

Patterns of Militarism in Israel*

Like other issues linked to the Jewish-Arab conflict and Jewish-Arab relations, most of the studies concerned with Israel, such as the place of the military and militaristic culture in Israeli society, are heavily distorted compared with other themes prevalent in the discourse and debates in the social sciences.¹ Ideological considerations blur the issue; until the publication of Uri Ben-Eliezer's *The Making of Israeli Militarism*, even using the term "militarism" in the canonical textbooks was taboo in Israel.² The main purpose of this paper is threefold: to survey briefly the present state of the literature on so-called civil-military relations in Israel; to revise the overall impact of the Jewish-Arab conflict and the militarization of Israeli society; and to reformulate the effect of militarization on the institutional and value spheres of the Israeli collectivity and collective identity.

The puzzle that appeals most to social scientists who deal with Israeli society centers around one research question: if Israel harbors so much

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military strength, and its military force constitutes such a central part of its society and is essential to its survival, why has the state not become militarist?³ Given that in Israel, military elite soldiers enjoy such prestige, the military budget claims about a fourth of the state's expenses, and a military-industrial complex has emerged within the country and accumulated powers of its own,⁴ how can it be that Israel has not developed a militarist society? Why has Israel not become a modern Sparta? Answers to this question generally relate to a combination of primary variables. The first is the stability of the political structure and the democratic political culture.⁵ Second is the "people's army" nature of the Israeli armed forces, or as they are called officially, the Israel Defense Forces, or IDF. Israel's military is perceived to be a popular army that has undergone a process of routinization, that is, the armed forces are built mainly on civilian reserve units and pass through a process of civilization⁶ by which they cannot attain a military status detached from the rest of society and beholden to their own independent interests. Similarly, such researchers claim that a kind of mental and institutional compartmentalization between civilian and military spheres obtains in Israel.⁷ Third, a military obliged, constantly and intensively, to tend to real security needs has neither the ability nor the resolve to develop a truly militarist character. Finally, the armed forces' high-ranking officers have become part of the social elite that forms national decisions and allocates resources; owing to this constructive partnership,⁸ the military has no incentive to intervene in political and social matters at the expense of democratic norms.

Whenever the military has interloped in civilian spheres, it has been perceived as positive intervention. Such intervention is seen as a role expansion by which the military contributes to the education of deprived population sectors,⁹ settlement activities in the country,¹⁰ absorbing immigrants,¹¹ and developing a consensus culture based on universal conscription.¹² In view of such an analysis, researchers have tended to define Israel positively as a "nation-in-arms,"¹³ a country in which civilians serve as soldiers whenever necessary to defend their homeland, and then take off their uniforms when the danger has passed. In a nation-in-arms, such obligatory military service does not encourage the armed forces to acquire more than minimal, unavoidable influence in political, economic, and cultural spheres.¹⁴ This classification is opposed to the garrison-state model proposed by Harold Laswell in 1941—a state run by managers of violence, the existence of which, given the hostile outlying environment, is dependent upon developing the military means to ward off dangers.¹⁵ Israel has also not been regarded as

a praetorian state—a state in which the military complex wields decisive powers in the political process because the political institutions are weak.¹⁶ In such a praetorian state, the state might be given directly to military rule and martial law, or the political institutions might be co-opted entirely according to David Rapoport's model.¹⁷

A considerable body of scholarship thus has endeavored to rid Israel of the stigma of militarism. Lately, however, a number of Israeli researchers¹⁸ have tended to characterize Israel as a militarist society. This definition has supplemented other claims about the society, such as the chauvinistic nature of Israeli nationalism, and the betrayal of socialism by the workers' party, Mapai, the ancestor of the Labor party. Scholars view the turn to militarism as a consequence of the establishment of the state in 1948 and of Israel's incorporation into the Western bloc. In this view, rather than solving the Arab and Palestinian problems through a peace process, Israel perceived as in its interest to externalize the conflict and transform it into a dispute between states, if only to forestall the return of the refugees. In quite a different analysis, Ben-Eliezer¹⁹ reached a similar conclusion. In his view, the roots of militarism in Israeli society reach back to the Jewish political community, the *yishuv*, which developed in colonial Palestine. In this period, the decision that only force could resolve the Jewish-Arab conflict was conclusively adopted and has remained operative ever since. As a result of this social construction of reality, an elite has emerged in Jewish society whose crucial role derives from its military or security functions. Barzilai,²⁰ using the much softer term of "combatant community," found the "permanent siege" costly in terms of civil rights that were considered inferior to security needs.

In both institutional and conceptual senses, the concept of security in Israel is far more wide-sweeping than the term military; at the same time, the ever-expanding boundaries of security are loosely defined, and almost any sphere or subject can be connected expediently to it. The economy, industry, settlements, and elementary school, high-school, and higher education structures are often incorporated in security-related spheres. Yet if the institutional boundaries of what is called the security network are mapped somewhat more formally, they appear to include the armed forces; the intelligence network and General Security Services; the civil and military administration of the occupied territories; the defense ministry and its governmental bureaucracy; the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) Foreign Affairs and Security Committee; the government's (impermanent) security cabinet;

the many-branched military industry, including research and development sectors, either government-owned, public, or private; and finally, various lobby groups of the branches mentioned above.

Despite the above findings, analyses, insights, and hypotheses, social scientists who examine Israeli society tend to resist classifying Israel as a militarist state or society. Assuming that Israel is not militarist, an analytic riddle indeed remains: How has the state retained an essentially nonmilitaristic nature if objective conditions that urge militarism are constantly at play in Israel, and signs of militant character appear in many of its public spheres? This debate is not entirely semantic. The central claims of the present article are as follows: in contrast to most of the approaches in social science research of Israel, which abjure the state's militarist character, it seems reasonable to argue that militarism has developed to a large degree in Israel, and such militarism has varied from time to time in character and potency, it tends to be one of the central organizational principles of the society.

This phenomenon arises mainly as a response to the situation of protracted conflict that has dominated the Zionist settlement movement since its inception in Palestine,²¹ where the surrounding Arab populations have been hostile to the movement's perceived colonial aims.²² Militarism became a factor in Israel's society when arms and the management of violence came to be perceived as routine, self-evident, and integral parts of the Israeli-Jewish culture, a natural state that could never be changed. Such militarism developed a distinctive character over time. After 1977, it declined, but since the beginning of the 2000s, it appears to have taken shape again. As Shaw put it, "militarism and militarization do not depend simply or directly on the role of the military in society . . . but, to the extent that war preparation becomes central to it, it may become effective through other [societal] institutions."²³ To this one might add the extent to which the state and society is organized institutionally and culturally around managing a protracted external conflict.

Patterns of Militarism

Militarism has three main dimensions. Each dimension can exist separately as an expression of a specific kind of militarism, or a dimension may coexist in some combination with one or both of the other dimensions, and each combination creates another pattern of militarism. It bears mentioning that these are ideal types in the Weberian sense of the term. In reality, not all of the possible

combinations of militarism are found, and when they appear, they vary in scope and extent. The first dimension can be called the violent-force dimension; the second is a cultural dimension; the third is a cognitive dimension.

The force dimension takes shape when military rule is established, directly or indirectly, and imposed for a length of time. Military rule comes about when generals or colonels take power, even when they take off their uniforms to create a facade of civilian rule. It is praetorian militarism when the rule is exclusively based on the coercive force of the armed forces' bayonets and its loyalty to the military leadership. In this eventuality, military officers become power brokers; they determine the public agenda, regulate the allocation of resources for the good of the military, and reward the ethnic or national class or group from which they themselves have emerged. This process of military rule is exemplified by regimes established in Africa²⁴ and Latin America from 1970–90.²⁵

The force dimension is assured by evident social mechanisms. It arises when significant civilian portions of the state accept military rule as a self-evident and unchallengeable situation, as happened historically in the revolutionary stages of Latin American regimes, when the armed forces became the flag-bearing, liberating element that assured the overthrow of colonialism,²⁶ and when civilian politicians were perceived as being inferior at managing the state efficiently, remaining incorruptible, being patriotic, and representing the interests of citizens. In other words, force militarism occurs when the perception of the military regime as a self-evident entity penetrates the collectivity's cognitive map. In this way, the military rule imposed by force acquires a type of legitimacy, as many strata of the population do not consider its very existence to be problematic or a subject for political bargaining. When such legitimacy and hegemony arises, the phenomenon should be classified as a comprehensive military regime rather than transient military rule.

At the same time, force militarism is not yet accompanied by a vast ceremonial expression, except perhaps some personal cult of a leader, and in the final analysis, the armed forces are perceived to be politically instrumental means. In such situations, the military amplifies its power to surveil and control for internal security needs and defend interests connected directly to it and to ethnic, class, and other groups that draw their strength from the armed forces and from which they derive their legitimacy.

In some cases, such as Lebanon, Somalia, Nigeria, Zaire, and Congo, the military becomes embroiled in civil war. At first glance, it would seem that

there is not, nor has there ever been, militarism of this type in Israel; such a claim, however, depends on the definitions of the terms used and the manner in which the boundaries of the Israeli collectivity are determined. Most social scientists who study Israel²⁷ define the collectivity as being basically Jewish and within the Green Line borders of the 1949 ceasefire lines. Under those definitions, Israel can be perceived as a democratic society. However, when the collectivity's boundaries are extended to comprise areas that have fallen under Israel's authority since 1967—that is, the conquered territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the security zone established by Israel in Southern Lebanon, which represents a settlement and security frontier for the Jewish population and in which 1.8 million Palestinians have lived under an occupying regime for a generation—the role of the Israeli military in the control network is cast utterly differently. The surveillance conducted by the armed forces and an auxiliary force of Arab mercenaries, an army that ministers policing activities aimed to pacify a nationally conscious people, and which strives to stifle a popular uprising that broke out in 1989 and has continued ever since, transforms the very nature not only of the Israeli military, but also of the entire Israeli state.²⁸ For its part, the military becomes a central agent in the attempt to assure internal security and surveillance. When the boundaries of the Israeli collectivity are marked in this way,²⁹ it taxes credulity to define the state as democratic in the accepted usage of the term; instead, Israel becomes what can be termed a *Herrenvolk* democracy, and its military is essentially the same as the tribal armies of various African states that assure the hegemony of one part of a collectivity's population and the subjugation of all of the other parts. At least in the Israeli case, Giddens³⁰ major distinction between internal and external aspects of pacification and militarization of the nation-state cannot be applied. The same social institutions, with the same ideologies, operate both internally and externally.

Cultural Militarism

Another possible dimension of militarism is the cultural facet, which can be interwoven with the first form of political militarism. When militarism is confined essentially to this cultural form and becomes part of the collective identity, it lacks the coercive power to regulate internal affairs and can thus be termed cultural militarism. Prussian militarism is the prototype of this form, which Vagts³¹ terms as “militarism by civilians,” as opposed

to militarism of soldiers. This form reached its zenith, as it were, with the Nazi regime. In it, the military does not control the decision-making process, which is governed by a political and ideological elite, though this elite might sometimes spruce itself up by donning the dress of generals and marshals. Cultural militarism obtains when the armed forces become essential to the social experience and collective identity—when they rank as one of the collectivity's central symbols and the embodiment of patriotism. Public experience is enveloped in ceremonial endeavor dominated by soldiering, military professionals, and paramilitary groups, such as youth movements that emphasize expressions of power, discipline, and military appearance. The main thrust of the collectivity's goals and orientations are defined in terms of war-making, preparations for wars, wars for peace, and wars to prevent wars.

In such political cultures, wars are perceived to be inevitable and the nation's essence and calling, an attitude reinforced as the soldiers march to battle in patriotic war to the sound of thunderous war plans formulated by ruling civilian elites. Soldiers of all ranks are objects of permanent indoctrination and control by professional political supervisors in uniform—so-called *politruks*. Victories are commemorated by an elaborate array of monuments, songs of glory, and cinema and television films, and a significant portion of private and public discourse applies itself to military matters. Monuments commemorate warriors and war dead,³² and memorial days³³ and bestowing decorative medals for heroism become manifest in the public realm, if not an integral part of the culture and collective identity.

The necessity and unavoidability of wars extends to both internal and foreign affairs. Each major societal goal—education, industry, technological advance, science, the arts, and even leisure—are perceived to be enlisted to serve the homeland, of which the military is viewed as the purest and most conspicuous embodiment. In such cases, the military tends to be apolitical and ruled by professional criteria. The armed forces are autonomous only regarding their own internal matters, and with respect to decisions in logistical and tactical areas, and they are not always independent even in these areas. The boundaries between the military and political institutions are “integral,” in Luckham's³⁴ terms, whereas the boundaries between the military and the cultural spheres are “permeable,” that is to say that, all told, the boundaries between military and society are fragmentary. Military professionals receive esteem and prestige but are not granted political power,³⁵ which resides precisely in the hands of extramilitary, primarily political

institutions that exploit the military, its symbols, and the entire discourse on national security to shape the social and political framework—in other words, to set the rules of the game, norms of public behavior, and priorities in the allocating societal resources, and to amplify their own powers.

A certain measure of cultural militarism can be found in the period soon after the establishment of the Israeli state, and some residual elements of this militarism remain today. In the northern metropolitan city of Haifa in the early 1950s, a military parade was arranged to celebrate the nation's independence day, and marchers hoisted the following slogan: "Israel trusts the IDF [Israel Defence Forces]—it is your defender and saviour."³⁶ A similar slogan that was quite current in the 1950s and 1960s was "The guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers." It is superfluous to point out that such expressions were known both to religious and secular Jews; here, in a very palpable sense, the military replaced the role of God. These catchall expressions reflected the spirit of the time. Jews had attained independence, and were expressing a sense that their existence and security depended not upon the will of God, fate, or the a colonial superpower, but on a new muscular Jew, his army, and his soldiers.

The attitude toward military institutions and militarism represents a central, determinative element in the social nexus. At the same time, the collectivity did not define itself as militaristic, as the concept had a stigmatic connotation and was considered to be "not appropriate for Jews."³⁷ The Israeli militarism is inclusive, embracing everything. At the very least, the phenomenon applies to the main, nonmarginal elements of the collectivity, and military mores are presented here as being universal for the time and place.³⁸

A different aspect of cultural militarism is created by a thin, exclusive stratum of civilians, as well as military elite groups, who rank military knowledge and norms as classified, esoteric material. In so doing, they endeavor to maintain hegemonic control over the collectivity, excluding those who cannot access such knowledge and skills. In Israel, expressions of this trend appeared whenever the public agenda and political discourse devoted to subjects defined as in the interest of national security were closed and manipulated by a small, elite circle.³⁹ Even when the security discourse operated in a relatively public manner, it deployed codes that divided the collectivity into two parts: a small group that knew the secret, and the vast majority that both accepted that the security language was comprised of self-evident yet recondite and unknown truths, and was totally alienated from the discourse.

Such social division of labor in the security realm proceeds due to a prevailing assumption that, as security matters must remain classified, those who settle affairs in the secret-security realm possess extraordinary security and military talents. Such a convention was rehearsed to reinforce a perception that, in contrast to mundane operations in political, social, and economic spheres, decision-making in sensitive security fields required exceptional or extraordinary qualifications. Even though the prestige of the military and armed forces in Israel has continuously decreased since the badly managed 1973 war and, even more so, the 1982 war in Lebanon, the institutional and cultural centrality of security remains the same.

Praetorian Militarism

The type of militarism that corresponds most faithfully to the classic notion of the term is praetorian militarism, which is comprised of all three dimensions: coercive force, cultural-ceremonial, and cognitive. Alfred Vagts defines this militarism as the antithesis of the regular military way, which he describes as

marked by a primary concentration of men and materials on winning specific objectives of power with utmost efficiency, that is with the least expenditure of blood and treasure. It is limited in scope, confined to one function, and scientific in its essential qualities. Militarism, on the other hand, presents a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions, and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes. . . . Its influence is unlimited in scope. It may permeate all society and become dominant over all industry and arts.⁴⁰

It is also a political situation in which the military, in effect, governs the state. The armed forces penetrate all social and state networks, such as bureaucracy, economy, education, and culture. It occurs when political and civilian institutions are weak and perceived as lacking legitimacy,⁴¹ as in Japan before World War II, the Latin American states of the 1960s and 1970s,⁴² some African states, and the Bedouin army of Jordan that rules over the Palestinian majority in the Hashemite Jordan state.⁴³ The military prohibits the existence of an autonomous civilian society; no autonomous public activities are conducted outside of its purview. The armed forces, the

state, and the economy are all interwoven. Also, on the cognitive level, no process of differentiation arises between these spheres; the phenomenon is not limited to the institutional level, as C. Wright Mills⁴⁴ theorized, but verges toward the military-industrial state envisioned by Giddens.⁴⁵

Civilian Militarism

The third dimension of militarism is cognitive, and once militarism penetrates it, it suffuses both the structural and cultural state of mind of the collectivity. The situation is liable to be reflected by full or partial institutional or cultural expressions, yet the main expression is a latent state of mind. Civilian militarism arises when civilian leaders and the led both regard primary military and strategic considerations as being, self-evidently, the only or the predominant considerations in most societal and political decisions or priority ordering. Usually, such an acceptance is unconscious. This militarism is what Lukes⁴⁶ characterized as the “third dimension of power.” In such a situation, the entire social nexus, both in an institutional sense—economic, industrial, and legislative—and mental sense, is oriented toward permanent war preparation to defend the collectivity’s very existence. Such preparation becomes part of the social routine; it is far from being an issue for public discussion, debate, or political struggle.⁴⁷ Even when military performances or other measures taken by the armed forces are publicly criticized, as has occurred often in Israel, the criticism is made through military experts, which does not challenge but reinforces militaristic orientations and discourse. It may be seen as a total militarism because it encompasses most of Israel’s social institutions, and because of the perception that all of the people participate in war preparations and possess military expertise, and a majority is involved in active combat.

Such militarism can be termed civilian militarism, as its main bearers and implementers are the social center, the civil government, civil elites, and all or most of the members of the collectivity. For this type of militarism, it is not necessary that the military, as an institutional structure, governs in the political sphere, nor is the army necessarily stationed at the center of a statist cult. In contrast, the civilian militarism, or what might be called the military mind, is systematically internalized by most statesmen, politicians, and the general public to be a self-evident reality, the imperatives of which transcend political or social allegiances. The gist of civilian

militarism is that military considerations, as well as matters that are defined as national security issues,⁴⁸ almost always receive higher priority than do political, social, economic, and ideological problems.

Military and national security considerations constitute part of the central organizing principles of the collectivity. In fact, any nonmilitary consideration is liable to be subordinate to the national security rationale and discourse.⁴⁹ David Ben-Gurion, former prime minister and minister of defense, once explained to Moshe Sharett, the foreign minister, that “the task of the Ministry of Security is to set security policies, whereas the task of the ministry of Foreign Affairs is to explain them.”

Israel is a clear example of this type of militarism, amply underscored by the evident and latent social significance that is attributed to military service,⁵⁰ the way in which the entire society orients itself toward constant preparation for war, and what Ross⁵¹ coined as “militarism of the mind.” The sociopolitical boundaries of the collectivity are determined and maintained by participation in military service, its manipulation, and sacrifice to support spheres that are classified as areas of national security.⁵²

The legacy of the early period of statehood is mixed, and it is perhaps hyperbolic to argue that trends of cultural militarism were entirely dominant. The identity of the state was tied in large part to the military, and the armed forces were central to the complex of “sacred” secular aims, achievements, and symbols associated with the new state, very much a mutation of Charles Tilly’s phrase that “wars made the state and the state made war.”⁵³ Yet the militarism was not an exclusive nexus of myths and imperatives connected to the state; opposed to it were symbols of other national imperatives and values, such as statehood, Judaism as a secularized nationalist creed, sociodemocracy, the flowering of the wasteland, and the building of the motherland. In the 1950s, the armed forces themselves were on one hand an elitist organization that had yet to undergo processes of professionalization and rationalization of the chain of command.⁵⁴ On the other hand, at least symbolically, their tasks were widened and the mission of building the state ascribed to them.⁵⁵ The results of amplifying the armed forces’ powers were interesting: the process did not, as Horowitz⁵⁶ expected, enhance the civilization of the military; instead, as Janowitz⁵⁷ analyzed in his review of the limits of the civilization of professional officers and the military in general, the widening of tasks encouraged a trend by which more and more social domains and subjects were perceived to belong to the realm of national security.

The Social Construction of the Arab-Jewish Conflict

A major social process in Israel was the translation of the Jewish-Arab conflict, or the Jewish-Israeli–Arab-Palestinian conflict, into a particular social construction of reality.⁵⁸ A particular version of this dispute came to be accepted as a routine, immutable, and uncontrollable given. One important aspect of the process involved encouraging the perception that the Jewish-Arab-Palestinian conflict must be eternal. It was interpreted as fate, or a kind of Greek tragedy, to which the two peoples were beholden. In May 1956, then–Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan struck this general theme in his famous eulogy to an Israeli settler, Roy Rothberg, who was killed by Palestinian “infiltrators” from Gaza:

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.⁵⁹

These words were uttered by a professional soldier, yet they reflected and in some measure continue to express a basic element of Israeli culture. It is no wonder that Dayan’s eulogy was branded on the nation’s collective memory. Conflict and war was made routine, a trend especially potent on the institutional level⁶⁰ and reinforced by the accumulated experience of combat and war. It turned Israeli society into a polity that could mobilize itself in a very short time to advance two interconnected goals. First, reserve soldiers could be enlisted to serve along with regular conscripts and army career professionals, effecting rapid military advantage and creating a force roughly equivalent to that of a middle-sized superpower—about 500,000 men with 4,000 tanks and 600 combat aircraft in the 1960s. Second, the home front was efficiently mobilized to compensate for the enlistment and departure of the vast majority of adult males. The home front perpetuated the operation of the domestic social economy, though the level of social performance dropped and the provision of many broad social services was deferred, so enabling the most rapid possible restoration of a social order until the end of the general call-up.

But the process did not end with the absorption of the conflict into the institutional construction of the society; on the contrary, it decreased the motivation to do it and created large strata interested in its absorption. As suggested, the conflict became a determining factor shaping a fair measure of the social structure and collective identity of Israel.

The Political Structure

The political sphere tends to lose its autonomy as national security considerations, representatives, and interpreters encroach. In the final analysis, civilian militarism represents the supreme expression of attaining a hegemony as state and society become subordinate to military and national security considerations. Analyzing contacts between elites, Lissak remarks in a somewhat restrained idiom that “there are no really integral boundaries between the defense and civilian sectors.”⁶¹ This form of militarism is related to Gramsci’s⁶² approach, by which hegemony is defined as the struggle over monopolistic control of a set of ideas that exclude all other possible rival conceptions and approaches to society and state power, and which supports the domination of the ruling social groups. Such ideas may comprise not only an entire ideological network that regulates the collectivity’s behavior, the rules of the game in the society, and even the perceived cosmological order that governs the world, but such ideas may be expressed in terms of institutional and behavioral arrangements that determine the collectivity’s structure and boundaries.

As with other types of militarism, a necessary but insufficient condition for the ascendance of hegemonic civil militarism is to use force as the preferred means of solving foreign policy problems—the distinction between foreign and domestic often being blurred. The important determinant factor is whether or not the military mind turns into an organizing principle in the ideological, political, and institutional state realms, and whether or not strategic considerations, defined as necessities to actual physical survival, become ascendant at the expense of all other considerations. Moshe Dayan summarized this situation when he explained at the start of the 1970s that “it is impossible to bear two banners at the same time,” referring to the banner of security as opposed to that of social welfare and other societal goals.⁶³ It is not so much that the militarist approach prioritized security over other social objectives,⁶⁴ but rather that the approach strengthened the perception that there were no alternatives in the political and social

worlds to the military approach—a solution termed pragmatic and thought to accord with a given sociopolitical reality that the conflict was an issue of physical survival.

In general, the military-military mind, as opposed to the civilian-military mind, is a Weberian ideal type comprised of several elements. It perceives humankind, especially an enemy, as essentially bad, selfish, and irrational, capable of understanding only the language of force and violence. Allocative or value-centered conflicts can be adjudicated only by the use of violent force, or on the international level, by means of war. Instability and uncertainty rule the international order; the actors in this order are nation-states, and the conflicts between them lead invariably to regional wars, or yet more expansive war. Only the nuclear balance and deterrence reduced this instability to some extent. The supreme duty of army regulars and professionals, as well as those who deal with national security, is to remain constantly vigilant, as they provide security against the potential advent of total war. The security threat to the survival of the state is real, tangible, and immediate, as it is difficult to analyze the probability that certain potential threats will turn into actual violence, and danger is automatically perceived in terms of a worst-case analysis. While this situation requires the constant investment of social resources, material and human, in the security realm, the dividends reaped by the allocation never suffice, and it is always necessary and desirable to escalate such investments and promote a higher level of security. The professional military is necessarily subordinate to the civilian echelon, but at the same time, politicians are typically unable to distinguish between social aims that are desirable and undesirable. For instance, war itself—if it is not imposed upon the country—is not desirable. Unnecessary war, or war waged at the wrong moment, merely weakens the state's power and level of security. The military is not supposed to intervene outright in politics, yet it is supposed to offer professional opinions for the consideration of statesmen, and to resist impulsive policies and aggressiveness that is not warranted by circumstances. Only when needed are recommendations made for preventive war. The elements that glorify war are civilians who have never had firsthand experience of its ardor, tolls, and horror; these include statesmen, philosophers, poets, writers, journalists, social scientists, and natural scientists, a group of amateurs contrasted with a nearly scientific military profession.

Such a description of the military mind emerges in particular from Huntington's⁶⁵ analysis. In contrast, Janowitz⁶⁶ argues that professionalization

is actually liable to make the military less responsive to civilian control, as the armed forces develop an ethos described as “the politics of wanting to be above politics.” When civilians adopt these orientations, they take them without the self-constraints that the military ethos imposes on the armed forces. As civilians, they can allow themselves to be more militaristic than the military.

The Economic Structure

The situation becomes yet more evident upon examining the economic structure. From war to war, and especially since 1967, the Israeli economy has undergone an accelerated process of militarization. The theory of the necessity of autarchy and nonreliance on foreign elements to acquire security materials emerged in response to the arms shipment embargo enforced against Israel, which started in 1948. Today, Israel manufactures almost all of its arms, beginning with semiautomatic rifles, submachine guns, sophisticated tanks, several types of ballistic missiles, drone planes, observation satellites, and missile carriers and warheads.⁶⁷ As Israel’s economy was too limited to cover the costs of developing and producing a military arms industry on the scale of a middle-ranking superpower, a vast program of exporting the products of the Israeli arms industry developed. Israel became one of the largest arms exporters in the world, trailing only the great superpowers. Other sectors in the military economy were financed with American aid and domestic government subsidies. When Israel’s expenditures for security and material costs are compared to other states, even in current years, when such expenditures have been reduced drastically, the Israeli state still has one of the highest destructive capacities in using resources to improve security.⁶⁸

Such circumstances bred a military-industrial complex in the pure meaning of the term. The regulation of military production schedules and the scope and character of military expenditures is governed by elite state bureaucratic groups, forces in the private economy, both Israeli and multinational, and the armed forces.⁶⁹ In a pioneering study, Bichler⁷⁰ found that between 1966 and 1986, security expenditures and the conversion of the economy for security production brought about wide-ranging changes in Israel’s economic structure, favoring a trend of concentration centered around large holding groups. When in 1985 internal security consumption was cut and the international market was bogged down by crisis, the arms

economy faced an acute problem: It was virtually impossible to convert production for security needs to production for civilian needs.⁷¹ For our purposes, Mintz's remark is even more compelling:

Public opinion in Israel generally views the activities of the complex with favor and support, often considering them to be essential. Because of the centrality and importance of the security conception in Israel and the broad consensus regarding a tangible danger to Israel's security, expressions such as "military-industrial complex," "new state managers," or "national security managers" do not have the same negative connotation which they are accorded in Western countries . . . Defense production and development is viewed with pride in the ability of and technological might of the small developing state and the "Jewish genius" dwelling therein.⁷²

However, since the mid-1980s, almost all of the economic indications for defense consumption were in sharp decline as major societal resources were allocated to the settlement regions of the frontier territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Defense consumption as a percentage of gross national income decreased from 20.2 percent in 1980 to 11.7 percent in 1991, and domestic defense consumption from 14 billion to 8.9 billion shekels.⁷³

The Legislative and Judicial Structure

After the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, the provisional state council declared a state of emergency that has not been annulled, revised, or limited to this day. The declaration provides the constitutional basis for emergency legislation and administration; in theory, such laws and powers, enforced by the government, can suspend or abridge all civil and human rights in the state. Thus, according to clause 9(a) in the Code of Law and Order, "the government retains the authority to oblige the will of the prime minister or any other minister and enforce regulations for a state of emergency." Beyond this, a portion of the emergency laws that applied in the period of the British colonial state, and even throughout the previous era of Ottoman rule, remained valid in Israel, and a series of new Israeli emergency laws was added to them. If this is not enough, the legislative branch can also enact regulations for a state of emergency applicable to a period of three months, with an option to prolong the period without parliamentary

approval. Such broad powers are founded upon a specific legal doctrine: Israel is perceived as facing a constant state of emergency, and threat to its very survival is understood to hover around it incessantly. Whenever necessary, the threat sanctions annulling or suspending legislation connected to the welfare or political and civil rights of all persons in the state; the justification for such curtailments is, of course, the state emergency. Such broad powers invariably tempt abuse.⁷⁴ In recent years, a number of new laws have been appended to the emergency law code that purport to fortify state security, but arguably, they have really been enacted to prohibit political activity that is normally considered to be legitimate.⁷⁵

Such broad-sweeping emergency legislation is liable to seep through all social and political spheres. Between November 1975 and October 1977, regulations governing rates of exchange of Israeli currency were renewed twenty-two times; each time, the justification was a perceived state of emergency. Later, in July 1985, forcing through a so-called economic program, the government appealed once again to emergency regulations. Its purpose this time was to enforce price ceilings, constrain wage negotiations between workers and employers, and even intervene in private agreements, such as rents for housing and service payments. Historically, the judicial branch in Israel, including the nation's highest court, has demonstrated its friendliness toward suspending rights and liberties couched in arguments about national security. The courts generally rely upon the counsel provided by representatives of the state and its military and security experts. At play here is an implicit or explicit assumption that providing for the very survival of Israel are preconditions that demote all other rights, and rarely is there any serious public meditation about the logical inverse of this social proposition, namely, what is the point of the survival of the state entity if it does not guarantee basic human and civil rights?

Hofnung⁷⁶ has completed the most comprehensive analysis of the relation between views of state security in Israel and legislation and adjudication in the state. His conclusions are as follows. Legislation for state of emergency can potentially disrupt altogether, or suspend, civil and human rights in Israel, but during the first two decades of Israeli statehood, government authorities exercised restraint toward applying regulations for states of emergency, especially regarding liberties and protections afforded to Jewish citizens. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, such restraint started to erode. The onus of such legislation and the use of security arguments is selective: Jews are less seldom subjected to such regulations, suffer regula-

tory burdens less than Arabs do, and Palestinians in the occupied territories are exposed regularly to the arbitrariness of such administrative legislation. Control mechanisms have evolved in Israel that assure in some measure a democratic regime and the rule of law, at least for Jews: the Supreme Court, legislative committees, the institution of the state comptroller, the public ombudsman, electronic and print media, associations for the protection of civil rights, the protection of the right of assembly, and others. Yet perpetuation of so-called temporary emergency regulations continues, along with a broad constitutional sanction to enact them, which makes no particular reference to ruling parties or coalitions, or to the nature of the perceived dangers. The political culture of Israel is characterized by the widespread social endorsement given to broad emergency powers; despite many jurists' acute criticisms, the majority of the public, some portion of the elite groups, and the ruling authorities⁷⁷ sanction the emergency code. There can be no doubt that this virtual *carte blanche* to impose martial law represents one of the clear expressions of civilian-militarism in Israel.

Macho Culture and Gender Domination

Since the beginning of the Zionist venture in Palestine, one of the weakest points of the Israeli nation-building process was the state's great demographic inferiority—simply put, that there were far more Arabs than there were Jews, in Palestine and later in the entire region. This inferiority was translated into security and military-power balance terms. To improve the numbers, the two sources of population increase—immigration and internal birth rate—were sanctified. Alongside immigration, encouraging birth became a major societal goal, and women were perceived as the nation's womb. Since the first years of the establishment of the sovereign Israeli state, considerable material incentives were granted to Jewish women and families through the social security system, and a special, high material prize was granted for the birth of a twelfth child.⁷⁸

However, equality for women remains a myth; it was never really implemented even in the kibbutz movement.⁷⁹ During active wars, society is divided basically into two major cultures: the warrior society of men and the home front society of women. During these brief periods of interruption, women take over many of the males' roles and positions in society; however, when the boys come home, women do not take advantage of war profits and in most cases have to forfeit their positions to the males. Gender

mobility following wars is prohibited.⁸⁰ Young women, like men, are drafted into Israeli military service, but the length of the service is shorter and usually women are not called to reserves.⁸¹ No combat service positions are open to women, and most of the complex and prestigious military occupations exclude them.⁸² Most of the young women fill secretarial or other auxiliary roles, and the vast majority of them are under the command of authoritative, older, and higher-ranked men. Thus, within the military, the traditional marginality of women and the stereotypical gender-conditioned division of labor in society is reinforced. The military itself is basically a macho and male-oriented subculture.⁸³ One of the results of marginalizing Jewish-Israeli women in the the military, the most important Israeli cultural and political institution, is not only that women's marginality in society is reinforced, but also that they are excluded from the most important societal discourse, that of national security; recall the cultural convention by which individuals or groups who do not serve in the military, or who serve in peripheral positions—not in elite units, or not as officers—have no perceived right or expertise to participate in the security dialogue.⁸⁴ The case of Israeli women demonstrates another consequence of Israeli militarism and the complex relationship between the institutionalization of the conflict and the distribution of power in Israeli society.

A Political Culture with Primordial Tendencies

Rather far-reaching changes in Israel's political culture ensued between 1977 and 1992, beginning with Likud's rise to power and the formation of a Likud-led nationalist-religious ruling coalition. New models came to challenge the old civilian militarism, which had been built upon a religion, perhaps cult of national security. Competing perceptions of territorial and religious nationalism appeared, which became aligned to a manifest-destiny type of expansionist policy in favor of a greater Israel. The common denominator between the new orientations was the emergence of primordial principles (see Chapter Four). Such elements existed in the sociopolitical military establishment beforehand, but in the new Likud-led era, their potency increased. The major difference between the national religious culture and the national security culture was not a question of fundamental ruling assumptions; it was a matter of emphasis. The new orientation viewed Eretz Israel—a designation for Israel that resounded with Biblical connotations—as a territory rife with holy and national significance. Arguably, this percep-

tion endorsed the development of a new national moral agenda to which regular conceptions of rational politics and human rights were sometimes extraneous, and thus the new orientation spawned fringe variants that favored the expulsion of the entire non-Jewish population of the territories, either immediately or as a result of a deliberate program that would create circumstances favorable to such dispersion (e.g., war on a local or regional scale). Jewish settlements were established feverishly in the occupied territories densely populated by Palestinians to guarantee surveillance and control over the conquered area and create irreversible *fait accompli*. The geographic thrust of the new militarist orientation is instructive: the same movement that aimed ardently to consolidate control over greater Israel was willing to relinquish control of the Sinai peninsula, territory that was holy to the competing national security culture.

Another modification wrought by the national-religious political culture was the amplification of the ideological and political sphere by virtue of abandoning national security considerations that seemed too narrow. Emphasizing political and ideological motivations changed the measure of freedom and autonomy attributed to the political center. The most evident expression of the new powers subsumed by the center was the recognition that the state could now wage a war of choice. Even in rhetorical terms, such a conflict was no longer perceived to be a last resort.⁸⁵

At the time of the 1982 war, Menachem Begin endeavored to deploy the military to attain patently political objectives. He denied overtly the rhetoric of the previous culture of civilian militarism dictating that the people's army should engage only in wars in which there was perceived to be no choice but to fight, splitting the national consensus that had evolved concerning the conduct of war. Begin claimed that a war can be waged by choice, and at the same time be considered to be *jus ad bellum*, a just war. But for the first time in the history of the state, a significant, bona fide protest movement, coupled with suggestions of possible mass resistance to an affirmation of the elective use of war violence, emerged in response to the costly prices of the government's policy and its inability to conclude its operations in a timely manner. This nascent resistance included expressions of dissent within the military itself.

Until Begin's affirmation of the legitimacy of war by choice, each war Israel waged, including the Lebanon war in its formative phase, had been defined as a war of no choice. Begin's claim that the state could use wars to gain political and ideological objectives, as well as his affirmation of the

right of the political echelon to make the relevant decisions to this end, helped rupture the constructed reality that had defined each war as a war of no choice.

Analyzing the behavior and attitudes of the core of resistance to the Lebanon war yields unsurprising results. Dissent being a new phenomenon in Israel's political culture, those soldiers who refused to serve in the war continue to perceive military service as a civil duty.⁸⁶ In their view, military service is a central Israeli experience and an integral part of Israel's national identity. Society interprets their existence as protesting a deviation from the model of military behavior, and from the goals of the state in using violent force, as unheld by national security policy makers.⁸⁷ In other words, the dissent must be seen as a desperate attempt to correct the use of the military; in no way was it a pacifist endeavor to defy any resort to military operations. A similar emergence of dissent is not easily found among soldiers who continued to carry out police and internal security functions among the Palestinian populations of the occupied territories during the Palestinian popular uprising that had broken out.⁸⁸ The armed forces have obliged the orders given by the political establishment, accepting a definition of the situation as a type of war of no choice and emphasizing professionalism, military skills, and performance. Thus, even when it was challenged by a political though not cultural turnabout, mainly between 1977 and 1992, civilian militarism in Israel ministered the approach most acceptable to the majority of the Jewish collectivity, and remained dominant though not hegemonic, continuing to contest the competing national religious and pure chauvinistic approaches.

Conclusion

Political culture in Israel varies from period to period, but parts of its core remain immutable, derived from a construction of reality that includes the collectivity's demand for total mobilization—institutional and mental—and continual preparation for war. Historically, this military preparedness has verged precariously on self-fulfilling prophecy. The political culture developed a latent and hegemonic cast of militarism, though its evident manifestations have ebbed slightly as cognitive processes emerged that sublimated militarism. Thus the army did not directly run politics but indirectly had tremendous influence. Civilian militarism was expressed in the main by the circumstance that the political establishment has not been accorded practi-

cal or conceptual autonomy. Alternative options in the administration of domestic or foreign policies have been blocked many times, and special social realities and exclusionary discourses have been constructed. The approach represents a part of the political culture that is governed by military-minded civilians. As civilian militarism in Israel is challenged today by many political and ideological orientations, its hegemony may have been broken, though it remains a powerful force in Israeli society.