a counter-boycott was not considered, namely because it was understood that the balance of economic power was in the Arabs' favor (Rolef 1989, 36).

In 1971, Tuvia Arazi, the director of *Matmach*, told Time magazine that the department was

"superfluous" because the boycott was "so inefficient and ineffective that we simply don't need this division any more" (Time 1971). By 1973, Matmach was dissolved as a separate department, and the boycott issue returned to the Economic department in MFA (Feiler 1998, 134). In a visit to Washington in 1975, Chaim Bar-Lev, the then Israeli Minister of Commerce, stated that "the Arab boycott means nothing to us. It has not effect on Israel" (Turck 1977, 472). In cases of blunt antisemitism, such as it was with Lord Mancroft, the MFA would directly appeal to foreign governments, but, in most other cases, it believed that quiet diplomacy would be far more effective, and this is an attitude that was expressed to me 50 years later by the former head of public diplomacy in MFA when it came to responding to BDS as well.[25]

The approach at the time was purely reactive, and the department didn't initiate actions on its own. Moreover, bureaucracies were established, then dissolved, and responsibilities moved from one ministry to another, without a coherent strategy or any sense of urgency. Unlike the fight against BDS, by the 1970s, new initiatives against the Arab boycott were coming from Jewish organizations abroad that were established in coordination with Israel but by the end of the decade had assumed independence from the state. These organizations pushed for the use of lawfare with the emphasis of convincing foreign governments to pass anti-boycott laws (Rolef 1989, 54).

After the 1970s and 1980s, much of the enthusiasm to combat the Arab boycott waned for several reasons. First, I discuss in greater detail later, in the 1970s, there was a switch in focus to combat the boycott through lawfare, advocating for countries, especially the U.S., to legislate anti-boycott laws. Second, the fear that the Arabs would be able to bring about Israel's economic ruin was dispelled, and by the 1980s, the boycott relaxed, especially after the peace treaty with Egypt was signed in 1979. The establishment of the Matmach and EWA represented the apex of Israeli anti-boycott activities, but even during this time, the focus was largely on diplomacy to deter specific companies from succumbing to the boycott, while avoiding securitization.

The absence of securitization

The dilemma facing Israel when the Arab boycott started is similar to the one today. But the responses were very different. Unlike the current response to BDS, the Arab boycott was never moved into the exception; rather, Israel "channeled the anti-boycott activities into routine in which spectacular activity was the exception rather than the rule. While a special department was assigned the task of dealing with the boycott, it was not an important and prestigious department" (Rolef 1989, 31). The boycott issue was never addressed at the highest level of government and was largely assigned to technocrats in the foreign and economic ministries, and there is no evidence that the politics of the exception was ever institutionalized.

The fundamental reason the Israelis did not securitize the Arab boycott in the same way they did the BDS campaign is because the former did not threaten Israel's ontological security. The boycott did not bring with it any disruption to existing routines of state behavior since Jewish Israelis and the Arabs had not engaged in cooperative relations to begin with. Moreover, the hostility of the Arabs was assumed as a given, whereas BDS is a loose network of activists, predominantly from friendly countries, whose relations Israel values. Israel's democratic character and its appeal to western audiences was also much stronger then than it is now, and the Arab's invocation of international law fell on deaf ears given their own oppressive regimes. Calls for BDS today come not from those oppressive regimes but from liberal and progressive western activists, whose commitment to international law and human rights is harder to question (though

not impossible), and who can effectively paint a counter-narrative of Israel as an apartheid-like state. This ability to undermine Israel's routines, narratives, and sense of belonging to the international community was unavailable to Arab states. Even commercial firms who adhered to the Arab boycott were viewed as doing so out of coercion, not political support for the boycott. While today those subscribing to BDS are doing so at will. Most importantly, the gap between domestic audience acceptance of securitization and external audience rejection, which results in the securitization dilemma, was not present in the case of the Arab boycott because securitization never took effect. In the case of BDS, as the next couple of chapters will illustrate, actions that are accepted as necessary and legitimate by Israeli Jews are increasingly rejected by external audiences in the West, including Jews in the U.S.

The decision not to securitize the boycott, though not couched in these terms, was guided by the balance of effectiveness. Repeated attempts at counter-boycotts of Arabs and third parties were rebuffed on the grounds that they would be counterproductive and harm more than help Israel. For example, the Yishuv defense committee refused to lump the Arab agriculture sector in Palestine with other Arab industries, recognizing that, by doing so, they would bring the Arabs in Palestine closer to other Arabs and strengthen the goals of the boycott.[26] The MFA's overall attitude was that aggressive responses to the boycott would have enhanced the effectiveness of the boycott by raising its profile and demonstrating that it was hurting the Israeli economy, thereby galvanizing the Arabs into further actions. Similar claims were made decades later by the same ministry, except that, by then, in 2015, BDS was being securitized and framed as a matter of national security so such propositions by the MFA were rebuffed by the security approach that emerged.

The inconsistent application of the Arab boycott by different Arab states might have also contributed to Israel's reluctance to view it as it as a serious threat. When the Arab states deemed it in their national interest, they would still do business with companies that also did business with Israel. For example, the CBO decided to allow boycotted companies to participate in the bid for the Arab Telecommunication Organization, which was affiliated with the Arab League, when it became clear that it would not be able to soliciting bids for a telecommunication satellite project because all the companies in space communications were on the blacklist. Military equipment was also generally exempt from the boycott (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] 1982, 3).

Implementation also varied from state to state. Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Somalia, Mauritania, and Algeria did not enforce the secondary boycott, while Egypt ended its boycott when it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979. Oman was a reluctant participant who generally only paid lip service to the boycott. On the other hand, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria are strict enforcers of the boycott until this present day. Most companies, however, found many loopholes to deal with both the Arabs and the Israelis using subsidiaries or dummy corporations (ibid., 5) reducing the impact of the boycott even further. A report from 1956 notes that the boycott "has been a weapon of spite rather a serious danger to Israel development." The report goes on to state that in some respect, the boycott fueled Israel's economic progress by encouraging agricultural output to new export markets.[27]

Another reason why securitization was not necessary is that the use of lawfare was effective. The European Branch of the WJC was particularly active on this front early on. In a report on the consequences of the Arab economic coercion, the WJC emphasized that the boycott practices were illegal from the standpoint of international law, international trade law, and the law of certain European institutions. The report provides recommendations for European individuals

and firms that have been impacted by the boycott to bring cases to the European Court of Justice and the EEC Commission so that the legality of those secondary boycotts could be tested.[28]

European Jews had experience with taking legal actions against boycotts. When boycotts of Jews were rampant in Germany during the Weimar Republic, Jewish business owners and organizations had some success in appealing to the courts for relief in the early to mid-1920s (Ahlheim 2010, 153).[29] Though the WJC was very active in Europe in the 1970s to try and pass anti-boycott laws, by 1979, a Congressional research report concluded that the Europeans were not likely to adopt anti-boycott measures because of their reliance of oil from the Arab countries.[30] Canada too was reluctant to pass specific anti-boycott laws in fear of losing Arab investment, which grew in Canada following the Arab oil crisis in the mid-1970s. It did strengthen existing human rights legislation to include in the definition of discrimination certain boycott activities (Feiler 1998, 257).

As is the case today with anti-BDS legislation, the most success in lawfare was achieved in the U.S. There, Jewish organizations, led by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the American Jewish Congress, with support from the ADL, were successful in advancing anti-Boycott legislation that would prevent Americans from submitting to the Arab boycott. The 1976 Ribicoff Amendment to the Tax Reform Act, while not prohibiting compliance with the Arab boycott, denied tax benefits to corporations that complied with it (Rolef 1989, 38). In 1977, the amendment to the Export Administration Amendments (EAA) focused more specifically on the secondary and tertiary boycott by prohibiting the discrimination against any U.S. person on the basis of race, religion, sex, or national origin. The enforcement of the law relied on U.S. persons who receive a boycott request to report it to the Commerce Department and not to comply with a request to boycott. In other words, the amendment broadly prohibited compliance with the boycott though with some exceptions.[31] However, it is important to note that these legislative changes were pushed by American Jewish organizations who, though opposing counter-boycotts directly, focused on responding to these boycott by focusing on commercial arguments, using legislative tools that targeted compliance with the boycott rather than targeting the boycotters themselves. Israel supported these moves but did not lead the initiatives. These legislative moves in the 1970s were successful in curbing the effectiveness of the boycott in the U.S. It became clear that the Arabs were not willing to use their economic power to destroy Israel, and so the need to securitize did not materialize. Importantly, Israel avoided directly interfering in domestic U.S. politics or directly targeting the boycotters or those who comply with them. Moves to counter the boycotts were made on the basis of persuasion, not compellence, but this is not the case today when it comes to BDS.

Three additional points are worth noting here. First, the strength of the diplomatic corps to override other voices that called for securitization is noteworthy. Once the boycott portfolio moved to the economic department in the MFA, there was very little support for offensive action against the boycott or its construction as an extension of Nazi policy. Instead, the MFA preferred to raise the issue in international forums but to avoid explicit action that would raise attention to the boycott. The MFA was also exercising discrete diplomacy with foreign government to influence their actions against the boycott. Israelis emphasized the negative consequences of the boycott with foreign government but downplayed it with potential investors and stressed that foreign companies could still do business with Israel through subsidiary companies or by simply ignoring the boycott (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] 1982, 5). However, by the second decade of the 21st century, the MFA was largely stripped of its BDS activities, transitioning the response to a security orientated ministry—the Ministry of Strategic Affairs.

Second, the framing of boycotts as either threats to physical security of the state or as forms of antisemitism is not new. These two frames are now repeatedly used by Israeli policy makers to tie BDS to Palestinian warfare and modern forms of antisemitism. These two frames were also present in Israeli policy debates when it came to the Arab boycott decades earlier. However, the construction of the threat of the Arab boycott as ideational never received traction with members of the MFA economic department as well as the Jewish Agency in New York actively resisting such constructions. When Meir Grossman urged Rose Halprin, the acting chairperson of the Jewish Agency in New York, to initiate a counter Jewish boycott on the Arabs, he was rebuffed by her. Halprin, like many others in the Jewish Agency and the MFA, supported a more subtle approach that would highlight the economic and commercial costs of the boycott on American firms rather than highlight the racialized elements of the boycott as Grossman wanted.[32]

Although the instrumentalization of the Holocaust was a known practice in Israel, especially under the leadership on Ben Gurion (Zertal 2005, 98–103), and despite the relative closeness to the event of the Holocaust, the "Israeli industry of Holocaust memory" as Gur-Ze'ev defines it (Gur-Ze'ev 2000, 386) was absent from policy making with regard to the Arab boycott. Repeated attempts to connect between the Arab boycott and Nazism did not receive much traction. As a result, the argument in favor of securitization through the construction of the boycott as antisemitic or tied to Arab warfare, even attempting to tie the boycott to Soviet threats to Western countries, failed.[33]

Third, Israelis understood the dilemma they faced and calculated that a forceful response would have been counterproductive, serving the Arab interest of raising the profile of the boycott. Instead, the boycott remained a secondary policy issue, driven by a variety of bureaucrats in the MFA and Economic and Commerce ministries, never rising to high level politics. Reflecting on the failure of his committee, Meir Grossman wrote in 1959:

> Meanwhile, the boycott activities of the Arab League have subsided. They had some setbacks, and were mainly occupied with a political campaign against Israel. It appeared that the Arab boycott in fact did not so terribly harm Israel's economy, and that by our constant reference to the Arab boycott as a terrible danger to Israel, **we actually encouraged them to continue it**.
>
> (emphasis added, r.o.)[34]

It seems that even Grossman, toward the end of his tenure in the Jewish Agency, recognized like many, the counterproductive outcomes of aggressive response to the boycott when it did not threaten to a large extent Israel's material interests or its identity as a Jewish state.

One possible reason for the difference between the framing of the Arab boycott and the BDS movement may stem from the different political leadership at each time period. The leadership of the Labor party in Israel in the first three decades of its existence may explain the resistance to securitization. For example, right-wing parties like Herut-Hazahar wanted to take more aggressive steps against the boycott, but they didn't win the debate (Rolef 1989, 18). By the 2000s, the politics in Israel shifted to the right of the political map, but by then, the Arab boycott was no longer in serious effect. However, such political orientation of the Israeli Labor did not prevent consecutive left leaning governments and Ben Gurion himself from instrumentalizing the memory of the Holocaust in other aspect of Israeli society, including identifying Arabs as Nazi collaborators (Gur-Ze'ev 2000; Zertal 2005).[35] Yet, these constructions did not emerge as constitutive in Israel's response to the boycott precisely because the Arab boycott did not have

the potential or the impact to threaten Israel's ontological security; it did not disrupt its routines, sense of belonging to the international community, or its foundational narrative as a Jewish-democratic state. The Arabs never had a strong constitutive role in Israel's ontological security since they were perceived as hostile from the start. As I noted in the previous chapter, in its endeavor to establish legitimacy, Israel failed, or did not attempt seriously to gain Arab recognition. Thus, when the Arabs rejected the Zionist enterprise, the impact of such rejection was not perceived as ontological. The BDS campaign, however, although ineffective at exerting economic or diplomatic pressure on Israel, is viewed as more threatening because, in part, it intersects with changing attitudes of liberal and progressive international audiences, but especially those in the West, who view Israel much more critically. BDS's decentralized nature, its ambiguous goals, and the ability to operate at the grassroot level contribute to Israeli uncertainty about the movement, thus exacerbating the ontological insecurity. Israel's own response to BDS has fueled those perceptions even further, thereby advancing the very threat it seeks to thwart.

The Arab boycott was not securitized by the state of Israel, but it did contribute to the conditions which allowed other securitizations to take effect in the state. The separation between Jews and Arabs meant that Israel did not draw its legitimacy from Arab acceptance. It also meant that it could exclude the local Arab population from the construction of its national identity. These separations and exclusions directly contributed to the cycle of the securitization dilemma that Israel finds itself locked in today. However, the findings of this chapter offer an alternative approach to the possible response to boycotts that was not adopted in the case of BDS. It demonstrates the extent to which policy makers can choose (or not, as the case may be) to securitize the same issue (boycotts in this case) across time and space. The following chapter examines the BDS movement in depth to begin to understand why different constructions were made with regard to the movement.

Notes

1 An Israeli study of these blacklisted companies from 1975 revealed that many were not in existence or were subsidiaries of Israeli companies or other companies already listed. Thus, it seemed that the CBO believed that the longer the list, the more it served as a deterrent for others against cooperation with Israel (Feiler 1998, 269).

2 CZA J1/3545. "Why I left Jenin" personal letter by Hans May January 24, 1946.

3 CZA S38/92 1957 SKIRAT REKA MEYUHEDET [translated from Hebrew, r.o].

4 CZA 38/152.

5 CZA 38/93, Meir Sherman, "Analysis on the Arab boycott as it affects the United States and the Free World." 1956, p. 14.

6 CZA S38/92 1957, SKIRAT REKA MEYUHEDET, p. 2.

7 CZA S38/140.

8 "Wide Committee to Counter Boycott Established." *HaShomer* [in Hebrew] May 9, 1957.

9 File 378/57 letter from Meir Grossman to Samuel Caplan August 15, 1957. Available in CZA S38/1285.

10 CZA S38/91.

11 CZA S38/1285. Similar practices could be found early in Jewish history when, in 1935, German shop owners were required to provide information about Aryan ancestry and "about the possible investment of Jewish capital and business connections of Jewish supplied or salesmen." Those who would not comply were threatened that their names would be published as "shops that do not want to be German!" (Ahlheim 2010, 164). At the time, German shop owners were backlisted and publicly shamed if they sold to Jews, the same applied for Germans buying from Jewish-owned businesses.

12 CZA S38/152 "World Cannot Expect Jews to Remain Passive in the Face of Arab Boycott." *Jewish Herald*. Johannesburg, August 24, 1956.

13 David Porter, "Racialism Endangers International Relations." CZA 38/154.

14 Report found in CZA S38/94.

15 Ibid.

16 CZA S8/356.

17 Such demands were reminiscent of similar attempts in 1935 to blacklist and publicly shame German shop owners who sold to Jews or those who bought from Jewish-owned businesses (Ahlheim 2010, 164).

18 “Plan for the Defense Committee.” CZA S8/356.

19 CZAS8/356. See also, “Arab Boycott” *Palestine Post*, April 25, 1947. Available in CZA S71/313.

20 CZA S8/356.

21 CZA S38/93.

22 CZA Z5/9007.

23 Letter from Rose Halprin to Henry Steinberg September 19, 1957. Available in CZA Z5/9007.

24 Letter from Meir Grossman to Samuel Caplan November 1, 1959. CZA S38/94.

25 Interview with Gideon Meir, August 8, 2018.

26 “Plan for the Defense Committee.” p. 2. CZA S8/356.

27 CZA 38/152.

28 CZA C10/3355.

29 By the end of the decade, The Weimar courts refused to make a value judgment on the propaganda of the National Socialists and were therefore less inclined to rule in Jews’ favor (Ahlheim 2010, 156–59).

30 Report 79-215F, “Possibilities of European Cooperation with the U.S. Antiboycott Legislation.” Congressional Research Report, May 1979. Available in CZA C10/3097.

31 7 EAA sec. 201, § 4A(a)(1).

32 A noted exception was a declaratory resolution by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in October 1956, which stated that the ICC “deeply deplores the present tendency of certain countries to have recourse to commercial boycott based on racial or religious criteria, for what there can, in its view, be no possible justification.” ICC “Commercial Boycott on Racial or Religious Grounds.” Document No. 100/71. October 17, 1956. Available in CZA S38/94. This is the most the Israelis could extrapolate from the international community, at a time when the sensitivity to the plight of Jews in World War II was still high. As I note earlier in this chapter, some, such as Israel Dunsky, the chairman of the Zionist Conference, made this connection explicit, and this guided the Jewish Agency’s discourse under Grossman’s leadership between 1956 and 1959.

33 One notable exception was the call of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA, which was willing to engage in counter-boycott activities against firms and companies that refused to sell to Israel. CZA S38/376.

34 Letter from Meir Grossman to Sam Caplan from Congress Weekly. November 1, 1959. CZA S38/94.

35 In Chapter 3 of her book, Zertal details the degree to which the narrative of equating Arabs with Nazis was employed by Ben Gurion, even using the trial of Adolf Eichman for Nazi crimes to advance such constructions, and eventually justifying the development of nuclear weapons by Israel (2005, 98–127). The trial of Eichman was also used to legitimize Israel’s pursuit of power by all means, and this “was the sub-text of the entire trial and of the discourse which grew out of it” (ibid., 108).

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4 BDS and the battle for Israel’s legitimacy

Inspired by the success of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign officially began in 2005, with a call signed by 170 Palestinian civil society organizations to Boycott, Divest, and Sanction Israel. Its roots, however, can be found much earlier as it draws most of its theoretical and ideological frames from the Old and New Left discourses that developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike those older movements, however, BDS has increasingly resonated not just with progressives, but also with liberal audiences in the West which have traditionally been friendly to Israel. As a result, the discursive challenges presented by the BDS movement have been constructed as ontological threats to Israel, often coded in language that frames the movement as antisemitic or an extension of Palestinian warfare.

BDS is often activated when state-led initiatives fail (Sourani 2013), and the failure of the Oslo peace process, the growth in Jewish settlement building and creeping annexation in the West Bank, the failure of Camp David II peace process in 2000, and the eruption of the Second Intifada soon after all culminated in disillusionment with the interstate process to bring about an end to Israeli occupation.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the boycott of Israel was not new. What separates the new movement from its predecessors is that it is largely led by civil society rather than states, but it is not anti-statist—it seeks to draw states in through the application of sanctions (Chalcraft 2019, 309). Moreover, the BDS movement, although initiated by Palestinian civil society, targets the international audiences in the West, whose support Israel has enjoyed in the past. In other words, the BDS movement is qualitatively different from other movements that posed a challenge to Israel in its appeal not only to the radical Left, or Arabs, but also increasingly so to liberals who previously were much more likely to be pro-Israeli.

The stated goals of the BDS movement are threefold: first, to end Israeli occupation and colonization of “all Arab lands” and dismantle the “colonial wall” it erected; second, to

recognize the full equal rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel; and third, to respect, protect, and promote the right of return of Palestinian refugees (BDS 2005). More than its leftist predecessors, the BDS movement is ambiguous regarding its preferred solution to the conflict, only grounding itself in "its commitment to international law and universal human rights" (Barghouti 2013, 223). Its supporters characterize it as a non-violent, rights-based approach to secure Palestinian human rights (Barghouti 2011, 2013; Falk 2013). Such a position allows it to attract audiences that are increasingly disillusioned by Israeli-continued occupation of the Palestinian territories but that might not have subscribed to the positions of the radical Left that inspired much of the movement's rhetoric.

Many proponents of the BDS movement consider all of Israel, including its internationally recognized borders, as colonized "Arab land." Critics described it as antisemitic, aimed at the destruction of Israel (Fishman 2012; Sheskin and Felson 2016). Others have observed inconsistent application of its guidelines (Hallward and Shaver 2012) and the gap between its rhetoric of human rights and equality, and practice, which at times discriminates against Israelis and Jews based on their national or religious identities (Peled 2019). As discussed in greater detail later in this book, the Israeli government views the movement as a national security threat, borne out of terror groups that co-opted civil society NGOs to enact political warfare on Israel (Diker 2016; Diker and Shay 2019; Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy 2019). These constructions, as I noted in the previous chapters, were present in Israel's debates on the Arab boycott but unlike then, these constructions now serve as constitutive in Israel's response to delegitimization efforts.

Although the left and progressive movements have been criticizing Israel, even questioning its right to exist since the 1960s, the modern delegitimization efforts, led by the BDS movement, represent a new ontological security threat to the state because they moved the discourse around the state into liberal spaces that have traditionally been pro-Israeli. The growing discourse around the state that frames it as a settler colonial/apartheid regime is increasingly normalized in these liberal spaces resulting in growing fear among Israeli policy makers that its legitimacy in the West will erode.

This chapter begins by exploring the birth of the BDS movement. Drawing on discourse analysis of the movement's documents and statements by its leaders, I explore the various analytical frames through which its call for action can be interpreted. The movement draws its moral, legal, and tactical arguments from the comparison to the successful case of South African apartheid. Unlike the conditions in South Africa, the case of Israel makes it difficult for the BDS movement to leverage high economic costs against Israel. Nonetheless, BDS has managed to create a critical situation which threatens Israel's ontological security by increasingly shifting the boundaries of the discursive consciousness around the state in liberal spaces by framing it as an apartheid state. Ejdus notes that states must feel "at home in the international society" as a precondition for their ontological security. They must have a "practical understanding of what to expect from international society and build a sense of place in the existing order" (Ejdus 2018, 888). I conclude by explaining how these discursive challenges manifest in real consequences for Israel's legitimacy, which explains why the movement has been constructed as a national security threat and eventually securitized.

The birth of the movement

The use of boycotts against Israeli occupation was employed by Palestinians in the early stages

of the first intifada in 1987–1988, which began with the spontaneous protests that transformed into a popular uprising (Waxman 2019, 120). Though the PLO was caught off guard by the protests, it quickly seized control over the uprising. This is not surprising as historically, there has been an "entanglement structure" between civil society and state power. "Boycott from this perspective, were not only reactions to power but also instruments of power, privileging some groups, territories and causes over others" (Trentmann 2019, 39). The BDS movement, however, was borne out of the weakness of state power, the rise in information technologies, and the failure of interstate processes employed over the course of the 20th century (Morrison 2015; Marfleet 2019, 273) to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The decade of the 1990s opened with much hope in the international community. The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War ushered in a new period of international cooperation. Following the end of the first Iraq War, George H. Bush's administration moved to ignite the Arab- Israeli peace process, capitalizing on gains made from the cooperation with Arab states during the Iraq War. Although not much came out of the Madrid conference in 1991, by 1993, Israelis and the PLO reached a major breakthrough, signing the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Agreements, known as the Oslo Accords. By the new millennium, however, the Oslo peace process collapsed, and 9/11 renewed U.S. wars in the Middle East.

In the early 2000s, the Palestinian leadership found itself in shambles, with various political factions of the PLO, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, often working against each other. High levels of corruption and repressive authoritarian rule of the Palestinian Authority led by Yasser Arafat resulted in disillusionment among the Palestinian population (Morrison 2015, 232; Chalcraft 2019, 303). The Oslo peace process fragmented the Palestinian territories into areas A, B, and C with different legal structures in each.[1] During this time, Israel institutionalized its occupation structure with the expansion of settlement building, checkpoints, building Israeli-only roads, and the construction of the separation barrier. The eruption of the intifada in 2000 also exposed the political fragmentation among the Palestinian political leadership as Yasser Arafat quickly lost control over the use of violence, and it was clear that by then the PLO had lost internal legitimacy among many Palestinians (Morrison 2015, 233).

Accordingly, Palestinian civil society did not attempt to bolster existing political initiatives of the PLO leadership but rather replace them (Jones 2019, 206). The first call for Israeli isolation came out of the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, where the NGO forum included a declaration that called for the international isolation of Israel as an apartheid state.[2]

The academic boycott against Israel was first suggested by two British Jewish professors in 2002. Hilary and Steven Rose made "the restricted call for a moratorium on European research and academic collaboration with Israeli institutions until the Israeli government opened serious peace negotiations." Unlike the later call of the BDS movement, the Roses were explicit in their support for the two-state solution since "every rational person knows that the only prospect of a just and lasting peace lies in Israel's recognition of a Palestinian state and the Arab world acceptance of a secure Israel behind its 1967 borders" (Rose and Rose 2002).

The 2004 ICJ ruling against Israel's construction of the separation barrier, also known as the "security fence," "colonial wall," "annexation wall," or "apartheid wall," was viewed as a watershed movement, providing additional ammunition against the state and inspiring further action grounded in international law. The ICJ determined that the barrier/wall was illegal under international law and called for its dismantlement. Following the ruling, the editors of *al-Majdal*, the Palestinian magazine of the Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee

Rights called for Palestinian "civil society actors, Palestinian, Israeli, and others, to effectively use [the ICJ ruling] as a tool for mobilization, advocacy, and action," noting that BDS must be considered (cited in Morrison 2015, 236). The ruling was specifically referenced a year later as justification for the call for BDS due to Israel's "continued construction of the colonial wall with total disregard to the Court's decision" (BDS 2005). The decision, and more importantly, the use of international law, became the central analytical frame through which Israeli actions were interpreted to international audiences through the discursive practices of the newly formed BDS movement.

The nature of the BDS movement

BDS capacity to threaten Israeli ontological security is found in its ability to provide an increasingly convincing counter-narrative to the Israeli one, which presents it as an apartheid state rather than a liberal state of the Jewish people. Kamel and Huber note that "what makes the Other a threat is not only the Other's ability to physically hurt oneself but maybe even more importantly, the Other's ability to damage one's identity construction" (2012, 368). Since there is an "intrinsic relationship between discourse and power" (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 54), BDS seeks to disrupt the production of power structures that have thus far favored Israel (Barghouti 2011, 2). It does so by adopting several discursive frames as analytical tools for the interpretation of action that help activists mobilize against Israel (Morrison 2015, 247). These frames are effective tools for mobilization since they "assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow and Bendord 1999, 198). BDS uses four frames to this effect. First, it frames Israel as a settler colonial/apartheid state. Second, it frames Israel as a violator of international law and human rights. Third, it frames Israel as a violator of academic freedom and BDS as an exercise in free speech. Finally, it frames Jewish support for BDS as a counter-claim against antisemitism. Each of these frames is met with a counter-frame of anti-BDS proponents (Arnold 2019).

The international law frame is used the most, while the human rights frame is seen as most effective in drawing support, especially among liberals, for Palestinian rights. The freedom of speech and academic freedom frames create the most controversy, especially on campuses, and the Jewish identity frame is used by the movement in response to accusations of antisemitism, but is very much related to debates about Jewish identity and the connection to Zionism, which have been a permanent feature within the American political Left since the 1960s (Fischbach 2020). All these frames have the compounding effect of targeting Israel's international legitimacy.

Discursive frames and Israel's legitimacy

The recognition of rightful membership in the international society is a condition for legitimacy. Through these different discursive frames, BDS seeks to deny this rightful membership by undermining the three aspects of legitimacy discussed earlier in this book: legal validity, justifiability, and consent. According to Beetham, a government is legitimate if it conforms with the rules of the system (legal validity), if those rules can be justifiable in terms of shared beliefs and norms in a given society, and if there is expressed consent of the population to the rulers (Beetham 2013, 101). In Beetham's analysis, consent is defined by those subordinate to the power that must give it consent for it to be legitimate. BDS seeks to harness global non-cooperation with Israel precisely because its subordinates (Palestinians and perhaps even Jews) are unable to (Chalcraft 2019, 308). Palestinians are seen as too weak to compel Israel from within, and thus, the consent denied must be a global one.

Recognition and endorsement by other states is an important aspect of a state's internal legitimacy and though consent is an ambiguous term, "acts of recognition, acknowledgment or engagement, from which authorities can derive legitimacy," can provide consent for a rule (Beetham 2013, 267–68). And these are precisely the acts that are denied to Israel through BDS. The goal is not further engagement but "replacing the systems of racial oppression: colonialism, occupation and apartheid" (PACBI 2012). In this regard, BDS represents an approach that is explicitly different than the conflict resolution approaches often employed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Conflict resolution approaches sought to bring Israelis and Palestinians closer together to familiarize each group with the other's narrative and engage in dialog as a means of conflict resolution (Bar-Tal 1997, 2000; Aweiss 2001; Bar-On and Kassem 2004; Kamel and Huber 2012). These approaches, however, have allowed, in part, for Israel to continue to 'manage' the conflict rather than resolve it (Amirav 2006; Djerejian 2006; Inbar 2006). Conflict resolution approaches seek to equate Palestinian and Jewish Israeli experiences which can ignore or diminish the structural power imbalance between them. The BDS approach is different. The goal is not necessarily to bring Palestinians and Israeli Jews closer together, but rather to unequivocally change the power dynamics and end Palestinian oppression by dismantling the systems of power that privilege Jews, including those based on the Jewish identity of the state.

In sum, the four discursive frames, anticolonialism/imperialist frame, the international law and human rights frame, freedom of expression/academic freedom frame, and the Jewish support frame, are all used by the BDS movement in order to undermine Israel's legitimacy among international audiences as a non-violent approach to resisting systemic power structures that the movement argues oppress the Palestinian people. Thus, it is worth discussing how each of these frames is operationalized to undermine Israeli legitimacy and thus its ontological security that has led the state to securitize the movement.

Antiracist/anticolonial/anti-imperialist frame

Supporters of the BDS movement often locate their objection to Israel in its original sin—settler colonialism (Makdisi 2008, 2011; Collins 2011; Butler 2012). Under this construction, Israel is illegitimate because it was borne out of imperialist European settler colonialism at a time when the world was moving toward decolonialization (Krikler 2019, 313).

While settler colonialism increasingly became a distinct area of academic enquiry in the 2000s (Edmonds and Carey 2013), the interpretation of Israel within this context dominated the discourse of the Left since the 1960s. In an article from 1970, the U.S. Communist Party chairman wrote "the struggles of the Arab people is an inseparable part of the fight of all peoples for liberation from imperialism" (quoted Fischbach 2020, 102). During this time, intersectionality between the communist Party and the racial oppression of Blacks in the U.S. developed, and the Palestinian cause was championed in the context of an anti-racist frame. This frame is still dominant in the BDS campaign which makes intersectional connection with the experience of minorities and indigenous populations (Salaita 2016). Thus, the anti-racist/anti-colonialist frame resonates particularly with the Left in the U.S., given its historic role in anti-racist and abolitionist campaigns (Zaretsky cited in Arnold 2019, 226). This interpretation of Israel makes no distinction between 1948 and 1967 and sees all Jewish presence in Palestine as a colonial project (Makdisi 2011, 246). And indeed, the call for BDS makes it clear that Israel must end its occupation of "all Arab land" rather than return to the lines of 1967.

In addition to the settler colonial frame, Israel is also framed as an apartheid regime. The location of the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism in Durban was not lost on Palestinian activists, and they utilized it in their advocacy for a provision that compared Israel to apartheid South Africa. Indeed, the movement itself, as indicated by the BDS call and its leading activists, was inspired by the success of BDS in South Africa (Barghouti 2011). The word "apartheid" appears three times in the BDS call from 2005 (a short document of 466 words). In 2013, perhaps, prematurely, Omar Barghouti, one of the founders of the BDS movement, stated that "Palestine's South Africa moment had finally arrived" (Barghouti 2013). Israel apartheid week has become an institutionalized feature of the movement's activity on campuses, and divestment resolutions on U.S. campuses have become a recurring move, with some drawing parallels to the increase of antisemitic activity and harassment of Jewish students on campuses (Lipstadt 2005; Amcha Initiative 2019) as a result. Although Israel's original sin is constructed in its settler colonial formation, the call for BDS against it is justified today because of its consistent violation of international law and human rights.

International law and human rights frame

The shift toward a discourse of universal human rights in advocating for Palestinian rights began to permeate the American Left in the 1970s. Lawyers such as Lebanese American Abdeen Jabara of the National Lawyers Guild began to focus on the discourse of human rights rather than the PLO or the politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a way to appeal to American liberals sympathetic to such causes. Jabara founded the Palestine Human Rights Campaign (PHRC) in 1977, appealing to religious organizations, peace groups, and human rights advocates as a way to mainstream the discourse on Palestinian rights in the U.S. (Fischbach 2020, 176–80).

Similarly, BDS, emboldened by the ICJ advisory opinion, embedded the discourse of the movement in terms of international law, both strategically and practically, because it is effective in raising awareness and recruiting liberal audiences in the West, especially in the U.S. (Arnold 2019, 228). An analysis of key documents produced by two of the leading organizations of the BDS movement, the BDS National Committee (BNC) (BDS 2005), and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI 2006, 2012, 2014a, 2014b) reveals that the reference to this frame including "international law," "human rights," and "Palestinian rights" is used by far the most, though often those terms are compounded into one

frame and linked directly to the anti-colonial frame, and the distinction between each is not always made clear (Morrison 2015, 248). For example, Barghouti writes in his book on BDS that it is "directed strictly against Israel as a colonial power that violates Palestinian rights and international law" (Barghouti 2011, 149). Chalcraft summarizes nicely the objectives of the movement as "the achievement of basic inalienable rights and the dismantling of forces of racism, and apartheid that are actualized in forms of occupation, colonization, and spectacular violence and humiliation visited by the Israeli state on the bodies of rightless Palestinians," thereby conflating all frames into one (2019, 304). In advocating against normalization between Israelis and Palestinians, PACBI argues that:

> BDS is all about achieving **Palestinian rights**, paramount among which is the **inalienable right** to self determination, by ending Israel's three-tiered system of **colonial and racial oppression: colonialism, occupation and apartheid**.
>
> (empasis added, PACBI 2012)

There are four different references to Israel's violation of international law in the guidelines for the cultural boycott (PACBI 2014b). The BDS call refers to the "persistent violations of international law" by Israel (BDS 2005). The revised PACBI call for academic boycott notes Israel's "crimes and breaches of international law" and its "violation of international law and UN resolutions" (PACBI 2006).

The compounding effect of these discourses is in targeting the first feature of Israeli legitimacy—its legal validity. Because rhetoric is a tool to change hearts and minds using language, the powerful have the ability to influence the beliefs of others—especially the beliefs related to the justifiability of their own power (Beetham 2013, 104). The call for BDS seeks to disrupt these power dynamics by highlighting Israeli actions as incompatible with existing international norms. As Beetham notes, for a rule to be justifiable it needs, *inter alia*, to be viewed as serving ends that are "recognized as socially necessary and interest that are general" (2013, 149). The call for BDS highlights this incompatibility noting that Israel's continued occupation and settlement expansion, its unilateral annexation of the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem, and its "de facto annexation of large parts of the West Bank by means of the Wall" are additional violations. But the BDS call also identifies Israel as a violator of international norms from inception:

> Fifty seven years after the state of Israel was built mainly on land ethnically cleansed of its Palestinian owners, a majority of Palestinians are refugees, most of whom are stateless. Moreover, Israel's entrenched system of racial discrimination against its own Arab-Palestinian citizens remains intact.
>
> (BDS 2005)

The use of the international law/human right frames thus works effectively to undermine the two features of Israel's legitimacy: legal validity and justifiability. Denial of consent is more effectively articulated through the freedom of speech/academic freedom frame.

Freedom of speech/academic freedom frame

Much of the debate and activism against Israel stems from predominantly American and British college and university campuses. Recall that Hilary and Steven Rose, two British professors

from Bradford and Open universities, respectively, were the first to issue the academic moratorium call in 2002. But well before then, when the New Left[3] emerged on American college campuses in 1960s, it very quickly was confronted by the Israel-Palestine question. Academic campuses became the "battleground between student groups to one side or the other in the Arab-Israeli conflict" (Fischbach 2020, 24), and this is still the case today. "Palestine Week" on campuses in the 1960s and 1970s has been replaced by "Apartheid Week" in the 2000s, representing a rhetorical, but not ideological, change in the movement's activities. Student groups such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) as well as the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI) lead the charge, taking their cue from Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). For activists however, freedom of speech does not just mean the freedom to hold events and lectures in support of Palestinians rights; it also means the freedom from Israeli influence on campus and active boycotts of the Israeli academy which "is profoundly implicated in supporting and perpetuating Israel's systematic denial of Palestinian rights" (PACBI 2014a).

Activists argue that the concept of academic freedom "is so elastic as to include the freedom to propound racist theories and incite hatred, support ethnic cleansing, and worse" (Barghouti and Taraki 2005). Therefore, so long as the Palestinians' academic freedoms are denied due to the Israeli occupation, so must Israel's, because "the right to live, and freedom from subjugation and colonial rule, to name a few, must be more important than academic freedom [of Israelis]" (Barghouti and Taraki 2005). Activists such as Omar Barghouti and Judith Butler argue that academic freedom should be understood in the context of the denial of other fundamental rights of Palestinians, thereby linking this frame back to the human rights frame (Butler 2006, 10–11). Perhaps, more than any other, this frame best represents the contemporary discursive battle over Israel taking place on campuses through the BDS movement, which actively denies consent for Israeli influences on campuses and beyond (Nelson 2019). In other words, it seeks to deny consent for the state and its citizens (Jews) from actively participating in the academic space. This battle is also tied to the participation of Jews in the movement and questions of antisemitism (Arnold 2019, 222).

The Jewish support frame

For most Jews in the diaspora, support for Israel was the default, and often unquestionable position. Many American Jews saw the 1967 Israeli preemptive attack as necessary since Israel faced a truly existential threat of destruction by Arab states, some going so far as to classify it as a genocidal war (Fischbach 2020, 60). For many American Jews, the 1967 war still represented triumph in the face of annihilation, but for some, especially as Israel moved to institutionalize the occupation, cracks began to emerge. Jews in the New Left were quickly dismissed as "self-hating" (ibid.). The same accusations can be found today against Jewish supporters of the BDS movement, who at once provide some cover for the movement against antisemitic accusations and at the same time, draw the ire of fellow Jews (Kaufman 2013; Arnold 2019, 232). Judith Butler wrote that when other Jews branded her as "self-hating" they were actually "trying to monopolize the right to speak in the name of the Jews so the allegation of anti-Semitism is actually a cover for an intra-Jewish quarrel" (Butler 2012). Lisa Goldman, an Israeli journalist who writes about BDS noted that, "Often, I feel as though the whole Palestine issue is more about the divisions within the Jewish community than about actual Palestinians" (Goldman 2013). And indeed, some have classified the debate within the Jewish community over

Israel/Palestine as “a crisis” (Beinart 2012), while others note that there is “trouble in the tribe” (Waxman 2016).

The debate within the Jewish community over Israel, while not new, has found new manifestation within the BDS debate. Much of the internal debate on the Middle East in the Left movement of the 1960 and 1970s was dominated by Jewish voices. Those in support of Arabs saw Israel as an extension of Western imperialism and a racist regime, while supporters of the state among the Jewish community saw it as a liberal democracy which should be granted exceptionalism from the anti-imperialist agenda of the Left (Fishman 2012). In a publication from 1971, titled *The New Left and the Jews* which came out of a conference hosted by the American Histadrut Cultural Exchange Institute, Tom Milstein summed up the sentiments of the participants, noting that the New Left was “definitely a clear and present danger to the security of the Jewish community in the United States,” and Jews in Israel (Milstein 1971). Writing for the *Jewish Current* in 1976, Louis Harap wrote that “anti-Israelism on the global Left approached and sometimes even verged on outright anti-Semitism” (quoted in Fischbach 2020, 98). In a 1968 report, Hyman Lumer, a high-ranking Jewish member of the Communist Party in the U.S. (CPUSA), lamented that Jewish members viewed criticism of Israeli policies and government as antisemitism or betrayal of the interest of the Jewish people (Fischbach 2020, 99).

Similarly, today, much of the debate around the criticism levied by BDS members against the state is centered around the debate of whether its members are motivated by antisemitism. For example, Joel Fishman, of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, argued that:

> The [BDS] movement is all the more dangerous because under the guise of a quest for justice its advocates skillfully conceal the strategic objective of isolating and destroying the Jewish state and perhaps also Jews who individually and collectively identify with the State of Israel.
>
> (Fishman 2012)

As a result of “urgent and extensive consultations” in 2019, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs produced a collection of essays that largely contextualize anti-Zionist discourse by the progressive Left in the West as a modern manifestation of antisemitism (Diker 2020). The group uses the “3D” test developed by Nathan Sharansky, the former Chairman of the Jewish Agency, according to which discourse that delegitimizes, demonizes or judges Israel by different standards is antisemitic (Sharansky 2004). The 3D test was also adopted by the U.S. State Department in its definition of antisemitism (U.S. Department of State n.d.). Moreover, the State Department refers to the definition of antisemitism developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism. IHRA includes in its definition activities that directly relate to BDS including: “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavor” or “applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation” or “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis” (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 2016).

In the contemporary pro-Israeli discussion, BDS is predominantly contextualized through the prism of antisemitism. While there is a recognition that there are legitimate ways of criticizing Israel, BDS critiques, including anti-Zionism, are framed as illegitimate discourses that are tainted by antisemitism (Baker 2020; Dershowitz 2020; Diker and Baker 2020). Such characterizations are easily dismissed by BDS activists as right-wing propaganda, thus preventing any meaningful discussion on the topic within the BDS movement (Arnold 2019,

238).

My goal here is not the enter into the polemic debate between pro and anti-BDS advocates but rather to highlight that despite decades apart, changing conditions on the ground, multiple failed peace processes as well as successive military engagements, not much has changed in the Jewish debate over Israel. The same arguments against far Left's criticism of Israel that emerged in the 1960s still continue today against the BDS movement. This begs the question—is the movement distinctively different than its predecessors? If so, how?

BDS and its (in)effectiveness

While the contours of the debate on Israel have not changed much over the years, the articulation of tactics has. Much like the Arab boycott, BDS calls on third parties not directly involved in the conflict to comply with the boycott against Israel. However, unlike the Arab boycott, which had third parties who didn't sympathize with the boycott's goal nevertheless comply for financial reasons (Rolef 1989, 5), in the case of BDS, at least thus far, only sympathizers comply.

Activists are quick to note that while not all the conditions of South African apartheid are similar to the case in Israel/Palestine, it is similar enough to necessitate similar responses. Richard Falk notes that "international law treats 'apartheid' as a universal crime, and not one that necessarily resembles the forms of drastic discrimination that prevailed in South Africa" (2013, 88–89).

Writing in 2013, Barghouti noted that support from high profile international figures such as Naomi Klein, Roger Waters, Elvis Costello, and the Pixies has largely laid to rest "skepticism about [BDS] potential" (Barghouti 2013, 223). My goal here is not to assess whether Israel is or is not an apartheid state. Rather, I note how the difference between the two cases makes it far less likely that BDS will be successful at exerting impactful diplomatic or economic sanctions against Israel than it did against South Africa. These conditions include the lack of coherency within the BDS movement, the difference in Israeli and South African economies, lack of mass Palestinian mobilization, and the lack of support for BDS from the Palestinian political and business elites.

BDS in South Africa was used as a supplementary tactic to mass political mobilization by the ANC rather than its main driver. International Solidarity was one of the four pillars of the ANC strategy, which also included mobilized mass struggle (as the main pillar), underground organization, armed resistance, and finally, BDS (Jones 2019, 200). In South Africa, BDS was used only "in combination with mass struggle" (Jones 2019, 203). In the case of Palestine, BDS seeks to replace the local, largely absent, mass mobilization with an international solidarity movement that will pressure Israel externally, while local resistance remains sporadic, fragmented, lacking in local buy-in. Notably, business elites in Palestine opposed BDS, and the PNA did not support it for the first five years, in part because the PLO was always suspicious of political moves they did not initiate (Marfleet 2019, 271) and then gave support only to boycott against Israeli settlements. Of course, from the perspective of the BDS activists, this lack of support from political and economic elites is not problematic. As noted earlier, BDS seeks to replace the Palestinian leadership, which it views as inept and corrupt. However, from the perspective of effective political mobilization, the lack of support of Palestinian political and economic elites may impede mass mobilization within Palestine. Although celebrated as a moment of "Arab Renaissance" that would fuel BDS even further (Barghouti 2013, 216–17; Falk 2013, 86), the Arab Spring, for example (with the exception of Tunisia), did not usher in a new

age of democracy, justice, and dignity in the region.

One of the main criticism levied against the movement is its lack of coherency and consensus on end goals and tactics (Barghouti 2013, 216–17; Falk 2013, 86). One can easily read, and indeed critics do, the call for BDS as a call for the elimination of the state of Israel. The word '*all*' is critical here. While it appears in the first demand of the BDS call—that Israel end its occupation and colonialization of *all* Arab lands—it is distinctly missing from the third demand—the right of return of refugees (but not all?) to their homes and properties. This ambiguity—whether all refugees should be allowed to return and whether the BDS considers all land of mandatory Palestine, including Israel's recognized borders, as "occupied and colonized" Arab lands—makes it easy to construct it as antisemitic. It is explicit in its recognition of Palestinian self-determination, but ambiguous on whether the same right is extended to Jewish-Israelis (Krikler 2019, 324). This ambiguity allows for supporters of the two-state solution to subscribe to BDS, but it allows BDS critics to frame the movement as one denying Israel the right to exist as well.

The distinction between Israel within the 1948 borders and the post-1967 is further blurred by the ambiguity regarding whether boycotts should be targeted against Israeli settlements alone or Israel as a whole. When it comes to solutions to the conflict, we also find a lack of clarity with some advocating for the two-state solution that would recognize both Jewish and Palestinian states, while others support one state with various forms of government. This lack of coherency undermines the effectiveness of the movement since it opens it up for various interpretations, allowing critics to paint it as wholly antisemitic while at the same time, making it difficult "to build a substantive consensus, or to make or measure progress towards its realization" (Jones 2019, 208).

With the lack of coherent goals and tactics, even sympathetic Israelis do not see a place in the movement for them. As a result, internal support from Israelis is lacking. In South Africa, the ANC saw BDS as a means of fracturing the white community and increasing support among Afrikaners for the end of apartheid. Notably, Jews were very active in the anti-apartheid movement, but wide support from Afrikaners never materialized (Jones 2019, 213). Similarly, Barghouti observed that through BDS, unity within the Israeli society will "start to crack" as more Israelis would begin to "withdraw their support for Israel apartheid and occupation" (2011, 222). As in South Africa, in Israel too, this has not materialized in the first 15 years of BDS operation. In fact, we observe the opposite—Israeli society has increasingly moved to the political Right. A majority (51.7%) of Israeli Jews now support the annexation of large portions of the West Bank, while only 20% would grant full citizenship rights to Palestinians following annexation (Hermann and Anabi 2020). The factors that can explain this shift to the Right exceed the scope of this chapter, but it is clear that there is very little support among Israeli Jews for BDS.

Despite being more liberal than their Israeli counterparts (Pew Research Center 2017),[4] support for BDS among American Jews still remains low. In a 2019 American Jewish Committee (AJC) survey on antisemitism with a sample that consisted of 56% self-identified liberals or those leaning liberal, 82% of respondents viewed the BDS movement as being antisemitic or having antisemitic supporters, and 84% viewed the statement that Israel has no right to exist as antisemitic (AJC 2019). As a result, there is very little support for BDS among American Jews as well though, as I discuss later, this is changing among younger American Jews.

What made the difference in South Africa—but is lacking in the case of Palestine—was the

shift in attitude of large-scale capital. Ironically, despite the movement's distinctive anti-capitalist attitude, the real impact of BDS can come, in part, from shifting attitudes of big business. As Jones notes, "big business leaders exercised profound structural influence over the state, and they played a significant role in lobbying for change and preparing the wider population for a negotiated settlement" (Jones 2019, 214). This is difficult in Israel, however, due to the nature of the Israeli economy and its integration in the capitalist international economy.

Unlike in South Africa, where Black working class were vital to the economy, since the first intifada, Israel has actively moved to eliminate its reliance on Palestinian labor, replacing it with migrant workers from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa (Marfleet 2019, 270). At the same time, Palestinians are completely dependent on Israel for work, some resorting to construction work in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, making it impossible for them to participate in BDS.

Ironically, decades of the Arab boycott prepared the Israeli economy to deal effectively with boycotts, developing less than direct relations in the Arab world, relying on third-country subsidiaries, and developing a technological edge on other economies. Importantly, Israel developed an export industry that specialized in high-quality products that are not easily substituted, making boycotts against it more difficult. According to a Brookings Institute study, since the mid-1990s, the proportion of export of differentiated Israeli goods exceeded that of homogenous goods. Differentiated goods are highly specialized goods such as computer chips that are far less vulnerable to consumer boycott. Homogenous goods such as fruits and vegetables, on the other hand, are easily replaceable. Moreover, many of Israel's exports are intermediate goods meaning they are part of the production process of other goods. The technology boom in Israel also contributed to this development as Israel started to specialize in high-quality computer parts, software, semiconductors, advanced machinery, and pharmaceuticals. By 2015, 50% of Israeli exports consisted of differentiated goods, while the South African economy in the 1980s and 1990s consisted of 60% homogenous goods that were easy to boycott. Today, 40% of Israeli export is above the median world quality, while only 10% of its products are in the bottom quartile (Bahar and Sachs 2018).

Boycotting such a specialized economy is nearly impossible. BDS activists themselves likely use Israeli-made products on a daily basis, whether it is the use of a smart phone, a computer run by Intel processor, or the electro-option sensor in their smart watch that measures their pulse. Facebook, Google, and Microsoft all use components developed in Israel, popular cancer-treating drugs were developed in the state, and the list goes on and on. According to World Bank data, Israeli GDP grew from 75.9 billion in 1993 to 370.5 billion in 2018. In PPP terms, GDP grew from 92.4 billion to 353.6 billion in the same period despite BDS activity from 2005.[5] Where economic boycott can be effective is with simple manufacturing, tourism, some agricultural products, and some services, but these do not make a substantial part of the economy and even when successful, as the case of SodaStream indicates, might end up hurting Palestinians more than Israelis.

In 2014, SodaStream, an Israeli-owned sparkling water company, became the target of the BDS campaign after airing a Super Bowl ad staring actress Scarlett Johansson. SodaStream was struggling financially at the time and wanted to branch into the American market. It had operated its plant in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank and the combination of the ad and the publicity of a Hollywood actress, who also served as an ambassador for the British charity Oxfam, made it a perfect candidate for boycott. As a result of the campaign, several U.K. retailers, such as John Lewis, dropped the brand, and one of its stores in Brighton had to close. But, more importantly,

BDS activists hailed the campaign as a success when the company closed its West Bank plant and moved to (a much larger) facility within Israel's 1948 borders in the Negev. "The BDS movement sees SodaStream's closure of its factory in the militarily occupied West Bank as a success, in line with our commitment to end Israel's violations of Palestinian human rights," Omar Barghouti said.

However, the victims of this "success" story were not Israelis, but Palestinians, and perhaps Scarlett Johansson herself who had to step down as ambassador for Oxfam as a result of the incident. In 2018, PepsiCo, ironically not sold in Israel until 1990s because of the secondary Arab boycott, bought SodaStream for $3.2 billion and continued to maintain its operations in Israel. The company's profits and its stocks increased exponentially (Robins-Early 2018). All the Palestinians who worked in its West Bank facility lost their jobs (which paid higher wages than average in the West Bank) and were replaced by Jews and Palestinian Bedouins in the Negev. The BDS campaign still maintains its boycott against the company because its new plant is "actively complicit in Israel's policy of displacing the indigenous Bedouin-Palestinian citizens of Israel in the Naqab (Negev)" (BDS 2018). Still, after SodaStream moved its facility into Israel, the campaign lost much of its international support, exposing perhaps the international condemnation of Israel's occupation, but unlike the BDS movement itself, not necessarily the willingness to boycott all Israeli goods.

The SodaStream case joins a handful of others, often cited by the movement[6] as demonstrable evidence of the success of BDS. However, the numbers and analysis of cases demonstrate that BDS has not been successful, thus far, at exerting high economic or diplomatic cost on Israel. Moreover, the strength and diversity of the Israeli economy does not necessarily support the conclusion that the South African model can work against it. Why, then, do so many Jews and Israeli officials see the movement as a threat?

BDS and ontological security

Despite limited economic impact, Israeli officials have argued that delegitimization efforts pose a threat to Israel (Reut Institute 2010; Kuperwasser 2020) and, since 2009, have begun to construct the BDS movement as a national security threat. This may seem bizarre given the discussion above. Yet, the challenge posed by the movement is in its discursive practices, which can "maintain, construct and constitute, legitimize, resist, and suspend meaning" (Shepherd 2008, 21). By continuously referring to Israel in the context of apartheid and international law violations, BDS is able to construct an alternative narrative of Israel that presents it as morally inferior[7] to the BDS movement. The "South Africanization" of the discourse around Israel (Susser 2011, 119) is particularly effective at undermining Israel's ontological security as this discourse seeks to disrupt the routines and stable social identities of the state as well as disrupt its ability to maintain relations with others in the international community by turning it into "a shunned and economically hemorrhaging pariah, as apartheid South Africa was" (Susser 2011, 119). As Subotic argued, "it is not enough for states to feel security in their view of self, they also need to feel secure in the company of others" (Subotić 2016, 7). The discursive frames used by the BDS movement against Israel have an impact of denying Israel recognition by others as a legitimate member of the international community. Recognition is a central feature of ontological security since the states require others to recognize their identity in order to feel a sense of security. Without such recognition, "we would not be able to think of ourselves as 'selves' in the first place" (Pizzorno 1991, 218–20, cited in Ringmar 2002, 119).

By resisting Israeli securitization, and targeting international audiences that are seen as vital for Israel's legitimacy, the BDS movement is able to influence the outcomes of Israel's securitization process.

Changing attitudes toward Israel among liberals in the West but especially in the U.S. have exacerbated the insecurity felt by Israelis and the threat they view from BDS operating in these spaces. Overall, Americans have a more favorable view of both Israeli people (64%) and their government (41%) than that of Palestinian people (46%) and their government (19%). As of 2019, 46% of Americans said that they sympathized more with Israelis compared to 16% who sympathized with Palestinians in the conflict (Doherty 2019). However, since 2001, there has been a growing partisan divide between Republicans and Democrats on the issue of Israel/Palestine. While in 1978, 49% of Republicans and 44% of Democrats sympathized with Israel; by 2018, the gap grew exponentially, with 79% of Republicans compared to only 27% of Democrats sympathetic toward Israel (Pew Research Center 2018); 48% of Democrats did not sympathize with either Israel or the Palestinians, compared with just 19% of Republicans (Pew Research Center 2018); 77% of Republicans or Republican leaning have favorable views of Israel compared with 57% of Democrats and Democratic leaning. The gap grows even further when it comes to the views of the Israeli government with 61% of Republicans but only 26% of Democrats having favorable views of the Israeli government (Doherty 2019). Democrats are increasingly more likely to express favorable views of both the sides of the conflict (46%), while 53% express unfavorable views of both Israelis and Palestinians governments. In other words, Democrats have a more balanced view of the conflict and are less likely to overwhelmingly support Israel and its government as Republicans are.

When we look at liberal Democrats the picture is even more stark. Nearly twice as many liberal Democrats (35%) sympathize with the Palestinians than with Israel (19%), while the inverse is true for conservative or moderate Democrats with 35% sympathetic to Israel and 17% to the Palestinians (Pew Research Center 2018). Since 2001, the share of liberal Democrats who sympathize with Israel has dropped from 48% to 19% in 2018. The share of moderate or conservative Democrats who sympathize with Israel has not changed much during the same period, going from 37% in 2001 to 35% in 2018 (Pew Research Center 2018).

There is also a gap that runs along race, age, and religion. While 51% of white Americans sympathize with Israel more, only 42% of Blacks and 33% of Hispanics feel the same. Those aged 50 and above are almost twice as likely to support Israel (56%) as those aged 18–29 (32%). White Evangelical Protestants are three times more likely to be sympathetic to Israel (78%) than those who are religiously unaffiliated (26%) (Pew Research Center 2018). As discussed earlier, Jews are overwhelmingly liberal. In the 2018 election, 79% supported Democratic candidates compared to 17% who supported Republican candidates (Podrebarac Scuipac and Smith 2018). In 2016, 71% of Jews voted for Hillary Clinton, the highest of any other religious group (Martinez and Smith 2016). Millennial Jews (those born after 1980) are less likely to be religious, more likely to be a product of an intermarriage, and like other millennials, are more likely to express sympathy toward the Palestinians (Pew Research Center 2013).

The political divide is exacerbated by the Christian Zionist support for right-wing Israeli expansionist policies. Christian Zionist and evangelical groups such as the Christians United for Israel (CUFI) led by John Hagee have become one of the most powerful sources of American support for right-wing Israeli politics (Kaplan 2018, 212).[8] In many ways, evangelical support for Israel, now well institutionalized between the two states (Hummel 2019), has served to exacerbate the political divide in the U.S. over Israel with evangelicals strongly aligned with the

Republicans. This changing landscape has increased the appeal of BDS in liberal spaces, especially among younger Americans, both Jewish and non-Jewish who reject both U.S. and Israeli militaristic exceptionalism at the heart of Israeli-Christian Zionist alliance.[9] Although liberals have traditionally been more sympathetic to Israel than progressives, and to some extent, still are, since 2001, the attitudes have been changing, perhaps not coincidently the year of the UN Durban conference on racism. By 2010, liberal publications such as the Washington Post noted that "Israel's feeling of isolation is becoming more pronounced" (Zacharia 2010).

We see that this change begin to express itself in electoral politics. In 2018, three Congressional candidates who support BDS: Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez of New York were elected to Congress in the "Blue Wave" of that year's election. The campaign of Bernie Sanders also expressed the most balanced positions on Israel/Palestine of any previous leading presidential candidate (Lynch 2020). Thus, the potential impact of BDS in this space—among younger, liberal more diverse Americans—is where the battle for Israel's legitimacy takes place.

By challenging the legitimacy of the state, BDS creates an uncertain environment in which Israel can no longer independently manage its relations with others, and where normalization projects on which conflict resolution strategies between Israelis and Palestinians have rested for decades are rejected. The insecurity of the Israeli-Jewish self is exacerbated by the fact that the BDS movement makes no clear statement on the end resolution of the conflict.[10] Because of its ambiguous goals, Israel and its supporters are able to interpret BDS calls as challenging not only Israeli policies in the occupied territories but also its existence in any part of historic Palestine as a Jewish state. Therefore, intractable conflict and enduring rivalries, such as those between Israelis and Palestinians, are often preferable to an alternative state of uncertainty that BDS may bring with it (Mitzen 2006, 343), which may explain why BDS is unable to garner much support even among liberal Jews in Israel and abroad.

Writing for *Boycott Israel* (a website dedicated to BDS from within Israel), Rachel Giora notes that: "Indeed, it is the loss of legitimacy and positive self-image that will enforce Israel to reconsider its policies" (Giora 2010). BDS assumes that the denial of legitimacy will increase the cost of Israel's actions and contribute to a fundamental change in its policies and identity. However, thus far, this outcome has not been observed. Quite the contrary, since 2001, Israel has increasingly adopted illiberal policies in response to delegitimization. Policies that serve to undermine its international image and challenge its relationship with liberal western audiences, including the Jewish diaspora. What may seem to others as "erratic outburst of anxiety followed by defensive measures" (Ejdus 2018, 888) are in fact ways to establish ontological security in an environment where Israel lacks trust in the international system. But those same actions further undermine Israel's legitimacy with the very audiences it needs to support it. This process is captured in the next chapter by the securitization dilemma.

Notes

1 Area A is under complete Palestinian Authority (PA) administrative and security control. Area B is under administrative control of the PA but security control of Israel and the IDF. Area C, comprising of just over 60% of the West Bank and encompassing Israeli settlements, is under complete Israeli control.

2 Articles 420–26 NGO Forum Declaration at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, 3 September 2001. https://www.i-p-o.org/racism-ngo-decl.htm. It is important to note that the declarations of the NGO forum were not included or part of the official UN report. See Report of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/451954/files/A_CONF.189_12%28PartIII%29-EN.pdf.

3 I use Fischbach's definition of the New Left as "a loosely organized collection of young, mostly white leftists who sought structural change in America but who generally eschewed ideological constructions and instead based their activism on moral passion and street-level politics" (2020, 10).

4 According to a 2017 survey, only 8% of Israeli Jews identified as liberal compared to 49% of American Jews; 37% of Israeli Jews identify as conservative, compared with only 19% of American Jews (Pew Research Center 2017).

5 World Bank data available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?end=2018&locations=IL&start=1993.

6 Other cases include French company Veolia withdrawal from the construction of the Jerusalem Light Rail, the divestment of the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Methodist Church (UMC), the Dutch pension fund PGGM, and the decision of Stephen Hawkins to pull out of a conference hosted by Israel's former President, Shimon Peres.

7 Adwan and Bar-On have noted that societies in conflict tend to develop narratives that "from their perspectives become the only true and morally superior narrative. These narratives devaluate and even dehumanize their enemy's right to a narrative. If the enemy's narrative is described at all, it is presented as being morally inferior" (Adwan and Bar-On 2004, 514–15).

8 As Kaplan notes that the alliance between Israel and evangelical Christians is not surprising as the prophecy of end of times strongly parallel's Israel's own existential fears of annihilation following a second holocaust (Kaplan 2018, 213). The support it receives from Christian Zionism helps Israel reify these notions of existential threats. Hummel offers an alternative explanation for Christian Zionism that is centered around political, historical and theological affinity between Jews as "Covenant Brothers" (Hummel 2019).

9 A detailed analysis of evangelical support for Israel exceeds the scope of this study. For more on Christian Zionism and Evangelical support for Israel, see (Clark 2007; Carenen 2012; Ari'el 2013; Smith 2013; Hummel 2019; Durbin 2019).

10 Though one of its founders and most prominent voices, Omar Barghouti, has made it clear that he supports the one-state solution that would end the Jewish character of the state (Mustafa 2009).

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5 The losing battle

In 2017, MSA minister Gilad Erdan played DJ at a party hosted by the ministry on a fashionable rooftop bar in downtown New York City telling attendees that "it was time to tell the truth about Israel." The event was hosted to launch 4IL, a new internet site designed to recruit (especially young) Israelis and their supporters in the fight against Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Erdan's speech was filmed by an Israeli crew from the "Keshet" network, which was paid by the MSA to broadcast the event on their network for Israeli viewers. Reports indicated that the ministry spent up to 1.5 million shekels buying up favorable TV and print coverage of their activities, including in *Israel Hayom* newspaper (the most read in Israel) and *The Jerusalem Post* (BZ 2017b). Why was the MSA invested in such branding campaigns and for what audience?

As discussed in Chapter 2, since the partition plan, Israel's legitimacy has been tied to the two-state solution. With creeping annexation since 1967, Israel's democratic norms and the viability of the two-state solution have eroded (Lustick 2019). The lack of consensus on the internal definition of the state's character as both Jewish and democratic has also meant that the increased political power of the Religious-Right block in Israeli politics undermined those democratic principles even further. Nonetheless, neither Israel's internal divide around questions of identity nor its policies in the West Bank and Gaza have been cited by Israeli officials as a cause for the decline of its international legitimacy. Moreover, although delegitimization was always a looming concern for Israel, especially when Zionism was beginning its mobilization to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, delegitimization was not constructed as an existential threat until the second decade of the 21st century. Writing in 2013, BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti noted, "Israel and the Zionist movement have woken up, rattled and quite startled, to the bellowing sound of an alarm and have started shouting 'Existential threat!'" (2013, 216).

Initially, Israel did not respond to the growing threat of delegitimization. Coming off years of improved image and growing acceptance in the region as a result of the Oslo peace process, the Israelis convince themselves that delegitimization was a thing of the past. Avoidance, as Lupovici notes, can be a common response of states to actions that are perceived to threaten their identity. "By distancing themselves from the source of identity threat, states limit the collective actor's exposure to actions, events, and utterances that challenge it" (2012, 818).

By the end of the second intifada, the Palestinian leadership had failed to muster any resistance to Israeli occupation, while other armed groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad are able to stir up low-level violence that Israel has come to manage with relative ease. BDS remained the only active non-violent resistance. At the same time, Israel massively expanded its settlement projects in the West Bank and initiated a blockade of the Gaza strip in 2007, after Hamas' takeover there. Although the securitization of legitimacy was not tied by policy makers to Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza, the events there served as the precipitous to the growing delegitimization movement against it.

Threats are socially constructed through discourse (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998) that, inter alia, acknowledges the threat exists and proposes ways to manage it (Lupovici 2012, 818). Securitization often follows as a moment of "rupture" in which the securitizing speech acts recognize the moment the threat manifest itself. The first such acknowledgement came in 2009 following the Goldstone report, which accused Israel of war crimes and potentially crimes against humanity committed in its campaign against Gaza in 2008–2009.

This chapter traces how Israel's construction of the threat of delegitimization and BDS specifically, formed the institutional and legal changes that followed, as part of a process characterized by securitization. By tracing the institutional changes implemented through Israel's

development of a counter-delegitimization process, I apply Rita Floyd's approach to securitization, where securitization requires not only speech acts but also behavioral changes—for example, a change in policy or development of a new program—to complete the securitization process (Floyd 2010, 2011). This securitization results in the adoption of measures against delegitimization that further undermine Israel's legitimacy among the same publics whose support it must win if it hopes to effectively combat the BDS movement.

In what I term *The Securitization Dilemma Cycle* (see Figure 5.1) that Israel finds itself locked in, securitizing actions contribute to increased delegitimization, requiring even further illiberal securitizing actions. There are five elements to this process. First, the identification of delegitimization as a threat and the construction of that threat as one to Israel's ontological security as a Jewish state. The threat is constructed as existential through speech acts and observable changes in behavior of the securitizing actor follow. Extraordinary, often extreme action that breaks away from "normal politics" is adopted in response to the perceived threat. These actions are accepted as legitimate by the internal audience (for example through the passing of legislation) but are rejected as illegitimate by external audiences (most importantly liberal audiences). Once caught in the securitization dilemma cycle, it is very difficult for the securitizing actor to break the cycle because doing so would require breaking the foundational construction of the threat as existential.

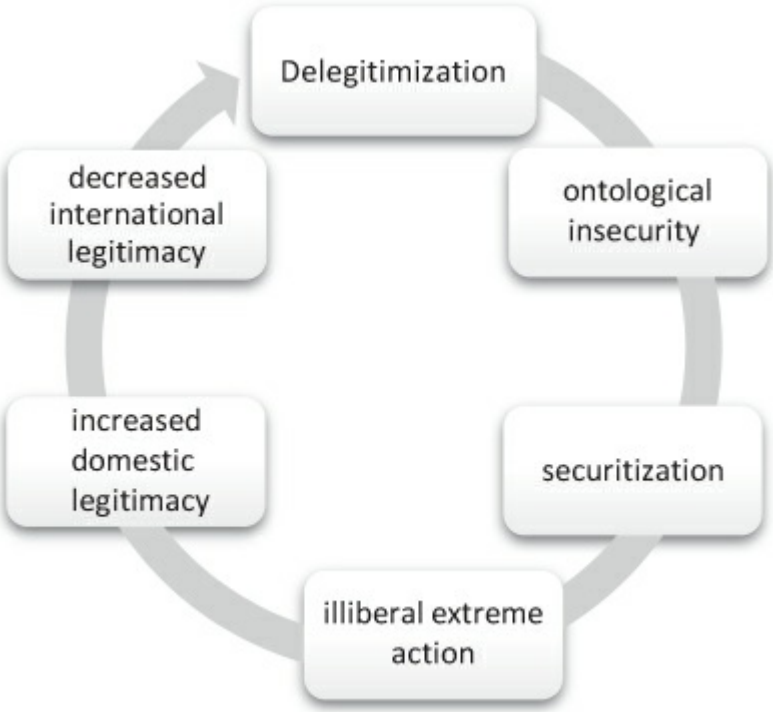

Figure 5.1 Securitization Dilemma Cycle.

Delegitimization and ontological insecurity

The first alarm bells of the new delegitimization efforts against Israel went off at the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2001. At the conference, Israel experienced what former MK and IDF spokesman, Nachman Shai, termed a "strategic ambush"

(Shai 2018). The state came wholly unprepared for what transpired, which was an active campaign led by civil society organization to define the state as an apartheid regime. These efforts took Israel by surprise and signaled a new international environment in which the state found itself. The conference became a public diplomacy disaster for Israel and concluded with Article 425 of the NGO Forum Declaration that included a call upon the international community to:

> [I]mpose a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state as in the case of South Africa which means the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel. Call upon the Government of South Africa to take the lead in this policy of isolation, bearing in mind its own historical success in countering the undermining policy of "constructive engagement" with its own past Apartheid regime.[1]

Although this declaration was not adopted by the UN conference itself, it was perceived as damaging to Israel and reminiscent of the notorious UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 from 1975, which defined Zionism as racism, thereby delegitimizing Jewish-self-determination.[2] In his statement to the conference, Deputy Foreign Minister, Rabbi Michael Malchior, characterized the events of the conference—its anti-Zionism—as another form of antisemitism, with the objective of undermining the "Jew" among nations.[3]

> When people criticize Zionism they mean Jews… And what is anti-Zionism? It is the denial to the Jew of the fundamental right that we justly claim for the people of Africa and freely accord to all other nations of the globe. It is discrimination against Jews because they are Jews. In short it is antisemitism.
>
> (Melchior 2001)

As noted in the previous chapter, the construction of delegitimization as a form of modern or "new" antisemitism is the primary frame used in reference to the movement. Seeing anti-Zionism as a form of antisemitism is not new, what began in Durban and has consistently underscored Israeli strategy was the view that the delegitimization movement is itself a form of antisemitism that seeks to eliminate the Jewish state by undermining its legitimacy among international actors (Shai 2018, 201). Such a strategy sees the battle against BDS as a battle over the consciousness of liberal and progressive audiences in the West, but especially the U.S. because it is the most important strategic partner for Israeli security. In representing BDS as a form of antisemitism, Israel seeks to undermine the support it enjoys among those audiences.

In response to the "ambush" at Durban, the Israelis and Americans withdrew from the conference. Secretary of State Colin Powell explained that the U.S. would withdraw because the conference produced "declarations containing hateful language, some of which is a throwback to the days of 'Zionism equals racism'; or supports the idea that we have made too much of the Holocaust; or suggests that apartheid exists in Israel; or that singles out only one country in the world—Israel—for censure and abuse."[4]

Nonetheless, the damage was done, and the first seeds of the BDS movement were formed. By 2002, the first call for academic boycott of Israel was issued, and the call to BDS was published in July 2005. Israel dismissed the NGO forum as an anti-Israel, anti-western attack, but it did not begin to form a comprehensive strategy until several years later. Even the ICJ

ruling against the legality of Israel's construction of a separation barrier in 2004, which sparked the call for BDS, did not yet present an observable change in Israel's response to the delegitimization efforts.

The second significant blow came following the Goldstone report in 2009. The report, which again caught Israel off guard, served as a catalyst for the change in Israeli policy vis-à-vis delegitimization. Richard Goldstone led the UN fact-finding mission on the Gaza Conflict, which was established by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) "to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law" committed by the conflicting parties in Gaza in 2008–2009 (A/HRC/RES/S-9/1 of 12 January 2009). The report found potential war crime and possible crimes against humanity committed by Israel and Hamas by deliberately targeting civilians. Israel rejected the findings as biased, misleading, and full of errors, and Goldstone himself later retracted his findings that Israel deliberately targeted civilians noting that, "if I had known then what I know now, the Goldstone Report would have been a different document" (Goldstone 2011). Still, the Goldstone report caused outrage with calls that Israeli officers and leaders be charged with war crimes at the International Criminal Court (ICC). It further fueled a campaign to delegitimize the state as a criminal regime.

The final blow came in 2010, following the Mavi Marmara flotilla of activists sailing from Turkey toward Gaza with the intention of breaking Israel's blockade there and providing humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. Israel had imposed a blockade on Gaza following the takeover of the strip by Hamas in 2007. After repeated warnings from the IDF not to approach the Gaza shore, Israeli commandos boarded one of the ships and a deadly confrontation with activists ensued, killing nine on board and injuring several Israeli soldiers. The incident caused a breakdown of diplomatic relations with Turkey, whose citizens comprised most of those onboard. Greece had withdrawn from a planned joint military exercise in protest of the Israeli raid (*BBC News* 2010a). The overall reaction was one of shock and regret (*BBC News* 2010c). William Hague, the British foreign secretary at the time, "deplored" the loss of life and called for the sanctions on Gaza to be lifted. Even former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a strong supporter of Israel, who was the Quartet Representative in the Middle East, expressed his "deep regret and shock at the tragic loss of life" (*BBC News* 2010b).

In all three incidents, Israel's reputation as a liberal democracy fighting in self-defense was significantly tarnished. Although the three cases were directly tied to Israel's campaigns in the West Bank and Gaza during the second intifada and its aftermath, very few Israeli officials made the connection between Israel's policies there and its growing international delegitimization.[5] In all my interviews with Israeli policy makers who work to combat BDS, Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians rarely came up as part of the conversation. Instead, the threat of delegitimization was repeatedly contextualized as part of growing antisemitism or Palestinian terror, which absolved the government from the need to examine how its own policies have contributed to its loss of legitimacy in the international community.

With the growing challenges to its legitimacy, Israel's initial response came in the form of an *ontological* demand—that the Palestinians recognize its Jewish identity as part of the peace process. Although Benjamin Netanyahu made this demand a cornerstone of his negotiation strategy in 2014, he was not the first to introduce it into the peace process. As early as 2001, a group of Israeli intellectuals, marred by the outbreak of violence in the second intifada, introduced the demand that Israel be recognized as a Jewish state and Palestine as an Arab one as a way to bridge the gaps between the warring parties (Lozowick 2003). The demand for recognizing Israel as a Jewish state was also one of the Israeli reservations appended to George

Bush's Road Map in 2003 (Haaretz 2003). The demand was formally introduced into the peace process in 2007 by foreign minister Tzipi Livni in the Annapolis conference, and Benjamin Netanyahu made this demand front and center in his negotiation strategy with the Palestinians in 2014 (Olesker 2018). For the Palestinians, the demand was a non-starter as it would subject Israel's Palestinian citizens to second-class status within the state. Palestinians also argued that Israel's definition was an internal process that they had no role in, and that the PLO had already formally recognized Israel's right to exist in the Oslo Accords.

The introduction of an ontological demand related to Israel's identity, however, indicated the insecurity the state felt about its standing as a Jewish state. Palestinian recognition of its Jewish character would absolve Israel of the challenges levied against it from BDS as it would recognize Jewish self-determination within mandatory Palestine. For the same reasons, however, such recognition would not be forthcoming from the Palestinians, leaving the state to contend with growing criticism against it.

Securitization: the speech act

Following the repeated defeats in the international arena in the 2000s, Israeli policy makers started to shift their thinking on the issue of delegitimization. Immediately after the Durban conference, the MFA created a department for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in its UN and International Organizations division, though much like the rest of the MFA, it remained underfunded and ineffective. Still, there was a growing recognition of the important role NGOs were playing in delegitimizing Israel within civil society (Shai 2018, 101). In 2009, we began to observe the government adopting securitizing moves—acts that signal a warning or a promise to protect the referent object (Floyd 2011, 428), in this case Israel's legitimacy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the source of success of BDS is in its ability to form intersectional coalitions that increase the discourse around the legitimacy of the state as a Jewish homeland and create divides, especially among Western liberals, in their support for Israel. In an attempt to create chasm within this intersectional coalition, Israel constructed the movement as either antisemitic or as an extension of Palestinian-armed resistance—directly linking it to terror groups. What followed was a securitization process that elevated the importance of BDS as a national security issue.

In 2009, Yossi Kuperwasser, who was then the deputy director of the small, and at the time still insignificant Ministry of Strategic Affairs (MSA), was tasked with studying the delegitimization phenomenon and devising a strategy in response. Kuperwasser, the former Brigadier General in the IDF and head of the Research Division of Israeli intelligence, assembled a small group of individuals who were already concerned with the phenomenon. The group included Dan Diker, who was the Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress, Jeremy Newmark, the Chief Executive of the Jewish Leadership Council in the UK, and Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The conference had the blessing of Uzi Arad, the head of the Israeli National Security Council. After the conference, the group published its recommendations for the establishment of a body to directly deal with the delegitimization threat as part of the Prime Minister Office (PMO) or the MFA. Although originally set up to provide a political portfolio for Moshe (Bogi) Ya'alon to join the government, the MSA eventually became the "ministry of BDS"—the leading bureaucracy in the fight against delegitimization, and with that, the institutionalization of Israel's response began.

The Reut Group, a prominent Israeli think tank, was the first to publicly identify delegitimization as a potential "existential threat" by blurring the lines between legitimate criticism of Israeli policies and delegitimizing the state as a pariah apartheid regime. Its report, like many other since then, uses Nathan Sharansky's 3Ds definition: any criticism that **delegitimizes** Israel and singles it out for actions committed by others, **denies** its rights to exist as the embodiment of Jews' self-determination rights, and **demonizes** it, is considered illegitimate criticism (emphasis added, Reut Institute 2010, 25). The report noted that while Israel's diplomatic and economic standing remains strong, as it does today, its "standing among the general publics and elites is eroded" (ibid.).

Reut Group was not alone in identifying the threat. In their annual assessment of 2014–2015, The Jewish People Policy Institute, a Jerusalem-based think tank chaired by Dennis Ross[6] and dedicated to issues of the Jewish people, concluded that Israel's delegitimization needed to be seen as no less of an existential threat than Iran's nuclear program and that "Israel needs to mobilize all its assets to deal with the strategic danger posed by the delegitimization movement" (Eizenstat and Ross 2015, 5). The threat is not in the actual boycotts, divestments, or sanctions. Rather, the issue was constructed as an existential threat to the state and its people (Jews) because BDS was seen as targeting its ontological security—its Jewish identity.

The media also participated in the securitization process. In March 2016, Israel's leading newspaper, *Yediot Acharonot*, held a conference on fighting BDS. The conference featured Israeli government officials, including ministers, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, artists, and prominent figures in Israeli society. The newspaper claimed that:

> Without knives, without missiles, but with an explosive device of false allegations of genocide, apartheid and crimes against humanity, the BDS movement is seizing more and more outposts in Europe, the United States and other countries. … academic, economic and cultural boycott is becoming a real threat to Israel's standing.
>
> (Yediot Acharonot n.d.)

The intentionality to securitize became apparent at this conference when transportation minister Israel Katz suggested in his presentation that Israel conduct "civil targeted killing" of BDS leaders such as Omar Barghouti. Aryeh Deri, who was the minister of the interior at the time, told the audience that he was moving to revoke Barghouti's Israeli permanent residency, though Barghouti is still a resident of Israel (Eichner 2016).

Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked made the explicit connection between BDS and antisemitism, arguing that "in the past we saw European leaders speaking against the Jews. Now, we see them speaking against Israel. It is the same anti-Semitism of blood libels, spreading lies, distorting reality and brainwashing people into hating Israel and the Jews" (Eglash 2016). In other words, that antizionism and the delegitimization efforts against Israel are directly tied to past antisemitism. Speaking at the 5th Global Forum for Combatting Anti-Semitism, Benjamin Netanyahu repeated the argument:

> And today the treatment of Israel is no different from the treatment of our forbearers. The Jewish state is being treated among the nations the way the Jewish people were treated for generations. …. The sad truth is that no rational examination can justify the obsession with the Jewish state, and this obsession with the Jewish state and the Jewish people has a name. It's called anti-Semitism.
>
> ("PM Netanyahu Addresses 5th Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism" 2015)

By 2015, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted the definition of antisemitism which was widely accepted by Israeli officials and promoted worldwide. The definition, as discussed earlier in this book, included contemporary examples of antisemitism such as "claiming that the existence of the state of Israel is a racist endeavor," or "applying double standard by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nations," or "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis" (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 2016). More recently, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs published a report linking between antisemitism and criticism of Israel (Diker 2020).

In addition to antisemitism, securitizing speech acts made an explicit connection between delegitimization and terrorism. Recall the earlier reference in this book of Likud party M.K. Anat Berdo who in 2015 likened the Palestinian campaign to ban Israel from the international soccer federation (FIFA) to terrorism. Comparing Jibril Rajoub, the head of the Palestinian Soccer Association to a "terrorist in sports gear," she argued that the move to ban Israel was an "extension of the massacre of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics" because it was "diplomatic terrorism" (Mualem 2015). Gilead Erdan, who was termed Israel's "BDS minister," noted that "terrorist organizations and the BDS organizations have never been so close ideologically and with regards to their operational tactics" (Hay 2018).

In 2019, the MSA had issued an extensive report titled "Terrorists in Suits" directly connecting between BDS activists and terrorist organizations. According to the report, BDS served as a complimentary track to terrorism through the infiltration of civil society NGOs by Hamas and PFLP members for the purpose of eliminating the state of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. It is also argued that the terrorist organizations use BDS NGOs as a front to raise funds that they would otherwise be blocked from (Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy 2019). In *The PACBI Deception*, Dan Diker and Adam Shay link the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel to terror groups and political warfare "masquerading as human rights" (Diker and Shay 2019). A similar report was published regarding Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), one of the most prominent BDS student group on U.S. campuses (Diker and Berk 2018).

Securitization of course does not happen at the point of speech but rather when there is a change in the behavior of the securitizing actor (Floyd 2010, 2011; Huysmans 2011) that is accepted by the intended audience (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998). These behaviors are often part of a series of decisions that when standing alone might not reveal a clear process, but when put together actualize the intentionality to securitize.

Securitization: the securitizing behavior

Although not always the case, in Israel's response to delegitimization, we can observe the "actualizations of a decision that ruptures normal procedures of practice" (Huysmans 2011, 373) that move the securitizing actor from normal politics into politics of the exception. In the Israeli case, this rupture begins with the restructuring of the MSA as the chief bureaucratic vehicle for the response to delegitimization. This restructuring was not trivial. It very much aligns with Rita Floyd's behavioral approach to securitization that includes, for example, new executive powers that are authorized by new laws (Floyd 2016, 684). And this is precisely what occurred in Israel.

Originally set up as a semi-security portfolio for Avigdor Lieberman to thwart the Iranian nuclear threat, the MSA was revamped in 2009 as a political consolation prize for Bogi Yaalon.

As noted earlier, in 2009, it was tasked with studying the delegitimization phenomenon. Its authority was restructured again in 2015 as the leading governmental organization combatting BDS, and for this purpose, the responsibility for public diplomacy was moved from the MFA and the PMO to the MSA despite the fact that the MSA was staffed predominantly with security personnel, not diplomats (Blau 2017). The ministry was also moved to the Tel Aviv area—the hub of the security establishment in Israel, rather than Jerusalem, where the foreign ministry is located.

It is worth pausing to contemplate the ramifications of attaching "public diplomacy" responsibilities to the governmental unit staffed and oriented predominantly by security personnel. In the past, there have been several attempts to structure a central *Hasbara* (the Hebrew term for public diplomacy) unit that have repeatedly failed as a result of bureaucratic competition, internal political rivalries, and repeated objections of the MFA to the creation of such an authority (Shai 2018, 65–66). These competitions emerged again when the MFA resisted the security orientation that was developing in the MSA in response to BDS and saw MSA activity as counterproductive for several reasons. First, there was a concern about the creation of parallel tracks that would duplicate or contradict the MFA activity abroad (Shai 2018, 206). Moreover, the MFA believed that countering BDS largely consisted of soft power campaigns, and it was diplomats who were best positioned to respond in such cases. This did not mean that the MFA was not concerned with combatting the movement, which they saw as a new form of antisemitism as well, but it did so quietly, behind the scenes, by lobbying lawmakers in the U.S. to promote anti-boycott legislation which they saw as most effective, perhaps learning from Israel's previous experience with countering the Arab boycott.

MFA officials wondered what the MSA could do that the MFA had not already explored. Some went so far as to say that the Israeli government and Jewish organizations fueled the BDS as an "existential threat" for political purposes, what can be referred to as a "Gevalt syndrome"—the need for something big and threatening in order to fundraise and promote their politics.[7] Gideon Meir, former head of public diplomacy in the MFA, believed that Israel's response to BDS was enhancing the movement's importance. For example, when Danny Danon, Israel's UN ambassador, organized an anti-BDS conference for students at the UN in 2016, the ministry saw this as counterproductive, giving undue publicity to BDS and perhaps Danon himself.[8] Critics argued that Netanyahu had deliberately undermined the foreign ministry, dividing its responsibilities between various ministries and stripping it of any funding to conduct public diplomacy.[9] Speaking to the Knesset State Control Committee Netanyahu stated that he did "not accept the claim that all foreign policy issues should be dealt with by the Foreign Ministry" (Ravid 2016c).

In 2016, the state comptroller's report indicated that the competition around authorities between the various departments rendered Israel's response to BDS ineffective (Ravid 2016a). For example, the Israeli embassy in London had harshly complained about Minister Erdan's activities, noting that he was operating directly in the UK, without notifying the embassy and in a way that could expose Jewish organizations in the UK to violation of UK law (Ravid 2016d). Nonetheless, by 2017, it was clear that Israel had adopted a security approach in response to BDS, and the MFA was stripped of most of its responsibilities and funding in this regard. Eventually, the MFA shut down its "civil society" division dealing with BDS as the MSA took over the architecture of the Israeli response (Eichner 2017).

With the battle of authorities over, the security orientation of the MSA was entrenched. What followed was an observable shift in the way Israel conducted its response to delegitimization

with an emphasis on extraordinary actions that were at odds with liberal values championed in the West by audiences whose support Israel relied on to maintain its international legitimacy.

Illiberal actions

Securitization is attractive to policy makers, especially in liberal democracies, precisely because it creates the exception. It allows the securitizing actors to adopt behavior that, under "normal" circumstances, would not be accepted by the targeted audience (in our case, the domestic citizenry). Erdan noted that the ministry had moved from "defense to offense" seeing "delegitimization, and BDS as one of its symptoms, as a threat to Israel's security" (Weinthal 2017). Militarized discourse was used to characterize the Israeli response as a "series of battles" of "guerilla warfare style boycott" (ibid.). Such discourse views delegitimization, and BDS as its current manifestation, as an existential threat to the state and its people that allows policy makers to operate in a space of exception—where extraordinary action is required and legitimized but also routinized and normalized at the same time. This tension—between exception and normalization—results in the securitization dilemma, where extraordinary and often illiberal actions are increasingly accepted as "normal" and "necessary" but result in further delegitimization of Israel in spaces that are antithetical to these illiberal actions.

The battle against delegitimization was placed in the hands of former military personnel rather than diplomats. Sima Vaknin-Gil, formerly the chief censor of the IDF, was brought in as the Director General of the ministry, with an additional former IDF officer, Tzahi Gavrieli, as the deputy director and the person directly in charge of the response to BDS. The ministry's budget ballooned from NIS 120 million in 2016 to approximately NIS 400 million for its 2017 activities. MSA received NIS 250 million for the 2017–2018 operating budget alone, and an additional NIS128 million to set up a not-for-profit company that could directly reach out to civil society organizations abroad. As a result, the staff of the MSA grew tenfolds (BZ 2017b). The MSA also charged the IDF research division (formerly led by Yossi Kuperwasser) to study the phenomenon of delegitimization. Some saw this as inappropriate as the IDF normally studies military threats, not political ones.[10] However, the move to involve the IDF in the counter-delegitimization operation aligned with the security approach spearheaded by the MSA. The security approach was also evident when, in 2016, the MSA sought to exempt itself from the Israeli Freedom of Information act, a privilege reserved for security institutions such as the Ministry of Defense. The MSA argued that in order to lead a successful campaign against delegitimization, it must operate with limited transparency and should therefore be exempt from oversight obligations under the law.[11]

The activities of the MSA against delegitimization can be divided into five different interlinked categories. The first, described at the beginning of this chapter, consists of traditional branding campaigns. Although, initially, the MSA tried to blur its ties to such campaigns, those have been led by the government in what we may traditionally call public diplomacy, previously in the domain of foreign affairs. The primary activities against BDS, however, lie in the shadows of secrecy, and those will be examined here in more depth. The first consisted of delegitimizing the delegitimizer by connecting them, as discussed earlier, to antisemitism and terrorism. This includes targeting BDS activists and their reputation using covert and overt tactics. The second most prominent battle is in the form of a lawfare campaign to outlaw, criminalize, or limit the right to BDS both inside Israel and by lobbying governments to adopt anti-BDS laws in their own countries. Third, the state is targeting civil society through the use of other NGOs to

influence the discourse in this arena. Lastly, the state is engaging with the diaspora to increase the connections of Jews to the state of Israel, albeit ineffectively. The degree to which illiberalism, marked by the attempts to limit democratic practices and critical discourse around the state, guided these policies differed in each case. However, the overall effect was one of limiting the space for democratic, albeit critical, engagement with the state and its policies, and the enhanced image of the state as a repressive one.

Delegitimizing the delegitimzer

In its effort to put BDS activists on the defense, aside from its own efforts to delegitimize BDS activists discussed here previously, the government also employed private cyber intelligence companies to spy on pro-Palestinian activists. Companies like Psy-Group that touted themselves as "private Mossad" were used against pro-BDS Palestinian activists as well as in public consciousness operations such as the ones employed by Russia in the U.S. elections in 2016. According to The New Yorker investigation, Psy-Group's operations against BDS activists in the U.S. started in 2016 and included gathering information from the deep web as well as human intelligence (HUMIT) against their targets. Psy-Group used former members of Israeli intelligence units in its operations in the U.S. to disseminate negative information about their targets with the goal of discrediting the reputation of pro BDS activists or deterring them from further engagement in BDS activities. Such operations were in line with the MSA's objective of "formulating the awareness and communication strategy to create significant change in the image of the State of Israel concerning the proactive campaign against delegitimization of the State of Israel and change in the communication dialogue" (Blau 2017). The goal, as stated earlier, was to put BDS activists "on the defense."

Although Israeli officials advising the company claimed its work was entirely legal in the U.S., Psy-Group went out of business in 2018, just as the FBI began investigating it (Entous 2019). Its actions on behalf of Israel illicit headlines such as "How Israeli Tech Firms Act as Global Agents of Repression" (Silversetin 2018) or "Private Mossad for Hire" (Entous and Farrow 2019) or "Israel Seeks to Erase Archives of Intel Firm Psy-Group Employed in anti-BDS Campaign" (Megiddo 2019). Such headlines in progressive and liberal publications paint a picture that further advances the negative image of the state propagated by BDS supporters.

Sima Vaknin-Gil, the former director general of the MSA, told a Knesset panel in 2017 that it was important to employ ambiguity in her work. "The way I worked with military issues like Hezbollah or terror funds or Syria or any other country against which I conducted a campaign as an intelligence officer—we didn't tell the other side what we intended to do" (Blau 2017). Except that Israel was not fighting Hezbollah, or Syria, but rather private individuals, professors, and students on U.S. campuses. For Israel, these activists are linked to its fight against terrorism, though these links often comprise of individuals' support for BDS. Such links are often tenuous and represent Israel's construction of BDS activism as security threats that justify similar intelligence operations to those conducted against violent groups.

The media was also employed as a securitizing agent of the state to delegitimize the BDS movement as a national security threat to Israel and to Jews. For example, in 2019, *The Jerusalem Post* was paid NIS100,000 by the MSA to advance the MSA's anti-BDS campaign by publishing a supplemental issue titled *Unmasking BDS* (Benzaquen and The Seventh Eye 2020). The content and tone of the publication was very similar to a report published by JCPA in 2016 titled *BDS Unmasked*.[12] *The Jerusalem Post* report featured articles by Sima Vaknin-Gil (the

former director general of MSA) but also reports from U.S. officials combating BDS and a coverage of the MSA extensive report on *Terrorists in Suits* (Linde 2019). The connection between this publication and previous ones by the MSA and JCPA is undeniable here. The goal of delegitimizing the delegitimizer as antisemitic and cover for terrorist groups is also clear. Yet, the fact that the newspaper was paid by the MSA to publish this report was not made clear.

In another incident discussed at the opening of this chapter, the ministry directly paid Israeli TV to cover Erdan's launching the new-pro-Israel activist application. But the ministry was secretly involved in dozens of campaigns in Israeli and American media in which its messages were planted to impact public consciousness around BDS. The involvement of the MSA in those campaigns and news coverages in print and TV media was often concealed (Benzaquen and The Seventh Eye 2020). Usually, such disclosure came in small print, in one sentence that indicated that the content of the coverage was developed in "cooperation" with the MSA (BZ 2017b). Coupled with legal acts that seek to exclude the MSA from Knesset review under the freedom of information act, or other legislation that seek to limit the right to BDS, a disturbing picture that paints Israel as an illiberal society where freedom of expression and thought are curtailed by government action starts to form.

Lawfare

Lawfare was fairly successful in curbing the impact of the Arab boycott, and it was used against BDS as well. The Israeli Knesset legislated two extraordinary laws in this regard. In 2011, it passed the Law for Prevention of Damage to State of Israel Through Boycott, known as "the boycott law." The boycott law provides Israeli citizens the ability to sue for damages caused by calls to boycott the state. An earlier and more extreme version of the law that would have criminalized BDS did not pass. MK Zeev Elkin, who was Israel's deputy foreign ministry and initiated the law, argued that Israel had "to defend itself against those aiming to harm it" (TOI Staff 2015).

The law was subject to intense criticism from within Israel's left and abroad. Critics argued that the law puts into question Israel's commitment to democratic principles and would therefore undermine Israel's legitimacy even more (Kremnitzer 2011). Importantly, in its definition of boycotts, the law includes not only calls to boycott Israel but also "areas under its control," referring to the West Bank and Gaza. In such a way, the state has blurred the lines between Israel's internationally recognized boundaries and the territories it occupies, mirroring the definition adopted by the BDS movement itself and contributing to the narrative that sees the entire area Israel controls as one state.[13] Even the ADL issued a condemnation of the law as undermining freedom of speech and expression. *The New York Times*, representing the bastion of American (and Jewish) liberal discourse, used its editorial page to lambast the law, arguing that it would "seriously tarnish" Israel's reputation as a "vibrant democracy" because it "effectively bans any public call for a boycott — economic, cultural or academic — against Israel or its West Bank settlements, making such action a punishable offense" (*New York Times* 2011).

The law largely passed legal review by the Israeli Supreme Court operating in its constitutional capacity as the High Court of Justice. In its decision, the court struck down only one section of the law that allowed the courts to order unlimited sums in compensation to a plaintiff without proof of damages, but nevertheless held the legality of the law (*Avneri v. Knesset*, 2015). In 2018, the Israeli magistrate court awarded $18,000 in damages to teenage plaintiffs who sued activists that launched a successful campaign to implore New Zealand performer Lorde to cancel her concert in Tel Aviv (Spiro 2018).

Even more egregiously, and to much wider condemnation and counterproductive outcomes, the state amended its Entry to Israel Law (Amendment No. 27) (Denying a Visa and Residency Permit for Advocates of Boycotting Israel) in 2017. The amendment allowed the Interior Ministry to bar BDS activists from entering the country. Similar to previous legislation in the securitization process, here too, the government argued that the situation it faced required it to adopt such tools to protect itself against the threat posed to Israel's resilience and security (Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy 2017). Following the legislation, Gilad Erdan issued a list of 20 organizations whose members would be barred from entering the state (Landau 2018a). The irony was not lost on critics when the list included the American organization Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)—thereby barring Jews, whose right of return to Israel is guaranteed by the Law of Return—from entering the state due to their political speech.

This law, perhaps more than any other action, epitomizes the extent to which the securitization dilemma can backfire. It was used to bar the entrance of Lara Alqasem, discussed at the opening of this book, but it also allowed security officials to detain several prominent Jews, including Peter Beinart, the liberal Jewish-American journalist. Beinart stated that he was

detained in summer of 2018 by the General Security Services—the Shin Bet—and asked about his political activities, in violation of Shin Bet regulation. Beinart was a staunch Zionist at the time, who strongly objected to Israel's occupation, and who also supported boycotting settlement-made goods but not Israel as a whole. The incident caused uproar and deeply undermined Israel's reputation in Jewish liberal and progressive spaces where Beinart is a leading figure. He has since shifted further to the left, arguing in June 2020, that he "no longer believes in a Jewish state" (Beinart 2020).

The law was also used to bar human rights activists, including Jews, from entering the state. For example, in 2017, Rabbi Alissa Wise and four other members of JVP were not allowed on a flight to Israel at the instruction of Israeli immigration authorities. While JVP supports BDS, there is no evidence that either Rabbi Wise or other members of the organization ever participated in acts of violence nor were they planning on engaging in violence against the state. A year later, a 43-year-old Jewish woman who was a member of Code Pink, another organization blacklisted by the MSA for its support for BDS, was denied entry even though she sought and received a visa (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 2018).

In 2019, Israel ordered Omar Shakir, the director of American NGO Human Rights Watch in Israel/Palestine, to leave the country when it refused to renew his visa, invoking the contentious law. The state argued that Shakir participated in BDS activities though there was no evidence that he had done so while directing Human Rights Watch and neither him nor the organization had openly stated their support for BDS. Israel's Supreme Court affirmed the decision arguing that there was a real "concern" that if allowed to stay in Israel, Shakir would use his position to delegitimize Israel and promote boycotts against it. Mr. Shakir was subsequently expelled from the state (Kershner 2019). In 2021, still under the direction of Shakir, Human Rights Watch published a scathing report accusing Israel of committing crimes against humanity of apartheid (Human Rights Watch 2021).

The support for these legislations is evident in the enactment of the law, which passed the Israeli Knesset, and its affirmation by the Israeli courts. Although there have been those who have protested these legislations, especially among the Israeli left, ultimately, these acts stand despite the damage done to Israel's reputation. Israeli officials explain that the state has a right to defend itself, as any other state with similar laws, and that it should not let into its country people who directly seek to cause it material harm.[14] Yet, the damage caused to Israel's reputation, especially among friendly liberal audiences, far exceeds any of the benefits. Such legislation is particularly perplexing since Israel, as any other state, could deny entry of foreign subjects based on security considerations on an individual basis. Of course, such act would require that the state show it had legitimate security concerns against individuals while the amendment to the entry law does not require the same. Thus, the law didn't grant Israel any new authority vis-à-vis foreign citizens that it did not already have, except to silence critics. Such legislation was motivated by domestic political consideration as a way to demonstrate to the Israeli populace that the state is taking action against BDS. However, the Alqasem and Beinart cases demonstrate how such actions result in counterproductive outcomes of appeasing a domestic audience but alienating international audiences at the same time. In the polarized debate over the law, Israel had lost the "hearts and minds" of international liberal audiences it must win to effectively combat the movement (Hatuel-Radshitzky, Prager, and Eilam 2018) it seeks to thwart.

Lawfare has been used internationally as well. During the Arab boycott, Israel and its allies had effectively lobbied governments, most importantly, in the U.S., to impose anti-boycott laws which significantly weakened the effect of the boycott.[15] Such methods are also employed today.

As of 2020, 30 states in the U.S. have adopted anti-boycott laws, and anti-boycott legislation has been introduced in 12 more (Palestine Legal, n.d.). Such legislation resulted in an absurd outcome when Bahia Amawi, a school employee in Texas, was forced to resign from her job as a speech therapist when she would not sign an anti-boycott clause in her contract. The federal court later struck down the law, arguing that it was likely unconstitutional as it violated the employee's first amendment rights (Patel 2019). These legislations have further contributed to Israel becoming a wedge issue in U.S. politics and served to place Israel on the illiberal side of the debate on first amendment rights (Reut Group 2018, 28).

Europe has become a battleground of lawfare as well. The U.K. government plans to pass a similar anti-boycott law after a government order to this effect was struck down by the British Supreme Court as unlawful (Harkov 2020). In what amounted to largely a symbolic resolution, in 2019, the German Parliament designated the BDS movement as antisemitic, comparing the recent campaign against buying Israeli-made goods to its shameful past of boycotting Jews (Bennhold 2019). In 2020, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that France's conviction of 11 BDS activists using its anti-discrimination laws was a violation of their freedom of expression. The court overruled their conviction and ordered the French government to compensate each of the defendants (*Reuters* 2020).

It is unclear how effective, if at all, these legislations are. Whereas the resistance of Western states to enact counter-boycott legislation against the Arab boycott in the 1970s was fueled by their own economic interests, the resistance to counter-BDS legislation is much more principled. In many ways, counter-BDS legislation serve to enhance the backlash against Israel as an illiberal regime, attempting to stifle freedom of expression in liberal democracies in the West. The battle that consumed Leftist movements in the 1960s and 1970s, between those who see actions against Israel as a form of antisemitism, and those who see Israeli exceptionalism as a form of Western imperialism, lives on. Thus, it is worth noting that although the radical Left's overall influence on U.S. politics has weakened, it served to mainstream ideas that now are at the heart of the battle over BDS (Fischbach 2020).

Civil society

Understanding that the main arena for the battle over delegitimization occurs in the international civil society arena, the state has found new ways to operate in coordination with other pro-Israeli NGOs while at the same time combatting others. NGOs serve to define the parameters of the civil discourse around the state, and it is this discourse that fuels the delegitimization efforts against it.

Unable to operate in foreign countries, and especially in the NGO arena, the state recognized that it needed to engage with pro-Israeli NGOs more effectively immediately after the Durban conference in 2001. Yet, the department set up in the MFA for such engagement was subsequently disbanded. In an extraordinary move, in 2018, the MFA created Kela-Shlomo, a private, not-for-profit company with its board of directors including Yossi Kuperwasser, the former director general of the MSA and Yaacov Amidror, Netanyahu's former national security advisor. This company was set up to be a GONGO – a governmental organization able to work directly with NGOs, including abroad, to engage in "public consciousness" campaigns. For this effort, the government set aside extraordinary funds (250 million NIS, of which half were supposed to come from private donors), while limiting the funds allocated for public diplomacy from the MFA. Following criticism about its secrecy (BZ 2018), Kela Shlomo was rebranded as

"Concert" with its mission made more transparent to work with other pro-Israeli groups to improve Israel's image around the world. To date, it is unclear how much of the funds it was allocated, Concert was able to spend. As of 2019, efforts to raise funds from private donors did not succeed (BZ 2018). In a petition to the courts against the MSA's set up of Kela Shlomo, attorney Shachar Ben Meir argued that the MSA was transferring authorities to conduct public consciousness campaigns to NGOs that would not be subjected to government regulation and Knesset oversight (BZ 2018). Other NGOs were hesitant to work with Kela Shlomo (now Concert) for fear of being viewed as an extension arm of the state and operating directly on its behalf.

The MSA is able to coordinate its activities with pro-Israeli organizations in the U.S. such as The Israel Project, The David Project, StandWithUs, and Israel on Campus Coalition, which specifically target U.S. campuses that are seen as the battle ground for the BDS activity. Such groups do not only advance Israeli advocacy on campus, but also target BDS activists and attempt to undermine their reputation and credibility and advance the objective of delegitimizing the delegitimizer, discussed earlier in this chapter. In this effort, Canary Mission has also been used by the government to identify pro-BDS American activists (Landau 2018b). Canary Mission has been characterized as a "shadowy online blacklist targeting college students who criticize Israel" (Nathan-Kazis 2018).[16] It is often employed by pro-Israeli activists, including the government of Israel, to discredit the pro-Palestinian activists by targeting their personal reputation in an effort to deter them from engaging in their activism. Such operations rarely deter activists, however. As Khury Petersen-Smith, a pro-activists from the Institute for Palestine Studies noted, activists who are targeted by these networks of pro-Israeli NGOs are pushed further into solidarity work with the Palestinians (*In Defense of Solidarity: Palestine on Campus A Virtual Film Screening & Panel Discussion* 2020).[17]

The MSA understands that it needs to work with individuals and NGOs to influence the discourse within civil society; yet, its security orientation to public diplomacy that sees the battle as a war rather than dialog is problematic and alienates many organizations that would otherwise actively engage in counter-BDS activities. As discussed below, organizations such as J-Street, who object to Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza and support a peaceful resolution with the Palestinians, are sometimes lumped with pro-BDS organizations by the MSA. Leftist, liberal organizations are not recruited or supported by the MSA's work, thereby contributing to the perception of illiberalism of Israeli policies.

Diaspora relations

Working closely with the Jewish diaspora has also been an important element of Israel's counter-boycott strategy. The Jewish Agency has always played an active role in maintaining a connection between Israel and the diaspora, but now, young Israelis, sent to live in Jewish communities abroad, inevitably have a role to play against the delegitimization efforts. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult due to the sense among the Jewish diaspora, especially in the U.S., that Israel has shifted toward nationalistic- conservative policies.

The growing divide among Israeli and American Jews is well-documented. While the former has become more religious and nationalistic, and latter, with the exception of the Haredi community, has become more secular and pluralistic (Pew Research Center 2016). Where Israel used to be a uniting force among Jews, it now serves to divide them (Waxman 2016). The BDS movement exploits this divide and makes it more difficult to sustain Jewish solidarity with the

state.[18] The Reut group, which was one of the first think tanks to identify delegitimization as a strategic threat to the state, characterizes the growing rift among Jews as a "strategic stumbling block" that threatens Israel's bipartisan status in U.S. politics (Reut Group 2018) and risks the support it may enjoy among both liberals and conservatives.

The MSA has dedicated some of its efforts to work with NGOs operating in the U.S. to try and improve Israel's image, but it has done so selectively, along partisan lines. In 2016, Erdan publicized a meeting he had with J Street in Israel to work cooperatively together against BDS. J Street is a liberal lobby organization that seeks a peaceful resolution to the conflict with the Palestinian through the two-state framework. Unlike its much larger counterpart, AIPAC, it does not offer Israel unquestionable support and often criticizes the policies of the Netanyahu government. Erdan had touted this meeting in his efforts to reach across the political aisle in combatting BDS (Ravid 2016b). Yet, after that meeting, the MSA never again contacted J Street to work with them.[19] Leftist organizations are often rejected for their criticism of Israeli policies, even when they officially stand against BDS. Stav Shaffir, a prominent voice in the liberal left in Israel, especially among millennials, even while condemning BDS as not progressive, nevertheless lamented on the pages of *The Forward*, a leading Jewish journal in the U.S., that the Israeli government was using BDS as a political ploy (Shaffir 2019). All of this is to say that, in working with NGOs and civil society, the MSA adopts a political litmus test that further alienates liberal Jews.

In its early discussion on the appropriate counter-delegitimization actions, the Israelis understood that they must capture the support of epistemic authorities: actors, who due to their position in society, may influence the public discourse around the state[20] (Michael 2007). Such epistemic authorities are found in academia, in social media, and in leading newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. But Israeli policies have in many cases alienated these epistemic authorities, such as Peter Beinart, who often see its actions as counter to the liberal values they champion. These authorities matter not purely because they are understood as Western by Israel who sees itself in similar terms, but predominantly because as epistemic authorities, they shape the debate and discourse around the state and serve as vectors for its international legitimacy. To win the "battle against BDS" the state must also win the audiences that shape these debates.

A losing battle?

In March 2019, Haaretz, Israel's leading liberal newspaper, hosted its annual conference on democracy. The conference was opened with words from President Rueven Rivlin and featured Israel's prominent politicians from the Left and Right. The last panel of the day, titled, "freedom of silence – the shrinking democracy in Israel" featured, among others, Lara Alqasem. A student, who no one would have known about had it not been for Israel's actions, was now featured as a symbol of Israel's shrinking democracy. While the majority of studies have highlighted situations where the securitization benefits the securitizing actor, Israel's response to delegitimization highlights a different case, one which explores what happens when the securitization process is successful, but the securitizing actor and audience are nevertheless left insecure. In the Israeli case, the securitization of delegitimization has not yielded the expected outcome of enhanced security of the referent object. It has contributed to the growing delegitimization of Israel, especially among epistemic authorities who shape the debate over the state. Increasingly, Israel's legitimacy in the U.S. rests on support of white conservative

Democrats and Republicans, especially Evangelicals. But such an approach abandons decades of bipartisan support the state fostered in the U.S.

The securitization process reveals several dilemmas. On the one hand, there is a need to work collectively together with governmental and nongovernmental actors and alert against the delegitimization efforts taking place against the state. On the other hand, raising the alarm also enhances the impact of the BDS movement. At times, the actions of the MSA suggest almost an atmosphere of hysteria, with actions spanning networks, agencies, both government and non-governmental, and with significant allocation of resources. NGOs whose reputation depends on their independence have a difficult time aligning with such orientations. Many outside the MSA see its approach as counterproductive. For example, the Reut group, though identifying BDS as a threat, notes that writing about BDS "also gives anti-Israel movement exposure and discloses elements of the pro-Israel network proposed strategy and tactics" (Reut Group 2018, 28). Others, such as Gideon Meir, the former head of public diplomacy in MFA and Yigal Palmor, former spokesperson and head of MFA's press bureau were more direct—that Israeli security approach to combat BDS boosts its impact and undermines Israel international legitimacy.

A second dilemma exists between the need to adopt a "wide tent approach" involving all actors invested in undermining BDS efforts, from the left and right, and the political orientation of the MSA as rejecting criticism of Israeli policies. Such an approach also serves to divide Jews along partisan lines. As Yael Patir, J Street's Israel director noted, BDS is a discourse of divide that creates a chasm between Israel and the Jewish diaspora and turns Israel into a political tool in the partisan divide between Democrats and Republicans in the U.S.[21] In its own actions, the MSA has contributed to this outcome and thus strengthens the impact of BDS.

A third dilemma that Israel faces is between the need to demonstrate to the domestic audience its actions against BDS, and the impact it creates for external audiences, especially liberals in the U.S. who are alienated by some of Israel's actions. This tension between domestic audiences who approve of the securitization actions and external audiences, who do not, exacerbates the securitization dilemma and further undermines Israel's legitimacy.

In its operations against BDS, Israel often subscribes to and subconsciously promotes the image constructed by the BDS movement itself as an illiberal state. In rejecting voices that criticize and condemn Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza, and even lumping the territories with Israel in anti-BDS legislations, the state serves to further the argument that the territories are an integral part of the state, thereby enhancing the image of the state as an apartheid regime.

What is even more perplexing is that in all its actions against BDS, Israeli policies vis-à-vis the conflict with the Palestinians rarely come up. The question of whether Israel's own unwillingness to engage in peace processes to resolve the conflict, spanning decades of resistance (Lustick 2019), is not included in the articulation of a counter-delegitimization strategy. In other words, Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, which gave rise to the BDS movement, is not considered as an element of its response against it. The construction of BDS as a modern form of antisemitism absolves the state and its officials from engaging in these more difficult inspections.

Since the MSA became "the ministry of BDS" in 2015, it has moved from the defensive to the offensive. Battle and war metaphors as well as a clear security orientation that uses tactics such as espionage and silencing guide the ministry's work. Leaders from the MSA often invoke militarized language and see themselves fighting against a war. Securitization at its core operates in the exception, in what Schmitt termed "the political"—the space where exceptional politics

rule and where competitors become adversaries. For Israel's security, it must not become a political issue dividing American politics, but its securitization process makes it difficult to avoid such an outcome. As a result, Israel's own action contributes to the very threat it wishes to thwart —its delegitimization.

Notes

1 See Article 425, NGO Forum Declaration at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, 3 September 2001, at https://www.i-p-o.org/racism-ngo-decl.htm.

2 The resolution was later repealed as a result of the pressure from the first Bush administration following the Gulf War in 1991.

3 The term "Jew among nations" was coined by Alan Dershowitz in his book *The Case for Israel* (Dershowitz 2003).

4 Statement by Secretary Colin L. Powell, World Conference against Racism. US State Department, Washington, DC, September 3, 2001. Available at: https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/4789.htm.

5 For a noted exception, see Sher and Yogev (2014).

6 Dennis Ross was the chief Middle East peace negotiator in the administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and led the U.S. efforts in the 2000 Camp David peace process.

7 Gideon Meir, interview with author, 20 August 2018. Meir also noted that the state's overreaction was enhancing the impact of BDS and helping the movement elevate its cause.

8 Gideon Meir, interview with author, 20 July 2020. M.K. Nachman Shai echoed similar sentiments regarding the activities of the MSA, which were seen as promoting the MSA itself but not effectively combatting BDS (BZ 2017a).

9 Gideon Meir, interview with author, 20 July 2020. A report from the State Comptroller confirmed that the MFA was weakened internally, and many of its responsibilities transferred to other ministries (Ravid 2016c). See also State Comptroller Annual Report for 2015 and Fiscal Year 2014, "The Diplomatic- Communicative Struggle against the Boycott Movement and Anti- Semitism Abroad" (n.d.).

10 Yigal Palmor, interview with author, 1 April 2019.

11 הצעת חוק חופש המידע (תיקון מס׳ 16) (החרגת המשרד לנושאים אסטרטגיים והסברה לגבי פעילותו בתחום הובלת המערכה נגד תופעת הדה-לגיטימציה והחרמות נגד ישראל), התשע״ז—2017. הצעת חוק הממשלה 1145– 10 יולי 2017.

12 Yossi Kuperwasser, the former Director General of the MSA, is a project director at JCPA.

13 Similar criticism was expressed by Yael Patir, Israel director of J Street, interview with author 7 April 2019.

14 Tzahi Gavrieli, interview with author, 3 June 2019.

15 The World Jewish Congress, for example, set up committees throughout North American and Europe to advance legislation against the Arab boycott. See CZA C10/2097.

16 The Israeli security services used Lara Alqasem's profile on Canary Mission as one of the evidence to her involvement with BDS (Landau 2018b).

17 Spoken at an online event hosted by Jewish Voice for Peace on You Tube October 15, 2020 "In Defense of Solidarity: Palestine on Campus A virtual film screening & panel discussion." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5LKZPO5gok.

18 Eran Shayshon, interview with author, 18 November 2018; Yael Patir, interview with author 7 April 2019.

19 Yael Patir, interview with author 7 April 2019; Michal Hatuel-Radshitzky noted that The BDS movement **may be perceived** as exploiting this divide. Interview with author, 12 March 2019.

20 Yossi Kuperwasser, interview with author, 31 March 2019.

21 Yael Patir, interview with author 7 April 2019.

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6 Resolving the securitization dilemma

Introduction

In November 2020, less than two months before the end of his term in office, secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, traveled to Israel on what was touted as a “private” trip but which involved meeting with several state officials and the U.S. ambassador to Israel. While he was there, Pompeo made a visit to an Israeli settlement—breaking a long-standing American policy not to do so. During the visit, Pompeo announced that the U.S. would move to label settlement-made goods as those made in Israel, thereby blurring the Green Line even further, and that the state department would label BDS as antisemitic. “It seems like a statement of fact…” Pompeo noted, “we will immediately take steps to identify organizations that engage in hateful BDS conduct and withdraw U.S. support for such groups” (Landau and Khoury 2020).

Despite Israel viewing Pompeo’s visit and change in U.S. policy toward BDS as a major policy achievement, in fact, it is likely that this diplomatic “achievement” will be counter-productive for Israel, even reinforcing the logic behind BDS claims against the Israeli state. Pompeo, deeply guided by his evangelical beliefs, serves to reinforce the Christian Zionist-Israeli

alliance that exacerbates Israel's partisan position in U.S. politics discussed in Chapter 4. Indeed, despite the Israeli government's desire for this policy shift, this decision by the outgoing Trump administration will do little to solve Israel's long-term challenges in leveraging international support for its policies. In fact, the strong alliance between Christian evangelicals, the Trump administration, and the Israeli government only serves to exacerbate the demographic patterns that will hurt Israel's international legitimacy in the long run. For example, Liberal and progressive Americans, who make up the base of today's Democratic Party, are no longer as supportive of Israel as they once were. A Gallop survey from 2019 revealed that only 43% of Democrats, compared to 76% of Republicans, support Israel (Saad 2019). Even more drastic, during the Trump administration, Liberal Democrats' sympathy for Israel in the Middle East dropped from 17% to only 3% compared to a drop from 35% to 28% among moderate/conservative Democrats. Moreover, most Americans (55%) and 70% of Democrats support the two-state solution (Saad 2020), and settlements are seen as an obstacle to that solution. Americans are still overwhelmingly supportive of Israel compared to their support of Palestinians, but the recent polling data suggest that the Democratic base's support for Israel is diminishing and that Israel is increasingly a wedge issue in American politics. Young, racially diverse Americans are least likely to support Israel. Given these demographic changes, Israel's reliance on long-term U.S. support may be in peril. In light of these changes, Secretary Pompeo's recent announcement on settlements and BDS, which is the very type of policy that American liberals increasingly reject as a violation of international law and human rights, provide another example to the many discussed in the previous chapter, where Israel "shoots itself in the foot" (Landau 2020).

As the title of this book suggests, Israel sees its response to the BDS movement, and delegitimization efforts against it more broadly, as a series of battles. The choice of the word "battle" is not accidental here. Israel's response to the BDS movement and other types of delegitimization efforts have been consistently constructed through the process of securitization —as part of its security policy. However, in this battle for its legitimacy, Israel is an active agent of its own international delegitimization. Actions Israel has taken in an attempt to combat the ontological insecurity brought about by the delegitimization efforts against it ultimately contribute to Israel's further delegitimization.

For most states, legitimacy is understood as an element of their soft power or resilience. It involves the normative dimensions of power and gives states the moral authority and credibility to act (Clark 2005; Beetham 2013). For Israel, as I have argued in this book, legitimacy is an element of its hard power, its national security, along with its nuclear capabilities and the strength of its army.

For Israel, discourses of security and justice move in opposite directions. The security framing limits the possibility for issues of legitimacy to be understood in terms of justice, as demanded by the BDS movement. At the same time, this closure limits the policy options of the state in responding to BDS. This security framing has resulted in Israel using hard power approaches to respond to the threat of delegitimization. It has meant that diplomats were sidelined during policy discussions and the space for political debate over BDS limited, both inside and outside the state. While this construction may be accepted by Israel's domestic Jewish audience, a population scarred by a traumatic past and uncertain future, for international audiences, especially the millennial generation in the U.S., and the younger generations in other Western states, such constructions are often rejected.

When I embarked on the research for this book, I wanted to understand why Israel was

responding so aggressively to a movement of seemingly small group of academics and activists promoting BDS on campuses, in labor unions and churches. The amount of funds as well as political capital expended on the efforts to combat BDS seemed disproportionate to its achievements. Arguably, Israel's position in the Middle East has never been better. Even before it signed normalization agreements with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco in 2020, Israel had strong security cooperation with Egypt. Additionally, although not official, Saudi Arabia is becoming a partner for Israel in the region. Despite its creeping and expanding annexation of territories in the West Bank and an ongoing conflict with Hamas in Gaza, Israel has come to manage its conflict with the Palestinians in ways that did not prevent these diplomatic achievements. Israel's position with past non-aligned states in Africa and Asia has also improved in the last two decades, and until the COVID-19 pandemic, its economy was growing. None of these achievements are directly related to Israel's actions against BDS. Why, then, does it continue to mobilize so much of its bureaucracy as well as its political capital to combat BDS?

One argument, advanced by the Israeli state—and which is now also the official American government's position—is that BDS is wholly antisemitic. Even if this were true, however, it would not alone explain the forcefulness of the Israeli reaction—a reaction that has not been adopted, for example, against white supremacists, whose participation in anti-Jewish activities has grown exponentially over the past decade (FBI 2019). It is also not a reaction that was adopted against the Arab boycott despite evidence of antisemitic actions by Arab states in enforcing the boycott. The most likely explanation for why Israel has focused so much energy on the BDS movement, and which this book has discussed, is that Israel sees the BDS movement as a threat to its Jewish identity. Since Israel has, since its inception, securitized its Jewish identity as necessary for the survival of the Jewish state, it has proceeded to respond to the BDS movement through securitization processes.

This response to the BDS movements has its roots in specific decisions regarding the state's Jewish identity made at the time preceding the country's founding. Indeed, an ethno-national state was not the only political solution that was considered for protecting Jewish self-determination and survival and other options existed. Even Israel's eventual Declaration of Independence presented a more pluralistic image of the state as a national home of the Jewish people but where Arab inhabitants of the state would be able to participate in its "upbuilding" on the basis of "full and equal citizenship and due representation" in all its institutions. Yet, the meaning of the Jewish identity of the state was never settled among Israel's inhabitants (Jews and Arabs alike) and between Israel and the Palestinian indigenous population. Nonetheless, the Jewish identity of the state, although still deeply contested, was seen as intrinsic to the state's survival. Even though and indeed because the ontological question of the meaning of Israel's Jewish identity remains unsettled, Israel has constructed the BDS movement as a delegitimization effort aimed at undermining the legitimacy of Israel's right to exist—i.e., by undermining its Jewish identity.

Legitimacy and unsettled identity

Throughout this book, I have emphasized that Israel's challenges in the face of the delegitimization efforts against it stem from its ontological insecurity—from the instability and uncertainty regarding the meaning and practices of its Jewish identity. In response to this insecurity, Israel had adopted securitization strategies which further exacerbated its identity insecurity by putting into question its ability to maintain both its Jewish and democratic

character.

Several issues contributed to the end result we see today. First, the inability or unwillingness of the Zionists to seriously engage with the indigenous population of Palestine meant that they did not build local consensus for their national project. Instead, the Zionists focused on the external audience—political elites in "civilized nations," to use Herzl's terminology, who could bestow legitimacy and advance the goal of Jews to establish a homeland in Palestine. The focus on external audiences from the outset meant that the role of these other nations in the legitimization project of Israel was set from the start. The partition plan further negated the need for Jews to build consensus with the Arab residents of the land and allowed them to pursue more exclusionary and nationally homogenous policies that would never fully work given the population balance between Jews and Arabs in the state.

Additionally, the status quo agreement reached between Ben Gurion and the Orthodox community in Israel meant that there would not be full separation of religion and state. Such agreement allowed for example, for the inclusion of a religious criterion in defining who is a Jew for the purposes of the Law of Return. It also gave supremacy to Orthodox conversion and practices in the state, which today increasingly alienate Reform and Conservatives Jews in the diaspora. The establishment of Israel not as the state of Israelis but of Jews also meant that external Jewish audiences would play a significant role in consideration of domestic Israeli policies. Finally, the Arab-Israeli conflict allowed Israel to 'other' both its internal Arab citizens and the Palestinians at large as existential security threats to the state. Against this backdrop, discursive practices that essentialized the exclusive character of the state as necessary for its survival gained traction.

As Israel securitized its Jewish identity, it adopted an approach of, to use Brubaker's term, "nationalizing nationalism." This approach requires an exclusionary understanding of the core ethno-cultural group whose position must be secured in the state. This is not the only form of nationalism, however. Minority nationalism, which focuses on the claims of the minority against exclusionary practices, or homeland nationalism, whereby ethnic kin states argue for the protection of their kin group against discriminatory practices of the nationalizing states, also impact the form of nationalism exercised in each state (Brubaker 1996). We can say that nationalizing nationalism provides the most ripe environment for securitization of the state's ethnic identity. But as Jutila warns, we should not adopt a deterministic frame for such analysis. States may come to adopt a more universalistic definition of nationalism in which the competing narratives to the national dominant one are not constructed as threats to the security of the state. In other words, nationalism in itself does not necessarily require securitization of the identity of the nation-state. Rather, more than one story can be told about the nation that enables us to advance desecuritization or avoid securitization altogether (Jutila 2006). The exclusionary narratives and routinized practices that are embedded in Israel's ontological security are not inevitable but a matter of choice.

Israel responds forcefully to BDS because it has constructed it as targeting its ontological security. As described throughout this book, ontological security is strongly correlated with the state behavior (Steele 2008). In order to be ontologically secure, actors, including states, must "possess answers to fundamental existential questions which all human life in some way addresses" (Steele 2008, 6). They do so through routines that contribute to their sense of "continuity and order" which are affirming to the sense of self (ibid.). Because the sense of the state's Jewish self was never fully legitimized among the indigenous Arab population nor Jews themselves, the state remains ontologically insecure. Indeed, political Zionism did not become

the dominant ideology among Jews until after the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel (Abulof 2014, 522). As I described in Chapter 2, the Jews went to great efforts in legitimizing their claims to a national home in Palestine among the international community, and they still engage in these efforts today when it comes to combatting the BDS movement. But they failed in establishing a stable Jewish identity for the state that is accepted by its residents and ethnic kin. For these reasons, legitimacy has been constructed as a national security asset so that threats to the legitimacy of the state are viewed as threats to the survival of the state that could be securitized.

Scholars of ethnic politics often make a connection between identity and conflict. Yet, the explicit connections between Israel's Jewish identity and its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians are not readily made (Yadgar 2020). Studies of ethnic relations in Israel have tended to construct Israel's security concerns and its identity as two separate frameworks (Olesker 2011). However, as this book establishes, such a separation is not only a-empirical but also damaging for both Israel's physical and ontological security. It also makes accommodation of Palestinian demands particularly difficult.

The historical analysis provided in this book—that begins with the formation of Zionism as a political movement—rebuffs claims that Israel is merely using securitization strategies to avoid making concessions to Palestinian rights. Yet, this is not to say that Israeli policies are not themselves contributing to its increased delegitimization. However, by constructing BDS as an antisemitic movement with ties to Palestinian terror groups, Israel has managed to avoid, both discursively and in its policies, seriously engaging with the critiques against its actions. This too has allowed BDS to increase its impact.

When scholars or policy makers discuss Israel's legitimacy, they rarely discuss Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Indeed, none of my interviews with policy makers involved in crafting Israel's response to BDS revealed a cognitive or discursive connection between Israeli policies and the delegitimization movement. For Israelis, as Netanyahu himself claimed, BDS is "not about what we do, it is about who we are." Yet, BDS activists, their supporters, and the audiences they target in the West focus almost exclusively on Israeli actions. It is hard to imagine that a robust and active engagement in a renewed peace process between Israelis and Palestinians would not have a positive impact on Israel's image, as did the Oslo peace process. Yet, this option has not been seriously entertained. This is not to say that there are not complicating factors preventing the resumption of the peace process, not least of which is the lack of willing leadership on the Palestinian side. It is nonetheless surprising that throughout my investigation of Israel's response to delegitimization, I could not detect any serious attempt to grapple with the underlying conditions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as part of Israel's response to current delegitimization efforts. The construction of the BDS movement as a manifestation of modern antisemitism has absolved Israeli policy makers from seriously engaging with its claims, especially those that fall on open and accepting ears among American Millennials and generation Z, including Jews.

BDS's invocation of the language of international law and human rights is especially powerful among young liberal Americans. As noted in the opening to this chapter, the political landscape in the U.S. is fundamentally changing when it comes to how the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is viewed. In the 2020 presidential election, there was a surge of young voter turnout and those aged 30 and under overwhelmingly voted for Biden. Young Black Americans, already less likely to be sympathetic to Israel, voted for Biden by rates of up to 86% (Pike 2020). Young voters were motivated by the pandemic, climate change, and racial violence

(Ibid.). It is not surprising that BDS and Black Lives Matter alliances have emerged even more strongly in the summer of 2020, connecting abuses of power against Blacks in the U.S. and Palestinians in Israel/Palestine. These discursive and activist connections are strong and increasingly impactful. Thus, Israel's response to BDS with security-oriented policies, especially those that further erase the Green Line, is ineffective in responding to the frames of international law and human rights used by BDS activists.

Israel's securitization of the delegitimization movement was not inevitable. Because the definition of issues as matters of national security and indeed the identity of states are not fixed, national narratives underpinning state policy can develop in ways that do not adopt exclusionary or militant policies. The examination of Israel's response to the Arab boycott reveals an alternative option that could have been perhaps more effective in defeating the boycott and avoiding securitization altogether. For example, in Chapter 3, I argued that despite some calls to securitize and respond more aggressively to the Arab boycott, this option was not accepted. This is because the Arab boycott, despite its potential to undermine the Israeli economy, and some evidence of antisemitism as fueling the boycott, was never constructed as an ontological threat to the state. Even third parties who participated in the boycott, such as international commercial firms, did not do so because they were convinced by the argument of the Arabs, but rather by the threat of loss of petrodollars. This is not the case with BDS where the goal of the movement is to capture and change international public opinion on Israel. The target of BDS is the grassroots level rather than economic and political elites. And while Israel still holds the support of those elites, evidence presented here suggests that it is losing public opinion, especially among younger voters, including Jews. Considering that future candidates for office in the U.S. and other Western democracies will need the votes of this growing population, the long-term calculus of political elites will likely change in response to this shifting public opinion.

At the core of Israel's securitization dilemma is the tension between the way domestic and external audiences view the securitization process. Second- generation securitization scholars have increasingly focused on the role of the audience in the securitization process. We now recognize that the securitization process is intersubjective and that audiences are active participants in the process. Multiple audiences can be involved in a single securitization process (Cote 2016). Less clear, however, is what happens when one set of audiences affirms and indeed demands that securitization takes place, while another rejects it. Arguably, in democracies, even flawed ones like Israel, domestic audiences matter more than external ones, and this can explain why the decision to securitize its Jewish identity was accepted as a government policy. However, because in the case of BDS the referent object of the securitization process is international legitimacy itself, international audiences matter just as much. Here is where the actor enters into the securitization dilemma. The discursive practice of constructing delegitimization as an existential threat to Israel relies on rhetoric, narratives, and national ethos of the Jewish domestic audience. The language speaks inherently to the internal debate on the meaning of the Jewish state and its place in Jewish experience. In many ways, the securitization practices of the Israeli state in response to BDS, especially in the passing of the Basic Law: Israel—The Nation State of the Jewish People, seeks to remedy a lacuna in the internal legitimation process of the meaning of the Jewish state in Israel, a meaning that was never fully settled (Yadgar 2020). These securitization moves seek to repair the lack of internal consensus on the meaning of the Jewish character of the state and at the same time rebuff external attempts to question the legitimacy of that unsettled identity. In the end, however, the process has resulted in further delegitimization through the adoption of extraordinary and illiberal practices that undermine Israel's democratic

character and alienate key audiences necessary for Israel's international legitimacy.

The securitization dilemma from a global perspective

The securitization dilemma described in this book is not unique to Israel, and Israel is not exclusive in its securitizing practices when it comes to the identity of the state. Increasingly, with the rise of nationalizing nationalism in the 21st century, more countries will experience such predicaments as they contextualize internal political challenges as those threatening the physical survival of the state and respond with securitization strategies that are, on the one hand, justified in local narratives and practices of the state, but, on the other hand, rejected by external audiences. Central and Eastern European states, for example, with significant Russian-speaking minorities, can find themselves in a securitization dilemma, whereby their imagined "ethnic core" is threatened by a looming Russian Federation who seeks to protect its "compatriots." At the same time, those who are members of the EU are faced with pressures to deemphasize and universalize their national identity, to promote and protect minority rights, and to avoid securitization. Even more stable democracies, such as the United Kingdom, have faced political crises following the securitization of migration as a threat to ontological security that resulted in the Brexit vote (Browning 2018). Indeed, cultural globalization and rising immigration have long been the subject of securitization studies (Huysmans 1995, 2000a, 2000b; Koslowski 1998; Castles and Davidson 2000; Bigo 2002, 2006; Doty 2006; Boswell 2007). Globalization and other supranational institutions such as the EU have threatened national identities by diminishing the role of the state in sustaining those identities (Waxman 2006, 195). When states respond to such threats with securitization, and when that securitization is rejected by external audiences, those states may find themselves locked in a securitization dilemma.

Interventionist policies of ethnic kin states can also give rise to securitization dilemmas. Myra Waterbury's work highlights the tension between the EU's political project, based on recognized borders and political sovereignty, and Hungary's ethnic-kin nationalism, organized around cultural and linguistic ties between groups that motivate elites to expend political and economic capital and even risk interstate conflict on behalf of their ethnic kin minority in neighboring states (Waterbury 2010).

Similar securitization policies are found in Latvia, where the integrative European process is resisted by a nation-rebuilding process of ethnic exclusion (Kachuyevski 2017). The securitization of minority rights there has led the state to view the Russian-speaking minority as a threat to the national identity of the state. The nation-(re)building project, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, was marked by exclusionary policies, for example, by denying the Russian minority automatic citizenship in the state (Kachuyevski 2017). But Latvian securitization of minority rights was subject to external pressure in two opposite directions: from Russia as an ethnic kin state seeking to enhance and sustain its ethnic ties with the Russian minority in Latvia, and the EU integration project, which sought to diminish the salience of those same identities. Despite the efforts of the EU, the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia remains alienated from the state (Ijabs 2016), thereby exacerbating the threat felt from a looming Russian intervention (Kachuyevski 2017). Thus, the construction of the minority in Latvia as a threat to the state has justified securitization policies that may further alienate the minority and justify even more intervention from Russia. Consequently, Latvia's practices of reinforcing cultural and historical ties between its Russian speaking minority and Russia can be seen as generating the very threat it seeks to thwart. Other ethnic kin states, such as Romania and Slovakia, have

pursued similar policies while rejecting the same policies from neighboring ethnic states, such as Hungary, toward their minorities (Csergo 2007).

These dynamics resemble the same securitization dilemma cycle found in Israel. But, such constructions are not inevitable, as other cases indicate. In Ukraine, for instance, where the Russian speakers were not perceived as strictly belonging to the Russian nation, and where the construction of identity along civic markers was more readily available (Kachuyevski and Olesker 2014; Cheskin and Kachuyevski 2019), the state was able to avoid the securitization dilemma (but not threats to the physical security from Russian intervention). The case of Ireland and Northern Ireland, where identities have been desecuritized and the borders (territorial and ideational) remain highly porous despite past violence, is another example of alternative policy options. Although these examples are not intended to conduct a large comparative analysis, they do help point to the ways in which we can observe similar dynamics in other states where, like Israel, the nation-building project rests on ethnic lines. In some cases, state policies can lead to the securitization dilemma. In others, securitization is avoided altogether, while in other cases, desecuritization of identities is possible.

A way out? Desecuritization and the securitization dilemma

Underscoring this book's critical analysis of securitization is the argument that security and threats are not objective concepts, but rather emerge as social constructs that are shaped by dominant discourses led by political elites, media, popular culture, and other forms of social communication. In a case like Israel, the dominant discourses among these actors have elevated issues of identity or legitimacy to matters of national survival and thus constitute the basis of political action in response.

But how can a state like Israel—where nation-building rests on ethnic lines and where identity and legitimacy have been elevated to matters of national survival—get out of the securitization dilemma once they are locked in the cycle? One possibility, which underscores the logic of BDS, is that outside pressure from external audiences will eventually align domestic and external audiences in shaping the behavior of the securitizing actor, thus helping the state exit the securitization cycle. For reasons I describe below, this possibility is difficult in the case of BDS because BDS too suffers from legitimacy challenges that make it less able to shape the behavior of Israel. Another possibility is that international intervention, such as the one in Kosovo that enjoyed high levels of legitimacy despite the lack of legal authorization, can fundamentally change the behavior of the securitizing actor. For such intervention to be successful, external actors must first decide to employ force and then commit to the long-term rebuilding of society with a focus on desecuritization. In the case of Israel, such an intervention is not possible for a number of reasons. First, although Israel's occupation and settlement building is widely viewed as a violation of international law, its actions do not amount to such gross violation of human rights that warrant forceful international intervention in violation of the principle of sovereignty. Moreover, the strong relationships and support Israel still enjoys among world powers, not least from the U.S., would make any international action against it difficult. As I note earlier in this book, this support is expected to diminish over time, especially as young Americans become more progressive and critical of Israel. Still, we are perhaps decades away from such policy changes that would deprive Israel of that support in Washington. Finally, unlike Kosovo, Bosnia, Libya, and even Syria, Israel is a formidable military and nuclear power, making international intervention extremely unlikely.

Ultimately, in the case of Israel, to break the securitization dilemma cycle, what is needed is a closer alignment between foreign and domestic audience acceptance that will create conditions that allow the domestic audience and securitizing actors to increasingly accept desecuritization policies. Desecuritization refers to the process by which issues are constructed as part of normal politics that do not pose an existential threat. Just as issues may be socially constructed as threats, requiring immediate action, they may be removed from such contextualization and brought back into the realm of "normal politics" (Waever 1995; Aradau 2004; Jutila 2006). With desecuritization, speed (or at least the sense of emergency), exceptionality, and othering of "enemies" are reduced, as are the exclusionary logics that underscore many of the undemocratic practices that follow out of securitization. In the case of Israel, moving BDS into non-security politics would avoid the tension at the heart of Israel's securitization dilemma by avoiding the illiberal practices of the exclusionary space. To use Schmittian terms, it would make BDS an issue of politics, but not political (where extraordinary powers are exercised).

The question remains, however, whether desecuritization is even possible when the referent object is constructed as part of the actor's ontological security. It is unlikely that the issue of delegitimization will simply fade away to bring about desecuritization (Behnke 2006). Some analogy may be drawn to the debate between Roe and Jutila regarding the possibility of desecuritizing minority rights. On the one hand, Roe suggests that where identities are based on a shared collective distinctiveness, and on an 'other', desecuritization of those identities becomes "logically impossible" because it would require the elimination of the distinctiveness of that identity and thus ideational ruin (Roe 2004). On the other hand, Jutila notes that by retelling the stories of ethnically divided groups that do not necessarily exclude the other, we may in fact desecuritize these entrenched identities (Jutila 2006). What complicates the issue here is that the securitization dilemma cycle is continually reinforcing securitization. Under these circumstances, is desecuritization 'logically impossible' as Roe suggests?

Huysmans' deconstructivist strategy seems appropriate here whereby the "story teller"—in our case, the securitizing actor—retells the story in such a way as to avoid the "security drama" involved (Huysmans 1995). Applying Huysman's strategy to Israel, the story of BDS would be recounted as "normal politics" of ordinary challenges the state confronts in the "everyday" of international politics. Such an approach would move the response to BDS from the security ministry of the MSA back to the realm of foreign policy through the MFA and public diplomacy. Aradau proposes similarly that desecuritization can occur when we move beyond the "friend-enemy" dichotomy on which traditional security logics rest (Aradau 2004). We might envision such a shift in the case of BDS, if more and more "friends" of Israel, including Jews, become BDS supporters. In such cases, Israel would find it difficult to construct all those as enemies of the state. Policy makers are already careful not to target Jews directly in their rhetoric against BDS.[1]

Still, it is hard to envision such a shift in the near future given Israel's security-oriented response to BDS and the infrastructure already invested, both bureaucratic and legal, in the securitized response to BDS. Aradau identifies this as a problem, noting that the agents of desecuritization cannot therefore be the same as the actors who securitized in the first place (Aradau 2004). Instead, she notes, we need to think of desecuritization more in terms of the local relations between the internal community that are "renegotiated reciprocally" (Aradau 2003 cited in Roe 2004, 287). Such a process would return to the original lacuna in the Israeli legitimization project: to the lack of legitimation of the Jewish identity of the state within the Jewish community and between Jews and Arabs in Israel. In other words, to escape the securitization

dilemma cycle, Israelis must engage in a reconstructive process of what it means to be a Jewish-democratic state. As I noted earlier in this book, identity is constituted and sustained through social interactions, and this process would involve an intra-Israeli process of deconstructing identities where "enemy" and "other" are renegotiated, and alternative understanding of identity is, in turn, reconstructed. In this process, national narratives that sit at the heart of the ontological security of the state are retold in such a way that different national groups exist distinctly, so that their ontological security is maintained, but do not threaten each other (Jutila 2006, 180; Rumelili 2015, 63). But as I note below, the process must also involve, an intra-Jewish and Israeli discussion on the meaning of the "Jewish" in the Jewish identity of the state.

Desecuritizing actors

In principle, anyone can be a desecuritizing actor (Jutila 2006, 181), but this does not mean that everyone has the same legitimacy to desecuritize. BDS activists, although able to advance a different story in which both Jews and Arabs exercise self-determination rights in Israel, are illegitimate in the eyes of most Jewish Israelis and indeed significant members of the Jewish diaspora. Followed to their logical conclusion, Israelis and supporters argue, the BDS demands would eliminate the possibility for a two-state solution in which Jews are able to exercise self-determination rights. Because BDS constructs all of Israel as a colonial endeavor and calls on the Palestinians to return to their original homes (now in Israel), Jewish Israelis see BDS as seeking an end to their national project. The resolution of its ontological insecurity is not likely to come from this direction. Arabs too have been unable to influence the Jewish-Arab debates on the identity of the state despite numerous attempts, some of which have adopted similarly exclusionary framing that denies Jews self-determination rights in Israel.[2] Jews in the diaspora and Israeli Jews themselves, however, as a dimension of internal-external kin actors, could progressively advance new narratives of the meaning of the "Jewish state" that are more pluralistic. Ethnic kin—in this case diaspora Jews—are positioned well to advance new ontological narratives about who "we" are because the state claims to exist on their behalf. As ethnic kin, the strong relationship between Israel and Jewish diaspora is already institutionalized through the Jewish Agency and Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. Such actors already participate and influence the domestic politics in Israel. The inclusion of these internal-external voices may begin to reimagine, reshape, and eventually, perhaps reconstruct the story of the political community and of Zionism itself. Such desecuritization may also open the political space for Jewish-Arab intergroup dialog that is not tainted by exclusionary framework as previous attempts have been (Olesker 2011). Such groups, especially those with epistemic authority, can write out the security element from the BDS issue while still arguing against BDS as an effective strategy to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In other words, the renegotiation of the meaning of the Jewish identity of the state can foster new understandings of BDS that take out its security-ness through the establishment, as a first step, of the legitimacy of the Jewish identity of the Israeli state among Jews and non-Jews in Israel. Such a negotiation process may drastically alter the meaning of "Jewish" in the identity of the state, but a consensus on such a meaning, and the role of minorities within that state, would greatly reduce the ontological insecurity of Israel.

The legitimacy of Israel's Jewish identity is ultimately a political problem, not a security one. As Waever himself noted in the onset of introducing securitization, it might not always be the best way to address political problems since it suspends normal politics that involve the slow deliberative process (Waever 1995, 55). As such, the best course of action would have been to

avoid securitization altogether. Now that this is no longer an option, a return to the deliberative process of investigating, negotiating, and reconstructing the Jewish identity is required. In other words, of reproducing their national identity through discourse in which the possibility of constituting the security of the in-group is not predicated on the othering of the out-group. This is not as farfetched as it may presently seem. While I agree that complete desecuritization, as in the removal of security from politics, is never possible (Behnke 2006), the referent object of each securitization may fade while others come into being. For example, to a large extent, Israeli-Saudi relations have been desecuritized for several years now despite no official normalization or peace agreement between the states. Similarly, the issue of legitimacy, while maintaining its securitized status in Israeli politics, may move the state to desecuritize other aspects of its identity—namely to reach a new status quo among its own citizens and ethnic kin—Jews and Palestinians alike. I do not wish to settle here the debate between those who argue that desecuritization requires the lack of speech or those who argue that desecuritization requires a declaration that an issue has moved back to "normal politics" (see Aradau 2004; Behnke 2006). My point here is to suggest that the securitization dilemma may be resolved through the reconfiguration of the referent object as existing outside the realm of security. The identity of the state may be brought back from the exception so that it does not require extraordinary and illiberal actions in response. I do not propose here that we universalize identities or eliminate difference as Aradau argues (2004). As I noted earlier, comparative cases show us the difficulty in such propositions. However, it is possible to eliminate reproductions of threat perception from the identity of others so that Palestinians and their self-determination rights are no longer perceived as a demographic threat to Jews. This is not to say that Israel does not face real and serious physical security threats in the OPT, but rather, that questions of physical insecurity should be uncoupled from questions of ontological security.

It is worth noting that sometimes ending an external conflict that may alleviate physical insecurity concerns can actually exacerbate ontological insecurity, especially when states become attached to routines and practices of conflict that affirm their distinctiveness (Mitzen 2006; Rumelili 2015). It may be argued that repeated attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict failed because the removal of conflict dynamics would engender ontological insecurity for both parties who have come to define themselves through the conflict.[3] However, the formation of the BDS movement against Israel may provide the necessary incentive to begin this uncoupling.

In the case on Israel, the solution to the securitization dilemma is the desecuritization of identities through the process of reconstruction of a stable identity of what it means to be a "Jewish state" that allows it to also maintain stable relations with the Other: its Palestinian citizens and those living in the occupied territories.[4] Such a process begins internally, but its implications extend beyond the state to Israel's standing in the international community. It is naïve to imagine that Israel's Jewish self will be constructed in a universalistic way that eliminates its distinctive identity markers in juxtaposition to others. It is possible, however, to remove the "security-ness" of those differences so that the self and the other do not view each other as physical threats.

In such a constellation, the three demands of BDS may be read very differently than they are now. The demand to end its "colonization and occupation" of all Arab land may be read as a demand to invest in Arab and Bedouin villages, their infrastructure and education, long neglected by the state, and resume its negotiations with the PA to mutually resolve the conflict. The demand for full equality to its Arab citizens may be achieved through guaranteeing full equality of the minority and equal access to state resources. This would also include viewing Arab parties

in the Knesset as legitimate members of governing coalitions. Finally, the demand for "respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties" can be exercised in other ways. For example, projects such as the ones led by Zochrot, an Israeli NGO that commemorates and educates Israelis on the Palestinian Nakba and the destruction of Palestinian homes and villages in the 1948 War, is a good example. The inclusion of the Palestinian Nakba in the Israeli school curriculum, and the elimination of the Nakba law prohibiting such education is another important step in this direction. The recognition of the Palestinian Nakba can also entail monetary compensation that does not require the physical return of Palestinians into Israel. While it is hard to envision this reality today, in the long run, the main impact of the delegitimization efforts against Israel may be the reconstruction of its identity so that some stability is achieved, and the identity itself is not consistently contested from within and outside the state. In such a way, new routinized and harmonious practices between the state and the Jewish diaspora, as well as between the state and its Palestinian citizens, may develop.

Scholars have long bemoaned Israel's "identity crisis"—the unsettled relationship between its Jewish and democratic character (Rouhana 1997; Waxman 2006; Stern 2017; Yadgar 2020). Yet, this debate has largely remained internal to Israelis and the larger diaspora Jewish community. What this book brings into sharp focus is the ways in which the modern delegitimization efforts have internationalized these debates and anchored Israel's continued legitimacy in settling this identity crisis. Breaking the securitization dilemma cycle requires breaking the foundational construction of the threat as existential. This can be done by addressing Israel's source of ontological insecurity—a still undefined and internally contested national identity. Neither the conflict with the Palestinians nor the discrimination and marginalization of its non-Jewish minority has forced Israel to finally settle the question of its Jewish identity. The consequences of the BDS movement's discursive successes, however, may do just that.

Notes

1 Kuperwasser, Interview with author, March 31, 2019.

2 In four separate documents, the leadership of the Palestinian citizens of Israel laid out their vision for majority-minority relations in the state. The "Vision Documents," as they came to be known, suffer from similar exclusionary frames. For example, the Haifa Declaration, representing one of the Vision Documents, rejects Israel as a Jewish state, the rights of return of Jews while calling for the right of return of all Palestinians refugees (Mada al-Carmel 2007). In their analysis of all four documents, Waxman and Peleg conclude that documents seek to deny Israel's legitimacy by, for example, ignoring Jewish ties to the land of Israel or Jewish self-determination rights recognized by the UN partition plan (Waxman and Peleg 2008). Such constructions have been a non-starter for Jews in Israel (Olesker 2011).

3 Israel's recent normalization agreements with other Arabs states, however, might suggest otherwise.

4 Although not part of my analysis here, the same process would have to occur on the Palestinian side, assuming that they too suffer from ontological insecurity. Such an examination exceeds the scope of this book.

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