SOCIETAL SECURITY: A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO ANALYSE ULTRA-ORTHODOX (HAREDI) POLITICS IN ISRAEL *

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Abstract

Haredi (ultra-orthodox) political parties in Israel, namely Yahadut HaTora and Shas, have been constantly affecting the domestic political agenda. Despite already flourished literature that covers the various roles these parties play; security dimension is yet to be addressed so far. This paper aims to analyse the Haredi politics in Israel in the identity-security nexus by questioning the political reflections of the Haredi parties' persistent attachments to the security language in four core topics which are the Haredi educational autonomy, the exemption of religious school (*yeshiva*) students from the army service, the conversion to Judaism process (*giyur*), and the nationwide Shabbat regulations. By analysing the coalition documents that Haredi parties took part in, campaign posters of the 2013 and the 2015 elections, individual and institutional Haredi responses to certain crises regarding these topics, this paper claims that Haredi politics is organized by the articulation of identity-security concerns at varied levels.

Keywords: Ultra-Orthodox, Shas, Yahadut HaTora, Societal security, Identity

Toplumsal Güvenlik: İsrail'de Ultra-Ortodoks (Haredi) Siyaseti Analiz Etmek İçin Yeni Bir Kavramsal Çerçeve

Öz

İsrail'deki Haredi (ultra-Ortodoks) siyasi partiler, Yahadut HaTora ve Şas, iç siyasi gündemi sık sık etkilemektedir. Her ne kadar bu partilerin oynadığı roller üzerinde gelişmiş bir literatür oluşmuşsa da henüz güvenlik boyutuna işaret edilmemiştir. Bu çalışma, İsrail'deki Haredi (ultra-Ortodoks) siyaseti, Haredi eğitim özerkliği, dini okul (Yeşiva) öğrencilerinin askerlik hizmetinden muafiyetleri, Yahudiliğe geçiş süreci (giyur) ve ulusal ölçekte Şabat düzenlemeleri olmak üzere dört konuda güvenlik diline sürekli bağlılıklarının siyasi yansımalarını sorgulayarak kimlik-güvenlik ekseninde analiz etmektedir. Makale, Haredi partilerin dahil oldukları koalisyon belgeleri, 2013 ve 2015 seçim afişleri ve bu başlıklarda ortaya çıkan krizlere verilen bireysel ve kurumsal Haredi tepkileri analiz ederek Haredi siyasetinin çeşitli düzeylerde kimlik-güvenlik endişelerinin ifadesi ile organize edildiğini iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Ultra-Ortodoks, Şas, Yahadut HaTora, Toplumsal güvenlik, Kimlik

Societal Security: A New Conceptual Framework to Analyse Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Politics in Israel*

Introduction

Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) political parties are indispensable actors of the Israeli political system and coalition-building processes thanks to their stable electoral strengths and capacities to mobilize their voters in the polls. The existence or absence of Haredi parties in any government coalition has certain impacts on the role of the religious Orthodoxy across the country (regarding both practices and the authority of institutions) and the community-related autonomies of the Haredi world in Israel and the state-religion relations in general. Although there has already been a bourgeoned literature of the religious parties, politics, and the Haredi community[1], the identity-security nexus has not been developed as a departure point[2] even if the term Haredi literally means 'fearful'.

The main argument of this paper is that Haredi politics is the politics of fear organized around the Jewish religion in such forms as the security of faith, the security of a religious community (Haredim[3]) and the security of the Jewish essence of the national identity and the state. To analyse this, it firstly introduces

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1 For example, culture war/kulturkampf is an analytical concept that has been applied to study religion-state relations in Israel and to explain the challenges deriving from the religious and the Haredi world. See; (Ben-Porat and Feniger, 2012; Kamil, 2000; Katz, 2008; Kimmerling, 1998; Lintl, 2020) There are also several works departing from the religious radicalism angle. See; (Fisher, 2016; Heilman and Friedman, 1992; Leon, 2014; Stadler, Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 2014)

2 Although significant studies have analysed how Haredi leaders/actors defend the faith, cultural autonomies, religious nature of the state (Heilman, 1992; Leon, 2015; Lintl, 2020) or the connection between sectarianism and insecurity (Mathie, 2016), the application of security studies in studying Haredim is still rare (Belder, 2022)

3 Haredim is the plural form of the term Haredi.

the explanatory concept of 'societal security', the elaboration of 'religion' in
societal security literature and the Haredim as a relevant case study and the non-
physical sources of societal security in the Haredi case are examined. The second
chapter explores the historical evolution of the Haredi identity, society, and
actors as well as the religious accommodation in Israel to show the security-
oriented context of the Haredi politics and the emerging insecurities in various
fields (education, conscription, conversion to Judaism, and Shabbat) in the
changing political context. This chapter also illustrates the actorness of the
Haredi political parties in framing and representing the Haredi societal security.
Third chapter provides empirical examples to analyse the identity-security
politics of Haredi parties. To identify the identity-security concerns of the Haredi
parties; this paper analyses coalition documents (including agreements,
principles, working papers, etc.), campaign posters in elections (particular
emphasis is given to the 2013 and the 2015 elections because Haredi parties were
excluded from the government in 2013 (after decades) and they only returned to
coalition after 2015 elections)[4], individual and institutional Haredi responses (in
both discourse and practice) to certain crises (to see how Haredi parties preferred
to frame the crisis) regarding the chosen four topics which are the Haredi
educational autonomy, the exemption of Yeshiva students from the army service,
conversion to Judaism (*giyur*) and Shabbat regulations. Theoretically, this paper
uses the Copenhagen School's 'discursive' conceptualization of security by
going beyond the objective- subjective division to focus on the identity- security
references of the Haredi political actors in various layers (as a faith, as a
community as a nation), but does not apply the securitization theory to the Haredi
politics as a causal mechanism because the paper does not focus on a single
historical case. For this reason, it does not claim to answer the question if
Haredim really face existential threats or if the identity security language is solely
a mean to generate support by the Haredi leaders.

1. Three Faces of Studying Religion as a Societal Security Topic and Haredim

When ethnic and religious groups faced state-led threats in many countries
in the 1990s, the central premises of the traditional security approaches favouring
state security failed to explain emerging crises. By the 1990s, the new security
circumstances required to decentre state from its central position as it easily
turned into the source of threat by itself against societies in many cases like

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4   Haredi parties were also excluded from the first two years of the 30th government
between 2003-05. After two-year of absence, Agudat Israel joined that government
coalition in 2005.

Yugoslavia. This change required taking societies as referent objects rather than merely being a sector of threat (Waever, 1993: 25). Societal security is defined with the sustainability of societal identity and its components like language, culture, association, religious and national identity and custom (Waever 1993:23). Societal identity is defined as something that makes people able to say 'we' (Buzan, 1993: 6; Waever, 1993: 17–24). Any measure rupturing to reproduce identity, whether physical or non-physical, were defined as societal security threats. When being (or feeling) threatened, societies tend to develop various responses from passive and cultural to coercive and militant, to protect its identity (Saleh, 2010: 236).

Relatively more developed and theoretically coherent works in the societal security literature have been conducted at the sub-national level in the form of the inter-societal security dilemma and ethnic security dilemma where inter-societal relations turned into violent conflicts or state apparatus was captured by one of the ethnic groups and oppressed others (Bilgic, 2013; Job, 1992; Kaufman, 1996; Lapid and Kratochwill, 1996; Melander, 1999; Posen, 1993; Roe, 2004; Tang, 2011). When security provider role of the state fails or the state itself turns into a security threat to its people, it becomes possible to identify anarchy (or in Barry Posen's word 'emerging anarchy') situation that facilitates comparison with the anarchy in the international realm and its role of creating security dilemma between states. However, problematizing the relations between the dominant ethnic identity of nation-states and the minority identities have also provided a fertile ground for the research at the national level, even in the absence of the anarchy situation (Ceylan, 2020; Kardaş and Balci, 2016; Møller, 2003).

The dominance of ethnic identity-oriented works extensively subordinated the religion-oriented studies because societal security approach was born to address intra-state ethnic violence in the 1990s. Even if the religious identity appeared in such violent conflicts, like in Yugoslavia, it mainly served as an ethnic marker role (Ivekovic, 2002; Roe, 2004; Waever, 2008). Even at some national-level analyses, ethnic and religious divisions overlap like in the Israeli-Palestinian case (Ceylan, 2020; Olesker, 2011). Moreover, studying religion as a topic of societal security requires further clarifications because taking religion in general and its followers as the representation of that religion is different than taking religious communities as societal actors at national or sub-national contexts. The former emphasizes its transnational character (Buzan and Wæver, 2009: 257; Waever, 2008). Furthermore, Waever and Lautsen's stress on the distinction between religion as religion (faith) and religion as a community identity also shows the complexity of studying religion in societal security context (Laustsen and Wæver, 2000: 709). However, rather than obfuscating, this complexity may help to understand certain cases like ultra-Orthodox communities (Haredim) in Israel, where the analytical difference between

religion as a community identity and religion as a religion blurs. Waever's
concerns regarding the division between religious communities as the referent
object of the societal security and the securitization of faith (survival of faith)
that is subjected to macro-securitization seems less crucial in the Haredi case
because faith defenders are also the securitizing elites of the religious
community.

Furthermore, the overlap of religious and national (Jewish) identities
encourages us to add one more dimension: religion as a national identity.
Regarding the components of the national identity or the Jewish character of the
state, the secular-religious cleavage enables Haredi political actors to take
religious understanding of the nation (the definition of the Jewish people, Am
Israel) and the Jewishness of the state as the referent objects for the societal
security understandings. In this sense, either seclusionist (radical separationists
or pragmatics) or connectionist (with the broader Jewish public) Haredi camp has
certain nationalist characteristics in this sense. Whereas seclusionist wing sees
itself as the island of authentic Jewish culture, the connectionist wing has wider
claims to recover religiosity in the Jewish state (Leon 2016).

To discuss these three layers of manifestations of societal security by
Haredi political parties in Israel, namely religion as faith, community identity
and national identity, the next chapter examines the historical evolution and
politicization of various Orthodox streams in close relations with the unique
institutional setting to understand why security matters for the Haredi identity. It
also clarifies the Haredi parties' actorness in terms of determining who speaks
security on behalf of the society.

2. Why Studying Security Matters for the Haredi Politics? Historical And Institutional Mapping of the Haredi Societal Security

The Jewish Orthodoxy was the early protectionist response to the effects
of the modernity on the societal bounds of the Jewish communities based on the
Jewish tradition in the late eighteenth century and to the Jewish emancipation
and the rational interpretation of Judaism (the Jewish enlightenment Haskalah)
(Brown, 2003: 312; Heilman and Friedman, 1991; Samet, 1988: 249). The Jewish
Orthodoxy promoted itself as the 'Jewish expression of Judaism'(Jung, 1928:
116) and its main goal was to restore the religious narrative (religion as
faith/religion) and the community bounds (religion as a community identity).
When political Zionism threatened the traditional 'chosen people' understanding
and formulated the Jewish people as a 'normal' nation (goy) among other normal

nations (goyim) (Rubinstein, 1984), the Orthodoxy reacted to this new definition of the Jewish people (religion as a national identity) as well.

Within the context of the Orthodox responses to the political question that Zionism posed since the late nineteenth century to the establishment of the State of Israel, two opposing but parallel ranks within the religious Orthodoxy, namely religious Zionist (represented by Mizrahi and HaPoel HaMizrahi) and Haredi (Agudat Israel and Poalei Agudat Israel), emerged and this political division deepened and turned into a societal division having social and religious dimensions after 1948 whereas the anti-Zionist groups of Jerusalem separated themselves from the Agudat Israel movement over the latter's pragmatic ties with the Zionist groups in the Yishuv period (Brown, 2003: 318–19).

Despite its practical stance in the beginning, modern Orthodoxy (or religious Zionism), especially with the influential Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Kook, attributed a teleological role to Zionism to terminate the 'Jewish exile' (Goldberg, 1997: 7). Moreover, the 'historical alliance' (dates to the 1935 Zionist Congress in Lucerne) between the modern Orthodox Mizrahi (Mafdal after 1956) and labour Zionist Mapai until the 1977 elections performed as the basis of the religious accommodation in Israel (Shapira, 2015: 127). In the ultra-Orthodox camp, unlike uncompromising stance of anti-Zionists, the Agudat Israel leadership took part in the state-formation process after the promises given by the Jewish Agency about the protection of the communal autonomies that had already been developed during the Yishuv period (like the educational autonomy) and the recognition of the religious Orthodoxy in central topics (Kashrut, Shabbat, personal matter issues like marriage and divorce and indirectly the conversion to Judaism) (Friedman, 1995). A letter including these assurances sent by the head of the agency David Ben-Gurion to the Agudat Israel leadership then became the symbol of this religious compromise (Barak-Erez, 2009: 2496), and the central pillars of Haredi societal security in the State of Israel. The biggest inclusion to these topics was the decision granting the Yeshiva (religious school) students the exemption from the army service in 1948, rooted the understanding 'Torato Umanuto' (Torah is his profession) for them. Despite not being agreed in the letter, it has historically become a substantial part of the status quo understanding (Barak-Erez, 2009: 2497).

This sort of religious accommodation in Israel created a consociational (or semi-consociational) model of governance by freezing core issues in religion-state relations (Arieli Horowitz, 2001; Bick, 2007; Cohen, 2004; Cohen and Rynhold, 2005; Don-Yehiya, 1999; Horowitz and Lissak, 1989). In religious matters, there was a division of labour (and also competition) between Orthodox parties. While religious Zionists were in the coalitions and focusing on the general issues about the Jewish character of the state, Agudat Israel remained mainly outside of the government coalitions (with some exceptions till 1977

elections) and focused more on the Haredi sectoral gains (Cohen, 2004: 74). Both sides performed the role of defending the faith (religion as religion) at different levels. Especially Agudat Israel enjoyed positioning itself as the true defender of faith without being obliged to make compromises to the state authorities.

This model extensively provided the Haredi society with an umbrella in identity security manner until the mid-1970s. Developments that took place since then decreased the effectiveness of the model in religious accommodation at different levels (Ben-Porat, 2008: 33–34; Cohen, 2004: 75; Cohen and Rynhold, 2005: 732–33; Don-Yehiya, 1999: 93; Eisenstadt, 2008: 209–11). Regarding their impacts on the societal security understandings, it is possible to summarize some of these developments (also disregarding some others) that had been identified by the authors cited above. First, the transformation of the political orientation of the religious Zionism centred on colonizing newly seized territories of the West Bank after 1967 deprived Agudat Israel of a comfort zone where it had gladly transferred the task of political negotiations (conflicts and compromises) with the state bodies and secular parties to Mafdal. The renewal of religious Zionism pushed Agudat Israel to the centre of power politics and be the main actor in state-religion relations. Moreover, Agudat Israel's return to the coalition in 1977 elections with the right-wing Likud victory is explained as the result of the increasing Haredi pressure to the leaders to access state funds, or as the political effort to overturn the labour hegemony, but also the result of Haredi community's integration with the rest of the Israeli society during the deep soul-searching period within Israeli society after 1973 Yom Kippur war (Liebman, 1995: 181). However, as Yoav Peled argued, after 1967, the 'return' to Judaism has been a major component of the religionization of Israeli society and felt among all sectors of society including seculars and Haredim, and the teshuvah (return & answer) movement became the ideological bulwark of Shas movement as a national project of spreading the light to the masses under the guidance of Rav Ovadia Yosef (Peled, 2018: 81-99, Leon, 2016). Second, the decline in labour-Zionist hegemony undermined the consociational model as it had based on the hegemony of the core (labour Zionism) and its relations with the peripheral actors. Likud and its traditionalist (masorti) supporters' victory also precipitated a Sephardi- Haredi break. An alternative coalition partnership and the decline of the establishment parties was taken as a message that the period of their novitiate was over (Heilman and Friedman, 1991: 11). Third, the pluralization of the Haredi politics in the 1980s (the birth of Sephardic Shas in 1984, the split of Lithuanians from Hassidic Agudat Israel to form non-Hassidic Degel HaTora in

1988[5]) and the success of the Haredi parties (especially Shas in the 1990s) gave them a chance to redefine the status quo in favour of their understandings under changing socio-political conditions. Fourth, the 1990s were not only the years of the rise of the Sephardic Shas but also the rise of secularist parties (parties having anti-status quoist agenda), the legal interventions of the Supreme Court (Bagatz) in religion-related issues in line with the individual freedom and the rise of secular population after the mass immigration to Israel from ex-Soviet territories. These developments sparked strong demands for reform in several areas, including liberalising and decentralizing existing nationwide Shabbat regulations, ensuring equality among citizens in the national service (with a focus on exemption of Yeshiva students from the army service), recognizing non-Orthodox religious streams, and liberalising the personal status law and decentralizing the conversion to Judaism (giyur).

If the consociational model and the religious status quo gave the Haredi parties an identity-security shelter, its crises since the 1970s pushed the Haredi leadership to securitize almost all the pillars of the status quo at different levels while expanding its scope whenever possible. The religious status quo has become the articulative reflection of the Haredi societal security walls (wall-making) around the Jewish religion, nation, and its authentic core, Haredi community. However, it should be noted that since 1967, the gradual evolution of Religious Zionism as a new hegemonic worldview has been affecting all sectors of the society including Haredim (Peled, 2018: 214).

3. The Manifestations of the Haredi Societal Security

Although the pillars of the religious status quo mainly constitute the Haredi societal security understandings in general, the positions of the Haredi parties vary. The organizational structures of the parties, the existence of spiritual councils, the independent educational networks, the historical- institutional background enables taking two parties as the major Haredi actors in this analysis. Yahadut HaTora (Torah Judaism) that represents the Ashkenazi branch of the Haredi community focuses mainly (not solely) on the protection of the community-related privileges whereas Shas (Sephardic Guardians of Torah) that represents Sephardic/ Mizrachi branch as well as Mizrahi traditional (masorti)

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5   These two Ashkenazi streams created an umbrella organization with the name 'Yahadut HaTora HaMeuhedet' (The United Tora Judaism), or simply Yahadut HaTora. Since 1992, these parties run in parliamentary elections under the brand of Yahadut HaTora.

voters brings about the issues of religiously Jewish character of the state and the role of religion in the public sphere. From this side, Shas can also be defined as counter nationalist (see Leon) or simply Mizrahi-centred. It is true that Shas manages to reach out to non-Haredi voters and use this in the election campaigns (with significant references to Mizrachi masorti voters as seen in the 2015 elections with the slogan 'Mizrachi votes for Mizrachi'). However, Arye Deri, the leader of the party describes the movement as a 'Jewish (religious) party, not an ethnic one' (Deri, 2018). This chapter focuses on four chosen topics of the status quo to analyse the implementation of the societal security politics of the Haredi parties in a comparative manner.

3.1. Educational Autonomy: The Heart of the Haredi Society

To define Haredi society in Israel, Menachem Friedman used the term *hevrat lomdim* (learning/scholar society) to illustrate the mission-oriented nature of the Haredi identity (Friedman, 1991). Even before the arrival of Ben Gurion's letter, the autonomous Haredi institutions had already been developed and also recognized by the British Mandate administration as one of the autonomous educational streams alongside Mizrahi-led religious schools, labour, and general stream (Schiff, 1977: 172–74; Zameret, 1999: 121). 1949 Compulsory Education Law recognized the education model of Agudat Israel as the fourth stream in the new state (Knesset, 1949). Although this pluralism was ended in 1953 and only two streams (state and state-religious) were recognized and the state-religious education was divided as general-religious (of Mizrahi) and Tora-religious (of Agudat Israel), only 21 of 104 schools of Agudat Israel joined the system whereas others were organized under the brand of *Hinuh Atzmai* (Independent Education Network (Don-Yehiya, 2005: 12). The most significant aspect of this independent school system was its extensive independence of curriculum. This education autonomy expanded when the number of the Sephardic Haredi schools (*HaMaayan*) increased independently from the Ashkenazi educational network.

In almost all coalition agreements they signed, both Agudat Israel and Shas tried to sustain the autonomous status of these schools and to secure public funding. Thanks to this curriculum independence, these institutions have managed to practice strict adherence to Jewish law and custom whereas offering gender-based education for boys (spending their time in praying and studying Tora) and girls (receiving religious instruction while studying traditional subjects to become primary breadwinners when they get married) (Kingsbury 2018:3). However, the high fertility rate among Haredim increased the percentage of the Haredi kids among the total numbers of school-age kids in Israel despite the low percentage of the Haredi population in general. The non-application of the core

curriculum in many Haredi schools has increasingly been criticized by the secularist parties since the 1990s on the ground that it deprives Haredi kids of learning core subjects like Maths and English. These voices led Haredi parties to securitize this educational autonomy as the heart of the Haredi society. Although both parties' autonomy seeking can be seen in coalition agreements, Yahadut HaTora reflected this danger in its election campaigns as well because it mainly aims to mobilize the Haredi community whereas Shas addresses a wider public (mainly Mizrahi voters in the traditional circle).

The rise of the anti-Haredi Yesh Atid (There is a Future) party just before the 2013 elections led Haredi parties to run an emergency campaign combining taboo (educational autonomy and the exemption of Yeshiva students from the army service) and totem (focusing the elderly leadership) to consolidate their voters (Leon, 2015). The approaching danger of the curriculum intervention was reflected in an election poster of Yahadut HaTora by emphasizing the name of the Greek mathematician Euclid as the name Haredi kids would be forced to learn rather than *Mishnayot*[6] if a government excluding Haredi parties was going to be formed. The poster was calling people to take action to protect the future generations (Novik, 2013). 'Tora will not be forgotten by Jews' (National Library Archives, 2013 Elections) was another slogan the party used during the campaign to show the existential threat of the curriculum intervention. This phrase was extracted from *Misha* and reflects a protective and safeguarding context. And, in the election campaign, such saviourism was attributed to Yahadut HaTora in line with the Haredi self-reflection of being the ideal form of the Jewish people.

The 2013 elections gave birth to a Haredi free coalition that lasted for two years. And the coalition guideline indicated that the government was going to work to provide all kids in Israel with the education that was going to protect them from the challenges of the changing world (Basics of Government Policies, 2013). This was an indirect expression of the curriculum intervention. The new government passed a government decision to add Maths and English to the Haredi core curriculum and conditioned the sustainability of the state funds with the minimum teaching hours of these core subjects in Haredi schools. After experiencing being outside of the government for two years, in its 2015 campaign, Yahadut HaTora chose the 'election for generations' slogan to mobilize its public on the grounds of societal security seeking. The campaign manager expressed that they aimed to show how societal gains achieved over decades went down the drain in a government without Haredim (Edelman, 2015). In its election poster, the statement 'election for generations or weeping for generations' (Kliger, 2015) was equalizing the Haredi failure in the elections with the loss of generations. When Haredi parties returned to the coalition, both parties

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6   Mishnayot is the plural form of the term Mishna (the oral law in Judaism).

inserted a chapter securing public funds and curriculum autonomy to Haredi schools in coalition agreements and reversed the government decisions taken in the last two years.

3.2. Military Service: A Rupture in Societal Reproduction

Yeshivas are the central pillars of the scholar community. These centres not only educate new religious elites but also protect the Haredi youth from the 'fallacious' effects of the modern world and provide them with a safe port to learn and live the tradition and transfer it to the next generations. The history of Yeshiva students' exemptions from the army service dates to 1948 (400 Yeshiva students were exempted from the service when this exemption decision was first implemented) (Knesset Research and Information Centre, 2018).

Although it was not free from questioning even before, the anti-exemption voices increased in the 1990s by the secularist parties (Meretz and Shinui) on the grounds of equal distribution of national burden. Moreover, the increasing interventionist tendency of the Supreme Court in frozen topics of the religion-state relations limited the exempting authority of the Defence Ministry in the 1990s. In its 1998 decision, the Supreme Court, while recognizing the role of the ministry of giving exemptions to individuals on various grounds, rejected its right to give automatic exemptions to all Yeshiva students (The Supreme Court Sitting as the High Court of Justice, 1998). A temporary law (designed for only five years in 2001 to give some time to the government for legislating a permanent law), namely Tal Law, aimed to regulate this exemption and it was extended in 2007 for another five-year. Since its annulment by the Supreme Court over its failure in 2012 (Ettinger, 2012; Levush, 2012), the Haredi exemption has been at the forefront of the Haredi societal security battle.

In general, army service is taken as a rupture of a certain practice (non-stop learning of Tora) reproducing the Haredi identity and society every single day. In addition to this rupture, facing the modern world (using technological tools, being in a mixed-sex organization, etc.) is also seen as a substantial threat to the Haredi youth. Despite sharing similar concerns regarding the dangers of military service, Yahadut HaTora and Shas developed different responses to the critical voices asking to end the exemption status of the Yeshiva students.

For Yahadut HaTora, it is a matter of the security of the community identity. To be Haredi, one must be at a Yeshiva, or around Yeshiva, not anywhere else. Despite not targeting the army unlike anti-Zionists, Yahadut HaTora kept using the fear politics via election posters in 2013. In one of those posters, Bnei Brak (a major Haredi city in Israel) youth is warned about the danger of a Haredi free coalition over the exemption status of Yeshiva students:

"Route 7: Know, This Route Goes from Bnei Brak to Bakum" (JDN 2013). Bakum is the induction centre near Tel Aviv and the bus (number 7) passes nearby the centre. In another poster, Yahadut HaTora used the picture of Kadima Party's election advert seen on a bus and critically compared state funds spared to soldiers and Yeshiva students (National Library Archives, 2013 Elections).

The so-called 'malice government' (Adamker, 2015) of 2013-2015 agreed on some quotas spared for the Haredi conscription and enforcement tools for the government in the coalition agreements. The law-making process witnessed securitizing performances of Yahadut HaTora parliamentarians (member of Knesset MK). They depicted the law as a measure preventing Yeshiva students from learning Tora (Meir Porush who also handcuffed himself to the podium), a war against Tora (Israel Eichler), a culture war against Haredim (Eliezer Moses) (Knesset News, 2013). The common point of all Yahadut HaTora responses is the strong emphasis on the security of religion as faith/religion and the security of religion as a community identity.

Unlike Yahadut HaTora, Shas representatives tend to articulate the role of Yeshiva students as spiritual soldiers of the State of Israel. In the same meeting, Shas leader Arye Deri defined Yeshiva students as the Sayeret Matkal (prime special forces unit within the Israel Defence Forces) of the state (Knesset News, 2013). This metaphor explicitly illustrates Shas' perception of the division of labour within the Jewish people/nation. While the army protects the physical security of the state, Yeshivas (and Yeshiva students) protect the religious Jewish character of the state and the spiritual security. Similarly, Eli Yishai (Shas MK) underscored the division of labour among the Jews by arguing that there is no Jew without Tora, and whoever learns Tora, it is for all Jews (Knesset News, 2013). When Haredim returned to the government in 2015, they managed to cancel the regulation penalizing the Haredi deserters despite the need for urgent legislation continued. Shas attempted to make new law in 2018 but it was not accepted in the second and third reading in the parliament. The bill was created by Shas MK Yoav Ben Tzur and defined Tora learning as a 'national value'. For him, if there were no Tora scholars, thew would be no connection between Jewish people (*HaAm HaYehudi*) and Israel (Knesset News, 2018a).

3.3. Conversion to Judaism (Giyur): Holding the Gate of Jewishness

Unlike educational autonomy or the exemption of Yeshiva students from the army service, conversion to Judaism (Giyur) is not directly about the Haredi identity but the religious Jewish national identity. In line with articulating religion in a national identity context, Shas has been prominent in conversion debates. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing demand for liberalizing the

conversion process which had been designed to be performed according to the Orthodox procedure and under the authority of the Chief Rabbinate. The massive immigration from the ex-Soviet territories to Israel created a phenomenon of the non-Jewish Jews because of the distinction between the national and religious Jewish identities (Cohen and Susser, 2009). Whereas non-Jewish spouses and children of Jews are also granted citizenship and the right to live in Israel, they are not recognized as Jews unless an official conversion process. This non-recognition also affected their marital status as they were not allowed to marry other Jews (Fox and Rynhold, 2008: 516).

Reform demands in the conversion system is a matter of identity security for the Haredi parties. For them, the normalization of marrying non-Jews paves the way for the annihilation of the Jewish people/nation. For them, it is something what happened to American Jewry (Halbertal, 2016: 125). The strong stress on the word 'assimilation' is seen in Haredi political and religious (mainly Chief Rabbis) leaders' articulation of the issue. One part of the Shas' election campaign in 2013 was spared for a fight against such reform demands symbolized with Avigdor Liberman, the leader of the secular nationalist (and mainly supported by Russian-speaking Jews in Israel) Israel Beitenu- Israel Our Home party. In one of the election posters, the picture of Liberman was used with the slogan 'only a strong Shas prevent assimilation' (Helman, 2012). This self-ascribed spiritual guarding role was also seen in its election slogan "Shas: state with a soul". Its election campaign explicitly asserted that mixed-marriage and 'so-called' conversions lead to the assimilation and the disappearance of the Jewish identity of the state (Shkedi, 2013).

Like other issues, the 2013-15 government passed a government decision bringing some reforms like decentralizing the conversion process (from the Chief Rabbinate) even if the Orthodox procedure and the authority of Orthodox rabbis and courts remained. (Knesset News, 2014). The Sephardic Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef called the decision destructive that was going to divide the Jewish people (Ettinger, 2014), whereas Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi David Lau insisted that the conversion must be performed in line with the Jewish law (Orthodox) under the authority of the Chief Rabbinate (Jerusalem Post, 2014).

When Haredim back to the coalition in 2015, they managed to insert the statement reconsolidating the authority of the Chief Rabbinate in conversion procedure to the coalition agreements by reversing the 2014 government decision. Unlike educational autonomy and the exemption issues, Chief Rabbis have taken part in the conversion debates by articulating any reform as a threat to the integrity of the Jewish people, which would lead to assimilation. In this regard, they shared a similar discourse with the Shas party. Compared to Yahadut HaTora and its recent references to the Jewishness of the state (as seen in Yahadut HaTora's 2021 election poster stating the integrity of the Jewish people, the

integrity of Tora, and the integrity of the land) Shas has eagerly taken the leadership in this confrontation by its already developed counter-nationalist discourse centralizing the religious Jewish component of the national identity for years.

3.4. Shabbat: Religious Value, Integral Part of the National Identity, Performance of Community Autonomy

Shabbat has become the symbol of the religious status quo and the societal security understandings of the Haredi parties. However, unlike the previous three, the Shabbat issue is analysed not within the context of elections. Instead, certain political crises that Haredi parties played the leading roles, and the constant performance of Haredi territoriality are analysed. There is one practical reason for this. There has almost been a national consensus on the special role of Shabbat in the country, which leaves very little room for Haredi parties to build a comprehensive pro-Shabbat strategy based on societal insecurities.

The organization of the Shabbat days were regulated via the hours of work and rest law (Hours of Work and Rest Law 5711, 1951) and municipality ordinance (Municipalities Ordinance) in the new state. The former states that Shabbat is the rest day for the Jews (and non-Jews have their rest days too) and forbids works on Shabbat with some exceptions (via general and special permits). However, especially special permits, which authorizes the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, have frequently caused political crises between the authorities and the Haredi parties on the ground of desecration of Shabbat allegations (securitization of faith) as lastly seen in the resignation of Yahadut HaTora MK Yaakov Litzman from the cabinet in 2017 over the continuation of the railway maintenance work on Shabbat. Litzman called this work an explicit desecration of Shabbat, and the violation of the values of Jewish tradition and the religious status quo. In this resignation letter, he quoted (with bold letters) Tora (Exodus 31/16): "the Israelite people shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout the ages as a covenant for all time".

The municipality ordinance addresses the plurality within the society by authorizing municipalities of granting permits for business activities on Shabbat. This kind of localization led to the differentiation of Shabbat regulations from city to city. This pluralism has often been targeted by Haredi parties (especially Shas) on the ground of undermining the Jewish character of the state (securitization of the national identity) as lastly seen in the so-called Supermarket Law (Hok HaMarkolim) in 2018, proposed by Shas to authorize internal minister (controlled by Shas at the time of legislation) to approve the municipal permits (Knesset News 2017, 2018b).

Apart from these work permits on Shabbat; Haredi parties and non-parliamentary groups securitize the preservation of the Shabbat regulations in Haredi territories to protect the religious and Haredi lifestyles (securitization of the community identity). In the coalition agreements signed with the Haredi parties, the assurance of such protection is often stated. Haredi cities and neighbourhoods aim to provide society with a protective cocoon to preserve a certain way of life and perform its requirements. This authenticity is positioned at the centre of the Haredi identity. Regarding this mission, in several Haredi neighbourhoods, roads are blocked on Shabbat. This territorial performance was also recognized by some decisions of the Supreme Court (531/77 and 5016/96) based on the balance between individual freedoms and the Haredi societal demands.

This sort of protectionism for the sake of the authentic Haredi community at the local level creates some sort of contrast with the imposition of nationwide Shabbat regulations at the national level. During the Supermarket Law negotiations in Knesset, even the representatives of the secularist parties (Yesh Atid and Israel Beitenu) framed this contrast by giving reference to the Haredi territorial autonomy. For Oded Forer (MK for Israel Beitenu), the authorization of a national body over local preferences would also be a threat for Bnei Brak in the long run (Anon, 1951). Similarly, in his objection to the bill, Lapid claimed that he would also be opposed if anyone wanted to open businesses on Shabbat in Bnei Brak (Maariv, 2018).

This contrast, while showing the differences between the societal security formulations of Yahadut HaTora and Shas regarding the Shabbat issue at different levels, also shows consistencies with their preferred approaches to the other topics of the religious status quo. While Yahadut HaTora adopts a faith-oriented and community-oriented approach, Shas adopts a national identity-oriented approach in almost all pillars of the status quo.

Conclusion

Haredi politics has historically been constructed in identity-security nexus that makes the application of societal security approach to comparatively analyse the Haredi political parties an insightful endeavour. The discourse and practices of the Haredi political parties in these key issues that are the educational autonomy, exemption of Yeshiva students, conversion to Judaism and Shabbat illustrate the general characteristics of the Haredi political agenda that has been heavily securitized in various ways in the historical-institutional evolution of the Haredi politics and the religious accommodation in Israel in general. Both Shas and Yahadut HaTora reflect certain aspects of the security needs of the societal identity in varying degrees and forms. Whereas Yahadut HaTora focuses more

on the security of the Jewish religion by positioning itself as the defender of the Jewish faith in Israel and the security of the Haredi community that has the self-ascribed role of the ideal representative of the Jewish religion and people, Shas develops an approach centralizing the security of the Jewish character of the state and the (religious) Jewish component of the Jewish nation.

The main contribution of this research is twofold. First, it offers a new theoretical ground to analyse Haredi politics in Israel and a new comparison tool. Second, it enriches the societal security literature by studying religion with its various dimensions such as the security of a religious faith, the security of a community identity and the security of a national identity in a single case study. Apart from the religion as a faith and a community identity, religion as a national identity provides further areas of research. By going beyond the religion-state relations context, it may find a room in the broader sphere of national identity debates with the participation of religious Zionist parties in other topics such as settlements.

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