

**ISRAEL'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH RUSSIA
IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA (1991-2011):
A DIASPORA EFFECT?**

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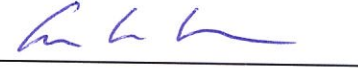
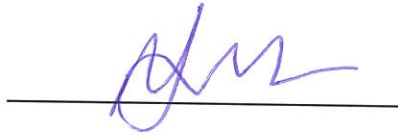
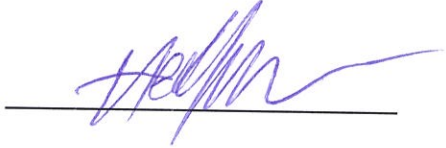
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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized initials 'FS' followed by a long horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

ISRAEL'S RAPPROCHEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA (1991-2011): A DIASPORA EFFECT?

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After three decades passed since the re-establishment of diplomatic ties in 1991, Israel and Russian Federation have enjoyed never-before-seen cooperation during the Arab insurgencies for democratisation that started by 2011, known as the “Arab Spring”. While the literature on this rapprochement mainly adopts security-based explanations, it ignores what happened before the Arab Spring in the aftermath of the re-establishment of relations in 1991. This thesis offers a debate on the changing nature of bilateral relations based on the drastically changed demography of Israel after the massive Jewish migration flow the Former Soviet Union countries since the end of the 1980s. By focusing on the question of what the Former Soviet Union Jews changed in Israel, this study argues that these Jews’ having a vast population and distinct cultural characteristics, turned them into a “Russian Diaspora” which became effective in the Israeli political establishment and Israeli foreign policy, consequently. This study contributes to the literature on the role of diaspora in domestic and foreign policy with a new contextualization, in which a multiple sense of belonging with a fluctuating identity is centralized. Finally, this thesis also demonstrates that Israeli foreign policy should not be considered without the influence of such communities being a diaspora of their former hostland.

Keywords: Israel, Russia, Diaspora, Former Soviet Union Jews

ÖZ

SOĞUK SAVAŞ SONRASI İSRAİL'İN RUSYA İLE YAKINLAŞMASI (1991-2011): DİASPORA ETKİSİ Mİ?

Işık, Fatih Şemsettin

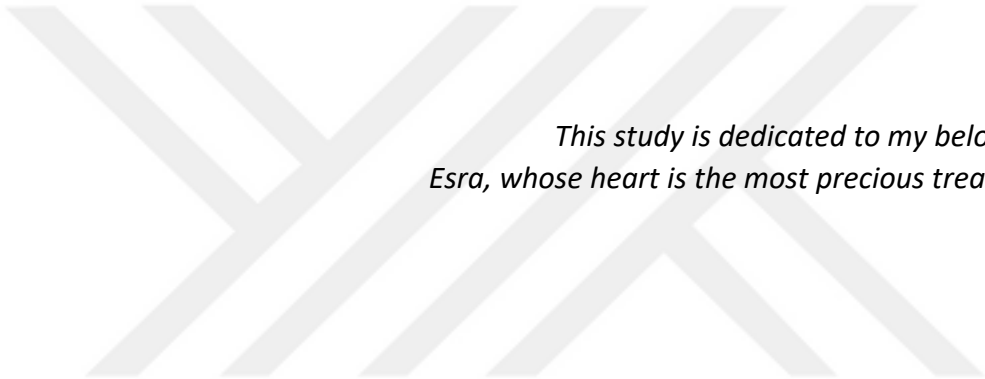
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1991 yılında diplomatik ilişkilerin yeniden kurulmasından bu yana geçen otuz yıldan sonra, İsrail ve Rusya Federasyonu, 2011'de "Arap Baharı" olarak bilinen demokratikleşme isyanları sırasında daha önce hiç görülmemiş bir işbirliğine sahip oldu. Her ne kadar bu yakınlaşma konusundaki literatür temel olarak güvenlik temelli açıklamaları benimsemiş olsa da, 1991'de ilişkilerin yeniden kurulmasından Arap Baharı'na kadar olan süreci görmezden gelmektedir. Bu tez, 1980'lerin sonundan itibaren İsrail'e Eski Sovyetler Birliği ülkelerinden göç etmiş Yahudilerin getirmiş olduğu demografik değişim temelinde iki ülke ilişkilerinin değişen doğasına dair bir tartışma sunmaktadır. Eski Sovyetler Birliği Yahudilerinin İsrail'de nelerin değiştiği sorusuna odaklanarak bu çalışma, bu Yahudilerin geniş bir nüfusa ve farklı kültürel özelliklere sahip olmalarını, onları bir "Rus diasporası" haline getirdiğini ve İsrail'in siyasi kuruluşunda ve sonuç olarak dış politikasında etkili hale geldiğini savunuyor. Bu çalışma, diasporanın iç ve dış politikadaki rolüyle ilgili olarak çoklu bir aidiyet duygusu ve değişken bir kimliğe sahip olmanın merkeze alındığı yeni bir bağlamaştırma ile literatüre katkıda bulunmaktadır. Son olarak, bu tez aynı zamanda İsrail dış politikasının, eski vatanlarının bir diasporası olması olma özelliği taşıyan bu tür toplulukların etkisinden bağımsız düşünülmemesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, Rusya, Diaspora, Eski Sovyet Ülkeleri Yahudileri



*This study is dedicated to my beloved spouse
Esra, whose heart is the most precious treasure for me*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States (US) as the sole superpower of the international political system created significant repercussions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the 1990s. On the one hand, while states in the region had to implement several changes in their relations with the sole emerging superpower, on the other hand, they also began to consider the Russian Federation as heir to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Some Arab countries, such as Syria and Iraq that once were allies of the Soviet Union had the most significant share in this surge of transforming relations. However, they were not the only regional actors whose relations with Russia transformed during this period. Another compelling case and one that needs more explanation are that of Israel.

In this new era, Israel already enjoyed a long-standing alliance with the United States (U.S.) and decided to diversify in its foreign relations by increasing dialogue with several countries with whom its relations had been unfriendly in the previous term. Russia, the most important of these countries, had already been sharing an optimistic attitude with Israel since the last years under Gorbachev's rule, and the two countries eventually raised their relations to the official level in 1990, after a hiatus of more than two decades following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Although their newly restored relations were not without friction over such issues as the Palestinian peace negotiations and Russian-Arab arms trade, this rapprochement with Russia continued smoothly and the perception of the "Soviet threat" was replaced with a dialogue channel for partnership in many areas.

With the new millennium and Vladimir Putin's coming to power in Russia, Israel's relations with Russia entered into a new phase. Shifting from the sole influence of the cultural ties between the two states, both countries found common ground on a political and economic basis to develop their ties. Unlike the attitude in the Cold War years, Israel's increasing cooperation with the US after the 9/11 incident and the

consolidation of their security partnership in the “War on Terror” did not interrupt this trend. More interestingly, despite Russia’s taking an active part in the construction of nuclear facilities and selling long-range missiles to Iran, as well as hosting Hamas leaders after their victory in the 2006 elections, Israel persistently continued to use diplomatic channels with the country. This friendly attitude of Israel, regardless of its alliance with the US and threats posed by Russia’s foreign policy actions, seemed a remarkable shift for the country, considering its formerly hostile attitude against the Soviets for their support of the Arab states with a considerable number of arms.

This promising process also continued in the Arab Spring in which the post-Cold War order of the MENA region was entirely forced to change. During the incidents, two countries noticed the opportunity for the betterment of bilateral relations and ultimately this even evolved into never-before-seen cooperation between two capitals, especially after the Syrian Civil War. Although two countries had disputes over Russia’s alliance choices in the civil war, they managed to get over them. This persistence for keeping mutual goodwill has become one of the main components in the fluctuating nature of their bilateral relations. While Israel’s deteriorating relations with US President Obama can at first glance be considered as a supportive factor for preserving relations with Russia, it should be noted that this persistent stance vis-à-vis Russia has continued even during the presidency of Donald Trump, which brought completely fresh air to US-Israeli ties.

Why did these two states prefer to cooperate in the Arab Spring? First, when the attitudes of the two states in the Arab Spring are taken into account, it can be seen that they are both in favour of the status quo in the MENA region against the Islamist insurgency and that they have stood together on this issue. Second, despite being on the same side as Iran in the Syrian civil war, it is clear that Russia wanted to preclude the Iranian state’s influence on Syria’s secular state identity and kept the negotiation channel open with Israel on this issue. Similarly, despite being partners in the Astana talks, Russia also wanted to prevent Turkey’s rising influence in Syria as a Muslim and democratic member of the Western camp, which is also favourable for Israel, which can eliminate a rival in the regional hegemony rivalry. Lastly, anti-terror efforts against

the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and Al Qaeda-linked groups constituted a significant portion of the cooperation between the two countries.

Having said that, such realist explanations can clarify what happened within the Arab Spring process only. There is also a reconciliation process before the Arab Spring that has started right after the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Russia, which requires further explanation. More significantly, these explanations require to be based on some other motivations that cannot be expected to be products of a realist framework due to Israel's foreign policy preferences in the post-Cold War period until the Arab Spring. Realism seems to have shortcomings in explaining Israel's having its foreign relations diversified with Russia because the country was already enjoying a grand alliance with the US, as a superpower which had started to lead the unipolar world order. In other words, even if Israel stood together with its ally in the post-9/11 period and the Iraq War and security has shaped the main framework of this alliance, Israel's rapprochement with Russia maintained with ever-increasing cooperation. Therefore, a non-security motivation is required to clarify this development.

Zooming in on the political situation in Israel, one sees that this process in bilateral ties should not be considered without demographic reasons. Israel received a vast flow of migration from former Soviet Union countries starting with the collapse of the Union as a state that claims to be a homeland for all Jews around the world, and that enjoys a widespread diaspora influence. Carrying out a whole process in Jewish immigration (a.k.a. *Aliyah*) of those Jews have required a solid diplomatic basis, and this issue became the most prominent topic in Israeli-Russian bilateral relations after the Cold War until the migration flow lost its prominence towards the end of the 1990s.

Within years, this flow of Soviet Jews [Hereafter: FSU Jews] into Israel significantly influenced Israeli society and the Israeli political sphere and perceptions in foreign policy. Since the beginnings of the 1970s and the peak of migration wave in the 1990s, FSU Jews have come to constitute a considerable portion of Israeli society. Their involvement in Israeli society is not only significant in quantitative terms but also remarkable for their distinctive presence with their political participation, economic

influence, and cultural stance. This distinctiveness was also due to their motivation in moving into Israel. Unlike most of the immigrating Jews who had to leave the countries that they live in, economic reasons outweighed more than political reasons in their leaving the Soviets. That means, they should not be categorised as “exiled” people and “voluntary” action are better to frame this case.

Acting as a community that desires to protect their “Russianness” against the integration efforts led by the state, FSU Jews presented a challenge that may reshape the nature of the Israeli state identity through making all the difference in the Israeli establishment and shaking the grounds of the political spectrum. In other words, the shaping process of Israel with its integration policies worked mutually, and these Jews and their unique characteristics in all spheres of life also shaped Israel.

In this study, it is argued that such a tremendous influence of the FSU Jews allows classifying these Jews to act as a Russian diaspora in Israel where they had a kinship in terms of ethnicity. Maintaining the legacy from their times in FSU states, their strong sense of political and socio-cultural belonging to Soviet/Russian culture after their *Aliyah* to Israel has allowed them to be considered within a different diasporic framework. Once they were seen as a “Jewish Diaspora” for Israel due to their different ethnic identity and culture in the Soviet Union; now, however, their distinctiveness and firm attachment to Soviet/Russian culture, has turned them into a “Russian Diaspora”.

Regarding this change, it can be said that there is a phenomenon in the globalisation era that migrants’ sense of belongingness does not have to be unilateral anymore: They can have a bilateral or multilateral sense of belonging for the societies where they once lived, worked, or spent a long time for any reason. Therefore, this situation allows this study to classify FSU Jews as a Russian diaspora. This classification does not necessarily require exclusiveness between their “Jewishness” and their “Russianness”. Instead, such a sense of belonging is a pluralisation of identity with the help of information technologies.

This thesis will examine the case of FSU Jews to study how a diaspora's effect on state identity formation allows one state to construct an alternative and positive perception regarding the diaspora country in foreign policy. It articulates that this gradual increase in cooperation could not have been achieved unless FSU Jews had demonstrated their sway in the political sphere as a Russian diaspora. The question of how this Jewish community as a Russian diaspora influenced perceptions in foreign policy needs to be answered in order to understand the impact of state identity issues on the nature of the foreign policy.

In addition to that, the question is also significant in terms of figuring out whether the US as a superpower is losing its influence in the Middle East and this power gap is being replaced with Russian influence. The question is also significant for predicting the future foreign policy intentions of other US allies in the region, especially the extent to which they can act outside the boundaries of that alliance, such as in the case of Turkey, Egypt, and the Gulf States.

While the primary focus of this study will be the question of "why did the FSU Jews become significantly influential in Israel?" this study will also try to find answers to the following questions: How did they have such a significant influence? To what extent does this influence contribute to shaping foreign policy perceptions vis-a-vis Russia? Where does the integration efforts of Israeli state stand in the emergence of the community's influence? Finally, this study will try to find an answer to the following question: How should this gradual dominance of the FSU Jews be elaborated in terms of regional and global politics?

Primary sources in this study will be statements of politicians and institutions, news reports, and statistics. Articles and books on Israel-Russia relations, the integration of the FSU Jews, and the diaspora phenomenon in international relations will support this research as secondary sources. While the primary sources of this study will be in English, some of them will also be in Hebrew. Regarding the methodology, discourse analysis and textual analysis in reading the primary sources will be applied. Last but not least, a critical reading of the concepts of identity and diaspora will be implemented

during the study, which gained a multilateral essence following the developments under globalisation.

This critical reading brings me to the reason why this topic is chosen to research. The main objective of studying this topic in this research is to demonstrate that diasporic identity in domestic politics today is not static but dynamic and that this dynamism is rooted in perception. Globalisation and information technologies have transformed identity into something fluid that takes many shapes according to the situation. In this flow of perceptions, identities not only determine the essence of group members but also shape other kinds of identities. Moreover, this shaping process is not necessarily imposed top-down. With this topic, it will be argued that the identity-shaping process can work bottom-up as well. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework of the thesis will be presented. After discussing the concept of the diaspora with a new contextualization and how it becomes a significant factor in domestic politics, the diaspora's influence on foreign policy through several international relations theories will be debated. Then, the FSU Jewish community will be evaluated within this new diaspora framework. Following a discussion of the influence of the FSU Jews on Israeli domestic and foreign policy, concluding remarks will be offered.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will explain the theoretical framework of this thesis. Within this framework, a theory first will be developed that problematizes the concept of the diaspora with a new contextualization. It is argued that diasporas become influential actors in domestic politics with their constitutive involvement in the formation of national identity through strengthening their political presence over time. However, traditional approaches on the concept of diaspora lack in giving a full picture of this influence in domestic politics and a new conceptualisation of the term are required. According to this new conceptualisation, diasporic identity does not only end when a diaspora community that lives in a **hostland** where they are ethnically in minority status move into a **homeland**. Following their migration, that particular diaspora community can be regarded as a diaspora of the hostland this time with political, social and cultural influence over the homeland that they newly settled.

Then, how this new contextualization can be applied to analyse the role of the diaspora in international politics will be discussed by zooming in several international relations theories. As this study focuses on the domestic level of the Israeli state, theories based on a domestic level will be more applicable to explain this case than the structural/systematic level. Furthermore, these domestic level approaches might also need some modifications due to the complexity of the diaspora concept and the effect of diaspora identity.

Finally, how the FSU Jews fit this new context of diaspora both in the domestic and international political sphere through a modified domestic-level IR theory will be explained before presenting the chapter that provides historical background.

2.1. Diaspora and the Domestic Politics

Although a consensus has emerged among scholars in acknowledging the link between the Jewish history of exile and the emergence of the diaspora concept, even as

something unique and incomparable with other experiences,¹ an intense debate about what a diaspora is or what it means to talk about diasporas in international relations continues.²

For instance, several scholars have claimed that the concept, which once contained a religious reference, has been secularized from the 20th century onwards and expanded to encompass “more and more populations, more and more situations, going as far as to encompass the whole of humanity in the phrase ‘the human diaspora’, which describes the historical movement of humans from Africa into the rest of the world.”³ These definitions manifest that the context of the concept is not narrow, but it has a broad scope.

The concept of the diaspora can be defined as a community that shares a common origin who resides outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland regardless of being real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control.⁴ Even though this definition is useful for understanding what diaspora means in politics, the question remains: to what extent are diasporas involved in political issues? There are some diasporic communities which enjoy relatively more privilege in joining policy-making process in the homeland (i.e. Jews in the United States vis-à-vis Israeli politics), and there are those who are less involved less in the political process (i.e. Turks in Germany vis-à-vis Turkish politics).

For Cohen, diasporas can be classified into five different categories (Table 2.1.) according to those diasporas historical experience and factors that forced them to be as such: Victim Diasporas, Labour Diasporas (Proletarian Diaspora), Colonial Diasporas,

¹ Shmuel Sandler, “Towards a Conceptual Framework of World Jewish Politics: State, Nation and Diaspora in a Jewish Foreign Policy,” *Israel Affairs* 10, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2004): 302,

² Latha Varadarajan, *The Domestic Abroad: Diasporas in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

³ Stéphane Dufoix, “Deconstructing and Reconstructing ‘Diaspora’: A Study in Socio-Historical Semantics,” in *Transnationalism: Diasporas and the Advent of a New (Dis)Order*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg (Boston: Brill, 2009), 47..

⁴ Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, “Diasporas and International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (2003): 452.

Trade Diasporas and De-territorialized Diasporas.⁵ Among them, the de-territorialised diaspora concept is crucial. Her emphasis on the “hybrid” and “cultural” aspect enables to interpret being “de-territorialised” in a different form and instead of indicating lack of a definite territory, one can also point out that the concept refers to having multiple territories but feeling confused about having a sense of belonging for one of these territories. In other words, “de-territorialised” can also correspond to “multi-territorialized”.

Table 2.1. A Classification of Diasporas (Source: Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas*)

Main Types of Diaspora	Main Examples	Other Examples and Notes
Victim	Jews, Africans, Armenians	Irish and Palestinians. Many contemporary refugee groups are incipient victim diasporas but time has to pass to see whether they return to their homelands, assimilate in their hostlands, creolise or mobilise as a diaspora.
Labour	Indentured Indians.	Chinese and Japanese; Turks, Italians, North Africans. Many others could be included. Another synonymous expression is ‘proletarian diaspora.’
Imperial	British	Russians, colonial powers other than Britain. Other synonymous expressions are ‘settler’ or ‘colonial’ diasporas
Trade	Lebanese, Chinese	Venetians, business and professional Indians, Chinese, Japanese
De-Territorialized	Caribbean peoples, Sindhis	Roma, Muslims and other religious diasporas. The expressions ‘hybrid’, ‘cultural’ and ‘post-colonial’ also are linked to the idea of deterritorialization without being synonymous.

⁵ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, Global Diasporas (London: Routledge, 2008), 18..

From this point, diaspora members' having a sense of belongingness on a multilateral basis as a modern phenomenon should also be discussed. In this context, even if diaspora members have returned to their homeland countries, some linkages such as language, culture, religious attitude or political presence might lead those members to act as a diaspora of their previous host countries, which is also related with the level of success in being integrated into the homeland society.

For Blumer, this sense of multiple belonging has been transformed with the rise of globalism, which has brought a new theoretical framework for the concept. He says that while the classical definition of diaspora was more interested in the roots and centralised the concept of a homeland, the new diaspora should be seen through the lenses of *multiple belongings* and decentralising the essentiality of the homeland concept in order to embody the transnationality of global capitalism. This new approach also "challenges the nationalist narrative of common origins or gathered populations."⁶

Safran describes the clash of the sense of belonging "one can be in the diaspora after one has returned to the homeland." He offers the case of Indian Jews as an example and asks whether Israel or India is a genuine homeland for them since they represent 'a social form in which they organise as a community and spin family and ethnic ties tighter and tighter' and whence they often return to their place of birth."⁷

This complicating situation can be better understood what Roger Brubaker offers in the definition of the diaspora concept. According to him, diaspora should be considered as a stance and a claim, "as an alternative to the essentialization of belonging," and as representing "a non-territorial form of essentialized belonging."⁸

⁶ Nadine Blumer, "'Am Yisrael Chai! (The Nation of Israel Lives!): Stark Reminders of Home in the Reproduction of Ethno-Diasporic Identity," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 9 (November 1, 2011): 1332.

⁷ William Safran, "The Diaspora and the Homeland: Reciprocities, Transformations, and Role Reversals," in *Transnationalism: Diasporas and the Advent of a New (Dis)Order*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzhak Sternberg (Boston: Brill, 2009), 77.

⁸ Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 11–12,

He also articulates that diaspora in this way is “formulating the identities and loyalties of a population,” while those who do the formulating can be speaking in the name of “the putative homeland state.”⁹

When it comes to the functions of diaspora, they are also regarded as a force in identity formation because though located outside their kin-state they assert a legitimate stake in it at the same time that defies the conventional meaning of the state, and they act as manifestations of “de-territorialised communities.” On this identity formation, Dieckhoff points out the rise of globalism in the emergence of long-distance nationalism (LDN), coined by Benedict Anderson, as a new way of linking diasporas and the national project. This term involves two main features for diaspora’s involvement in state affairs: 1) The unaccountability of the community that enables intense political radicalism and 2) functioning as a unit for strengthening ethnic identity and a sense of belonging in the diaspora.¹⁰ All in all, the arguments mentioned above regarding the changing aspect of the diaspora due to the rise of globalism and identity politics, requires the concept to be considered within a different framework.

As a transnational actor, diasporas can also be influential in international politics because their presence outside of the homeland brings at least two parties together on a particular political issue. Some scholars have pointed out the role of diasporas in international relations with their transcending feature of demonstrating belongingness.¹¹ They have been seen as the paradigmatic ‘Other’ of the nation-state phenomenon,¹² and scholars have studied this challenging role by focusing on specific diasporas in specific locations through their specific influences, such as lobbying, participating in elections, or supporting particular factions in civil wars.¹³

⁹ Brubaker, 12.

¹⁰ Alain Dieckhoff, “The Jewish Diaspora and Israel: Belonging at Distance?,” *Nations and Nationalism* 23, no. 2 (2017): 271.

¹¹ Yossi Shain, *Kinship & Diasporas in International Affairs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 127.

¹² Khachig Tololyan, “Exile Governments in Armenian Polity,” in *Governments-In-Exile in Contemporary World Politics*, ed. Yossi Shain (New York: Routledge, 1991); Cohen, *Global Diasporas*; James Clifford, “Traveling Cultures,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 1991); Tony Smith, “In Defense of Intervention,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1993,

¹³ Latha Varadarajan, *The Domestic Abroad: Diasporas in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 6,

Along with creating problems for the homelands or the hostlands, they can also be useful in peace-making and conflict resolution processes. According to Shain and Barth, there are factors that influence diaspora's effectiveness in foreign policy: (1) the degree of diasporic motivation, which is related with time and issues or with "differentiation between groups, usually varying according to their position vis-a-vis the identity issue," including the *dual loyalty* problem; (2) the socio-political nature of the hostland, which affects the organizational capacity (i.e. regimes); (3) the socio-political nature of the homeland, which determines the operational capacity (i.e. weakness of the state) and (4) the strength of the bilateral ties between diaspora and homeland, which affects the balance of power between them and the unity of the diaspora.¹⁴

2.2. Diaspora Identity and the Foreign Policy

The role of diasporas as efficient actors in foreign policy has been a new matter of discussion by scholars of international relations theories.¹⁵ Among them, though not rejecting the role of non-state actors and their transnational activities, neo-realism centralises the role of the state and its material capabilities in interstate relations and considers the anarchy as the main feature of the international system, which ultimately determines these relations.¹⁶

Some other theorists see this heavy influence of the system on states as a shortcoming, and they endeavoured to explain the behaviours of the state by focusing on interactions between the system and the unit-level variables – the domestic material power relationships and strategic leadership that shapes internal characteristics of

<https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199733910.001.0001/acprof-9780199733910>.

¹⁴ Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory," 463–65.

¹⁵ For instance; Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szabton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, 1 edition (S.I.: Routledge, 1993); Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the U.S. and Their Homelands* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*, 1st Edition edition (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2003). .

¹⁶ Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979), 93–95..

states.¹⁷ In the same effort, Schweller points out that states react differently to similar pressures and impacts of the system, and he relates this variety of responses to internal factors instead of system-led factors.¹⁸ Having agreed upon this issue as a shortcoming of realism, particularly structural realism, Donnelly thinks that this emphasis on structure-imposed state behaviour makes them appear as 'black boxes' and should be 'unpacked'.¹⁹

While agreeing with neo-realism upon the concept of anarchy, constructivist Alexander Wendt challenges the notion that the concept has a fixed meaning²⁰ and instead prioritises how states can construct it through non-material/ideational factors, such as identity. In his theory, he offers several alternative imaginations of anarchy and presents an alternative view of interstate relations through the lenses of identity. As a social unit which centralises its distinct identity from the mainstream society, diasporas thus be better examined in interstate relations through constructivism than neo-realism.

Having said that, since realism embraces a statist approach and Wendt's constructivism adopts an identity-based statist approach²¹ in examining the foreign policy sphere and both of them prioritise the structural level analysis from other levels, it does not apply to the diaspora theory in which this study argues. As the diaspora constitutes a significant component of the domestic political sphere, it is crucial to look at the domestic-level extensions of constructivist theory in order to be able to see the link between the diaspora identity and the foreign policy.

¹⁷ Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," ed. Michael E. Brown et al., *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144–72.

¹⁸ Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 6..

¹⁹ Jack Donnelly, "Realism," in *Theories of International Relations*, ed. Andrew Linklater and Scott Burchill, 3rd edition (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 70..

²⁰ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²¹ Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 385; Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

For instance, Katzenstein, in his comparison of Germany and Japan, claims that these states' pursuit of different national security policies in the post-WWII period is related to how legal and social norms interacted differently.²² Whereas Ruggie and Kratochwil argue that the idea of the sovereignty of the state is something constructed and that emerged due to massive changes in the system,²³ Kratochwil says that this phenomenon is still witnessed with the international order and security policies in the post-Cold War period.²⁴

However, none of these theorists enters a discussion about the domestic sphere of identity politics. In his study, Kösebalaban stresses this lack of debate, particularly in Wendt's approach and reveals how state identity is indirectly equalised with national identity. For him, national identity does not emerge out of interstate interactions in the system/structural level but also from "a clash of competing interpretations of such interactions at the domestic level." Instead of being objectively internalised, experiences in the international system are regarded through "subjective interpretations of social actors."²⁵

Fundamentally, this approach adopts an idea that states are not unitary actors and involves *intermediary dimensions* between internal and external spheres. Among those dimensions, the presence of a diaspora is a key component whose extensions can be involved in both the domestic and the foreign policy sphere. Apart from their becoming practical tools in pursuing national interests in the foreign policy sphere, diasporas can sometimes even be transnational actors whose presence penetrates deeply into the very existence of a particular state.²⁶

²² Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 153–54.

²³ Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, "International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State," *International Organization* 40, no. 4 (1986): 753–75.

²⁴ Friedrich Kratochwil, "Regimes, Interpretation and the 'Science' of Politics: A Reappraisal," *Millennium* 17, no. 2 (June 1, 1988): 263–84.

²⁵ Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 1st ed, Middle East Today (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 16–17.

²⁶ Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory."

The ties between Israel and the Jewish diaspora can be considered within this framework. The Zionist movement in Europe, which led to the emergence of the State of Israel years later, was born in the Jewish diaspora as an effort to create a state for the Jews and a homeland to which they could feel belonged. Creating this nation-state hence required a nationalisation process, and the Jewish diaspora, which comprised Jews all around the world, had a uniquely significant role in this process. Starting with the Aliyah movements at the end of the 19th century, the Jews who migrated to the Palestinian territory were, in a way, collected as a 'nation' under a single territory. The Law of Return, which allows all Jews to become the citizens of the country,²⁷ was passed by the Knesset two years after the state's establishment. The State of Israel would not exist without the Jewish diaspora as an intermediary dimension.

While Kösebalaban discusses how ideological identities compete in each other for shaping the Turkish Foreign Policy, his approach in explaining this case can be even more explanatory for the case of this study. Although the competition between ideological identities can also be applied for Israel's relations with Russia, as it will be discussed in the next chapters, diaspora identity can outweigh the ideological identity in Israeli politics. Because people cannot change where they came from, and the cultural setting in which they were grown-up, unlike the situation in political views, competition between diaspora identities is further crucial than the ideological ones. This competition can be even more significant for countries like Israel, which was founded based on a Jewish nation-state identity with the contribution of multiple diasporas thanks to the worldwide Jewish diaspora.

One might also question whether a neo-classical realist approach can be applied for understanding the diaspora effect in the rapprochement between Israel and Russia. This approach can be seen as a theoretical effort in providing the domestic-level explanations of the neo-realist approach, and it aims to explain the differentiation in

²⁷ "Law of Return 5710-1950," accessed February 14, 2018, <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfa-archive/1950-1959/pages/law%20of%20return%205710-1950.aspx>.

the foreign policy behaviour of states,²⁸ which is a factor ignored by the neo-realists due to their focus on system-level factors.²⁹ For this purpose, they prioritise not only the material resources of states but some ideational factors such as ideology and nationalism.³⁰ They regard the national identity, which would be a result of these factors as an ultimate determinant of a state's foreign policy preferences.³¹ Namely, the focus on the domestic-level units makes this approach applicable to the case of diaspora's effect in the foreign policy.

Nevertheless, one issue prevents the neo-classical realist approach to fit the context of this study. Even though they criticise the system-centre approach of the neo-realists, the neo-classical theorists are still utilising their presumptions to interpret interstate relations. For instance; they have identified three common presumptions in their approaches: 1) Collectivity and groups as key actors in world politics, 2) Power as the fundamental feature of international politics, and 3) The conflictual perception of the essential nature of international politics.³² Among them, the last two assumptions are still carrying the notion of the neo-realist tradition, which fundamentally centralises power relations between states. However, the involvement of diasporas into the foreign policy agenda of states does not have to be within this framework. In the case of this study, Israel's entering the rapprochement with Russia with the influence of the FSU Jews is more about the expansion of Russian Jewish identity in Israeli society and political realm than the changing perception regarding Russia's power. As mentioned above, Israel did not abandon its negative perception for Russia even during the rapprochement process due to Moscow's pressure to reach an official status in the Palestinian negotiations and its good relations with Iran and Hamas. Yet, it did not prevent the rise of the FSU Jews in Israeli politics and their influence on Israel-Russia relations. In other words, the presence of the FSU Jews undermined all negative

²⁸ Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy."

²⁹ Derek Beach, *Analyzing Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke, Hampshire U.K. ; New York: Red Globe Press, 2012), 64.

³⁰ Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," 149.

³¹ Beach, *Analyzing Foreign Policy*, 65.

³² Randall L. Schweller, "The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism," in *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field*, ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2003), 327.

perceptions regarding Russia's power, and the rapprochement could be maintained. Eventually, there was no survival motivation or maximising the international influence for Israel, as the neoclassical realist theory assumed.³³

This contribution of diaspora identity to national identity formation will open some new debates on actors in international relations theory. For instance, diasporas possess a global presence, while at the same time, they enjoy a local identity. A mixture of these two aspects allows them to act as a global network society and work as pressure groups, which can be classified as a sui generis influence over international politics. Scholars of international relations theory should consider this aspect of diasporas as an intermediary dimension which challenges unitary actors (i.e. system, state) and individuals.

³³ Ümran Gürses, "Neoclassical Realism, the Limits of Analysis and Relations Theory," in *Analyzing Foreign Policy Crises in Turkey: Conceptual, Theoretical and Practical Discussions*, ed. Fuat Aksu and Helin Sarı Ertem, 2017, 43.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF A RUSSIAN DIASPORA IN ISRAEL

In this part, why the FSU Jewish community can be considered as a Russian Diaspora in the Israeli society will be explained through the following reasons: First, the population of the community compelled the demographic balance in Israel. This situation caused shifts in the Israeli national identity and the political representation issue, which later ended up with “diversification” of Israeli foreign policy agenda. Second, the distinct characteristics of the community due to political, economic and cultural reasons, caused a shift in the Israeli state integration efforts by prioritising a less interventionist attitude towards the community. Therefore, the community could stay within its identity boundaries though they were not isolated and disintegrated completely.

Although Jews in the Soviet countries have always been a part of the agenda for Israel’s diplomatic relations with the Union, the issue has raised into an unprecedented degree of significance in the last decade of the 20th century. In 1988, Jews already began to leave the country by thousands in each month with carrying Israeli visas.³⁴ Starting by 1989, this migration wave rapidly accelerated and reached to the figures to the extent that the demographics in Israel radically changed in a short period. For instance, while the FSU Jews constituted only 0.33% of the whole Israeli population, this raised 4% next year and 10% in five years (Table 3.1.).

The emergence of some significant problems during these efforts was not unexpected. These problems have already started with the transfer of the FSU Jews into Israel and the state’s providing accommodation and employment facilities to the migrants. However, the quality aspect of the problem, namely the profile of these migrants, was not less significant than the quantity aspect of the problem that is sourced due to the massive migrant population. The emerging FSU Jewish community with their unique

³⁴ “Chronicle of Events,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 19, no. 1 (March 1, 1989): 90–99.

and distinct socio-cultural characteristics led the Israeli state and society to encounter with the community for several aspects and brought further challenges. Although state and society reached a certain level of experience in integrating Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewish communities since the time of Jewish Agency during the British mandate period, the FSU Jews pushed the limits of the integration capabilities of Israeli state and society in qualitative terms and took extraordinary measures. What makes FSU Jewish community integration different can be classified under three reasons: *Political, economic and cultural reasons.*

Table 3.1. The FSU Jewish Migration and Its Proportion Within the Israeli Population (Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics)

Year	Immigrants from F.S.U.	Total Population of Israel	Percentage in the Total Population
1988	2,283	4,477,000	0,05
1989	15,215	4,560,000	0,33
1990	200,442	4,822,000	4,1
1991	348,281	5,059,000	6,8
1992	413,374	5,196,000	7,95
1993	479,519	5,328,000	9
1994	547,598	5,472,000	10
1995	612,446	5,619,000	10,8
1996	671,494	5,689,000	11,8
1997	726,115	5,987,000	12,1
1998	772,147	6,038,000	12,7
1999	838,995	6,200,000	13,5
2000	889,812	6,289,000	14,1
2001	923,413	6,460,000	14,2
2002	941,921	6,600,000	14,2
2003	954,304	6,600,000	14,45
2004	964,434	6,780,000	14,2
2005	973,865	6,930,000	14
2006	981,334	7,116,000	13,7
2007	987,980	7,244,000	13,6
2008	993,596	7,337,000	13,5
2009	1,000,544	7,552,000	13,2
2010	1,007,702	7,695,000	13
2011	1,014,927	7,746,000	13,1

Politically, the community brought a significant challenge to the Zionism-based integration policies of Israel that have been implemented since the first years of the

state. These integration policies were based on new immigrants' attachment to Zionism and accept the ideology as a transformative component for the constituency. However, unlike their predecessors in the 1970s, the migrants in this period were feeling less attached to the Zionist principles and the problems of Jewish self-identification, including the relations with Sabra, the indigenous inhabitants of Israel.³⁵

According to a poll organised by Public Opinion Research of Israel (PORI) in October 1990, more than 50 per cent of interviewees from the FSU Jews indicated that level of Jewish identity was either cultural or a result of family ties. Whereas only 5 per cent replied as "Zionist" and only 1.7 per cent identified themselves as belonging to the category of a "practising religious believer."³⁶ These repatriates were instead indicating the instability in the political and economic situation of the CIS (former the Soviet Union) countries and willingness to raise their children with a more predictable future as one of the main reasons to leave.³⁷ Consequently, the essential premise in the way of building the perception that Israel represents the homeland of all Jewish entity in the world as the 'Zion', faces a stiff challenge.

This lack of attachment to Zionism and different perception of Jewishness even goes back to the time when they live in the Soviet Union. During their time in the USSR, it was documented that they regarded their Jewishness mostly in ethnic terms and undermined the significance of the religious part of this Jewishness for their collective and personal identities.³⁸ In other words, they have adopted an ethnicity-dominated Jewishness without feeling obliged to observe principles of Judaic religion. Although to what extent they have participated the Soviet modernisation and secularisation has

³⁵ Moshe Lissak and Eli Leshem, "The Russian Intelligentsia in Israel: Between Ghettoization and Integration," *Israel Affairs* 2, no. 2 (December 1, 1995): 22,

³⁶ Bernard Reich, Noah Dropkin, and Meyrav Wurmser, "Soviet Jewish Immigration and the 1992 Israeli Knesset Elections," *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 3 (1993): 464–78.

³⁷ Shmuel Adler, "Israel's Absorption Policies since 1970's," in *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and Resettlement*, ed. Noah Lewin-Epstein, Yaacov Ro'i, and Paul Ritterband, The Cummings Center Series (London; Portland, Or: Frank Cass, 1997), 144.

³⁸ Zvi Gitelman, "The Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present" (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Yaacov Ro'i, "Religion, Israel, and the Development of Soviet Jewry's National Consciousness, 1967–91," in *Jewish Life after the USSR*, ed. Z. Gitelman, M. Glants, and M.I. Goldman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 13–26; Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

been an influential factor in the process,³⁹ Remennick highlights that this secularism-oriented Jewish identity enables them to be considered under the social type known as 'Homo-Sovieticus'.⁴⁰

The economy, as also stated within the political reasons, was a substantial factor in hindering FSU Jewish integration into Israeli state and society. The high level of education in this new olim highlighted the economic integration more significantly. According to the figures, 61 per cent of the recently arrived FSU Jews had achieved 13 or more years of formal education whereas only 26 per cent of the Israeli population in 1992 had that education. Within this group, more than 42 per cent had scientific and academic professional educations, a figure four times the Israeli average. Even though this difference has changed within the passing time, there was still a significant difference in qualified education between two societies.

It is seen that while 60% of the migrants were specialists with higher education, this was only 28% among the Sabra.⁴¹ Among them, there were 73,000 engineers, 15,200 doctors, 16,100 nurses, 33,600 teachers, 11,700 scientists and 15,100 artists, writers and journalists.⁴² Furthermore, these people had earned their lives under a communist regime, and suddenly they had started to make their living under an economic system in which capitalism was increasingly dominating after Likud party came to power in 1977 elections. Therefore, for Israel, not only the employment of a vast but well qualified and educated population but the integration of that population into a completely new system was also a challenge.

Culturally, it can be said that this "Homo-Sovieticus" identity led them to maintain Russianness in the post-Soviet context. The "Russianness" of the community is still

³⁹ Julia Lerner, "'Russians' in Israel as a Post-Soviet Subject: Implementing the Civilizational Repertoire," *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 1 (January 2011): 22.

⁴⁰ Larissa Remennick, *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Identity, Integration, and Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007)

⁴¹ T.D. Moshkova, "Russian-Israeli Relations: The Role of The Russian-Speaking Community Of The State Of Israel," *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 18, no. 2 (2018): 392.

⁴² Eli Leshem and Moshe Lissak, "Development and Consolidation of the Russian Community in Israel," in *Roots and Routes: Ethnicity and Migration in Global Perspective*, ed. Reuven Kahane and Shalyah Yail (Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1999), 174.

active for them by contacting with a worldwide Russian-speaking socio-cultural diaspora through either physically or via the electronic media, and it is regularly updated on the post-Soviet political and cultural formations. As an example of how they still construct their self-image, it is argued that the community's Orientalist attitude to Mizrahi Jews and Islamophobic rhetoric against Israeli Palestinians were shaped by the post-Soviet perspective based on Russian and European cultural spaces.⁴³ This historically-constructed and persistently-maintained civilizational facet of the Russian-Soviet cultural repertoire, allowed the community to maintain their Russianness together with its cultural elements.⁴⁴

Parallel to this idea, Safran also underlines how they remain "committed to the Russian language and literature, which is 'theirs,' and which many of them consider superior to Hebrew and its literature," and their collateral diaspora identity "is reflected in their maintaining their former citizenship."⁴⁵ For this reason, "for many who remain in Israel, especially those who could not easily adjust to the new country, who maintain Russian customs and cuisine, and whose social circle is largely confined to fellow Russian immigrants, Russia is the homeland and Israel is one of the countries of their dispersion, if not a way station to still another diaspora."⁴⁶

As a sub-matter under the cultural belongingness issue, teaching Hebrew has been more challenging for the state in the case of FSU Jewish community compared to other new migrant communities. According to a study conducted when the massive influx of FSU Jews happened in 1992, although emigrants embrace Jewishness as their primary identity, they share a strong feeling that Russian, as their own cultural-linguistic identity, is of greater importance for them than Hebrew as one of the most crucial elements of assigning a membership for the Jewish nation-state.⁴⁷ It can be even

⁴³ Lerner, "'Russians' in Israel as a Post-Soviet Subject," 32.

⁴⁴ Lerner, 34.

⁴⁵ Safran, "The Diaspora and the Homeland: Reciprocities, Transformations, and Role Reversals," 82.

⁴⁶ Safran, 84.

⁴⁷ Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Elite Olshtain, and Idit Geijst, "Identity and Language: The Social Insertion of Soviet Jews in Israel," in *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and Resettlement*, ed. Noah Lewin-Epstein, Yaacov Ro'i, and Paul Ritterband, The Cummings Center Series (London ; Portland, Or: Frank Cass, 1997), 371.

considered that this uniqueness of the FSU Jews was a serious threat to the policy of melting ethnic minority groups into the same pot within the framework of monolingual ideology in Hebrew.⁴⁸ Also, their weak attachment to Zionism as an ideology and Judaism as a religion caused them to take slower progress in learning Hebrew and embracing it as the main language of the societal culture compared to other Jewish communities from elsewhere. Also, political pressure on the community under the rule of the Soviet Union deprived them of developing a socio-cultural living space in a hybrid language with Hebrew. While their Ashkenazi counterparts could maintain a distinct culture in Yiddish and Sephardi counterparts could do the same with Ladino, the FSU Jews could speak Russian only for many years.

Within the efforts for integration and preventing the emerging “Russian Street” to remain as a Russian ghetto, the Israeli state had to take extraordinary measures in societal issues of the community. Although a considerable amount of duration has passed since then, these measures that involve many affirmative actions, are even still applied by the state, which reveals how deep the integration problem is. For instance; the government occasionally borrowed some components of the Russian experience of industrial construction as in the case of Vysotsky’s company, which comes from pre-revolutionary Russia and the company is now known as controlling most of the tea market in the country.⁴⁹ As another example, the Ministry of Aliyah and Absorption is tolerant to the usage of Russian in state institutions and the introduction of Russian as the third language into the curricula of Israeli schools. In this context, the Ministry of Education provided Russian-speaking immigrant pupils with the opportunity to use the texts in Russian at the TANAKH (Jewish Scripture) examinations, as well as the opportunity to pass the exams in the native language under the secondary school program.

⁴⁸ Lewis H. Glinert, “Inside the Language Planner’s Head: Tactical Responses to a Mass Immigration,” *Journal of Multicultural and Multilingual Development* 16, no. 5 (1995): 351–71; Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology and Practice* (Clevendon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1999).

⁴⁹ Moshkova, “Russian-Israeli Relations,” 390.

It should be noted that these attempts to overcome those severe challenges for the Israeli state and its year-long integration policies smoothly, also sourced due to the transformation of the Israeli society starting by 1990s. The migration in the 1990s coincided with the process of national identity crisis and 'post-Zionism' debates which contributed to the legitimisation of the "multiculturalism" in Israel and particularly of the social institutions of the "Russian" community. Just like the FSU Jewish community is transformed, as Gershenson claims, the globalisation wave led this process to maintain mutually and ending up with FSU Jewish community's transforming the Israeli society itself.⁵⁰ For instance, they propelled Israeli society towards multilingualism⁵¹ and brought a significant impact on their political attitude. As developments towards the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000s would manifest, they played a significant role in Israeli political establishment by shaping a unique identity among the representatives of the "Russian street" and the emergence of the subculture of "Russian" repatriates in the society.

As an intermediary power between society and the state, media had also its share in this massive transformation which included a dual process at the same time: Exclusion and integration. On the one hand, since these immigrants were maintaining to speak Russian language and perceiving themselves as attached to the Russian culture, they increased the variety in the Israeli media outlets and created their establishment. On the other hand, this variety enabled them to be recognised by the Israeli society, boost the intellectual and integration capacity of the country.⁵² Especially in the aftermath of their arrival, an impressive number of periodicals, have been published in the Russian language by the community. Within two decades after their migration, four daily newspapers, 60 weeklies, 40 biweekly and monthly magazines and about 20 quarterly and annual publications were published, and most of them were active during the 1990s.

⁵⁰ Olga Gershenson, "'Is Israel Part of Russia?' Immigrants on Russian and Israeli Screens," *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 1 (January 2011): 164.

⁵¹ Shulamit Kopeliovich, "How Long Is 'the Russian Street' in Israel? Prospects of Maintaining the Russian Language," *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 1 (January 2011): 108–24.

⁵² Nelly Elias, "Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Their Media: Still Together?," *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 1 (January 2011): 72.

Moreover, in the same period, Russian characters began to appear more often on Israeli screens, and Israeli film industry also went through a transformation regarding the portrayals of Russian-Jewish characters by relatively abandoning the usual stereotypes for the community.⁵³ The most significant point in this issue is that this pattern of integration was different from the Israeli state's integration policies by allowing the immigrants to preserve their original identity and ties to the former homeland.⁵⁴

With this theoretical chapter, the theoretical framework of this thesis is presented. It is argued that some mainstream international relations theories such as realism lack explanatory power and instead adopt a constructivist perspective to explain the argument that this study articulates. The shortcomings of the constructivist notion are solved with a new conceptualisation of the concept of diaspora, and this re-contextualization allows one to show the influence of diaspora on the formation of national identity and how this process is manifested in foreign policy perception. The next part will deal with mapping a historical background of bilateral relations. As the next chapter demonstrates, relations between Israel and the USSR have witnessed many ups and downs throughout the history and Jews in the Soviet Union also became a significant factor in determining this volatile nature of bilateral relations.

⁵³ Gershenson, "Is Israel Part of Russia?"

⁵⁴ Dan Caspi and Nelly Elias, "Being Here but Feeling There: The Case of Russian Media in Israel," *Israeli Sociology: A Journal for the Study of Israeli Society* 2 (2000): 415–55 [in Hebrew]; Nelly Elias, *Coming Home: Media and Returning Diaspora in Israel and Germany* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008); Tamar Horowitz, "The Integration of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union," *Israel Affairs* 11, no. 1 (2005): 117–36.

CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND OF ISRAEL-RUSSIA RELATIONS

In this chapter, a periodisation of Israeli-Russian relations will be presented on a conceptual basis. Instead of focusing on some dates without touching upon the context that has affected bilateral relations, a more meaningful picture will be achieved by looking at the historical background through several concepts. To this end, the period until 1991 will be discussed when diplomatic relations were fully restored, under the following divisions: 1) The Pre-State Era, covering Jews in Russia and the first series of Aliyah in the Yishuv period; 2) the Establishment of the State of Israel and the Cold War Era, involving three sub-periods: a) Relative cooperation between 1948 and 1956, b) Rise of tensions between 1956 and 1967 and, c) The demise of relations between 1967 and 1991.

4.1. Pre-State Era

Among the most active group in Ashkenazi (East European) Jewry, the Jewish community in Russia was a part of the landmark events in the country, particularly towards the end of the 19th century. This involvement, which coincided with growing anti-Semitism across the European continent, led the Jewish community in Russia to be politically and socially active and forerunners of the Zionist movement. Their political activities eventually brought the emergence of Israel in 1948. In other words, the relations between Russia and Israel go back even further than the emergence of the two states, and this deep background of bilateral relations continues to shape dynamics in these relations as well as in Israeli politics.

With the rise of nationalist movements in Europe and the emergence of the puzzling Jewish Question as a consequence of rising anti-Semitism, nationalist efforts within the Jewish community also began to emerge for a Jewish homeland and national self-determination. Described as Zionism, Jews in Eastern Europe and Russian territories gradually constructed their political organisation. The political presence of the Russian Jewish community is seen especially after the upsurge of violent attacks against them

- pogroms - in 1881. Two movements of that time, the BILU⁵⁵ and Hovevei Zion,⁵⁶ advocated the idea of immigrating to Palestine in a secular and socialist framework.

However, these calls could barely find correspondence within the Jewish community in the initial phases. Between 1882 and 1903, only 25.000 among almost 2 million Jews in Russia migrated to Palestine in the Ottoman territory. These waves of migration are known as the First Aliyah, from the Hebrew word for ascending,⁵⁷ and became a phenomenon to describe Jewish migration to Palestine and Israel after 1948. Together with who moved to Jerusalem, Russian Jews who came with the first Aliyah also founded villages in growing numbers across the Palestinian territory.⁵⁸ However, the Second Aliyah between 1904 and 1914, after the depression over the stagnation of the first settlements, the controversies in the Zionist Organization, and the death of Theodor Herzl in 1904 involved 40,000 Jews, many of whom were imbued with socialist ideas that led to the rise of Kibbutz settlements in Palestine.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, Jews who remained in Russia maintained their political organisation and later established several parties in the country. Espousing Zionist or socialist doctrines, the Bund (General League of Jewish Workingmen in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), once an integral part of the Russian Socialist Democratic Movement, was the most prominent of those parties working for the modernisation of Russian Jewish nationality as well as protecting the Jewish identity at the same time.⁶⁰ Some other Jewish parties such as the Zionist Socialist Workers Party (SSRP), Jewish Social Democratic Party (ESDRP-PZ), Jewish Socialist Labour Party (SERP), and Jewish Territorialist Labour Party (ETRP) also took an active part in the 1905 Revolution⁶¹ and competed with each other

⁵⁵ Established from the Hebrew initials in the biblical phrase *Beth Jacob Lechu Venelcha* 'O House of Jacob, come and let us go', this organization advocated the immigration of Jews to Palestine to work as farmers on Palestinian territory.

⁵⁶ Meaning Lovers of Zion in Yiddish, this movement was established after a small founding conference in 1884 at Kattowitz, just across the border from Russian Poland at that time.

⁵⁷ Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 5.

⁵⁸ Gilbert, 9.

⁵⁹ "Modern Zionist Aliyot," The Jewish Agency, accessed May 10, 2018, <http://www.jewishagency.org/historical-aliyah/content/28841>.

⁶⁰ Thomas E. Sawyer, *The Jewish Minority in the Soviet Union* (Westview Press, 1979), 111.

⁶¹ Genrikh Agranovskii, "Jewish Socialist Parties during the 1905 Russian Revolution," *East European Jewish Affairs* 42, no. 1 (April 1, 2012): 69–78.

to dominate the Jewish street in the Russian Empire.⁶² This shows that Russian Jewish intellectuals were not ghettoised in the society but instead actively participated in revolutionary movements and constituted a significant component of the centre of the socialist upheaval in the Tsar Empire.

The Jewish community welcomed the revolution in March 1917 due to its principles based on national self-determination and minority rights.⁶³ However, the increasing political and cultural presence of the community in an anti-assimilative manner brought new cleavages to the country, including the political elite, especially after the Revolution in November 1917. The gradual elimination of the Jews in the political elite in Russia led them to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the British occupation of Palestine in 1917 and the agreement on granting the Palestine Mandate to Britain in 1919. Therefore, it is not surprising that many of the migrants in the Third Aliyah were from the Russian Jewish community. Between 1919 and 1923, 35,000 Jews, many of whom were socialism-inspired pioneers, again arrived in Palestine and contributed considerably to the state formation process for the future Israel.⁶⁴ The labour union Histadrut and militia unit Haganah (later to be the Israeli army) were founded in this period.

Later, Stalin came to power in the USSR after Lenin's death in 1924. In his first years, he initiated a firm policy of political and socio-economic integration of minorities and Jews were included in this scope. In this context, old Jewish parties were liquidated, and autonomous institutions of the community were either shut down or absorbed by the political centre by January 1930.⁶⁵ He also began to implement policies to stop the Jewish migration flow to Palestine and ordered the creation of a Jewish Autonomous Region located in the new city of Birobidzhan in the early 1930s, aiming to resettle thousands of Jews as a counterbalance unit against Zionism.⁶⁶ For this reason, the

⁶² As an important note, some of those parties were not necessarily defending the idea of emigration to Palestine and rather preferred to work for a creating a Jewish state in any free land.

⁶³ Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (New York : Macmillan, 1964), 201–2.

⁶⁴ Gilbert, *Israel*, 43.

⁶⁵ Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets*, 229.

⁶⁶ Mikhail Chlenov, "The Jewish Community of Russia: Present-day Situation and Prospects," *East European Jewish Affairs* 32, no. 1 (June 1, 2002): 17.

proportion of Russian Jews in the Aliyah in the following period decreased, and German and Austrian Jews from Europe largely replaced Russian Jews in the migration flow after Hitler's rise to power.

After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty in August 1939 and the partition of Poland, almost three million Jews from that country started to flow into Soviet territories under Stalin's Soviet administration; which, though it offered them shelter, resettled them in harsh conditions.⁶⁷ With the attack on the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany in 1941, Stalin created an alliance both Polish Jews and Soviet Jews against the 'common enemy.'⁶⁸ By the spring of 1942, as many as one million Russian Jews and Polish Jews were also killed in the Nazi death camps.⁶⁹ By the end of WWII, both Jews in Palestine in the Allied armies and Soviets Jews had heavy casualties: 200,000 Soviet Jewish soldiers and more than 750 Palestine Jews in the British Army had died.⁷⁰

In the following period, the new world order was designed. One strategic consideration that the Soviet Union focused upon was driving Britain out of the Middle East. To accomplish this, Stalin wanted to split the bloc of pro-British Muslim Arab states and backed the Palestinian Jews in their independence efforts.⁷¹ In ideological terms, the emerging State of Israel represented a genuine 'people's democracy' in the rivalry between the socialist and imperialist systems.⁷² The first phases of the bilateral relations between the Soviet Union and future Israel overlapped the Cold War context, which brought many challenges and even ruptures on several occurrences.

⁶⁷ For the Polish Jews who fled into Soviet territories after this treaty and their challenges in the Soviet Union, see also: Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann, eds., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, 1st edition (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2017).

⁶⁸ Mark Edele and Wanda Warlik, "Saved by Stalin? Trajectories and Numbers of Polish Jews in the Soviet Second World War," in *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, Wayne State University Press (Detroit, MI, 2017), 114.

⁶⁹ Gilbert, *Israel*, 112.

⁷⁰ Gilbert, 120.

⁷¹ Robert Owen Freedman, "Soviet Jewry as a Factor in Soviet-Israeli Relations," in *Soviet Jewry in the 1980s: The Politics of Anti-Semitism and Emigration and the Dynamics of Resettlement*, ed. Robert Owen Freedman (Duke University Press, 1989), 62–63.

⁷² Efraim Karsh, "Soviet-Israeli Relations: A New Phase?," *The World Today* 41, no. 12 (1985): 214–17.

4.2. Cold War Era

4.2.1. 1948-1956: Relative Cooperation

With the establishment of State of Israel and the coinciding Independence War in 1948, Israel received the diplomatic support of two superpowers, the US and USSR, at the same time. In the UN General Assembly voting on the partition plan for the Palestinian territories on November 29, 1947, the USSR was in favour of the proposal and recognised the newly born state just three days after the announcement of its establishment on May 14.⁷³ Israel favourably reciprocated this attitude by appointing Golda Meir, who was among the 24 founders of the state, as minister plenipotentiary to the Soviet Union on September 1948.⁷⁴

During the Arab-Israeli War, the USSR also provided arms support to Israel via Czechoslovakia,⁷⁵ and this backing of the country had a considerable influence on the survival of the newly born Israeli state. Furthermore, the ideational similarities between Zionism and Communism, the kibbutz administrations and the communitarian way of living in Israeli society since the Yishuv period, gave the impression of a strong ideological affinity between Israel and the USSR.

However, describing this relationship between the State of Israel and the USSR as fully cooperative, let alone as an alliance. Despite his acknowledging the Soviet support in the emergence of the Israeli state, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion was known as an anti-communist and, based on the rise of the anti-Semitism in the USSR; he underlined the fact that 'the communist bloc recognises Israel but not Jews'⁷⁶. The cooperation between the two countries thus remained limited.

⁷³ Philip Marshall Brown, "The Recognition of Israel," *The American Journal of International Law* 42, no. 3 (1948): 620.

⁷⁴ Yossi Goldstein, "Doomed to Fail: Golda Meir's Mission to Moscow (Part I)," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 3 (January 1, 2011): 131.

⁷⁵ Leslie Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel, 1948-1967* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 45.

⁷⁶ Uri Bialer, "Facts and Pacts: Ben-Gurion and Israel's International Orientation, 1948-1956," in *David Ben-Gurion: Politics and Leadership in Israel*, ed. Ronald W. Zweig (London ; F. Cass ; Jerusalem: Portland, Or. : Y.I. Ben-Zvi, 1991), 217.

The best way to describe Israeli foreign policy between the US-USSR rivalry until 1956 is that it refused to take a clear side and instead adopting a 'non-identification' policy as its central policy.⁷⁷ This policy was a pragmatic one that centred Israel's inner strength on acquiring a 'spiritual independence', not on ideological one born of a pro-non-alignment attitude.⁷⁸ To be more explicit, Israel shaped its foreign policy attitudes according to the needs of the state on that day, particularly the arms support and the population influx through Jewish migration necessary for consolidating the state's survival in the Middle East region.⁷⁹

As evidence of this situation, on the one side, Israel backed the US in the Korean War out of an expectation that it would receive arms support from the country.⁸⁰ On the other side, Ben-Gurion made several attempts to prevent the deterioration of bilateral relations after the Soviet mission in Tel Aviv was bombed, and several members of its staff were wounded on February 9, 1953. Despite the breaking off diplomatic relations for a couple of months,⁸¹ Ben-Gurion later softened his anti-Soviet tone starting when Stalin died in March same year, and informal talks in Bulgaria with the Khrushchev government resulted in the elevation of the Soviet legation in Tel Aviv and the Israeli legation in Moscow to embassy level again in June 1954.⁸² Following this reconciliation period, Ben-Gurion even conducted talks with Moscow for buying arms as well.⁸³

This pragmatism of Israel is also witnessed in the population issue. Despite being pressured by Washington about having inclined towards being 'red'⁸⁴ Israeli

⁷⁷ Gyoo-hyoung Kahng, "Zionism, Israel, and the Soviet Union: A Study in the Rise and Fall of Brief Soviet-Israeli Friendship from 1945 to 1955," *Global Economic Review* 27, no. 4 (1998): 99.

⁷⁸ Bialer, 216-220.

⁷⁹ Nadav Safran, "The Soviet Union and Israel: 1947-1969," in *The Soviet Union and the Middle East: The Post-World War II Era*, ed. Ivo Lederer and Wayne Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press., 1974), 162.

⁸⁰ Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel, 1948-1967*, 143.

⁸¹ For details of the incident in which some Jewish doctors in the USSR were accused of plotting to murder leading Communist Party figures, called the "Doctors' Plot," see also Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948-1953*, 1st edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004).

⁸² Gyoo-hyoung Kahng, "Zionism, Israel, and the Soviet Union: A Study in the Rise and Fall of Brief Soviet-Israeli Friendship from 1945 to 1955," 103.

⁸³ Bialer, "Facts and Pacts: Ben-Gurion and Israel's International Orientation, 1948-1956," 230-32.

⁸⁴ Bialer, 224.

governments strove to maintain contacts with Moscow due to the rise of anti-Semitism in the country since the 1940s,⁸⁵ which they expected would lead to migrations to the state.⁸⁶

4.2.2. 1956-1967: Rise of Tensions and Rupture of Official Ties

Tensions between the two countries increased because of Soviet support for Gamal Abdel Nasser, the new president of Egypt who came to power in a military coup in 1952. He became popular with his anti-Israeli pan-Arab nationalist, anti-imperialist rhetoric. His arms deal with Soviet-proxy Czechoslovakia in September 1955⁸⁷, and the funds he received from the USSR for the construction of the Aswan Dam were the most evident signs of such support in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The arms in particular deal brought about a significant shift in the strategic balance between Egypt and Israel⁸⁸, and it raised concerns in Israel about a possible war with the Arab country. The Israeli government decided to prepare for war in the upcoming summer⁸⁹ and attempted to align with the US, Britain, and France against the threat. Despite being refused by Washington and London, Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres managed to secure military support from Paris.⁹⁰ After Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, the UK backtracked in its decision and joined France and Israel to challenge the Egyptian president.

The Sinai War started after Israel attacked Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsula on October 29, 1956. British and French forces joined the offensive two days later and reached the banks of the Suez Canal the same week. Two superpowers –the US and

⁸⁵ Gyoo-hyoung Kahng, 100.

⁸⁶ Devorah Hakohen, *Immigrants in Turmoil: Mass Immigration to Israel and Its Repercussions in the 1950s and After*, Modern Jewish History (Syracuse New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 21.

⁸⁷ This agreement was not a sudden development but rather a result of long-standing negotiations between Czech, Soviet, and Egyptian officials. For an extensive study of those negotiations starting from 1953, see Guy Laron, *Cutting the Gordian Knot: The Post-WWII Egyptian Quest for Arms and the 1955 Czechoslovak Arms Deal*, 55 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007).

⁸⁸ Ohad Leslau, "Israeli Intelligence and the Czech–Egyptian Arms Deal," *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 3 (June 2012): 329.

⁸⁹ Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War*, Revised Edition (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 291.

⁹⁰ Stein, *The Making of Modern Israel, 1948-1967*, 177.

the USSR- issued two separate ultimatums urging the offensive forces to withdraw. After the consequent withdrawal of the offensive forces, the USSR and its proxy, Egypt increased their status substantially in the region. Israel, on the other hand, shifted more into the Western camp and formed a nuclear alliance with France.

This shift in Israeli foreign policy was not significant only for different alignment options, but also for relations with the USSR, which shifted into a new phase. Before the Egyptian-Czechoslovakian arms deal and the 1956 Egypt-Israel War, there was a perception that allowed Israel to cooperate with the USSR in regional and global issues despite its reservations about the country's anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. After those incidents, which clearly showed the Soviet support for Egypt, Israelis instead started to regard Soviets as a superpower with which the state should avoid conflict. The Alliance of the Periphery doctrine developed by Israelis shortly afterwards in 1958, should be regarded as an attempt to challenge the Soviet influence on the Arab states through forging a counter-balance with anti-Soviet Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia.⁹¹

In the first half of the 1960s, tensions in the Cold War was at the peak, and Soviet-Israeli relations were inevitably influenced by this situation. On the one hand, pan-Arabism was gradually becoming a unifying component for the Arabs, in the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958, and the Soviets were supporting this development. On the other hand, Khrushchev was acting more aggressively against Israel, which he saw as the puppet of imperial powers.⁹² Syria, in the aftermath of the UAR's dissolution, was becoming a strategic ally of the Soviets as the northern neighbour of Israel.

The Soviets were solidifying their military and economic support for Egypt and Syria in the 1960s due to the country's geopolitical interests in the region, including facilities and bases in those two countries for their newly organised Mediterranean squadron

⁹¹ As can be understood from the members of this alliance, the main purpose for Israel was to challenge the surrounding Arab countries by receiving support from non-Arab countries of the MENA region. For the issue, see also Asher Susser, "Israel's Place in a Changing Regional Order (1948-2013)," *Israel Studies* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 220–21.

⁹² Talal Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1999), 22.

and the aircraft protecting it.⁹³ This policy, based on the “power projection function of the Soviet military,” was not due to the pursuit of interests in the MENA region but they were also a quest for positions vis-à-vis the US and its allies from the Western countries.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, Levi Eshkol’s election as Prime Minister of Israel in 1963, as a soft-spoken figure than his dogmatic and harsh predecessor Ben-Gurion, softened the tensions in the air.⁹⁵ With this optimism, both countries seemed that they might find common ground, and they conducted private talks in June 1965 and in January 1966 with representatives of the Soviet and Israeli governments, expressing their interest in improving relations between the two countries.⁹⁶ However, this willingness to protect the momentum and preventing conflict in the Arab-Israeli rivalry started to collapse after a military coup in Syria in 1966 and the rise of a pro-Palestinian Ba’ath faction to power. This development led to the increase of military clashes on the Syrian Israeli border and to USSR efforts to avoid turning this into a regional/global conflict.⁹⁷

When the USSR shared intelligence with Egypt about an Israeli build-up on the Syrian border, which was later revealed to be wrong⁹⁸ and when the Israelis attacked Egyptian forces on June 5, 1967, after Nasser’s decision to close the Tiran Straits, the Soviet Union clarified its side with the Arab countries to a never-before-seen extent. Having cut off diplomatic relations with Israel, the Soviet Union went even further and declared to the US that it might militarily intervene in the conflict unless the US reined in the Israelis.

⁹³ Galia Golan, “The Soviet Union and the Outbreak of the June 1967 Six-Day War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 4. See Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War II to Gorbachev* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Galia Golan, *Yom Kippur and After* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1977); and Galia Golan, “The Soviet Union and the Middle East After Thirty Years,” in Andrzej Korbonski and Francis Fukuyama, eds., *The Soviet Union and the Third World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987)

⁹⁴ Galia Golan, “The Soviet Union and the Outbreak of the June 1967 Six-Day War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 4.

⁹⁵ Guy Laron, “Playing with Fire: The Soviet-Syrian-Israeli Triangle, 1965-1967,” *Cold War History* 10, no. 2 (May 2010): 167.

⁹⁶ Laron, 167.

⁹⁷ Laron, 171.

⁹⁸ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 28.

Different from the earlier 1956 Sinai War, the Soviet Union changed its foreign policy demeanour and shifted from passive support to active military support of the Arabs in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Disappointed with the Israelis' involvement in the conflict and their subsequent victory, which opened the floodgates for US support, the USSR had to act with the Arabs to maintain its influence over the region.

It can be said that the Soviets' Arab policy in the 1967 War frustrated the Arabs,⁹⁹ which allowed the Israelis to kill two birds with one stone. The minuscule effect of the Soviet intervention to the war as well as the vague content of threats against the US and Israel disappointed the Arabs.¹⁰⁰ After the war, the Soviets mainly pursued three policies: avoiding conflict with the US in the MENA region, arming Arab allies with advanced weapons, and forcing Arab leaders to find a political solution - even until 1991.¹⁰¹ As an indirect result of this policy, relations between Israel and the USSR would work through unofficial channels for an extended period.

4.2.3. 1967-1991: Demise of Bilateral Relations

Following the Arab defeat in the 1967 War, the Cold War attained a never-before-seen influence on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Along with the developments that pushed the superpowers to affirm their allies in the region, beginning in the 1970s, regional allies increasingly dragged their allies into regional conflicts, which also brought the détente policy between the US and the USSR under severe threat.

As a consequence of this new dimension in alliances, some disputes also happened between allies, including global powers demurring to declare full-fledged support for their regional proxies in several occurrences. Amid such a tense situation, bilateral relations between Israel and Russia which had officially broken down after 1967, remained static in the Cold War context without furnishing any alternative source for cooperation. Furthermore, the Jewish community in the Soviet Union and their

⁹⁹ Nizameddin, 27.

¹⁰⁰ Avi Kober, "Great-Power Involvement and Israeli Battlefield Success in the Arab-Israeli Wars, 1948–1982," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 28.

¹⁰¹ Nizameddin, *Russia and the Middle East*, 29.

struggles to make Aliyah for Israel became another issue that led to the further deterioration of bilateral ties.

A first test case of deteriorated ties was a severe issue in which the Soviet military took an active part in combat with Israeli forces for the first time in the Cold War.¹⁰² During the Egyptian–Israeli War of Attrition in 1969–70, not only did the Soviet Union activate its military advisors for Egypt in the battlefield, but Soviet pilots also joined the air clashes with the Israeli Air Forces (IAF) and even inflicted casualties in them.¹⁰³ This deep Soviet involvement in the military conflict, called ‘Operation Kavkaz’ (Caucasus), should be considered within a global context and Cold War framework instead of a simple bolstering of the alliance with Egypt. It is not a coincidence that the tensest phase of the crisis between Israeli and Soviet forces was around Port Said, where Soviet naval facilities were deployed in the Mediterranean against NATO and the US expansion of influence with its Sixth Fleet in the basin.¹⁰⁴

Amidst the growing rift between Tel Aviv and Moscow, Soviet armed support for the Arabs dramatically increased. In addition to the rearmament and training task of the Egyptian forces, the deployment of their integral military formations in Egypt became Moscow’s concrete objective in its Egypt policy. Within this policy, over 50,000 members of the Soviet armed forces, almost 20,000 active among them, were deployed during the peak period of 1969–1972 in Egypt.¹⁰⁵ This military support was also bolstered before the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and the first advancements of the Syrian and Egyptian armies can be understood as an effect of such support.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Dima P. Adamsky, “‘Zero-Hour for the Bears’: Inquiring into the Soviet Decision to Intervene in the Egyptian–Israeli War of Attrition, 1969–70,” *Cold War History* 6, no. 1 (February 2006): 113.

¹⁰³ Adamsky, 121.

¹⁰⁴ Adamsky, 122.

¹⁰⁵ Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, “The Tyranny of Vested-Interest Sources: Shaping the Record of Soviet Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1973,” *Journal of the Middle East & Africa* 1, no. 1 (January 2010): 44. For an extensive treatment of the same issue, see also Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: The USSR’s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*, 1 edition (Oxford ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁰⁶ John L. Scherer, “Soviet and American Behavior During the Yom Kippur War,” *World Affairs*, no. 1 (1978): 6–8.

Another particular dynamic of the bilateral relations between Israel and the USSR was the US involvement as the communication channel for delivering messages between the two capitals. As a witness of that period, Henry Kissinger notes the incidents in which the Soviet ambassador in Washington was sending him messages threatening retaliation against Israeli actions during the Israeli advance on the Syrian front.¹⁰⁷ This communication line between the superpowers and the desire to protect the détente pushed the US to force the Israelis to sign a ceasefire agreement and even walk back its support of Israeli actions in the region.

This policy was seen, especially after the Camp David process. With Egypt's leaning on the US and making peace with Israel under the Sadat administration, Syria became the most crucial ally of the Soviets in the region. During the Israeli occupation of Lebanon in 1982, Israel also launched an attack on Syria's Soviet-made air defence missiles and radar stations in the Bekaa Valley, leading to Soviet threats delivered via the US. After these threats, President Ronald Reagan insisted that Israel agree to a ceasefire to prevent negative consequences for US-Israeli relations. In this case, "the inter-superpower relationship overshadowed the patron-client relationship."¹⁰⁸

Despite such instances, in most cases, cooperation reunited in relations between the US and Israel. One of the most significant aspects of this cooperation vis-a-vis the Soviet Union in that period was the Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel. Since Israel-Soviet relations were broken off, the US had been taking an active role in facilitating the emigration of Soviet Jewry to Israel and increasing its pressure to ease the restrictive policies of the country on emigration.

Starting with the Nixon administration, the US and several American Jewish organisations under the successive presidencies of Ford, Carter, and Reagan followed an active and fruitful foreign policy on a moral and legal basis against Soviet officials

¹⁰⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 508.

¹⁰⁸ Kober, "Great-Power Involvement and Israeli Battlefield Success in the Arab-Israeli Wars, 1948–1982," 32–33.

on the issue.¹⁰⁹ Notably, the “Refuseniks”, which refers to Jews in the Soviet Union who applied for permission to leave for Israel but were refused presumably due to hostile relations with Israel at that time,¹¹⁰ became a real issue starting with the 1970s. The term has gradually received international recognition via the activities of the Prisoners of Zion.¹¹¹

With Gorbachev’s political ascendancy in 1985, things changed drastically. His liberalisation policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union overlapped with the easing of Soviet Jewish emigration. This policy was also due to his willingness to strengthen relations with Washington and to receive more assistance from the Americans.¹¹² However, just as these policies led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev’s opening up the floodgates for Soviet Jewish emigration also bore an unprecedented result, and the number of emigrants dramatically increased, especially after 1989. In the next chapter, how those Jews have transformed the Israeli political scene will be depicted.

¹⁰⁹ Minton Goldman, “United States Foreign Policy and Soviet Jewish Emigration from Nixon to Bush,” in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro’i (Oregon: Frank Cass, 1995), 338–61.

¹¹⁰ Yaacov Ro’i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration, 1948-1967* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹¹¹ Vladimir (Ze’ev) Khanin, “The Refusenik Community in Moscow: Social Networks and Models of Identification,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 41, no. 1–2 (August 1, 2011): 76.

¹¹² Goldman, “United States Foreign Policy and Soviet Jewish Emigration from Nixon to Bush,” 350.

CHAPTER 5

RUSSIAN DIASPORA IN ISRAELI POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY

5.1. Politicisation and Russian Parties Phenomenon

As a natural result of the FSU Jewish immigrants in immense numbers, their voices uttering more demands in the political sphere have raised. Starting with the parliamentary elections in 1992, the FSU Jewish community increasingly shaped the political landscape in Israel. The most crucial factor in demonstrating this influence is the political parties founded by the FSU Jews, later turned out to be a “Russian Parties” phenomenon. In this part, how this phenomenon drastically changed Israeli politics will be explained by dividing the almost three-decade process into two: The Localization Process (1991-2000) and the Golden Era (2001-2009).

5.1.1. 1991 – 2000: The Localization Process

Although the community’s immediate initiatives in terms of political organisation failed in the elections, its significant population and number of the electorate were enough to perceive them as “king-maker”, which exactly happened with Labor’s surprising victory. According to the data presented by Israel’s Ministry of Immigration and Absorption, among the more than 3.4 million Israelis eligible to vote in the elections were some 300,000 recent immigrants and the overwhelming majority of whom came from the former Soviet Union.¹¹³ Predictably due to their ongoing integration into the Israeli society, political parties in Israel engaged in the immigrants on a limited basis until early 1992. However, in the later phases of the campaigning process, parties increased their efforts in attracting the immigrants’ vote by airing advertisements in Russian and placing new immigrants on the party lists.

Meanwhile, the two biggest parties, Likud and Labor, were mainly competing on the immigrant-vote based on several reasons. On the one side, Likud was expecting that the FSU Jews will not vote for a party (Labor) that advocates the principles of an already-failed socialist system and rather they will support Likud as the most significant

¹¹³ Reich, Dropkin, and Wurmser, “Soviet Jewish Immigration and the 1992 Israeli Knesset Elections,” 465.5.49

right-wing party which prioritises the security agenda. Moreover, party members also believed that immigrants would be thankful to the party for their leadership in the Aliyah process and young generation of the immigrants, who were absorbed more quickly into the society, will even influence their parents' voting behaviour.¹¹⁴ On the other side, Labor believed that the immigrants being a highly educated and cultured group would make them lean towards supporting them as a leftist party.

Moreover, Labor built his campaign upon the failure of Likud in the absorption of immigrants and providing them with good living conditions.¹¹⁵ This prediction of Labor was accurate, considering the immigrants' thought on Likud's absorption policies. Several poll results before the elections showed that most of the immigrants supported Likud's foreign policy positions, but its absorption process was a failure.¹¹⁶ When the election results announced (Table 5.1.), it was revealed that the immigrants supported Labor for giving a lesson to Likud exactly in this issue. This incident resembles what happened in 1977 elections, when Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews votes from the periphery, brought Likud to the power and overthrown three-decade Labor party rule.

Table 5.1. 1992 Knesset Elections: Exit Poll of the FSU Jews

(Source: Dahaf-Israel Television, Israel Television [Channel 1], June 23, 1992)

Party	Percentage	Party	Percentage
Labor	47.10	Shas	1.60
Likud	18	Moledet	1.57
Meretz	11	Tzomet	1.42
Democracy And Aliyah	5.49	Mafdal	0.62
United Torah Judaism	2.11	Shas	1.60

¹¹⁴ Reich, Dropkin, and Wurmser, 467.

¹¹⁵ Reich, Dropkin, and Wurmser, 468.

¹¹⁶ Reich, Dropkin, and Wurmser, 472.

Contrary to the long-standing expectations that an immigrant party was unlikely to run in the election, three immigrant-dominated parties were also established in the spring of 1992: Democracy and Aliyah (DA), the Israeli Renaissance Movement (TALI), and Pensioners and Immigrants Party. However, all parties have failed in passing the electoral threshold, manifesting that the politicisation period of the FSU Jews was yet to be completed with extensive organisation and funding, though the community, in general, was influential in the elections.¹¹⁷

With the elections in 1996, this marginalised trend within the immigrants, turned out to be a real phenomenon, enabling them to generate the “Russian parties”. Among them, Yisrael BaAliyah (Israel on the Aliyah [Up]) (YBA) co-founded in 1996 by Natan Sharansky and Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, as both of them are refuseniks and ex-Soviet dissidents, who were both representing the “victimisation” of Soviet Jews in the Union. This victimised image of these co-founders, particularly of Sharansky, was a strategy utilised for collecting the Russian immigrants under the party’s representation. Born and raised as a Ukraine (then part of the Soviet Union) based Jew, Sharansky had been associated with an activist role inside the Soviet Jewry movement during the restraints by the Union for exit visas to Israel in the 1970s. Until his release in 1986, both his active stance in the Refusenik movement and the campaign for his freedom from the imprisonment in a Siberian forced labour camp almost for a decade, Sharansky was symbolised for human rights in general and Soviet Jewry in particular. As the first political prisoner ever released by Gorbachev due to intense political pressure from Washington, it was not surprising that he is expected to get involved into the Israeli political scene when he arrived at Israel in 1986 and elected President of the newly created Zionist Forum, the umbrella organisation of former Soviet activists in 1988. With the 14th Parliamentary Elections in 1996, this came out to be true.

Although FSU Jewish votes’ bringing Labor to the power in 1992 was enough to figure out how the community became effective in shaping the future of politics in Israel, it can be said that 1996 has become the real game-changer in the Israeli political

¹¹⁷ Reich, Dropkin, and Wurmser, 477.

landscape. Despite being founded in the same year of the elections, YBA showed an unexpected success by having 5.8% of the votes, corresponding seven seats in the Knesset.¹¹⁸ Together with Sharansky and Edelstein, other five deputies were Roman Bronfman, Michael Nudelman, Yuri Stern, Marina Solodkin and Zvi Weinberg as Jews who have made Aliyah from the Soviet Union countries. This rate of gained votes in the elections even helped them to have ministerial seats in the Cabinet, Sharansky as Minister of Industry and Trade and Edelstein as Minister of Absorption. Considering the urgency for the integration of the immigrants and their employment in Israel's developing economy, it can be asserted that these appointments of two leading Russian Jewish figures were made purposefully for domestic political needs.

Not only at the national level, but the party also enjoyed significant support in the local elections in 1998.¹¹⁹ Considering this success in the municipal level together with the FSU Jews' mostly supporting Likud candidates in 1993 local elections, it can be claimed that bottom-up process of politicisation is almost completed for the political movement and an opposite top-down process have begun through localisation since then. On the one hand, this shifting strategy allowed YBA to expand its influence and address more people in Israeli society. On the other hand, fragmentation within the party became inevitable since the grassroots and the voter base were expanded.

There were some indications of these frictions within the party even in the 1998 local elections. A group of critic of the party leaders made their independent 'Russian' municipal lists in the elections and they found support from influential people in Israeli politics including Larisa Gershtein, Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, leader of the 'Community for Jerusalem' bloc and Yosef Begun, former Zionist activist in the Soviets who were marginalized by the YBA party.¹²⁰ This opposing fraction within the FSU Jews, centralised Israeliness more than the Russianness and opted to expand their influence

¹¹⁸ "Knesset Elections Results - Fourteenth Knesset," accessed June 13, 2019, https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res14.htm.

¹¹⁹ Vladimir Khanin, "Israeli 'Russian' Parties and the New Immigrant Vote," *Israel Affairs* 7, no. 2–3 (December 1, 2000): 101–34.

¹²⁰ Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin, "The New Russian Jewish Diaspora and 'Russian' Party Politics in Israel," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 4 (December 2002): 44.

over all parts of the Israeli society instead of remaining limited with the immigrant community. In this regard, the victorious Russian municipal bloc in Ashdod (Our Home - Ashdod) which received nine seats in the city council, inspired Avigdor Lieberman, former Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office and who is also a veteran immigrant from the USSR, to copy the successful model to the national level.¹²¹

The general elections in 1999 were the landmark incident in which the split among the FSU Jewish political movement was irreversibly apparent. Right before the elections, a group of right-wing members of the party led by Yurii Stern and Michael Nudelman left the party due to the dissatisfaction with Israeli-Palestinian talks in the Wye Plantation summit. Unlike Sharansky and Edelstein, who enjoys more the relations with bureaucracy and party elite, Stern and Nudelman were more populist politicians and more sympathised by increasing voter-base.¹²² After a short period, they joined Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) (YB) party which was founded by Lieberman. This new party got rapidly organised with a large group of Russian-speaking former members of Likud who were disappointed with the party, particularly after the Wye agreement. Namely, the party has collected significant figures of the anti-Israeli political elite and anti-YBA establishment.¹²³

Another secessionist group with leftist views led by Roman Bronfman and Alex Tsinker also joined the opposition efforts against YBA due to ideological reasons, and they established a new party called HaBehira HaDemocratit (Democratic Choice) in August 1999 after the elections.¹²⁴ Along with these attempts, several other parties with an FSU Jewish background have also begun to appear more as a challenge YBA.¹²⁵ However, only YB and HaBehira HaDemocratit could survive politically.

¹²¹ Daniel Ben Simon, 'Christmas Presents', Ha'aretz, 29 December 2000.

¹²² Khanin, "Israeli 'Russian' Parties and the New Immigrant Vote," 123–29.

¹²³ Khanin, "The New Russian Jewish Diaspora and 'Russian' Party Politics in Israel"; Khanin, "Israeli 'Russian' Parties and the New Immigrant Vote."

¹²⁴ Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), 21 July 1999.

¹²⁵ Although there were some small "Russian" parties entering the 1996 elections, such as Yedinstvo and Aliya (Unity and Aliya), which received 22,000 votes but was unable to pass the 1.5 per cent electoral threshold, elections in 1999 were more fertile in terms of having "Russian" parties in the race. Among them, there was Tikva (Hope) founded by Alex Tentser and Slava Premysler, Lev Olim Lemaan Yisrael (Heart of Immigrants for Israel - Lomi), created in February-March 1999. For more; Khanin, "The New Russian Jewish Diaspora and 'Russian' Party Politics in Israel."

When it comes to the elections, Yisrael BaAliyah won 172,000 votes and 6 Knesset seats, losing only a slight proportion of votes from results of the previous elections in 1996. Meanwhile, Yisrael Beiteinu (allying with Moledet, Tkuma, and Herut parties) received more than 82,000 votes and 4 Knesset seats. Although Yisrael BaAliyah and its leader Sharansky, holding the Interior Ministry portfolio seems more successful in the elections, what Yisrael Beiteinu did in a short period was also impressive. With an anti-establishment stance, Liberman could trigger a massive wave of solidarity around him, including among many Israelis of non-FSU origin. Namely, the agenda of his party became more Israeli than the Russian attracted society. Consequently, his party became one of the key factions in the right-wing National Union (Halchud HaLeumi) bloc in opposition to Ehud Barak's centre-left government.¹²⁶

Table 5.2. Founding Ideologies of Russian Jewish Parties and Their Classification

	HaBehira HaDemocratit	Yisrael BaAliyah	Yisrael Beiteinu
<i>Ideology</i>	Post-Zionist	Neo-Zionist	Classical Zionist
<i>Approach to the Law of Return</i>	Not to change	To correct, but to preserve the essence	To change
<i>Foreign Policy</i>	Left	Centrist	Right
<i>Approach to State and Religion</i>	Anti-clerical, to separate religion from the state	Moderate, careful change the status quo	Moderate, not to change the status quo

On the brink of entering a new century, this phenomenon emerged in less than a decade, demonstrated several things: First, the FSU Jewish community had an influence on the Israeli politics both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Since the immigrant population is enormous, and that population consists of many political backgrounds (Table 5.2.), they can determine the future of mainstream political parties. Second, the emergence of many “Russian” parties starting with 1992 elections, points that the community is not homogenous, and it can be very

¹²⁶ Khanin, 41.

pragmatic, as it is seen in the rise of Yisrael Beiteinu and HaBehira HaDemocratit. Last but not least, embracing an “Israeli” identity that will accompany the “Russian” identity also started to become an essential part of the society and parties’ agenda. Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin’s being elected as the Russian President in 2000, gave momentum to the increasing profile of FSU Jews as a Russian diaspora.

5.1.2. 2001 – 2011: The Golden Era

In the aftermath of reform in the electoral system in 1996, in which the Prime Minister and the Knesset members will be elected in separate elections, it is witnessed that the “Russian Vote” becomes more crucial than ever for prime minister candidates. Netanyahu’s surprise victory in 1996 was also due to the support he received from the FSU Jews thanks to his anti-Oslo rhetoric with a right-wing stance. In the premiership election in 2001, Ariel Sharon also knew this issue well. Thanks to his opposing stance against the negotiations with the Palestinians as well as actions that stirred up the Palestinians, leading to the Second Intifada, he could achieve in receiving the Russian vote.¹²⁷ In exchange, National Union bloc was brought into the National Unity Government, as the bloc leader Rehavam Zeevi was appointed Minister of Tourism and Lieberman becoming Minister of National Infrastructure, who became the bloc leader after Zeevi was assassinated on 17 October 2001.

The rise of right-wing politics in Israel after the Second Intifada was further exacerbated by the contribution of FSU Jews in the next elections. In the 2003 elections, it has become clear that the community supports Russian political parties with a nationalist agenda instead of those who remained within the “ethnic” boundaries with a leftist or centrist tendency. For instance, while the National Union received seven seats with 173,973 votes (5.53 %), Yisrael BaAliyah with its more centrist political stance could only receive two seats in the Knesset.¹²⁸ As a result of this declining power, Sharansky and Edelstein decided to merge its shrunken factions

¹²⁷ Vladimir (Ze’ev) Khanin, “Russian-Jewish Political Experience in Israel: Patterns, Elites and Movements,” *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 1 (January 2011): 66.

¹²⁸ “Knesset Elections Results - Sixteenth Knesset,” accessed June 13, 2019, https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res16.htm.

with that of Likud in 2004.¹²⁹ Again, Left-oriented HaBehira HaDemocratit had to split due to disagreement in joining leftist Meretz party list in the elections¹³⁰ and lost its already minor influence in Israeli politics.

Yisrael Beiteinu's rising profile in the right-wing political components became evident in the next elections in March 2006. Only two months before, Hamas had won the Palestinian elections and this development alarmed the Israeli right, leading to parties using a securitising anti-Palestinian tone in their campaigns. Lieberman-led Yisrael Beiteinu benefited upon this process and became the fifth-largest parliamentary faction in the Knesset with 11 seats (281,880 votes in total / 9.0%).¹³¹ He also joined Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's coalition led by Kadima party and was appointed Minister of Strategic Affairs. His being appointed to this post instead of ministries related to immigration or infrastructure issues also demonstrated how the party and the support it receives from the FSU Jews. It was revealed that more than nine of 11 seats of the party came from the FSU Jews, at least 80% former Yisrael BaAliyah votes.¹³² Only two seats came from native and veteran Israelis, mostly former Likud voters of the moderate right who had been disappointed with Sharon's leadership in 2004–2006 as well as feeling suspicious of the current Likud leader Netanyahu.¹³³ Hence, the party became the 'Russian community consensus movement'¹³⁴ likewise witnessed between 1996 to 1999 being enjoyed by Yisrael BaAliyah.

The process ending up with the 2009 Elections became a turning point for the Yisrael Beiteinu party. In two decades, the ongoing waves of FSU Jewish population had reached almost 1 million, corresponding to 13.5% of the whole population as demonstrated previously in Table 2.2. Among this group, about 760,000 were citizens

¹²⁹ Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin, "The Israel Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) Party between the Mainstream and 'Russian' Community Politics," *Israel Affairs* 16, no. 1 (January 2010): 108.

¹³⁰ "The Meretz Man and the Austrian Right," *Haaretz*, January 9, 2003, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/1.4962797>.

¹³¹ "Knesset Elections Results - Seventeenth Knesset," accessed June 13, 2019, https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res17.htm.

¹³² Khanin, "The Israel Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) Party between the Mainstream and 'Russian' Community Politics," 108.

¹³³ Khanin, "The Israel Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) Party between the Mainstream and 'Russian' Community Politics."

¹³⁴ Khanin, 109.

of voting age, and the political weight of the ‘Russian’ voters corresponded to approximately 20–22 seats in the Knesset (Figure 5.1).¹³⁵ Therefore, it can be claimed that this significant potential of voter-base triggered the party to raise the bar for influence in the Knesset and act more independently than ever.

For instance, the party withdrew from the coalition in January 2008 with the pretext of protesting concessions Olmert offered during negotiations with the Palestinians¹³⁶ and raised its voice for a “third-way” approach to the Palestinian issue. According to this approach which is referred as ‘Kissinger-Lieberman Plan’, a population and territories exchange, in which there will be an exchange of Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank with Arab cities like Umm al-Fahm and towns in the Arab triangle in the southern Galilee, should be implemented as a neo-centralist alternative to both the land for peace of the left and the peace for peace concepts of the right.¹³⁷

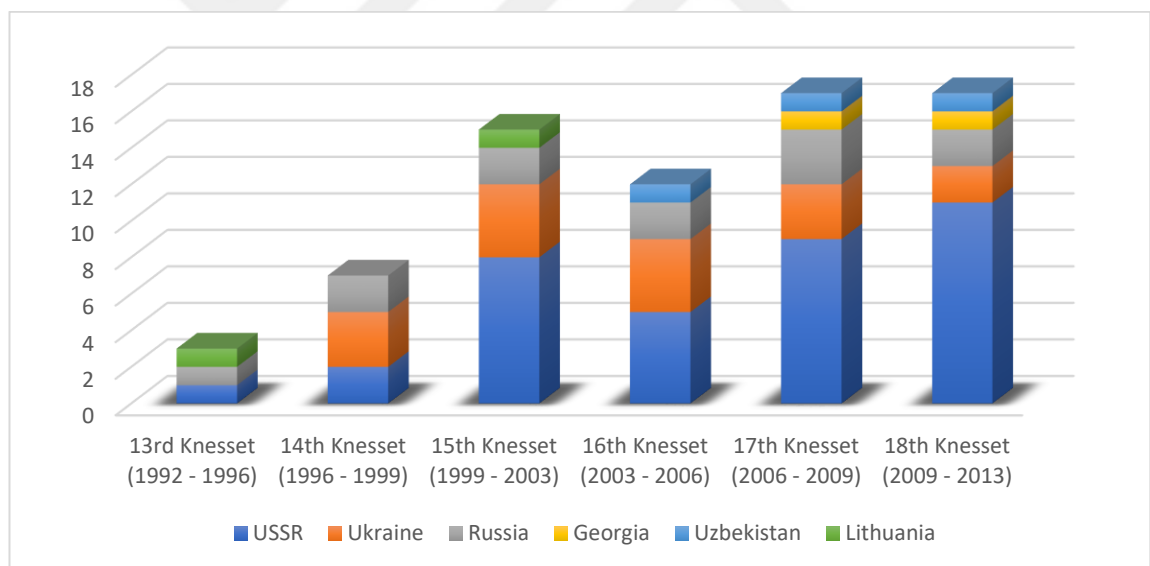


Figure 5.1. Number of FSU Jewish MPs and Their Countries of Origin (1992–2013)
(Source: Official Website of Israel’s Knesset)

¹³⁵ Khanin, “Russian-Jewish Political Experience in Israel,” 56.

¹³⁶ “Factbox: Facts about Israel’s Avigdor Lieberman,” *Reuters*, April 13, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-lieberman-factbox-idUSTRE73C5GA20110413>.

¹³⁷ Khanin, “The Israel Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) Party between the Mainstream and ‘Russian’ Community Politics,” 105.

Consequently, this attitude had a broad repercussion within the Israeli electorate and the party became one of the biggest surprises of the 2009 elections by winning 15 seats in Knesset, the highest number in the party's history, with 394,577 votes (11.7%).¹³⁸ While two-thirds of these seats were thanks to FSU Jews, particularly the ones who made Aliyah in recent years, five seats came from other segments of the Israeli society who were not content with Kadima or Likud policies¹³⁹ and predictably, the failure in the war with Hezbollah in Lebanon. With this broad range of supporters, the party began to enjoy the maximum influence it received so far as well as eliminating all its rivals within the Russian parties in Israeli politics (Table 5.3.). In other words, the party could achieve in combining the FSU Jewish community solidarity vote with an effective nationwide agenda. As a result of this widespread support with an effective agenda, Lieberman is appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the cabinet, which may be regarded as the most critical position that a politician from Russian parties attained in the Israeli cabinet since the 1990s.

Having said that, a major dilemma of the party also became apparent in this process. As the composition of voters revealed, the party had to keep a delicate balance between two components that may conflict in each other; its nationwide aspirations and its predominantly Russian character.¹⁴⁰ Although both components had been present within the FSU Jewish community since the 1990s, it can be claimed that from 2009 onwards, the heterogeneity of the FSU Jewish community was gradually eradicated and the community integrated into the mainstream Israeli society in a manner that cannot be easily distinguished anymore. Even though the Russian identity was significant, a peaceful merge of both Israeli and Russian identities has irreversibly started from this period. Consequently, the YB party started to have downfall afterwards with the challenging situation of keeping this delicate balance.

¹³⁸ "Knesset Elections Results - Eighteenth Knesset," accessed June 13, 2019, https://knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res18.htm.

¹³⁹ Khanin, "The Israel Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) Party between the Mainstream and 'Russian' Community Politics," 117.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

However, the two years after the elections became the most determining period ever in Israel-Russia relations. This period proved that the role of Russia in Israeli foreign policy has increased. Following Lieberman’s appointment, two countries first made a strategic partnership between each other along with the agreements with the contribution of Absorption Minister Sofa Landver and Tourism Minister Stas Misezhnikov, who are both FSU Jews and Lieberman’s colleagues from the YB. Moreover, other deputies, such as Reuven Rivlin, Ze’ev Elkin and Robert Ilatov have joined these efforts, including the improvement of inter-parliamentary relations, to nearly the same level as relations between the Knesset and the US Congress (including the establishment of an inter-parliamentary committee on the issue of strategic security).¹⁴¹ This trend was further intensified with Shimon Peres’s visit in May 2010 as President, which was termed as a “groundbreaking” for relations between the two countries. Furthermore, the visit was regarded as deviating from its focus on the Jews in Russia and the immigration issue to the utilisation of diplomatic means in bilateral relations.¹⁴²

Table 5.3. Electoral Successes of Two Leading Russian Jewish Parties (1996 -2009)
(Source: Official Website of the Israeli Knesset)

	Yisrael Beiteinu		Yisrael Be'aliyah	
	% of votes	Deputies	% of votes	Deputies
1996	-	-	5.8	7
1999	2.6	4	5.1	6
2003	5.53	7 (4) ¹⁴³	2.15	2
2006	9.0	11	-	-
2009	11.7	15	-	-

¹⁴¹ Vladimir (Ze’ev) Khanin, “The Social Aspect of Israeli-Russian Relations: A View from Jerusalem,” in *Russia and Israel in the Changing Middle East: Conference Proceedings*, ed. Zvi Magen and V. V Naumkin, 2013, 67, [http://www.inss.org.il.cdn.reblaze.com/upload/\(FILE\)1375089691.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il.cdn.reblaze.com/upload/(FILE)1375089691.pdf).

¹⁴² Khanin, 68.

¹⁴³ Under Halchud Haleumi Alliance

5.2. Diplomacy-craft by “Homo-Sovieticus”

As the political representation of the FSU Jews gradually increased, and the Russian-Jewish parties consolidated a strong position in the legislative efforts, repercussions of this change in the Israeli political establishment were also expected to be seen within the diplomatic efforts. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the priorities of Israel’s foreign policy agenda became the intensification the diplomatic contacts with the former Soviet countries. Not only was the Jewish diaspora in those countries a solid reason for this new agenda, but the willingness to increase the international recognition with Soviet-influenced states after almost three decades was a significant motivating factor for Israel to focus on this opportunity.

One of the main instruments for this foreign policy objective was the recruitment of diplomatic personnel with a Soviet background. Within this policy between 1991 and 2011, Israel prioritised appointing its ambassadors to these states from the FSU Jews community regardless of the year that they migrated. When the most significant six FSU countries were taken as a sample according to the strategic importance for Israel after 1991, it is revealed that Jews with a Soviet background were preferred by the Israeli state in 19 of total 35 appointments to the ambassadorship positions (Table 5.4.).

The decisiveness in implementing this diplomatic strategy was also shaped by the significance of that particular country. For instance, while all ambassadors to Ukraine (6) were coming from a Soviet background, only one or two were sharing the same background among the envoys to Azerbaijan and Belarus. Although it is not included in the sample, it is also revealed that none of the ambassadors to the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) were from this background.

Furthermore, some of these diplomats were circulated among these former Soviet countries, which demonstrates how Israel persists in maintaining healthy diplomatic relations with those states through a transfer of experience. For instance, with the exception of Ehud Eitam, envoys such as Zvi Magen, Anna Azari and Arkady Milman were promoted with an ambassadorship of a more significant country in their

consecutive post within these states. This strategy in the Israeli foreign policy went even further to the extent that some of these FSU Jewish ambassadors were re-appointed to the same country that they previously served. Israel Mey Ami in Kazakhstan, Zeev Ben Arie in Belarus and Shabtai Tsur in Georgia are among them.

Russia	Ukraine	Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia
Aryeh Levin (1991 – 1992)	Ehud Eitam (1992 – 1993)	Arkady Milman (1992 – 1993)	Eliezer Yotvat (1994–1997)	Zeev Ben-Arie (1997 - 1998)	Ehud Eitam (1998 - 2001)
Haim Bar Lev (1992 - 1994)	Zvi Magen (1993 – 1998)	Bentsion Karmel (1993 – 1996)	Arkady Milman (1997–1999)	Martin Peled-Flax (1998 – 2002)	Rivka Cohen-Litant (2001 – 2004)
Aliza Shenhar (1994 – 1998)	Anna Azari (1999 – 2003)	Israel Mey Ami (1996 – 2002)	Eitan Naeh (2001–2005)	Zeev Ben-Arie (2004 – 2009)	Shabtai Tsur (2005–2008)
Zvi Magen (1998 – 1999)	Naomi Ben Ami (2003 – 2006)	Moshe Kimhi (2002 – 2004)	Arthur Lenk (2005–2009)	Edward Shapira (2009 – 2011)	Itzhak Gerberg (2008 – 2012)
Natan Meron (2000 - 2003)	Zina Kalay-Kleitman (2007 – 2011)	Michael Lotem (2004 – 2006)	Michael Lotem (2009–2012)		Yuval Fuchs (2012 – 2016)
Arkady Milman (2003 - 2005)	Reuven Dinel (2011 – 2014)	Ran Ichay (2006 – 2008)			Shabtai Tsur (2016 -)
Anna Azari (2006 – 2010)		Israel Mey Ami (2008 – 2012)			
Dorit Golender (2010 – 2015)					

Table 5.4. List of Israeli Ambassadors appointed to the FSU States (1991 – 2011)

Names with bold characters have an FSU Jewish origin.

(Source: Official Website of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Even though most of these envoys were the Jews who had already migrated to Israel before 1991, the crucial point in this regard is that the Israeli foreign policy sphere is indirectly getting influenced by a change at its domestic political sphere. Namely, consolidation of the FSU Jews in the Knesset and the cabinet also brought a considerable power in the bureaucracy and thus, required the Israeli state to act robustly in its diplomatic opening to the former Soviet countries.

5.3. Russia Perception of FSU Jewish Politicians

As the rise of Russian political power in two decades is explained, it is also required to comprehend how several Israeli politicians with a Soviet background perceived Russia within this period. For this purpose, those political figures will be examined through their statements and actions between the years of 1989 and 2009. While

grandiose figures such as Sharansky and Lieberman will be examined, some minor politicians will also be referred to in this process.

5.3.1. Natan Sharansky

When he actively entered in politics with his leadership to the YBA party in 1996 elections, Sharansky had already achieved a prestigious status within the Israeli society¹⁴⁴. Until his resignation from the Knesset in 2006, he held four different positions within different cabinets, including as the Minister of Industry and Trade from June 1996-1999, Minister of the Interior from July 1999-2000, Minister of Housing and Construction & Deputy Prime Minister from March 2001 until February 2003 and Minister without Portfolio, responsible for Jerusalem, social and Diaspora affairs until 2006.

During his years in Israeli cabinets, it can be said that Sharansky followed a cautious stance against Russia, though not harshly critical which might have been expected due to his activist years as a Refusenik in his time at the Soviet Union. This attitude of him can sound meaningful considering that he prioritizes the protection of Jewish culture in Russia and the continuation of the FSU Jewish migration wave from the FSU countries, particularly the qualified population which will give an economic boost to Israel. For instance, in his first visit to Russia in 1997, he underlined that a major theme of his visit at the head of a delegation of Israeli businessmen was that “building economic bonds between Israel and Russia was the natural continuation of the old struggle to emigrate from the Soviet Union,” while confirming that newly-elected Prime Minister Netanyahu will make his first official visit to Russia in two months.¹⁴⁵

In another visit in the same year, he reiterated that he dreams of building high-tech bridges between two states and developing trade and joint research and development projects between the FSU states and Israel's booming high-tech industrial sector,

¹⁴⁴ For his political background, see Page 41 above.

¹⁴⁵ Serge Schmemmann, “Sharansky Ends Russian Trip With a Visit to His Old Prison Cell,” *The New York Times*, January 31, 1997, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/31/world/sharansky-ends-russian-trip-with-a-visit-to-his-old-prison-cell.html>.

stating as “a reason to come” to Russia where he was not admitted.¹⁴⁶ Before his visits to Russia, he even plays a chess game with Garry Kasparov, the world champion in a meeting at Jerusalem,¹⁴⁷ which shows how crucial that Sharansky regards maintaining ties with Russia and its society. In other words, the concept of Jewish Diaspora was an active component that shaped his political stance, in which he openly stated that the Israeli government should be very closely involved in the problems of the Jews of the Diaspora, as “those who are not yet living in Israel.”¹⁴⁸

Not only the Jewish Diaspora puts Russia in a significant position to engage with, but Sharansky also saw Russia strategically very important. For instance, he even supported the idea that the US allowing Russia to involve as a Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status by an act of Congress¹⁴⁹ in order to integrate the country into the world economy more rapidly. Furthermore, he emphasised that Russia is a country that “plays a very important role in the world”, including in debates over democracy back then,¹⁵⁰ stating that political culture of Russia is not an important obstacle to democratic transformation during the first years of Putin.¹⁵¹

All in all, Sharansky as the most popular figure of the FSU Jewish community in the 1980s and 1990s, helped Israeli state to perceive Russia differently. Through using his charisma and vision to utilise the immigrant population according to the benefit of the Israeli economy, Sharansky can be seen as a political figure that paved the way for increased communication with Russia in its initial years after the Soviet era. Although he has become a victim of the Soviet oppression as a Refusenik, this situation

¹⁴⁶ Storer H. Rowley, “Russia’s Brain Drain is Israel’s Gain,” *chicagotribune.com*, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1997-03-03-9703030073-story.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Miller, “Russian Immigrant Minister Beats World Chess Champion,” AP NEWS, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://apnews.com/92b1c4c794e1493c3ef427da8f237714>.

¹⁴⁸ Harry Kreisler, Conversation with Natan Sharansky, p. 4 of 4, Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley, April 16, 2004, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people4/Sharansky/sharansky-con4.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Samuel Vaknin, *Russian Roulette: Russia’s Economy in Putin’s Era*, ed. Lidija Rangelovska, 2003, 80, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4779>.

¹⁵⁰ “Being Sharansky,” *National Review* (blog), July 4, 2005, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2005/07/being-sharansky-jay-nordlinger/>.

¹⁵¹ William Galston, “The Democracy Solution,” *The American Prospect*, May 22, 2005, <https://prospect.org/article/democracy-solution>.

seemingly did not prevent him from leading this process, in which he pointed Russia as an opportunity in expanding Israel's foreign policy sphere.

5.3.2. Avigdor Lieberman

Before his leadership to YB, Lieberman joined Likud in 1988 and served as Director-General of the Likud (1993-1996) and Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office (1996-1997) under Netanyahu. Starting from this period, he was known as a person who maintains his contacts with the FSU Jewish businessmen doing business in Russia and former Soviet countries, and it is even suspected that he was being involved in several criminal cases on the territory of Russia and Israel due to these relations. For instance; Lieberman was questioned by the Israeli police in 2007 on suspicions of receiving approximately \$US500,000 illegal finance for his 2001 election campaign from a company named Mcg Holding, which belongs to Michael Cherney, an FSU Jewish businessman.¹⁵² Moreover, even Cherney admitted that his contact with Lieberman has started during his appointment of Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office in 1996: "We used to meet periodically: sometimes we had lunch together, sometimes we played tennis, talked about Russian culture, music, his desire to write books."¹⁵³

This inspiration from the Russian culture deeply affected him, even to the extent that it shaped its political stance and principles. Once he admitted that his role-model is Peter the First, the Russian emperor who dragged Russia into modern Europe and became a military power. Regarding this issue, he stated that he read a Soviet-era historical novel on the emperor "at least 300 times" and said "Whenever I am tired or upset, and I want something to calm me, I open it on any page and start to read ... One cannot understand modern Russia without reading this book."¹⁵⁴ Namely, he identified

¹⁵² Uri Blau and Gidi Weitz, "\$500,000 Funneled to Lieberman Associates," *Haaretz*, April 25, 2007, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.4817432>.

¹⁵³ Gidi Weitz, "Michael Cherney: On Deripaska, the Russian Mafia and the Israeli Police," *Novinite.Com* (blog), December 12, 2009, <https://www.novinite.com/articles/111687/Michael+Cherney%3A+On+Deripaska%2C+the+Russian+mafia+and+the+Israeli+police>.

¹⁵⁴ Gershom Gorenberg, "The Minister for National Fears," *The Atlantic*, May 1, 2007, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/05/the-minister-for-national-fears/305775/>.

himself as a Russian who desires to bring change in Israel through a powerful and autocratic stance.

Consequently, he knew that this was a way of holding the support of the FSU Jewish community. During an interview in 2007, he said that the community respect his "Putin-like strongman persona" and draws a comparison between Russia's Chechen problem and the Palestinian conflict: "I think that all olim from Russia have a better understanding of the situation; they know that all illusions of the left are empty slogans."¹⁵⁵

For that reason, predictions regarding his potential to open a new phase in relations with Russia¹⁵⁶ came out to be true when he was appointed as Foreign Minister in 2009. In his first visit to Russia as Foreign Minister in the same year, both countries have opened a new page in their relations. He announced in Moscow that Israel had agreed to attend the international peace conference in Moscow, which is long desired by Putin, probably in exchange for holding off on the delivery of SAM-300 missiles to Iran as well as sophisticated missiles and military aircraft to Syria. In the same meeting, both states also agreed to develop their security cooperation by the arms trade.

Most importantly, Lieberman's personality played a significant role in this development. A WikiLeaks document released in 2010 revealed that during this visit, Lieberman cemented Moscow's impression that he is one of their own, by conducting his meetings in Russian, shared stories about Moscow, and smoked, creating a comfortable atmosphere with his Russian interlocutors, based on the information provided by Israeli deputy FM Yuval Fuchs.¹⁵⁷

This positive atmosphere repeated itself in another meeting in the same year. Lieberman said that the year 2010 would be a landmark in bilateral relations in which

¹⁵⁵ Lily Galili, "All Is Heaven with Avigdor Lieberman," *Moment Magazine* (blog), February 2007, <https://www.momentmag.com/all-is-heaven-with-avigdor-lieberman/>.

¹⁵⁶ "Nationalist Could Be Israel's next Foreign Minister," CNN, March 6, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/03/06/israel.fm/index.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Barak Ravid, "WikiLeaks Cable: Russian Leadership Viewed Lieberman as 'One of Its Own,'" *Haaretz*, November 29, 2010, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5146530>.

both states are planning to reach a consensus on many agreements “which will not get bogged down in red tape, including measures to help protect Russian and Israeli investment.” How Putin responded to Israeli FM is significant: “You know that there is a large Russian community in Israel, and you are part of it. I am glad that people from the Soviet Union built such brilliant political careers in Israel. This is something that unites us in a way that is unlike any other country.”¹⁵⁸ That means, the FSU Jewish community as a “Russian Diaspora” is regarded as a strong contributor in developing relations.

Along with his increasing contacts with Russia, Lieberman also drew attention to Russia’s strategic importance in regional politics. In an interview with the Russian newspaper *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, he reiterated that Russia must be brought back into the picture due to it having a special influence in the Muslim world, and it must be considered as “a strategic partner that should play a special role in the Middle East.” He even goes further in indicating the vitality of these relations by saying “I have argued for some time that Israel has an insufficient appreciation for the ‘Kremlin factor’. I intend to mend this gap.”¹⁵⁹

Although he emigrated Israel in 1978 from Moldova, much earlier than the migration wave that this study highlighted, Lieberman has become the leading political figure that changed Israeli state’s perception on Russia thanks to the support he receives from the FSU Jewish community. Representing a more pragmatic stance compared to Sharansky, Lieberman should be considered more successful in holding a stable voter base from the FSU Jews, which allows him to be regarded as a key figure in the maintenance of Israel-Russia ties. Moreover, the lack of an alternative figure from the FSU Jews, which became clear by the time YBA and other minor parties were dissolved, helped him to determine Israel’s relations with Russia more independently.

¹⁵⁸ “Prime Minister Vladimir Putin Met with Avigdor Lieberman, Israel’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister,” Archive of the Official Site of the 2008-2012 Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin - Events, December 4, 2019, <http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/8446/>.

¹⁵⁹ Gwynne Dyer, “Lieberman the Truth-Teller,” *The Korea Times* -, May 6, 2009, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2019/06/198_44429.html.

5.3.3. Other Figures from the FSU Jews

Along with the grand figures mentioned above, there are also several other FSU Jewish political figures which have been active in shaping Israel's foreign policy perception towards Russia. Although their effect remains relatively minor, they are still significant figures in keeping the relations with Russia on the Israeli foreign policy agenda. Among them, **Yuli-Yoel Edelstein** is currently one of the most senior politicians in Israel. Being a member of the Refusenik movement in the Soviet Union, he could make Aliyah in 1987 and joined Sharansky in the foundation of the YBA party. After he served as Deputy Minister of Immigrant Absorption and Minister of Immigrant Absorption in the 1990s, the party merged with Likud, and he was appointed as Minister of Immigrant Absorption in 2009. He was also elected as the 17th Speaker of the Knesset in 2013.

For him, it is essential to maintain cultural ties with Russia, though it does not necessarily mean that they should have involved in Russian politics. For him, "this is exactly the waterline", adding "as long as the efforts are toward cultural cooperation, promoting the Russian language, definitely we are there. If we are talking about organisations dealing with bringing Russian politics or uniting Russians around Russia, definitely we are not there."¹⁶⁰

Another influential figure is **Avigdor Eskin**, a supporter of Rabbi Meir Kahane who is a Jewish ultra-nationalist religious activist that supports the annexation of the Palestinian lands and transferring or removing the Palestinian Arab population from Israel. He joined Kahanist Kach (Thus in Hebrew) political party in 1978. For him, Israel needs to ally with Russia, and it should end its passionate attachment to America by dealing with it "from the position of a strong independent state, not that of a heavily subsidised and grovelling military colony."¹⁶¹ He even went further to the extent of

¹⁶⁰ "Russian Jewish Lawmakers Forge a Common Cause," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), July 18, 2008, <https://www.jta.org/2008/07/18/archive/russian-jewish-lawmakers-forge-a-common-cause>.

¹⁶¹ "Avigdor Eskin And the National Question In Israel | Articles," VDARE.com, accessed June 13, 2019, </articles/avigdor-eskin-and-the-national-question-in-israel>.

claiming that Jews and Russians as the genuine spiritual and messianic people in his presentation on one of the leading Russian TV channels.¹⁶²

Last but not least, **Eduard Kuznetsov** also played a significant role in altering perceptions regarding Russia in Israel, particularly in media. With the increasing Russian news outlets in the 1990s, Kuznetsov became an influential figure in the FSU Jewish community as the editor of the Vesti (News) newspaper in Russian until 1999. It is asserted that Kuznetsov's Vesti represented the highest quality, while 38.8% of the FSU Jewish readers then preferred Vesti over other Russian newspapers, which is the highest among the community.¹⁶³

Summarily, the course of events between the re-establishment of ties between Israel and Russia until the beginning of the Arab Spring can be seen through the influence of the FSU Jewish community. With a distinct culture accompanying a massive population, the community pushed two countries to develop their relations over two decades by representing a "Russian Diaspora" in Israel. In the first phase, the coordination of the immigration as well as the integration issue occupied a significant part in the agenda of Israeli politics. When the community got politicised and generated Russian parties from all ideological spheres, it also started to shape Israeli political landscape and the establishment through influential figures. This was also followed by taking more decisive actions, especially during the foreign ministry of Lieberman. In the next chapter, some concluding remarks on the topic will be presented.

¹⁶² "The Crisis in Ukraine and 'the New Jewish Question' - Opinion - Jerusalem Post," accessed June 13, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/The-crisis-in-Ukraine-and-the-new-Jewish-question-351466>.

¹⁶³ "JewishPost.Com - The 'Russian Power' in Israel," accessed June 13, 2019, <http://www.jewishpost.com/archives/news/the-russian-power-in-israel.html>.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study aimed to discuss why Israel entered a rapprochement process with Russia in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union until the beginning of Arab insurgencies in the MENA region. In this effort, it is argued that the Jewish migration flow to Israel from the Soviet countries since the end of the 1980s, led to the emergence of a Russian Diaspora in Israel for political, economic and particularly cultural reasons and affected the Israeli political agenda along with the rapprochement as mentioned above. Ultimately, this study discovered that the process in two decades could not be adequately explained without considering this demographic reason and the problems that emanated in identity politics.

One might still claim that assuming this community as a Russian diaspora is unconvincing since these Jews already came back to their homeland and their diaspora identity based on the Jewish ethnicity is over. Although this argument can seem persuasive given the fact that these Jews regard themselves Jewish as relevant surveys demonstrated, it has still shortcomings. For instance, the expansion of globalism and the rise of identity politics also affected the concept of diaspora and diaspora identity and these phenomena once having a solid and fixed meaning, are transformed into concepts with fluid and flexible content.

With this change, the transformation of the concept of having a homeland and carrying a sense of belonging to that homeland also became inevitable. As the case of this study argued, lack of a clear attachment to Zionism, economically high-standard profile and very distinct socio-cultural capital of the FSU Jews, enabled them to remain intact within a Russian identity framework, namely as a “Homo-Sovieticus”. Maintenance of this identity eventually pushed them to get politicised over these values and accelerated the rapprochement process with Russia in the post-Soviet period.

Such a new contextualization of the diaspora concept as a significant political unit in determining domestic and foreign policy agendas of the states paves the way for examining various cases in the field of diaspora studies. For instance, a comparison of this new model diasporas with the traditional ones according to their reaction to the integration policies can be studied for enlightening the changing aspects in the identity perception of the migrants. A comparative study of the FSU Jewish immigrants who came to Israel before the collapse of the Soviet Union and after the collapse of the Soviet Union will give insight into their contrasting perception of the “Russian” identity.

Besides, studies evaluating the impact of diaspora on the domestic and foreign policy of states can also be conducted from different approaches of the international relations theories apart from the constructivist tradition. For instance, the impact of Indian or Pakistani diaspora on the British domestic & foreign policy can be studied from a post-colonial IR theory approach, whereas a neo-classical realist approach may better fit to the context of the Jewish diaspora in the US and its influence on the US domestic & foreign policy.

However, the most significant objective of this study is to contribute to the literature on FSU Jews. Most of the literature on this topic is about what this community changed in Israel’s cultural policies and economic integration efforts. Although there is limited literature on the involvement of the FSU Jews in Israeli politics, they do not evaluate them within a context of diaspora, and only political party experiences of those Jews became noteworthy to study.

This thesis can be a model for more studies on this Jewish community in Israeli studies. A new generation who were born as Sabras (Israeli born Jews), is worth to study regarding their political preferences and to what extent it differs from the previous generation, especially on the matter of political attachment to the Russian Jewish parties. Portraying this new generation will also give an insight about how Russia is perceived by them and to what extent relations with Russia is seen as an alternative to the alliance with the US.

Last but not least, the diaspora framework of this study can also pave the way for scholarly works on Israeli politics. For example, the FSU Jews can be compared with some other Jews from a particular country, such as Turkey, Morocco and Ethiopia. By examining whether they also carry the features of a diaspora community, their influence on domestic politics and the foreign relations with the country they migrated from can be studied. Nonetheless, the achievement of such studies goes through the way of increasing interest in adequately understanding the FSU Jewish community and their strong attachment with the Russian cultural identity.



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