

The Social Construction of Israel's National Security*

Conceptual Framework: Contextual Deconstruction of the Constructed

Since Plato's well-known cave fable, philosophers and social scientists have been perpetually troubled by the puzzle of what are hard or objective facts and what are artifacts, and how one can distinguish among them.¹ Today some social scientists argue that any search for objectivity is a lost cause, as all so-called realities are culturally or socially constructed; the experts and scientists themselves are products of hegemonic world-orders, rather than being, say, neutral value-free observers from Mars. Most of them do not deny the existence of objective conditions, even in their extreme manifestations, such as wars, epidemics, or disasters that kill human beings. However, the definition of any such conditions as societal problems depends on the degree that collectivities have defined them as such and feel threatened

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by them.² Others still strongly insist that realities and facts are methodologically detectable and separable from their cultural, social, and political wrappings,³ or as Goode and Ben-Yehuda put it,

the objectivists argue that what defines a social problem is the existence of an objectively given, concretely real demanding or threatening condition. What makes a condition a problem is that it harms or endangers human life and well being . . . according to this view, the final arbiter of the reality of social problems is the expert, armed with empirical evidence and scientific insight, and not the untrained general public.⁴

I think every social scientist should feel very uncomfortable with both approaches, especially with such a clear separation and negation of the existence of tangible, observable, and measurable facts in both the physical and social worlds. We have the objective knowledge that immense quantities of what people view as an immutable part of every culture and society are the result of social construction and interpretation. I am not referring just to conscious lies, cynical political manipulations, or social engineering, though even such events should be incorporated into the phenomenon of construction. The birth of beliefs, facts that are not facts, and myths that a large portion of the population of any collectivity consider to be facts are, as any student in our introductory courses learns, an integral part of the dynamics of production and reproduction of any social order. From this, three basic problems arise. Presuming that any social scientist is also a product of a social culture and order—inside or outside the collectivity under investigation—is it possible at all for the observer to be objective, or as famously posed by the Weberians, as “value-free?”⁵ Is it desirable to be so? If so, what are the best techniques to do it?

Let me answer the second question in the affirmative. Because if not, then the social sciences in general and sociology in particular lose any advantages they have over ideological or religious analyses of social phenomena, and the processes of social science lose legitimacy as a scientific body of knowledge. Claims against objectivity also make nonsense of any critical approach to evaluating any text in the world. Without objectivity, denials of the occurrence of the Jewish Holocaust, or the Palestinian Nakba, have the same status as more or less accurate texts that assume that the events occurred. As for the first question, my answer is that it is difficult,

but not impossible. The precondition is that every social scientist must be fully aware of her or his own personal values and ideologies, as well as the interests of her or his nationality, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, or other group, all of which, consciously or unconsciously, heavily influence the social scientist's professional output—from the choice of research subject and area, the *problemstellung*, and methods to, particularly, the interpretation of findings. There should be a constant and lifelong tension between social scientists and their research materials and objects. Perhaps a total or pure objectivity is never completely achievable, but it must definitely be our aim and desire.

As for the technique to do it, the profession already provides us with contextual constructionism, an approach that can be summarized briefly as starting with the following presumptions. There is no necessary and complete contradiction between an objective societal problem and its shaping and reshaping as a constructed reality. The role of the social scientist is to deconstruct the constructed reality as much as possible to its objective core, if it exists; to follow the historical paths of the construction process within its sociopolitical context;⁶ and to discover and analyze the role of the constructed and invented realities, or societal problems, within their context. Social scientists must also consider constructed and invented realities as social problems that can, in a large measure, shape the objective realities,⁷ and detect the dialectical interrelations between objective and constructed societal problems.⁸

National security is a societal problem par excellence, the severity and salience of which varies from society to society. It is directly connected to personal and collective life-and-death existential issues, sometimes to the physical, political, and social existence of the entire collectivity. The *raison d'être* of any state, its legitimacy, and its claim on the monopoly on physical violence, are derived directly from the state's unalienable promise to provide security for its subjects—law and order for the inside and security from the outside. Analyzing and deconstructing national security as a societal problem poses an almost unique challenge for any social scientist, not only because the complexity of the issue, but also because of the secrecy that is considered as an inherent demand and condition of this sphere of sociopolitical and sociomilitary activities, even in the most democratic regimes and open societies.⁹

Another derivative of the problem of analyzing national security are the questions about who is entitled authoritatively to create, modify, or chal-

lenge national security doctrines; who possess the academic expertise to research ongoing (not historical) “strictly military” issues; and who is entitled to participate in the public discourse on military and security issues. In Israel, the last aspect has opened up in the last decade to a wider public, such as media professionals, academics, intellectuals, interest groups, and even ordinary persons—that is, middle-class Jewish males—but the former two aspects are still almost completely the monopoly of generals and ex-generals.¹⁰ Following the consequences of the 1974 war, a Council for National Security, composed of both civilian and military experts to act as a check on the General Staff, periodically appeared on the public agenda, but the “defense establishment”¹¹ constantly suffocated its initiatives.

Construction of Doctrines

A national security doctrine is supposed to be an explicit or implicit code of rules and practices for the most efficient operation of the armed forces and utilization of other societal resources at the collectivity's disposal to achieve certain defined military goals and targets. In a narrower sense, as mentioned above, because the major role of any state is to provide its subjects with both protection and the feeling of protection from external threats, a national security doctrine is presumed to be a culturally acceptable way to accomplish this. However, limiting the use of military forces to strictly defensive purposes would be far from the proper approach for a sociological analysis of the phenomenon. In large measure, national security is not only a socially constructed term, but it is difficult to differentiate from the other cultural, economic, political, and social characteristics and ideologies of a given collectivity. National security is often supposed to be an integral part of the national interest, or at least is commonly interpreted to be such, and military forces are frequently used and misused for a wide variety of purposes that actually have nothing to do with a strict, non-manipulative definition of national security. Consequently, national security doctrines sometimes include rules and practices that completely contradict the proper interests of the goals of national security, and preserve and maximize the collectivity's military strength and capabilities, as the present essay demonstrates.

The first military doctrine that can be considered an Israeli military doctrine is the so-called Plan D (*Tochnit Daleth*), launched by Major General Yigael Yadin on March 10, 1948¹² in anticipation of the expected military

clashes between the state-making Jewish community of colonial Palestine and the Arab community, as well as the assumed intervention by military forces of Arab states. In the plan's preamble, Yadin stated:

The aim of this plan is the control of the area of the Jewish State and the defense of its borders [as determined by the UN Partition Plan] and the clusters of [Jewish] settlements outside the boundaries, against regular and irregular enemy forces operating from bases outside and inside the State.¹³

Furthermore, the plan suggested several actions, among others, to reach these goals:

Actions against enemy settlements located in our, or near our, defense systems [i.e., Jewish settlement and localities] with the aim of preventing their use as bases for active armed forces. These actions should be divided into the following types: The destruction of villages (by fire, blowing up and mining)—especially of those villages over which we cannot gain [permanent] control. Gaining of control will be accomplished in accordance with the following instructions: The encircling of the village and the search of it. In the event of resistance—the destruction of the resisting forces and the expulsion of the population beyond the boundaries of the State.¹⁴

As in many other cases, in Plan D, what seems at a first glance to be a pure and limited military doctrine proved itself to comprise far-reaching measures that led to a complete demographic, ethnic, social, and political transformation of Palestine through the state-building project. Implementing the spirit of Plan D, Jewish military forces conquered about 20,000 square kilometers of territory, compared with the 14,000 square kilometers granted them by the UN Partition Resolution, and cleansed them almost completely of their Arab inhabitants.¹⁵ From this point of view, the doctrine established by Plan D closely fit both the requirements of the intercommunal war and the subsequent stage of interstate war after the intracommunal enemy was eliminated.¹⁶

Moreover, the doctrine clearly reflected the local Zionist ideological aspirations to acquire the greatest amount of contiguous territory possible, cleansed of Arab presence, as a necessary condition for establishing an ex-

clusively Jewish nation-state. Until the 1948 war, Jewish public agencies and private investors succeeded in buying only about 7 percent of the land in Palestine, which was enough to build a viable community but exhausted their financial abilities. Afterward, they decided to use the sword instead of money to considerably enlarge their territorial resources.¹⁷ The British colonial regime provided a political and military umbrella under which the Zionist enterprise could develop its basic institutional, economic, and social framework, but it also secured the essential interests of the Arab collectivity. As the British umbrella was removed, the Arab and Jewish communities found themselves face to face in a zero-sum-like situation. By rejecting the British partition plan, the Arab community and leadership were confident not only in their absolute right to control the entire country, but also in their ability to do so. For its part, the Jewish community and leadership appreciated that they did not have enough forces to control the entire territory of Palestine and to expel or rule its Arab majority. They accepted the partition plan, but invested all of their efforts toward improving its terms and expanding their boundaries as far as possible, including as small an Arab population as possible within them.

There is no hard evidence that, despite its far-reaching political consequences and meanings, Plan D was ever adopted or even discussed at the political level. If we were to adopt a soft conspiracy-theory approach, we might conclude that many political and national leaders knew very well that some kinds of orders and plans were better not discussed or presented officially. In any case, the way that the military operations of 1948 were conducted leave no room for doubts that Plan D was the doctrine that Jewish military forces used during the war, or the spirit and perception behind their efforts. To paraphrase Tilly's¹⁸ words, social and cultural conditions make doctrines, doctrines make wars, wars make states, and states continue to make wars.

The military, social, political, and global conditions that led to the formulation of Yadin's doctrine have deeply changed since March 1948, in part because of the plan's success. However, some of the basic premises and ideological perceptions behind Plan D are still valid, deeply rooted within would-be Israeli social and military thought, and more importantly, in the combination of and interaction between them. Three of these premises are as follows.

First, there is a demographic asymmetry between the combatant sides: the Jews are always "the few" and the Arabs are always "the many." Yadin did

not explicitly acknowledge that his order to destroy hostile Arab villages¹⁹ over which Jewish forces could not gain permanent control was rooted in the scarcity of human power resources or the inability to form a standing army to exercise direct control over the Arab population fallen under Jewish rule.²⁰ However, the presumption of demographic asymmetry became the baseline for all further versions of the national security doctrine formulated after Plan D, including the most important one, written by Major General Israel Tal.²¹

Second, the immense demographic discrepancy between the Jewish settler-society and its Arab environment may be the main factual and objective ingredient in the entire Israeli national security discourse. However, even in this case, strategists have large degrees of freedom to play between different boundaries of the Jewish-Arab conflict. These boundaries should be subdivided as follows. The Palestinian circle itself has at least three sub-boundaries: Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinians within the 1967 war's occupied territories, and Palestinians all over the world, or in the *gurba*, the Palestinian exile.²² Next is the circle of the immediate Arab states that encircle Israel: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. The Arab states that are not immediate neighbors—Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Libya, and the rest—are included in the next circle, sometimes considered as “the Arab world.” When the conflict is perceived as religious warfare, the entire Muslim world—including Iran—should be considered. Before the collapse of the Soviet bloc, it was also considered sometimes as a part of the conflict, but in that case, the conflict should have been considered as a confrontation between superpower blocs. This perspective contains something of the outlook of “the West against the rest,” especially in the context of worldwide terrorism efforts. Apart from that should be found, especially among some religious xenophobic subcultures, a metaphysical perception of the cosmic order as aligning most if not all of the gentile world against the Jewish people.²³ Even the most quantifiable, objective, and factual aspects of the conflict can be subject to social construction.

Third, settlements are important as objects to be protected as a part of the nation and state-building effort, part of the defense system, and primarily as a tool to determine the state's geographical and political boundaries.²⁴ The government made the decision to defend all of the settlements considered defensible,²⁵ even those located outside the borders of the territories allocated for the Jewish state. This was the military and doctrinal complement to destroying all of the Arab localities that were perceived to endanger access to any Jewish settlement, including those outside of the partition

plan boundaries, and to expel their inhabitants. The political system accepted the partition plan, but the military system's doctrine grossly violated the principles inherent in partition.

As is understandable from the above, the overall security doctrine was offensive in nature,²⁶ at least regarding the Arabs of Palestine. Later, the offensive characteristics of the Israeli military doctrine were largely expanded and elaborated upon. Some military experts added the so-called indirect approach, attributed to the British military expert and analyst B.H. Liddel-Hart, to the offensive character of Israeli war-making practices. The approach calls for concentrations of massive forces, surprise attacks against the enemy's weak points through unconventional means and timing, and then the immediate exploitation of the presumed success. Dan Horowitz added to this strategy an additional dimension of "flexible responsiveness."²⁷ Horowitz depicted the modern, highly mobile battlefield as a chaotic situation in which the supposed chains of command and communications systems no longer exist. In such a situation, the small isolated unit must operate on its own initiative, guessing what the general command expects from it. Horowitz attributed to "the Israeli soldier" the quality of "flexibility," due to his way of socialization, while the "Arab soldier" usually lacked this, and thus was highly dependent on the ordinary chain of command. Horowitz's perspective is a sophisticated example of the mythologization of the Israeli military and its society, a widespread phenomenon between 1956 and 1973, to explain and construct Israel's military successes and its regional unequivocal superiority. Later, many of Israel's military failures were attributed to the same qualities of undisciplined soldiering, private initiatives, and negligence. Another expression of the same phenomenon was the breakup of the chain of command when after the 1967 war, high-ranking officers, colonels, and major generals took over the command of small units and were involved directly in the battlefield.²⁸

The Humanpower Management Doctrine

The Israeli military almost disintegrated after the 1948 war. Many of its officers were killed during the war, while others left the military or were purged for political reasons.²⁹ Most of the veteran population felt that they already contributed enough to the country and turned to their own well being. The mass of new immigrants was not considered apt for soldiering with high ability and motivation for combat. Under these circumstances, the political and

military establishment began to reconstruct the armed forces and was forced to choose between a military based on small elite units and an all-encompassing popular army.³⁰ The decision that was made then is still in effect, not only in the military, but also across Israeli society: to build up a military based on a universal compulsory draft of all male and female citizens, but to grant to the minister of defense the authority to exempt from service any category of men or women—Arabs and ultra-Orthodox students, for example—according to his absolute discretion. The length of service for women was shorter than the length of men's service, and women's marginality in the military reinforced their position in society and fixed gender roles.

The decision to favor quantity over quality of soldiers was made because of the perception of the military as the major statist tool for the Israelification of new immigrants, especially those from Arab lands, according to Israel's melting-pot ideology.³¹ It was also designed to address the situation of "few against many" described above.³² Universal compulsory conscription was complemented by a system of reserve duty over the course of almost all of a man's, and sometimes an unmarried woman's, active life.³³ This doctrine of using manpower intentionally located military service at the center of the Israeli experience and consciousness, but also contributed to the construction of the meaning of citizenship, societal boundaries, and stratification, as well as the militaristic cultural setting.³⁴

If the military system had its own logic in the 1950s and 1960s, when cohorts were tiny, it was that the military was manpower-hungry and immigrants were perceived as needing de-socialization and re-socialization. By the 1990s, the system was devoid of any economic or social logic. It proved itself to be economically and socially wasteful, as the state expropriated for itself a vast portion of its male Jewish citizens without any proper examination of the armed forces' real needs.³⁵ The system prevented the military from allocating its manpower rationally or economically, and preserving the military monopoly over human resources distorted careers and professional choices across Israeli society and its labor market. This made the Israeli military a clumsy bureaucratic monster. Only a transition to an all-voluntary force can shake the system from its doctrinal deadlock.³⁶

The Doctrine of Preemptive War, 1956–1967

By refusing to deal with the problem of uprooted Palestinians concentrated in refugee camps in surrounding countries, Israel was exposed to

increasing Palestinian infiltration activities. The infiltrations slowly developed into a kind of guerrilla warfare and terrorist activity, mainly against civilians settled in frontier settlements established on "abandoned" Arab lands and filled with new immigrants. To Israel, the authorities of the Arab states from where the infiltrators came were responsible for the infiltrations, and Israel responded with an escalating series of retaliations and reprisals against military and civilian targets in Arab countries.³⁷ This period, labeled by Benny Morris³⁸ as the period of "Israel's border wars" had several consequences.

First, the border quarrels signaled that the Arab-Israeli conflict was not over, as many hoped immediately after the armistice agreements were signed.³⁹ The state's existence was not yet ensured even after the victorious 1948 war and the Israeli army's cleansing territory of most of its Arab inhabitants. Even the personal security of Israeli citizens was not ensured. Although some military experts, such as Yigal Allon,⁴⁰ distinguished between basic security, or the strategic threat to the collectivity's very existence, and current security (*bitachon shotef*), or tactical activities, for most of the last fifty years, this distinction has tended to be blurred both conceptually and organizationally.⁴¹ Conceptually, the infiltrations and later warfare with Palestinians was constructed as an existential or strategic threat. Institutionally, highly trained combat units were frequently employed to meet current security assignments.

Second, the military continued to be a central institution and symbol in the newly established state. Because the state had the monopoly over the military and the use of violence, the state became the major actor in society and state-ness⁴² (*mamlachtiyut*) the central pillar of the new national identity and Israeliness. The cults of the state and military became one and the same,⁴³ which was one of the major sources of Israeli cultural and civilian militarism.⁴⁴

Third, major human, emotional, and material resources were invested and recruited for national security concerns. This became the basis for building and reproducing, from war to war, a highly mobilized society and a larger sense that the conflict was routine.⁴⁵

Fourth, some strategists defined the infiltration-retaliation circle as low-density, controlled hostility and perceived it as a functional equivalent to a full-scale war. This challenge-and-response process constructed the expectations of the international community, internal public opinion, and the military itself that there would be a second round of fighting, perceived as necessary to consolidate the territorial and political achievements of the

1948 war⁴⁶ and deal with both internal social and economic strains and the rebuilding of the military's offensive and combat capacities.⁴⁷

A popular argument made by government officials and the press was that Israel was too small and vulnerable to absorb a direct major attack against its territory and population, and lacked strategic depth; therefore the initiative must always be Israel's. In addition, Israel's military might was mainly based on the reserve system,⁴⁸ which needed time to mobilize. These claims were the basis for developing an elaborate doctrine that was not just an offensive doctrine, but also a doctrine of preemptive, blitzkrieg-style war, based on deception, surprise, the maneuvering of large-scale armor units, and massive air strikes.⁴⁹ The doctrine was first successfully applied, partially, during the 1956 Sinai campaign.

However, even the Sinai campaign was not a full-scale war. It was waged against only one Arab state, Egypt, and against only some of its military forces, as the major portion of the Egyptian military was preoccupied with facing (successfully) an Anglo-French invasion to take over the Suez Canal area.⁵⁰ Despite this, Israel constructed the Sinai Campaign as a successful war, proving the efficacy of its preemptive war doctrine. However, Egypt's swift political and military recuperation and the international (Soviet-American) pressures on Israel, as well as England and France, to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip led to two doctrinal conclusions. First, it is very difficult to convert military victories into political achievements. Second, Israel may win many rounds of battles but none can be decisive, because Israel cannot destroy any Arab country or fatally damage it, at least with conventional weaponry. However, a single major Arab victory would decompose Israel and lead to what Yehoshafat Harkabi⁵¹ called the "politicide" of the Jewish state. The Sinai campaign injected many high moral feelings and euphoria into the Jewish population of Israel and granted its military a glorious aura, but from a doctrinal standpoint, it led to some very pessimistic conclusions.

Another fundamental question that arose after the successful military operation and quick withdrawal from Sinai⁵² was the issue of which side time favors in the long run. The Arabs compared the Jewish settler-state with the Crusaders and the Latin Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem, founded in 1099 by European powers and settlers and led by religious and ideological passion. In 1187, the legendary Ayubian Muslim leader Saladin finally destroyed the Crusader state, despite its long-term military superiority, following the decisive battle in Hittin. Implicitly the Israel culture

became aware of this chilling analogy and tried to learn something from the Crusader case. The primary conclusion was that the Crusaders' failure was caused chiefly by two complementary factors: that the Crusaders intermingled too much within the region, and that, as a consequence, they weakened their cultural, political, and technological relations with their mother societies.⁵³ Not surprisingly, these two lessons are consistent with three major tendencies within Israeli society and culture: to separate itself physically and culturally from the Arabs, due to anxiety about so-called Levantinization, as well the shadow of becoming a binational entity; to consider itself as a part of the West; and to maintain the sentimental, cultural, political, and economic linkages with the Jewish Diaspora, going as far as to consider Israel as the state for all of the Jews in the world. However, all of these cultural traits were not absorbed into the Israeli military's thinking until the Oslo agreements, which were based mainly on agreements about only one of the above tendencies, namely, the wishes of the population to be separate. Until then, the contradictory idea of territorial depth ruled the Israeli military doctrine.

Territorial Depth, Security, and Sanctification of Land

Despite Israel's relatively non-belligerent period between 1957 and 1967, the Israeli military depicted the situation as a "dormant war," liable to erupt at any moment.⁵⁴ From a sociological point of view, such a construction of reality should be considered as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and in June 1967, Israel fully applied its preemptive *blitzkrieg* war doctrine, using large concentrations of military forces against Egypt. Israel argued that Egypt had violated the tacit agreements reached following Israel's withdrawal from Sinai in 1957 by concentrating forces close to the ceasefire lines and closing the Tiran Straits to Israeli navigation, acts considered as *casi belli*.⁵⁵ Military strategists argued that Israel's inability to prevent Egypt's unilateral militarization of the Sinai had seriously compromised Israel's deterrence credibility, and there was no choice (*ein breirah*) but to reestablish it by full-scale war. After Israel destroyed the Egyptian air force and armor on the ground, it occupied the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip. As the Arab Legion hesitantly joined the war, Israel also occupied the so-called West Bank, "liberating" the old city of Jerusalem. Syria was not directly involved in moving troops, but had long-running quarrels with Israel concerning both countries' desire to control the Jordan River's sources. Israel exploited

the enormous successes of the battles against Egypt and Jordan and the fog of war in the region, capturing the hilly Syrian region later known as the Golan Heights. As a consequence, in just six days, Israel gained control of additional territories totaling about 26,000 square miles, an area more than three times as large as its total territory before the war.

The June 1967 war, defined by Yigal Allon⁵⁶ as a “preemptive counter-attack,” was an example of how to wage a modern conventional war of movement with minimal casualties for the attacking troops and maximal destruction of the enemy’s short-run war capabilities.⁵⁷ However, the war also showed how the dynamics of sociostrategic escalation develop and how a “war of no choice” is socially constructed. The 1967 war exemplifies the wide gaps between military-strategic planning and doctrine and the lack of complementary political and social planning and vision, the latter of which turned an illustrious military victory into a political disaster and a social catastrophe even by the values of the initiators of the war themselves.

In May 1967, after the spectacular Egyptian troop concentration, Israel also publicly declared a full mobilization of its reserve system. The social and economic meaning of such a total mobilization is to siphon most of Israel’s male population from the civilian system, transforming the entire society into what has been labeled as an “interrupted system,” in which there is a moratorium on most routine societal goals.⁵⁸ A full mobilization in Israel has heavy economic and social costs and means a strong commitment that the threat is real and warfare almost inevitable.⁵⁹

However, Israel did not strike immediately, but only after about ten days of total mobilization and paralysis of the home front, explained by the international community’s efforts to solve the crisis.⁶⁰ The “waiting period” caused profound collective anxiety and mistrust in the political center; from the time that total mobilization was declared—and the troops remained mobilized for a long time—an automatic social and cultural device was activated and the war, at least against Egypt, became inevitable, not for military but for sociopolitical reasons.

However, the major strategic problems had just begun. The war, especially the air strikes, had been well planned, but there was no strategy, doctrine, or plans made for the aftermath. A general and vague statement was made about the readiness to return territories in exchange for peace, which was promptly reciprocated by the Arab states’ total refusal to deal with Israel at the Khartoum summit. For their part, the Israeli leadership did not even consider a unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories or a

part of them, despite some intellectuals' proposals in this direction. The cabinet rejected even Moshe Dayan's suggestion of a minor retreat from the Suez Canal line to make possible opening it to international navigation. Perhaps it was assumed that the pressures exercised by the superpowers would impose a withdrawal on Israel, as happened in 1957.

As time passed, the feeling that the holding of the occupied territories was temporary became routinized and institutionalized. The territories and their inhabitants were absorbed into the Israeli political, economic, cultural, and strategic self-image, and a new political, economic, and strategic entity, which I have called "the Israel control system,"⁶¹ emerged. But not all of the newly occupied territories had the same cultural and strategic meaning. The almost unpopulated Sinai Peninsula was evaluated chiefly for its strategic and economic values, as it contained an enormous quantity of oil and other important and scarce natural resources.⁶² Sinai was considered as the ultimate "strategic depth," and the control of the "impassable" Suez canal, fortified by the Bar-Lev Line—the Israeli equivalent of the Maginot Line—gave the Israelis an unprecedented sense of security, despite the high casualties from Egyptian artillery, reciprocated the Israeli air force.⁶³

The far-reaching social, ideological, and political consequences of the 1967 war ripened and became clear only after the 1973 war. The most meaningful event was the reopened access to the heartland of the ancient Jewish holy land. As Moshe Dayan, the purely secular defense minister, expressed: "We have returned to you Shilo and Anatot [the ancient cities of the Hebrew prophets near Jerusalem] in order never to leave you." Deep religious if not messianic sentiments captured most of Israeli society, which perceived the results of the war as a miracle and a direct intervention of a higher power in the course of history. The euphoric power trip, however, was accompanied by a tremendously anomic situation. It was unclear how much, in what form, and if at all the superpowers would allow the Israeli state to maintain its control over the newly acquired territories. Between 1967 and 1973, two basic approaches were developed toward the territories. The Allon plan suggested selective annexation of some territories, including the Jordan valley, accompanied with settlements "for security reasons." Dayan suggested a "functional division of rule" over the West Bank, between the Hashemite Kingdom and Israel. The Jordanians were supposed to maintain control over the population, who would be considered as Jordanian subjects, and Israel was to maintain responsibility for the strategic security of the territory and

control over its land and water. The only flaw in Dayan's highly innovative approach was Jordan's refusal to accept it.

Perhaps the most significant sociostrategic process in the region—the re-appearance of the Palestinian ethnic and national identity—occurred during this time. Between 1949 and 1967 the international community redefined the Palestinian problem as a refugee issue. The disappearance of the Palestinian nationality was of common interest to both Israel and Jordan, and perhaps other Arab states as well; much energy and effort were invested by both states to de-Palestinize the Palestinians and to make them Israeli-Arabs on one side and Jordanians on the other.⁶⁴ However, the reunification of the three parts of historical Palestine—Israel itself, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip—and placing all of their Arab inhabitants under Jewish rule was among the paramount factors in the reemergence of Palestinian nationalism. The continuation of the Israeli conquest was a major trigger for their claim for self-determination and their readiness to wage an independent armed struggle against the Jewish state. The new situation in the Middle East, that is, the military and ideological collapse of Nasserist pan-Arabism following the Israeli military victory, added much legitimacy to the until then-negligible and marginal Fatah organization, oriented only toward Palestine. Under this new regional constellation, Fatah and other guerrilla organizations controlled not only the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), but also the Palestinian consciousness inside and outside of historical Palestine.

Thus, one significant unintended consequence of the Israeli military victory was the reemergence of Zionism's principal direct foe and competitor over the same land. The construction of the Palestinian ethnic and national identity was accelerated even more following the increasing oppression, caused by "internal" and "external" resistance, labeled by the Israelis as "terror." Additional accelerating factors were the increasing settlement process of the occupied territories by Jews, especially after 1974, and the feeling of the Palestinians of being dispossessed from their last land and water reservoirs.

From Military to Police: The Transformation of the Israeli Armed Forces

The Israeli state appeared suddenly as a regional power. As stated above, the boundaries of its control were largely expanded, a large Arab population fell within these boundaries, and large frontier territories were reopened for settlement. The initial official attitude after the 1967 war was to agree to

withdraw from all of the territory except Jerusalem in exchange for peace or other kinds of arrangements. However, peace and territory were incommensurable values. Peace was an abstract situation that had not yet been experienced by Israeli society on Israeli territory—land, water, or other natural resources—was a measurable and concrete geopolitical term.⁶⁵ Additionally, territories were also considered in terms of providing security, national property, and “holiness.”⁶⁶ But what really made the situation complicated were the Arab inhabitants that densely populated some of the most central areas. The Syrian Heights were largely the cleanest ethnically, and about 90,000 Syrians had been driven away during the conquest. In the West Bank and Gaza, more than a million Palestinians remained. The two basic long-term options were their mass expulsion or granting them Israeli citizenship in the event of annexation of the desired territories, as was suggested by a group of activists and mainstream intellectuals from the Labor camp. Both options were unrealistic, the first because of its moral and international implications and the second because it would transform the Jewish nation-state into a very unwanted binational polity. This permanent-temporary situation of continued occupation, under all of the internal and external constraints, led to a highly anomic situation and a shortage of ideological solutions and political and moral guides. The old hegemonic Socialist-Zionist ideologies no longer had answers in this rapidly changed world.

Into the ideological and political vacuum stepped a new actor that previously had been located on the periphery of the hegemony. This was the Gush Emunim, or Bloc of the Faithful, a social movement and ideology. Using some central elements of the original hegemonic symbols, identity, and culture, the movement tried to establish a counterculture and a political alternative based on theological premises. Above all, it was a rebellion of the Ashkenazi national religious youth and younger generation against its elder generation, which it regarded as having abandoned its religious and nationalist principles for the socialist-secular Zionists. Recruiting the original theology developed in the 1930s by the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi Isaac Hacoheh Kook and then applied and interpreted by his son to the sociopolitical situation after the 1967 and 1973 wars, they decided to reshape the Israeli state and society.

In 1974, Gush Emunim took control of the National Religious Party and made it its political sponsor. This enabled it to create a heterogeneous settler society, including nonreligious and nonideological settlers, primarily in the so-called Judea and Samaria territories. The core of the settler society

is based around “holy communities” of observant Askenazic Jews, many of them graduates of elite military units and Hesdery Yeshivas.⁶⁷ The cores of the communities are the families, reinforced by the local school system, the youth movement (Bnei Akiva), the synagogue, the local rabbi, and the local council or municipality. Even though many of the true believers live or work outside the settler communities, the communities are constructed as ideologically and mutually supportive bubbles.

Within the bubbles it is relatively easy to recruit people for quick political actions,⁶⁸ to exercise internal social control, and to grant mutual spiritual and ideological support. Gush Emunim first operated on the supra-territorial level as a political and social movement and later through Amana as an officially recognized settlement authority. Later, when Gush Emunim declined as a political movement, the leadership of the movement was divided between the political and the ideological-spiritual organs, the council of rabbis.

The Emuni ideology proposed to replace the secular state of Israel with the Land of Israel, a geographic and political entity fully based on an ethnocentric fusion of religion and nationalism. This was the delayed effect of the autonomous national-religious educational system as well as the yeshiva high school and other national-religious yeshiva education. Armed with deep religious conviction and personal commitment, Gush Emunim emerged to settle both the occupied territories and the hearts of the Jewish people, using the major classic practical Zionist symbols and the rhetoric of pioneering, settlement, redemption, national security, self-sacrifice, and conquest of land—from Arabs and nature—to establish a new settler society on the newly conquered lands. The immediate political *raison d'être* of the settlements and their geographic dispersion was to establish a fait accompli that would preclude any possibility of abandoning the territories. They would ensure the completeness of the Land of Israel and the title of the People of Israel over them, as an integral part of the redemption that was soon coming. They touched upon the dormant religious elements of secular Israeli identity and the Achilles' heel of the Israeli secular and statist nationalism. The Jewish secular society was enchanted by this new pioneering passion and was almost completely disarmed in the face of the renewed Zionist practices, symbols, and myths, primarily because of the absence of any coherent competing ideologies or social movements.

No less meaningful was the Emuni ideological assault on the Israeli public agenda, way of thinking, cultural code, and terminology. The Emuni

double-talk proved to be very effective. Toward their own religious-nationalistic constituency they used the primordial symbols of land and blood. Toward the secularists they used the rhetoric of pioneering, settlement, and security. The secular hard-liners or hawkish elites were never equipped with such an arsenal of emotional terms and abundance of associations as were their religious partners. The West Bank became Judea and Samaria, or Yesha, which is not just an acronym for Judea, Samaria, and Gaza Strip, but also literally means salvation or redemption. In public discourse the term “state of Israel” became frequently interchangeable with the term “Land of Israel,” eliding the convention that the entire greater Israel belonged exclusively to the Jewish people. More and more the Israeli secular and civil identity, which had been constructed around state citizenship, was reshaped into a narrative of a primordial Jewish identity in which the criteria for belonging were defined basically in religious terms.⁶⁹

As Meron Benvenisti suggested several times, the grassroots settlement of the West Bank became a critical mass of about 140 settlements with about 180,000 Jewish settlers.⁷⁰ These settlements and settlers needed day-and-night protection from Palestinian guerrilla warfare, but the Palestinians needed many more times that protection from extremist settlers or avengers. Slowly, considerable portions of the Israeli armed forces—regulars and reserves, especially the infantry, paratroopers, and military intelligence—became engaged in policing the occupied territories. This process of allocating increasing amounts of military force as well as material, human, emotional, and intellectual resources became even more critical as the Palestinian popular uprising, the intifada, broke out in December 1987.

Like any military, the Israeli military did not have a proper doctrine for fighting against an unarmed (at least not with firearms) civilian population. The Palestinians' major weapons were stones thrown by youth, children, and sometimes women. The Palestinians very cautiously almost never crossed the line to give Israeli troops a pretext to use their overwhelming military superiority. Thus the Israeli troops were forced to employ street warfare without firearms. They used tear gas, truncheons, rubber bullets, administrative detentions, and home demolitions. Many other collective punishments, such as closures and curfew, were frequently imposed, and orders to break the bones of rioters were given and executed. This was a war of attrition⁷¹ and both sides became exhausted, pushed into a no-win corner.

The role of policing the occupied territories, which culminated during the intifada, has had a devastating impact on the Israeli military. Instead

of preparing the forces and developing doctrines for the future battlefield within the context of a swiftly changing world order, the military and the general staff were intellectually and morally preoccupied with how to fight children. Yitzhak Rabin, then minister of defense, slowly came to the conclusion that there could not be a military solution to the Palestinian problem, only a political one. When Rabin became prime minister again in 1992, with the return of Labor to power, he was ready to leave most of the occupied West Bank and Gaza. He even eventually agreed to establish a limited Palestinian state to redirect the Israeli military to its major military mission of the strategic defense of Israel. The logic of the Oslo agreements, in addition to separation, was to continue the strategic control over the territory⁷² but to grant the Palestinians the political, economic, and symbolic satisfactions of having a state and exchanging the policing over them by the Jewish military with policing by their own Fatah militias.⁷³ Here, Rabin clearly prioritized military-strategic considerations over political, sentimental, and religious considerations. He tried to clarify the Emuni rhetoric, which blurred the boundaries between national security and sentimental considerations toward the occupied territories.⁷⁴

Camp David and the War of Choice Controversy

In 1977 a political upheaval occurred in Israel when the secular ultranationalist Likud movement⁷⁵ overthrew the long domination of the Labor movement. The expectation was that one of the first moves of Menachem Begin, the Likud leader identified for years with the ideology of Greater Israel, would be to annex immediately at least the heartland of Judea and Samaria.⁷⁶ Instead, to the enormous surprise of his adherents as well as his opponents, Begin responded positively to Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's initiative to exchange the territory of the Sinai Peninsula for a peace treaty with Egypt, as well as Egypt's recognition of the legitimate existence of a sovereign Jewish state in the region.⁷⁷ After a difficult bargaining process, Israel withdrew in stages from all of Sinai, which remained a partially demilitarized area, and dismantled all of the Jewish settlements there. The formula of "peace in exchange for [all] the territories" was created, disproving the meta-doctrinal convention that it was necessary to rely forever on military might because it would be impossible for Arabs to accept the existence of the Jewish settler society. The exit of Egypt from the coalition of Arab enmity toward Israel was a major change in the political, military, and re-

gional power balance, and brought about the collapse of the Arab Western Front, just as later the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty critically damaged the Eastern Front. Begin's breakthrough also stressed that Arab recognition of the legitimacy of Israel, in addition to demilitarized buffer zones and more or less normalized relationships, should not be a less important component of a secure existence than territorial depth and military divisions. However, the Egyptians conditioned their acceptance on a reasonable solution to the Palestinian national problem, and in the Camp David accords, Begin even agreed to grant full autonomy to the Palestinians, though he did not specify what he meant.

However, it seems that Begin's general plans, inspired by his hawkish and charismatic minister of defense, Ariel Sharon, were much more far-reaching. After the September 1970 clashes in Jordan, the Palestinian guerrilla forces and their headquarters left Jordan for South Lebanon and the Beirut area. From there they waged permanent and harassing guerrilla warfare against Israel. After completing the withdrawal from Sinai, despite some popular protests organized by his own political camp, Begin invaded Lebanon. The goal of the invasion was to destroy forever not just the military ability of the Palestinians but also their national movement, will, and identity.⁷⁸ This was the second Jewish-Palestinian war, after the first round of 1947–48, and it was waged not so much for the peace of the Galilee but for the consolidation of Israeli control over Judea and Samaria.⁷⁹ An additional purpose of the war was to establish a new Maronite regime in Lebanon friendly to Israel. This was the first time that Israel behaved explicitly as a regional power that wanted to convert its military power into political achievements—to make order, or a *Pax Israeliana*, in the Middle East.⁸⁰ Excluding the 1948 war, all of the other Israeli-Arab wars were caused or intentionally not avoided by Israel.⁸¹ Despite this, none of the conflicts were socially constructed as having been Israeli-initiated. In all of the previous wars the Arabs were presented as having caused the escalation that made the war inevitable, if they were not the direct aggressors. Under Begin, however, for the first time an Israeli leader openly demanded the right to use the armed forces not to avoid an immediate existential threat, but to achieve what a democratically elected leadership considered as long-run national interests.⁸² Military strategists also claimed that invading Lebanon would rehabilitate the Israeli deterrence capacity and the military morale lowered as a consequence of the 1973 war. This sincere approach led to a bitter domestic controversy over the war and its goals, marking the first time in Israel that the Jewish national consensus

around waging a war was broken and met with a wide popular opposition. Opponents of the war argued mainly that where the armed forces are based on reserves, that is, on a social contract with the people of the military system, the leadership was not allowed to initiate a war by choice (*milchemet breira*), but only a war of no choice.⁸³ A war by choice was presumed to damage both the morale of the warriors and the highly desired national consensus in the last domain that still united the Israelis, the sphere of national security. For the first time, conscientious objectors appeared in Israel, and the nature of the previous wars also became a part of public discourse.⁸⁴ The subject probably would never have been so acute and central if the war had been successful, fast, “clean,” and with much fewer casualties. However, despite the PLO's military defeat and the Palestinian guerrilla movement's expulsion to Tunisia, the Palestinian identity in the occupied territories and the demand for self-determination survived and even increased. The Israeli troops welcomed by the local Lebanese population as liberators soon became conquerors, and militia groups like the Shiite Amal and Hizb-Allah, formed following the Israeli invasion, waged guerrilla war against the Israeli soldiers. For years, the politicians lacked the intellectual integrity and courage to accept that the war was the largest doctrinal fiasco in the history of the Israeli military.⁸⁵ The most severe consequence of the Lebanese war was the legitimacy granted to the Syrians to take over control of Lebanon and to institutionalize their presence there. Israeli maintenance even today of the “security zone” in South Lebanon, supported by a militia of mercenaries—the so-called South Lebanese Army—is the continuation of the same war within a narrow scope, but continuing most of the doctrinaire misconceptions related to it, namely military security cordons accompanied by direct or indirect occupation of a populated area.

The Outer Circle and the Parallel Doctrine

Almost unrelated to the conventional military doctrines and perceptions, since the early 1960s, Israel has made efforts to develop its own tactical and strategic capability for nuclear war. A nuclear weapon was considered as the ultimate insurance policy, facing the basic asymmetries between Israel and the Arab and Muslim world according to the “few against many” perception. The basic conception was that Israel must have enough conventional capacity to win any regional war, but also possess a nuclear option for three extreme cases: a complete failure of its conventional defense and deterrence

capability, and a real and immediate threat to the existence of the Jewish state; the acquisition of nuclear weapons by close or distant regional foes; and deterrence of a superpower threat against Israel, as happened in 1956 when the Soviets threatened it with nuclear missiles. The nuclear option was also perceived as a psychological, ideological, and cultural need for an ultimate security for an immigrant-settler society unaccepted by its surrounding environment, and for a people that just a generation before had been the victim of a systematic genocide.

Israel opted for a sophisticated, ambiguous nuclear policy. It never performed a nuclear test and never publicly admitted the possession of such weaponry. On the other hand it refused to sign the nuclear weapons non-proliferation treaty or be inspected by international or American agencies.⁸⁶ Israel always declared that it would never be the first nation to introduce nuclear weapons in the region, which could also be interpreted as having a “bomb in the basement,” meaning that nuclear weapons would be available on short notice, even if not yet technically assembled. It seems that Israel had a tacit agreement with the United States and other nuclear powers, which allowed it to develop its own nuclear capacity as long as such capacity remained undeclared. This also depended on its regional nuclear monopoly, which Israel has tried to preserve at any price. This monopoly is necessary because a balance of nuclear terror and mutual deterrence that was valid between superpowers is perceived as meaningless in a regional context, just as a second-strike capability, while technically possible, is meaningless given the limited territorial scope and dense concentration of population in the region, though some strategists like Feldman⁸⁷ or Aronson⁸⁸ have argued differently.⁸⁹ Thus, when Israel suspected that a France-supplied Iraqi reactor (Tammuz) was close to being operative, it hastened to destroy it by an air raid. Following this act was the so-called Begin Doctrine, which suggested that Israel had to destroy any nuclear reactors in any regional power before they could become operative to ensure Israel's regional nuclear monopoly. However, the nuclearization of the region seems only a question of time, and thus Israel's monopoly may vanish very soon.⁹⁰ The prestigious military analyst Ze'ev Schiff⁹¹ has suggested that considering the new international world order and the increasing capabilities of the distant or outer-circle conflict states, such as Iraq, Iran, or even Pakistan, to launch missile attacks against Israel—as was demonstrated so well during the Gulf War—the Israeli military doctrine is completely outdated and irrelevant to the rapidly changing reality. Schiff related this to the politicians' inability for

long-term thinking and the fear of the military to become entangled with the politicians. In any case, the real or imagined nuclear power of Israel, intended to offer it a basic sense of power, security, and self-confidence, was used domestically to draw two contradictory conclusions: that Israel was powerful enough to be able to make generous concessions in exchange for achieving a peaceful solution to Jewish-Arab conflict and to reach legitimacy as an accepted society in the region;⁹² and that Israel was powerful enough to maintain what it perceived as its natural national rights over its motherland, and to stand fast in the face of the entire world.⁹³

The Israeli nuclear capability, the existence of a presumed massive nuclear arsenal and reactor, and its moral, political, social, and environmental implications and consequences never were subjects of systematic public debate. So far the issue seems to be the most, and perhaps the last, consensual tacit agreement about its strict necessity, and most of the leftist and rightist political and intellectual elites in Israel keep public silence about it.⁹⁴ The silence intermingles very well with Israel's societal construction of the nuclear aspect of its national security doctrine. Even questions about the safety of nuclear reactors—no less severe an existential problem than national security—are eliminated from the public agenda.

Epilogue: The Military-Cultural Complex

Military doctrines are presumed to determine the *modus operandi* of the state's military forces to achieve the goals imposed by the collectivity most efficiently, but above all, to ensure its very existence. From this preliminary social analysis of the Israeli military doctrines and behavior at different times and in diverse contexts, it is clear that security, as a societal problem, is not performed within a bubble. National security doctrines are a part of the society's belief system, perceptions of reality, and dominant ideologies, and among the interests of diverse groups and other societal categories. However, the military practices and doctrines both create and construct hard fact and reality. As I have demonstrated in previous works,⁹⁵ the military mind and culture, sometimes defined as militarism, intruded so much into the Israeli civilian culture and absorbed it that it is almost impossible to distinguish among them. The other side of this phenomenon was the intrusion of civilian values, norms, and political trends within the military.⁹⁶ This intermingling among civilian and military cultures in both the institutional and cultural spheres created what should be could be regarded as

a military-cultural complex, penetrating and connecting all of the societal spheres, private and collective, in Israel. Settlement doctrines are translated into military doctrines and vice versa, and both create societal problems that construct social facts and are also constructed by them.

The Israeli state is based on an immigrant-settler society, but state-society relations have not yet been firmly established, in large part because Israel's boundaries are still under dispute.⁹⁷ During most of its history, it has been considered a colonial intruder among the peoples of the region and obliged to rely on its own sword. This led to a construction of a societal reality accompanied by military-doctrinaire conclusions. John Keegan⁹⁸ claims that warfare and conflict are primarily cultural constructs. The Jewish-Arab Palestinian conflict, most of the time, has been understood as a routine, immutable, and uncontrollable given, an eternal fate, a kind of Greek tragedy that the two peoples are destined to play. The following well-known eulogy by Moshe Dayan to an Israeli soldier (Roy Rothberg) killed in May 1956 plays on this same theme:

We are a generation of settlers, yet without a helmet or a gun barrel we will be unable to plant a tree or build a house. Let us not be afraid to perceive the enmity that consumes the lives of hundreds of thousands of Arabs around us. Let us not avert our gaze, for it will weaken our hands. This is the fate of our generation. The only choice we have is to be armed, strong and resolute or else our sword will fall from our hands and the thread of our lives will be severed.⁹⁹

The settler society was not powerful enough to completely exclude the native people that it met on the territory it considered to be its ancient homeland. The local peoples were not powerful enough to prevent the settlers from establishing and successfully developing a viable nation and a regional power, and only recently have some of them begun a fragile process of rapprochement and recognition of it. This required the construction of other cultural and military realities, demanding other national security doctrines.

However, the previous perceptions of realities are not dying and persist alongside the old realities. Even now, Israel is considered to be in a protracted existential conflict, expected at any time to erupt into a total war that will require the recruitment of all its material, human, and emotional resources. The doctrines are built on the principle of a worst-case analysis. On the question of in what measure this presentation of the Israeli condition and

the security issues as societal problem are closer to “objective reality” rather than just another “constructed reality”—or just one additional text among other texts—I have no conclusive answer.

However, it is no wonder that, under such circumstances, Israel has developed as a culturally and materially recruited militaristic society, in which national security has shaped the culture, values, and ideologies that require an extensive construction of a convenient social reality. In turn, the ideologies, politics, and culture interfere with professional military and national security considerations, until it is almost impossible to differentiate between them.