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**Bachelor's Thesis**

**2019**

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**Israel and the BDS Movement in the Context  
of Securitization Theory**

Bachelor's Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2019

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 1 January 2019

Laura Mangunda

## **References**

MANGUNDA, Laura. *Israel and the BDS Movement in the Context of Securitization Theory*. Prague, 2019. 65 pages. Bachelor's thesis (Bc). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies. Department of International Relations. Supervisor Mgr. Jakub Záhora, PhD.

**Length of the Thesis:** 127 068 (with spaces)

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the case study of Israel's treatment of the BDS movement through the lens of securitization theory, specifically the political sector of security. Following the new developments of the theory that focus on the contextual approach to security and on the non-exceptional security measures as determinants of successful securitization, this thesis has two objectives. First, in consideration of the contextual approach to security, it seeks to analyse how the securitizing actors securitized BDS in the chosen speeches of Benjamin Netanyahu, Gilad Erdan and Danny Danon. Second, in consideration of non-exceptional security measures, it seeks to offer an overview of adopted anti-BDS measures in order to evaluate whether the securitization of the boycott movement in Israel has been successful.

## **Abstrakt**

Táto práca sa zaoberá prípadovou štúdiou prístupu Izraela k hnutiu BDS z pohľadu teórie sekuritizácie, konkrétne z pohľadu politického sektoru bezpečnosti. Táto práca, nasledujúc nový vývoj a rekonceptualizácie v teórii, ktoré poukazujú na zohľadnenie kontextu bezpečnosti a na fenomén nemimoriadnych bezpečnostných opatrení pri určovaní úspechu sekuritizácie, má dva ciele. Prvým cieľom je analyzovať ako sekuritizační aktéri sekuritizujú BDS vo vybraných prejavoch Benjamina Netanyahua, Gilada Erdana a Dannyho Danona. Druhým cieľom je poskytnúť prehľad prijatých bezpečnostných opatrení a vyhodnotiť, či bolo BDS v Izraeli úspešne sekuritizované.

## **Keywords**

Israel, BDS, boycott, securitization theory, political sector of security, political security

## **Klíčová slova**

Izrael, BDS, bojkot, teória sekuritizácie, politický sektor bezpečnosti, politická bezpečnosť

## **Title**

Israel and the BDS Movement in the Context of Securitization Theory

## **Název práce**

Izrael a hnutie BDS v kontexte teórie sekuritizácie

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my gratitude to Mgr. Jakub Záhora, PhD. for his patience, flexibility and helpful comments.

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## **Introduction**

Securitization, as a concept focused on the construction of meaning, is inherently relevant in the current political climate that has been described as the age of “post-truth”. It works with the premise that security perceptions are constructed rather than objective. The construction of security meaning is especially relevant in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has been described as a prime example of an intractable conflict, a prolonged conflict which involves differing narratives and perceptions of the other side. Moreover, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as a conflict extensively influenced by the international community, the international image becomes very important. The phenomenon of the rising importance of framing has been described as moving from warfare to imagefare, from conventional wars to battles of ideas, stories and images (Ayalon, Popovich and Yarchi 2016). It is evident, for example, in the rise of public diplomacy - efforts to inform and influence foreign audiences - on both sides of the conflict. In the era of “post-truth” in general, and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, what gets framed as a security issue is essential. Securitization theory offers a framework for studying these processes of security framing.

Having spent one year in Israel from 2017 to 2018, what caught my attention was a bill that was passed in March 2017 and allowed denials of entry into Israel to those who promote boycotts against it. Hence, in this thesis, I attempt to examine the process in which this came to be and other potential effects that this process might have had.

The goal of this thesis is to examine securitization of the boycott movement in Israel. I start by presenting securitization theory and new developments in securitization studies: the context-based approach to studying securitization and non-exceptional approach to studying its success. This is followed by introducing the specific meaning of security in Israel and by briefly presenting the BDS movement that promotes boycotts of Israel. Then, incorporating the theoretical premises into the conceptualization and operationalization of the thesis, I move to the analytical part. First, employing qualitative discourse analysis, I examine how the actors securitized the movement in the chosen speeches. Then, in an overview of adopted anti-BDS measures, I attempt to determine if the securitization of the BDS movement in Israel was successful.

# 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SECURITY BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Critical security studies developed out of need for a reconceptualization of security. With the end of Cold War, redistribution of power in the international arena and emergence of new types of threats, critical security studies came to question the military and state-centric concept of security that was dominating traditional security studies. This concept was seen as inherently inadequate for capturing the new reality of international relations. Critical security theorists argued for a wider definition of security that would be able to reflect this new reality.

In the backlash against the so called „wideners“, it was argued that widening of the security concept, and therefore according the security status to a wider scope of traditionally non-security issues, would carry political implications and cause incoherence in the field of security studies (Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998: 2-5). In response, the critical security theorists developed a new definition of security that centered around the politics of existential threat, or survival of collective units and principles, as its defining and unifying core (Buzan et al. 1998: 27). In this way, the reconceptualized concept of security, though in different forms, retains the same security meaning. This extended concept of security facilitates the study of security beyond the military-political sphere as well as inclusion of non-state actors (such as ethnic minorities or resistance organizations) and non-military threats (such as threats emerging from the growing interdependence of the global economy).

## 1.1. Securitization theory

Though extending security onto different spheres and adopting a constructivist view of social relations in general, much of critical security studies still reproduces the traditional approach to security in its objectivist understanding of threats – that is, by focusing on what „objectively“ *is* a threat. Securitization theory, a theory developed by the Copenhagen School in the 1990s, goes beyond that, extending the constructivist approach to threats themselves. In securitization theory, security is „*a special form of social praxis*“ in which threats are constructed in interaction between actors, it is „*a quality actors inject into issues by securitizing them*“ (Buzan et al. 1998: 204).

Securitization, then, is a process of threat construction. In securitization process, an issue is presented as an existential threat to a designated referent object by a securitizing actor in order to justify taking extraordinary measures to handle this threat. A sense of priority and urgency is evoked because if the threat is not tackled, the referent object might cease to exist, consequently rendering all other issues irrelevant. By claiming these emergency conditions, the securitizing actor is able to legitimize the use of force or otherwise breaking free of rules of the normal politics in the eyes of the audience (Buzan et al. 1998: 21).

A securitized issue enters the realm of special politics as a result of being assigned a specific security meaning. Entering this realm is what distinguishes securitization from mere politicization of an issue. While securitization can be regarded as an extreme form of politicization, it can also be seen as the opposite of politicization in a sense that the issue is no longer a matter of open political debate (Buzan et al. 1998: 29). This is also where the potential risk of its exploitation lies. According to Buzan et al., *„one should not believe this is an innocent reflection of the issue being a security threat: it is always a political choice to securitize or to accept a securitization“* (1998: 29).

Since threats are constructed, the purpose of securitization studies is not to analyze their objectivity. Rather, it is to analyze the construction of shared understanding which occurs in a speech act carried out by the securitizing actor. In its understanding of speech act, securitization theory draws upon the speech act theory and the concept of performative utterances, wherein articulation of security itself is a form of security action and wherein certain utterances not only describe but also create reality (Balzacq 2005: 174-176; Stritzel 2007: 360-362). The speech act *„is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real: it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done (like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship)“* (Buzan et al. 1998: 26). Therefore, instead of the objectivity of threats, securitization studies focus on analysing the dynamics of the securitization process – who securitizes, to whom, what is being securitized, under what conditions and with what effects – in order to assess if a problem would better be handled in the sphere of normal politics, to study the processes in which attitudes towards security are created, maintained or changed, to predict the possible developments of security politics as well as for other purposes (Buzan et al. 1998: 27-29).

### **1.1.1. Sectoral security**

One of the main contributions of the Copenhagen School is the introduction of the sectoral approach to security. Sectors are an analytical tool for studying securitization in different spheres defined by specific types of interactions that occur within them. Although in reality the security interactions take place across sectors, the sectoral approach serves as a useful model for analysing specific features of security (Buzan et al. 1998: 27-29).

There are, in total, five sectors of security: military, political, societal, economic and environmental. Military sector is characterized by coercive interactions and corresponds with the traditional understanding of security. Political sector is characterized by interactions of recognition and legitimacy, societal sector by interactions of collective identity, economic sector by interactions of production and trade, and environmental sector by interactions between human activity and biosphere (Buzan et al. 1998: 7-8). Nature of security utterances, securitizing actors, referent objects, audience, threats and security measures often differs among sectors, with certain units being characteristic to specific sectors. Case study analysed in this thesis falls within the political sector of security.

#### **1.1.1.1. Political sector of security**

Political security is understood by the Copenhagen School through the dichotomy of stabilization and destabilization. If political security is identified by an institutionalized, stabilized and relatively permanent authority, then the upsetting of status quo and stabilized patterns is regarded as insecurity. Hence, political security concerns non-military threats to the organizational stability of states or other political units, particularly to their sovereignty, national identity, organizing ideology and the institutions that express it. Such threats can be made to internal legitimacy or external recognition of a political unit. The concept of political security can be applied to threats such as those that integrative international institutions pose to state sovereignty, that encouraging secessionism poses to unity of a multinational state or that opposing ideologies of capitalism and communism posed to each other in the Cold War (Buzan 1991: 57-111; Buzan et al. 1998: 141-162).

The primary referent object of political security is the state, although it may also apply to other political units like suprastate institutions, self-organized but stateless groups or transnational movements with high mobilizing potential. Referent objects of political security can also be systemic, specifically when political processes, structures and interunit institutions are threatened (Buzan et al. 1998: 145-150).

In political security, the referent object normally coincides with the securitizing actor. In case of states, it is usually the state's formal leaders and institutions, particularly the government. There are certain implications to governments posing as securitizing actors. First, they may opt for securitizing the state even when it is the government itself that is politically threatened. Second, while usually holding more legitimacy than other actors, they are also subject to more public scrutiny. In case of systemic referent objects, international organizations or leading international media may also become securitizing actors (Buzan et al. 1998: 145-150).

To determine the types of threats that occur in the political sector more specifically, the notion of state has to be revisited. Although state is the primary referent object of political security, there are many components within the state to which security can apply. Buzan identifies three components of the state: its physical base, its idea and the institutions that uphold it. According to him, the idea of the state is the most central of state components and therefore also the central issue of security. He recognizes nation and organizing ideologies as the two main sources of these ideas. Nation is a large group of people sharing cultural, historical or ethnic heritage. A state (particularly a nation state) can be seen as an expression and a protector of a nation. Organizing ideologies, on the other hand, are less rooted in shared heritage and are thus more vulnerable to disruption. They are closely linked to the state's institutional structures, in some cases to such an extent that a disruption of the organizing ideology may even have fatal effects on the state. The USA in relation to pluralist democracy and capitalism and Israel in relation to Zionism are examples of such deep interconnection between the state and its organizing ideology (1991: 57-111). As a result, contestation of its organizing ideologies can threaten the existing structure of the state or its existence itself. What these threats have in common is that they ultimately relate to the issue of state sovereignty (similarly to how threats to societal security ultimately relate to identity).

Since the notion of state sovereignty has an absolute character, even minor threats to it are regarded as existential (Buzan et al. 1998: 150-154).

### **1.1.2. Contextual approach to securitization**

In light of empirical applications of the securitization theory, the more recent reflections on the theory are concerned with the introduction of the contextual (also referred to as pragmatic, structural or sociological) approach to securitization. The proponents of this approach claim that the original speech act-focused (also called internalist or philosophical) approach to securitization is inadequate for empirical research because it fails to see the speech act as an act embedded in context (Balzacq 2005). In the original approach of the Copenhagen School, securitization is seen as a self-referential practice. As a consequence of the performative nature of language, the utterance itself creates a new reality of insecurity. Security *is* a speech act – „*what is ,out there‘ is thus irrelevant*“ (Balzacq 2005: 181).

This lack of consideration for the external context has been critiqued from different perspectives. It was argued that there are certain objective external threats (such as a typhoon or radiation exposure) that are threats regardless of their language mediation (Balzacq 2005: 181; Floyd 2011: 430). Additionally, it was suggested that this insensitivity to specific contexts ultimately makes securitization theory unsuitable for non-Western contexts. What occurs is a phenomenon of a so called „Westphalian straitjacket“, a situation when securitizations in non-Western contexts are interpreted through a Eurocentric lense. For example, it is assumed that speech is always possible and preferable, not taking into account various non-democratic contexts (Wilkinson 2007: 10-13).

In the contextual approach, securitization is understood as a practice that takes places within a configuration of circumstances. In their performative capacity, security utterances *do* modify the context and create new reality – but they must also be aligned with it. For securitization to occur, security utterances have to resonate with various facets of external context such as identity, political culture, historical experience or potential trauma of the audience, current power relations and other threats that are present at the moment. According to Balzacq, the underlying idea is that „*when the concept ‘security’ is used, it forces the audience to ‘look around’ in order to identify the*

*conditions (the presumed threats) that justify its articulation. In other words, the context 'selects' or activates certain properties of the concept, while others are concealed*" (2005: 182). Security is thus a symbol guiding the audience's attention and perception. Both textual and cultural meaning of the speech act together constitute a frame of reference, a semantic repertoire of security, through which the speech act is understood by the audience (Balzacq 2005: 183; 2011: 8-18). Such frames commonly draw upon sociolinguistic resources such as emotional appeals, historical analogies and symbolic, often culturally specific, language to resonate with the audience (Stritzel 2012: 554-555). As for the role that these frames play in securitization, it is, *„to structure various properties of an entity or development under the same label – „threat“ – by virtue of the conventions governing the use of the concept and the conditions under which its invocation is justified*" (Balzacq 2011: 14). For example, in his study of securitization of the Falungong movement in China, Vuori found that security frames utilizing resonant ideas and cognitive maps of societies have significant effect on securitization. In the Chinese case, these frames utilized ideological beliefs, calling the movement unpatriotic, revisionist, capitalist or a threat to socialism (2011). Vuori notes that in China *„‘counter-revolution’ was, for a long time, in institutionalized basis for securitization, onto which particular instances and chains of events were grafted. This demonstrates how, in one way, social artifacts – here issues of security – are sedimented into the background of social reality*" (2013: 135). Security continuums – practice of linking the issue to different threats and presenting it as a part of a wider struggle – were also employed (2011: 198-199). From this perspective, securitization could be seen as an act of translation of the speech act into existing discourse in order to establish its new meaning.

Two dimensions or levels of context can be distinguished: agent level (socio-political context) and act level (socio-linguistic context) (Balzacq 2005: 178-179; Stritzel 2007: 369-372). The agent level pertains to the identity and power position of the securitizing actor and to the nature and capacity of the audience. The context of the securitizing actor is related to the concept of linguistic competence wherein the power of speech act derives from the social power of the speaker. For example, some issues fall within what is recognized as a legitimate sphere of a specific actor. Consequently, these will have a privileged position when securitizing. In regards to the audience, what is relevant are its frames of reference (described above), its perception of the securitizing actor, its

capability to enable the actions of the securitizing actor and potential presence of any opposing voices (Balzacq 2005).

The act level concerns grammatical and syntactical rules of language, but also heuristic artifacts – metaphors, analogies, stereotypes, contrasts and other figures of speech that are used to resonate with circumstances in order to mobilize the audience (Balzacq 2005: 178-179). Heuristic artifacts are therefore crucial for aligning the act with the existing discourse and for relating it to “*what the audience already knows*” (Williams 2011: 215). Moreover, when constructing a threat, the securitizing actor typically follows the principles of logical rigor (pointing out the criticality and potential consequences of the problem for the audience) and emotional intensity (Balzacq 2005: 191).

### **1.1.3. Determining the success of securitization**

In the original securitization theory of the Copenhagen School, what renders securitization successful is the legitimization of extraordinary measures that takes place in the acceptance by the audience. This is also what distinguishes a successful securitization from a mere securitizing move contained in the articulation of a threat: „*the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such*“ (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). The extraordinary measures themselves don't have to be adopted. Rather, it is „*only that the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize existential measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threat, point of no return, and necessity*“ (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). Moreover, “*securitization is not fulfilled only by breaking rules (which can take many forms) nor solely by existential threats (which can lead to nothing) but by cases of existential threats that legitimize breaking of the rules*“ (Buzan et al. 1998: 25). The key moment is the legitimization of the breaking of the rules by an enabling audience (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-26; Balzacq 2011: 8-18).

However, the examination of the success of securitization in practice remains problematic. For example, the audience-focused view fails to take into account to whom the securitization is directed and in the eyes of whom it is securitized. In practice, this may manifest in cases of accidental securitizations whereas a state, while attempting to

target external audience, ends up securitizing its domestic public (Wagnsson 2000: 18). In addition, it has been suggested that the audience does not have a decisive role in the success of securitization. Presenting different scenarios of the audience's reaction to the securitizing actor's move, Floyd posits that what matters more is whether the actor acts or doesn't act on their promise of protection. From this point of view, a successful securitization is defined by a securitizing move followed by security practice rather than by the acceptance of the audience (2011: 428-429; 2016: 677-691).

### **1.1.3.1. Turn to non-exceptional measures**

Reconceptualizations of successful securitizations that move away from the audience and focus instead on adoption of security measures also challenge the requirement of their exceptionality. The securitization theory's general emphasis on exceptionality as a defining feature of security has been challenged in light of empirical research (Stritzel 2007; Williams 2011; Floyd 2016). It was noted that this view lacks consideration for the context since identifying security with extremity – rather than just risk or other lower forms of insecurity – may not be true for local or otherwise specific settings where applying the concept of security can have an effect regardless of its exceptionality or existentiality (Williams 2011: 212-216). As to the extraordinary measures specifically, it was argued that insisting on exceptionality of the measures gives no consideration to how the actors themselves perceive them and that even non-exceptional policies can take an exceptional form, such as using the fast track in legislative procedure (Floyd 2016: 677-683). As Floyd states, „*what matters for the 'success' of securitization is not whether or not threats are existential, and conversely that the security response is extraordinary, but rather that practitioners believe the danger or harm a threat to their security (however defined), and regard what they do in response to the threat they themselves identified to be an implemented security policy*” (2016: 691).

This new approach to determining the success of securitization therefore concentrates on the phenomenon of non-exceptional, ordinary security measures. It was suggested that especially in liberal democratic settings, when addressing a threat, the securitizing actors often remain within the rules and adopt new legislation rather than resort to exceptional measures. Instead of breaking free of rules by suspending laws, they often pass new laws, accord new powers or employ already existing apparatus to deal with the

threat (Olesker 2014; Floyd 2016: 677-683). In her study of Israeli laws employed as security practices, Olesker refers to this as banality of securitization, a phenomenon also evident in “*the use of routine procedures of governance, such as immigration policies or budgetary allocations of funds*” (Olesker 2014: 107). Floyd focuses on the securitizing actor’s change in behaviour: a securitization is successful when designation of a threat is followed by the securitizing actor’s action and when this action is justified with reference to the threat (2016: 684-688). According to Salter who includes policy change as one of the four steps in his model of evaluating securitization, policy change may refer not only to changes in actual policy, but also changes in discourse or budget (Salter 2011: 121-122). Successful securitization is, therefore, an implementation of security policies into practice.

## **1.2. Security in the Israeli Context**

Due to the importance of the context within which a particular securitization takes place, it is necessary to discuss the specific meaning of security in Israel.

### **1.2.1. Prominence of (in)security**

Security holds a prominent place in Israeli political and collective life across the political spectrum, both in discourse and practice. This preoccupation with security has been described as chronic insecurity, and a state of securitism, whereby security becomes a nation’s major concern and objective, plays crucial role in various areas of decision-making and whereby the security establishment has considerable power over society (Bar-Tal, Magal and Halperin 2009: 219). The latter is evident, for example, in the high level of trust that the IDF hold in the eyes of the Israeli Jewish public, especially when compared to the government. Although research on insecurity has primarily been focused on physical threats on the individual level (such as being involved in a terror attack), existential insecurity among the Israeli Jews was also found in relation to survival and security of Israel as a state (Bar-Tal et al. 2009: 223-225).

When a state or a society is faced with a persistent or recurrent threat, the security of certain issues may become institutionalized. Institutionalization of security refers to a situation in which certain issues are implicitly assumed to be in the area of urgency and priority. Security nature of an institutionalized issue doesn’t have to be established

each time – rather, it is implied in the issue itself. In states, military security (security in the traditional sense) is typically institutionalized. Institutionalization of security doesn't position the issue in the sphere of normal politics: although automatically, it still takes precedence over other issues (Buzan et al. 1998: 27-29). However, in the Israeli context of prominence and routinization of insecurity in which the security of many issues is institutionalized, it may become hard to separate the realms of normal and special politics as „*it may seem that insecurity is the normal politics*“ (Lupovici 2014: 402).

Another concept used to describe the prominence of security in Israel is the concept of deep securitization as presented by Abulof. Deep securitization is securitization of distinct scale and scope: „*threats are explicitly framed as probable and protracted, endangering the very existence of the nation/state and that discourse is incessantly and widely employed by the society.*“ (2014: 397). Similar to the abovementioned case of excessive institutionalization of security, also here, the spheres of normal and special politics are hard to distinguish. One of the key features of deep securitization is the blurring of the boundary between securitization and politicization: „*since “normal politics” is immersed in the discourse and praxis of “existential threats,” one can hardly make issues part of public policy without framing them as posing “existential threats.”*“ (2014: 400). Even in his earlier work, Abulof points to the salience of existential discourse in Israel. In his analysis of the *Haaretz* newspaper, he shows that the number of articles referring to „existential danger“ or „existential threat“ was as high as 350 per year (with the lowest figure in the examined period of 1994-2007 still exceeding a hundred) (2009: 237). He notes that „*this Zionist “culture of threat” has provided a fertile ground for securitizations of the deepest sort. Elite and public alike have framed military threats, such as Arab invasion, terror, and more recently the Iranian nuclear project, as endangering the very existence of Israel. Zionist deep securitizing moves, moreover, encompass nonmilitary threats—such as intra-Jewish strife, economic disparities, political corruption, or even “brain drain”—all explicitly framed as “existential”* (2009: 404).

The prominent status of security in Israel can be explained as a result of both objective conditions and sociopsychological background of the Israeli Jewish public. As for the objective conditions, since its establishment, Israel has been a party to an intractable conflict with Palestinians in particular and its Arab neighbours general. Israel has

legally been in a state of emergency since its establishment, with this status being extended on a regular basis (Knesset 2017). Moreover, Israel's efforts to attain military security and supremacy in the region have resulted in relatively high inclusion of the population in its national security (especially through obligatory military service and the IDF's reserve force) and its strong military industry (Bar-Tal et al. 2009: 220-223). However, the level of Israeli insecurity cannot be attributed solely to these objective conditions. Parallel to them, there are also sociopsychological factors pertaining to the nature and history of the Israeli Jewish public (Bar-Tal et al. 2009: 228-241). These are reflected, among others, in the collective memory and the resulting mentality of the Israeli Jews.

### **1.2.2. Collective memory**

Collective memory can be defined as a depository of past experiences and traumas that facilitates their reproduction by society, culture and education. Jewish collective memory is dominated by a history of anti-Semitic persecution in the form of discrimination, expulsions, coerced religious conversions, pogroms and eventually the Holocaust (Bar-Tal et al. 2009: 228-241; Abulof 2009: 235-239; Friling 2009). As Bar-Tal and Antebi explain, „*from the Jewish point of view, the Holocaust does not stand alone as one grim event, but is a metaphor for Jewish history itself*“ (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992: 253). The Israeli-Arab conflict has been perceived through the lense of this collective memory and, reciprocally, has contributed to its intensification. For example, Abulof suggests that Holocaust discourse was used by then Prime Minister Menachem Begin when presenting Auschwitz as the only alternative to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon (2009: 236). A study of the Israeli media reports on the Second Intifada suggests that reports were made with reference to the historical persecution of Jews (Bar-Tal et al. 2009: 230). This imagery was also evoked when, during the Israeli withdrawal and settlement evacuation from Gaza in 2005, the evacuee children wore badges with Stars of David on them to symbolize the Nazi-era evacuations of Jews (Friling 2009: 9). In addition, this collective memory is also embedded in other spheres of the Israeli Jewish collective life, for example in Israeli commemoration patterns, school trips to Nazi concentration camps or Holocaust-related black humour (Friling 2009: 8-11).

### 1.2.3. Mentality

Closely related to collective memory is the mentality that stems from it. The Jewish mentality has been described as a doomsday mentality, a mentality embodied in perfecting the skill of „*detecting the potentially disastrous side of seemingly benign developments*“ (Dowty 2001: 25). Also, Israeli Jewish society has been described as having a syndrome of siege mentality, suspecting the world of having highly negative intentions towards one own’s society (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992). A 1987 quote of Yitzhak Rabin, former Prime Minister and then Minister of Defense of Israel, illustrates this mentality well: „*In every generation, they rise up to destroy us, and we must remember that this could happen to us in the future*“ (Bar-Tal and Antebi 1992: 264). Siege mentality manifests, for example, in Israel’s chronic suspicion of the international community (Bar-Tal et al. 2009: 237-241). This suspicion can be further explained by an inherent misunderstanding between Israel and the international community that is contained in the concept of the gap of minds. This concept is used in an analysis of Israeli Jews as a case of small peoples, ethnic communities with a deep-rooted sense of uncertainty about its own survival (Abulof 2009). According to Abulof, the gap of minds is a „*cognitive gap between members of a small people and outsiders. The first tend to regard their existential uncertainty as self-evident, an almost invisible stalking shadow; their critics commonly regard this existential uncertainty as baseless, a pathology of the collective mind.*“ (2009: 228). Another part of the siege mentality is self-victimization, a tendency to see Israel as a victim of the hostile world. This is especially true in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Bar-Tal, Oren and Halperin 2010: 38-39). In her analysis of the role of historiography in Israeli and Palestinian framing of security, Coskun notes that „*the notion of the ‘few against many’ along with the perception of ‘a nation under siege’ became major elements in the Israeli security discourse. In spite of Israel’s victory, Zionist leadership interpreted Israel as the victim of the Arab–Israeli wars*“ (Coskun 2010: 289).

### 1.3. Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a Palestinian-led global movement consisting of academic associations, churches, unions and various grassroots organizations. As the name suggests, its activities consist of *boycott* (withdrawal of support for Israel, companies and institutions that are complicit to Israeli violations of

Palestinian human rights), *divestment* (urging banks, pension funds, universities, local councils and similar organizations to withdraw investment from Israeli companies and other companies complicit in violations of Palestinian rights) and *sanctions* (pressuring states to exclude Israel from military trade and free-trade agreements and various international forums) (BDS Movement). These steps are intended to pressure Israel into complying with the following three demands of the movement: (1) *ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall*, (2) *recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality*, and (3) *respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194*. The call was thus representative of “*the three integral parts of the people of Palestine: Palestinian refugees, Palestinians under occupation and Palestinian citizens of Israel*” (Palestinian Civil Society 2005).

The movement, inspired by the South African anti-Apartheid movement, was established in 2005 when a call for BDS was addressed to Israelis and the international community by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations. It was issued in the ending phase of the harshly repressed Second Intifada that was a reaction to the disillusionment from the failure of the Oslo Peace Process. BDS was described as a strategy for which the circumstances aligned “*with the diplomatic route stymied and with a militant route so costly*” (Munayyer 2016: 283). The movement gained more momentum after the 2008-2009 Gaza War which attracted international attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that led to the fact-finding mission and subsequent publication of the UN Goldstone Report mapping the deliberate attacks on civilians during the war. The movement gained more support as Israel faced more international criticism following the 2014 Gaza War.

The movement is viewed very differently from the Israeli and from the Palestinian perspective. From the Palestinian (pro-Palestinian) perspective, it is a non-violent campaign seeking the end of the Israeli “*regime of of settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation over the Palestinian people*” (BDS Movement) by applying pressure in a situation of asymmetric power. As for the movement’s official relations with the Palestinian leadership, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has neither endorsed nor rejected BDS, despite boycotting products of Israeli settlements in the West Bank (McMahon

2014: 67-68), and was criticized by the movement for normalizing the status quo through its security and economic collaboration with Israel (BDS Movement 2013). However, in January 2018, the Central Council of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the formal representative of the Palestinian people, officially endorsed its support for BDS (BNC 2018). From the Israeli (pro-Israeli) perspective, BDS is seen as a delegitimization campaign with anti-Semitic roots as a "strategic threat with potentially existential implications" (Reut Institute 2015).

Despite the seemingly economical character of boycott, divestment and sanctions, the impact of the movement is not primarily economical. This is partly due to the fact that the majority of products exported by Israel are intermediate products used for manufacturing of other products, rather than end consumer products (Efrati 2017: 45-50). The movement's impact, rather, lies in the shift of public and media attention and discourse. Although the movement is "agnostic" (McMahon 2014: 67) in a sense that it does not address the concrete political form of Israel's compliance with the demands, it has de facto challenged the former international consensus on the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Due to the nature of its demands – which also address the issue of Palestinian refugees and Palestinian citizens of Israel (Israeli Arabs) – it has undermined the central premise of the peace process that the conflict may be resolved by only ending the occupation without addressing those issues. By inclusion of these issues, the movement has challenged the legitimacy of Israel as a state privileging the rights of Jews over non-Jews (The Guardian 2018). This also reflects the threat perceived by Israel.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this thesis is to examine securitization of the BDS movement by Benjamin Netanyahu, Gilad Erdan and Danny Danon, three prominent Israeli politicians, in the chosen speeches that took place between March 2010 and November 2018. First, employing qualitative discourse analysis, I examine how (using what themes) the actors securitize the movement in the chosen speeches. The specific context of security in Israel is reflected in the conceptualization, operationalization and interpretation of the analysis. Second, in an overview of adopted anti-BDS measures, I attempt to determine if the securitization of the BDS movement in Israel has been successful.

### 2.1. Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is one of the main methods of studying securitization. Like securitization theory, discourse analysis also draws on the constructive ability of language. As Mutlu and Salter describe, „*language is political, social and cultural: discourse analysis is the rigorous study of writing, speech and other communicative events in order to understand these political, social and cultural dynamics*“ (2013: 113). Discourse can be understood as both a resource and a practice of meaning. Text, then, is one of its material forms. When applying contextual approach to securitization, not only intratextuality but also intertextuality have to be considered (Balzacq 2011b: 43).

Intratextuality is concerned with what is within text. In practice, this means examining what function the particular text serves and what representations it creates. It is an inquiry into the performative quality of the text (Balzacq 2011b: 43). Depending on the function that the text serves in the process of securitization, it is possible to identify different types of speech acts: assertives (for example, statements and explanations), directives (for example, orders and requests), commissives (for example, promises and threats), expressives (for example, apologies, thanks and expressions of feelings) and declarations (for example, declaring a war) (Searle and Vanderveken 1985: 37–38). In this way, a speech act is not confined to one utterance. Conversely, one utterance may contain several speech acts (Levinson 1980: 20). Based on the aim of the text and what types of speech acts it employs, it is also possible to discern different strands of securitization within it: strands aimed at legitimating future acts, at raising an issue on

the agenda, at deterrence, at legitimating past acts or at gaining control (Vuori 2008: 73-76).

Intertextuality, on the other hand, pertains to the embeddedness of text within and against other texts and structures of meaning and examination of the relationships and patterns among them. In this way, narratives – „*reccurent patterns of linguistic characterization*“ (Balzacq 2011b: 43) – can be examined and used for analysis of the construction of meaning. In construction of a security meaning, a narrative establishes a link pointing to a threatening phenomenon, contributes to its routinization and creates contrasting sets of understanding (Balzacq 2011b: 43).

## **2.2. Conceptualization**

In its original definition, securitization is a process in which a securitizing actor presents an issue as an existential threat to a referent object in order to justify adoption of security measures in the eyes of the audience. In order to analyse securitization, it is necessary to specify the meaning of these terms as used in this thesis.

### **2.2.1. Referent object**

Referent object is an object that is claimed to be existentially threatened. As stated above, the referent object of political security is typically the state. An important feature of a referent object is its legitimacy, or its „right to survive“ (Buzan et al. 1998: 35-42). Israel’s legitimacy has been previously conceptualized as a referent object in Olesker’s study of Israel and the BDS, noting that Israel’s case is illustrative since its legitimacy has been questioned since the state’s establishment (2018: 313). Abulof, in his study of deep securitization in Israel, notes the complex meaning of political legitimacy in such cases: „*The incomplete (or absent) legitimation for a collective identity or collective polity intensifies its members’ perception of insecurity (as existential uncertainty) and hence its securitization discourse. The loss of legitimacy itself is securitized, framed as an existential threat.*“ He adds that „*if the insecure polity is ethnonational, political legitimation lends itself to justify both the ethnic community (“the people,” understood genealogically) and the state, legitimating each other: the state must exist to preserve the people, and the people must persist (often with an assured majority) to sustain the state*“ (2014: 402).

Therefore, the referent object of this case study is Israel as a legitimate state in its current form, that is as a Jewish state exercising control over the occupied territories (in the form that the BDS movement seeks to challenge).

### **2.2.2. Existential threat**

The character of existential threat is closely related to the character of the designated referent object (Buzan et al. 1998: 21-22). Just as states consist of different components that may be seen as threatened, threats also consist of different components that may be perceived as threatening. This case study examines the threat posed to Israel by the BDS, not in its capacity to cause economic harm but, rather, in its capacity to politically isolate and delegitimize Israel.

### **2.2.3. Securitizing actor**

Securitizing actor is an actor who securitizes an issue by declaring a referent object to be existentially threatened. Securitizing actor is relatively easy to determine in states since there are rules as to who can speak on its behalf – it is typically the state's government and political leaders. These also hold a privileged position when securitizing and therefore possess high linguistic competence (Buzan et al. 1998: 35-42). In this case study, Israel as the securitizing actor is represented by three officials and members of the ruling right-wing Likud Party: Benjamin Netanyahu, Gilad Erdan and Danny Danon. These actors were chosen because of their prominence in Israeli political life and their involvement with the issue of BDS.

Benjamin Netanyahu has served as the Prime Minister of Israel for three consecutive terms since 2009, and can therefore be seen as currently the most prominent Israeli political figure. He served as the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2012 to 2013 and has held the position again since 2015. Besides, Netanyahu held several high-ranking positions (including Prime Minister) prior to the examined period. Gilad Erdan has presided over the Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy since the 2015 election. He also held various ministerial positions in the previous years of Netanyahu's governments. Erdan, also called the „*Israel's answer to the BDS*“ (Jerusalem Post 2015), has been given the role in the Strategic Affairs Ministry with the explicit purpose of taking steps against the movement. Danny

Danon has served as the Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN since 2015. In the previous years, he also briefly held the position of Minister of Science and Deputy Minister of Defense. Danon has been involved in Israel's anti-BDS politics mainly by sponsoring Israel's first Boycott Bill as a MK in 2011 (*NY Daily News* 2011) and by leading three anti-BDS conferences at the UN in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

#### **2.2.4. Audience**

The original approach to securitization views audience as a rather homogenous public. In practice, however, there can be several parallel audiences (Vuori 2008: 72) to which different logics of persuasion apply, but that are nevertheless united in the same policy-making process (Lónard and Kaunert 2011: 74). According to the audience, different settings of securitization – popular, elite, technocratic, expert or scientific – can be distinguished (Salter 2011: 117-118). In this case study, different types of audiences may be recognized as well. Although in this case study the success of securitization is determined by adoption of anti-BDS policies and not by the audience, the nature of the audience may affect how the securitizing actors choose to speak security.

The analysed speeches target audiences from various types of settings, from the members of Israeli cabinet (Netanyahu's cabinet addresses), security experts (Netanyahu's speech at the 2015 Herzliya Conference) and legal experts (Erdoğan's speech at the 2018 Legal Network Initiative) to foreign representatives (Netanyahu's speeches at the meetings with the Polish and Czech Foreign Ministers). However, the vast majority of speeches is addressed to civil society organizations and gatherings (especially Jewish organizations and organizations focused on cooperation with Israel) and to individuals attending the events (for example, in the case of Danon's anti-BDS conferences with attendance as high as 2000, it is predominantly American Jewish students and activists). Finally, the audience includes the broader public that may access the videos and transcripts of these speeches online on governmental platforms where most of them are published.

From the perspective of nationality, the analysed speeches address both Israeli Jewish and Diaspora Jewish public, as well as the broader international audience. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, Israel „*sees itself as being responsible for all Jews worldwide, whether they live in Israel or the Diaspora*“ (Ministry of Diaspora Affairs). Secondly,

the BDS movement, although originally a Palestinian initiative, has become a global campaign with influence in Europe and the United States. Lastly, it is due to the fact that all chosen speeches were either carried out in English or (in the case of Netanyahu's cabinet addresses) translated into and published in English to an official governmental website.

### **2.2.5. Security measures and successful securitization**

In consideration of the securitization studies' turn to non-exceptional measures, this case study focuses on anti-BDS security measures that were adopted by Israel regardless of their exceptional character. The decisive criterion is the securitizing actor's change in behaviour evident in adopting new laws, according new powers, employing already existing security apparatus to deal with the threat or in budgetary changes. I follow the framework proposed by Floyd in which a securitization is successful when the identification of a threat is followed by the actor's behaviour and this behaviour is justified with reference to the identified threat (2016: 684-688). However, since it is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will not carry out a discourse analysis of the justifying discourse – the emphasis will be put on the implemented policy change.

### **2.2.6. Speeches**

A total of 21 speeches from the three securitizing actors were chosen for discourse analysis: fifteen from Netanyahu, three from Erdan and three from Danon.

The first consideration for the selection of speeches was their accessibility. All selected speeches are accessible online in their original English version (with the exception of Netanyahu's cabinet addresses that were translated from Hebrew prior to being published), either as videos or as full transcripts. The vast majority of speeches is published on official governmental platforms. The second consideration was that the speeches engaged with the issue of BDS extensively<sup>1</sup>. Five speeches focused on BDS explicitly, while others engaged with the topic on occasions that weren't specifically BDS-related.

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of Netanyahu's speeches, search engine on the Prime Minister's website's was used to pre-select speeches containing the word "boycott" or "BDS".

The choice of time frame was made with reference to the 2009 election victory and ongoing governmental rule of Netanyahu and his Likud Party, as well as with reference to the adoption of the anti-BDS laws in 2011 and 2017. The selected speeches range from the time period of March 2010 to November 2018. An emphasis is put on the last three years of this time period due to the recent intensification of the anti-BDS discourse and practices in Israel and because Erdan and Danon only assumed their current offices in 2015.

## **2.3. Operationalization**

Construction of a threat in a process of securitization occurs using various words. Considering that security language is not confined to uttering the word „security“ (Buzan et al. 1998: 27), it is necessary to propose signifiers or „watchwords“ (Vuori 2013: 136) of security that constitute a security meaning for the purpose of discourse analysis. I did this by first creating categories of words and themes according to both the conventional (such as the word „threat“) and context-specific (such as „anti-Semitic“) meaning of security and the logic of securitization, subsequently modifying these categories in accordance with the examined texts.

### **2.3.1. Warfare language**

#### **2.3.1.1. Warfare language describing the BDS**

This category refers to the use of security and military terms to describe BDS, its intentions and its actions. Under Searle and Vanderveken’s typology of speech acts (1985: 37–38), these would fall within the category of assertives since their function is to assert the threatening nature of the movement. This applies to words like *threat*, *attack*, *assault*, *enemies* or *dangers*. This also applies to the theme of „*new kind of warfare*“ wherein phrases use these terms to refer to BDS indirectly, suggesting that it is a new form of the old conventional warfare. Additionally, this category includes statements linking or comparing BDS to *terrorism* or *incitement*.

#### **2.3.1.2. Warfare language describing Israel**

This category refers to the use of security and military terms to describe Israel or Jews, their actions and what they have to do or should do. Under Searle and Vanderveken’s

typology (1985: 37–38), these would generally be considered directives since they aim to mobilize the audience. Words like *fight, defense, offense, attack, combat, battle* or *armed* fall within this category.

### **2.3.2. Existentiality**

Most empirical studies of securitization accord existentiality even to discourse that does not concern existence or survival explicitly. This is because the existential threshold of securitization is not clearly specified (Abulof 2014: 397-399). However, due to the salience of existential discourse in Israel, I chose to only consider statements that explicitly refer to the survival of Israel or the Jewish people in relation to the actions and intentions of BDS. This includes references to *existence, end, elimination* or *dissolution of the state*, references to *right to exist* and *right to live* as well as the themes of „*no future*“ or „*no room for Israel in any borders*“. Statements solely referring to historical rights, legal rights or rights to independence and sovereignty are not included in this category

### **2.3.3. Urgency**

This category refers to mobilizing statements suggesting a shortage of time and applies to the themes of „*now is the time*“ and „*we cannot rest*“.

### **2.3.4. Exceptionality**

This category pertains to any statement positioning BDS above or outside the sphere of normal politics, either explicitly (within the „*different from legitimate political criticism/debate*“ theme or by denoting BDS as *extremist*) or by suggesting what the reaction to BDS should be (either „*zero tolerance*“ or „*unity across the political spectrum*“ theme)..

### **2.3.5. Antisemitism**

This is an additional category not included in the original speech-focused concept of securitization. In this category I attempt to integrate the specific Israeli context consisting of Jewish collective memory, mentality and security discourse. The premise of analysing this category is that in Israel, anti-Semitism serves as an institutionalized

basis for security (similar to counter-revolution in Vuori's study of China) (2013: 135). The theme of anti-Semitism has been used in relation to the BDS movement in the past. For example, Erdan cited an excerpt of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in his recent Tel Aviv speech about BDS (*Haaretz* 2018). This category includes statements invoking the theme of *anti-Semitism* when speaking about BDS, either explicitly or by referring to *Nazism*, *Holocaust* and the *historical persecution of the Jewish people*. Words like racism and hate are not included in this category as they are not specific enough.

### **3. ANALYTICAL PART: ISRAEL AND THE SECURITIZATION OF THE BDS MOVEMENT**

#### **3.1. Discourse analysis: How did Israel securitize the BDS movement?**

##### **3.1.1. Benjamin Netanyahu**

###### **3.1.1.1. Netanyahu's addresses at cabinet meetings**

###### **3.1.1.1.1. Warfare language describing BDS**

The words „*attack*“, „*threat*“, „*assault on our legitimacy*“ and „*enemies*“ were used to describe the BDS movement. In one case, Netanyahu linked the movement to incitement, calling it „*a network of incitement against Israel and the Jewish People in order to undermine the existence of Israel as the Jewish national state and its right to defend itself by itself against its enemies.*“ (23 June 2013). In another case, BDS was presented as a threat analogous to conventional threats, specifically to those posed by Iran: „*The very existence of the State of Israel is under an attack from two elements: First – the physical threat as reflected in Iran's attempts to arm itself with nuclear weapons, and second – the threat posed by the global delegitimization campaign that denies our right to exist. Therefore, we are working to ensure that Israel will have the physical means to defend its citizens and we are waging a determined campaign against the movements to boycott Israel and deny its right to exist. The key to dealing with these threats is an active – not just defensive – approach; we must denounce those who would slander us and seek our ill.*“ (28 June 2015).

###### **3.1.1.1.2. Warfare language describing Israel and exceptionality**

As evident above, descriptions of BDS that used warfare language were often directly followed by mobilizing warfare language referring to Israel. This is true for other speeches as well. He talks of „*establishing an offensive, first of all offensive, but also defensive, network in the face of attempts to boycott the State of Israel and harm the IDF's right to defend the citizens of the country*“ (7 June 2015). Additionally, he says:

*„Against attempts to attack Israel with lies, false accusations and boycotts, we must line up – Right and Left – to rebuff the pressure, expose the lies and attack those who attack us. We will gather forces in Israel and around the world to shatter the lies of our enemies, and we will fight for Israel's right to live in peace and security, to live at all.“* (7 June 2015). The phrase *„we must attack those who attack us“* is a precise example of such a case, using the word *„attack“* to describe both the threat and the corresponding (and therefore justified) response to it. What can also be observed here is the call for unity across the political spectrum (*„we must line up – Right and Left“*), evoking the *„above politics“* exceptional nature of BDS.

### **3.1.1.1.3. Existentiality**

While the theme of existentiality is evident in the previously mentioned cases (*„the very existence of the State of Israel“*; *„Israel's right to live in peace and security, to live at all“*; *„to undermine the existence of Israel as the Jewish national state“* and other mentions of Israel's *„right to exist“*), there are further references to this theme. The theme of *„no future“* is used when Netanyahu states: *„The Jewish people have no future without the State of Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora have no future without the state of the Jews. Thus, in order to ensure the future of the people, one must ensure the future of the state.“* (28 June 2015). The theme of *„no room for Israel in any borders“* is employed in the following statement: *„As far as those pushing the boycotts are concerned, the settlements in Judea and Samaria<sup>2</sup> are not the focus of the conflict, but our settling in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Be'er Sheva, Haifa<sup>3</sup> and – of course – Jerusalem.“* (Netanyahu, 7 June 2015).

### **3.1.1.1.4. Anti-Semitism**

One speech referred to anti-Semitism, particularly to the events that unfolded after the 2015 EU decision to label products from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Following the decision, the German KaDeWe department store temporarily removed Israeli products to re-label them (*Haaretz* 2015). Netanyahu criticized this step, referring to history: *„This department store had been owned by Jews; the Nazis took it. Absurdly, the store is now labeling products from communities in Judea, Samaria and*

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<sup>2</sup> Two major areas of the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank

<sup>3</sup> Cities within the Green Line, i.e. within the internationally recognized borders of „Israel Proper“

*the Golan Heights. [...] We strongly protest this step, which is unacceptable morally, historically and on its merits.*“ (22 November 2015).

### **3.1.1.2. Netanyahu’s public speeches**

#### **3.1.1.2.1. Warfare language describing BDS**

In Netanyahu’s ten public speeches, BDS was also described by the words „*threat*“ and „*assault on our legitimacy*“. Similar to the previous category of Netanyahu’s speeches, BDS was presented alongside the Iranian threat. In his address to Christian United for Israel, an American Christian pro-Israel organization, Netanyahu said: „*Israel faces great challenges. We must prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. We must repel the assault on our legitimacy.*“ (8 March 2010). Moreover, it was implied that BDS is merely a continuation of old conventional warfare. In his speech at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, he stated: „*...there is a new campaign against us, having failed to dislodge us with weapons, with armies, with terrorists, with rockets, with missiles, they now think that they’ll dislodge us with boycotts, and that’s nothing new.*“ (17 February 2014).

#### **3.1.1.2.2. Warfare language describing Israel**

Mobilizing warfare language relating to Israel extensively used the words „*fight*“, „*defend*“, „*battle*“ and „*combat*“. For example, while also implying urgency, Netanyahu stated: „*And I think we have to fight them. It’s time to delegitimize the delegitimizers. And it’s time that we fight back.*“ (17 February 2014). In his greeting at the 2015 Anti-BDS Summit in Las Vegas, Netanyahu told the participants that „*delegitimization of Israel must be fought, and you are on the front lines*“ and that it must be fought so that the supporters of Israel „*can be armed with facts to defend the truth*“. He went on saying that truth is their „*most potent weapon*“ (6 June 2015). Similarly, in his message to the participants of Danon’s first anti-BDS conference at the UN, he said that the participants were „*the real freedom fighters, the real champions of justice*“ (31 May 2016). What was notable was the use of the word „*battle*“. While in the speech to Christians United for Israel he urged the participants to „*join [us] in this battle to defend the truth*“ (8 March 2010), in his 2017 speech at the AIPAC Policy Conference he said: „*We will defend ourselves not only on the physical battlefield, but also on the moral*

*battlefield.*“ (27 March 2017). Again, BDS was framed as a category alongside the conventional physical threats.

### **3.1.1.2.3. Existentiality and exceptionality**

Existentiality in Netanyahu's speeches included in references to the supposed real intentions of the BDS movement, which is to „*see the end of the Jewish state*“ (17 February 2014), to „*seek the dissolution of the only state for the Jewish people*“ (4 March 2014) and to „*call for the elimination of Israel*“ (8 June 2015). In his Las Vegas speech, employing the „no future“ theme, Netanyahu states: „*It's not about this or that Israeli policy. It's about our right to exist here as a free people. Our right to defend ourselves. Our right to determine our own future. There is no Jewish future without the Jewish state.*“ (6 June 2015). A common theme of these claims is suggesting that BDS hides its real intentions behind a mask: „*People tell me, you know, the BDS movement really wants, all they want to do is get Israel back to the '67 borders. Well, here's what one of the leaders of the BDS says: "The real aim of BDS is to bring down the State of Israel. Justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the State of Israel." BDS tries to conceal this bigoted agenda behind an elaborate smokescreen, and they exploit the language of human rights while they deny the right of the Jewish people to independence and sovereignty.*“ Pointing to the „above politics“ exceptional nature of BDS by giving it the label of extremism, he continues: „*And I think this lie has to be exposed for what it is. It's a rejectionist extremist Palestinian position in which there is no room for Israel in any borders.*“ (8 June 2015). BDS is excluded from the category of legitimate criticism. Netanyahu asserts that „*there's a world of difference between pertinent, legitimate criticism and the kind of vilification that is addressed to Israel every day that is really meant to deny us our right to live as a free people in our land*“ (18 June 2015). He also makes a remark about the abundance of legitimate criticism in Israel: „*We have a boisterous democracy where everyone has an opinion. And believe me, no one in Israel is shy about expressing it – about anything. In Israel, self-criticism is on steroids. But the BDS movement is not about legitimate criticism. It's about making Israel illegitimate.*“ (4 March 2014)

#### 3.1.1.2.4. Anti-Semitism

Lastly, there are widespread references to anti-Semitism in Netanyahu's speeches, both explicitly and by referring to the history of persecution of Jews and the Holocaust. In the explicit remarks, the notion of mask is used again: *„And I think it's important that the boycotters must be exposed for what they are. They're classical anti-Semites in modern garb.“* (17 February 2014). However, most of these allegations are included in longer commentaries. Netanyahu speaks of BDS as a re-emergence of anti-Semitism: *„...they now think that they'll dislodge us with boycotts, and that's nothing new. We've had that in our history as well. You know the boycotts of Jews, and I think the most eerie thing, the most disgraceful thing is to have people on the soil of Europe talking about the boycott of Jews. I think that's an outrage, but that is something that we're re-encountering. In the past, anti-Semites boycotted Jewish businesses and today they call for the boycott of the Jewish state.“* (17 February 2014). Three different themes are used here. The first two sentences engage the theme of the ever-present persecution of the Jewish people, a theme embedded in the siege mentality. The second sentence makes a reference to the Nazi boycotts of Jews. The third sentence claims Israel to be the new target of anti-Semitism. Netanyahu uses these themes again in his 2014 AIPAC Policy Conference speech: *„It's hard to shed prejudices that have been ingrained in consciousness over millennia. And from antiquity to the Middle Ages to modern times, Jews were boycotted, discriminated against and singled out. Today the singling out of the Jewish people has turned into the singling out of the Jewish state. So you see, attempts to boycott, divest and sanction Israel, the most threatened democracy on Earth, are simply the latest chapter in the long and dark history of anti-Semitism. Those who wear – those who wear the BDS label should be treated exactly as we treat any anti-Semite or bigot. They should be exposed and condemned.“* (4 March 2014). The links to Holocaust-era boycotts of Jews were made again during the Netanyahu's meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister Schetyna: *„And I hope, Mr. Minister, we can discuss how to advance a genuine peace and stop the slandering of Israel. I say that to the foreign minister of a free proud and independent Poland, on whose soil the defamation of the Jewish people happened when the Nazis controlled Europe. The attacks on the Jews were always preceded by the slander of the Jews. What was done to the Jewish people then is being done to the Jewish state now. We won't accommodate that. In those days we could do nothing. Today we can speak our mind, hold our*

ground. *We're going to do both.*“ (15 June 2015). The notion of Israel as a new target of anti-Semitism – here accompanied by the contrast of „then“ when „*we could do nothing*“ and „now“ – is especially interesting.

### **3.1.2. Gilad Erdan**

#### **3.1.2.1. Warfare language describing BDS**

In his speeches, one of which took place in 2016 and two in 2018, Erdan broadly uses the warfare language. When characterizing the BDS movement, just like Netanyahu, Erdan uses the words „*threat*“, „*attack*“, „*assault on Israel's legitimacy*“ and „*enemies*“ as well as „*anti-Israel forces*“. He also presents BDS as a continuation of threats posed by conventional warfare: „*Israel's enemies know that we cannot be defeated through conventional warfare - thank God - so they're using the new tools of this 21st century to advance their old goals.*“ (5 February 2018).

Erdan repeatedly links BDS to terrorism. In his speech at the Israel German Congress in Frankfurt, he says that the Ministry is „*exposing the links between BDS activists and designated terrorist groups such as Hamas and the PFLP*“ (25 November 2018). In his Legal Network Initiative speech, Erdan mainly does this implicitly, by association. For example, he opens the speech with the topic of BDS, then directly follows up with a recent terror attack: „*The fight against the BDS unites all of us, Likud and Labour, left and right. Before I begin my remarks, I must say something about today's terrible terror attack. Today, Itamar Ben-Gal was cruelly murdered by a young Palestinian terrorist full of hate and incitement.*“ He later continues to present BDS as a category alongside terrorism and incitement: „*I want to address two issues tonight. The first is countering the anti-Semitic BDS movement which seeks to drive Israelis and Palestinians apart, delegitimize Israel and put up barriers between the two sides. The second is the incitement spread by the Palestinian Authority and Abu Mazen, which drives terror as we've seen today, demonizes Israel and feeds a culture of hate.*“ (5 February 2018).

However, equating BDS to terrorism is especially evident in Erdan's speech at the 2016 Jerusalem Post Conference in New York. In one part of his speech (one that later attracted quite a lot of media coverage), makes the following analogy: „*I would like you to imagine two people. On the one side, picture a sophisticated university professor who believes that Israel is the root of all evil. On the other hand, a young man from Hebron*

*taught to hate from young age, and motivated by Islamic extremism. At first glance, they have little in common. Sure, neither is too keen on Israel, but they come from different backgrounds, move in different circles and express themselves in different ways. The professor exalts his hostility towards Israel through leading BDS campaigns: organizing boycotts of Israeli academics, using intimidation to prevent Israeli voices from being heard and spreading bile and lies about Israel in his classroom. The young man's hatred is expressed through taking a knife or gun and going out to murder innocent Israelis. While he dare not admit it, the BDS leader has more in common with the terrorists than with genuine human rights activists. Though their tools are different, BDS and terrorism are united in their goals, they are united in their language of hate and they are united in their victims. They not only complement each other, they fuel each other.“ (22 May 2016). In this speech, Erdan elaborates on the three things that BDS and terrorism supposedly share: goals („Their shared goal is simple and explicit: the destruction of the State of Israel.“), language („BDS and terror also share the language of hate, in which incitement against Israelis is the norm and violence is legitimized.“) and victims. In his comparison of the victims of BDS and terror, he uses strong emotional appeals and personalization: „BDS and terror also share victims. Terrorism harms all in its path, irrespective of their origin. Such, as we all remember, Taylor Force, the American army veteran stabbed to death in Jaffa. Or Richard Laking, who died after being shot and stabbed on a bus in Jerusalem. Richard was a former Connecticut school principal who came to Israel to teach both Jewish and Arab children and wrote a book called “Teaching as an act of love”. And he was murdered by those taught to hate. Richardson Mika is a close friend of mine, and I will never forget his tears as he told me how such a gentle, loving man was so brutally murdered. BDS also harms all in its path. Who here knows that 1 in 4 biotechnological solutions in the world has Israeli roots? Think about it. 1 in 4. And that is what they want to destroy. If BDS succeeds, amongst its victims will be cancer patients, stroke victims and those with Alzheimer's across the world who are given life - life - by Israeli innovation.“ Dubbing BDS „a battle that is no less intense and no less important [than countering terrorism]“, Erdan concludes his New York speech by saying: „And so, when we take into account their shared goal, language and victims, what we see is that our boycotting university professor and our terrorist from Hebron in fact represent two sides of exactly the same ideology. Friends, BDS and terror are two sides of the same coin.“ (22 May 2018).*

### 3.1.2.2. Warfare language describing Israel and urgency

In addressing the audience, Erdan frequently uses the words „fight“, „combat“, „counter“ or „battle“ and announces „moving from defense to offense“. This phrase is used in a rather sentimental analogy in which Erdan compares the conference participants to officers guarding Jerusalem: „Now I want to ask all of you to close your eyes and think for a second about the young men and women, police officers, border police and soldiers who are standing guard tonight over the Old City of Jerusalem. Think about them. Outside, in the cold, standing high on top of the stone walls, walking through the narrow alleyways, listening to the sound of the prayers, prayers from the synagogues, mosques and churches, standing guard while we sit here. [...] We are here tonight to rise up and declare that we're fighting back. That we're moving from defense to offense. That we'll defend justice and pursue those who advance an ideology of hate, anti-Semitism and discrimination. That just as those young men and women outside tonight are defending the capital of the Jewish people, Jerusalem, so too we will do everything in our power to defend them in the courts of law and the courts of public opinion, in capitals around the world.“ (5 February 2018). During the Jerusalem Post Conference Erdan uses a similar analogy, although this time equating participants to Israel's Special Forces: „In the fight against terror, not everyone can be on the front lines. But in the fight against BDS, the battlefield, as you know, is different. Because you are on the front line, you are our Special Forces, you are our Yamam<sup>4</sup> and our Sayeret Matkal<sup>5</sup>.“ (22 May 2016). In some instances, urgency is implied. For example, Erdan says that „for the first time, BDS extremists are on the defensive“ but follows up with saying that „we cannot afford to be complacent“ (22 May 2016).

### 3.1.2.3. Existentiality and exceptionality

In presenting the existential nature of BDS, Erdan claims that the movement's goal is „the destruction of the State of Israel“ (22 May 2016) and „wiping Israel off the map“ since „they refuse to recognize the legitimacy of a Jewish state anywhere in the Middle East, in any borders“ (5 February 2018). The emphasis that Erdan puts on loss of life when talking about the potential victims of BDS may also be viewed as a reference to survival and existentiality: „If BDS succeeds, amongst its victims will be cancer

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<sup>4</sup> Israeli counter-terrorism unit

<sup>5</sup> Israeli intelligence-gathering unit

*patients, stroke victims and those with Alzheimer's across the world who are given life – life – by Israeli innovation.*“ (22 May 2016). As for the „above politics“ nature of the movement, Erdan talks of „BDS extremists“ (25 November 2018) and calls for unity across the political spectrum when he says that „*the fight against the BDS unites all of us, Likud and Labour, left and right*“ (5 February 2018) or that, just like in fighting terror, „*there is no left and right in this fight, no Labour and Likud, no coalition and opposition. In this, we are one country united, and one people united.*“ (22 May 2016).

#### **3.1.2.4. Anti-Semitism**

Erdan often refers to „*the anti-Semitic nature of BDS*“, „*the anti-Semitism and hate at the heart of the BDS campaign*“, and denotes it „*the new form of anti-Semitism*“ (25 November 2018). It is suggested again that BDS hides its real intentions behind a mask: „*Now the BDS extremists know that it's no longer politically correct to be blatantly anti-Semitic. So they try to hide their true goals by hijacking the language of human rights and putting a mask of progressive slogans over the ugly face of hate.*“ (25 November 2018). Finally, Erdan draws a parallel between the past targeting of Jews and the present targeting of Israel. He states that „*while the old anti-Semitism demonized the Jew and blamed him for all of Germany's problems, the new anti-Semitism demonizes the Jewish state, and blames it for all of the Middle East's problems. The old anti-Semitism called for boycotts of Jewish businesses, and threatened those who refused. The new anti-Semitism calls for a boycott of products from the Jewish state, and threatens those who refuse. These two forms of anti-Semitism have the same poisonous roots.*“ (25 November 2018).

#### **3.1.3. Danny Danon**

##### **3.1.3.1. Warfare language describing BDS and existentiality**

Employing security terms, Danon refers to „*threats*“, „*dangers*“ and „*forces*“ of BDS. Again, BDS is presented as a new type of warfare when Danon states: „*Today, BDS will present a new threat to Israel and to the Jewish people. It's not like threat we are used to. We can't stop it with more weapons.*“ (31 May 2016). Moreover, using again the metaphor of a mask and evoking the theme of existentiality, he accuses BDS of incitement: „*BDS hides behind the mask of civil rights and peace activism. But there is*

*nothing civil or peaceful about them. This is a movement that incites against the Jewish state, a movement whose leaders openly call for the elimination of Israel. BDS is not about helping the Palestinians or bringing peace. Their only goal is to bring an end to the Jewish state.*“ (31 May 2016).

### **3.1.3.2. Warfare language describing Israel and urgency**

The warfare language is employed even more broadly to describe Israel. This is done both in order to mobilize the audience and to address the BDS activists themselves. Like Netanyahu and Erdan, Danon also addresses the audience by using the words „fight“, „battle“, „defend“, „defeat“, „combat“ or „move from defense to offense“. In addition, Danon uses the theme of winning a battle. Referring to the UN resolution that equated Zionism to racism but that was eventually revoked, he says: *„We won a great victory for the state of Israel and my friends, we will do it again. We will fight BDS. We will fight BDS on campus, we will fight them in courts of law, we will fight them in the halls of the UN. And we will win.*“ (31 May 2016). Later, he adds: *„This is a battle we must fight. This is a battle we will win.*“ (31 May 2016). While also using the term „front lines“, Danon appeals to the emotions of the audience, saying: *„And one day you will tell your children: I was there when we stopped BDS. I stood up when they tried to turn the world against the Jewish state. I was there for Israel. I was on the front lines.*“ (31 May 2016). Moreover, he dubs the participants *„the Iron Dome<sup>6</sup> of the State of Israel“* (31 May 2016). Finally, he points out the need for an urgent action, either by repeatedly saying that *„now is a time to act, now is a time to make a difference, now is a time to stand up and declare that we will not allow BDS to demonize Israel“* (31 May 2016) or by saying that they *„cannot rest for even a moment“* (29 March 2017). Unlike the previous actors, Danon also addresses the BDS: *„I have a message for our enemies. I have a message for those who are calling to boycott Israel, for those who want to end of the Jewish state. I have a message for all of those who are standing right now outside the UN holding banners and screaming hateful anti-Semitic slogans against Israel: You will never win. [...] We will defeat you, once and for all.*“ (31 May 2016). And, similarly: *„We are here today with a simple message for those who seek to harm the Jewish state and the Jewish people. We will keep fighting until we eliminate the BDS on*

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<sup>6</sup> Israeli anti-aircraft defense system

*our campuses, we will keep fighting until the BDS is rejected here at the UN, we will keep fighting until anti-Semitism is finally defeated.*“ (31 May 2016).

### **3.1.3.3. Exceptionality**

Regarding exceptionality, Danon separates BDS from legitimate political movements and even compares it to stalinism and fascism: *„Some try to label these acts as belonging to the right-wing of the political spectrum, just as others try to associate BDS with the political left. These are false and even dangerous labels. Was Stalin a leftist championing for working people? Was Mussolini rightist advocating for free markets? Of course not. There is acceptable political debate and there is simple hate. By associating these vile acts with legitimate political movements, we run the risk of legitimizing the illegitimate.“*(29 March 2017). Danon separates BDS from normal politics again at the 2018 conference when he says: *„We welcome debate. We accept criticism. But we will not tolerate hate. We will not allow others to isolate and delegitimize us under the guise of constructive criticism.“*. He adds that they *„must adopt a zero tolerance policy“* and that *„these are not points of view“* (30 May 2018).

### **3.1.3.4. Anti-Semitism**

Lastly, in various ways, Danon makes widespread references to anti-Semitism. Besides the already mentioned instances, Danon describes BDS as *„pure anti-Semitism“* (29 March 2017) and *„one of the most aggressive anti-Semitic movements“* (30 May 2018). Jewish people are presented as survivors of ever-present persecutions. Almost analogous to Rabin’s 1987 *„In every generation...“* speech, Danon notes that: *„In every generation, there were those who spread lies and incited violence against us, but we survived every threat, we defeated every enemy...“* (31 May 2016). Holocaust is mentioned when Danon asks: *„Can you imagine that 70 years after the Holocaust, the UN is creating lists to encourage the boycott of Jewish companies?“* (31 May 2016). BDS is compared to vandalism in Jewish cemeteries. While also invalidating BDS and a legitimate political stance, Danon says: *„Those who topple Jewish tombstones in the dark of night and those who seek to delegitimize the Jewish state are not members of any political group.“* (29 March 2017). Additionally, in regards to the creation of UN database of companies operating in the Israeli settlements, he says: *„Sadly, we have seen this before. We know anti-Semitism when we see it. We know that vandalism in*

*Jewish cemeteries is anti-Semitism. And we know that singling out the Jewish state for boycotts is also anti-Semitism. These lists, these boycotts, remind us of dark periods in our history. But, ladies and gentlemen, in those dark times, there was no independent state of Israel. Today, we will no longer be silent. Today, we will never hide our Jewish heritage. Today, Jews will not be ashamed to walk the streets with their kippahs.*“(29 March 2017). Again, a distinction between „then“ and „now“ is made. Moreover, the notion of Israel as a new target of the same old anti-Semitism is used again at the 2018 conference when Danon states: *„We must not pretend that anti-Israel sentiment is different than anti-Semitism. It is simply a new term for the same old hatred. [...] Anti-Semitism is alive and well, with Israel as its target.*“ (30 May 2018).

### **3.1.4. Discussion**

In all analysed cases, the securitizing actors used security and military terms and themes to portray BDS as a threat and to mobilize the audience. When characterizing BDS, the actors commonly equated the movement to conventional physical threats, specifically by presenting the two categories alongside each other. This was true especially in Netanyahu’s speeches in relation to threats posed by Iran. BDS was sometimes presented as an extension of these conventional threats and warfare. Moreover, it was suggested several times that BDS hides its true nature of threat behind a mask of a legitimate movement.

Particularly in the speeches of Gilad Erdan, linkages were made between incitement, terrorism and BDS. The fact that this discourse is predominantly present in Erdan’s speeches could be partly explained by his position as the Minister of Public Security. Also, Erdan has a history of linking issues to terrorism prior to official confirmation. Such was the controversial case of the 2016 arsons that swept over Israel and that Erdan labeled as acts of terror and even „arson Intifada“, for which he was later criticized (*Haaretz* 2017). However, this discourse is not solely used by Erdan. In 2016, Yisrael Katz, Israeli Minister of Intelligence and Transportation, called for „targeted civil eliminations“ – a word span on targeted assassinations used in counter-terrorism operations – of BDS activists (*+972 Magazine* 2016).

Security and military language was also widely used to mobilize the audience. Salience of security and existential discourse that is typical for cases of deep securitization was

evident, for example, in the usage of very specific security terms (such as Iron Dome, Yamam and Sayeret Matkal) to communicate with the audience. This shows, firstly, that security terms are widely known, and secondly, that involvement in matters of national security enjoys a good reputation. Mobilizing calls were often framed as a direct (and therefore justified) reaction to a previous action, for example by framing it as „*attacking those who attack us*“, „*moving from defense to offense*“, or „*fighting back*“. In Floyd's framework, the actor's explicit reference to the threat when justifying security action is one of the conditions of a successful securitization (2016: 684-688). In this view, framing Israel's calls for action (for example, urging foreign lawmakers to adopt anti-BDS laws) as a response to BDS's attacks may constitute a link between the threat and the adopted measures. Moreover, emotional appeals, a sense of urgency and remarks about the exceptional nature of BDS were often included in the discourse. References to BDS's exceptionality were often quite explicit and aiming to delegitimize the movement.

Also confirming the salience of existential discourse in Israel, when the speeches referred to the existential nature of the threat, they often did so explicitly. Moreover, on several occasions, the existence and survival of Israel were directly conflated with the existence and survival of the Jewish people. The basis of this existential fear seems to stem from uncertainty about the intentions of the movement, specifically whether it seeks the end of occupation or the end of Israel itself. Indeed, the actors often referred to „real intentions“ of BDS, suggesting that, rather than ending the occupation, its objective is the end, dissolution and elimination of Israel in any borders. This suspicious perception of BDS is in congruence with Israel's „doomsday“ and „siege“ mentality. This uncertainty could potentially explain adoption of security measures, since, according to Olesker, „*uncertainty about the other's intentions causes actors to take aggressive actions to combat a perceived threat.*“ (2018: 319). However, the actors securitized BDS even when the boycott initiative in question were directed exclusively at Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and not at Israel itself. Such was the case of the German KaDeWe department store or the case UN database of companies, which were, nonetheless, both securitized with reference to anti-Semitism in Netanyahu's and Danon's speeches, respectively.

As mentioned above, anti-Semitism was also widely referenced in the analysed discourse. This was done using three main themes. Firstly, it was the historical and ever-present persecution of the Jews. Interestingly, while this theme inherently implies siege mentality and self-victimization, the Jewish people were also presented as capable of surviving, winning and overcoming every threat and every enemy. This could be explained by Israel's "*positive self-image of military and moral superiority*" (2010: 39) that Bar-Tal et al. suggest is characteristic of the Israeli Jewish society alongside its tendency of self-victimization. Secondly, references to the Holocaust-era were made, particularly when referring to boycott initiatives in Europe and at the UN. Thirdly, Israel was claimed to be the new target of today's anti-Semitism. This framing could be best explained by the concept of "new anti-Semitism", a concept arguing that today's anti-Semitism manifests as opposition to and overt criticism of the State of Israel. This concept is characterized by the so called 3D Test which was designed to separate "new anti-Semitism" from legitimate criticism of Israel. The 3D Test stands for demonization, delegitimization and double standards (Sharansky 2004). Indeed, the analysed speeches refer these criteria on several occasions.

The nature of the audience did not notably influence the securitizing actors' discourse. The small differences between actors, instead, seem to be inherent to the positions that they are holding: for instance, while Netanyahu (as a Prime Minister and Foreign Minister) tended to present BDS alongside the Iranian threat, Erdan (as a Public Security Minister) tended to associate BDS with terrorism and Danon (as Israel's Ambassador to the UN) tended to hint at initiatives that oppose Israel at the UN

### **3.2. An overview of security practices: Is BDS securitized?**

#### **3.2.1. Establishment and activities of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs**

One of the forms that security measures may take is accordance of new or emergency powers to deal with the threat (Floyd 2016: 678). This may be observed in the re-establishment of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs after Netanyahu's 2009 election victory.<sup>7</sup> The authority to deal with BDS was gradually transferred to it from the

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<sup>7</sup> The ministry was first established in 2006, but in a different format, and was shut down two years later (Haaretz 2017b).

Foreign Affairs Ministry, with a major shift in authority and funding taking place in 2013 (*Haaretz* 2016). Some of the responsibilities previously held by the Ministries of Interior and Justice were reportedly also transferred to the Strategic Affairs Ministry (*Times of Israel* 2018). After the 2015 election, the Ministry was headed by Erdan and tasked with leading and coordinating all activities against delegitimization and boycott of Israel. Compared to the Foreign Affairs Ministry which handled BDS previously, the Strategic Affairs Ministry has taken a more aggressive approach. One of the objections against the Ministry that was brought up in a 2018 petition to the Israeli Supreme Court was that the ministry was authorized by a governmental decision rather than by legislation, especially considering its extensive powers and secrecy under which it operates (*Seventh Eye* 2018). Regarding the secrecy of the Ministry's operations, Sima Vaknin-Gil, the Director General of Erdan's ministry, argued that ambiguity was necessary in order to fight the BDS campaign, comparing the struggle to those that she conducted against terrorist groups (*Haaretz* 2017b).

The Ministry was given a considerable budget to deal with BDS, with the reported figures ranging from 100 to 130 million NIS (approximately \$25-36 million) (*Arutz Sheva* 2015; *Jerusalem Post* 2016; *Times of Israel* 2018). According to an investigation of the Ministry's spending that was made accessible under the Freedom of Information laws, the recipients of many budgetary allocations were not specified (*Times of Israel* 2018).

One of the uses of the Ministry's budget was paying for sponsored content in various Israeli media outlets (*The Guardian* 2018; *Times of Israel* 2018). According to information obtained through the Freedom of Information laws, in 2017, a large sum was paid to Yedioth Ahronoth, one of Israel's most widely circulated newspapers, and Channel 2 to publish content aimed at „enlisting Israelis into the struggle“. The articles were also targeted at foreign audience since parts of the budget went to English speaking media outlets such as the Jerusalem Post or Times of Israel. In addition, the largest expenditure was reportedly directed at search engines and social media, including creating the Act.IL application (*+972 Magazine* 2017). The Act.IL application was designed to find situations where Israel is being criticized online (especially on social media) and direct users to „missions“ where they can respond to these criticisms, report delegitimizing content, bring down online rating of pages or

businesses or contact officials of various international organizations that oppose Israel (*Jerusalem Post* 2017; *Haaretz* 2017). Alongside the application, the Ministry launched the 4IL campaign, an online platform that, among other similar content, features videos focused on „unmasking BDS“ or cartoons associating BDS with terrorism<sup>8</sup>. The campaign, also dubbed „cyber second strike“ or „Iron Dome of Truth“, was said to „enlist Israel’s supporters as foot soldiers against online efforts to „demonize“ and „undermine“ the country’s legitimacy“ (*Haaretz* 2017).

The Ministry’s budget also went to partnering with non-governmental anti-BDS organizations. These partnerships were presented as „an an important step in moving us from defense to to offense“ by the Strategic Affairs Ministry (*Jerusalem Post* 2018). In line with these partnerships, a public benefit corporation Kela Shlomo („Solomon’s sling“) was established in 2016. The organization, largely led by former Israeli governmental and security officials, is reportedly heavily funded by both the Ministry and private donors and tasked with conducting “mass consciousness activities”. This cooperation was also challenged in the abovementioned 2018 Supreme Court petition on the account that the Ministry undemocratically outsources its powers in order to enable activities that it could not otherwise do due to democratic constraint (*Seventh Eye* 2018). Indeed, it was suggested in multiple reports that by entering into this cooperation, the Ministry may attempt to overcome its duties under the Freedom of Information laws (*Times of Israel* 2018).

### **3.2.2. Involvement of intelligence agencies**

Another form that security measures may take is employment of already existing security apparatus (Floyd 2016: 678). This is evident in the involvement of Israeli intelligence apparatus in the anti-BDS policies. In 2011, a special Delegitimization Department was established under the research division of the Israeli Military Intelligence. According to INSS, an Israeli security research institute, this was done in coordination of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and the Military Intelligence as a response to the Mavi Marmara incident of 2010, in which a flotilla of international acitivists attempted to break the blockade of Gaza. The incident resulted in violence in

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<sup>8</sup> One cartoon, for example, portrays a BDS activist victoriously holding hands with a terrorist carrying a gun, a bloody knife and explosives. While the activist’s hand covered in what seems to be red paint used for protest banner, the terrorist’s hand is covered in blood.

which several activists were killed by Israeli forces. In the eyes of the securitizing actors, the incident „proved that the delegitimization campaign can lead to political escalation“ and „exact a heavy political toll“ (Siman-Tov and Michael 2017: 100). As for the specific activities, it was reported that the new department would monitor and collect information on organizations that strive to delegitimize Israel (including organizations supporting BDS) (*Haaretz* 2011). While this only applies to foreign organizations, it was also reported that Israeli citizens involved in delegitimization campaigns were monitored by the Israeli security service Shin Bet (*Haaretz* 2015). The involvement of the intelligence apparatus was also confirmed at the 2016 Yedioth Ahronoth Conference by the Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz. Regarding the involvement of intelligence agencies, when asked if there is a connection between the his ministry and the struggle against BDS, the Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz said: „Absolutely. It carries it out and indeed needs to carry it out. Israel must carry out a targeted civilian thwarting of the leadership of BDS activists by using our sophisticated intel capabilities and using our intelligence apparatus. We are talking about an organization whose goal is to undermine the existence of the State of Israel“ (footage in Hebrew at Barkan 2016: 3:05-3:41).

### **3.2.3. Adoption of anti-BDS laws**

#### **3.2.3.1. The 2011 Prevention of Damage to the State of Israel by Means of Boycott Law**

The Prevention of Damage to the State of Israel by Means of Boycott Law, a law co-sponsored by then MK Danny Danon (*NY Daily News* 2011), was adopted by the Israeli Knesset in July 2011. The new law classified public calls for boycott of Israel as a civil wrong and imposed administrative sanctions (such as denial of certain government benefits) and legal obligation to pay punitive damages<sup>9</sup> on its proponents. The law defines boycott as „deliberately refraining from economic, cultural or academic ties with another person or body solely because of its connection with the State of Israel, one of its institutions or an area under its control, such that it may cause economic, cultural or academic harm“ (Boycott Law 2011). Thus, the law also applies to boycotts of Israeli settlements. The law applies to Israeli citizens and permanent residents. In

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<sup>9</sup> Compensation independent of actual damage done

2015, the Boycott Law was challenged as unconstitutional, but was upheld by the Israeli Supreme Court. It was argued that calls for boycott are means of coercion rather than persuasion and therefore undermine rather than serve the principles of democracy (Avnieri vs. Knesset 2015). However, the provision imposing punitive damages was struck down.

### **3.2.3.2. The 2017 Amendment to the Entry into Israel Law**

In March 2017, the Knesset passed an amendment to the 1952 Entry into Israel Law, one of Israel's Basic Laws. The amendment gave the Interior Minister power to withhold visa or residence permit from any non-Israeli citizen (including permanent residents, a status applying to many Palestinians residing in Israel, particularly in East Jerusalem) if the person, their organization or the body that they work for knowingly publishes a public call to boycott Israel, or if the person has committed to participate in such a boycott (Amendment of the Entry into Israel Law 2017). In July 2018, a blacklist of BDS-supporting organizations whose members would be denied entry under the 2017 Amendment was published by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs. A number of persons were denied entry into Israel since the amendment was adopted, among them, for example the Chairman of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign Hugh Lanning (Population and Immigration Authority 2017), the Human Right Watch director Omar Shakir (*4IL* 2018b), a senior member of a feminist Code Pink organization Ariel Gold (*4IL* 2018), five members of the left-wing organization Jewish Voice for Peace (*Times of Israel* 2017), or a well-known Jewish American journalist Peter Beinart (*Times of Israel* 2018c). It is notable that many of the individuals that were denied entry were Jewish. The Amendment attracted a lot of attention in August 2018 when Lara Alqasem, an American citizen coming to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, was denied entry due to her previous involvement in the Students for Justice in Palestine, a student organization advocating for the boycott of Israel. The denial was subsequently revoked by the Supreme Court, arguing that the policy is preventative rather than punitive and that it is restricted to persons who threaten Israeli democracy and strive to apply coercive and aggressive boycott (Alqasem v. Ministry of the Interior 2018).

### 3.2.4. Discussion

In the examined period, two laws directly concerning the boycott of Israel were passed (one of which extended the powers of Interior Minister in regards to entry denials); Ministry of Strategic affairs was re-established, tasked with overseeing the anti-BDS initiatives and given budget for this purpose; the Ministry together with private individuals created Kela Shlomo, a public benefit organization aimed at countering BDS efforts; and the Delegitimization Department was established under the Israeli Military Intelligence for research and surveillance of the BDS activists.

These measures were accompanied by security discourse similar to the securitizing actors' discourse that was analysed in the previous section. For example, when announcing the establishment of Kela Shlomo, Erdan declared: *„Billions of people are exposed to the incitement and the false propaganda aimed at harming Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish state and undermining the moral basis of our existence. A joint struggle, waged by the government and pro-Israel organizations, will double our capabilities and enable us to thwart and defeat the boycott campaign.”* (Times of Israel 2018) In his 2011 article titled *„Why I Sponsored Israel's Boycott Bill“*, Danon states: *„I have been proud to initiate these pieces of legislation, which, it is hoped, will provide safeguards against foreign elements that are attacking our democracy from within.“* (NY Daily News 2011). As for the 2017 amendment, Erdan was quoted in a Jerusalem Post article, saying: *„We know BDS activists have connections to terrorist organizations and want to enter Israel to harm us.“* (Jerusalem Post 2017b). In all the entry denial cases mentioned above, the entry was denied with reference to harm that those in question present to Israel. For example, in the case of Hugh Lanning, the Chairman of Palestine Solidarity Campaign that was denied entry only a week after the Amendment was passed, the Interior Minister Aryeh Deri (quoted alongside Erdan) stated that *„whoever acts against Israel and does all he can to endanger the security of the state must understand that we are determined to pursue a policy which no longer ignores activists working to undermine the state's existence“* (Population and Immigration Authority 2017).

According to Floyd's framework, securitizing discourse followed by an implementation of security measures is what determines the success of securitization. The taken measures do not have to be extraordinary by breaking the rules of normal politics or suspending the law, but rather, they may take the form of passing new laws, granting new powers, or employing already existing apparatus. (2016: 678). The anti-BDS measures presented above have taken all these forms. Along with securitizing discourse and implemented security measures, the final component of Floyd's framework is that the measures are justified with reference to the identified threat (2016: 684-688). Although thoroughly analysing the justifying discourse is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is apparent from their media coverage that the measures were presented as a necessity in the face of a threat. Thus, following Floyd's framework, the securitization of BDS in Israel was successful.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I attempted to examine Israel's treatment of the BDS movement through the lens of securitization theory. I presented securitization theory as a new concept of security that posits, firstly, that security is not confined to the traditional military-political sphere, and, secondly, that threats are discursively constructed by how securitizing actors present them to their audience. I described the Copenhagen School's sectoral approach to security, focusing on the political sector which addresses the threats posed to state's or society's stability through challenging its authority or legitimacy. The focus on political sector allowed me to examine BDS as a threat to Israel's oft-challenged legitimacy as the threatened referent object of this securitization.

I mapped the key developments in the theory. These developments attempted to integrate the context in which a particular securitization takes places and, also, to challenge the theory's requirement of exceptionality, especially in relation to security measures implemented as a result of securitization. In accordance with these two lines of new theoretical developments, the goals of this thesis were twofold.

The first goal was to examine how the actors securitized the BDS movement in light of the contextual approach to securitization. I discussed different themes present in Israeli security discourse and practice, particularly the prominence of security in the Israeli political and collective life (a phenomenon that has been explored through the concept of securitism, institutionalization of security and deep securitization, which I briefly presented) and the influence of the Jewish collective memory and mentality on the understanding of security in Israel. To examine how these were reflected in the securitizing discourse, I analysed 21 speeches of Benjamin Netanyahu, Gilad Erdan and Danny Dannon, three prominent Likud politicians serving in the current Israeli government. The analysis showed that along with discourse inherent to the original securitization theory (presenting an issue as a threat by using conventional signifiers such as security and military terms, explicit mentions of survival and existentiality, urgency or the „above politics“ nature of the threat), the Israeli securitizing actors also utilized the specific meaning of security and specific security signifiers that are specific to Israel, particularly by presenting BDS as an anti-Semitic movement whose activities are on the par with incitement and terror organizations. Moreover, even the

conventional security signifiers reflected the specific meaning of Israeli security, for example by mobilizing statements that employed very specific security terminology to present the audience as the part of the anti-BDS fight. The concept of „new anti-Semitism“ – denoting the disproportional criticisms of the State of Israel as today’s anti-Semitism – has also influenced the actor’s discourse and helped them frame BDS as dangerous. Therefore, along with conventional security terminology, references to anti-Semitism, including Israel’s position „in the hostile world“, and terror (often with strong emotional appeals) have all been utilized as bases for securitization and proven their constructive power of creating security threats.

Secondly, I attempted to assess the success of securitization by examining the measures taken by Israel against the movement. For this purpose, I adopted the framework of scholars that posit that rather than focusing on extraordinary measures, even the fact that new or emergency (although non-exceptional) measures were adopted, can determine the success of securitization. In the examined case, the securitizing discourse was followed by adoption of two anti-BDS laws, establishment and funding of institutions and campaigns to deal with the threat, and by integration of already existing apparatus into the anti-BDS struggle. For this reason, I posit that the securitization process was successful.

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