

# **POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN ISRAEL**

**IRE215**

**SPRING 2020**

**Session 9**



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# On The Agenda For Today

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## ■ Israel Foreign Relations II

- Israel and the EU
- Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

From last week

## ■ Immigration to Israel

- What does 'immigration' mean?
- Ingathering of exiles
- Historic outline
- Who are the immigrants?
- Immigration from the Former Soviet Union



# Israel and the EU

- **Bilateral Association Agreement (EU/Israel)** negotiated in the early 1990

## The Barcelona Process/Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995) =>

- Launched by the **Ministers of Foreign Affairs** of the then **15 EU members + 14 Mediterranean partners** at the **Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference**
- Framework of **bilateral and regional relations: the Union For The Mediterranean**
- Parties: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey



# Israel and the EU

## The Barcelona Process/Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995) =>

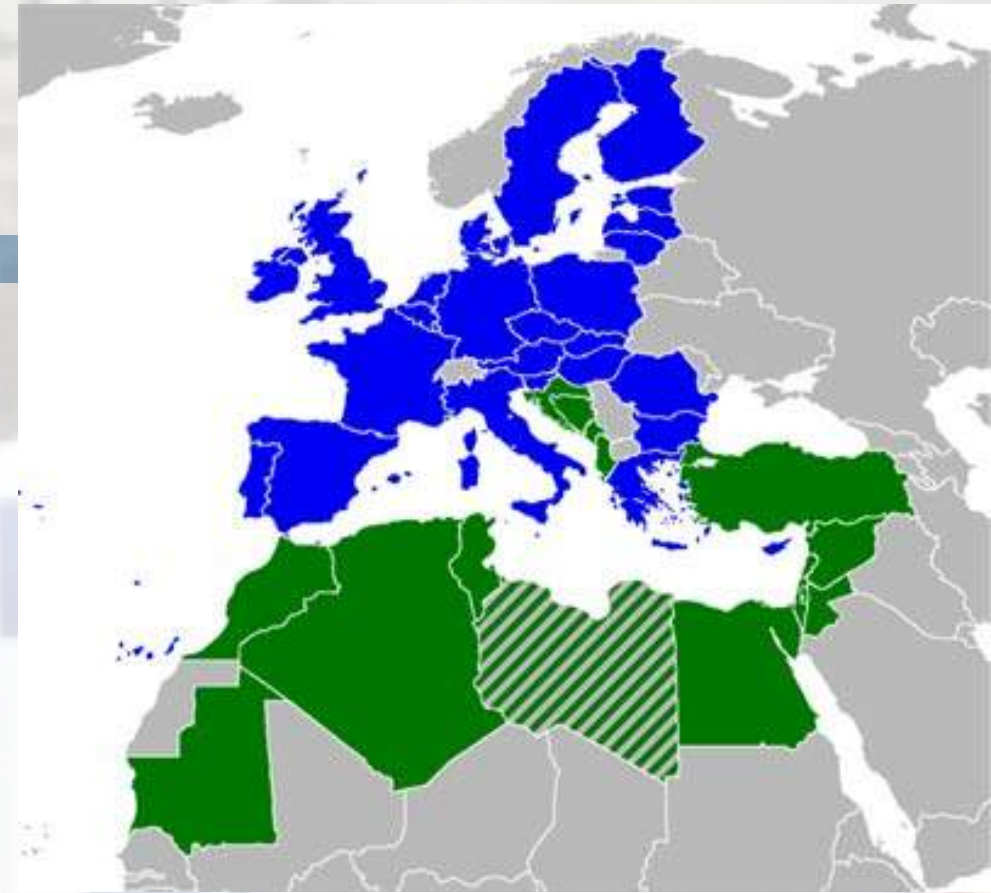
- Innovative **alliance**, based on **joint ownership, dialogue** and **co-operation**
- Seeking to create a **Mediterranean region of peace, security** and **prosperity**
- The partnership was organised in **three dimensions** (remain today):
  - **Political and Security**
  - **Economic and Financial Partnership**
  - **Social, Cultural and Human Partnership**





# Israel and the EU

- The **Barcelona Process** evolved into the **Union for the Mediterranean** => **Euro-Mediterranean Partnership** launched in 2008
  - Aimed to forge **closer ties** with the ME and North Africa
  - Alternative to EU membership?
- Bringing together the 27 EU members and 16 other countries, the new forum covers nearly 800 million people



# Israel and the EU

## European Parliament's Israel Delegation =>

- The **European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Israel (D-IL)**, established in 1979
- Responsible for **sustaining/enhancing EU-Israel relations** by means of **parliamentary diplomacy**
  - Reinforcing the importance of **sustainability** & internationally agreed norms
  - Tracing **security threats**, re-emergence of armed conflict
  - **Inter-parliamentary meetings** with members of the Knesset
  - Combating **antisemitism**



# Israel and the EU

## European Parliament's Israel Delegation =>

- **Yearly** meetings in Jerusalem/Brussels => **Steady relationship**
- **Issues touching on EU-Israel relationship** occupy the delegation during their regular meetings
  - Members of the **Knesset** occasionally **contribute** to these meetings
- Works in **close coordination with other EU bodies**
- Composed of 18 full members + 18 substitute members
- Current Chair: Antonio López-Istúriz, a conservative Spanish MEP





# Israel and the EU

## Contemporary Relationship =>

- **Strained Israel/EU relations** over the past few years
  - **Radicalisation** of the **political left** in Europe, more pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel
  - **Political tensions** due to difference of opinions over: the occupation & Jewish settlements in the **West Bank**, absence of peace talks with the Palestinians
- **Netanyahu's** last governments made **no efforts to improve relations**, despite the centrality of the EU in European politics
  - **No much hope for change** in the foreseeable future

# Israel and the EU

## Contemporary Relationship =>

- Prevailing, **negative attitudes** in Israel toward the **EU** regardless of **Europe's significance** to Israel:
  - **Europe is Israel's largest trading partner**
  - **Diplomatic cooperation + dialogue on defence & security**
- Israel prioritizes **direct ties with EU member states**

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

## Diaspora =>

- A population that shares a **common heritage, scattered** in different parts of the world (outside of their homeland)
- The dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel/Jews living outside Israel
  - **Diaspora ≠ Migration**
- World Jewish population >13 million, 41% live in Israel



# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- With the **establishment of Israel (1948)**, mass immigration to Israel of Jewish communities expected
- Why?
  - **Israel** as a realization of a long sooth after **national dream** (first exile of Jews from Israel: 586 BCE)
  - 'Kibbutz Galuyot' - **Ingathering of the Exiles**, central ideal of early Zionist thinkers
  - The Holocaust
- **Jewish Diaspora**: Jews that chose **not to immigrate to Israel**

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- **Israel at the Center of the Jewish world: 'ha'aretz' (Hebrew for 'THE land')**
- **19<sup>th</sup> century European Jewish Diaspora perceived as a problem, whereas a Jewish state was perceived as the solution: propelled the work of the Zionist movement**
- **Jewish existence outside of Israel was frowned upon by Israeli, seen as abnormal or even doomed**
  - Holocaust as proof

**=> Israel: World Jewry should relocate to Israel**



# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- **The negation of the diaspora/ 'shlilat ha'galut' in Israel**
  - Attitude of **placing no value** on the Diaspora communities
  - **Infused into Israeli education**, making it the **dominant prism** through which Israeli society looked outward
- Flourishing Jewish communities outside of Israel (e.g. in the US): **Ideological challenge** for Israelis





# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- A **poll of Israeli Jews** (late 1980s) found:
  - **Most Israeli Jews** believed that their American counterparts could lead a **fuller life in Israel** rather than in the US
  - **Most Israeli Jews were “troubled”** that **American Jews** were **not immigrating** as a group
  - Nearly **two-thirds** said they considered it an **obligation** to convince American Jews to **move to Israel**

‘Zionism exists only  
in its practical  
form’

‘You can’t sit in Manhattan and be  
a Zionist just because you like  
oranges, falafel and come here  
once a year to visit’

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- Following the 1967 **Six Day War** and the 1973 **Yom Kippur War** => **Political/Ideological shift**



Ben Gurion

“I have complete and unbridled faith in both the **Jewish People the world over** and in the **State of Israel**. There can be no faith in **either without the other**, because **each needs and depends on the other**”

- **Coexisting** => **The Jewish Diaspora as Israeli partners**

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

## American Jews and Zionism =>

- **Zionism divided American Jewry** for much of the latter 19th century + first half of the 20th century
  - Even after Israel was established- not all American Jews were Zionists
  - Faded only with the Israeli **triumph** of the **Six-Day War** (1967) and the **existential threat** posed by the **Yom Kippur War** (1973)
    - Israel's existence seemingly hanging in the balance: American Jews 'rallied around the Israeli flag' + raised \$\$\$



# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- Building a **Partnership** => **Joint Activity**



- The **World Zionist Organization** (1897)

- The **Jewish Agency for Israel** (1929)



- The **Joint Distribution Committee**

- Project 'Renewal' in the 1980s

- Yet, dynamics of **seemingly one-sided relationship** often caused **bitterness** among Israelis

- '**Cash** was the **minimum** Diaspora Jews could give when they themselves weren't sending their kids to **mandatory army service**'

- 'What Israel needed was **NOT** American Jewish **hand-outs**, but **investments**'

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- **Israeli-Palestinian Peace Accords (1993)** altered Israel's relationship with the Diaspora
  - Prospect of **peace**
  - **American Jewish lobby less critical** for Israel
- Instead of questions of **Israel's survival**: issues of **Jewish life in Israel**
  - **Tensions: Israel's Orthodox Jewish establishment vs. American Reform + Conservative movements**
  - **Cooperation: American Jews vs. Assimilation => 'Birthright' program** (free trip to Israel to straighten Jewish identity + connection to Israel)

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

- **Persistence of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict**
  - **New security threats (Iran) necessitated funds + political lobbying**
- 
- **Relationship** with the Jewish Diaspora (not just in the US) evolved: **Mutual aid**
    - **Alongside encouraging immigration to Israel** (due to rising antisemitism), Israel helps **strengthen** Jewish community in the **Diaspora** + keep them **safe**



# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

## Views of the Jewish State and the Diaspora =>

- Survey conducted in 2014-2015
- **Israeli Jews** value Israel as a **Jewish state + Jewish diaspora**
  - 7/10: **Thriving** Jewish diaspora **necessary** for long-term **survival** of Jews
- **Israeli Jews** value their **connections with American Jews** despite discrepant political and religious views
  - Most agree that **Jews in Israel + US share a common destiny** to some extent
  - 6/10: American Jews have a **good influence** over how things are going in Israel

# Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

## In conclusion =>

- **Israel is central to Jewish life**
- **World Jewry** participate in and contribute to **building Israel**: socially, politically + financial support
  - Diaspora Jews **don't serve** in the Israeli **military**, don't pay Israeli taxes, **can't vote** and don't live under the threat of Hamas/Hezbollah rocket bombardments
- **Yet, more inclusive, mutual relationship**



# Israel and the American Jewish Diaspora

## Contemporary Developments => Heading towards a **breaking point**

### ■ 2018:

- Terror Attack in Pittsburgh synagogue:  
**Israel/American split**
- Hanukah celebration at the white house:  
insinuations of **dual loyalties** of American Jews



### ■ President **Trump**:

- **Beloved in Israel**- Trump recognizes Israel's existential threats + supports Netanyahu's right-wing notions (move of embassy)
- **Unloved by most American Jews**- viewed as **a threat, inducing violence**



# Immigration to Israel



# What Does Immigration Mean?

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- **Immigration** => Households move, in order to **permanently live** in a new country- '*Aliah*' (Hebrew for immigration to Israel, literal meaning 'to rise')
- **(Potential) Motives of the receiving country =>**
  - **Social-political:** Israel as a safe haven for Jews
  - **Economic:** Needs specific professionals (e.g. point system in Australia)
- **(Potential) Motives of the immigrants =>** Economic, social, religious ...
- **Policy =>** Local economic assistance + equal/preferred labor market status, welfare, taxes reduction

# Ingathering of Exiles

The Idea of 'Ingathering Exiles' (aka collecting Jews to Israel) =>

- **Religious Aspect:** Jewish **religious** belief stemming from the Bible:
  - Isaiah 11:12 – *He (the Lord) will hold up a beacon to the nations and assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth*
  - Jeremiah 31:10: *He who scattered Israel will gather them and will guard them as a shepherd his flock*
- **Historical Aspect:** The **Holocaust**
- **Political Aspect:** Enabling immigration as a **core value of Zionism**





# Ingathering of Exiles

## The Idea of 'Ingathering Exiles'=>

- The **Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel** stated:

*"The State of Israel will be **open for Jewish immigration** and the **ingathering of the exiles**; it will foster the development of the country for all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex . . . ."*



# In gathering Exiles

## Integration of Immigrants in Israel =>

- The process of **absorbing immigrants** into the Israeli society was **difficult**:
  - Reality of ***Ma'abarot*** (transit camps) versus the dream of the 'Promised Land' / '**land of milk and honey**'
  - Ties to place + culture of **origin** versus pressure to **become Israeli** (e.g. change of first and family names)



# Immigration to Israel

## Historical Outline =>

- Israel was established by **Jews from Europe- Ashkenazi Jews** (also 88% of Jews living in Israel before the establishment of the state)
- Pre-state immigration (1930-1940s) (we already talked about it)
- Immigration waves of **Mizrahi Jews** (1950-1960s)

*“During the 1950s and 1960s, over **half a million** Mediterranean, North African, and Middle Eastern Jews came to Israel with little more than the clothes on their collective back. . . . Completely dependent upon state institutions that intented on remolding them in their own image, choices were limited and autonomy, except in the most private sense, was unimaginable. . . .”*

*-Keys to the Garden: New Israeli Writing*





# Immigration to Israel

## Historical Outline =>

- **Following the Six -Day War (1967) => Awakened Jewish consciousness,** (mainly) among Canadian and American Jews: increased immigration from North America
- Immigration from the former **Soviet Union** (1990's)
- Immigration of from **Ethiopia** (1990's-2000's)
- Immigration from **France** (2015-)



# Immigration to Israel

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## Who are the immigrants?

- Most immigrants arriving in Israel are **Jewish** (according to the Law of Return, 1950)
- Their **non-Jewish family members** (e.g., non-Jewish spouse)
- Not included: Foreign workers, students, refugees



# Determinants of Immigration

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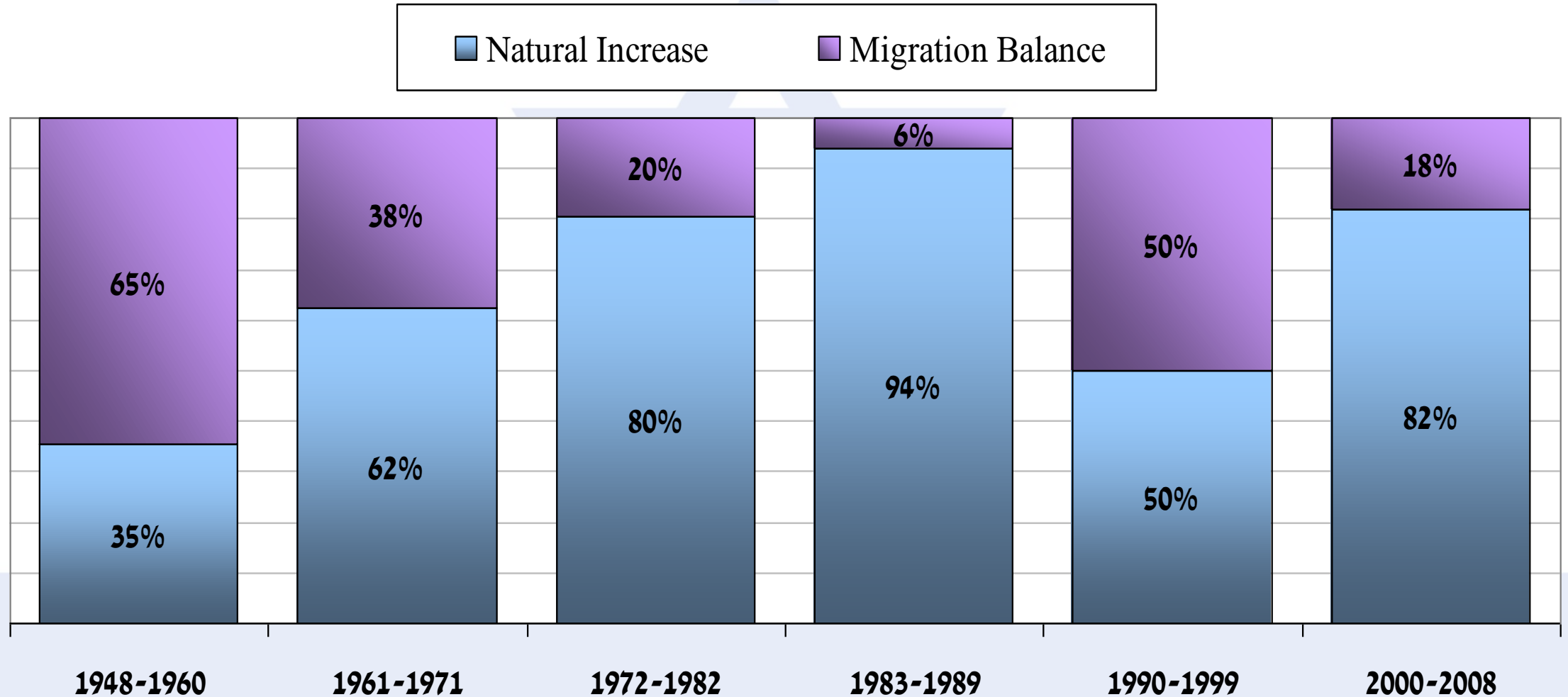
- **“Push” factors:** Racism, religious persecutions abroad, economic crises
- **“Pull” factors:** Religious and/or Zionistic ideology
- In some cases, immigration is dependent on **political factors** (Immigration of Soviet Jews was mainly possible after the collapse of the Soviet Union)
- **Immigration** has been a **significant contributor to population growth in Israel**, especially after the collapse of the USSR (as you can see in the next slide)





# Migration Share/Total Population Growth

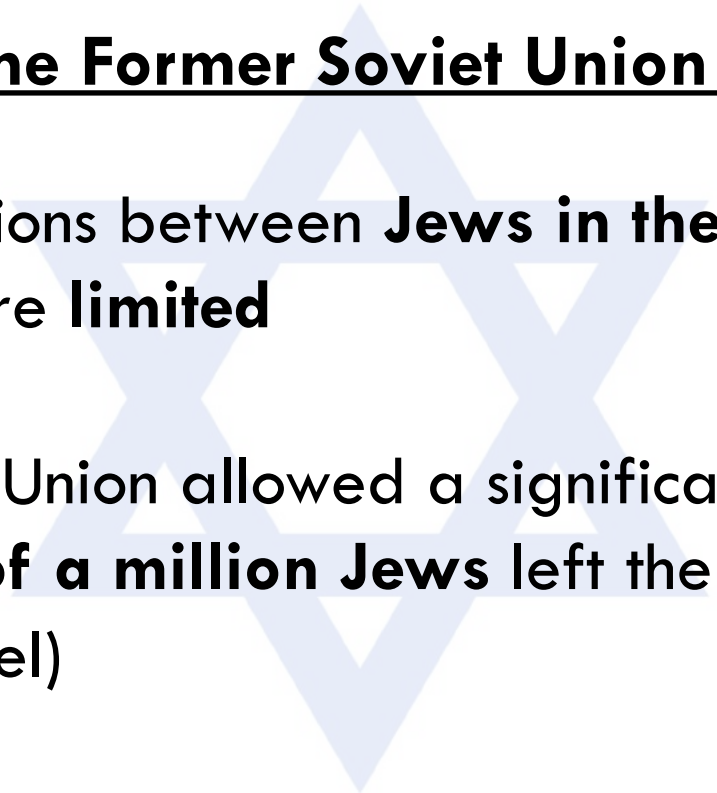
33



# FSU Immigrants

## Immigration from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) =>

- 1948-1967: Relations between **Jews in the Soviet Union** and the State of **Israel** were **limited**
- 1970s: The Soviet Union allowed a significant number of Jews to leave (about a **quarter of a million Jews** left the Soviet Union, 140k immigrated to Israel)



# FSU Immigrants

- Late 1980s: **Even more** Soviet Jews were permitted to leave the FSU (the time of President Gorbachev)
- 1989-1991: The **collapse of the Soviet Union** further facilitated Aliya
  - 1990: 190k immigrants, 1991: 150k
  - Until the end of the 1990s, stabilization of conditions in the former USSR region + **difficulties in integration** in Israel caused immigration to level off at approximately **70k per year**





# FSU Immigrants

- **Push and Pull Factors:**

- Russian discriminatory practices of Jews
- Demise of the USSR
- Jewish perceptions of Israel as “The Promised Land” + place of refuge
- Other possible destinations closed their doors

- Between 1989 and 2003, more than **950k Jews** from the former Soviet Union had made their home in Israel




# FSU Immigrants

- High on **human capital** but low on **Jewish identity**
  - Most of the immigrants who arrived from the FSU were **urban** and **well-educated**, but communism + antisemitism did not allow for the developed of Jewish identity
- High % of **mixed families** (Jews married to non-Jews)



# Major Occupations of FSU Immigrants



<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1998-1989</b>	<b>% 1998</b>	<b>%1989-1998</b>
Engineers	<b>4,100</b>	<b>82,250</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
Physicians & dentists	<b>800</b>	<b>16,900</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Artists & authors	<b>750</b>	<b>16,450</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
Nurses & para-medicals	<b>1,150</b>	<b>18,550</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
Teachers	<b>2,400</b>	<b>38,700</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46,000</b>	<b>769,850</b>		



# Unemployment Rates: Immigrants & Native Israelis

- **Immigrants' unemployment rate was significantly higher** than of native Israelis (look at the table in the next slide)
- **Unemployment rate drops as immigrants assimilate**
- **Decreases in unemployment rate among immigrants are not associated with an increase in unemployment rate for native Israelis** (immigrants don't 'take our jobs')
- **The economy is expending** (and as it grows, there are most businesses and more jobs overall)



# Unemployment Rates: Immigrants & Native Israelis

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Men</b>								
Native Israelis	7.5%	7.1%	7.7%	6.7%	5.2%	4.8%	5.2%	5.8%
Russian immigrants	40.7%	28.5%	19.9%	15.0%	9.0%	7.1%	7.7%	7.0%
<b>Women</b>								
Native Israelis	11.0%	11.0%	11.5%	10.0%	9.1%	7.4%	6.8%	7.0%
Russian immigrants	52.9%	50.3%	38.4%	28.5%	21.5%	17.6%	11.8%	10.4%

# FSU Immigrants

- **Over a million** citizens of the former Soviet Union have immigrated to Israel since the collapse of the Iron Curtain
- FSU immigrants make up **15% of the Israeli population**, and have greatly affected the Israeli society
  - **Invaluable contributions** (cultural, scientific, high-tech, medical, and sport)
- Massive FSU immigration forced Israel to discuss **difficult issues**- such as the question **“Who is a Jew?”**





# FSU Immigrants

- A 'Jew' for the purposes of **Aliyah** and **citizenship** (according to the **Law of Return**) is **broadly defined** (similarly to the Nazi anti-Jewish laws of the 1930s)
- According to **Halacha** (Jewish religious Law) a 'Jew' is anyone born to a **Jewish mother** or **converted** to Judaism in an **Orthodox** manner (that is, according to Jewish law)
- There's a **gap** between the **civil definition** and the **religious definition** of 'Jewish', whereas the **civil definition** is more **inclusive**



# FSU Immigrants

- This gap is a source of **discrimination of non-Jews** in matters of **personal status** (marriage, death) as they are governed by the chief **rabbinate** of Israel (Orthodox religion authority)
- As many as a **quarter** of FSU immigrants currently living in Israel, are **NOT** considered '**Jewish**' by Israel's rabbinate
  - Difficult, if not impossible, for many Russian-Israelis to get married/buried in Israel



# FSU Immigrants

## THE TIMES OF ISRAEL The Jewish world's fastest-growing news site

HOME | ISRAEL & THE REGION | **JEWISH TIMES** | ISRAEL INSIDE | OPS & BLOGS | THE JEWISH PLANET

Home > Jewish Times

### Russian-speakers who want to make aliya could need DNA test

Prime Minister's Office says would-be immigrants from former Soviet Union may be asked to prove Jewish bloodline

By ASHER ZEIGER and TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF | July 29, 2013, 10:19 am | 12



Is 'Jewishness' a **cultural** construct (e.g. 'I celebrate the Jewish holidays, self identify as Jewish, decided to live in Israel')

or a **biological** one? ('I'm a matrilineal descent of Jews and can genetically prove that I'm Jewish')

(depends on who you're asking...)



# FSU Immigrants

- **How should Israel respond?**

- **Should the Law of Return be amended to *only include* those who are considered **Jewish** by Orthodox Jewish law?**
- **Should *non-Jewish* immigrants be encouraged to *convert* to Judaism (according to **Orthodox** law)?**



- **Maybe identifying as a Jew, wanting to live in Israel, serving in the Israeli army, speaking Hebrew, paying taxes etc. is 'enough'?**



# Next Session...

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- Immigrants to Israel (Part II)
- Minority Communities in Israel



**Thank You For Your Attention!**

**Please e-mail me your Questions**

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