Israel and its Army

From cohesion to confusion

Stuart A. Cohen

Middle Eastern Military Studies

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The Israel Defense Force (IDF) plays a key role in Israeli society and has traditionally been regarded not only as the guardian of national survival, but also as a 'people's army' responsible for the custody of national values. This volume analyzes the circumstances currently undermining those perceptions and explores both the changes occurring in Israel's military framework and their potential implications.

This book highlights the influence exerted on relations between Israelis and their army by massive shifts in the country's domestic and cultural environments as well as transformations in the external strategic landscape. It argues that these changes, besides compelling the IDF to undertake major programmes of structural reform and doctrinal revision, have also stimulated unprecedented critical public scrutiny of the armed forces and their conduct. The way in which the resultant tensions are resolved is of crucial importance not only for Israel, but for the Middle East as a whole.

This book will be of considerable interest to students of Politics and International Relations, Middle East Studies and Military Studies.

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To Tova and our family
Psalms 128: 5–6

Contents

Figures

Foreword

Although this book was originally commissioned by *Routledge* in the autumn of 2005, I only began writing the manuscript on July 12, 2006. By a quirk of fate, that same morning a Hizbollah team ambushed an Israel Defense Force (IDF) patrol just inside Israel's Lebanese border, thereby triggering what Israel officially terms her 'second Lebanon War'.

From Israel's perspective, the campaign that followed fell far short of expectations. The IDF did not attain the swift, overwhelming and virtually bloodless battlefield victory initially anticipated by Lieutenant General Dan Halutz, the state-of-the-art air force pilot who had swaggered into office as chief of the IDF General Staff just a year earlier, in June 2005. Rather, the fighting, which dragged on for 34 days, was disappointingly protracted and costly. Despite being outgunned and outnumbered, Hizbollah forces managed to disable 45 of Israel's much-vaunted 'Merkavah' Mk 4 tanks (10 percent of the IDF armor deployed in the war), to temporarily put out of service the pride of Israel's navy, the class-5 Saar destroyer INS *Hanit* ('Spear') and – most embarrassing of all – to subject the Galilee to a daily bombardment of short-range 'katyusha' missiles. By the time the UN managed to cobble together a cease-fire, 119 Israeli troops and 39 civilians had been killed, and hundreds more seriously injured. Not even the subsequent award of decorations to 142 servicemen for acts of individual heroism could mitigate the impression that the IDF was not up to scratch.

Just as significant as the operational features of the second Lebanon War were the reactions of Israeli society to its unexpected course. Complaints of military bungling and mismanagement began to appear in the media as early as the second week of the fighting. By the time the war reached its bloody close, the trickle of suspicion had expanded into a torrent of allegations, with discharged IDF reservists leading the pack and baying cries of betrayal. Opinion polls reported that Israeli society's confidence in its armed forces, which for over five decades had consistently hovered at around 90 percent, had in August 2006 plummeted to unprecedented lows. Prime Minister Olmert sought to shore up the dykes of public confidence by commissioning, Eliyahu Winograd, a retired justice of the Supreme Court, to chair an investigation of the war's conduct. The Chief

of Staff likewise bowed to public pressure and, in the course of the autumn and winter of 2006, established some 40 internal military tribunals whose inquiries, he promised, would leave no stone unturned.

In at least one important respect, these moves boomeranged. Designed to clear the air, the plethora of commissions of inquiry served only to intensify tensions. Even in the censored versions, their reports produced ample fresh evidence of military and political dereliction. Moreover, the Winograd Committee's transcripts make it clear that several of the witnesses summoned to testify had calculated that their best course was to beat someone else's breast, a strategy that inevitably further poisoned relationships amongst and between the politicians and their generals. Amir Peretz, the inexperienced Minister of Defense who the war consigned to the lonely margins of public life, suffered the indignity of being voted out of office by his own party.

In the IDF, the knives went to work still more extensively. After dismissing a number of his senior subordinates, including one of the two area commanders in the Lebanon, and publicly exchanging insults with several major generals, two of whom resigned in a huff, Halutz himself walked the plank in February 2007. His replacement as CoS was General Gabi Ashkenazi, a product of the old down-to-earth IDF infantry school, who had had the good fortune to retire from service prior to the outbreak of the war, and was hence untainted by its failures. Deliberately projecting a back-to-basics approach, Ashkenazi immediately launched a program of intensive military reform. Older IDF units, some of which had not trained together for years, were given a schedule of rigorous exercises; new formations were created in order to repair deficiencies in the order of battle. But although these measures reportedly helped to restore some of the IDF's confidence in itself and, by extension, some public confidence in the IDF, the fallout from the war persisted. In June 2007, another of the area commanders responsible for the campaign announced 'mea culpa' and resigned; the following month, so too did the commander of Israel's navy.

Necessarily, elements of these interconnected dramas are woven into the present study's analysis of relationships between the IDF and the society that it is committed to defend. Nevertheless, it is important to stress at the outset that this book is not presented as a narrative of either the second Lebanon War or its domestic aftermath. Rather, it seeks to expand the focus of thematic and chronological enquiry and thereby illuminate the contexts necessary for an understanding of the societal–military atmosphere preceding the conflict and, by extension, for a balanced assessment of the roots of the public outcry to which it gave rise. Hence, this book is principally concerned with a long-term process of adjustment in relations between Israelis and their army that is still very much under way. Specifically, it identifies the multiple pressures – not just military desiderata but also, and often more substantially, an array of changing cultural, economic, technological, political and demographic trends – that have influ-

enced the various and varied forms in which soldiers, citizens and soldier-citizens have always interacted in Israel and continue to do so. At the same time, it traces the trajectory of that relationship, demonstrating how the cohesiveness that was once considered its most striking characteristic has, in successive stages, given way to a sense of confusion and uncertainty about its future direction.

A note on sources

As is inevitable in studies of this type, at several points, it treads along paths mapped out by others. Hence, most of the references in the pages that follow are to secondary sources. But I would hardly have dared put finger to keyboard without at least some access to primary and authentic information originating in the IDF itself.

It is indicative of the transformations currently taking place in the attitudes of the armed forces in Israel to the Israeli public, transformations that lie at the very heart of this book, that such materials are not now as difficult to obtain as was the case in earlier periods, when access to primary sources on military-related matters was severely restricted to a few privileged insiders, and even then only in very stingy doses. Although the IDF still shrouds numerous matters in strict secrecy, on several topics it today makes publicly available far more information than could once have been imagined. True, for the most part, it does so grudgingly, and only in reluctant response to demands, expressed by the courts as well as the media, that the military evince 'transparency'. But some breaches in the walls of silence have occurred voluntarily and indeed have occasionally been instigated by individual sectors within the IDF itself. The lead in this respect has been taken by the IDF's Behavioral Science Unit (*Makhleket Mada'ei ha-Hitnahagut*, known from its Hebrew acronym as *MAMDAH*), whose staff of sociologists and psychologists has deliberately broken with a tradition in accordance with which IDF authorities, very much like their senior colleagues elsewhere in the world, kept academics interested in their institution at arm's length. Today, members of *MAMDAH* maintain several channels of formal and informal communication with colleagues in academia, which in turn facilitate access to other IDF branches and their senior personnel. What has emerged, then, is a particular version of what sociologists call an 'epistemic community', in which ties of association cut across formal lines of affiliation.

I count it as a privilege to have for several years been occasionally invited to participate in such exchanges. They have not provided me with any hard data that I could possibly publish without betraying the confidence of persons who have honored me with their trust. Rather their contribution, one in several respects even more informative, has been to provide less formalized insights into the sort of issues with which the IDF is concerned and the directions in which its search for solutions is moving.

In a sense, then, my contacts with the IDF have provided signposts, pointing out the areas in which I might profitably search for complementary materials, available in the public domain.

My efforts to do so have been very much facilitated by two other institutions. One is the Department of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, which has been my academic home for many years. The other is the University's Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies, of which I am proud to have been a research associate since its foundation by Dr Thomas Hecht. Under the energetic leadership of my good friend and colleague, Professor Efraim Inbar, BESA, has for over a decade now provided a uniquely collegial environment for the analysis of Israeli security in all its facets. For that supportive ambience, I am truly grateful.

Without in any way avoiding responsibility for my work, I would also like to acknowledge the insights provided over the years by students in my annual MA seminars on the IDF at Bar-Ilan and especially by those who have intermittently worked as research assistants: Mr (now Dr) Ilan Suliman, Ms. Ronit Zaga, Mr Kobie Green, Mr Ori Bagno and Mr (now Dr) Ehud Eilam. Especially appreciated during the last tricky stages of writing was the advice as well as help provided by Mr Avi Woolf.

I would also like to acknowledge with thanks the confidence shown by Professor Barry Rubin, who invited me to contribute to the *Routledge* 'Middle Eastern Military Studies' series of which this book is a part and who has been supportive throughout.

As always, however, my greatest debt – and one impossible to specify – is to my wife and our family.

Stuart A. Cohen

1 Frameworks of analysis

Ever since its foundation as an independent state in 1948, Israel has habitually been depicted as 'a nation in arms'. Of the several circumstances assumed to justify that description undoubtedly the most conspicuous is the pervasiveness of military conflict in the national narrative. Born into battle, Israel has ever since been almost continuously engaged in some form of violent military confrontation. War, indeed, has been central, as much to the formation of the collective identity of most Israelis as to their state's consolidation.

So, too, was the experience of soldiering. From the first, Israel enacted a system of military service whereby all citizens, females as well as males, enlisted in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) when aged 18 and could be drafted for annual stints of compulsory reserve duty until middle age. Nominally, that legislation still applies. As a result, salaried professionals never comprised more than a fraction of the overall complement of the country's armed forces. Most soldiers in *TZAHAL*, the Hebrew acronym for the IDF, have always been citizens temporarily in uniform.

Even individually, those circumstances would invalidate many of the boundaries that elsewhere in the world conventionally demarcate 'military' from 'civilian' segments of public life. Combined, they have created a symbiosis between Israeli society and its army without parallel in post-World War II democracies. At the apex of the Israeli social structure, civilian and military elites over the years forged a close partnership, whose influence enabled numerous senior officers to somersault their way into politics or to attain high executive positions in public service virtually the minute they retired from active army life. Still more extensively, a military ethos long pervaded other strata in the societal fabric. Quite apart from being invested with iconic status as the guardian of national survival, the IDF was widely projected as the corporate custodian of national values. The message that military service is as much a national privilege as a legal obligation was drummed into successive generations of schoolchildren almost without change – and apparently to enormous effect. Propensity to enlist in the ranks and to volunteer for combat units, colloquially known as 'motivation to service', has always been extraordinarily high.

Thanks to such phenomena, relations between Israelis and their army habitually defy conventional categorization, refusing to be dragooned into the terminological pigeonholes common in the political science literature. Dan Horowitz, one of the pioneers of the scientific study of Israel's civil–military complex, long ago pointed out why that is so (Horowitz 1977). For one thing, although the IDF is undoubtedly subordinate to the democratically elected government, its exceptionally large influence over policy-making clearly deviates from Samuel Huntington's model of 'objective' civilian control. But on the other hand, Horowitz argued, it would be equally untrue to depict Israel as a 'garrison state', dominated by persons whom the American sociologist Howard Lasswell identified as specialists in the organization of violence and its application. Instead, Israel and her army form a singular compound. Precisely because the boundaries differentiating her soldiers from her citizens are so porous, they facilitate the existence of what Horowitz subsequently termed 'a civilianized military in a partially militarized society' (Horowitz 1982: 77–105).

There was always more to the pas de deux relationship thus outlined than a merely mechanistic ordering of instrumental interactions between Israelis and their army. Over time, their fusion was facilitated, and cemented, by an association that possessed unabashedly devotional overtones. From the first, the IDF prided itself on being 'a people's army' – not a severely compartmentalized instrument of state policy, responsible solely for narrowly defined security concerns, but an institution that is representative of all the various (principally Jewish) groupings of which Israel's heterogeneous population is composed and a forum in which they might find a sense of common purpose (Williams 1989). And, as will be demonstrated below, for several decades, society responded by displaying adulation for the IDF and expressing attachment to the values that it ostensibly embodies.

Scholarly surveys, too, conveyed the message of deep and reciprocal emotional attachment. Occasional instances of civil–military contention, whether at the base of society (as shown by ultra-orthodox Jewish protests against the conscription of women in the 1950s) or at the highest decision-making levels (as in the tense days prior to the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967), were treated as aberrations. Potential areas of future friction, even though not entirely dismissed, were likewise judged to be peripheral. At the broad center of Israeli life, attitudes toward the IDF's role in society seemed to be infused with an aura of fundamental consensus and marked by overwhelming agreement with regard to both the necessity for the military apparatus and its right to priority in the allocation of the country's resources, human as well as material. Hence, Israel found no place at all in cross-country analyses of the circumstances that might facilitate a breakdown in the democratic chain of command. Indeed, in the introduction that Samuel Finer wrote to the Hebrew translation of

his classic *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (Finer 1982: 21–29), a work originally published 20 years earlier, he had no difficulty at all in explaining away the fact that Israel did not even appear in its index.

What made this atmosphere of persistent civil–military harmony especially conspicuous is the contrast with the divisiveness evident in other spheres of Israeli public concern (Horowitz and Lissak 1989). After 1948, and in some cases before, national policies with regard to education, social welfare, international alignment, immigration and religious affairs generated contentious debates, which were invariably conducted in a spirit of heated ideological dissension. By contrast, the IDF appeared immune to public strife. Even when its activities were not protected by strict censorship, as was usually the case, they were likely to be shielded from critical popular scrutiny by the equally protective cocoon of domestic esteem. In films, novels, theaters and songs, the IDF was portrayed as the universally acknowledged guardian and repository of Israel's national virtue. Add to this its record of battlefield success, and it is easy to understand how for many years the IDF came to enjoy a public status that often approached the sacral.

By the first decade of the twenty-first century, those conditions no longer applied. Instead, the IDF found itself being steadily demythologized. Men in uniform, once approached as demigods, came to be considered mere mortals. Likewise, the military institution, previously an object of deferential awe, is now often the butt of critical disesteem. Whilst the antecedents of that development lie deep in fundamental shifts in Israeli culture (which will be analyzed below, Chapter 4), its initial stirrings surfaced during two of the great caesurae of Israeli military history. One was the 1973 Yom Kippur war, when the IDF swayed precariously on the pedestal of infallibility that it had mounted in triumph just six years earlier. The other was the Lebanon campaign of 1982, the first war in Israeli history to give rise to domestic dissension of any significance.

Although opinion polls indicate that even thereafter the IDF remained the most respected of all Israeli public institutions (which, considering the paucity of the opposition, does not necessarily say very much), by the early 1990s its ratings were tending to fluctuate with unprecedented frequency (Arian 1995: 62–65). True, disillusionment was uneven, affecting some sectors of Israeli society more noticeably than others. But, even before the fiasco of the 2006 second Lebanon War, the overall trend was unmistakable. A relationship that just a quarter of a century earlier had been characterized by the mutual celebration of such copybook achievements as the IDF's rescue of Jewish hostages at Entebbe in 1976 and its 'surgical' destruction of the Iraqi nuclear installation at Osiraq in 1981 was showing signs of mutual disillusionment. Senior officers had become outspokenly critical of trends in Israeli society; articulate segments of society increasingly distanced themselves from the armed forces.

It would undoubtedly be mistaken to exaggerate the singularity of that swing in public mood. After all, similar changes in relationships between societies and their armed forces simultaneously took place throughout western society, of which most Israelis like to consider themselves a part. In Europe, as well as in northern America, massive cultural shifts in public attitudes toward the morality and efficacy of the use of military force, trends initially evident during the Vietnam War and thereafter accelerated by the end of the Cold War and the quagmires of Iraq and Afghanistan, have for decades been engendering an atmosphere that, notwithstanding the persistence of local idiosyncrasies (Forster 2005: 100–136), is broadly permeated by 'post-militarism'. This climate has not altogether tarnished the symbolic esteem in which men (and, increasingly, women) in uniform are held. But the new environment does undermine many of the time-honored values and virtues to which generations of armies traditionally appealed when framing their calls to military service. The so-called 'post-modern militaries' have largely jettisoned the old rhetoric of patriotism. Instead, they base their recruitment and retention policies on inducements of a more blatantly material nature (Moskos *et al.* 1999: 1–13; Morgan 2003).

Whilst noting such parallels and their influences on the IDF, the principal thrust of this book will nevertheless be introspective. It is not conceived as an exercise in comparative international analysis, but as a study of a process whose Israeli version possesses features of its own. This emphasis on the intra-national level of analysis is deliberate. It reflects the argument that – notwithstanding the apparent universality of 'post-modern militaries' – their emergence is not entirely amenable to generic study. To say that is not of course to disparage the contribution of those scholars who have conducted synoptic inquiries into the phenomenon, undoubtedly the most influential of whom has been the American military sociologist, Professor Charles Moskos. It is, however, to emphasize the need to incorporate a complementary, second-tier analysis, one that focuses specifically on the mechanics of the process whereby what is trans-national in the new climate of relations between societies and their armies is being shaped by what is singular and parochial in the specific circumstances of individual nations. Such is the approach underlying the present work. By concentrating on the grainy particularity of changing relationships between Israelis and their army, it hopes to illuminate their wider influence on Israel's security policies and preferences.

To the best of my knowledge, no work of a similar type and scope has previously been published. It must immediately be pointed out, however, that no work of this type could possibly have been contemplated, let alone completed, had other students of the field not undertaken much of the preliminary groundwork. They did, of course, leave considerable room for further interpretation and analysis – which is what this book purports to provide. Nevertheless, in many respects this is a work of synthesis, which

is heavily indebted to an extended chain of earlier studies (including, I must add, some of my own). The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to clarify that context. It does not purport to present a comprehensive survey of the study of relationships between military and society in Israel. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate the extent to which the ebb and flow of that interaction is itself reflected in its historiography, a phenomenon that helps to explain why – and when – some aspects of this field have attracted more attention than others.

Scholarly traditions

The study of relations between Israelis and their army is a comparative latecomer, whose pedigree is much shorter than the topic it purports to analyze. During the first 25 years of Israel's existence, the country's civil–military nexus attracted almost no attention in either academic or professional military circles and was likewise absent from more popular discourse. There certainly was an interest in Israeli security studies, broadly defined. But the field was dominated by narrative military histories that were largely written by participants in the events they described, who drew heavily on memory, pride and prejudice.

The early historiography of the War of Independence set the tone, with the initial spate of memoirs and unit commemorations displaying a heavy bias toward operational detail that was only occasionally relieved by flashes of strategic analysis (Bar-On 2001). Much the same was true of the IDF's official *Korot Milkhemet Ha-Atzma'ut* ('Narrative of the War of Independence'), put together by Netanel Lorch, the founder and first CO of the IDF's Historical Branch, and published in 1958. In 550 pages, this massive inventory of engagements minor as well as major clearly set out to celebrate received national orthodoxies, and hence for the most part avoided critical introspection. In 1966, the triumphant mold was fractured by the appearance of a study entitled *Bitachon Yisrael – Etmol, ha-Yom u-Machar* ('Israel's Security: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'). But that occasionally brilliant book was contaminated, certainly in the public eye, by the identity of its author, Yisrael Ber, a long-time Ben-Gurion *confidant* who in 1961 had been found guilty of spying on behalf of the Soviet Union. Besides, within a year of publication, Ber's analysis was overtaken by the Six-Day War, whose afterglow generated demand for another crop of unabashedly adulatory reconstructions of battlefield heroism, many written by hired hands chosen more for their ability to recount tales of martial glory than for their qualities as historians.

Emphases did change in the wake of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, altogether a pivotal juncture in the IDF's declinology. Awareness of military incompetence prior to that campaign, especially as uncovered by the judicial tribunal set up in its wake (the Agranat Commission), created a climate that allowed for the appearance of a more analytical type of study.

The first to take advantage of this new tone were Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz (1975), two young scholars whose *The Israeli Army, 1948–1973* hacked a pioneering way through a forest of myths and assumptions that had never previously been explored. With the opening of some – albeit, it must be stressed, by no means all – of Israel's institutional and national archives to public inspection in the 1980s, Israeli military history also became an accepted topic of academic treatment. Some researchers exploited this situation in order to fight old battles all over again. But others sought to reach a less obviously partisan understanding of the processes whereby the results were obtained. Eventually, many of the fruits of their labors reached a wider audience with the publication of an entire library of densely footnoted monographs, essays and collective books on Israel's military past (Bar-On 2004: 1–20).

Novel approaches to the subject also emerged. A school of self-styled 'new' historians deliberately set out to rewrite and revise the accepted (Jewish) heroic narrative that had thereto controlled the interpretational landscape, especially with respect to the events of 1948 (Gelber 2004: 43–68). Others scholars, although less blatant in their attachment to a specific program, produced works that were hardly less iconoclastic. Especially, noteworthy in this latter category is Martin van Creveld's *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israel Defense Force* (1998), which offers as much an informed indictment of Israel's security policies in the present as a scholarly commentary on her military achievements in the past. Yet a third move away from the old school of historical study was taken by historians who deliberately avoided focusing on clashes of arms. Looking beyond the battlefield, they teased out of the sources a mine of information about the evolution of IDF force structures and doctrines. The most intrepid even managed to decode some of the black arts of Israel's military budgeting (Greenberg 1988, 1993).

Notwithstanding this surge of activity, the record of relationships between the IDF and the society from which it drew its resources suffered comparative neglect. Luttwak and Horowitz (1975: 280–286) devoted just six pages to this topic, which is similarly marginalized in Van Creveld's (1998: 362) comment that 'A military that used to regard itself – and was regarded by others – as the vanguard of the nation in many ways has turned into a social anachronism.' Virtually, the only historical issue of specifically sociological interest studied in any depth was the contribution that the IDF made to the development of Jewish–Israeli society, and hence to the military role in immigrant absorption, land settlement and the like during the early years of statehood (Bowden 1976, since superseded by Drori 2005a). But the obverse side of that coin – the impact that society may have exerted on the military – long remained a void. Indeed, throughout the first half-century of Israel's existence, little more than perfunctory attention was paid to what Sir Michael Howard famously labeled 'the forgotten dimensions of strategy' (Howard 1979): the influence that domestic

factors might have exerted on the IDF's combat performance and operational style.

Once the gaze is shifted from the discipline of history to the social sciences, treatment of such issues undoubtedly becomes more spacious. Here too, however, the record has a Cinderella-like quality. Prior to the 1960s, not a single work of any substance was published in the fields of politics and sociology on relations between Israeli society and the IDF, references to which were limited to occasional observations, usually by foreign observers. Thereafter, too, the growth in attention was uneven and proceeded in three broad chronological spurts: the first lasted from the late 1960s through the 1970s; the second began in the early 1980s and went on until the mid-1990s, when it was succeeded by the third, which is still in progress. These time frames were never entirely segmented. Some overlapping did take place, with topics dominant in one period continuing to be analyzed during others. Overall, however, each wave of study possessed its own character and focus. Hence, they will here be outlined sequentially.

The first wave, whose genesis dates to the late 1960s, focused almost exclusively on the style and substance of what was broadly defined as national security decision-making. Hence, the question considered most worthy of attention was how Israel's political and military elites collaborate when formulating and implementing national defense strategies, preserving civilian surveillance whilst at the same time permitting the armed forces professional autonomy. First posed by Amos Perlmutter as early as 1968, when Israel's policy makers seemed to have discovered the secret of apparently perfect co-ordination (Perlmutter 1968, 1969), that still remains a central issue of inquiry. Indeed, now that interactions between Israel's political and military elites no longer project an appearance of such perfect harmony, their relationships are reviewed even more intensely, and very much more critically (Yaniv 1994; Ben-Meir 1995; Ya'ari 2004; Maoz 2006; Peri 2006). But although the context of the material has thus changed, the methodological framework in which it is analyzed basically remains unaltered. Specifically, in this area the interpretational landscape is still dominated by theories and hypotheses originally posited, without any reference whatsoever to Israel, in Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* (first published in 1957). Specific references to newer paradigms, such as the principal–agent models developed by Deborah Avant (1998), Michael Desch (1999) and Peter Feaver (2003), are only just beginning to make an appearance in the literature on the Israeli 'case' (Michael 2007).

Early in the 1980s, the pendulum of research began to swing, and the study of civil–military relations in Israel embarked upon its *second wave* of development. In this stage, concentration on the specifics of the IDF's impact on decisions for war and peace was complemented by a wider spectrum of inquiries into the ways, some obtrusive others subtle, in which

civil–military relationships intrude upon additional areas of Israeli life, private as well as public.

Here, too, the principal tools of analysis were imported from abroad, and again especially from the United States. Particularly obtrusive was the influence exerted by the 'Armed Forces and Society' approach pioneered by Morris Janowitz and subsequently further advanced by Charles Moskos, with both of whom several Israeli scholars became personally acquainted. An outstanding and formative example is Professor Moshe Lissak of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, whose status as a founding father of Israeli military sociology received formal recognition in 1993, when he was awarded the Israel Prize for his work in this field. Taken under Janowitz's wing when a post-doctoral student at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, Lissak immediately set about looking for ways to explain how, notwithstanding the IDF's high profile, Israel nevertheless managed to remain a vibrant democracy. In an extended series of papers and books, published in both Hebrew and English, Lissak insisted that the key to this 'paradox', as he termed it, could not be found solely by examining the nature of civil–military relations at the very apex of government. Analysis had also to include interactions at lower reaches in the societal pyramid (Lissak 1983, 1993: 55–80).

Accuracy requires that the influence of Lissak's writings not be antedated. In fact, their impact on the Israeli academic community was delayed. In their statistical survey of 'The Study of War and the Military in Israel', Zeev Rosenhek *et al.* (2003) demonstrate that for many years Lissak's remained a rather lonely voice. With the important (but nevertheless singular) exception of Dan Horowitz, a colleague at the Hebrew University with whom Lissak coauthored several seminal works, no other academic immediately responded to his exhortation to apply American sociological methodologies to the Israeli case. Altogether, indeed, interest in the IDF and its relations with Israeli society at large remained low, with the result that, according to this audit (Rosenhek *et al.* 2003: 463), between 1967 and 1983 the *sum total* of academic publications in the general field of military sociology in Israel was just 31, of which 13 were authored by non-Israelis and only five did not focus on national security decision-making.

Hence, what is here termed the second wave of studies on civil–military relations in Israel did not really gather steam until the first third of the 1980s. Thereafter, however, the tempo changed radically. Statistics tell one part of the story. Between 1983 and 1997, the year in which the survey conducted by Rosenhek *et al.* ends, fully 136 new publications in this field appeared, at an average of around nine each year (compared to two and a half in the period prior to 1983). Equally noteworthy is the fact that although 90 percent of the post-1983 publications were authored or coauthored by Israeli scholars (compared to a much lower figure in the previous period), less than a quarter originally appeared in Hebrew, and fully

76 percent first saw the light of day in English-language journals or books published abroad. This indication of a growing international interest in the specifics of relations between Israel and her army is confirmed by my own survey of the contents of *Armed Forces and Society*, a quarterly that is generally recognized to be the premiere journal in the field. In all its first ten volumes, covering the decade 1974–1984, *Armed Forces and Society* published only one article of any direct relevance to the IDF (Azarya and Kimmerling 1980). By contrast, of the 583 articles published between the fall of 1984 and the summer of 2007, the number of those specifically dedicated to Israeli-related matters rose to 34 – almost 6 percent of the total – only two of which were not authored by Israelis.

Even more dramatic has been the increasing diversity of the topics covered since the 1980s. Several studies still follow paths originally mapped out by Lissak and his disciples. Thus, even when employing such new buzzwords as 'policy networks' and 'social networks', they essentially flesh out his portrait of the formal and informal interplay between Israel's civil and military elites (e.g. Etzioni-Halevy 1996; Barak and Sheffer 2006). Others, however, seem to have been driven by an almost frenzied determination to explore more obscure nuances of relations between the IDF and Israeli society at large. So intense was their quest – and, for that matter, so spectacular its success – that they left few (if any) stones in this particular mosaic unturned. As subsequent chapters will show, thanks to their labors, we now possess, at the macro-level, detailed studies of the IDF's corporate influence on various areas. One is Israel's economy (including her industrial structure and utilization of land resources); another, the country's stratified pattern of gender relationships; yet a third, and perhaps most significantly of all, many Israelis' collective definitions of their citizenship. At the micro-level, research extends from examinations of the psychological effects of military service on young adults (Lieblich 1989; Sion 1997) to the contribution of enlistment to the socialization of new immigrants (Roumani 1979). As Chapter 6 will show, it also spans topics as diverse as the tensions experienced by religiously orthodox servicemen and women in uniform and the parameters of conscientious objection.

In some part, both the quantity and the range of the output generated in this second wave can be attributed to essentially technical causes. Under that heading comes, for instance, the general expansion that took place during the 1980s and 1990s in Israel's overall academic population and its output. Probably even more relevant was the absorption by the Israeli academic discourse in those decades of new ('critical') sociological methodologies developed in the United States and Europe, whose application to matters military uncovered entire areas of research that had hitherto lain hidden from view.[1] Most salient of all, however, was the influence exerted on academic inquiry in the same period by what Rosenhek *et al.* (2003: 461) refer to as 'a general weakening of the hold of security considerations on public policies and debates … coupled with growing misgivings about,

and questionings of, the military sphere or arena as *the* definer of Israeliness' (Italics in original).

These sentiments became especially influential during the first Lebanon War (1982–1985) and the first and second *intifada*s (1987–1993 and 2000–2006, respectively), times when it in any case became acceptable in some circles to portray the IDF as more often the sinner than the sinned against. A growing number of sociologists then began to put together a new 'meta-narrative' of Israel's development, whose thrust is reflected in the avowedly censorious tone that informs many of the studies published in that period. Several of the most prominent reconstructions of the national story, which are in many ways also the most fruitful, almost deliberately aimed to demonstrate that, on close inspection, the influence of the IDF on Israeli society turns out to have been far less benign than used to be so smugly assumed. Once the traditional teleological version was abandoned, it became possible, if not mandatory, to modify the celebratory and almost pious tone that had hitherto been considered de rigueur in all discussions related to the IDF – and that had, between the lines, characterized Lissak's analyses of relationships between Israelis and their army too.

Avishai Ehrlich, a professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, presented an initial version of the new approach as early as 1987, in an article that considered the Arab–Israeli conflict, not as an exogenous factor in Israel's development, but rather as a constitutive of Israeli society and state (Ehrlich 1987: 121–42). As Peri (1996b) shows, similar themes were later developed by a wide spectrum of analysts, ranging from anthropologists to political economists. But undoubtedly, their most persistent and influential exponent was Baruch Kimmerling, a one-time student of Lissak's who very much blazed his own trail in the academic community. Whereas at one stage Kimmerling portrayed Israel's democratic society as a flexible system, capable of adapting to different social structural codes in times of 'war' and 'non-belligerence' (Kimmerling 1985), his later works detected a far more consistent tendency in Israel toward what he called 'cognitive militarism'. This he defined as a '*latent state-of-mind*' (his emphasis), at whose core stands the conviction that 'military considerations, as well as matters that are defined as "national security" issues, almost always receive higher priority than political, economic and ideological problems' (Kimmerling 1993: 200). Thus described, 'cognitive militarism' encouraged Israel's elites, civilian as well as military, to seek primarily violent military resolutions to security problems that might be amenable to alternative treatment.

Partly because of the rambling style of his writing, and partly because some of his examples were patently inappropriate, Kimmerling's thesis sometimes fell flat (Peri 1996a). Painting with a broad brush, he could only generalize about cognitive militarism's alleged impact on the 'social construction of the Arab–Jewish conflict' and on Israel's political, eco-

nomic and legal structure. Other observers, however, even when not acknowledging Kimmerling's influence or using his terminology, have been far more precise in their analyses of both the origins of the phenomenon that he described and its more recent expressions. Late in the 1990s, for instance, Yaron Ezrahi of Tel-Aviv University (Ezrahi 1997) and Uri Ben-Eliezer of Haifa University (Ben-Eliezer 1998a) examined both specific indications of Israeli militarism and their possible implications for the country's moral and political future. More recently, geographers have audited the massive scale of the IDF's share of Israel's real estate. Thanks to the consideration that Israeli rural and urban planning authorities have always shown for 'security needs', together with some pretty dubious special pleading on the part of lawyers representing the military interest, the IDF's share of the property market has grown by leaps and bounds since 1948. Even within the pre-1967 borders, the armed forces in 2005–2006 controlled, directly or indirectly, some 45 percent of the country's land uses (Oren 2005) and similarly massive proportions of its airspace and coastline (Perez and Rosenblum 2006).

The new millennium has witnessed the emergence of *a third phase* of studies. In contrast to their predecessors, participants in this latest development do not set out to examine the ways in which the IDF influences (for better or for worse, depending on one's point of view) various strata and segments of Israeli society. Instead, they turn the prism of inquiry inside out. Society, broadly defined, now becomes the fount of processes whose impact is transforming the composition and character of the IDF. Admittedly, this possibility had been tentatively explored in previous periods too. Thus, in 1970, Samuel Rolbant published an unabashedly adulatory tribute to both the society that had produced the victors of the Six-Day War and the military institution that had welded them so effectively together (Rolbant 1970). In the mid-1980s, Colonel (res.) Reuven Gal, a former IDF chief psychologist, produced his *Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (1985a), which likewise called attention to the sociology of Israeli servicemen, and especially to the fact that a disproportionate number of IDF junior officers had been born and/or bred in *kibbutzim*.

But such studies were exceptional and left much work to be done. Rolbant was far too dazzled by IDF successes to be in any way critical. Gal, although certainly more clearheaded and better informed, and also made considerably wiser by the experience of both the Yom Kippur and the Lebanon wars, was a participant-observer with an unavoidable leaning toward the establishment version. The novelty of the newer studies lies in that most are written by professional academics, outsiders who have been trained to approach the military as a unit of analysis hardly different to any other. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, this new approach generated occasional micro-level studies of unit cohesion (Cantignani 2004; Ben-Shalom *et al.* 2005). It also found more substantive expression in several larger works, two on class changes in the composition of combat

formations (Levy 2003a, 2007a) and another on gender identities in the IDF as a whole (Sasson-Levy 2006).

Although still in its early stages, the third wave of inquiry can already lay claim to several methodological breakthroughs. For one thing, it has helped neuter research, or at least made it less obviously subjective than was previously the case. By portraying Israel's armed forces as the consequence of their environment rather than as that environment's principal creator, it has allowed analysis to be more easily decoupled from the mythologies and demonologies that informed many of the studies produced during the first and second periods, when researchers tended to be engaged to one position or another, sometimes passionately so. In this connection, there is something symbolic in the way the baton of influence in the Hebrew University's department of Sociology and Anthropology passed in the early twenty-first century from Kimmerling (who died after prolonged illness in 2007) to Eyal Ben-Ari, who has schooled a generation of dissertation students to write theses less obviously driven by political intent.

Second, and equally important, the new perspective also opened up a new research agenda. In the third wave of inquiry into relations between Israelis and their army, shifts in society have become little more than a 'backcloth', necessary of course to an understanding of the why's and how's of the story, but nevertheless not the crux of attention. At the heart of the plot now lie the ways in which different constituent parts of the IDF, whether willingly and consciously or not, react to the changes going on around them. In this scheme of things, the IDF is not a monolithic unit of analysis but a much more heterogeneous entity. To adapt the title of one such study, whilst still claiming to constitute 'the army of the people', it in fact clothes different segments of the nation in somewhat different uniforms (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999: 157–186).

Such is also the perspective adopted in this book. Hence, it is not conceived as simply another addition to the existing literary corpus on both the sociology of Israel and its military history. Rather, it purports to constitute a more specific and contemporary study of the IDF and to chart the ways in which changes in its operational and technological environment, as well as in its societal status, are contributing to its transformation. That aim explains the book's structure. It opens with 'Changing contexts', a section that comprises three individual chapters. The first presents a historical survey of the processes that shaped early relationships between Israelis and the IDF and thereby created the template against whose standards all subsequent alterations in the tone and substance of the interaction must be gauged. The two following chapters in this section outline, respectively, the shifts in Israel's strategic and societal landscapes, whose combined influence has undermined many of the hypotheses and assumptions upon which the country's security policies were based. Chapters 5–7 (which together form a section entitled 'New dilemmas') describe the various

challenges that the new environment poses for the IDF, particularly in such critical areas as force structures, force composition and force ethos. In conclusion, the final section ('Prospects') discusses the influences that seem most likely to shape the course of relationships between Israelis and their army in the foreseeable future.

Part I
Changing contexts

2 Forging a relationship

The Jewish legacy of non-belligerency

Measured by the long gauge of Jewish history, the intimacy of contemporary relationships between Israelis and their army is entirely novel. For many centuries, the nation now almost totally mobilized for war possessed no martial traditions at all. True, the Old Testament's record of the Children of Israel, beginning with the book of Exodus and ending with the last chapters of Chronicles, leaves no doubt that Judaism's earliest and most influential teachings were formulated and transmitted against a backcloth of almost incessant military activity. According to the narratives preserved in the Apocrypha, and especially in the books of Maccabees, Jubilees and Judith, warfare played a similarly crucial role in the formation of ancient Jewry's national identity during the period of the second commonwealth (516 BCE–70 CE). But the threads of continuity seemed to have been severed with Rome's obliteration of the last vestiges of Judea's independence in 70 CE and her even more savage suppression of the rebellion that erupted in the province six decades later. David Biale (1986) has pointed out that, even thereafter, Jews were not entirely powerless. Nevertheless, with exile and political subjugation becoming increasingly dominant motifs of their history, they undoubtedly became non-bellicose. Throughout pre-modern times, the standard Jewish responses to persecution and assault were flight or martyrdom, not resistance or revolt. In effect: 'Jews developed an aversion to bloodshed … war belonged either to their mythical past or to their messianic future, but not to their present' (Luz 1987: 53).

There were sporadic deviations from that norm (Baron 1977: 3–14). Even in pre-modern times, some Jews occasionally opted to become soldiers of fortune, pursuing a profession of arms in the most exotic of locations. Several participated in the great confrontations between the Cross and the Crescent fought out in medieval Spain – and one, Ismail ibn Nagrela (993–1055/6; in Jewish sources named *Shemuel ha-Nagid* ['Samuel the Prince']), vizier to the Muslim rulers of Grenada, had the unique distinction of commanding an Islamic army.[1] In later periods,

recruitment became more widespread. In many cases, this was because conscription was enforced – a fate imposed on the 'cantonists', Jewish children who in the mid-nineteenth century were press-ganged into the ranks of the Imperial Russian army for periods lasting as long as 25 years. But in other instances, enlistment was voluntary. Jews eager to become fully accepted citizens of the Netherlands and the United States enrolled in the Dutch and American armies as early as the eighteenth century. In increasing numbers, the Jews of France, Germany, Britain and Italy soon began taking the same route to national identity.

Nevertheless, even in the nineteenth-century heyday of Emancipation, all such instances were exceptional. For the vast majority of both European and Oriental Jewries, military service remained an anathema. The proportion of Jews who earned their livelihood by soldiering persistently lagged far behind that of the gentile average and never comprised more than a fraction of the total Jewish population. More to the point, not until the twentieth century does there exist any reliable evidence that Jews – qua professing Jews and as a collectivity – considered resorting to violence as a means of restoring their national independence or affirming their specifically religious identity. And even then, as will be seen, most did so hesitantly and reluctantly.

Overwhelmingly, traditional Jewish thought legitimized the non-belligerency thus prevalent in mainstream Jewish practice. As early as the sixth century, Jewish sages began to expunge most memories of warfare from the national consciousness. Even the Bible, otherwise a perennial wellspring of comfort and inspiration, was subjected to a process of re-interpretation, whereby Scripture's tales of martial valor and heroism were deliberately divested of their plain meanings. Thanks to the alchemy of rabbinic exegesis, King David, for instance, was transformed from a warrior into a scholar and his band of champions recast as pious students (S.A. Cohen 1997b: 4). Simeon Bar-Kochba, the fabled leader of the last-gasp Jewish revolt against Rome in the second century, underwent an even more extreme form of literary metamorphosis. Medieval narratives deliberately dispossessed Bar Kochba of the quasi-mystical aura preserved in the older tales of his physical prowess and martial charisma. Instead, they emphasized the orgy of destruction that resulted from the failure of his revolt, during the course of which some half-a-million Jews were slaughtered and vast portions of Judea laid waste. Thus, what had once been a great myth of national heroism became a discourse on the price of national folly. Not until the twentieth century was Bar Kochba, whose original name translates as 'son of a star', adopted as a role model of Jewish military endeavor. Previous generations had nicknamed him 'Bar-Koziba' ('bearer of disappointment') and portrayed him as 'the prototypical false messiah' (Marks 1994: 204).

There are indications that the handful of Jewish Bible commentators and Talmudic exegetes who somehow rose to positions of influence in

gentile courts could not avoid devoting some thought to what would today be termed grand strategy. Scattered references indicate that those with personal experience of high politics in fact readily acknowledged warfare's utility as a tool of statesmanship in an inherently anarchical world (Inbar 1987). Most scholars, however, were noticeably reluctant to develop that theme, even as a topic of purely speculative and abstract analysis. Overwhelmingly, the great minds of pre-modern Jewry seem to have been far too sensitive to the precariousness of their people's existence to risk the accusations of incitement to rebellion that might result from evidence that they were indulging in systematic analyses of warfare and its pursuit. Deliberately, they shied away from the subject.

As a result, military activity and thought constitutes one of the very few spheres of human endeavor to which Jews made no significant contribution whatsoever after ancient times. Other civilizations can trace virtually unbroken chains of strategic traditions that stretch back to Sun Tsu, Kantichuya, Xenophon and Onasander, to al-Tabari and Nasir-al-Din or, at the very least, to Clausewitz, Mahan and Liddell Hart. By comparison, where military matters are concerned, Jewish culture has for the past 2,000 years offered nothing but a lengthy void. Standard surveys of the field, such as Gerard Chaliand's *The Art of War in World History* (1994), cite not one Jewish writer or source throughout the entire swathe of history stretching from Josephus, in the first century, until Henry Kissinger. In fairness, there is no reason for them to do so, since military matters are almost entirely ignored in the classic works of traditional Jewish philosophy, exegesis and legal thought.

The titanic exception to all such rules is, of course, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204), better known in Jewish tradition as the *RAMBAM* and to the wider world of letters as Maimonides, the most authoritative and influential Jewish philosopher and codifier of all times. A personal physician to the ruler of Egypt, Maimonides was undoubtedly sensitive to Jewry's lack of coercive power. Indeed, he explicitly broke with the convention of discretion maintained by his co-religionists when committing to writing his assessment of the dire consequences that had flowed from the decay of ancient Israel's martial ethos. 'The reason that we lost our kingdom and that our temple was destroyed', he informed the Jews of Marseilles, 'was that they [Jewry's spiritual leaders in the first century] did not concern themselves with studying war or with foreign conquests, which they imagined would be of no use' (cited in Blidstein 1983: 219). More noticeably, Maimonides incorporated teachings and religious instructions relating to war within his magisterial and all-embracing code of Jewish law, *Mishneh Torah* ('Supplementary Torah'). The fourteenth volume of that work, entitled 'Laws of Kings and their Wars', contains an exceptionally detailed review of the available sources, cataloguing the uses and misuses of military force and presenting a benchmark Jewish classification of conflict situations. Particularly long-lasting were Maimonides'

summaries of the distinctions between wars that the Talmudic authorities classified as either 'commanded' (*mitzvah*) or 'permitted' (*reshut*) (Walzer 2006b: 149–168).

A review of the fate of the Maimonidean enterprise, however, merely underscores the singularity of its author's treatment of matters military. In other areas covered by Maimonides' grand code, his rulings and opinions supported towering pyramids of subsequent addenda, criticisms, commentaries and supra-commentaries, producing a corpus that dissects every word of *Mishneh Torah*, and sometimes individual letters too. But only the most assiduous of Maimonides' students glossed the great master's comments on the various ritual and ethical problems that warfare could pose (German 2003: 313–364). Where this subject was concerned, most scholars neither challenged nor confirmed Maimonides' rulings; for the most part, they were simply not discussed.

The emergence of military activism

The advent of political Zionism during the late nineteenth century did not immediately bring about a reversal of the traditional Jewish attitude of reticence toward warfare. Although in many other respects Zionism deserves depiction as a 'revolution' against past Jewish practices, where the exercise of military force was concerned, the lines of continuity predominated. Delegates to the first Zionist Congress held in Basle in 1897, who took the momentous step of resolving to secure 'the establishment of a Jewish homeland openly recognized, legally secured', made no provisions for the raising of a militia. When Theodore Herzl, the movement's founder, spoke and wrote of the Jews' State, he did not envision its attainment by military conquest, but by purchase and diplomacy. This scheme of things demanded neither universal conscription nor even the nurturing of a popular martial ethos – 'Just a professional army, equipped, of course, with every requisite of modern warfare, to preserve order internally and externally' (Herzl 1946: 147).

Virtually, all of Zionism's precursors and early practitioners shared this naively utopian view. Only Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1894), a rabbi from the backwaters of western Poland, was prescient enough to foresee that Jewish settlers in Palestine might have to defend themselves from native marauders, a need to which he devoted an entire paragraph in his pathbreaking *Derishat Ziyyon* ('Seeking Zion'), first published in 1862 (Kalischer 2002: 130). In practice, however, such military provisions as were initially made, of which the most famous was the *Ha-Shomer* ('The Guard') organization, founded in the lower Galilee in 1909, owed far more to local initiatives than to any centralized planning. Until as late as the outbreak of World War I, the official Zionist leadership ignored unmistakable signs of how vulnerable to occasional Arab assault were the small-scale Jewish settlements established during the first and second

waves of immigration (*aliyot*; 1881–1904 and 1904–1914, respectively). Instead, it continued to adhere to the conviction that the process of colonization would proceed peacefully. 'Conquest (*kibbush*) of the land', the term used to describe settlement, was thus deliberately emptied of military connotations.

> The war for which we are being prepared is very simple, not dangerous in the least. What we desire is to engage in patient labor, work devoid of any bloodshed, work that is only civilized colonization. Diligent labor is our sword and bow. In the end, no one will oppose us in enmity.
>
> (Max Emmanuel Mandelstamm, cited in An. Shapira 1992: 41)

As Anita Shapira has shown, the intellectual and emotional journey from Zionism's initial posture of non-belligerency to the State of Israel's militancy was tortuous and complicated. There was nothing ineluctable, and certainly nothing consensual, about either the emergence of what she terms the 'defensive ethos' in the years immediately after World War I or its replacement with an increasingly pro-active 'offensive ethos' after 1939. Every juncture on the road occasioned debates that were as intense as they were protracted and resulted in frequent schisms. In some part, the route eventually taken by the majority responded to the impact of the horrific events played out during the 1930s and 1940s on the wider canvass of Jewish experience. The Holocaust, certainly, acted as a catalyst. In the main, however, the victory of the 'activists' over the 'moderates' within mainstream Zionism reflected parochial concerns, which impacted principally on the *Yishuv*, as the Jewish community in Palestine was known.

In retrospect, the milestones are easily ticked off: sporadic Arab attacks on Jews and Jewish settlements in 1920–1921; the more widespread and violent Arab 'rebellion' of 1936–1939; the British White Paper of 1939; the threat that Rommel's forces might reach Palestine in 1941 and 1942; the Labor Government's enforcement of the ban on Jewish immigration after 1945 and the insecurity that followed the UN resolution on partition in November 1947. By the latter date, the 'offensive' ethos had become fully consolidated. Henceforth, 'Force was to play a central role in realizing the political aims of the Zionist movement' (An. Shapira 1992: 288).

The shift in attitude was most obviously expressed at an institutional level. It facilitated and promoted the foundation and maintenance of autonomous (and sometimes clandestine) Jewish armed forces, which were more obviously committed to offensive action than were the networks of officially sanctioned self-defense constabularies established within the framework of both the *Ha-Shomer* and its successor the *Haganah* (founded in 1920).[2] Equally noteworthy, however, is the way in which the emergence of a new type of military organization was accompanied, and indeed promoted, by a deeper transformation of

cultural values. Inexorably, or so it now seems, military themes and motifs seeped into the *Yishuv*'s poetry, prose and songs, which they at times indeed seemed to dominate. Armed skirmishes, such as the heroically unsuccessful defense of the Galilean Jewish outpost at Tel-Hai in 1920, assumed mythological proportions (Zerubavel 1991).

Moreover, 'conquest of the land' reverted to its plain meaning. In the Labor movement, the change was subtle and involved hitching the ethos of fighting to the traditional tasks of agricultural settlement and societal regeneration epitomized in the *kibbutz*. The right-wing Revisionist movement tended to be more explicit. At the 1938 convention of *Beitar* (the Revisionist youth movement) held in Poland, Menachem Begin, then a rising firebrand, convinced delegates to revise the wording of the oath that had been drafted just four years previously by the movement's founder, Ze'ev Jabotinsky. As before, Clause 4 was to commence: 'I will train to fight in the defense of my people', but the original continuation ('and I will only use my strength for defense') was replaced with a more bellicose undertaking 'to conquer the homeland' (Shindler 2006: 207).

Generational transition eased the process of transformation. Labor Zionism's older mentors had with characteristic dialectical casuistry declared themselves militantly anti-militaristic. If they are to be taken at their word, they adopted the offensive ethos with reluctance, claiming that destiny had left them no choice but to take up arms. But the younger generation of *sabras* ('cacti'), the term of affection used by the *Yishuv* to designate its native-born offspring, who had grown up in the 1930s and reached maturity in the 1940s, experienced no such qualms. Men such as Yigal Alon, Moshe Dayan and Yitzchak Rabin (to cite only those who were later to become household names the world over) had received an education deliberately designed to release them from the psychological ballast of non-bellicosity that still burdened their elders. Taught to believe that they were men of destiny, and confident in their ability to fulfill the national mission thrust upon them by history, they assumed the designated role of Jewry's new elite with almost religious enthusiasm.[3] In the process, they imbibed and disseminated an entirely new canon of military-related myths. Theirs was the generation that first turned Masada, the desert crag that had been the site of the Jewish fighters' last stand against Rome in 70 CE, into a place of pilgrimage during the 1930s (Ben-Yehuda 1995). In the following decade, they also bestowed on the *Yishuv* youngsters who parachuted into Nazi occupied Europe during World War II the status of heroes of the nation (Baumel 1996).

Surveying this ground from the vantage point of hindsight, some modern Israeli sociologists discern a quasi-Machiavellian dimension in the development of *Yishuv* militarism in the decade prior to 1948 (Ben-Eliezer 1998b). What is most significant about that cataclysmic period, they argue, is that it witnessed the genesis of a civil–military 'trade-off', an arrangement that bore fruit in the 1950s, and that left its imprint on the

shape and structure of Israel's political life well into the 1980s. In this reading, the two parties to the deal are easily identified. On one side stood the *Yishuv*'s veteran leaders, the men (and some few women) who, even though they did not yet wield sovereignty, possessed enormous authority. They had fashioned the instrumental prerequisites for national regeneration and wished to retain the political power bestowed by their leadership over what was still a voluntary political system. On the other side were the younger generation who manned the *Haganah* and, especially, the *PALMACH*, and who were absolutely convinced that they possessed the means required for turning the 'state-in-the-making' into a reality.

As analyzed by the new school of critical sociology, the bargain struck by the parties is equally plain: 'militarism' was exchanged for the threat of 'praetorianism'. Specifically, the *PALMACH*'s young lions were promised societal regard, cultural predominance and priority of access to whatever resources the polity could muster. In return, they undertook not to use the means thus placed at their disposal to challenge the formal primacy of civilian authority. Instead, and even after the establishment of the State, they colluded with the older political leadership in the pretence of military subordination to the elected government.

Ben-Gurion and the establishment of a national army

Besides being far too cynical to be entirely plausible, that reading of Israel's lurch toward militarism also suffers from additional flaws. For one thing, it downplays the influence that David Ben-Gurion exercised on that process and indeed on all others during the pivotal transition from *Yishuv* to statehood. Easily the single most influential Zionist personality of his era, Ben-Gurion, was hardly the man to be browbeaten into exchanging the substance of power for its trappings. Ever since 1935, he had chaired the Jewish Agency, the *Yishuv*'s semi-official self-government, and by the early 1940s had established himself as the principal architect of Zionism's political strategy, in the process dethroning Chaim Weizmann from that position.

Hence, when Ben-Gurion demanded that the 22nd Zionist Congress, held at Basel in the fall of 1946, also grant him the 'defense portfolio', a demand in which the assembled delegates readily acquiesced, he did not speak from a position of weakness. Although he had thereto accumulated scant military experience, he soon schooled himself to grasp the strategic essentials of the armed conflict on which he appreciated the *Yishuv* was about to embark. The imminent confrontation between Jews and Arabs, he appreciated, would share very few of the characteristics of the skirmishes that had taken place in 1921, 1929 and 1936–1939. This time, the enemy would comprise not motley gangs of villagers or clansmen but fully equipped state armies. That being the case, the Jews too would have to fundamentally overhaul their existing military structures (E.A. Cohen 2002: 133–172).

Ben-Gurion made no effort whatsoever to attempt to realize that goal by bolstering the position of either the *Haganah* or the *PALMACH* and their existing leaderships. On the contrary, he deliberately – at times, even abrasively – embarked upon a process designed to bring about the dismantlement of those organizations and their displacement by a national army, entirely different in conception, scale, professionalism and chain of command. He displayed an especial partiality toward two new sources of military leadership material, both of which had been made available by World War II. One consisted of Diaspora Jews who had risen to reasonably senior command in Allied armies; the other comprised the several thousand members of the *Yishuv* who, instead of joining the *Haganah*, had enlisted in the British army, some within the framework of its Jewish brigade.

Historians of the period dispute the precise degree of influence exerted on Ben-Gurion's personnel preferences by party political considerations. Especially, open to varying interpretations is the validity of Ben-Gurion's fear that the *PALMACH*, unless disbanded, might become (or, in some versions, remain) the military instrument of the left wing and pro-Soviet *MAPAM* party.[4] Whichever way, Ben-Gurion certainly did not cobble together a 'trade-off' with the persons who he was determined to subordinate to his own control. On the contrary, in July 1948, at the very height of the young State's struggle for survival, he forced a showdown, threatening to resign unless they accepted his hegemony. Thereafter, he insisted on disbanding the *PALMACH* as well as the *ETZEL*, the right-wing underground movement that he likewise stripped of autonomous status. To cap it all, he even took the risk of snubbing Yigal Alon, the boy wonder who had commanded the *PALMACH* when still in his late twenties and whose dazzlingly successful campaigns in 1948–1949 had won him fame as Israel's most brilliant general of the War of Independence. When the time came in October 1949 to appoint a CO of Israel Defense Force (IDF) Southern Command, Ben-Gurion, in his capacity as Minister of Defense, rejected Alon's candidacy. Instead, he awarded the post to Moshe Dayan who, although junior in rank, leaned much closer than did Alon to Ben-Gurion's politics. Outmaneuvered, Alon resigned from service and for a couple of years hid himself away in – of all unlikely places – Oxford (An. Shapira 2004: 454–465). The IDF lost its most promising star, but Ben-Gurion had established the principle of unity of command, without which the Force could never have become a truly national army.

'Popular' militarism and its expressions

A further flaw in the depiction of Israel's early 'militarism' as a deliberately crafted disincentive to 'praetorianism' lies in its suggestion that this so-called trade-off was somehow imposed on an otherwise passive population by the elites who had most to gain from the deal. But that, surely, is to

misconstrue the depth of feeling that military associations aroused during the early years of statehood amongst wide sections of the Jewish population. By extension, it is also to underplay the extent to which the traditional Jewish attitude of reticence toward matters military was then thrown into reverse. During the War of Independence and the immediately following decades, the vast majority of Israeli–Jewish citizens did not wait to be told that the armed forces constituted a defining ingredient of their new state. On the contrary, they created – sometimes spontaneously – the environment that facilitated the transmission of that message.

Cultural historians have discovered early evidence for the new trend in the ways that Israelis commemorated the fallen of the War of Independence. This particular test case is well chosen, since the battles waged between 1947 and 1949 were far bloodier than any that the *Yishuv* had previously experienced. Out of a total Jewish population of 650,000, almost 5,800 were killed in the fighting and over 12,500 wounded (three times as many as during the entire previous 50 years put together), with males in the 18–21 age cohort suffering a particularly high proportion of casualties (circa 8 percent). Recent research shows that one in every five of the war's victims was a civilian, a proportion roughly similar to UK war dead during World War II. But Israelis developed nothing like the 'Blitz myth' of civilian heroism that in Britain primed the pump of Churchill's rhetoric. Instead, the dead that they chose to commemorate in the numerous war memorials that were spontaneously erected throughout the land immediately after the war, and in the plethora of 'remembrance books' compiled at individual initiative during the same period, were almost exclusively IDF soldiers (Sivan 1991, 1993). The determination to concretize the link between specifically martial valor and state formation was clearly a bottom-up phenomenon that owed little, if anything, to conditioning from above.

Indeed, the country's political and cultural elites needed only to channel and mold the trend. One way of doing so was to establish separate 'military cemeteries', which thereafter constituted specially hallowed sites of private and public pilgrimage, dedicated to those who had died in uniform. Another, taken in 1951, was to pass legislation that stressed the sequence between soldiering and sovereignty by declaring the eve of every annual Independence Day to be a national day of remembrance, on which the country would for ever more observe two minutes of silence in memory of the fallen soldiers. Yet a third was the publication, in 1955, of an official Memorial Book. Entitled *Yizkor* (the opening word of the traditional Jewish prayer that begins: 'May the Lord Remember …'), this work records the names and biographies of those who had paid for Jewish independence with their lives – a roll call from which, again, civilian dead were pointedly excluded.

Just as significant as the appearance of such phenomena is the degree to which the conventions that they signified were received, not least by the

families of non-military fatalities. They too internalized the convention that death in battle was somehow more sacrosanct than any other. Until as late as the 1980s, it was also considered worthier of national commemoration than the martyrdom of the Holocaust victims, anti-heroes who with very few exceptions had followed the traditional Jewish path of non-violent submission (Ben-Amos 2003).

An array of supplementary mechanisms buttressed the military's status as a 'charismatic institution', elevated to the entirely novel position of supremacy in the Jewish national pantheon. Indeed, almost immediately on its foundation, *TZAHAL* (the IDF's Hebrew acronym, which itself became a term of endearment) was projected as the most crucial of all the constitutive elements of *mamlakhti'ut* ('state consciousness'), the noun that Ben-Gurion coined in order to describe the revolution that Israel's foundation had wrought in the Jewish political condition (Kedar 2002). In large part, that message was conveyed through the medium of pageant. Beginning as early as 1949, military parades constituted the most widely attended of the annual pageants staged in celebration of Israel's Independence Day. Public enthusiasm for this tradition overcame even the opposition to its perpetuation occasionally voiced by the military during the 1950s and 1960s, usually on the grounds that the logistics were too costly and time-consuming. Designed to boost public confidence by demonstrating the IDF's might, each succeeding Independence Day parade became more lavish than its predecessor, reaching gargantuan proportions in 1973 when Israel celebrated her silver jubilee – ironically, just five months before the surprise outbreak of the Yom Kippur war shattered the illusion of IDF infallibility once and for all (Azaryahu 1995: 89–106).

Other expressions of popular taste reinforced the message of transformation. Given the backcloth of Jewish history, no one could have predicted that within just two decades of attaining statehood real-life military Israeli commanders would turn into cult figures, with their speeches receiving the attention that other societies bestow on the words of intellectual trendsetters.[5] Neither would it have been reasonable to foresee the overwhelming prominence of portraits and photographs of soldiers and their armaments on the covers of the greeting cards that Israelis in their thousands sent to each other on the eve of every Jewish New Year during the 1950s and 1960s (Grossman 2003a).

True, by listening attentively, it was possible to hear voices that opposed the sound of drums and trumpets (Hadari 2002: 269–279). One was that of Hayyim Guri, whose CV marked him out as authentic a *sabra* as one could wish for: kibbutz education; service in the *Haganah*, *PALMACH* and IDF; composer of lyrics to some of Israel's most patriotic songs. Nevertheless, as early as 1950 Guri published *Ad Alot ha-Shachar* ('Till Dawn Breaks'), an autobiographic novel in which the soldier-narrator vividly describes the horrors of combat. Uri Avneri trod a similar path. The son of a pre-war immigrant from Germany, Avneri's literary

career had taken off in 1949 when he published *Bisdot Paleshet* ('In the Fields of the Philistine'), a best-selling and gung-ho account of his exploits as a member of a famous IDF desert patrol. In 1950, however, he brought out *Ha-Tzad Ha-Sheni shel ha-Matbeah* ('The Other Side of the Coin'), an anti-war account in the tradition of Remarque and Mailer. Similar sentiments occasionally found a platform in theater. In 'A Regular Play', produced in 1955, Yoram Matmor dared to muse on the corrupting effects of war on the generation of '48. Fifteen years later, Chanoch Levin's 'Queen of the Bath', a collage of 21-related 'snapshots', employed satire as a means of puncturing the mood of triumphalism engendered by the Six-Day War.

But it would clearly be mistaken to overestimate the impact of such outbursts or to pre-date the response that they later generated. No public outcry ensued when, at the instigation of Mordechai Makleff, deputy IDF CoS, the censor stopped distribution of Guri's book, 2,000 unsold copies of which were confiscated by the police. Although Avneri was similarly hounded by officialdom and brought to trial for evading military censorship, he too was not immediately considered a martyr to a just cause. Moreover, both 'A Regular Play' and 'Queen of the Bath' were box-office flops and discontinued by the Kameri Theater in Tel-Aviv after just 19 performances each.

Instead, the first generation of Israeli artistic life was overwhelmingly permeated by blatantly narcissistic reflections of military experiences. Soldiers and their deeds of valor figure prominently in the novels written and bought during the State's early years (Spicehandler 1995: 313–330) and were standard themes in children's literature until 1967 (Shefi 2004). Likewise, the heroism said to be characteristic of the IDF troop behavior in the War of Independence constituted the subject of *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (1955), Israel's first big-budget film. Altogether, six of the first ten narrative films produced locally in Israel dealt with war, and by 1973 30 full-length films featured the IDF – invariably, favorably so (Schnitzer 1994: 39–47).

Still more emphatically, military themes and associations dominated the lyrics of the most popular songs of Israel's first decades. Quick to appreciate the potential for self-advertisement inherent in popular taste, commanders of the IDF's senior arms and units (air force, armor, navy, etc.) vied with each other in promoting their own entertainment troupes, whose repertoires consistently dominated Israel's 'hit parades' until as late as the mid-1970s (Tessler 2007). Doubtless, this level of popularity owed much to the bias of the presenters on the army's own radio station (*Galei Tzahal*), who, at no cost, provided the military ensembles with almost unlimited access to a wide audience of listeners. But here too 'pull' as well as 'push' factors were at work. Especially was this so during or immediately after wars, when virtually the entire country could be heard humming and whistling tunes set to words that extolled the IDF and its

heroes. Thus, the most popular song of 1957, the year after the Sinai Campaign, was a paean of triumph sung by the ensemble of the *NAHAL* corps:

> It is not a legend my friends, nor a passing dream
> Here, facing Mount Sinai, the bush burns.
> …
> Oh! the flame of God in the roar of the engines
> Tales will still be told, my brothers,
> Of the return of the people to the Revelation at Sinai.
>
> (Barak 1989: 85)

Likewise, the most popular song of 1968, the year after the Six-Day War, was sung by the Navy ensemble and lamented the loss of the battlefield dead. 'What blessings shall I bestow on this child?' asks the angel in its opening and title line. Successive stanzas record the parents' request that their son be granted the gift of a smile, of dance, of song and of good heart. When the angel avows that he has indeed bestowed all these gifts, the grieving parents respond: 'Oh Lord, would that You had granted him the gift of life' (Barak 1989: 78).

There was nothing at all accidental or even subliminal about the use of religious associations and metaphors in such texts, all of which were otherwise unabashedly secular in thrust and meaning. The choice of language was deliberately designed to tap the reservoir of emotions that previous generations of Jews had built up with reference to matters of faith and ritual observance. Exploitation of Jewish traditions very much intensified once Ben-Gurion began to appreciate how much the Bible could be employed as a means of both severing the new Jews' links with their Diaspora past and emphasizing the ties that bound them to their homeland and its historical heroes. This was a rather late development, since prior to statehood Ben-Gurion had hardly ever cited Scriptures. Thereafter, however, he advanced it with characteristic creativity. At the Prime Minister's prompting, Biblical warriors such as Joshua, Gideon and David became role models for the present (An. Shapira 1997).

At the same time, traditional festivals were invested with explicitly military meanings. This process particularly affected the presentation of *Hanukah*, the Jewish holiday celebrating the victory of the Maccabees over their Seleucid oppressors during the Second Temple period. Medieval rabbinic depictions had almost entirely airbrushed military associations out of the festival's ritual, attributing the Maccabees' triumph to spiritual virtues. In modern Israel, that trend was reversed. Pageants performed by schoolchildren up and down the country now portrayed the Maccabees as the direct precursors of the IDF's own soldiers. Judah, the member of the family whom history has endowed with the most illustrious martial record, was presented in plastic art in full modern Israeli military regalia (Grossman 2003b). More metaphorically

still, the first line of *Hanukah*'s best-known hymn, which praises God as Israel's 'Fortress and Rock of Redemption' (*Ma'oz Tsur*), became the introductory stanza to a popular song that paid tribute to an Israeli strongpoint (*ma'oz*) along the Suez Canal during the 1970 War of Attrition (Don-Yehiya 1992). A similar process occurred with respect to the *Haggadah*, the text traditionally recited in Jewish homes on the first evening of the Passover festival, which celebrates the Exodus from Egypt. For generations, portraits of soldiers had illustrated the *Haggadah*'s references both to the 'wicked son' and to Israel's 'oppressors'. After 1948, however, the figure in IDF uniform symbolized 'the wise son' and the nation's 'Redeemer' (Grossman 2006).

As Yonah Hadari-Ramage (1995: 355–374) points out, the process of transmutation not only secularized and militarized what had once been sacred and pastoral. Pari passu, it also consecrated what had hitherto been considered profane, crowning the IDF as the steward of Jewry's eschatological tradition. *Tzahal*'s virtual deification assumed particularly blatant proportions at moments of high military drama, when its battlefield achievements seemed little short of inspired. In this respect, the religiosity characteristic of public reactions to success in the Sinai campaign of 1956 set a precedent. Confronted with the still more remarkable run of victories in 1967 and with the seemingly miraculous recovery after initial setbacks in 1973, even confirmed atheists seemed prepared to invest the soldier with Messianic attributes. His uniform was the latter-day equivalent of the prayer shawl and phylacteries that had enwrapped his forefathers (Hadari 2002: 97–99; Hechter 2003).

Spiritual leaders of religious Zionism in Israel took such themes even further. Born along by what seemed to them to be the divinely ordained tide of events, most (albeit not all) divested themselves of the non-militaristic attitudes that had characterized national-religious thought for over half a century – not to speak of two millennia of anti-belligerent Jewish orthodox traditions (Holzer 2002). Instead, they went far toward militarizing Judaism. Although portents of this development too appeared as early as 1956, it scaled new heights in the seemingly apocalyptic years of 1967 and 1973–1974. Addressing his pupils on Independence Day 1967, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook, the principal of one of the most influential of all national religious academies (*yeshivot*) in the country, explicitly attached the adjective 'holy' to both the IDF and its every item of ordnance (reprinted in Kook 2003: 253–268). With victory in the war that erupted a month later, that attribution became an item of faith. Clearly, the troops privileged to have 'liberated' Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus and Jericho, cities that embrace the very cradle of Jewry's homeland and house its most sacred shrines, had marched to a rhythm dictated by the footsteps of the Messiah, whose advent was now surely imminent. The 1967 War was as much a celestial fulfillment of destiny as a spectacular feat of terrestrial martial arms.

> With the taking of the Temple Mount', recalled Yoel Bin-Nun, a religious paratrooper who later became a prominent rabbi, 'we were suddenly thrust forward by a gigantic hand that propelled us out of the everyday and petty reality in which we had been submerged.
>
> (cited in Aran 1986: 129)

The Yom Kippur war, far from deflating this mood, gave it a new lease of life. Precisely because of its horrors, warfare could now be regarded as a purging experience, and hence as a necessary prologue to the advent of a better age (Ravitzky 1996b).

The creation of a 'people's army'

Universal military service provided the experience that cemented the emotive ties between Israel and her army thus forged by cultural conditioning. With the passage in 1949 of the National Service Law, which mandated conscription and reserve duty, the defense of the homeland became the responsibility of all citizens, and not just of those who volunteered to assume that burden, as had been the case in the *Yishuv*. Henceforth, enlistment would not only distinguish adolescents from adults, but it also became a rite of republican affirmation, signifying the beginning of an extended commitment to national defense that would accompany the individual until well into middle age. By extension, reserve duty periodically validated and concretized the symbiosis between Israelis and their army expressed in the country's growing corpus of collective military myths, symbols and associations.

It is doubtful whether Ben-Gurion had all this in mind in 1948–1949, when originally designing Israel's system of military service. As Yitzchak Greenberg's meticulous account shows (Greenberg 2001), at the time he was preoccupied with the far more prosaic concerns. One was the need to raise an army capable of defeating the Arab forces that had invaded the newly established State and thus threatened its survival. The other was to find a way of balancing the IDF's apparently insatiable demand for manpower with the treasury's insistence on financial parsimony and the retention of a large industrial workforce.[6] Economic considerations ruled out the option of a fully professional army, such as was advocated by Yigael Yadin (the deputy CoS until 1949 and CoS 1949–1952). A Swiss-type militia, based on short conscription terms, would be cheaper but could not guarantee the standards of military proficiency that Israel required. Ben-Gurion's own initial preference was to take a leaf out of Leon Trotsky's book and to conscript the entire workforce into the army that would then dispatch 'labor battalions' to industry and agriculture. But in existing circumstance that was not a viable option. Hence, it was virtually by a process of elimination that he eventually hit upon a hybrid structure, born out modifications to each of the alternatives. The IDF's famous 'three-tier'

inverted pyramid (built on successively more numerous layers of professionals, conscripts and reservists) articulated a compromise between competing lobbies, not the realization of a preconceived vision (Kadish 1996).

Once this force structure was in place, however, Ben-Gurion was certainly quick to appreciate its potential as an instrument for societal engineering. No sooner had he received reports that both conscript and reserve registration were proceeding smoothly, which was the case as early as April 1950,[7] than he set about establishing an entire supplementary network of official and semi-official frameworks that further emphasized the military's centrality in each Israeli's personal life cycle. Children in elementary school were regularly exposed to military themes and motifs, many of which were often transmitted directly by *morot hayyalot* (conscript servicewomen attached to the IDF Education Corps who acted as supplementary teachers in under-privileged areas); teenagers were encouraged to join a pre-conscription youth movement *GADNA* (*gedudei no'ar*, 'youth brigades') designed to steel them for the coming rigors of military life (Lissak 1971: 325–329).

Above all, the IDF itself was instructed to perceive of itself as 'a people's army' the bonding institution that would enable the new State's inherently fissiparous society to be homogenized and welded into a single whole. That task assumed especial importance in view of the massive numbers of new immigrants who had immediately to be absorbed. Over 100,000 arrived in each of the years 1948 and 1949, 240,000 more in 1950 and a further 175,000 in both 1951 and 1952. By 1953, it was calculated that, within just half a decade, the size of Israel's population had more than doubled. Long before then, Ben-Gurion had decided to employ the IDF as the catalyst for societal cohesion. Indeed, as early as 1949, he informed a cadre of newly commissioned officers that:

> While the first mission of the IDF … is the security of the State, that is not its only task. The Army must also serve as a pioneering educational force for Israeli youth, both native born and immigrants. The IDF must educate a pioneering generation, healthy in body and spirit, brave and faithful, which will heal tribal and Diaspora divisions and implement the historic missions of the State of Israel through a process of self-fulfillment, by building the homeland and making its deserts bloom.
>
> (cited in Ben-Gurion 1971: 81)

Jewish history, in other words, was to turn full circle. The people who had for centuries made a virtue out of possessing no army at all was now to become the very epitome of a nation in arms.

The response

IDF responses to Ben-Gurion's clarion calls were immediate and comprehensive (Drori 2005a). The engineering corps were assigned to the construction and upkeep of the make-shift camps (*ma'abarot*) that housed the new immigrants; the army's education and medical services provided a considerable proportion of the personnel, female and male, required to educate them and keep them healthy; and an entire infantry formation, the *NAHAL* brigade, was established in order to establish and maintain agricultural settlements in regions of the country considered too insecure or inhospitable for regular civilian habitation. Just as impressive as the quantity of energies that the IDF thus devoted to the task of nation-building was the spirit in which it did so. Yigael Yadin was especially supportive and clearly informed the General Staff of his credo as early as 1951:

> Every army has to transform citizens into soldiers. But we also have to make citizens out of soldiers. More precisely, it is our task to see to it that Jews from the various Diasporas who have not yet become either citizens in the full sense or soldiers will consider themselves solidly rooted Israelis: patriots, conscious of their national destiny and fighters.
>
> (cited in Praver 1999: 54)

If enlistment figures are any indication, popular reaction to Ben-Gurion's call to construct the IDF as a genuine 'peoples' army' was equally encouraging. The overwhelming majority of those called to military service reported for duty. Truly, some dropout rates were alarmingly high, and amongst conscripts who were immigrants from Asian and African lands initially reached 55 percent. Youngsters of *Ashkenazi* origin, too, often preferred assignments to combat-support units than to most fighting formations (Drori 2006: 422–423). Nevertheless, the number of desertions was reportedly negligible.

Conscientious objection was even less of a problem. Until as late as the 1980s, only a handful of intrepid souls were prepared to suffer the indignity of public trial for daring to challenge the fact that conscientious objection is not recognized in Israeli law other than for women who claim exemption from service on religious grounds. One exception was Amnon Zichroni, who at the age of 18 in 1954 went on hunger strike rather than enlist in the military, an institution to whose very existence, in Israel and elsewhere; he was in principle opposed. Also unusual was the IDF's decision to take Zichroni to court.[8] Other claims to the status of conscientious objection, of which there were very few, were dealt with far more delicately. Provided that the enlistee made no fuss, successive Ministers of Defense invariably exercised the discretion allowed them by law to permit individuals to substitute some form of non-military communal service for army duty (Blatt *et al*. 1975: 72; Epstein 1998).

Conscription apart, the most material signs of Israel's mobilization were financial. Frequently, the IDF complained that it was being starved of funds (which military doesn't?), and in December 1952, Yigael Yadin resigned his post as CoS in protest at a new round of budgetary cuts. But despite all the attempts at parsimony, according to figures compiled by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (2007, Table 5), only in 1953 did annual defense outlays ever amount to less than 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). They averaged 7 percent until 1956, when they jumped to 14.1 percent, and then leveled out at about 9 percent until 1967, when they jumped again to 17 percent. They thereafter rose exponentially, reaching the almost intolerable figures of 31.2 percent in 1973 and 32.1 percent in 1975.

Reparations from West Germany, foreign loans and gifts from Diaspora Jewry all helped to alleviate the defense burden. Nevertheless, taxes on the Israeli citizen remained enormously high. Even so, large numbers responded with remarkable alacrity to appeals to dig deeper into their pockets and contribute generously to the various non-profit organizations with high-sounding titles established in order to provide troops with amenities and cultural facilities that the IDF itself claimed to be unable to afford.[9] At times of crisis, the public urge to shower the IDF with financial contributions became even more pronounced. Thus in 1955, news that the Egyptian army was about to receive a new generation of weapons from its Soviet patrons prompted the establishment of a 'Defense Fund' (*Keren ha-Magen*) whose declared purpose was to enable the IDF to purchase weapons of its own. Schools, factories and entire neighborhoods frantically sought to out-donate each other, with the results of their competition receiving the sort of media attention normally lavished on a long anticipated football cup-tie (Bar-On 1991: 66–73).

Amongst elites in society, partnership took more subtle forms. Israel's generals and senior civilians did not join hands in a party or even a formal lobby. Rather, they constituted what has frequently been termed a 'network' (Maman 1996; Barak and Sheffer 2006), an informal association of persons located at critical nodes in various walks of life who share a vision of national priorities and values that they are in a position to promote. Conscription and reserve service certainly helped to shape and lubricate this fecund mechanism of civil–military interaction. So too – perhaps even more decisively – did the convention (first established in the mid-1950s by Moshe Dayan as CoS) that IDF professional officers retire from active duty after only 20 years of service, a circumstance that virtually compelled them to effect a 'lateral transfer' to senior office in politics, economy, judiciary and academe. Also noteworthy, however, are the instances indicating that the currents of movement could likewise operate in the opposite direction. Persons with expertise in fields of interest to the IDF, principally Middle Eastern affairs, but also engineering, economics and ballistics, were frequently co-opted into the military framework, on either a regular or a part-time basis (Eyal 2002).

Overwhelmingly, attention has focused on the consequences of those processes. Thus, Rebecca Schiff (1992) considered them partially responsible for Israel's character as an 'uncivil' state, to which the conventional dichotomies (civil as opposed to religious, civil as opposed to military and civil as opposed to uncouth) simply cannot be applied. More critically, Zeev Maoz (2006) documents at length the extent to which Israelis at the helm of government remained wedded to a mind set that, because it prioritized military assessments of the world, persistently handicapped Israel's security and foreign policies (see pp. 69–70). Neglected, by comparison, has been the need for an analysis of the circumstances responsible for sustaining the symbiosis by which the 'civilian void' was purportedly nurtured.

This imbalance is to be regretted, principally because it imparts to the IDF's hegemony in Israeli life a more enduring aura than it deserves. In reality, that status was always contingent on at least two conditions. One was the persistence of an external security environment that demanded the retention of universal conscription and hence of the service arrangements that gave the IDF the character of a 'people's army' rather than a segmented, professional force. The other was the continuation of a domestic climate almost entirely uncritical of the IDF's conduct and values.

As the next two chapters will demonstrate, by the dawn of the twenty-first century neither condition still applied.

3 The changing operational landscape

Even in the heyday of its status as a 'people's army', the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) primary functions were always military in the conventional sense. The domestic purposes that Ben-Gurion assigned to the Force as an agency of nation-building, although always prominent, remained decidedly secondary. As laid down in its mission statements, the IDF's principal tasks were to deter and overcome external threats to Israel's security and to provide the government with whatever military force was deemed necessary for the defense and enhancement of national aims.

The purpose of the present chapter is to outline the ways in which changes in Israel's security environment have affected the IDF's ability to fulfill those functions. To that end, this chapter focuses on three principal themes.

1 The progressive complexity of the IDF's range of military commitments.
2 The increasing technological bias of the principal instruments to which the IDF turned in an attempt to confront its multiple challenges.
3 The ways in which the pressures of both operational and technological change caused the IDF to assume an increasingly bifurcate structure, whose core consisted of a highly specialized and proficient component but whose outer shell retained traditional militia characteristics and seemed to be decreasingly competent. These differentials, we shall argue, made the IDF as a whole much more vulnerable to critical public scrutiny.

New tasks

Unlike many other countries in the western world, Israel has never possessed an officially approved security doctrine, in which a coherent corpus of strategic preferences is systematically extrapolated, step by operational step, from fundamental postulates concerning the purposes of the Jewish State and the mission of its armed forces. What is more, no Israeli government has ever mandated one of its agencies to draft such a document. Shy

of producing abstract and theoretically grounded formulations in this sphere as in others (Israel is also one of the very few countries in the world without a written constitution), successive generations of political leaders have eschewed broad formulations of grand strategy. Instead, they have preferred to adopt a pragmatic and empirical approach to the application of military force.

Virtually by default, therefore, it has been left to others to infer from Israel's military practice the principles upon which it might be based. Over the years, a distinguished brace of academic analysts have jumped at the opportunity to do so, with the result that we now possess multiple distillations of Israel's security thinking and its component desiderata and constraints (e.g. Yaniv 1987a; Horowitz 1993: 11–53; Handel 1994: 534–578; Steinberg 1999; Heller 2000; Inbar 2002; Rodman 2005). From time to time, additional insights nuances have been provided by 'practitioners', individuals who themselves played a role in Israel's military history as either soldier or statesman, and occasionally in both capacities (e.g. Dayan 1976; Tamir 1988; Sharon 1989; Eitan 1991; Peled 1993; Rabin 1996; Narkiss 1998; Sagi 1998).

Most such writings consist of personal memoirs, a genre dominated by the authors' recollections of their participation in individual security missions and/or battles, and which contain only brief passages of more theoretical strategic analysis. But two exceptions stand out: Yigal Alon's *Masach Shel Chol* ('Curtain of Sand'), the first edition of which appeared in 1960; and Israel Tal's *Bitachon Le'umi* ('National Security'), which was first published in Hebrew almost four decades later, in 1996 (Tal 2000, English edition). Notwithstanding their age differences, the two works have much in common. For one thing, they were both written by men who had become military legends in their lifetimes: Alon, as already noted (see p. 24), had covered himself in glory in the War of Independence. Tal, who was born in 1924, had performed with equal distinction, both when leading his armored corps to a stunning victory in the Sinai desert during the Six-Day War and when, as deputy CoS, keeping a cool head during the Yom Kippur War. But both books were notable as much for their content as their authorship. Indeed, Alon and Tal owe their virtually canonical status amongst Israeli writers on military affairs to their thematic analyses of concepts that most of their comrades in arms could only claim to have 'operationalized' – and even then, more often by instinct than by intent.

Read consecutively, *Masach shel Chol* (which has never been translated) and *National Security* convey an image of underlying intellectual continuity. Thanks principally to the rigidities of geography and demography, they suggest, the basic contours of Israel's security landscape have altered very little since Ben-Gurion first mapped them out in 1948. Condemned to a position of chronic material and quantitative inferiority against her potential foes, Israel's survival depends on the quality of her human resources and on the skill with which they are deployed and led. In stra-

tegic terms, too, Israel lacks conventional depth and can never be sure of her ability to absorb enemy attacks. At most, it might be possible to deter neighbors bent on violating Israel's borders. But should deterrence fail, or seem about to do so, Israeli forces would have to attack and carry the battle to the enemy's territory. Hence, the IDF's preferred operational posture must always be offensive.

Transmitted with only minor emendations from generation to generation, the propositions thus formulated for the realm of grand strategy have acquired an axiomatic status that seems to guarantee their longevity. At the more specific levels of operational planning and military performance, however, the narrative of underlying conceptual resilience is harder to sustain. Viewed retrospectively, the history of the IDF between 1948 and 2007 in fact falls into two distinct periods and is bisected by a watershed that emerged around the mid-1980s. Prior to that period, there existed a sense of certainty, both with respect to the IDF's priorities and with respect to the results that Israel's armed forces were expected to achieve. Thereafter, however, the prevailing mood came to be one of increasing confusion.

These differences of atmosphere are easily explained. For the first three and half decades of the IDF's existence, its force planners and commanders operated in an environment that took virtually for granted both the identity of the principal threats to Israel's security and the character of the required responses. Israel's survival, ran the general consensus, was endangered by the proximity to her borders of the massive, conventional armies maintained by her immediate neighbors, many of whose leaders repeatedly proclaimed their commitment to the destruction of the Jewish state that they so vastly outnumbered. Invasion, such as had been experienced in 1948, threatened in 1967, and carried out in 1973, constituted an existential danger or, in the terms used by Israeli strategic parlance, 'case ultimate' (*mikreh ha-kol*). By contrast, more limited incursions, even when involving murderous assaults on Israeli property and lives, constituted no more than painful irritants.

The IDF's order of battle reflected that perception. Notwithstanding the prominence of relatively low-intensity missions in the IDF's operation record during both the early 1950s (the period of the so-called 'reprisal raids') and the early 1970s (the campaign against *Fatah* strongholds in the Jordan Valley and the Gaza Strip), the unique demands of this form of combat received very little recognition in either IDF training exercises or budgetary appropriations. Attention focused, rather, on preparing and equipping the Force for high-intensity combat, designed to bring about a battlefield 'decision' against conventional Arab armies. One correlate was the increasing emphasis placed on tanks and air power, which as early as the late 1950s became the IDF's principal arms. Another was the employment of the infantry in combat formations of ever-burgeoning size – the brigade (*hativah*) in the 1950s, the task-oriented division (*ugda mesimati*)

in the 1960s, the standing division in the 1970s and the corps (*gayis*) in the 1980s. Yet a third correlate was the IDF's increasing dependence on its reserve component. Tal, for one, was adamant that without the 'surge' capacity provided by the reservists, Israel could never have mounted either the offensives that swept the IDF to victory in 1967 or the counter-attacks that staved off defeat in 1973. Succumbing to hyperbole, he concluded: 'The reserve military is among the most important collective creations of the Jewish people' (Tal 2000: 67).

As the late Dan Horowitz was the first to point out, at some indeterminate point in the mid-1980s many of the old certainties that thus permeated Israeli security thinking began to crumble, revealing what he termed 'the strategic limitations of a "nation in arms"' (Horowitz 1987). In immediate terms, the change of atmosphere can be attributed to the scars inflicted by the IDF's first Lebanon debacle. Other than in the air, where Israeli Air Force (IAF) fighter pilots overwhelmed Syria's air defense network, 'Operation Peace for the Galilee', launched in June 1982, did not at all fulfill initial predictions of a short and decisive clash of arms (Yaniv 1987b). Within a year, it had instead developed into a fragmented series of attritional and inconclusive engagements against 'non-conventional' foes. Shackled by the occupation of southern Lebanon, Israeli generals found it much harder than their predecessors to win reputations for martial success. Politicians, too, experienced considerably more difficulty in drumming up enthusiasm for a costly conflict that seemed to drag on interminably.

Deeper forces were also at work. At root, the new atmosphere of confusion enveloping the IDF responded to fundamental changes in Israel's entire security environment. Some were essentially domestic in nature, and as will be seen (see Chapter 4) reflected shifts in societal culture. But others related more specifically to the international diplomatic and military context, where transformations were all the more bewildering for being so pronounced. In the late 1970s, Iran, long considered a firm ally, virtually overnight metamorphosed into an inveterate foe, whereas Egypt, a long-standing enemy, all but became Israel's security partner. Matters became progressively more ambiguous during the subsequent tumultuous decades, when Israeli security also began to be affected by (amongst other developments) the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the volatility of relations with the Palestinian Authority and the repercussions of both the first (1991) and the second (2003) American-led invasions of Iraq. Yitzchak Rabin, a man whose responsibility for Israel's security dated back to 1965, when he had been appointed IDF CoS, was by the early 1990s especially sensitive to the need for conceptual re-adjustment and to its possibly disconcerting side effects. As he informed the *Knesset* (Israel's parliament) in October 1994, during the first three decades of Israel's history, her strategic environment, even when most monotonously and malevolently hostile, had at least possessed the reassurance of familiarity. Now, however, its complexities were

far too novel to be unraveled with any degree of confidence (cited in Inbar 1999: 179–190).

The IDF was not, of course, the only armed force under pressure to develop new operational paradigms and doctrines in what was essentially unfamiliar terrain. By the mid-1990s, at the latest, militaries all over the world were likewise being compelled to adjust, not just to the end of bipolar rivalry between the super powers, but also to the multiple transformations in warfare that the implosion of the Soviet Union in some part helped to fuel (Van Creveld 1991, 1999: 337–354; Münkler 2005; Shaw 2005). Israel's distinction lay in the specifics of the conceptual adaptations that her new circumstances required. Just prior to the second Lebanon War of 2006, these were investigated by the 'Meridor Committee' (named after its chairman, Mr Dan Meridor, a former Minister of Justice) appointed in 2004 by Shaul Mofaz soon after he had leapfrogged his way in record time from the post of CoS to that of the Minister of Defense. Although the details of Meridor's final report remain classified, enough has been leaked to reveal its principal findings (*Jane's Defense Weekly* May 3, 2006: 16–17). Threats to Israel's security, he cautioned, no longer emanated solely, or even principally, from the conventional battlefield. Increasingly, the IDF would have to confront both 'sub-conventional' and 'supra-conventional' dangers.

At its most basic, that expansion of focus necessitated a realignment of geo-strategic priorities. Prior to the 1980s, at the core of military planning lay the IDF's *perimeter* responsibilities, chief amongst which was the need to prepare for conventional battle with the armies of Israel's immediate Arab neighbors. Thanks to the peace treaties signed with Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (in 1994), fears that the 'confrontation states' might launch another massive cross-border invasion very much abated. Indeed, by the end of the century, the IDF thought it possible to consider dismantling Southern Command altogether and assigned only a fraction of its manpower to guarding what had once been its most sensitive frontier – and even then more with an eye to stopping drug-trafficking, gun-running and illegal immigration than to trip-wiring full-scale invasion. Nevertheless, informed observers cautioned against too sanguine a view of the new circumstances, warning that the lull in hostile Egyptian activity, especially, might only be temporary (Azarva 2007). Syria, too – although now encircled by an increasingly cozy Israeli–Turkish friendship (Inbar 2001), remained a potentially formidable foe, whose plans for military modernization and re-equipment were followed in Jerusalem with undisguised concern.

Underlying the sense of insecurity thus conveyed was the acknowledgement that the span of IDF operational commitments now pulled in two, very different, additional geographical directions. One was *remote* and derived from the need to defend Israeli citizens and their property against rocket attacks and especially from those that might be launched by

'distant' enemies, who had once been thought to lay 'over the horizon' of Israel's immediate strategic vision. The second type of new commitment was essentially *intra-border* and arose from the intensification of the so-called 'low-intensity' attacks on Israeli civilian and military targets, by *Hizbollah* militias based in southern Lebanon and by Palestinian irregulars located in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Prior to the mid-1980s, both remote and intra-border commitments had ranked very low on IDF priorities. Defense against possible long-range attack on civilian targets was especially neglected (Bitzur 2003). Anti-aircraft capabilities, which until 1962 were the responsibility of the artillery corps, were likewise persistently starved of funds.[1] Complacency of that order could perhaps be excused whilst Israeli cities remained unharmed. After all, as far as Israel was concerned, the 1956, 1967 and 1973 campaigns were all characterized by a minimal incidence of air raids and missile attacks. By the 1980s, however, the tide of apparent immunity had clearly begun to turn, with more distant foes threatening to develop and deploy destructive capacities of alarming ferocity. The prototype was Saddam Hussein's Iraq, whose nuclear ambitions Israeli aircraft were dispatched to thwart by destroying the Osiraq facility as early as 1981 and whose forces nevertheless launched over 30 Scud missiles (armed with conventional warheads) against Israeli cities a decade later.

Long before American forces finally ended that threat by toppling Saddam's regime in 2003, however, Iraq's place at the very top of Israel's official demonology had in any case been usurped by Iran. As early as 1995, Yitzchak Rabin publicly warned that Iran's suspected drive to attain nuclear bombs presented Israel with an existential threat of unprecedented proportions. The urgency of that danger was in the course of the following decade emphasized by successive demonstrations of Iranian ballistic capabilities, each of which was accompanied by a round of inflammatory rhetoric on the part of President Ahmadinejad. The IDF had now to prepare itself to meet a 'bolt from the blue', a sudden attack by missiles tipped with weapons of mass destruction (Cordesman 2002: 560–578).

At the sub-conventional end of the force spectrum, IDF's responsibilities likewise expanded beyond all previous experience after the mid-1980s. Thereto, 'low-intensity' attacks on Israeli lives and property, although frequently bloody, had generally been relegated to the sidelines of Israeli strategic concerns. Israeli reprisals, too, were accorded only secondary status. At best, the General Staff regarded them as convenient training exercises for the more serious business of large-scale warfare against conventional Arab armies. At worst, they were considered to distract the IDF from its principal tasks. The taxonomy developed in Israeli strategic parlance during the 1950s enshrined distinctions that remained prevalent for the next four decades. Missions were considered relevant to 'basic security' solely if they related to the threat of a massive conventional invasion.

Counter-terrorism, by contrast, received the much more lowly designation of 'current security' concerns (Shalom 1996; D. Tal 1998).

By the end of the twentieth century, that order of priorities was clearly losing its validity. 'Current security' missions could no longer be regarded as marginal accretions to an operational agenda dominated by the prospect of set-piece battles. Instead, they had to be considered an operational burden in their own right. Notwithstanding the support of the South Lebanese Army, a proxy force that Israel equipped and financed, the defense of the 'security zone' in southern Lebanon against persistent *Hizbollah* attacks became increasingly costly. By the time Prime Minister Barak announced a unilateral withdrawal from the region in May 2000, over 250 IDF soldiers had been killed in combat since 1985 and 840 more were seriously injured. Almost a hundred others had died in local operational accidents.

Equally significant was the strain meanwhile exerted on Israel's military resources by her occupation of the territories conquered in 1967. For the first two decades after the Six-Day War, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Israeli legal parlance insisted on designating their 'administration', had indeed been a remarkably low-cost operation. With Palestinian insurgency then limited to localized and sporadic eruptions, such as occurred in Gaza in 1971–1972 (Maimon 1993), Israeli control was maintained by a barely visible constabulary garrison, which for the most part consisted of no more than a handful of widely dispersed battalions (Nadel 2006: 166–171). The IDF, it seemed, could do its job without having recourse to either permanent roadblocks or massive roundups of suspected 'terrorists'. All such illusions, however, were shattered by the outbreak of the first *intifada* in 1987 and its even more violent successor in the year 2000. Both convulsions necessitated the diversion of large numbers of IDF conscripts to garrison duties and the mobilization of reserve forces for riot dispersion, highway patrols, curfew impositions and house demolitions. Altogether, 'current security' assumed the proportions of a major combat mission. Counter-insurgency developed into an all-arms operation, encompassing artillery barrages, naval bombardments, armored incursions into major urban centers and 'surgical' air strikes by F-15I and F-16 aircraft as well as AH-64A Apache and AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters (Shay 2004: 231–251).

New tools

Confronted with the increasing variety of its military commitments, the IDF turned to the panacea of technology. This was not an unexpected response. After all, in earlier periods, too, Israelis had looked to the quality of the IDF's ordnance as a means of helping to compensate for their country's inherent quantitative inferiority. Technological innovation had indeed long been invested with the status of a 'force multiplier', so much

so that as early as 1948 the IDF had established a 'Science Corps' (*Cheil Mada*) as an independent arm. But in this area too, the mid-1980s were pivotal, since they witnessed the beginning of a movement away from what has aptly been termed an attitude of 'conservative innovation' (Cohen *et al.* 1998: 68–71) toward one of far less bridled enthusiasm. Such was the extent of the change that in terms of the sophistication and complexity of its arsenal and C4I systems, especially, the IDF of the early twenty-first century bore hardly any comparison with its predecessor of just two decades earlier.

Ma'arachot, by far the most authoritative and informative of all IDF journals (it has appeared continuously since 1939), repeatedly reminded its readers that the IDF's infatuation with technology was not at all unique. Toward the end of the century, military–technical advances were altogether transforming the face of the conventional battlefield, with the advent of the microprocessor and of precision-guided missiles exerting an impact that is widely, albeit not unanimously, considered to constitute a 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA). But although *Ma'arachot* devoted two entire issues [nos 355 (January 1998) and 392 (December 2003)] to this concept, it would be mistaken to regard the IDF's drive to modernize its battlefield capabilities as little more than an indiscriminate imitation of an American phenomenon. Rather, the Israeli version of the RMA throughout remained distinctive and tailored to the specifics of perceived IDF needs. It also had its own history.

In its early stages, the IDF's assimilation of advanced technological solutions to the multiplicity of its operational needs seems to have been somewhat haphazard. Certainly, there did exist a general atmosphere conducive to some experimentation, provided that it did not prove too expensive and/or create too much organizational turbulence. But the pace and scope of actual modernization tended to oscillate and were determined by what Chris Demchak (1996, 2001: 77–146) terms the IDF's 'ad hoc and fragmented decision-making style'. Hence, innovation varied from arm to arm, sometimes from corps to corps, progressing virtually autonomously – and certainly without explicit General Staff sponsorship or coordination. For many years, indeed, the most persistent and vocal advocates of a more comprehensive and consistent policy with respect to technological-military change were not military persons at all, but civilians in a non-IDF branch of Israel's security realm. One was Ze'ev Bonen, who for over four decades worked at *Refael*, the Israel weapons' development authority, eventually rising to be its president and director general (Bonen 1995). Another was Azriel Lorber, an American-educated air and space engineer, who advocated making technological literacy a sine qua non for graduation from the IDF officers school (Lorber 1979) and later went on to publish books and articles on the future battlefield (e.g. Lorber 1997, 1998).

Only in the 1990s did there emerge a coherent 'school' of technological enthusiasts within the IDF itself, whose members were sufficiently well

placed both to formulate a focused program of action and to see that it was carried through. Naval personnel initially took the lead (Sharvit 2004), but their place in the vanguard of the drive for technological adaptation was soon usurped by colleagues from the air force, the most prominent of whom was Major General Yitzchak Ben-Yisrael, a senior officer in Israeli Air Force (IAF) intelligence. Born in 1949, Ben-Yisrael's rise through the ranks was meteoric. Whilst in service, he twice received Israel's highest public award for service in the security sector, on the first occasion when aged only 23. Somehow, he also found time to complete a doctorate in physics and philosophy at Tel-Aviv University before being appointed in 1992 the director of R&D in the General Staff, at the rank of Brigadier. Thereafter, he was seconded to the Ministry of Defense, where between 1998 and 2002 he headed *MAFAT*, Israel's central agency for the development of weapons systems and technological infrastructures. On retirement, he returned to Tel-Aviv University, where he was appointed chair of the program in security and technology. In 2007, he embarked on yet another career change when taking his seat as one of the ruling *Kadimah* party's representatives in the *Knesset*

Throughout, Ben-Yisrael refused to conform to the standard image of a military technician and much preferred the role of a philosopher-scientist. In the latter capacity, indeed, he became something of a cult figure. Whilst still in uniform, he had published several extended analyses of both traditional military thought and future force requirements (e.g. Ben-Yisrael 1985: 31–53, 1988). In the course of the following two decades, his profile became far more prominent. The public seminars that he organized at Tel-Aviv University on technology and security, some of which were subsequently published (Ben-Yisrael and Golan 2007), attracted considerable interest. He reached a still larger audience through regular guest appearances as a commentator on military affairs on public television and radio and by publishing a spate of articles in both the daily press and academic forums (Ben-Yisrael 2000, 2001: 269–327, 2004: 69–89, 2006: 9–46). Throughout, he drew upon examples from both the 1991 Gulf War and the fighting in the Balkans to describe what he called the contemporary 'battlefield revolution' (*mahapeichah bisdei hakrav* – for which the accepted Hebrew acronym is *MASHAK*), a term that he preferred to the 'revolution in military affairs'. He also reverted to old themes. In order to keep pace with this paradigm shift in the application of military violence, Israel must insure that: 'Most of the resources allocated to force construction have to be diverted to qualitative and technological elements (special forces, intelligence and air power) including the development of our scientific and technological capabilities' (Ben-Yisrael 1997b: 42).

Aficionados of modern military gadgetry can follow in detail the implementation of the program advocated by Ben-Yisrael and others of like mind by perusing the pages of such specialist publications as *Jane's Defense Weekly*. More synchronic catalogues of additions to the IDF's

arsenal appear in annual issues of the *Strategic Survey* published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, which can be further supplemented by reference to the data periodically made available, thanks to the prodigious productivity of Professor Anthony Cordesman (2002: 55–144 and 189–196, 2006: 101–153). For the layman, the amount of information now accessible can be bewildering. Out of the fog of obscurity, however, two features of the record emerge with shining clarity. One is the large proportion of the new weapons in service developed and manufactured, to IDF specifications, by Israel's highly sophisticated complex of domestic military and electronic industries, which in many areas of military production lead the world. The other is the wide range of battlefield situations in which the IDF seeks to exploit its hi-tech potential.

The available sources show that throughout the 1990s, the IDF continued to invest heavily in improving its arsenal in preparation for land, sea and air warfare against similarly equipped neighbors. It armed itself, then, for the sort of symmetrical 'contests of firepower' that might materialize were the IDF ever to find itself once again at war with Syria or Egypt, or perhaps both. With that scenario in mind, its principal battle platforms (aircraft, helicopters, tanks and artillery naval surface vessels) were upgraded, with foreign purchases supplementing domestic production. Even more significant, certainly for those who see future war in terms of 'cyber war', were the improvements made to the IDF's command, control, communications and surveillance capabilities – many of which were, again, the products of home-grown invention and production.

By the first years of the twenty-first century, indeed, IDF commanders had begun to think in terms of an entirely new C4I system (see Chapter 5). After considerable experimentation, they in 2004 launched a particularly ambitious – and expensive – digital army program, known as *TSAYAD* ('Hunter', *Tzavah Yabashti Digitali*), which was ultimately planned to connect all ground, sea and air forces in the IDF to a single, secure, broadband and fiber-optic network of communications. In an interview with *Jane's Defense Weekly*, published on December 24, 2004, Major General Yiftach Ron-Tal, then CO of IDF Ground Forces Command, enthused: 'Ten Years from now, and an infantry NCO, a single artillery barrel (sic), an Apache helicopter and a Merkava tank will share the same battle and intelligence picture.'

Equally strenuous, and no less dramatic, were the steps taken in the same period to insure that the IDF could also exploit technology to meet the challenges of both supra-conventional and sub-conventional conflict (Shapir 2001: 147–175). Concern for the former, in the guise of long-range missile attack, generated a particularly wide spectrum of hi-tech projects, which together supplied the IDF with a vastly extended list of force options. Thanks to improvements in air-refueling techniques, long-range air strikes were more feasible by the end of the century. They could now

also be supplemented by other instruments of force. A land-based multi-tiered defense system, code-named *Homah* ('Wall'), enveloped in sensors and with the 'Arrow' anti-missile missile as its centerpiece, was one; naval capabilities (extended by the purchase of several missile-carrying submarines) a second; and space satellites, to be used as both monitoring devices and rocket platforms, was a third. [Israel had become the eighth member of the global space club in September 1988, when launching her own satellite *Ofek-1*. By 2006, she had five dual-use satellites in orbit (Ilan-Lipovsky 2006).] And behind all this, there lurked the generally unspoken presence, all the more menacing for being deliberately opaque, of nuclear bombs.[2]

Since the IDF did not participate in any major conflict throughout the 25 years that separated the first from the second Lebanon campaigns, very few of the new conventional and supra-conventional technologies that it developed in that period were subjected to the test of battlefield conditions. Such was not the case, however, with respect to the wide range of new instruments adapted for use in sub-conventional circumstances, whose range was equally extensive and in some respects even more imaginative. Ben-Yisrael, on the eve of his retirement as chief of military R&D, explained the reason in an interview that he gave to Barbara Opall-Rome, published in *Defense News* on December 17, 2001. Both the latter stages of the south Lebanon campaign and the second *intifada*, he pointed out, had stimulated the development of several 'low-intensity' technological capabilities, almost all of which were entirely home-produced. Both conflicts also constituted laboratories in which the systems and their components could be put to the test of actual combat. Particular attention, according to Ben-Yisrael, was paid to a new generation of 'platforms': long- and short-range unmanned aerial vehicles (an area in which Israel had long been a world leader), surveillance balloons and ground-based command centers with a wide array of new sensors, seismic detection devices and powerful infrared spotters. Individual soldiers too had received an entirely 'new look'. Specifically, 'They are equipped with new personal weapons, protective gear, sophisticated sensors and targeting devices, and new means of communications.' Indeed, as far as Ben-Yisrael was concerned, the age of the 'digital soldier' was just around the corner.

New thinking

Critics of the IDF's apparent infatuation with digitalized gadgets persistently warned of its potentially baneful influences. They were particularly concerned that a 'cult' of technology might whittle away at the ability, and opportunity, for creative thinking, which used to be the IDF's principal assets. Publicly voiced in *Ma'arachot* before the 2006 Lebanon campaign (Finkel 2006), such fears assumed new prominence thereafter. In October 2006, the IDF Spokesman's Unit revealed that a post-battle investigation

conducted by Major General (res.) Yoram Yair accused brigade and battalion commanders of betraying the IDF tradition of leading from the front. Instead of sweating it out in the field with the troops under their command, they had passed the time gazing at their computer screens in their air-conditioned offices (*Haaretz* October 15, 2006). Worse still, the Winograd committee found that CoS Halutz had infected the entire General Staff with his faith in the hi-tech wizardry of air power. His belief in the IAF's ability to destroy pre-selected enemy targets, accurately and with near impunity, discouraged all consideration of alternative applications of force (Winograd Commission Interim Report 2007: 53–57). By the time the reserves were mobilized and fed into battle, the *Hizbollah* had managed to strike at Israel's cities and regroup the forces that had simply sat out the Israeli air onslaught.

On balance, those criticisms seem perhaps too harsh. The difficulties that the IDF encountered in the summer of 2006 cannot be entirely attributed to its reliance on technology. They also reflected a failure to find appropriate responses to a far more complex cluster of conceptual challenges.

First among these was the growing tension between the IDF's tradition of offensive activity and the very different modus operandi that it was increasingly been compelled to adopt. Ever since 1948, IDF operations had prioritized speed and maneuver. Once battle was joined, it was to be taken to the enemy and conducted on his territory. Above all, engagements were to be brought to a quick decision by exploiting the benefits conferred by movement. The favored model, which all commanders strove to emulate, was the sort of *blitzkrieg* fought in the Sinai desert in 1967 and on the western bank of the Suez Canal in 1973, rather than the static and persistent exchanges of fire that had characterized the 'war of attrition' conducted along the IDF's ceasefire lines with Egypt in 1969–1970 (Kober 1995).

Although that order of preferences was still considered axiomatic during the planning stages of the first Lebanon War of 1982, the subsequent experience of asymmetric and low-intensity conflicts made it appear increasingly archaic (Kober 2005). By the early 1990s, at the latest, Israelis had abandoned all hope of ending their involvement in the Lebanon quickly and at little cost, as was initially promised by the architects of the 1982 onslaught. The IDF had clearly been dragged into a guerrilla campaign that was bound to be protracted. Confrontations with the Palestinians conveyed a similar message. When the first *intifada* erupted in December 1987, Yitzchak Rabin, then Minister of Defense, had still thought it possible, as he informed the General Staff, 'to strike the violent demonstrations off the agenda' in the traditional fashion, by a swift display of overwhelming force. But he soon thereafter appreciated the need to switch to an attritional mode. 'The problem', he acknowledged the following year, 'cannot be solved in one go. What will bring the violence

to an end is a cumulative process of physical and economic fatigue' (Inbar 1991: 41). During the second *intifada*, too, both politicians and generals repeatedly felt it necessary to warn the Israeli public and its allies that the old expectations of a quick triumph of arms were unrealistic. Explicitly taking issue with the advocates of a quick fix through air power (e.g. Gordon 1998, 2003), CoS Yaalon was adamant that 'Victory will be won on points and not by a knock-out blow' (*Haaretz* 15 July, 2002; Yaalon 2007: 11).

Ideally, the shifts thus taking place in strategic perceptions should have stimulated equally substantial adjustments to doctrines and force dispositions. In fact, however, the IDF was noticeably slow to develop a coherent concept of low-intensity conflict. Well into the 1990s, its thinking remained wedded to the old taxonomy that prioritized 'basic security' concerns, with the result that 'current security' missions were rarely considered worthy of intellectual attention. In this respect, again, the tone was set by Yitzchak Rabin, who in June 1986 authoritatively informed the *Knesset* that:

> Since much of the combat in the recent Lebanon campaign had been against guerrilla groups who are not a regular army, since they have no air force, no armor corps … there can be no doubt that the lessons that can be learned from this part of the campaign with respect to the military problems likely to confront the State of Israel, and for which the IDF has to prepare itself, are very limited.
>
> (*Knesset Protocol* 11: 2957)

For several years thereafter, senior echelons in the Force continued to share that view. Studies conducted in 1991 by the Instruction and Doctrine Division of the IDF Operations Directorate discovered that no attempt had been made to coordinate all the material with respect to low-intensity campaigning made available during the past nine years as a result of combat in the Lebanon.[3] In 1992, the State Comptroller (1992: 808–810) reported that the IDF had neglected to institute a uniform procedure for post-action reports on 'current security' missions, a failure that had resulted in a waste of invaluable experience. Altogether, it is generally agreed, the IDF's counter-insurgency operations prior to the mid-1990s were noticeably inept (e.g. Jones 1997). Instead of making a coherent and concerted attempt to win over 'hearts and minds' in either southern Lebanon or the occupied territories, the IDF resorted to unimaginative roundups of what it termed 'terrorists' and their affiliates, who it then corralled in enormous detention camps. As any basic manual of low-intensity conflict could have predicted, those compounds promptly became 'revolutionary universities' where 'petty delinquents were housed and fed by the Israeli army and schooled by its enemies' (Goldberg 2007: 123).

Avi Kober's content analysis survey of *Ma'arachot*, the IDF's principal

public forum for discussing military matters, supplies one explanation for that scale of clumsiness. Until as late as 2000, he finds, only 3 percent of all the articles published in the journal since 1948 dealt with sub-conventional conflict, whereas 94 percent (2,870 in all) dealt with conventional warfare (Kober 2003: 154). In other words, notwithstanding almost a decade and a half of almost continuous experience of low-intensity conflict, when the second *intifada* erupted the subject was still absent from the IDF's intellectual agenda. A topic that elsewhere in the world had long been an extraordinarily fruitful area of theoretical analysis and historical inquiry was in Israeli military circles hardly researched or debated at all.

The person who did most to change that attitude was Colonel Shemuel (Samo) Nir, who in the course of over a decade of service as an intelligence officer in Northern Command had by the mid-1990s acquired a familiarity with Hizbollah practices and doctrines in southern Lebanon unparalleled in the entire IDF. Ill-health forced Nir to relocate to Tel-Aviv in 1995 (he retired from service in 1998 and finally succumbed to cancer in 2003), but by then he had already managed to convince several other senior officers that the application of the term 'current security' to the IDF's campaigns against irregular forces was entirely inappropriate. Far more accurate, he suggested, was *ha-imut ha-mugbal* (lit. 'the limited conflict', the use of the definite article was deliberate), a phrase that he felt better conveyed the singularity of what was elsewhere becoming known as 'asymmetric warfare'. In a series of position papers, lectures and articles (many of which were subsequently posthumously re-issued in a single collection of texts and recordings; Nir 2004), Nir urged the IDF to adapt its organization, intelligence services and operational style to the specifics of the challenge at hand.

Nir's notions gained currency in the IDF with remarkable speed (Banjo 2005; Wiener 2006). Within just half a decade, anybody considered an up-and-coming somebody in the IDF hierarchy seemed to be chanting the mantra of *ha-imut ha-mugbal*. Between 2000 and the end of 2006, the proportion of all articles in *Ma'arachot* devoted to this rendition of low-intensity conflict jumped to 20 percent (72 out of a total of 359). Recognition scaled new heights in 2004, with the publication of the proceedings of a seminar jointly conducted on the topic the previous year by the National Defense College (*MABAL*) and Haifa University's Center for the Study of National Security (Yehezkeli 2003). An apogee was reached later that year, when the Ministry of Defense publishing house produced an entire volume of over 450 pages entitled *Ha-Imut Ha-Mugbal*, containing 18 articles, whose list of contributors included two major generals, two brigadier generals and nine full colonels. Not all of the contributions, it must be noted, subscribed to Nir's approach, and one, by a senior instructor at the IDF Command and Staff College, was flagrantly dismissive of what he considered the intellectual obscurity of the entire 'limited conflict jargon' (Wagman 2004: 251–298). Otherwise, however, the concept had clearly 'arrived'.

Whether or not any practical benefits resulted from all this huffing and puffing, which subsequently also spawned the notion of 'diffused warfare',[4] subsequently became a subject of lively debate. Nir's devotees and disciples identified several successes. His ideas, they noted, exerted a strong influence on Major General Amiram Levin, who as CO of Northern Command (1995–1998) was responsible for establishing squads of troops specifically trained for combat against the *Hizbollah* (the *Egoz* units), a development that stimulated the formation of several other new 'special units' as well as the augmentation and enlargement of those that had traditionally been designated elite formations (Zalmanovich 2000; Tamir 2005: 100–117; Brosh and Amitai 2007). Subsequently, the ripple effects of Nir's teachings extended yet further and eventually reached all levels of command. In 1998, full courses on the history and theory of guerrilla warfare and tactics were at long last inserted into the curriculum of the IDF Staff College; in 1999, a school of tactical command was established for company commanders; in 2000, a facility specifically designed for instruction in urban warfare was constructed at the Field Unit Training Center at Tze'elim in southern Israel, where a fieldcraft school also opened in 2001 (Shamir 2004a: 22).

Major General Gadi Eisenkot, who commanded IDF forces on the West Bank between 2003 and 2005, publicly voiced the opinion that such measures were in large part responsible for the IDF's ability to contain, and ultimately reduce, the level of violence in the areas then under his control (*Haaretz* April 14, 2006). Others, however, took a far less favorable view. In the long run, they warned, the process instigated by Nir and his disciples would distort IDF force structures, primarily because the new emphasis on improving counter-insurgency abilities would divert attention from the need to prepare for conventional scenarios. Politically biased critics of Israel's continued military presence in the West Bank and (until 2005) the Gaza Strip argued that this imbalance was a predictably corrosive consequence of the occupation – the original sin responsible for irreparably blunting the effectiveness of troops who wasted their talents on pointless chases after gangs of teenagers in the back alleys of Palestinian villages (Van Creveld 1998: 348–349). But even Major General Yiftach Ron-Tal, who had no such ideological axe to grind, in 2004 admitted that: 'We are losing some of our basic skills in conventional warfare' (*Jane's Defense Weekly* September 1, 2004: 27). To all intents and purposes, the IDF Ground Forces had simply become the executive arm of the General Security Services (*SHABAK*), at whose say-so it apprehended and/or gunned down in the middle of the night individuals suspected of being terrorists.

Inevitably, preparations for combat on a larger scale paid the price. By the late 1990s, the IDF's traditional 'chain of knowledge' had been cut. The retirement in 1998 of Amnon Lipkin-Shahak (CoS 1995–1998) and his former deputy, Matan Vilnai, left the General Staff without a single

member in possession of senior command experience in large-scale combat – a situation without precedent in IDF history. At senior ranks, battle-hardened veterans of the armored and infantry brigades were now outnumbered by graduates of the 'special units', and especially the *sayeret matkal* and *shaldag* (the IAF special force), whose expertise lay in the conduct of firefights on a much more limited scale.

The shift in the focus of American–Israeli military interaction nicely encapsulates the change. In the mid-1970s, General Donn Starry, then CO of US Army Center and School, surveyed the Golan Heights tank battlefields of the Yom Kippur War and reportedly experienced an 'epiphany' (Kitfield 1995: 151–155). For several successive years, he dispatched senior members of the US Army staff to Israel on similar tours, trusting that they would thereby also gain insight into the 'deep battlefield'. By the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, all such pilgrimages were superfluous – principally because in this area the IDF had nothing to teach. By then, not even the most seasoned of its commanders, in any branch, possessed anything like the record of modern and large-scale 'high-intensity' campaigning that their American contemporaries had meanwhile acquired in their two wars against Iraq. On the contrary, as one of the IDF's most senior veterans pointed out, in that area the new generation of Israeli commanders had much to learn. Their low-intensity experience had conditioned them to think in terms of minimal casualties and the attainment of results that were satisfactory rather than decisive. As the 2006 campaign showed, 'real' war demanded far greater resolution.[5]

Adequate training might have filled some of the gaps in knowledge thus created. But this too was not forthcoming. In late 2002, a study of ground force schedules for the coming year revealed that counter-insurgency missions by small units of force, once limited to select undercover units (collectively designated *mista'arvim*: 'masqueraders'), now dominated the agendas of almost all ground troops, conscripts and reservists alike. Brigade-sized exercises, by contrast, were noticeable by their absence (*Haaretz* October 22, 2002). Many of the troops and commanders who fought in southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006 could hardly remember when they had last participated in even a battalion exercise of any significant duration. In his evidence to the Winograd Committee, the official inquiry into the background to the war and its initial conduct, Major General (res.) Amos Malka, who had commanded the IDF Intelligence Branch between 1998 and 2002, unhesitatingly pinpointed the cause of what he termed the IDF's 'atrophy'. The army, he was convinced, 'had paid exaggerated attention to one single issue, the Palestinian issue, and neglected others' (Malka 2006: 28).

In terms of structure, the most conspicuous result of this situation was the transformation of the unified people's army of Ben-Gurion's creation into a segmented framework that tolerated divergent levels of achievement. By 2006, the IDF had in effect evolved into two distinct bodies. One con-

sisted of elite formations: the hi-tech units responsible for the development of and functioning of Israel's ballistic defenses and her signals intelligence ('Unit 8200'); several components of the navy, whose underwater and long-range capabilities were enhanced when Israel commissioned three new Dolphin class submarines in 1999–2000; the air force, which was officially re-named the 'Air and Space Force' in 2005; and, not least, the traditional 'special' commando battalions and their imitations. Manned by personnel of especially high caliber, in its own area of specialization each of these units continued to notch up a string of successes in the early twenty-first century, thereby embellishing the distinguished service record for which they were already justifiably famous. Deliberately publicized reports of joint operations carried out in the West Bank reinforced the message of success. Addressing a conference held at Tel-Aviv University in January 2006, CoS Halutz bragged that the IDF had managed to reduce the time lag between 'sensors' and 'shooters' (in the air as well as on land) to a bare minimum. Thanks to

> technological improvements in the gathering and processing of real-time intelligence … terrorism today is at 10 per cent of the level it was in 2002 – 10 per cent in terms of the number of suicide bombers, the number of their successes and the number of victims
>
> (*Haaretz* January 11, 2006)

But as far as the vast bulk of the IDF was concerned, the track record was very different. Partly, this was because much of the force complement had not participated in the fighting at all. Indeed, the more specialized that the focus on the *imut mugbal* became, the less likely it became that non-specialist conscripts and (even more so) non-specialist reservists would ever be called upon to shoulder that particular burden. The societal consequences of the disparities in service duties to which that situation gave rise will be discussed in some detail below (see pp. 133–135). Of more immediate relevance in the present context is their immediate operational impact. The bulk of the complement became rusty through underemployment. Personnel who were assigned to low-intensity duties found themselves ill-prepared and under-trained for the task. Hence, their log became marred by numerous instances of operational mishaps and failures. After 2000, as before, IDF tanks, including the much-touted *Merkava IV*, repeatedly fell victim to roadside explosives (*Haaretz* March 15, 2002); 'friendly fire' continued to take its unnecessary toll in lives (*Haaretz* October 2, 2002); even in some of the most highly regarded infantry brigades, groups of conscripts at an advanced stage of service occasionally 'rebelled' and deserted their posts when they felt that their privileges were being infringed (even when issued, the punishments were far from draconian; *Haaretz* February 7, 1999, April 18, 2006, March 2, 2007); and the complacency of officers continued to be cited as a root cause of the poor performance of the troops under their command (*Haaretz* November 12, 2003).

Against that background, a sense of inevitability attaches itself to the sequence of events that ignited the second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006. Especially is this true with respect to the immediate cause of the conflagration: the Hizbollah ambush on July 12 of an IDF armored patrol manned by reservists and engaged on a routine inspection of Israel's northern border, an action that resulted in seven of the reservists being killed whilst two others were hauled off into captivity. A subsequent investigation carried out by Major General (res.) Doron Almog uncovered an almost unbelievably long string of deficiencies that, as he revealed in a press briefing in mid-November 2006, reached back to the highest levels of command. Intelligence warnings of a possible kidnapping attempt had not been passed on to units in the field; Brigadier General Gal Hirsch, who as CO of the Galilee Corps was responsible for the region in which the incident took place, made insufficient efforts to insure that his orders to all IDF soldiers to keep a 'low profile' along the border were being carried out; during their entire three-week stint of service, the reservists had conducted no training exercise that might have prepared them for what happened; and the patrol from which the soldiers were abducted – surely not by chance, on the very last day of their reserve spell – set out 'almost as if [the troops] were going on a picnic' (*Haaretz* November 13, 2006). Confronted with so damning a body of evidence, Hirsh had no choice but to resign.

There are at least two levels at which the kidnappings of July 12, 2006, deserve to be considered symptomatic of erosion in the certainties that had at one time leant an air of stability to relations between Israelis and their army.

First, the kidnappings underscored the extent of the confusion then reigning within the IDF with respect to the relative ranking of its military commitments. In part, indeed, it is possible to attribute at least some of the faults that Almog uncovered to prior, and still unresolved, intra-military debates with respect to priorities amongst the new mix of sub-conventional, conventional and supra-conventional missions that this chapter has described. Bluntly summarized, the IDF had in 2006 not yet fully come to terms with the need to conceptualize a new set of operational priorities that was consonant with its changing security milieu.

Second, to this must be added the societal reaction to news of the kidnappings and, especially, to the realization that the circumstances of that particular occurrence were by no means sui generic. The kidnappings followed the abduction of a conscript by a *Hamas* squad that had tunneled its way out of Gaza in June 2006 (an incident that a subsequent inquiry also attributed to deficiencies in command and discipline) and were succeeded by still more blatant signs of IDF incompetence throughout the 34 days of the second Lebanon War itself. What made these revelations particularly damaging was the altered tone of the overall climate of opinion in which they were received. By 2006, the IDF had long lost the

immunity to public criticisms that it had enjoyed in the halcyon days of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Rather, and as the next chapter will show, it had become vulnerable to long-term changes in its domestic setting that, in many respects, were just as fundamental – and no less influential – as were the shifts taking place in Israel's external environment.

4 The new societal setting

Since the 1980s, changes in the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) operational milieu have been complemented by a series of simultaneous transformations in Israel's domestic environment. These further undermine the old foundations of the traditional rapport between Israelis and their army. Increasingly, their relationship has come to resemble that of partners in a three-legged race who, although bound tightly together and generally heading in the same direction, frequently trip each other on the way.

Three processes account for that development, each of which will here be analyzed in turn.

1 The emergence of a new and less deferential climate of public opinion.
2 The surfacing of new issues affecting societal–military interaction.
3 The appearance of a new set of 'players' on the stage of civil–military relations.

The new arena

Lieutenant General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, IDF CoS 1995–1998, was both a witness to the change in atmosphere between Israelis and their army and, he felt, one of its victims. Born in Tel-Aviv in 1944 and drafted in 1965, Lipkin-Shahak personified the ideal soldier that Ben-Gurion had intended the IDF to produce: skilled, steeped in Zionist values and absolutely committed to service. Originally trained as a paratrooper, Lipkin-Shahak amassed vast combat and command experience. He twice received the IDF's second-highest award for courage on the battlefield before becoming deputy CoS in 1991 and CoS in 1995.

It was in the latter capacity that, in October 1996, Lipkin-Shahak delivered the official IDF eulogy on the first anniversary of the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin, the Prime Minister who had been CoS when Lipkin-Shahak had originally enlisted and with whom in recent years his working relationship had been exceptionally close. Given the CoS's background, the military and civilian dignitaries assembled at Rabin's graveside would certainly have anticipated hearing a highly charged speech, articulating

both private and institutional grief. Less expected, and hence all the more powerful, was the way in which Lipkin-Shahak exploited the occasion and the setting to present an especially biting survey of the disesteem that he felt all around him.

> How far we are, O captain, from the days when a military uniform was a source of pride and self-respect. During the past year, as a result of a process which commenced long ago but which has gained momentum, [we have seen] soldiers and officers, conscripts, professionals and reservists, walking around in our midst with an almost apologetic look on their faces.
>
> (Lipkin-Shahak 1996)

Ten years later, Dan Halutz, when he was CoS, spoke less emotionally, but even more bluntly. Barely five minutes into his testimony to the Winograd Committee on the second Lebanon War, Halutz complained that 'For some time now the IDF has become the national punching-bag, which it has become increasingly possible to hit, beat and criticize' (Halutz 2007: 3).

Weberian analysis offers a broad explanation for the phenomena about which Lipkin-Shahak and Halutz so bitterly complained (Eisenstadt 1987: 403–442). What they were witnessing, it posits, is a Zionist version of 'the routinization of charisma', a process that affects revolutions the world over. Once the primary ends have been secured, the original ardor inevitably cools. Unquestioning commitment to ideals that in the past seemed sublime gives way to frustration with the ordinariness of the new order, which therefore itself becomes the butt of critical scrutiny.

The ebb and flow of Jewish collective memories made Israeli society especially prone to that process and its effects. Israelis who experienced the reconstitution of Jewish statehood in 1948, or who arrived in the country during the next decade, could not have failed to sense the enormity of Israel's meaning. Their children, by contrast, were more likely to take for granted such signs of sovereignty as an independent parliament, government and even an army. No longer mesmerized by the thought that they were making Jewish history and reversing its previous course, they were able to adopt a far less emotive attitude toward the State and its institutions. Independence Day, accordingly, could be celebrated by family picnics, not military parades. Indeed, the discontinuance of the latter rite after 1973 left Israel without any central IDF ceremony at all – not even an equivalent to the anodyne pomp of Trooping the Colour.

Exogenous forces further contributed to the emergence of a new mindset. Beginning in the early 1980s, Israel's economy and society underwent progressive liberalization, in the process becoming increasingly sensitive to changes in values and conduct that have transformed norms and behavior throughout the world. The heightened tempo of technological

inventions and their application also revolutionized the ways individuals work and live, whilst at the same time setting new criteria for the audit of goals and achievements, individual as well as collective. Thanks to these combined developments, normalcy assumed new meaning in Israel. No longer does it denote adherence to a cultural ethos unique to Zionism's ideological heritage. Amongst the rapidly expanding bourgeoisie, in particular, it has instead come to convey conformity with a lifestyle determined by the ever more intrusive dictates of globalization.

As Oz Almog's (2004: 685–780) collection of vignettes nicely demonstrates, trends in Israeli literature and arts provide an especially informative barometer of the consequent change in societal attitudes toward the IDF. The cultural mainstream that in an earlier age had overwhelmingly enveloped *TZAHAL* with a mystique of infallibility was by the mid-1990s clearly projecting far less favorable images. Isolated signs of that development became apparent as early as the sober aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. But the events that did most to ruffle the equanimity previously prevalent in Israel's cultural elite were the Lebanese imbroglio and the two *intifada*s. With those experiences, trust in the authorized version of the IDF's prowess and probity gave way to anxiety and doubt. Its generals began to attract as many iconoclasts as idolaters.

A stream of military-related films, novels, plays and collections of poetry testified to the growing strength of the new mood (Gertz 1998: 193–214). Heroism, self-sacrifice and the glamour of military service, all themes that had been prominent in such genres prior to the 1980s, thereafter tended to be sidelined, and sometimes deliberately satirized. One example is *Gorodich*, a play that opened to a lengthy and successful run in Tel-Aviv in 1993. Written and produced by Hillel Mittlepunkt, who was only born a year after the State of Israel came into existence, *Gorodich* recounts the biography of Shemuel Gonen [Gorodich], the real-life IDF general whose valor during the Six-Day War had made him a public hero in 1967 – and whose failures of command in 1973 had earned him equally widespread notoriety. But the plot concerns far more than the precipitate decline of a military idol. Gonen, who died in 1991 in relative obscurity (he spent his last years diamond prospecting in Africa), pays the price of a hubris that is national as well as personal. The play reaches a pitch when the protagonist delivers a deliberately grotesque rendition of the speech in which, at the height of his fame in 1967, Gonen had applauded 'My Glorious Brothers', his comrades in the armored brigade who 'had looked death in the eye, and forced it to blink'.

In other art forms, the dominant feelings engendered by association with the IDF were confusion and futility. Home-produced films, for instance, dwelled on war's dislocating effects on individual combatants and its power to corrode their values. Thus, *Shtei Etzba'ot mi-Tzidon* (literally 'Two Fingers from Sidon', officially translated as 'Ricochets', 1986), a film which includes footing shot at the IDF's expense by its own film

unit, describes the chaos characteristic of Lebanon in the mid-1980s as seen through the eyes of a thoroughly confused young officer. *Ha-Hayyim al pi Agfa* ('Life According to Agfa', 1992), set in Tel-Aviv at the height of the first *intifada*, suggested that the conflict with the Palestinians had injected violence into everyday Israeli life too. More recently, *Beaufort* (awarded the silver bear at the 2007 Berlin film festival) depicts the disintegrating effects of army life on the soldier's mind and body by focusing on the harrowing experiences of the last Israeli unit to man the Crusader castle of the film's name prior to the IDF's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in the summer of 2000.

Novelists of the post-1982 era likewise focused on the harrowing effects of the military experience. One widely read author was Yehoshua Kenaz (b. 1937), who never made any secret of his left-wing and anti-establishment leanings. Kenaz took one step toward demystifying the IDF in 1986, when he published *Hitganvut Yechidim* ('Individual Training'). In this fictional portrait of an IDF unit consisting of soldiers of limited physical abilities during the 1950s, the central character ultimately commits suicide when he cannot conform to society's expectations that he attain military distinction. In *Machzir Ahavot Kodmot* ('Returning Former Loves', 1997), which tells the story of a youngster who deserts his military unit, Kenaz goes one stage further. Even at the novel's end, readers cannot be certain why the protagonist deserted his base – nor why he eventually decides to return to it. All we know is that his father, like all Israeli society, has become much more tolerant of such behavior than in the past.

In many respects, the new literature merely mirrored changing reality. Whereas veterans of the 1973 fighting tended to accept war as an almost natural occurrence that did not interrupt the basic rhythm of their lives (Lomsky-Feder 2001: 269–293), by the 1990s such was no longer the case. Increasingly, combat came to be regarded as a digression from normalcy – and often an unnecessary one at that. Autobiographical accounts of the military experience, which now tended to be more often written from the perspective of the 'grunt' than the officer, showed that the quotidian concerns of the average soldier were far removed from the heroics of fable. Partly as a result, what has been termed Israel's 'cultural code of captivity' (Gavriely 2006) likewise underwent review. IDF prisoners of war (POWs), previously shamed into silence for not having fought to their last drop of blood, were now encouraged to emerge from the closet of anonymity.

But, it was in the highly sensitive area of military deaths and their commemoration that the new climate became most discernible (Weiss 1997; Bilu and Witztum 2000). In the old scheme of things, each fallen soldier had supposedly died a hero's death, and no loss of life had been in vain. Accidents, negligence, suicides or friendly fire, although all known to occur, were never discussed in public, still less made subjects of widespread investigation. By the 1990s, that was clearly no longer the case (see pp. 74–75). Moreover, after the Yom Kippur War, memorial books began

to acknowledge that military death is not always heroic or glamorous, even in battle, and that to tank and air crews, who made up a large proportion of the 1973 casualties, it can come horribly and painfully (Sivan 1999: 177–204).

Gradually, the sense of personal grief replaced that of national sacrifice. In the old hegemonic climate of opinion, fallen soldiers had been posthumously appropriated by the state and thus made public property. True, Israel has never possessed a monument to an 'unknown soldier'. Every casualty has a name, and most have their own grave (as of July 2007, only 195 missing IDF soldiers presumed dead had not been brought to burial). Almost without exception all soldiers leave behind families, whom the IDF tries to comfort through what has aptly been called a 'moving bureaucracy' of bereavement (Vinitzsky-Seroussi and Ben-Ari 2000) and who are also entitled to financial support from the Ministry of Defense.[1]

Nevertheless, for many years, fathers and mothers, especially, were virtually dispossessed of their unique family status: the entire nation referred to the fallen as its 'sons'. In the new atmosphere that began to emerge in the 1980s, however, parents refuse to play the essentially emblematic roles to which they were thus traditionally assigned. Rather, they demand recognition of the singularity of their tragedy. Brothers-in-arms, too, no longer stand silent-witness at military funerals. By the dawn of the new millennium, the tradition of the stoic salute had given way, especially in conscript formations, to more demonstrative expressions of grief (Rosenthal 2001). In full view of newspaper photographers and television cameras, not to speak of their officers, young men in uniform now wrap their arms around each other and openly weep as the remains of their fallen comrade are interred.

A 'softer' society?

By the 1990s, the frequency of such scenes was generating fears of erosion in the public resilience required to sustain the national struggle for survival. Suspicions first surfaced during the 1991 Gulf War, when bourgeois residents of the Tel-Aviv area, a prime target of night-time Iraqi Scud missile attacks, every evening got into their cars and abandoned the region. In one view, 'This display of weakness led Israeli leaders, such as Yitzchak Rabin, to believe that there was greater urgency in reaching peace with Israel's neighbors even with greater concessions than had been planned' (Inbar 2003: 86–87). Newspapers reported that senior military sources suspected Israeli society of suffering from 'fatigue' (*Haaretz* September 15, 1997; November 15, 1999), a fear apparently buttressed by polls indicating a decline in public readiness to sustain the human and material costs that warfare entails (Arian 1998: Table 13).

Budgetary trends further fueled the flames of anxiety. Nominally, it is true; the annual amounts that the Treasury made available to the IDF

remained staggering (around ten billion US dollars in 2004 alone). As a proportion of both gross national product (GNP) and of overall government expenditure, however, defense budgets between 1985 and 2005 unmistakably declined. They were slashed by almost a quarter between 1985 and 1988, a period of particularly acute crisis in the Israeli economy, and never afterward regained their former levels. Successive Chiefs of Staff regularly rang the alarm. In what became virtually an annual ritual, they used the platforms provided by press interviews and TV chat shows to warn the public that the IDF was being starved of resources. By the 1990s, however, governments and voters were clearly prioritizing a 'social agenda'. Israel's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by over 6 percent per annum between 1990 and 1995, by another 8 percent in 2000 and by over 7 percent more in 2006. But notwithstanding this boom, defense expenditures throughout the 1990s and 2000s were on average pegged at below 10 percent of GDP (as opposed to over 20 percent in 1985 and over 30 percent in 1975). Even in 2006–2007, when public anxiety over the IDF's supposed need for funds was at its height, the figures changed only marginally and, so it was surmised, temporarily (Shiffer 2007).

But the most alarming indicators that Israeli society might be becoming softer emanated from studies conducted by the IDF's Manpower Branch in the mid-1990s and published in April 1997. These indicated that over the previous decade, conscript willingness to enlist in combat units had declined by some 9 percent (Almog 2004: 816–823). Clearly rattled, the Manpower Branch set up various task forces to study the recruitment situation in greater detail and suggest remedies for its apparent ills. But these generally sensible initiatives seemed far too mild a response to what media hyperbole immediately branded 'a crisis in motivation'. Besides, it was feared that conscripts might not be the only weak link in the IDF complement. Deploying the full panoply of statistical data, some professional sociologists forecast that the reserve system, too, was about to collapse (Linn 1997; Ben-Dor *et al.* 2002).

In the event, nothing of the sort occurred. 'Motivation to service' amongst conscripts leveled out, and the massive disaffection of reservists predicted by the survey data failed to materialize. When summonsed to emergency combat duty in the spring of 2002, after a particularly horrendous spate of suicide bombings, and again in the summer of 2006, a week into the second Lebanon War, reservists responded overwhelmingly (a phenomenon to which honest observers responded by re-assessing the evidence that had earlier predicted an unenthusiastic turnout; Ben-Dor and Pedahzur 2006). Society as a whole likewise showed no signs of buckling under the strain of persistent conflict. Even the impression created in 1991 by the nightly flight from Tel-Aviv, it transpired, had been illusory (Solomon 1995). Far from being 'soft', Israelis demonstrated remarkable fortitude – especially when civilians and their property were primary targets of enemy assault.

That was certainly the case during the second *intifada* of 2000–2005, when Palestinian terror attacks and suicide bombings became particularly intense. In the course of over 20,000 recorded attacks of various sorts, 764 civilians were killed, and another 3,100 seriously injured (the figures amongst IDF personnel were 215 and 532 respectively). Nevertheless, a detailed study of public reactions uncovered an overwhelming determination to carry on with as normal a life as circumstances allowed. 'Contrary to expectations – and certainly to a far greater extent than is conceded by the media or some political interests – the Israeli public demonstrated a high degree of resilience' (Elran 2006: 68). Schools and universities continued to function; restaurants, theaters and shopping malls still attracted crowds of customers; and emigration, although up from an annual average of 13,200 persons in the 1990s to about 19,000 in 2000–2004, remained below the levels of the 1980s.

A similar situation prevailed in the summer of 2006. Notwithstanding the shock waves generated by the intensity and duration of the Hizbollah rocket bombardment, Israeli society did not crumble. Panic was avoided even in the Galilee, where the inadequacy of both the civilian and military civil defense arrangements was especially stark. Those who could evacuate did so without fuss. Others were assisted by a welter of privately run philanthropic and welfare organizations, some financed by some pretty shady characters. Elsewhere, Israeli society seemed largely unaffected. GDP fell by only 1.4 percent during the war, the stock exchange remained buoyant, and the national currency retained its dollar exchange value throughout (Rubin 2007: 14–16). In retrospect, indeed, senior officers appear to have been more 'post-heroic' than the public. After the war, a reserve brigadier in the armored corps explicitly accused his superiors of displaying 'excessive sensitivity to human life.' How, he asked, could the IDF expect to win its battles when its high command referred to soldiers as 'children' and committed itself to 'wars without any losses whatsoever' (Finkel 2007)?

New issues

Shifts in popular perceptions of matters military, then, did not produce the dire effects forecast by the alarmists of the 1990s. For all its supposed post-modernism, or even 'post-Zionism', when called upon to make sacrifices in the name of state security, Israeli society, as a whole, responded as readily as in the supposedly more heroic atmosphere of an earlier age. That being so, what had changed? And what gave rise to the disappointment expressed by Lipkin-Shahak and Halutz? The answers seem more complex than initially thought. What the new environment of dissent most undermined was not overall support for the IDF, but the virtual unanimity of the terms in which the military's place in society was defined. Public attitudes toward the IDF, once almost monochrome, became increasingly diversified.

Civil–military relations were not, of course, the only area of public life to be affected by the liquefaction of consensus in Israeli society. If anything, the diffusion that came to characterize public attitudes to the IDF merely mirrored processes even more prevalent in other spheres. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, Israel became an increasingly fragmented society, which shed its earlier conformity to centripetal norms and evinced growing sensitivity to demands that the interests of a specific ethnic community, if not of the individual *qua* individual, replace the collectivity as the center of concern (Shafir and Peled 2002). Thus the *kibbutz* and the *Histadrut* (Labor Federation), the twin totems of the *Yishuv*'s commitment to a socialist society, were shunted to the margins of economic interest. Party political alignments, too, were recast. In the tenth *Knesset*, elected in 1981, the two major traditional political 'camps', represented by the *Ma'arakh* (Labor) and *Likud* parties, had between them directly held 95 mandates, leaving eight other factions to share the remaining 25. Thereafter, however, the combined share of these two conglomerates sunk – to 66 in 1996, to 45 in 1999, to 57 in 2003 and to 48 in 2006. Concurrently, the share of smaller parties that appealed to more atomized communities (religious, ethnic, single-issue interests) proportionately increased. By the time the new millennium dawned, the image of a single, unified Israeli society had evaporated and had been replaced by 'a new system of competing cultures and countercultures' (Kimmerling 2001: 23).

As far as the interface between Israelis and their army is concerned, the changed atmosphere found most obtrusive expression in the emergence of a new agenda, which brought novel issues of contention to the fore. As the following pages will show, some of the topics that began to stir friction grew out of concerns directly related to spheres of IDF responsibility (notably, military service in territories conquered in 1967). But others generated controversy precisely because they advanced essentially civilian principles and values, such as individual rights and gender equality, which their advocates insisted on applying to military life.

The territories

Of all the security-related topics to have engendered disagreement in Israeli public life over the last 40 years, undoubtedly, the most persistent concerns the future of the territories conquered on the west bank of the Jordan river in 1967. Encompassing arguments that appeal to emotion as well as reason, and involving demographic projections as well as geographic realities, the debate over the future disposition of the territories has more or less split Israeli opinion down the middle.

In the present context, particularly relevant are the controversies generated by the IDF's ambiguous role in the unremitting, and sometimes surreptitious, multiplication and expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and, until 2005, the Gaza Strip (Gorenberg 2006). True, the initial

impetus for the settlement enterprise came from various buccaneering bands of civilians, inspired by mixed dosages of millenarianism, nationalism and opportunism. But without governmental connivance no settlement could ever have been established, and without IDF protection many might have withered. In the territories, indeed, the IDF functions under the Defense Ministry's mandate as a dual-purpose military. Its troops do not just constitute a constabulary force, whose principal task is to stamp out Palestinian insurgency. They are also assigned to defend the lives and property of Israeli citizens, whose very presence in the region some soldiers consider to be an original sin.

As early as the late 1970s, Gad Elgazi, then an 18-year-old conscript who later became a professor of philosophy at Tel-Aviv University, insisted on the IDF soldier's right to refuse to serve in the territories on moral grounds, taking his case as far as the Supreme Court, where it was rejected (Shachar 1982). But public interest in conscientious objection did not take off until the phenomenon became more widespread in the first stage of the first Lebanon War launched in June 1982. Israel's first organized conscientious objection movement, *Yesh Gevul* ('There is a Limit', founded in August 1982), initially offered assistance to conscripts and reservists who refused summonses to perform military duties in Lebanon. Only at a second stage of activity did it expand its mandate to cover the territories too. Even then, it took the two *intifada*s to cause a significant rise in the number of servicemen returning their call-up papers. Not until the year 2000 did a distinguished roster of 600 veterans of crack combat units – some of whom were still active reservists – sign the manifesto against service in the territories drafted by a new conscientious objection movement, *Ometz Le-Sarev* ['Courage to Refuse (to Serve)']. Feminist-based conscientious objection, such as is promoted by 'New Profile', a 'Movement for the Civil-ization of Israeli Society' (htww.newprofile.org) is of even more recent origin.

Almost the minute conscientious objection emerged, individual scholars pronounced it worthy of detailed psychological and sociological inquiry. Ruth Linn of Haifa University was particularly prolific producing a copious stream of studies on the subject (Linn 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1996, 1999; see also Chacham 2003). Other observers took a more allegorical approach, and with due acknowledgment to the theories of nationhood propounded in the 1980s by Anthony Giddens and Charles Tilly, approached conscientious objection in Israel as, in the words of one of the most thoughtful analyses, 'an attempt to define "civic space" and thus re-draw boundaries of the Israeli collectivity thereto determined by military service' (Helman 1999). With time, conscientious objection also became the subject of a sizable library of philosophical inquiries and Supreme Court decisions that debated its moral and legal dimensions (Menuchin 1990; Ganz 2004; Sagi and Shapira 2004).

Instructive though these inquiries undoubtedly were, their quantity

belied the diminutiveness of the phenomenon by which they were stimulated. Altogether, only a few hundred Israelis have ever been convicted for refusal to perform military service (130 during the first Lebanon War, 165 during the first *intifada*, barely two dozen in the second *intifada* and just one in the second Lebanon War) – and overwhelmingly, they have been native-born, Ashkenazi, secular, highly educated and bourgeois males. Even if advocates of conscientious objection throughout the years 1982–2006 are added to actual practitioners, the '*refusenik* community' remains unrepresentative of society at large and still numbers only a couple of thousand individuals.

Admittedly, these figures do not include what may be a far larger number of 'gray' conscientious objectors, especially reservists, who manage to come to individual arrangements with their commanding officers, whereby in return for a posting to duties within the green line they agree not to refuse draft orders. Nevertheless, the number remains tiny. *Ometz Le-Sarev* never became a mass movement, and its founders, who soon succumbed to internal dissensions, were so frustrated by the paucity of support that they dismantled the organization in 2003. Altogether, 'It has become clear that the refuseniks have failed to engender the widespread civil protest that influences patterns of security policy or challenges the political system' (Dloomy 2005: 696).

Precisely, the same is true of right-wing conscientious objection, which posits the right of soldiers to refuse to carry out orders designed to dismantle Jewish settlements in the territories or otherwise relinquish Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land. Based on a version of religious-Zionist ideology that considers the entire Land of Israel to be Jewry's God-given and hence irrevocable patrimony, right-wing conscientious objection first became a subject of public speculation in 1993, with the announcement of the Oslo accords (Naor 2001). But the prospect became far more tangible in December 2003, when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced his intention to effect a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria. Some senior rabbis in the national religious community responded by issuing statements that instructed those of their disciples who served in the IDF to refuse whatever orders they might be given to implement the government's programs. The establishment of settlements in the regions 'liberated' in 1967, the rabbis ruled, had been a *mitzvah* (religious commandment). By the same token, participation in their dismantlement would signify a sinful absence of confidence in the Almighty's salvation.[2]

For months prior to the implementation of the 2005 disengagement program, pundits avidly debated the effect that such pronouncements might exert on the behavior of national–religious troops. Opponents of Sharon's policy maintained a website (www.seruv.co.il) which regularly warned that conscientious objection would be widespread. Even supposedly more hard-headed observers expressed anxiety. On the morning of

August 14, 2005, when the disengagement operation commenced, the military correspondent of *Ma'ariv*, Israel's second most popular daily, pronounced that the possibility of widespread conscientious objection by religious troops presented the IDF with 'an existential test'.

Such projections turned out to be wildly exaggerated (S.A. Cohen 2007d). Testifying to the *Knesset*'s Foreign Affairs and Security Committee in September 2005, a month after completing disengagement, CoS Halutz, stated that just 63 soldiers had been tried for refusing orders during the operation (50 conscripts; five petty officers and three other ranks in professional service; and five reservists). Doubtless several more avoided inclusion in that list by quietly managing to have themselves transferred from units directly engaged in disengagement. Even so, the overall picture remains clear. The right-wing variety of conscientious objection, very much like its left-wing brand, is a decidedly minority viewpoint. At no stage in its history has it concealed an iceberg of mass dissent lurking beneath the waterline of the national consensus.

One other phenomenon remains worthy of attention. Whereas conscientious objection as an expression of political opinion has thus remained dormant, its expression by male (and some female) pacifists – who are opposed to military action of any kind – has shown some signs of increase. Once limited to a tiny group of Jehovah's Witnesses (Shelach 1978), pacifist claims were between 2000 and 2003 reportedly advanced by over 550 such petitioners (*Haaretz* July 18, 2003). Privately interviewed in 2006, IDF Human Resource staff admitted that by then the number had doubled. They attributed the growth to the current fashion amongst Israeli youngsters to undertake extended trips to India and/or the Far East after completing their conscript service. On their return, many of the trekkers apply to be released from reserve duty on the grounds that, whilst abroad, they had developed a deep personal abhorrence of violence and militarism in any shape or form.

Significantly, the IDF has begun to treat this new phenomenon with unprecedented flexibility. Early in the new millennium, military authorities for the first time seemed implicitly to distinguish between 'selective conscientious objection', as articulated by applicants who based their petitions for exemption from service on political opposition to duty in the territories, and 'full conscientious objection', as expressed in the applicants' claims that service would irremediably compromise their pacifist beliefs. The IDF still treats the former as an anathema, and as recently as 2003–2004 pursued a group of selective conscientious objectors through the courts with relentless determination (Rotbard *et al.* 2004). 'Full conscientious objection', by contrast, enjoys more toleration. Indeed, the Human Resources branch has considerably expanded the number and powers of its 'Conscience Committees', as the tribunals that adjudicate the veracity of individual claims to pacifism are termed. Particularly noteworthy are changes introduced since 2002, when Chief Justice Barak publicly criti-

cized their all-military composition. Standing orders now require that the tribunals meet more frequently than in the past, and that their membership also includes at least one civilian.

'Conditional' service

Beginning in the mid-1990s, media pundits warned that 'draft dodging' was becoming prevalent. Potential conscripts, they reported, were applying in droves for exemptions to the draft, often on patently spurious grounds. Figures occasionally released by official sources ostensibly substantiated that picture. Between 1998 and 2000, they showed applications for release from service on grounds of psychological disability and 'adjustment difficulties' (an IDF code for lack of motivation) had grown, respectively, by 12 and 45 percent. Whereas in 1998, 3.62 percent of the potential cohort had been released on either of those grounds; by 2000, the figure had crept up to 4.05 percent (State Comptroller 2002: 122–126) and in July 2007 topped 5 percent. Worse still, 'motivation for service' – measured by conscript applications to be assigned to combat duties – had slipped by a percentage point when compared to 2006 (*Haaretz* July 18, 2007).

On closer examination, however, the overall picture turns out to be far less lurid than the media initially assumed (S.A. Cohen 2007f). For one thing, and despite all the brouhaha, many combat units still report a surfeit of applicants. Second, although declining, 'motivation for service' still remains well above the 70 percent line, which by any contemporary international standard is very high indeed. Finally, *hishtamtut* ('draft dodging'), even though certainly a growing phenomenon, still remains marginal. Indeed, given the lack of luster that now attaches to service in the IDF – an institution that has not fought a single indisputably successful campaign since 1982, that for over 20 years has required its conscripts to carry out a range of unpleasant and often distasteful duties in the occupied territories, that in 2005 sent them to evict fellow-Jews from their homes in the Gaza Strip, and whose commanders performed so poorly in the second Lebanon War of 2006 – the wonder is not that the proportion of 'shirkers' has reached 5 percent, but that it is not much higher.

The shift of attitude, it transpires, has been far more subtle. Unabashedly, material elements have been injected into the national discourse with regard to military service, which was once almost entirely permeated by ideological motifs. The first to articulate a new tone were reservists, groups of whom sporadically declared that their response to draft summonses would be conditional on the satisfaction of specified tangible demands. Thus, beginning in the late 1990s, university students on several occasions reportedly threatened not to turn up for reserve duty unless assured by Israel's academic institutions that their study-loads would take into account their enforced absence from the lecture hall and laboratory during their service (e.g. *Haaretz* December 31, 2006). More

ominously, in 1999, almost 100 reservists who served as pilots and air crew announced that they would not fly any further missions unless the Ministry of Defense guaranteed to pay the extra premiums required to guarantee that, should they suffer injury whilst on duty, they would be fully insured against loss of (civilian) earning power (*Haaretz* January 27, 1999; the required legislation was soon rushed through the *Knesset*).

Levy *et al.* (2007) observe parallel processes amongst conscript elements. They find that sons and daughters of secular bourgeois families, especially, now apply to the military – and especially to military commemoration rituals held in high schools – the change in values associated with an atmosphere that prioritizes the individual over the collective and that therefore undermines the old 'warrior' ethos. When it comes to recruitment, these population groups imitate reservists by also entering into 'bargaining relationships' with the IDF, thereby transforming service from an 'obligation' to a 'contract'. The potential draftees are certainly prepared to enlist – and even undertake the rigors and expense of privately run premilitary training courses before doing so. In return, however, they now expect military service to satisfy their personal expectations: of self-fulfillment, achievement and the attainment of marketable skills. Notwithstanding the occasional obscurity of the sociological jargon, the implication is clear. In order to maintain the existing draft levels and rates of propensity to service, the IDF must adapt itself to the new 'conditional' ambience that now attaches to both conscript and reserve duty.

Gender issues

Changing domestic norms in relation to gender require similarly drastic adjustments.

Superficially, the IDF has made most progress with respect to gays. Regulations enacted in 1993 for the first time explicitly specified the right of homosexuals to be drafted and declared that sexual minorities would receive assignments 'according to the criteria in force for all candidates for military service'. The new provisions certainly marked an advance over their predecessors, which had barred sexual minorities from positions considered sensitive from a security point of view (Gross 2000; Belkin and Levitt 2001). But their practical effects seem, nevertheless, to have been marginal. In combat units, especially, the overall IDF cultural ethos remains preponderantly masculine (Kaplan and Ben-Ari 2000). Personnel authorities, far from maintaining the momentum observable in the mid-1990s, thereafter reverted to earlier practice. Youngsters who declare their homosexuality prior to conscription (the numbers are reportedly minuscule) are simply not drafted. Those who emerge from the closet during the course of service are advised to accept discharge.

Sexual harassment has required more drastic treatment. Prior to the 1990s, there existed a general consensus that sexual prowess goes hand in

hand with military accomplishment. Moshe Dayan, probably modern Israel's most famous soldier, had earned an especially widespread reputation for excellence in both areas, and lesser mortals were excused for wishing to emulate his example. Even in the 1980s, when overall societal attitudes toward sexual molestation were patently shifting, senior IDF sources still inclined to tolerance. In 1985, the prevalent mind-set respecting sexual harassment was expressed by the IDF spokesman of the day, Brigadier General Efraim Lapid: 'Whilst we must not ignore the injury to the individual in the military community, we would be wrong to blow this topic out of all proportion' (cited in Barnoi 1997: 84).

Legislation enacted in 1998, making sexual harassment in all walks of life a criminal offense, indicated that so nonchalant an attitude could no longer be sustained. Clearer warnings that the IDF had to change its mores were sounded the following year. In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court upheld the appeal of a woman who petitioned against the promotion of Brigadier General Nir Galili to the rank of major general in command of a field corps on the grounds that he had raped her several years earlier when he had been her immediate superior. A penetrating analysis of that case (Shaked 2002: 443–478) shows just how significant it was. True, Galili was not removed from his present command, still less cashiered, as many feminists insisted should have been the case (Sered 2000: 95). Otherwise, however, the three judges, all women, came down firmly on the side of the appellant. They explicitly took no account of the fact that Galili had already been tried by an IDF disciplinary tribunal, which had in 1996 punished him by delaying his promotion for two years. Still more demonstratively, the Court also refused to be swayed by testimony given on Galili's behalf by Shaul Mofaz, the CoS, who declared that failure to promote Galili would endanger the IDF's operational capabilities. 'The considerations that have to be weighed', Justice Strassberg-Cohen pronounced, were entirely different. Specifically:

> the supreme importance of the IDF's moral probity; the need to uproot the phenomenon of sexual exploitation in situations of the subordination of soldiers to their officers; the need to strengthen public confidence in the IDF, not just as a professionally efficient body, but also as one that possesses credibility, probity, and a high moral standard, especially in the context of relationships between commanders and their soldiers.
>
> (Shaked 2002: 459)

How wide the gulf between military practice and civilian norms in this area had become was confirmed by the fate of Major General Yitzchak Mordechai, a decorated war hero who had risen through the ranks to command each of the IDF's territorial commands and, after his retirement from service in 1999, was appointed Minister of Defense. In the new

atmosphere, however, Mordechai's predatory sexual reputation suddenly became a burden rather than an asset. Accused in 2000 of having in the past molested two woman soldiers, Mordechai was forced to resign from the Government and, when convicted in 2001, gave up his *Knesset* seat too. Although he subsequently won his fight to avoid being stripped of his rank (a decision confirmed by the Military Court of Appeals against the advice of the Chief Military Advocate), his public career was in shreds. IDF practices that had once been tolerated, and often mildly applauded, were now unacceptable.

Not even two high-profile trials, however, can change an entire institutional culture. Hence, the IDF found it necessary in subsequent years to take proactive steps to increase troop awareness of the criminality of sexual harassment, inter alia by distributing educational material (pamphlets and films) and by empowering tribunals to nullify the service contracts of career soldiers convicted of sexual molestation. Even so, rape remains a problem, whilst other forms of misdemeanor are rife. Testifying before the *Knesset*'s committee on the status of women in 2004, the chief of staff's adviser on women's affairs reported that one in every five woman soldiers reported suffering sexual harassment (most of the accused were their superiors), and that complaints in this area jumped by 43 percent between 2000 and 2001 and by a further 78 percent in the subsequent two years (*Haaretz* May 18, 2004 and January 22, 2007). The State Comptroller (2006: 31–34) was quick to warn that, with those figures at hand, the IDF cannot possibly hope to inspire societal confidence in its handling of gender issues simply by mouthing platitudes.

New players

As such comments indicate, the conventional institutional guardians of civilian supremacy over the military had by 2006 certainly become more vocal advocates of the need to submit the IDF to new standards of conduct. A review of the State Comptroller's Annual Reports shows that ever since the 1980s, successive incumbents of that office had evinced progressively greater willingness to delve into what had once been considered sacrosanct areas of IDF responsibility. Recruitment procedures, placement criteria, training agendas, gender issues, acquisition policies and maintenance schedules – all were subject to detailed scrutiny, thus incidentally transforming the reports themselves into invaluable sources of information otherwise unobtainable. Of late, members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee have exhibited similar tendencies. In 2005, they adopted the *Report of the Public Committee for the Examination of Parliamentary Supervision over the Security System*, which, inter alia, required regular and scheduled appearances on the part of the CoS (*Knesset Protocol* March 22, 2005). In 2006, in the wake of the Lebanon War, the Committee took another unprecedented step, when conducting

its own public hearings into complaints by reservists of military incompetence.

Nevertheless, the influence of such developments must not be exaggerated. As several studies point out, even in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the instruments of government ostensibly responsible for supervising the military wield little effective power. On this point, a memorandum, compiled in 2004 by Major General (res.) Aviezer Ya'ari, a former comptroller of the defense system at the State Comptroller's Office, was particularly blunt. Drawing on a lifetime of intimate acquaintance with the civil–military interface (prior to retiring from service Ya'ari had headed the research division of the Military Intelligence Directorate), he concluded that much of his effort to analyze civilian supervision over the military in Israel had been wasted. In the last analysis, no such thing existed (Ya'ari 2004).

The almost complete absence of what Feaver (2003) terms 'civilian monitoring systems over military conduct' is particularly stark at the very highest level of decision-making. Formally, of course, the IDF adheres to the conventions of democratic government. Hence, not even at moments of extreme civil–military crisis, such as the tense 'waiting' period prior to the outbreak of the Six-Day War, has a military coup d'état ever been a realistic possibility (Gluska 2007). In every other important respect, however, the security establishment, itself dominated by the IDF, has persistently exerted a stranglehold on virtually every aspect of Israel's strategic thinking and diplomatic activity. The belated establishment of a National Security Council in 2000, a reform originally advocated in 1974 by the Agranat Commission established after the Yom Kippur War and resisted by the IDF ever since, did little to change that situation. As before, the IDF continued to enjoy three decisive advantages in what Michael (2006) terms the 'discourse space' between the military and civilian echelons: a virtual monopoly over access to raw intelligence data, strategic as well as tactical; command of the largest institutions in the country dedicated to the analysis of those materials and the formulation of policy responses; the assurance of a sympathetic hearing at the Cabinet table, where the presence of persons who only recently retired from military service at senior levels has always been conspicuous.

Yehuda Ben-Meir (1995), who late in the 1970s served a short spell as Israel's deputy Foreign Minister, long ago pointed out the deficiencies in that combination. By permitting the IDF to play roles that were substantive as well as advisory, it deprived Israel of strategic flexibility. More recently, Zeev Maoz (2006), a former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel-Aviv University, has presented a far more critical audit. Applying a sledgehammer rather than a scalpel, Maoz finds the civilian void at the heart of Israel's security and foreign policies responsible for a catalog of faults serious enough to carry a whiff of treason. Absence of civilian oversight, he charges, accounts for the wanton arrogance with

which Israel has so often, and so unnecessarily, wielded its military might ('Most of Israel's wars were due either to its aggressive designs… miscalculations in conflict management strategies, or avoidable'); for the converse pattern of risk-shunning behavior in the management of peace diplomacy ('Israel has almost never initiated any significant peace effort. It was as responsible for the failure of peace-related efforts as were the Arab states or the Palestinians'); for several purportedly hair-brained schemes founded on the misguided assumption that Israel can use violence to manipulate the domestic system of other states and actors in the region; and for her 'ability to run a covert and unsupervised nuclear program that is driven by technocrats rather than by strategists and political leaders'.

Be that as it may, once attention shifts to the new issues that now dominate the military–societal agenda, a different pattern emerges. Although here too the government and its agencies often dance to the military's tune, IDF dominance is by no means assured. Rather, with respect to the rights of the individual soldier vis-à-vis the military system, especially, senior echelons in the IDF hierarchy frequently find their views and policies challenged by an impressively wide spectrum of alternative voices, some formally orchestrated by institutionalized frameworks, others not.

Three clusters of such groupings have attained particular prominence.

- Individual service personnel;
- Interest groups and lobbies acting on behalf of specific causes; and
- Agencies that lay claim to a wider mandate as either official or unofficial watchdogs over military action.

Although the activities of these three clusters frequently overlap, in the pages that follow, the ways in which they interact with the IDF will be analyzed sequentially.

Service personnel

The *Haganah* and the *PALMACH* bequeathed to the IDF a tradition of informal camaraderie and freedom of expression whose strength and influence Statehood did little to diminish. Hence, IDF officers – all of whom gain their commissions by rising through the ranks – have never been allowed the same degree of control over soldiers' lives frequently exercised by other militaries; neither are the rigors of Israeli army life particularly harsh. Thanks to the relative intimacy of Israeli society, informal channels of protest against alleged wrongdoings have always been plentiful; and formal instruments are also not a new development. The office of the IDF Ombudsman (*Netziv Kevilot ha-Hayalim*), headed by a civilian mandated to investigate individual allegations of military mistreatment, was established as early as 1972, an era when the IDF's prestige was at its height. A study of the Ombudsman's subsequent annual reports shows that, allow-

ing for fluctuations in the intensity of combat, the type and number of cases with which it has dealt has remained remarkably consistent. In the 1970s, as in the early 2000s, commander–subordinate relations topped the list of complaints, followed by allegations of failure to receive adequate medical treatment. Moreover, since 1986, the proportion of conscripts filing complaints has persistently been greater than that of reservists and – even more so – regulars.

But this impression of continuity is deceptive. It masks the fact that the IDF Ombudsman, although undoubtedly still an important channel of communication between service personnel and the IDF, is no longer the only one of its kind. Increasingly, its role has been supplanted by a plethora of other mechanisms, many of which have emerged spontaneously outside the official military framework, and in response to grassroots demands for alternative sources of information and advice.

Initial indications of the new trend appeared in the early 1990s, with the publication of 'guides' to the IDF, some addressed to prospective recruits by former senior officers (e.g. Eldar 1990, 1995), which conventionally included specific chapters devoted to the rights of the individual soldier. Within a decade, however, the place of the printed word had been supplanted by a rash of websites, such as www.army.co.il and www.hakshev.co.il (for new recruits) and ipaper.co.il/cgi-bin/v.cgi?id=miluim and www.eytanut.org.il (for reservists). Despite differences of style, all share several basic characteristics: an extensive archive of data; links to articles on conditions of military service in the daily press and to relevant Supreme Court decisions; a forum for the discussion of common grievances; and – most important – a 'question-and-answer' portal in which qualified attorneys (some of whom maintain websites of their own) post responses to specific queries. It is doubtless a tribute to the popularity and influence of such sites that the IDF now provides a similar service on www.aka.idf.il.

Other military–institutional responses to the winds of change are older. As early as 1993, the Manpower Branch modified its previous practice of allocating new conscripts to whichever non-volunteer units the recruitment center considered them most suited. Instead, it inaugurated a new system, explicitly designed to take account of the enlistees' own wishes. Current regulations insure that, prior to their enlistment, prospective recruits receive a letter informing them of the placements for which their psychometric tests and physical condition make them eligible to apply, with the assurance that – within the limits dictated by the military's overall manpower needs – their wishes will be considered. One knock-on effect has been the fragmentation of the IDF's own voice. Recognizing the competitive conditions that now prevail in the marketplace of troop allocations, individual branches in the late 1990s broke with the convention that the IDF present recruits with a monolithic face. Instead, different arms now vie for the attention of youngsters through the medium of state-of-the-art

websites, each of which proclaims the virtues of its own sponsor. Thus, prospective recruits can now do some virtual shopping and compare the attraction of service in the ground forces, as portrayed in the website www1.idf.il/MAZI/Site/Templates/Homepage.asp, with those of the Air Force and Navy in the websites, respectively, www.iaf.org.il/Templates/Homepage/Homepage.aspx; and www1.idf.il/Navy/Site/Templates/Homepage.asp?lang=he.

Interest groups and lobbies

As from the 1980s, the number of registered Israeli civil associations, each in possession of its own agenda, has grown by leaps and bounds: from just 3,000 in 1982, to 27,000 by 1998 and to almost 32,000 in 2005. Over time, this pot-pourri of civil rights NGOs, gender activists, public-minded academics, religious organizations, environmentalists, philanthropic bodies and ad hoc regional interests has become increasingly vociferous in demands that government agencies redress alleged wrongs and increasingly adept at appealing to the Supreme Court when any individual group considers an injustice to have been committed. Certainly, not all of these bodies promote causes of military relevance. But the quantity of those that do remains large enough to require the IDF to relate to whatever issues are raised.

Often, ad hoc responses suffice. Thus, an environmentalist group's demands that armor exercises be relocated in order to protect wild life in the Negev desert need go no further than the desk of the local brigadier. Even when a particular interest seems to warrant more senior attention, all that is required is the courtesy of a single meeting (such as that which CoS Halutz had in October 2006 with spokesmen for gay rights in the IDF). In other areas of public concern, however, more systematic attention has been necessary. Thus, IDF contacts with feminist lobbyists are now handled by the Chief of Staff's Adviser on Women's Affairs, an office established in 2001 when the IDF abolished the post of *Ketzinat Chen Rashit* (Chief Women's Corp Officer), which feminists had long considered to be more of a hindrance to gender equality than a help (see p. 123). Likewise, the Human Resources branch maintains a unit, *mador beinish*, whose primary function is to liaise with the principals of rabbinical academies with respect to their pupils' conditions of service.

Still more consequential, certainly from an operational perspective, has been the need to respond to groups with competing interests in IDF policy in the territories. One pole of opinion is represented by the bevy of local and international human rights NGO's that now monitor Israeli activities vis-à-vis the Palestinian population, paying as much attention to the IDF's conduct of routine surveillance at checkpoints as to more serious charges of unwarranted uses of force (Steinberg 2006).

Jewish settlers and their representative Council (*Moetzet Yesha*) have an

obvious interest in prodding the IDF to show equal consideration – at the least – for their own safety and welfare. Demands to that effect very much increased during the second *intifada*, but in fact predated that outbreak. Ever since the 1970s, settlers and their leaders had cultivated working relationships with various levels of the IDF structure, stretching from the members of the units assigned to defend specific settlements right up to the COs of the regional commands (Sandak 1998; Zertal and Eldar 2004). Thanks to those contacts, and to the support of a powerful political lobby, they have managed to exert a degree of influence over IDF behavior – and indeed over all Israeli policy – vastly in excess of their demographic weight (less than 10 percent of all Jewish Israelis). In stages, senior staffs in both Central and Southern commands were persuaded, albeit some more easily than others, to accommodate various settler demands for security and protection. Thus, they assigned growing numbers of troops to the defense of individual settlements; they cooperated with the various quasi-militia frameworks established by the settlers; and they arranged for the transfer of settlers in the reserves to the IDF units responsible for local area defense (*haganah merchavit*). After 2000, they also acquiesced in most settler demands for travel restrictions on local Palestinian traffic and for the imposition of tighter curfews.

Parents

Strictly speaking, parents do not constitute a lobby at all, since they are not organized within a single organizational framework. Even so, they are probably more powerful than any other pressure group with which the IDF now has to contend.

Awareness of the need to take some account of parents' interest in the welfare of their children is also not novel. 'Let every Hebrew mother know that she has entrusted the fate of her son to commanders worthy of the charge', a valedictory admonition bequeathed to the IDF by Ben-Gurion in 1963, has long been engraved in gold letters on the wall of the General Staff conference room in Tel-Aviv. Nevertheless, for many years military institutional relationships with parents were limited and impersonal. Once their child was conscripted, parents received only the military post office box number of the recruit's base, visits to which were restricted to specified occasions.

Those barriers of seclusion no longer exist. Ever since the early 1990s, the Manpower Branch (which as a concession to political correctness was in 2005 renamed the 'Human Resources Branch') has felt it necessary to conduct local 'parents' evenings', at which officers of senior rank address the families of high-school pupils who are about to be conscripted. Likewise, 'Parents' Days', held within weeks of induction, have become obligatory fixtures on the calendar of basic training bases, where commanders introduce themselves to the conscripts' families (including, often, their

siblings and grandparents) and supply their own personal telephone numbers for use in case of need. The IDF now accepts weekend visits to a base by a soldier's family as routine (Herzog 2004); in times of emergency, such as the second Lebanon War, it also accepts parental inquiries on specially established 'hot lines'.

Most parents exploit the opportunities thus offered for involvement in matters military in order to improve the service conditions of their individual children. Some, however, promote causes of wider relevance. Probably, the most famous were the 'Four Mothers', an ad hoc quartet whose sons served in combat units. Jolted into action by the 73 deaths caused by a collision between two military helicopters transporting troops across Israel's northern border in February 1997, the 'Four Mothers' advocated a complete and immediate IDF withdrawal from southern Lebanon. Their campaign mushroomed into a nationwide movement, which undoubtedly influenced government decision-making and had top military brass insisting that a distinction be made between parental involvement (in Hebrew *me'uravut*), which is to be encouraged, and parental interference (*hitarvut*), which ought to be strictly curtailed (El 1998; Sela 2007: 67–70).

Where bereavement was concerned, it became increasingly difficult to draw any such line. Here, too, recent research (Katz 2007) identifies the 1980s and the 1990s as the critical decades of change. Thereto, the vast majority of parents of fallen soldiers accepted that military cemeteries adhere to the principle of across-the-board uniformity of design and text. Indeed, a survey conducted in 1994 found that over 90 percent of all war graves and epitaphs still conformed to a single standard. But thereafter, the mood shifted rapidly. Brushing aside the opposition of the Public Council for Soldier Commemoration (the representative body of bereaved families charged with responsibility for implementing the relevant legislation enacted in 1950), by the year 2006, individual parents had asserted an entire string of rights: to add to the gravestone civilian equivalents to the Hebrew dates; to specify the names of the deceased's siblings and the circumstances of death; to supplement the official inscription with an individualized text; and to decorate the gravesite with shrubbery, candle-holders and various personal artifacts (Katz 2007: 278–279, 288–289). Some of the changes resulted from specific petitions to the Supreme Court and/or new legislation. But others did not await formal authorization. As members of the Public Council haplessly admitted, individual parents had simply taken the law into their own hands, forcing Knesset legislators to retroactively sanction what had become common practice.

Parental assertiveness was by no means restricted to commemoration. By the 1990s, next of kin were insisting that the cause of death also required investigation. Especially was that so in cases involving training accidents and 'friendly fire', which raised suspicions of command culpability. Some bereaved mothers sought solace by composing anti-war poetry;

others promoted nationwide campaigns for tightening military safety precautions.[3] But not all found the inner strength to follow such paths. Two bereaved mothers felt so driven to despair by alleged bureaucratic stonewalling that they committed suicide, leaving public notes that accused the IDF of now being doubly guilty – for their own deaths as well as those of their sons (Lebel 2006).

Once the rule of silence that had previously guaranteed military immunity to parental criticism was thus broken, there followed an escalatory cycle of further stipulations (Doron and Lebel 2003). Sometimes singly and sometimes in groups, bereaved parents demanded that individual officers suspected of responsibility for the death of a soldier be brought to trial in a civil court; that judicial inquiries into military accidents, such as the 1997 helicopter collision, cease to be an IDF monopoly and instead be entrusted to independent civilian tribunals, on which parents can be represented; and that officers even marginally responsible for unnecessary deaths be barred from promotion. A further threshold was crossed in the wake of the 2006 second Lebanon War. In marked contrast to their forbears in 1973 and 1982, bereaved parents on this occasion did not limit their demands for accountability solely to the political echelon nominally responsible for initiating the fighting. On the contrary, they almost uniformly demanded that the CoS too accept responsibility for the fate of their children and therefore resign his post (*Haaretz* January 1, 2007).

The watchdogs

Much of the effectiveness of the new pressure groups has stemmed from their ability to exploit the opportunities presented by the increasingly critical attitude toward the IDF now displayed by Israel's courts and the media. Reversing the decades of tradition, both have moved from a relationship with the IDF that was fundamentally collusive to a posture that is far more challenging. In the process, journalists and judges have divested themselves of the attitude, dominant in the 1950s and still common in the early 1970s, which maintained that 'security matters', an umbrella term used to cloak a multitude of military and quasi-military issues, justified media self-censorship and judicial non-intervention alike (Lebel 2002: 205–223, 2005: 151–179). Instead, they now see themselves responsible for publicizing and legitimizing the public concerns about IDF conduct that the new pressure groups voice.

Media and judicial intrusiveness in military affairs has not been an autonomous development. Rather, it has grown out of two wider processes. One is the progressive heterogeneity of the Israeli press, radio and television. Increasing fragmentation and competitiveness has not only terminated the top-down era of controlled information prevalent in the early decades of statehood with respect to the civilian media (Caspi and Limor 1999). Even more markedly, it has also affected the IDF's own

radio network (*Galei Tzahal*), which has abandoned most of its erstwhile pretences to specialize in military themes and has instead courted – and gained – popularity by presenting a lively repertoire of entertainment programs (Shefer-Mikhles 2001).

The second process of wider relevance responsible for the prominence of the new watchdogs has been the increasing judicial activism of Israel's Supreme Court, especially under the presidency of Aaron Barak, who served as Chief Justice from 1995 to 2006. Quite apart from promoting legislation designed to insure individual rights, Barak (2006: 263–281) was also determined to expand the range of issues deemed to lie within the Court's competence as the High Court of Justice. To that end, he deliberately encouraged citizen applications for legal redress. Such was his success that by the end of the twentieth century petitions to reverse decisions taken by governmental agencies, or to restrain intended government action, had become routine features of Israeli public life. It has been calculated (Dor and Hofnung 2006) that in 1997, when the number of accepted petitions was 1,631 (it grew to 2,306 in 2006), Israel's Supreme Court was already hearing 13 times more cases than its US counterpart and over 16 times more than the Canadian Supreme Court.

The pace of Supreme Court citizen-friendly activism vis-à-vis the IDF certainly accelerated after Barak's appointment as Chief Justice in 1996. An especially significant threshold was crossed in 1999, when by a majority of 10–1, the Court insisted that the military justice system adhere to the civil rights principles embodied in the *Basic Law: Respect for the Individual and His Rights* (enacted in 1992). Nevertheless, the process of judicial intrusion into IDF affairs was not entirely dependent on the force of Barak's personality, redoubtable though it undoubtedly was. As the Attorney General of the day pointed out in 1997 (Rubinstein 1997), under the presidency of Barak's predecessor, Chief Justice Meir Shamgar, the court had already begun to apply the *Basic Law* to several areas of military as well as civilian life. Two instances generated especial public interest. In 1994, by a 3–2 majority, the Shamgar Court ruled that the Air Force's refusal to admit Ms. Alice Miller to its fighter pilot training course, solely because she was a woman (in every other way she was fully qualified for enrollment) contradicted the principle of gender equality. The following year the Court, by a 4–1 majority, backtracked on the position established two decades previously, when an earlier Supreme Court had refused to allow bereaved parents to alter the standard epitaph on the military gravestones of their fallen sons (Katz 2007: 211–214). When harnessed to the engine of media pressure (see pp. 135–138), judicial intervention could seemingly carry all before it.[4]

Court attitudes toward IDF operations in the territories have been less intrusive. After studying a multitude of relevant decisions, David Kretzmer found few instances in which the Supreme Court took a stand that explicitly contradicted an IDF position. Overall, he concludes, as far as the

territories are concerned, the jurisprudence of Court decisions has been 'blatantly government-minded' (Kretzmer 2002: 188). Although the Court has accepted Palestinian claims to a locus standi – and in so doing has gone further than any other occupying power in history – its judgments tend to focus more on matters of procedure than of substance. Thus, not even under Barak did the Court explicitly outlaw house demolitions, detentions without trial or deportations; it simply required that all such actions be preceded by hearings. Similarly, and again like its predecessor, Barak's court tiptoed around the potentially convulsive issue of Jewish settlements, whose legality it never addressed head-on.

Even so, and as is shown by Amichai Cohen (2005), the picture is not altogether one of judicial paralysis. For one thing, although seldom explicitly overturning military decisions, Barak's Court barely gave as much credit to the benevolence of the military authorities as did that headed by Shamgar. Instead, and especially during the 1990s, it began to exert far more informal pressure on the IDF than had once been the case, usually prior to formal hearings. This technique perceptibly extended what Kretzmer himself terms 'the shadow of the law'. Aware of the Court's new attitude, the military administration was by the end of the 1990s recognizing the validity of over 30 percent of Palestinian petitions before they actually reached judicial review. Second, in other areas, the Court has laid down new ground rules. It has insisted that the location of the security fence under construction in Judea and Samaria take reasonable account of the interests of the Palestinians most likely to be affected by its route; it has called attention to the need to provide Palestinians in combat zones with essential humanitarian aid; it has warned that it finds unacceptable the 'neighbor maneuver' – a practice whereby troops seeking to enter a house suspected of harboring a terrorist use local Palestinian residents as human shields; and it has placed procedural restrictions on operations designated 'targeted killings'.

All this activity has not necessarily made the IDF into a more ethical army (see Chapter 7). But it has certainly heightened its awareness of the need to take account of the presence of a new actor in the arena of societal–military discourse.

The new media–military relationship

Paradigm shifts are still more evident in the attitude of the popular press toward many aspects of IDF life and behavior.

One sign of the new climate is the demise of 'The Editors' Council', a forum that had long provided the government with a media safety valve on security issues. Established in 1949, the Council gave institutional form to a bargain struck between Israel's political elites and her press barons. Government ministers and senior officials (including military personnel) would provide editors with regular off-the-record briefings on security

affairs; in return for being made privy to state secrets, the editors promised not to reveal the information thus received to their publics. During the course of the 1990s, however, this cozy system collapsed. One after another, editors unilaterally withdrew from the Council, which to all intents and purposes had by the end of the twentieth century ceased to function (Peri 2000: 184–213).

As a result, relations between the press and the IDF have come to resemble a free-for-all. Gone for ever, it now appears, are the 'one size fits all' days, when the IDF could expect the media, and indeed the entire country, to hang on the words of a single, officially designated military analyst – a position filled with great success by Major General Chaim Herzog in 1967 and Major General Aharon Yariv in 1973. Even before the collapse of public confidence in official military briefings during the 2006 Lebanon campaign, it had become clear that no IDF Spokesperson could hope to attain the oracular status enjoyed as recently as the Gulf War of 1991 by Brigadier General Nachman Shai, who then filled that post (Shai 2001: 74–77).

Even more emphatically obsolete, it appears, is Israel's antiquated system of military censorship regulations and gagging orders, some of which have been explicitly questioned by the Supreme Court and others occasionally exposed to public ridicule (Blumenblatt 2005). Especially farcical were the censor's extended, and ultimately unsuccessful, efforts to prevent the publication of a Hebrew translation of Dr. Avner Cohen's, *Israel and the Bomb* (published by Columbia University Press in New York in 1998), on the grounds that the book might expose what has been termed 'the world's worst-kept secret' (Negbi 2005: 183–199).

The change in atmosphere has been abetted by the emergence of a new breed of military correspondents. Once considered virtual courtiers at the camps of individual generals, journalists now play a far more ambivalent role. Although still maintaining close contact with specific officers (so much so that during the 2006 war, CoS Halutz demanded to see a printout of the numbers contacted by each of his commanders on their mobile telephones), the uses to which they put the information that they thus obtain remains unpredictable. Where Israel's armed forces are concerned, journalists clearly now consider themselves shapers of opinion, and not merely its disseminators. Hence, even when most liberally embedded in IDF units, as was certainly the case during the 2006 Lebanon War, journalists frequently exploit that vantage point in order to expose military incompetence.

Significantly, societal reactions to the change have been mild. Few citizens now expect military correspondents to package the IDF in a manner likely to make it most palatable to the public. Rather, they expect journalists to act as their mouthpiece and to transmit civilian concerns to the military. Ms Carmela Menasheh, military correspondent for Israel radio's main news channel since 1988, epitomizes this metamorphosis. When

appointed to the post, she seemed an unlikely choice. Her own military career had not been in any way distinguished (conscript service in the *Nahal* parachute brigade) and after discharge in 1974, she apprenticed as a reporter on consumer and police affairs. But within two decades, Carmela Menasheh had become a household name. Her command of the semi-Byzantine intricacies of Israel's military framework received formal recognition in 1994, when her colleagues elected her to chair the military correspondent's section of the Association of Israeli Journalists.

It has long been recognized that, in her professional life, Ms Menasheh is very much a woman of her times (Ben-Tzedef 2000). Her *forte* lies not in highbrow analyses of feats of arms but in reporting the nitty-gritty of military life. She initially came to public attention by exposing instances of petty and not so petty corruption at senior levels of command, and her principal claim to fame rests on her ability to fathom the inner world of the common soldier, conscript and reservist alike. At this level, she clearly considers it a professional as well as patriotic duty to uncover instances of maltreatment, a stance that has made her the bane of many an officer's life – and the darling of servicemen and their families. Indeed, for a while, she functioned as an independent ombudsman, maintaining a website (www.nfc.co.il) that specifically invited citizens to report allegation of military wrongdoing. Her receipt of the outstanding achievement award from the National Council for Volunteering in Israel in 2005 was both a tribute to her work on behalf of the common citizen-soldier and a token of the extent to which the IDF's public image had changed.

The implications

In immediate terms, the IDF has sought to accommodate itself to the new societal climate by undertaking a series of institutional adjustments. Thus, in addition to initiating 'parents' days' and establishing conscript-friendly websites (both discussed above), the General Staff has also authorized the modernization of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit, whose lack of the technological facilities required for 'real-time' response has long been considered the Achilles heel of the military's public relation (Eiland 2001). In a similar spirit of reforming zeal, the IDF in 2005 launched a comprehensive examination of the office of the Military Censor – the first to be undertaken since the post was established on the coattails of the British mandate Emergency Regulations of 1945. Increasingly sensitive to the importance of legal considerations in military operations in the territories, it has also expanded and diversified the resources available in this area to local commanders (Noiman 2007).

However effective such steps may turn out to be, it remains doubtful whether they can do more than scratch the surface of the problems that they are designed to address. Principally, this is because the domestic predicament in which the IDF now finds itself is far too severe to be

amenable to merely marginal and piecemeal treatment. The scope of the IDF's new societal arena, together with the diversity of the public agencies with which it now has to interact, suggests that relations between Israel's military and her society have turned a more significant corner.

Briefly summarized, the current situation reflects an inversion of traditional roles (S.A. Cohen 2007a). In an earlier age, the characteristically porous nature of Israel's civil–military boundaries had permitted a high level of military involvement in essentially civilian areas of public and private life. Generals had been considered authorities, not just in their own professional spheres, but also in fields such as education and land settlement, which the IDF, through a process of 'role expansion', had virtually made its own. In their basic form, the circumstances largely responsible for that situation remain valid. Today, too, Israel's civil–military boundaries are very much fragmented. Since the mid-1990s, however, the principal currents of influence thus allowed to penetrate from one sphere to another have begun to flow in a new direction. The initiative now lies with a progressively assertive range of civilian constituencies: parents, gender activists, civil rights groups, settler organizations, journalists and judges. By imposing a new agenda on the IDF, this informal rainbow coalition has increasingly managed to intrude on military conduct. Rules of engagement, recruitment policies and promotion criteria, areas that even the most liberal of democracies conventionally consider to be the armed forces' exclusive spheres of professional competence, are all now subjects of public debate.

These circumstances, especially because they are combined with the uncertainties induced by concurrent changes in Israel's external environment, have measurably undermined the equilibrium of relations between Israelis and their army. Issues of contention, once largely hidden from view by an insulating layer of predominant societal–military cooperation, now constitute major sites of contention, posing dilemmas that defy consensual solutions. Three such dilemmas have assumed special importance as issues of public debate and concern.

- The structure of the IDF and its professional competence.
- The societal influence of Israel's military service practices.
- The ethical conduct of IDF troops, especially vis-à-vis Palestinians.

In Part II, each of these dilemmas will be analyzed in an individual chapter.

Part II
New dilemmas

5 A 'smaller and smarter' Israel Defense Force?

Undoubtedly, the most fundamental of the dilemmas that the Israel Defense Force (IDF) has faced in recent years is how best to respond to ongoing transformations in Israel's security landscape. Although much of the analysis of that conundrum has taken place behind closed doors, sensitivity to the need for force adaptations has occasionally seeped into wider national consciousness. Indeed, public discourse was deliberately initiated early in 1987, when Lieutenant General Dan Shomron, who had recently been appointed the thirteenth CoS, communicated to a non-military audience his conviction that the IDF ought to be, as he put it, 'smaller and smarter' (*Haaretz* March 17, 1987). At the time, self-censorship, reinforced by Shomron's natural taciturnity, prevented the CoS from enlarging on that theme. But his remarks opened a public debate that progressively grew more intense. Indeed, much of the history of relations between Israelis and their army over the next two decades can be interpreted as a consequence of the reverberations caused by successive attempts to implement the fundamentals of Shomron's program and attain its objectives.

The story, it must immediately be pointed out, is by no means one of linear progression. Although each of Shomron's successors as CoS reiterated the 'slimmer and smarter' formula, the process of reform stumbled along in fits and starts. In the last analysis, its rhythm depended on the skill with which its promoters coped with two principal obstacles. One was the obstructionism of the IDF bureaucracy, which 'for all its receptivity to tactical and operational innovation, can be powerfully resistant to more thorough-going reconsideration of its first-order assumptions' (Cohen *et al.* 1998: 69). The other was the pressure of day-to-day operational commitments, whose demands limited the attention that the General Staff, and especially the CoS, could devote to long-term plans.

In different periods, both considerations took their toll. Shomron, having floated the 'smaller and smarter' idea, and prepared some of the groundwork required for its implementation, became distracted by the unexpected outbreak of the first *intifada* in 1987 and then by the equally unanticipated Iraqi Scud missile attacks of 1991. His successor, Ehud Barak (CoS 1991–1995), was a far more exuberant exponent of

administrative modernization, advocating 'Total Quality Management', for example, with a fervor that bordered on the obsessive. But Barak proved noticeably inept in the delicate arts of political and institutional negotiations required for a thorough overhaul of the IDF structure. Driven by the twin furies of haste and hubris, a combination of flaws that was also to mar his subsequent term as prime minister (May 1999–February 2001), Barak's accomplishments ultimately fell far short of expectations. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, the next CoS (1995–1998), went to the opposite extreme. Probably because he was afraid to repeat Barak's mistakes, he placed the entire project of IDF reconstruction on a back burner, preferring to delegate analysis of further reforms to a series of committees whilst devoting an increasing amount of his own time to the complexities of negotiations with the Palestinians and Syrians.

In fact, only when Shaul Mofaz became CoS in July 1998 did Shomron's slogan assume concrete form. This was something of a surprise, because on his appointment Mofaz seemed to lack the assets required to push through far-reaching change. For one thing, his personal background virtually condemned him to a position on the fringes of the traditional IDF aristocracy. Each of his three predecessors was a native *sabra*, and two, Shomron and Barak, had grown up in the elitist atmosphere of veteran *kibbutzim*. Mofaz, by contrast, was born in Iran and did not arrive in Israel until nine years old. Thereafter, he was only grudgingly accepted as an 'external' student at the elite agricultural school for the offspring of Israel's farming gentry at Nahalal, a status roughly equivalent to that of a local village 'day boy' at an English public school. What made Mofaz's background still more starkly relevant was that his deputy as CoS, Uzi Dayan, nephew of Moshe, had been a 'regular' pupil in the same class.

Then, there was the non-glittering nature of Mofaz's service record. Early in his career, he had twice been rejected by the officer's training school, and although he had subsequently participated in several headline-grabbing operations, including the 1976 Entebbe raid, he had never – again, unlike both Lipkin-Shahak and Barak – been decorated for battle-field bravery. And finally, there was Mofaz's apparent lack of prior apprenticeship in administrative reform. In this respect, the main contrast was with Matan Vilnai, the Major General who most observers, not least Vilnai himself, had considered best qualified to succeed Lipkin-Shahak as CoS and who resigned in a huff when denied the post by Defense Minister Mordechai, an old antagonist, in 1998. Scion to one of Jerusalem's most distinguished Ashkenazi families (his father was a renowned geographer), Vilnai had deliberately cultivated a cerebral image. He had also long waxed eloquent on the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA), a subject to which he devoted two extended study tours in the United States. By contrast, Mofaz had prior to his appointment as CoS barely uttered a word in public on the topic.

Three compensatory qualities enabled Mofaz to overcome these

disadvantages. First, he was a fast learner, who quickly grasped the essentials of the reforms required. Second, once he had the bit of the program between his teeth, he worked toward its implementation with a tenacity that heartened supporters and wore down critics. Finally, and perhaps most crucial of all, Mofaz possessed good fortune. His first year in office coincided with a lull in operational activity (1999 was the first year in Israel's entire history that not a single civilian Israeli died as a result of a terrorist attack). The period between the IDF's withdrawal from the Lebanon in June 2000 and the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2002 was likewise relatively quiet.

Mofaz's successors enjoyed no such breathing space. Moshe (Bugie) Yaalon's term as CoS (2002–2005), besides being overshadowed by the second *intifada*, was foreshortened in 2005, when he opposed Ariel Sharon's plan to disengage from the Gaza Strip. Halutz's tenure, which commenced in June 2005, was even more disappointing, especially since it commenced on a note of high promise. Immediately after assuming command, Halutz declared reconstruction to be at the very top of his agenda and informed the prime minister in January 2006 that 'organizational change is going to be the main feature' of the coming year (Winograd Commission Interim Report 2007: 50). As good as his word, Halutz set to work with the zeal of an evangelist, re-assigning entire GHQ professional and logistics structures to new commands. But all this activity came to an ignominiously sudden halt after just 18 months, when Halutz bowed to public criticism of his handling of the 2006 Lebanon campaign and resigned. His successor, Gabi Ashkenazi, had not been in office for more than a week before announcing that he intended to undo much of Halutz's work, principally by re-constituting the Logistics Command and reinstating several professional specialization units as autonomous commands (*Haaretz* February 27, 2007).

Whilst its record of implementation is thus uneven, the basic meanings attached to the notion of a 'smaller and smarter' IDF have remained remarkably consistent. Attention principally focuses on two principal administrative themes. First, the IDF is to cut back on manpower ('downsize' was a buzzword of American strategic discourse when Shomron initially launched his program). It is also to streamline its cobwebbed command structures and exploit the opportunities offered by emerging computer technologies, in particular, to substitute brainpower for muscle power. Second, however, the IDF is also to make itself more professionally proficient, and hence 'smarter', principally by upgrading the quality of the officer corps.

These two objectives are obviously inter-related and, according to published reports, are indeed invariably discussed in tandem within the covers of IDF multiyear plans. Nevertheless, for the purpose of analysis, the steps taken toward their realization will in this chapter be assessed independently.

Efforts to make the IDF 'smaller': an audit

Re-structuring

Re-alignments to institutional superstructures constitute the most obtrusive signs of the transition from the traditional IDF to a newer format. As from the late 1980s, military command frameworks barely touched for almost four decades began to be radically recast. By the end of the twentieth century, it was clear that the resultant turbulence warranted definition as an Israeli version of the RMA (Luft 1999).

Some of the organizational alterations carried out during the era of the drive toward a 'slimmer and smarter' IDF owed little to the RMA concept. Rather, they constituted specific responses to developing operational needs. A prime example is the decision taken in 1990 to establish a new 'Rear Command' (*Pikud Oref*), which was ostensibly supposed to upgrade civil defense arrangements that were clearly out of date. (The debate on this issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.) Other modifications, by contrast, reflect far more radical purposes. They aimed not merely to adapt the IDF command structure to a specific function. Rather, they were designed to overhaul an institutional framework that might otherwise have become seriously outdated. Thrashed out at the end of the twentieth century in a series of in-depth seminars on IDF future needs, conducted over the course of some two years by some 30 General Staff working groups, the requirements were eventually consolidated into the multiyear plan entitled *Tzahal 2000*.

The evolution of MAZI

As of 2007, the program's most far-reaching application has been the establishment of an integrated Ground Arms Command (*Mifkedet Zero'ot Ha-Yabashah – MAZI*), on a par with the Air Force and Navy commands. Formally inaugurated in June 1999, and made fully operational a year later, *MAZI* was the product of an extended period of gestation, which was prolonged by the obstinacy with which successive Chiefs of Staff had since the end of the 1973 war shelved any change that threatened to impinge on their proclivity for micro-management.

Major General (res.) Yisrael Tal (see p. 48) presented a detailed proposal to establish an umbrella framework for the ground forces as early as 1977. But it took six further years of considerable pressure on the part of Ezer Weizmann and Moshe Arens, who served as Ministers of Defense 1977–1980 and 1983–1984, respectively, to overcome military resistance to reform. Even then, the co-coordinating body eventually set up in 1983 proved to be an inchoate structure. Designated the *Mifkedet Cheilot ha-Sadeh* (*MAFCHASH*, 'field forces command'), its functions were so loosely defined that corps commanders continued to behave 'as though nothing

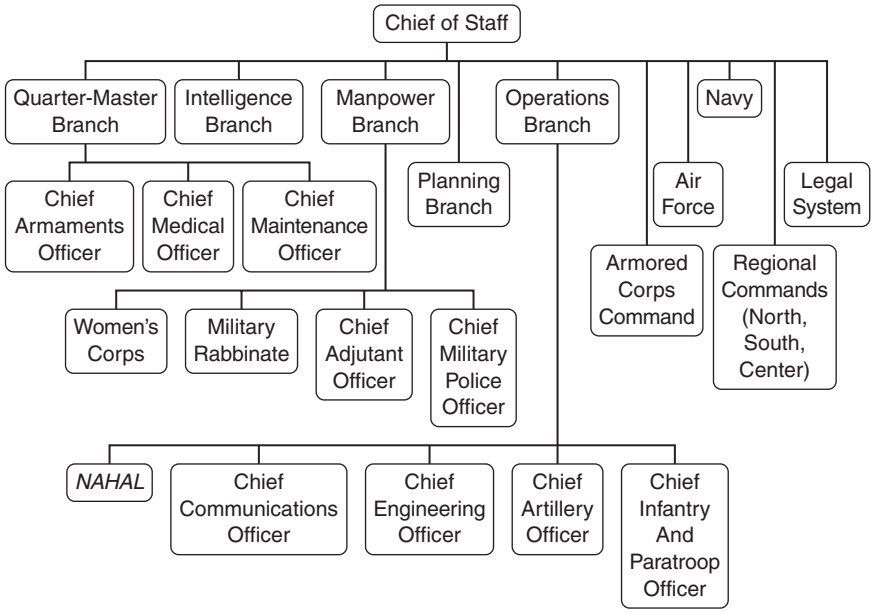

Figure 1 The IDF before establishment of *MAFCHASH* in 1983.

had happened' (Shalom 1995: 188). Bypassing the new framework altogether, many persisted in their old habits of negotiating their needs directly with GHQ.

As Figures 1 and 2 show, the establishment of the *MAFCHASH* certainly altered the IDF's superstructure. But many officers, including Mofaz, thought it did not go far enough. The IDF, they maintained, still required a fully integrated Ground Forces structure, to be known as *MAZI*.

As outlined by Mofaz, who was the new framework's principal midwife, *MAZI* articulates a new view of the functions of the IDF General Staff and its relationships with the arms under its overall command. Although responsibility for the operational handling of the ground forces remains with the regional commands (North, Central and South), *MAZI* nevertheless creates a single administrative address for all matters regarding composition, training and supply. *MAZI*'s proponents, whose views are represented on its website (www1.idf.il/MAZI/Site/Templates/Homepage.asp) envision an umbrella framework that incorporates all the logistic and support systems that the ground forces require, thereby eliminating costly organizational and overlaps.

They also claim that the military bureaucracy will be further streamlined once *MAZI*'s various components are physically re-located. At present, units and their facilities are still dispersed in a maze of

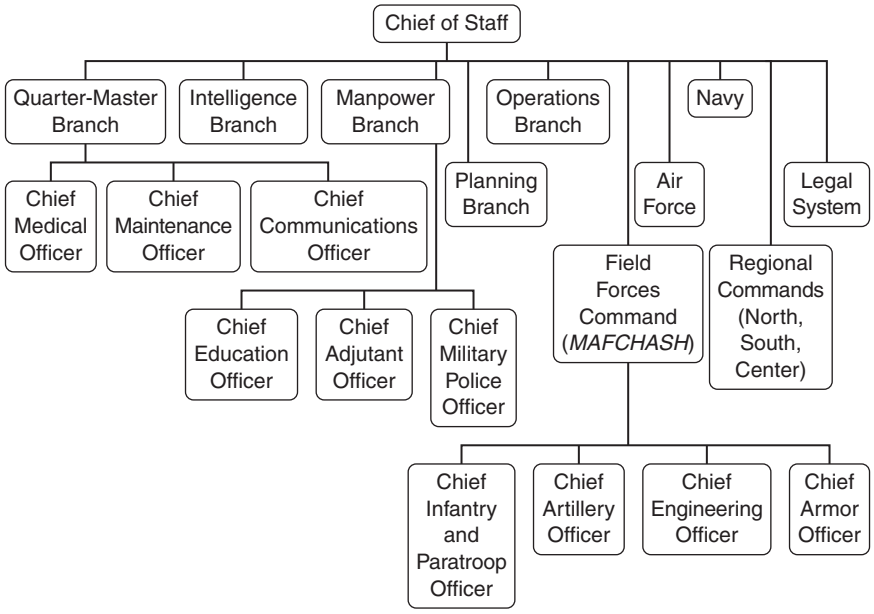

Figure 2 The IDF after establishment of *MAFCHASH* in 1983.

old-fashioned bases (many originally built by British mandatory forces) and often sited in the midst of the crowded urban sprawl that has grown up around Tel-Aviv. However, in April 2007, the government sanctioned their consolidation into a state-of-the-art 'city of bases' to be constructed from scratch in the underpopulated Negev desert. Economists promise that the move will realize enormous profits; the IDF can sell off valuable real estate and at the same time considerably reduce manpower duplications (*Haaretz* February 20, 2007). Its greatest potential benefits, however, were said to be organizational. A centralized *MAZI* was supposed to prove far more capable of buffering the General Staff from the burden of responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the ground forces' routine affairs.

As Mofaz publicly pointed out in 1999, thus relieved of some of its old burdens, the General Staff would be free to focus on long-term planning and on formulating strategies for the IDF as a whole matter that 'genuinely require the involvement of the Chief of Staff and his deputy' (Mofaz 1999: 4). Anticipating that result, he set in train a process designed to consolidate the GHQ's organizational structure, too. This was also a revolutionary development, since it involved modifying frameworks adhered to by the IDF with only minor changes ever since 1948, when Fred Gronich, an American Jewish officer who had served on General Eisenhower's staff in World War II, sketched out a basic GHQ 'map' for Ben-Gurion's elucidation.[1]

True, neither Mofaz nor his successors adopted the most radical of the new proposals – the establishment of a new Strategic Command to deal with the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attacks. But *Tzahal 2000*, the multiyear program that he presented on the eve of the new millennium did authorize two others (Figure 3). One, implemented almost immediately, was the restructuring of the Operations Branch, hitherto maintained as a subordinate function under the deputy CoS, to which Mofaz assigned overall responsibility for issuing operational directives to all service branches, whose activities it also monitored and coordinated. The other was the re-organization of the Technology and Logistics Branch (*Agaf Le-Technologiah ve-Logistikah – ATAL*) that had in 1996 itself replaced the older and top-heavier Quartermaster's Branch (*Agaf Afsana'ut*). When Halutz took the helm, he took both moves further (Figures 4 and 5). First, in an effort to simplify communications between the Operations Branch and divisional commands, late in 2005 he disbanded the various Corps Headquarters that had thereto commanded

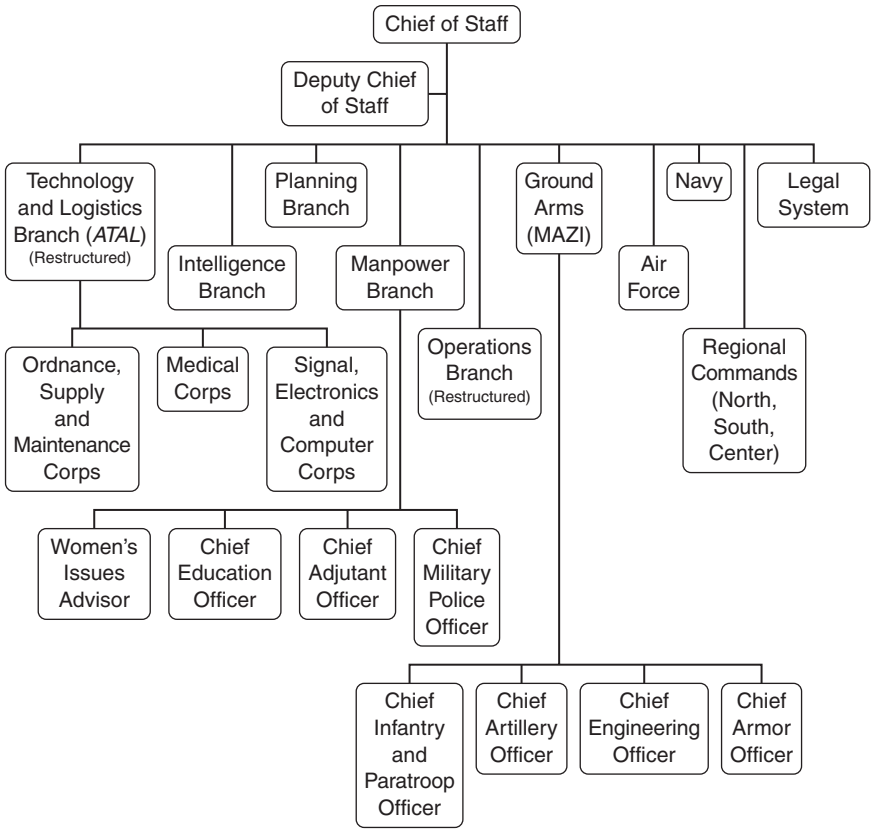

Figure 3 The Mofaz reforms (*Tzahal 2000*).

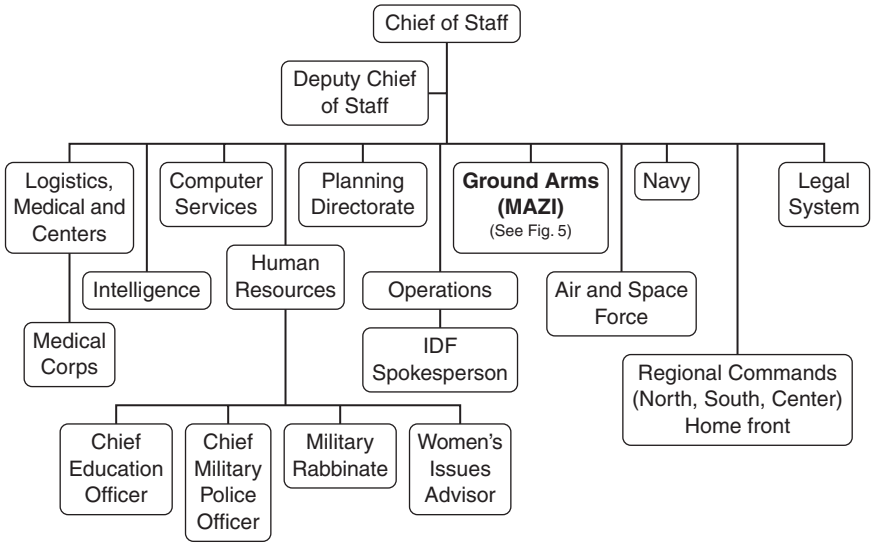

Figure 4 The Halutz reforms (2005/2006) – the General Staff.

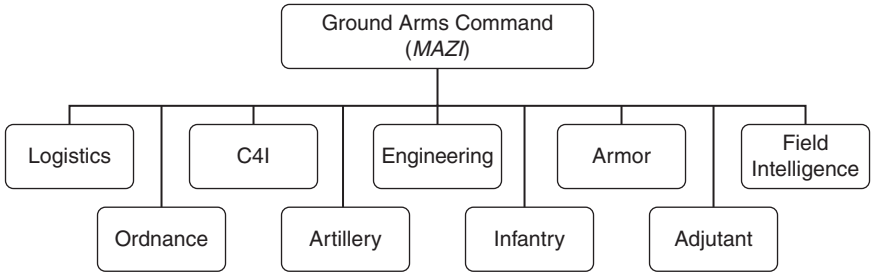

Figure 5 The Halutz reforms (2005/2006) – *MAZI*.

several divisions. Second, in April 2006 he subordinated adjutant, communications, logistics and ordnance units to *MAZI*, leaving responsibility only for medical and construction services with a rump quartermaster's branch, now designated *Agaf Logistikah, Refuah u-Merkazim Logisti'im* (*ALRAM*).

Computerization and its complexities

Without revolutionary advances in information technology, structural reshuffling on so radical a scale would probably have been neither possible

nor necessary. In the military sphere as in every other walk of life, however, the advent of successive generations of computers changed not only the way that complex institutions operate, but even more substantially, their fundamental conceptions about how they could and should manage and deploy their resources. In the IDF, certainly, computer management of command and control systems came to be regarded as a key to the construction of shared databases and the transmission of intelligence and communications in real time from one end of the military system to all others (Demchak 2001: 77–146).

The IDF had established a computer unit as early as 1961, in order to handle its first acquisition, a Philco 211 with a 16 KB memory. Designated *MAMRAM* (*Merkaz Mechashvim ve-Rishum Memukhan*), the unit soon acquired a reputation as a home for brilliant whiz kids, many of whom subsequently collaborated when establishing highly successful startup companies in the civilian sector. By the 1980s, however, computer usage in the IDF had become too widespread to tolerate *MAMRAM*'s monopoly. With computers now considered status symbols, individual corps commanders began to install their own machines, which they then recruited independent teams of programmers and maintenance personnel to service. In 1982, the General Staff tried to rectify this situation by appointing a Chief Communications and Electronics Officer. But matters continued to spin out of control. Over a decade later, there still existed no overall IDF policy on the pace and levels of computer acquisitions, nor even with respect to the various functions (other than word processing) that this increasingly ubiquitous tool might provide. The state of anarchy was especially evident in the Intelligence Corps, whose top-secret surveillance unit ('Unit 8200') was repeatedly accused of acting as a law unto itself (State Comptroller of Israel 1995: 73–74, 1997: 1017–1018).

MAMRAM's proper location proved to be particularly problematic. Shunted from the GHQ Operations Branch to the Communications Corps in 1982, it was in 1994 designated part of an enlarged computer section, responsible for advising the CoS with regard to computer policy. Even so, its affiliation remained tenuous. In 1999, the computer section moved with the rest of the Communications Corps to the Technology and Logistics Branch (*ATAL*); in 2003, it was incorporated within *Lotem*, the unit set up within the newly established Computer Corps (*Cheil Tikshuv)* in order to supply a wide range of computer-related services to all IDF ground units. Under that guise, it relocated once again three years later, this time to *MAZI*.

More lay behind all this movement to and fro than periodic bureaucratic scuffles over the demarcation of organizational demesnes, although there were plenty of those too. At root, the frequent changes of *MAMRAM*'s location reflected a more fundamental tension between the two contradictory impulses that the computer revolution generated. One was top-down centralization, both of communications systems (the IDF

inaugurated an integrated intranet, known as *Tzahalnet*, in 1996) and of logistic frameworks. The other impulse was to exploit the opportunities that computers allowed for a much 'flatter' military organization, which would restore to brigade and divisional commanders the degree of autonomy that, so legend maintained, they had reportedly enjoyed in 1948, but that they had since been denied.

'Dispersion' (*bizur*) was indeed the principal slogan of the innovations announced with much fanfare in May 1998, on the eve of Mofaz's elevation to CoS, under the generic code name *Aviv Neurim* ('Spring Youth').[2] Designed both to enhance operational performance in the multilevel and highly complex nature of the modern battlefield and to reduce overlapping and wasteful duplications throughout the military institution, *Aviv Neurim* proposed to grant task force commanders down to the brigade level both managerial and budgetary autonomy. Enthusiasts claimed that the vision of a flatter force was brought even closer to realization with the development of new C4I systems: *Tirat ha-Agam* ('Castle on the Lake', under development since 2003) and an even more ambitious and expensive digital army program, known as *TSAYAD* ('Hunter', *Tzavah Yabashti Digitali*), launched in 2004. Major General Yiftach Ron-Tal, *MAZI*'s CO from 2001 to 2006 and the person who did most to promote *TSAYAD*, saw the program as a means of connecting all ground, sea and air forces in the IDF to a single fiber-optic-based network, thereby enabling even junior commanders to communicate directly with any other relevant source, with whom they will also be able to immediately share information appertaining to their current mission. 'Ten years from now', he predicted in an interview that *Jane's Defense Weekly* published on December 22, 2004, 'an infantry NCO, a single artillery barrel (sic), an Apache helicopter and a Merkava tank will share the same battle and intelligence picture'.

Critics of the IDF's lackluster performance in the summer of 2006 charged that Ron-Tal and his like-minded colleagues had their heads in the clouds. Besides distorting norms of command (see pp. 45–46), the IDF's infatuation with technology had warped its understanding of what true military management was all about. Thus, instead of focusing on the time-honored basics of their profession, senior IDF commanders spent their time debating structures – often in language that few of their subordinates could possibly understand. One insight into the jargon-laden level of the discussion that ensued is provided by an article entitled 'The Shift from Sectoral Logistics to Inter-Arm Technologistics' published in May 2005, in the gala four hundredth issue of *Ma'arachot* by the then CO of *ALRAM* (Adam 2005). What makes this piece especially piquant is that its author, Major General Udi Adam, was soon to be appointed CO of Northern Command, where his performance was so unsatisfactory that he was all but fired by CoS Halutz in the midst of the second Lebanon War.

The dangers in this situation were bluntly brought to public attention by Zeev Schiff, the doyen of Israeli military correspondents, in an article

that he published in *Haaretz* shortly after the end of the second Lebanon War and less than a year before his death in 2007 (Schiff 2006). The recent fighting, Schiff argued, showed that the efforts invested in IDF reorganization during the previous two decades had been largely wasted. All that they had achieved was a top-heavy structure, which prioritized process over substance. Officers responsible for logistics, especially, had confused their priorities. Infatuated with the pyrotechnics of PowerPoint flowcharts, they had neglected matters that since time immemorial all quartermasters had known to be the very ABC of their profession: adequate provision for both the storage of victuals and ammunition and their timely and orderly transport to the arena of combat. The confusion experienced by reservists in the summer of 2006 was surely not what Shomron had in mind when originally calling for change.

The re-allocation of resources

Although the various 'slimmer and smarter' programs were primarily designed to improve the IDF's organizational proficiency and operational performance, those were never its sole purposes. They were also supposed to reduce the Force's flab, which had grown to gigantic proportions since the Yom Kippur War, in the wake of which panic-stricken IDF force planners had launched a drive to almost double the men and materiel at their disposal (Barnett 1992: 261–265). By the mid-1980s, it was clear that the IDF possessed a surplus of human resources, the size of whose payroll was partially responsible for Israel's near-bankruptcy in 1984–1985 (Barkai 1987). Clearly, downsizing was called for.

Role contraction

Always in a hurry to get things done, Barak, who was appointed CoS in 1991, soon identified one area in which manpower costs could be reduced substantially. Far too many servicemen and women, he argued, were employed on missions that were essentially civilian in nature and bore little relation to the military's function as the agent of state security. Under his watch, the IDF would divest itself of all such tasks and in the process become at once both more professional and cheaper to run. In his own phrase, 'whatever does not shoot, will be cut' (*Haaretz* September 27, 1992).

Barak's coda to Shomron's original 'smaller and smarter' program certainly made economic sense. But it undermined what had thereto been a norm of the Israel's societal–military interface. As several studies have demonstrated, ever since Ben-Gurion's day the IDF had posed not just as an army of the people but also as an institution that undertook numerous civilian projects on the public's behalf (Bowden 1976; Roumani 1979; Drori 2005a). Indeed, military participation in state-building was an

established ingredient of the national narrative. During the early 1950s, the Engineering Corps had constructed and serviced the makeshift camps (*ma'abarot*) hastily erected to house the massive influx of immigrants; in the same period, the Education Corps had begun to dispatch conscripts (principally women) to serve as supplementary teachers in underprivileged areas whilst also helping uneducated 18-year olds to attain the literacy levels required to permit their enlistment. Other military contributions to the country's overall culture were more widespread. Army ensembles never limited their appearances to audiences composed entirely of troops. Their frequent appearances before the general public also insured that the dominance of IDF influence over the style, content and slang of popular taste.

Towering above all other symbols of the military's contribution to state-building in Israel, however, was IDF participation in land settlement. In its very first paragraph, the Security Service law of September 1949 required every conscript to devote one year of service to agricultural work after basic training. *NAHAL*, the military framework of 'Pioneering Fighting Youth', gave practical expression to that general statement of intent. Set up in 1950, *NAHAL* enabled youth movement graduates, men and women, to enlist in the IDF as consolidated cadres (*garinim*) and combine their conscript military duties with the maintenance of agricultural settlements in areas considered too harsh or too insecure for normal civilian habitation. By 1967, 35 *NAHAL* outposts (*he-achzuyot*) had been established. In the conventions of the day, each came to be regarded as an extension of the traditional Zionist–Socialist drive for *kibbush ha-aretz* ('conquest of the land', see pp. 21–22) and hence as the very fulfillment of the Jewish national vision (Doar 1992).

Anecdotal evidence indicates that Moshe Dayan (CoS 1953–1957) had wished to divest the IDF of many such expressions of military role expansion as early as the mid-1950s (Ne'eman 1984: 89). However, some 30 more years had to pass before any of his successors dared to test the waters of societal change by reversing traditional practice. Barak took the plunge with characteristic bravery. In quick order, he announced that he was closing down several popular IDF journals and dismantling most army ensembles (of which, in 2007, there remained just two). Simultaneously, he changed the rules governing the public employment of soldiers. As of 1993, he declared (*Haaretz* February 12 1993), the various ministries and public agencies to which the IDF supplied conscripts as supplementary teachers, nature guides, youth leaders, assistant social workers, police adjuncts and the like would have to pay for their services. No matter how worthy the cause, the IDF would no longer supply manpower free of all charge.

By the mid-1990s, the resultant shift from a posture of role expansion to one of role contraction was already apparent in several areas (S.A. Cohen 1993c).

- Immigrant absorption was certainly one. Although the Air Force played a crucial role in airlifting thousands of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel (especially in 'Operation Shlomo' in May 1991, when it flew some 14,000 Ethiopian Jews from Addis Ababa to Tel-Aviv virtually overnight), Barak made it clear that military responsibility for their welfare ceased as soon as the planes had landed. In stark contrast to the 1950s, no immigrants were housed for any length of time in IDF facilities or supplied with provisions out of IDF stocks. Moreover, and as the State Comptroller (1999: 84–92) had cause to complain, even the steps taken by the IDF to facilitate the enlistment of immigrants in the Force began to leave much to be desired. By the end of the century, it was discovered, the courses that the IDF had initially provided in order to help Ethiopian immigrants cope with the difficulties of both conscription and demobilization (entitled *Magen Tziyyon*) had likewise also tapered off (Shabtay 1999: 83–100).
- A similar process occurred with respect to the provisions made to bring undereducated and underprivileged native youngsters up to the levels of literacy required for conscription. In the early 1980s, Refael Eitan, CoS 1978–1983, had endowed this project with flagship status, declaring the IDF's Center for Special Population Groups (*MAKAAM*, whose denizens were popularly known as 'Raful's kids') to be one of the military's principal contributions to state security. By the end of the decade, the attitude of the General Staff had clearly changed. In a speech ostensibly delivered to celebrate *MAKAAM*'s tenth birthday, but clearly also intended to stimulate debate on the aims of the Education Corps, the head of the Manpower Branch wondered aloud whether there was not a limit to the resources that the IDF needed to pour into the project (Goren 1989). Cuts in its budget and activities soon followed. After retirement from service, Eitan (2001: 238) wistfully recalled *MAKAAM*'s earlier days of glory and continued to pronounce the project a national necessity. By 2005, however, it was clearly all but defunct (State Comptroller of Israel 2005: 145–164).
- Most symptomatic and precipitous of all, however, was the demise of the *NAHAL* (Koren 1997). Awarded the Israel Prize for outstanding contributions to Israeli society as recently as 1984, by the end of the 1990s, *NAHAL* had lost its luster. The State Comptroller reported in 1997 that the quantity of conscripts who formed themselves into *garinim* and applied for service in the framework had declined by some 75 percent over the previous 20 years. Those who remained did little to embellish its reputation. At considerable expense, they maintained just three agricultural settlements and, when allowed to locate themselves in underprivileged urban areas, made no noticeable contribution to improving the lives of their neighbors. Ultimately, it was decided to deprive *NAHAL* of most of its individuality. As a concession to the past, IDF Manpower authorities did permit the brigade to

retain its traditional shoulder tag, featuring a sword and scythe, and allowed a limited number of its conscripts to perform social welfare tasks under the supervision of the Education Corps. But the vast majority of those who wore the bright green beret assigned to *NAHAL* were otherwise indistinguishable from soldiers serving in the IDF's other three infantry brigades: *Golani*, *Givati* and *Tzanchanim* (Paratroops).

Reduced numbers but increased costs

Other projects to reduce the IDF's complement and thus slim down the force followed more conventional paths, consisting of individual drives to reduce wastage. The professional complement was especially affected by the new spirit of parsimony. Here too, Barak set the tone when eliminating almost 10,000 separate clerical and maintenance posts, 18 percent of the total, thereto staffed by salaried personnel (Cordesman 2002: 199–200). Reporting in May 2007, the Brodet Commission on the Military Budget (see pp. 179–180) showed that Barak's successors had adopted a more systematic approach. For one thing, they encouraged officers considered superfluous to take early retirement, a step that enabled some three thousand posts to be scrapped. They had also adopted a policy of vigorous 'outsourcing'. Car leasing and maintenance, office construction, basic flight instruction and satellite surveillance, and even some checkpoint surveillance duties, were by 2007 already carried out in whole or in part by civilian contractors. Plans were also well advanced to 'de-militarize' most of the IDF's labor-intensive medical services and, more ambitiously still, to 'outsource' the enormous kitchens that it maintains on rear bases (Brodet Commission 2007: 103–105).

Still more significant, certainly from a long-term perspective, were the first steps taken by Barak's successors toward rectifying the anomalies resulting from earlier arrangements, which had guaranteed professional military personnel, regardless of occupation or rank, job security from the very inception of their careers. By early in the twenty-first century, those conditions had begun to change. Under a system that ruffled some plumage amongst top brass when first introduced by Mofaz in 1998, and was nevertheless implemented by Yaalon early in 2004, the IDF posited a distinction between 'initial' and 'real' professionals (*keva rishoni* and *keva tahor*). As the CO Manpower Branch explained in an article that he wrote for *Ma'arachot*, the first are persons accepted into professional service for probationary periods of seven years; the latter constitute a more restricted category of personnel at a later stage of their careers who receive tenure-track contracts (Segev 1998). Critics of this 'two-tier' approach suggest that it injects an unhealthy spirit of job insecurity into a profession that wishes to retain the characteristics of a vocation. But supporters of the new system, now supported by the Brodet commissioners, insist on its

utility as a safety valve against extended IDF commitments to surplus manpower (Brodet Commission 2007: 128–129).

Clearly, however, force contractions have their limits. Whilst there is certainly room to cut the number of middle-rank professionals and of civilians in military employ engaged in non-essential tasks, the IDF can hardly afford to adopt the same attitude toward its senior combat staff. Likewise considered vital are the cadres responsible for developing and maintaining Israel's increasingly sophisticated arsenal. Fearful that job insecurity and/or reduced salaries might persuade both categories of career personnel to resign from service and seek job opportunities in Israel's expanding civilian market, IDF force planners have ever since the 1990s found themselves constrained to introduce several new *retention* schemes.

Some of the new retention programs dangle a package of professional inducements. Thus, *Ofek Rachok* ('Distant Horizon') put together in 2003, offers a six-year 'fast track' from battalion to divisional command, an option that includes flexible intermissions for paid study leave, and holds out the prospect that especially talented colonels will be listed in the CoS's select register of 'future commanders' (State Comptroller of Israel 2006: 51–52). Other schemes, such as *Mashav*, initiated in the mid-1990s, more blatantly emphasize immediately fungible material incentives, prominent amongst which is a generous package of fringe benefits that includes housing, recreation and clothing allowances. Altogether, the IDF is careful to insure that those officers who it is interested in keeping in service receive adequate remuneration. Since the details of individual military paychecks are hidden behind a veil of secrecy better suited to safeguarding the most confidential IDF's war plans, precise information about professional salaries is hard to obtain. But they are clearly in excess of those available to other public service sectors. Thus in the spring of 2007, a period when Israel's schoolteachers had to resort to strike action in order to negotiate a miserly raise, military personnel received altogether different treatment. After a series of discreet talks with IDF representatives, treasury officials announced the grant of a salary increment of 16.7 percent for persons who had held the rank of captain for the past two years. Major generals, although granted an increase of only 1 percent, would henceforth earn more than Israel's prime minister (*Haaretz* April 7, 2007).

In the long term, these developments seem bound to increase what Reuven Gal once termed the IDF's shift toward 'pragmatic professionalism', and thus to push it even further away from the 'institutional' extremity of Moskos' famous I/O axis, and ever-closer to its 'occupational' pole (Gal 1988: 267–278). More immediately, however, the results have been dichotomous, giving the IDF the strange appearance of an institution that is at once both over-fed and under-nourished. On the one hand, retention schemes seem certainly to have stemmed the seepage of talent evident in the mid-1990s, when many junior and middle-rank officers were lured away from service by the boom in Israel's hi-tech industries. But at the

same time, they have also fostered a view that service in the IDF, once widely regarded as an altruistic mission, is now almost indistinguishable from any other profession.[3] From the point of view of the IDF's public relations, equally detrimental is the extent to which recent reforms have inflated the size and cost of the military's senior echelon, creating the impression of a top-heavy structure. Each structural change initiated by Mofaz and Halutz, in particular, seemed merely to pile on additional layers of command. In 2007, *MAZI* alone was home to two major generals and no less than 15 brigadier generals.

Publicly available budgetary figures, because they reflected all such distortions, further increased societal sensitivity to their effects. Statistics made available by the Brodet Commission (2007: 127) show that the proportion of Israel's domestic defense budget devoted entirely to military salaries and pensions grew from 47.4 percent in 1995 to 54.8 percent in 2006. The share devoted to pension outlays rose particularly sharply: fourfold in just two decades. Clearly, Israel was paying the price of the belief, put about in the late 1950s by Moshe Dayan, to the effect that the best way to prevent the IDF from ageing was to insure that all professional military personnel, regardless of occupation or rank, receive generous and non-contributory retirement benefits after only 20 years of military service. In 2003, Yaalon tried to reform the system by extending the retirement age in some (but not all) rear occupations to 55. But the average still leveled out at 46. Actuarial assessments now indicate that far more drastic measures are required. Given extensions in life expectancy, the size of the IDF's annual pension budget is bound to grow yet larger, invalidating the entire idea of a smaller and cheaper force.

Efforts to make the IDF 'smarter': an audit

In the course of the two decades that followed Shomron's call for a 'smarter' IDF, the overall educational levels of its complement rose significantly. Principally, this was thanks to processes at work in society at large. Whereas 14,000 youngsters matriculated from twelfth grade in 1980, the number topped 25,000 in 2005. Over the same period, student enrollment at institutions of higher learning jumped from 54,500 to 124,000. Hence, not only did a progressively larger proportion of IDF conscripts enter service after completing 12 years of high-school studies, a growing number of IDF officers also possessed first, second and even third university degrees.

What is striking, nevertheless, is that the benefits of this situation have not been evenly distributed. If anything, it has produced a lopsided effect, creating a gap between the generally high standard of narrowly defined technical expertise in the IDF and the inadequacies of its officer corps' knowledge of the body of professional and theoretical knowledge that are unique to the military art. These discrepancies have become especially stark in two areas: officer recruitment and officer training.

Officer recruitment

By and large, the IDF has adhered to a system of officer recruitment based on the principle that commanders rise through the ranks. Hence, even conscripts identified for potential promotion by their initial *KABA* (psychometric) scores undergo precisely the same courses of basic training and initial specialization as all other recruits. Only after a term as non-commissioned officers (NCOs), usually toward the end of their first year of compulsory service, do they qualify for entry to the junior officers' training school.

That said, some short cuts have long been allowed. As early as 1950, the IDF initiated the *atudah akadema'it* ('academic reserve'), a special service track for a small number of academically gifted recruits, who have already gained university places on the basis of their matriculation grades. Modeled on the ROTC programs developed in the United States, the *atudah akadema'it* allows successful applicants, generally no more than a few hundred each year, to combine their mandatory conscript service with studies toward an undergraduate degree, principally by completing much of their training during university vacations. In return for this benefit, and for having the IDF pay their university fees, participants in the program contract to 'sign on' for three additional years of duty as IDF professionals after graduation.

Although always open to male and female students in a cross section of the humanities and social sciences, the *atudah* program has traditionally given preference to engineering and the natural sciences, subjects considered likely to be of more direct military application. Ever since 1979, especially talented students in these fields have been invited to apply for enrollment in an upgraded version of the *atudah* program known as *Talpiyot* ('citadel'). Those who pass *Talpiyot*'s especially rigorous entrance examinations (in 2005, only 45 of the 5,000 applicants were accepted) register – as a segregated group – for courses in mathematics, physics and computer sciences leading to a BSc in natural sciences at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where they are housed in their own compound on campus. On completion of their first degree, the graduates spend the next five and half years serving as salaried R&D officers (starting at the rank of lieutenant) in various areas of advanced technology, whilst also studying toward an MSc. Most are snapped up by the Air Force, but some have traditionally been seconded to Israel's military industries where they join teams working on development projects (State Comptroller of Israel 1996: 872–873).

By any gauge, *Talpiyot* has been outstandingly successful. At comparatively little cost, it has produced successive cadres of graduates who have contributed significantly to the IDF's technological edge.[4] By the early 1990s, however, manpower authorities were becoming sensitive to two of *Talpiyot*'s weaknesses. First, since its graduates are invariably assigned to combat support units, the program does little to raise the technological lit-

eracy, or indeed the general academic level, of officer cadets in IDF combat branches. Second, since *Talpiyot* targets only the most gifted of recruits, it can never supply more than a fraction of the rapidly expanding demand for personnel qualified to command the IDF's hi-tech battle systems.

Under Ehud Barak's aegis, the solution sought to both problems was typically radical. Early in his term as CoS, the IDF announced a plan to upgrade the combat officer corps by an innovation termed the *atudah keravit* ('combat reserve'). This allowed suitably qualified recruits, provided they contracted to 'sign on' for two to three years of salaried service in frontline units, to take a university degree (again, at IDF expense) in any discipline of their choice, including the humanities and social sciences, whilst still on conscript service, and to earn their commissions at the same time. Enthusiasts promised that the *atudah keravit* would change the complexion of a critical echelon of the IDF's ground forces. They envisioned an annual influx of an entirely new breed of second lieutenants, one of whose prime qualifications for command would be that they had been trained to think.

In fact, however, nothing of the sort occurred. Instead, the *atudah keravit* program fizzled out. Interviewed in 2006, senior field commanders offered different explanations for that result. Some argued that the quality of personnel graduating from the program was simply substandard. Others, however, blamed the combat units for failing to adjust their thinking to the notion that officers might be parachuted into command without having first gone through all the prior stages of conscript service. Whichever the case, after an initial spurt of interest in 1993, applications declined sharply and dropout rates soared. In 1998, the *atudah keravit* was cancelled, and the experiment quietly disappeared from view.

When Mofaz assumed office, he decided to revert to the older *atudah akadema'it* model, which he immediately set about supplementing. In order to meet what was fast becoming a critical shortfall in computer programmers and scientists in combat-support units, he promoted an entire range of new and high-sounding enlistment schemes: *Pesagot* ('Peaks') launched in 1998, *Berakim* ('Lightening') in 2002 and *Atidim* ('Futures') in 2004. Although far less selective than *Talpiyot*, all resembled that program in similarly offering gifted youngsters the chance to earn a university degree in physics, engineering or computer sciences at IDF expense. As the Ministry of Defense's website was at pains to point out (www.mod.gov.il/pages/mafat/hachshara.asp), all also guaranteed successful applicants that, on completion of their studies, they would be enlisted as junior officers in hi-tech support units.

According to the IDF Human Resources Branch, the new programs are so attractive that they are consistently oversubscribed. Less propitiously, however, they have also exacerbated the discrepancies in educational backgrounds that in any case tend to differentiate the combat from the combat-support sections of the officer corps. Thanks in large part to the success of

the *Talpiyot* track and its various offshoots, the academic standards of the personnel responsible for maintaining and servicing the IDF's expanding armory of C4I systems are constantly being upgraded by the influx of junior officers who have received the best undergraduate education that Israel can provide. In their case, then, technical proficiency is backed up by study of the theoretical literature. But the picture is generally very different in the combat arms that, notwithstanding the exponential growth in the IDF's logistic and technical 'tail', still accounts for roughly 70 percent of the total officer corps (Avi 2003: 61). With the possible exception of certain sections of the air force, in the 'teeth' of the IDF, junior and even senior commanders frequently receive their appointments and promotions without having received anything other than a very cursory introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of their profession.

Officer education

Warnings of the dangers inherent in that imbalance long preceded the advent of the hi-tech revolution. As early as the late 1970s, Colonel (res.) Ya'akov Chisdai, a former CO of the officers' training school, warned that the IDF was producing little more than technocrats, almost entirely ignorant of strategic concepts and military history (Chisdai 1978: 10–12). In the wake of the first Lebanon War, Colonel Emanuel Wald, former head of the Military Planning Unit in the General Staff, produced a secret report that said much the same thing – except at greater length and more scathingly and that, when rejected by the CoS of the day, its author published in 1987 in an abbreviated and censored version (for a translation, see Wald 1992a).

One possible way to repair the deficiencies cited by Chisdai and Wald was to include the formal study of military theory and practice in the curriculum of the programs undertaken by officers during the course of their careers. But an academic perspective on the military art was never part of the IDF tradition. Although from time to time during the IDF's early years individual commanders did take an interest in military history and strategic thought, none studied such subjects systematically in an academic framework. Like their autodidactic predecessors in the *Haganah* (Bogner 1998), they were essentially intellectual dilettantes. On examination, the myth that Israel's victories in the IDF's age of glory were inspired by a reading of Liddell Hart's *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, a myth that Liddell Hart himself did much to promulgate, turns out to be entirely baseless (Ben-Moshe 1981). Israel's finest military historians and strategic theorists were the products of her universities and not of the IDF. None of her generals made any world-class contributions to military thought whilst on service, and the very few who did so after retirement principally owed their attainments to the academic training that they had acquired at a comparatively late stage in life.[5]

The various IDF officers' training schools reflected, and indeed fostered, the anti-intellectual bias to which they were heir. Their courses articulated the notion that there exists no substitute for practical hands-on experience. Moreover, and principally because of the commitment to the notion that officers have to emerge from the ranks and undergo exactly the same basic training as the soldiers they are to command, the IDF has never seriously contemplated establishing a military academy on the lines of Sandhurst or WestPoint. Instead, it has persistently adhered to a framework of professional education that, at every tier, disparages abstract doctrines, especially if they are not translated into Hebrew (Amidror 2001; Zigdon and Raviv 2003).

That perspective dominates the entire military hierarchy but is especially pronounced at its senior levels where the bane of the IDF's tradition of rapid promotion is compounded by frequent command rotations. Officers are so keen to get on with their jobs, and move on to the next appointment, that they consider classroom study a distraction.[6] Formally, senior staff (colonel and above) are required to audit advanced courses in military theory and management and to spend a year at *MABAL* (*Ha-Mikhlalah le-Bitachon Leumi*; the National Defense College), originally founded in 1962 for the training of both the military and the civilian elites in the security sector. But very few have ever completed the entire cycle. Citing the Six-Day War as proof that IDF officers knew all there was to know about war, the Ministry of Defense shut down *MABAL* in 1967, and even though its doors were somewhat shamefacedly re-opened after the near-debacle of 1973, the prevalent attitude amongst senior IDF staff toward anything that smacked of theory remained one of disdain (Keren 2001: 145–146). The State Comptroller's report for 2006 (p. 56) notes that 82 percent of major generals, 68 percent of brigadier generals and 76 percent of colonels had gained their ranks without ever setting foot in *MABAL*. Advanced IDF courses for senior staff were hardly better attended. Indeed, the *Mifneh* program, a 40-day management seminar that CoS Yaalon had in 2003 ordered to be made mandatory for senior field commanders, only managed to attract the annual quota of 20–25 attendees by holding sessions in a resort hotel designed for luxury vacations.

In fact, notwithstanding repeated incantations of the need for officers to become 'smarter', in the entire period between the early 1980s and 2005–2006, the IDF made only two major efforts to increase their awareness of the importance of military theory. One was to insert courses on this subject into the curriculum of the Command and Staff College (*Pikud u-Mateh – PUM*, an institution established in 1951), whose syllabus had otherwise altered very little in the first three decades of its history. The other was to introduce senior command levels to the wonders of 'operational theory'. As we shall see, for different reasons, neither effort produced the hoped-for results.

PUM

Spurred to action by critical analyses of the performance of IDF corps and regional commands during the 1982 Lebanon campaign, Lieutenant General Moshe Levi, CoS 1983–1987, in 1983 announced the establishment of a new Command and Staff College program code-named 'Lightning' (*PUM-Barak*) – in retrospect, a somewhat ironic designation given that Ehud Barak, the most famous bearer of that name and at the time already CO of the Intelligence Branch, had himself managed to avoid attending the Command and Staff College altogether. The new program was designed to require prospective brigadiers (colonels) to spend ten consecutive months studying theoretical as well as practical subjects and to become acquainted with the concepts and principles underpinning strategic studies (Ben-Reuven 2004; Shamir 2004a). Acknowledging that the IDF lacked a qualified teaching staff of its own in those areas, Levi permitted *PUM* commanders to hire university lecturers to conduct seminars on military bases and to prepare readings of the core texts on which the *Barak* students would be examined. His successors, as part of their drive to improve the attractiveness of officer retention schemes, allowed individual corps and arms to conclude autonomous contracts with individual university departments, which undertook to prepare packages of courses that enabled junior officers (first and second lieutenants) to obtain a 'fast-track' BA.

The contribution of the atmosphere induced by Shomron's 'slimmer and smarter' slogan was to expand the links thus forged between the military and academia (Enoch and Yogev 1989). Eager for bites at the increasing budgets that the IDF was making available for officer education in the 1990s, university departments vied with each other in putting together programs tailored to meet the needs of a specifically military audience. Some granted formal academic recognition to *Barak* courses, whose graduates thus earned credits toward a first or second degree in history or political studies. Others offered IDF officers, including reserve officers, a master's program that would allow them to integrate studies undertaken in military frameworks with university courses. This process advanced one stage further in 1999 when the IDF established a Tactical Command College, designed to provide company commanders (second lieutenants) slated to receive battalions of their own with two years of military and academic instruction. After intense competition, the Hebrew University in 2003 won a contract to supervise the academic component of the College's program and formulated a course of studies designed to enable cadets to earn a BA in military history within just two academic years. In 2006, Haifa University successfully tendered a cheaper (and shorter) counter proposal (Kadish 2007: 63–67).

It remains questionable whether all this activity has achieved very much. Certainly, the IDF has become more responsive to bottom-up

demands that officers be given the opportunity to acquire academic credentials. Nevertheless, it has not necessarily become any 'smarter' in the sense intended by Shomron. If anything, according to Colonel (res.) Meir Pa'il, a veteran *Palmachnik* who enjoyed a legendary spell as CO of the officers' course in the 1960s, the blight of 'mediocrity' has merely become more pervasive than ever (Pa'il 2003: 187). Enrolment in the Tactical Command College is modest (combined, the first three cohorts numbered just 137 cadets) and clearly embraces only a fraction of the relevant officer complement. Moreover, even those admitted might not necessarily learn very much. Confronted with a class composed entirely of IDF officers, university lecturers have tended, perhaps inevitably, to succumb to their pleas for special concessions. Texts not available in Hebrew translation are removed from the reading assignments and teams of assistants are employed in order to help the class write its papers. The new generation of IDF officers, it has been repeatedly alleged, is acquiring far more experience in the arts of manipulating the system than in pondering the subtleties of Clausewitz and Jomini (Van Creveld 1998: 316; Grodzinski 2007).

'Operational Theory'

Official IDF interest in 'Operational Theory' commenced during Barak's tenure as CoS. It was formalized in 1993, when the head of the General Staff's doctrine and training department (*TOHAD*) established a Research Group, which was charged with responsibility for both developing IDF doctrine in this area and putting together a kit of written materials for use in a *MABAL* course on 'Advanced Battle Command'. Neither aim was fulfilled. Despite persistent injections of funds and an incremental growth in staff of some 600 percent, the 'Operational Theory Research Institute' (the considerably more pompous title given to the Research Group in 2001) achieved very little. By 2006, it had produced no reports on large-scale military tactics, it had failed to deliver the promised handbook on operational commands and methods (or even a glossary of 'operational' terms) and its course at *MABAL* had been discontinued. In sum, the IDF had nothing to show for its investment other than random links in a loose chain of oral tradition. As the State Comptroller (2006: 61–64) pointed out, without a clear and authorized language of operational discourse, individual commanders would inevitably interpret concepts, and hence orders, in separate ways.

Clarity, however, was far from being operational theory's strong point. On the contrary, the entire subject often seemed clouded in precisely the same sort of obscurity that, as noted above, had already befogged IDF discussions of both the *imut mugbal* (see p. 48) and logistics reforms (see p. 92). In the case of operational theory, much of the fault lay with its principal exponent: Brigadier General (res.) Shimon Naveh. A highly

talented soldier who capped a distinguished combat career in the IDF by writing a PhD on military thought at King's College, London, Naveh had much to say about how Israel's military should go about its business. But even his admirers acknowledged that he was difficult to comprehend; his writings, especially, were couched in a convoluted and jargon-laden style that his excessive footnoting did nothing to improve.[7] His detractors, whose numbers were multiplied by Naveh's abrasive responses to criticism, accused him of spouting absolute gibberish. Especially contentious were his applications to military matters of the post-structuralism of Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Debord (he apparently draws the line at Derrida). Praised as insights of genius by some commentators (e.g. Challans 2006; Weizman 2006), they were dismissed as humbug by others.

One especially unrelenting critic was Major General Ya'akov Amidror, who was appointed CO of *MABAL* in 1999. From the first, Amidror insisted that IDF officers master the classics of military thought before dabbling in contemporary strategic fads. Deeply suspicious that Naveh's Operational Theory Research Institute was reversing those priorities, he in 2002 summarily banished its entire staff from the compound under his command. (In the spring of 2006, the IDF officially terminated its association with the Institute, whose staff was suspected of financial irregularities.) Retirement from service did nothing to moderate Amidror's views. On the contrary, in 2005 he went public with accusations that Naveh and his associates had done nothing but befuddle the minds of Israel's military leaders with a load of mumbo jumbo that defied the rules of plain speech. Deliberately satirizing the jargon that he accused Naveh of introducing, Amidror entitled his own article: 'The Strike as a Cognitive Paradigm of Effects' (Amidror 2005).

The evidence of the Lebanon War, 2006

Members of the Winograd Committee, who investigated the 2006 Lebanon War, seem to have agreed, although they expressed themselves in more muted language. Altogether, they concluded, the new operational lexicon, with its talk of 'indirect levers' and 'effects', had done more harm than good. For one thing, it discarded and disparaged terms made familiar to IDF personnel through decades of previous use. More seriously, the new lexicon generated serious communications breakdowns. It soon became public knowledge that HQ had couched orders in language ('low footprint'; 'freeze operational space') that made no sense whatever to the forces in the field, thereby violating a fundamental rule of military command (Shelah and Limor 2007: 198). As the Winograd interim report dryly commented: 'We have to point out that clarity of orders is a vital component of combat effectiveness' (Winograd Commission Interim Report 2007: 59).

In the public eye, certainly, linguistic confusion had merely compounded the sins of organizational disarray. Significantly, indeed, the Winograd report explicitly juxtaposes one to the other. Immediately after commenting on the detrimental effects of the IDF's new terminology (p. 59: paragraph 118), it remarks that 'Frequent organizational changes in the IDF created a situation of constant disruption, and perhaps even confusion, that weakened the army's ability to cope optimally with the campaign' (p. 60: paragraph 119). Combined, the two processes had indeed concocted a witches' brew. Instead of transforming Israel's military into a smaller and smarter framework, the steps taken over the previous two decades had unintentionally produced a force that articulate sections of Israeli society now considered to be both cumbersome and inept.

6 From nation-binder to nation-divider?

Formally, Israel's conscription policies and practices give an impression of almost unique resilience. Elsewhere in the world, the late twentieth century witnessed sweeping changes in military service systems. The universal draft, once a norm in democratic as well as authoritarian states, became exceptional and all-volunteer forces the rule. In Israel, by contrast, most of the service laws enacted as long ago as 1949 remain on the statute books. As a result, the Israel Defense Force (IDF) is still predominantly manned by conscripts and mandatory reservists, not professionals.

Conventional wisdom ascribes the stolid continuity of the IDF's militia character to societal needs as well as operational requirements. Universal conscription, in addition to ensuring a regular and supposedly cheap supply of military manpower, is also thought to obfuscate societal differences and act as a national rite de passage to equal citizenship. But though that image remains powerful, with the passage of time it has lost much of its luster. As the present chapter will show, even during Ben-Gurion's times the reality produced by recruitment and placement policies deviated markedly from his vision of an all-embracing 'people's army' that constituted a vast 'melting pot'. Contemporary discrepancies between the theory and practice have become so vast that they cast doubt on the validity of both concepts.

In graphic terms, the outcomes of Israel's military service policies present a continuum, punctuated by five principal junctures.

Eradication	*Moderation*	*Reflection*	*Exacerbation*	*Creation*
1_____	2_____	3_____	4_____	5_____

1 *Eradication*, the spectrum's most positive extremity, exists when common service nullifies societal divides. In this situation, conscription performs an integrative function, whose effects permeate civilian society too.
2 *Moderation* is a more modest stage. Conscription does not homogenize the nation. But the military setting does establish frameworks

shared by otherwise antagonistic groups. Service thereby furnishes an experience of co-existence that can be carried over into society at large.

3 *Reflection* represents a median point, in that the societal impact exerted by the draft is essentially passive. Recruitment and placement policies merely mirror stratifications in the civilian sector by which indeed they are dictated.

4 With *exacerbation* the pendulum moves in a less benign direction. This outcome occurs when military service practices aggravate existing societal discrepancies. Whether by accident or design, conscription reinforces the inequalities in status that in any case distinguish groups of citizens in a pluralist society.

5 *Creation* represents the negative extremity of the continuum, with inequalities in recruitment practices adding new categories of differentiation to an already divided country. At this stage, military service is transformed from a nation binder into a national divider.

Chronology has certainly influenced the ebb and flow of these five outcomes in Israel's history. Their evolution was not, however, strictly sequential. As will be seen, thanks to the heterogeneity of Israeli society, several have co-existed simultaneously, causing different groups to be affected by military service in different ways.

Eradication

Notwithstanding Ben-Gurion's promotion of the IDF as a tool capable of inculcating citizenship as well as comradeship, the chances that conscription might eradicate Israel's societal differences were always slim. Cross-country studies of similar attempts to employ the military as a tool of social engineering indicate that not even under the best of circumstances do armed forces perform as well as transmitters of allegedly homogenizing national norms (Krebs 2004). And, from the start, conditions in Israel were never ideal.

One set of problems arose from the ambivalent relationship that existed within the IDF between native conscripts and volunteers from overseas. Initially, Ben-Gurion hoped to exploit the notion of Jewish peoplehood as a means of persuading foreign Jewish nationals, veterans of World War II, to enlist in the IDF for the duration of the War of Independence. In total, indeed, the *MACHAL* ('overseas volunteers') framework established for that purpose encompassed some 4,000 persons, mostly Jews but including an assortment of gentile adventurers, whose presence was especially valuable in *sherut avir*, the fledgling air service (Gelber 1986b: 159–161, 553). But whatever additional symbolic benefits Ben-Gurion might have hoped to reap from this display of Diaspora Jewish solidarity were nullified by the recriminations and accusations of bad faith that sped back and forth when the '*machalnicks*' refused to swear allegiance to the IDF, whilst

insisting that they receive, in foreign currency, the generous cash bonuses that they had been somewhat rashly promised (Markovitzky 1995: 291–298). When *MACHAL* was disbanded in 1949 few of its members remained in Israel. Even they doubted that the IDF could ever again be employed to bridge the gulf between Israelis and Diaspora Jews.[1]

Fractures within domestic Israeli society were yet more severe. Especially fissiparous were the divisions that resulted from the vast demographic changes that took place during the first decade of statehood. Between 1948 and 1953 Israel's Jewish population almost doubled, principally thanks to the arrival of almost a million new immigrants, over 60 percent of whom were unimaginatively – and with a disdain that still rankles – lumped together as *mizrachiyim* ('Orientals'; Shalom Shitrit 2004). Conscription insured that this influx almost immediately affected IDF educational profiles. By 1953, Jews of oriental extraction constituted 51 percent of all new recruits, almost half of whom had not completed elementary school and could barely speak any Hebrew (Peled 2000).

From the start, the IDF Educational Corps attempted to improve the literacy of the new immigrant conscripts, setting a precedent of investment in their absorption that has been sustained ever since. Nevertheless, linguistic handicaps continued to produce an ethnic stratification that placed newcomers at the very bottom of the IDF occupational ladder. Consequently, whereas technical and communications services, together with the officer training courses, were throughout the 1950s overwhelmingly populated with native-born *ashkenazim* ('westerners'), immigrant *mizrachiyim* made up three quarters of the complement of most basic infantry units in which, not incidentally, instances of petty theft, racketeering and indiscipline became endemic. A General Staff report on a tour of infantry units, compiled in 1953, shows that a version of Gresham's Law had taken effect: 'While good soldiers were squeezed out, soldiers with a record of disciplinary problems on their bases or at different facilities are placed in [combat] brigades' (cited Drori 2006: 426).

Inevitably, IDF operational standards plummeted. During the early 1950s, IDF infantry units repeatedly failed to accomplish their missions. Some could not locate the designated objective; others panicked at the first whiff of gunshot. Reading the reports, Ben-Gurion came close to despairing of turning *mizrachiyim* into creditable soldiers, and thereby into citizens of equal status (Morris 1994). Instead of eradicating societal differences, conscription seemed to demonstrate just how glaring they were. Security considerations dictated a more pragmatic perspective. In 1955, he agreed that future reprisal operations would be entrusted to an unabashedly elite fighting force ('unit 101') comprised almost entirely of quintessential *sabras*, residents of *kibbutzim* (Sharon 1989: 90; Morris 1993: 236–239).

A simplistic reading suggests that time did much to resolve the contradictions in which the IDF thus became embroiled. In this version, the

subsequent social mobility of many *mizrachiyim*, accompanied by a dramatic rise in their high-school attendance, vastly improved their qualifications as soldiers. Consequent assignment to every branch of military service in turn facilitated their integration into civilian life. Samuel Rolbant's sketch of the 'single family' of Israeli soldiers (Rolbant 1970: 154), drawn in the euphoric afterglow of the Six-Day War, presents an effusive version of that thesis. By implication, it also informs more sedate analyses. Possible distinctions between *ashkenazi* and *mizrachi* service patterns receive only glancing notice in a pioneering study released in 1983 by a former head of the IDF Manpower Branch (Nativ 1983). More astonishingly, they are altogether ignored in the otherwise detailed *Portrait of the Israeli Soldier*, published three years later by Reuven Gal, who had been the IDF's Chief Psychologist between 1977 and 1982. The reticence common to both accounts conveys an impression that the entire topic, besides being taboo, was thought to be becoming irrelevant.

Subsequent research has tended to be more skeptical. As Cynthia Enloe famously observed in other contexts, the notion that armed forces might eradicate societal differences simply by putting conscripts into uniform rests on a fundamentally discriminatory outlook (Enloe 1980). Starting from the assumption that there exists a hierarchy of cultures in society, it expects the targeted group, in this case *mizrachiyim*, to assimilate the dominant habits and norms of *ashkenazim*, as much in the military domain as elsewhere. According to Smooha (1983) and Roumani (1991: 51–80) the *MAKAAM* framework (see p. 107), although well-intentioned, typified this fault. Its ultimate effect was to 'deculturalize' *mizrachiyim*, who thus became diluted – and necessarily inferior – versions of *ashkenazim*.

Following Smooha, observers also accused IDF placement and promotion evaluation procedures of reflecting similar biases. Hard data proved difficult to obtain, especially since the IDF never recognized *mizrachiyim* and *ashkenazim* as categories of social definition (whereas it did from the first assign profiling labels to 'men/women'; 'new immigrants/veterans', '[non-Jewish] minorities'; 'religious/secular [Jews]'). But aptitude tests, known in the IDF as *KABA* scores, seemed to tell their own tale. Always framed in ways that privileged high-school graduates and handicapped early school-leavers (Safrai 2006), they continued to disadvantage *mizrachi* youngsters well into the second generation. No wonder, therefore, that *ashkenazim* were in the 1990s calculated to be over-represented in 'white collar' military occupations, particularly those associated with hi-tech command and control systems (Erez *et al.* 1993), whilst *mizrachiyim* predominated in 'blue collar' tasks, such as cooks and general service jobs. The promotion cycles of the two groups also appeared to move at different speeds (Swirski 1995: 91–98).

Moderation

Although military service thus failed to entirely eradicate the *mizrachi–ashkenazi* divide, it certainly helped to moderate their differences.

One process that has facilitated moderation is the (belated) promotion of officers of *mizrachi* backgrounds to positions of senior command. Three of the seven chiefs of staff appointed between 1983 and 2006 were of entirely *mizrachi* origin [Moshe Levi (1983–1987), whose parents were immigrants from Iraq; Shaul Mofaz (1998–2002) and Dan Halutz (2006–2007), both born to families from Iran]. And although *mizrachiyim* may still be under-represented, proportionately, in the officer class as a whole, their presence is certainly pronounced. To adapt an observation made by Charles Moskos with respect to blacks in the United States military, the IDF was the first national institution in which *mizrachiyim* bossed around *ashkenazim* as a matter of course, and remains the most visible forum in which they do so.

At a deeper level, common service in the IDF has also helped to undermine ethnocentric stereotypes and dispel the atmosphere of mutual ignorance, where they are most likely to develop. *Ashkenazim* and *mizrachiyim* have never been drafted into segregated formations, and their consequent proximity, especially in combat units, was many years ago said to support Allport's contention (commonly known as 'the contact hypothesis') that intergroup association can improve intergroup relations (Amir 1968). That said, it cannot be denied that, for their own purposes, junior IDF officers often encourage versions of ethnic identity. Recent research indicates, for instance, that blatant ethnic associations now pervade the sort of inter-unit rivalries that commanders foster in order to promote esprit de corps. Relations within and between the Paratroop and Golani (infantry) brigades, especially, are flavored by the general perception that they constitute, respectively, *ashkenazi* and *mizrachi* strongholds – so much so that *ashkenazim* drafted into Golani are expected to adopt typically *mizrachi* mannerisms and dialects, whilst *mizrachiyim* assigned to the paratroops are likewise expected to assume *ashkenazi* codes.[2]

Relations between religiously observant and non-practicing Jewish troops

For many years common military service proved to be an especially successful means of moderating tensions between religiously observant and non-practicing Jewish troops. Given the conditions prevalent in 1948, this was no mean achievement. After all, mainstream Jewish Israeli society before and immediately after independence was emphatically secular, often – paradoxically – devoutly so. Nevertheless, from the first Ben-Gurion dismissed suggestions that the IDF follows the segregationist precedent set by the *Haganah*, which had allowed religiously observant volunteers to serve

in their own homogeneous units. 'The creation of religious [military] units', he predicted in 1949 to a delegation of national-religious leaders, 'will result in the creation of anti-religious units' (cited in Friedman 2005: 109–112) and thus undermine precisely the integrative ethos that conscription was supposed to promote.

Ultimately, the person who did most to help Ben-Gurion chart an alternative way to accommodate the conflicting religious sensibilities of the military complement was Rabbi Shlomo Goren (1917–1994). Easily the most profound, productive and prominent of the military rabbis that Israel ever produced, Goren held the post of *rav tzeva'i rashi* (IDF Chief Military Chaplain) for an unparalleled term of 33 years, from 1948 until 1971. In the course of his tenure, he raised public awareness of the role played by the unit under his command, whose function as a bridging mechanism between practicing and non-practicing troops he never ceased to stress.

Goren's point of departure was unabashedly sectarian, stressing the IDF's obligation to accommodate the needs of religious conscripts, even though they comprised a minority of the total complement. Hence, he insisted that the entire military framework conform to the basic precepts of traditional Jewish law. Specifically, every base had to maintain the ritual amenities that observant Jews require on a daily basis (a synagogue, prayer books, etc.). Similarly, General Staff regulations had to ensure that traditional Jewish practices, especially with respect to dietary matters (*kashrut*) and Sabbath observance, would be universally observed. In order to further help observant soldiers harmonize military realities and religious requirements (for instance, by carrying out their duties in ways that did not conflict with traditional Judaism's complex web of Sabbath do's and don'ts) Goren also applied himself to determining Jewish law (*halakhah*) with respect to military matters. With an eye on posterity, after retiring from service he collated his rulings in *Meishiv Milkhamah* ('Responding to War'. Jerusalem: Idra Rabbah, 1983–1993), three groundbreaking volumes 'relating to the army, war and security'. Together, these plump tomes summarize a lifetime of deep personal involvement in an area about which rabbinic enquiry had been almost completely silent for two millennia (S.A. Cohen 2007c).

But Goren was no introverted fundamentalist. He was deeply aware that he also had a duty to cater to the far larger constituency of non-observant military personnel, to whom ritual minutiae were either an anathema or meant very little at all. In an effort to fulfill that obligation Goren first established within his command a 'religious tradition and knowledge' branch, responsible for disseminating oral and written information about Jewish religious rites to troops to whom they were entirely strange. At the same time he impressed on his chaplains the need to dispense spiritual encouragement and comfort to all service personnel, regardless of their degree of orthodoxy. Goren set a personal example in especially dramatic fashion at the outbreak of the Six-Day War on June 5

1967, when he went on IDF radio to broadcast an exhortation that began with Deuteronomy 20: 3–5 ('Hear O Israel …') and concluded with Psalms 118: 25 ('O Lord, save us! O Lord, send us success!') (Michaelson 1982: 103).

But by far the most long-lasting of Goren's contributions to the moderation of religious–secular differences in the IDF was to initiate military rites in which both segments of the complement could jointly participate. For instance, he institutionalized the convention, which is still observed, whereby every Jewish soldier on active service, regardless of background and rank, attends the ceremony of blessing the wine (*kiddush*) that precedes the Friday evening meal and marks the inauguration of the Sabbath. He also established the tradition whereby each major rite of passage in the Israeli military experience is marked by a pageant deliberately suffused with Jewish connotations. To this day every new Jewish recruit receives a copy of the Old Testament, prefaced by an introduction that is written by the IDF Chief Rabbi of the day (Christians receive the New Testament, Muslims the Koran and Druze a medallion). Likewise, passing-out parades are frequently held at Masada or the Western Wall in Jerusalem, venues suffused with Jewish associations to which the military chaplain, who is always one of the speakers, conventionally makes reference.

Throughout, Goren's purpose was clear. He did not set out to convert non-observant troops to a traditional Jewish lifestyle. Rather, his objective was to create a sense of shared destiny. By deliberately weaving Judaism's heritage of rituals and teachings into the fabric of military life, he sought to infuse all personnel with a sense of shared Jewish values and purposes. In so doing, he worked toward transforming service in the IDF into a formative influence on Israel's version of a 'civil religion' – that capacious mosaic of symbols, themes, myths and associations that together foster and convey feelings of national affinity and reciprocity (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983).

As will be seen (see pp. 125–130), for a variety of reasons, the atmosphere of religious–secular accommodation thus created was not sustained. After the early 1970s, especially, the gaps between secular and observant communities in Israel widened – as much within the IDF as elsewhere in society. Thereto, however, joint military service had indeed fostered moderation. In this respect, at least, Rolbant's rose-tinted portrait rings true:

> Its principal achievement has been not that it has enabled the devout recruits to observe the requirements of the Torah, but that it has helped to break all barriers between men who lived their lives in vastly different cultural milieus. Boys from religious families could mix freely with antireligious boys from secularist left-wing kibbutzim, learning to give and take, to disagree while respecting the other's right to his own

> view, to refrain from excesses of behavior and find a deeper unity of purpose.
>
> (Rolbant 1970: 154)

Reflection

For the most part, however, the military impact on societal relations has been less pronounced. Instead, the IDF's composition has just mirrored stratifications already prevalent in the civilian sphere, thus producing a situation here termed 'reflection'.

Non-Jewish 'minorities'

One clear illustration of 'reflection' is provided by the military service patterns of Israel's non-Jewish minorities. Four groups fall into this category: a very small number of male Christian Arab volunteers, most male members of the tiny Circassian community (total population of approximately 3,000), roughly 1,000 Bedouin male volunteers, and – the largest group of all – male members of the Druze community, all of whom have been subject to the draft since 1957.[3] Divided from each other by cultural and religious differences, all four population groups share a sense of marginality in the overall Israeli societal fabric. Their native language (predominantly Arabic) and their non-Jewish status clearly exclude them from membership of Israel's Jewish collectivity. At the same time, however, their customs and beliefs equally set them apart from Muslim Arabs. Living for the most part in their own settlements, both physically and figuratively members of these minorities occupy the borderlands between Israel's Jewish and Muslim worlds. Sensitive to currents of opinion in both, they cannot fully assimilate into either.

Historical research has dispelled the romantic narrative of an uninterrupted 'bond of blood' between Jews and Druze, sealed when they fought shoulder to shoulder in 1948. From the first their relationship was considerably more complex and marked by mutual suspicion as well as cooperation. Even so, Druze leaders proved remarkably prescient when in the early 1950s they identified the importance of enlistment in what Krebs (2006: 44–113) terms Israel's 'frame of republican citizenship discourse'. They also managed to allay fears that their community, once in uniform, might become a fifth column (Peled 1998: 142–158). Political benefits and conscription thereafter went hand in hand. Israel recognized the Druze as an autonomous religious community in 1957 and established Druze courts in 1962. Restrictions on Druze military occupations began to be relaxed in the 1970s and were almost all removed in the 1990s. Meanwhile, the proportion of Druze males in professional service grew steadily, as did their representation amongst IDF officers. One Druze serviceman crossed the threshold of divisional command in 1995; another was in August 2001 promoted to the rank of major general.

Notwithstanding such achievements, the service patterns of most Druze troops still parallel the 'bunching' characteristic of other minorities within the IDF. Christian Arabs tend to serve in auxiliary service sectors, Circassians gravitate in groups toward the infantry; and Bedouins figure prominently amongst the scouts in the desert reconnaissance battalion (*gedud ha-siyur ha-midbari*). Despite the military's increasingly 'open door' policy with regard to Druze postings, they too concentrate in specific areas. One is the Border Police (*Mishmar ha-Gevul*), where they comprise 10 percent of the complement and to command of which a Druze was appointed in 2004. The other is the translator's pool in the IDF legal system, where their bilingual skills are put to use whenever suspected Palestinian insurgents are brought to trial.

Because both assignments necessitate close proximity to Palestinians, they nicely illustrate the complexities that characterize the ambivalent identities of Druze soldiers in general. Lisa Hajjar's analysis of the status of Druze translators is in this respect particularly enlightening. Their roles, she finds, are far from purely technical and their stance in court hardly neutral. As translators, they become mouthpieces of resistance as well as of authority. They function simultaneously as Israeli soldiers who maintain a military occupation over a hostile civilian population and, at the same time, as 'non-Arab Arabs', spokesmen for a non-Jewish identity with which they empathize. As one interviewee put it, his military service had confirmed his oblique status as a singular hybrid: 'An Arab Druze Israeli. It's crazy' (Hajjar 2005: 152).

A large-scale survey conducted by Yehoshuah Amrani in 2002–2003 (Amrani 2004), whose findings were independently confirmed by a smaller sample taken in 2005 (Halabi 2006: 79–87), reveals the extent to which the Druze sense of marginality within the IDF mirrors and reinforces similar sentiments in civilian society. Over 70 percent of the Druze ex-servicemen interviewed expressed frustration with their status. Other than at the declaratory level, they complained, their Jewish co-citizens seem unmoved by the contribution that, as the casualty lists demonstrate, Druze soldiers have made to the country's security. Worse still, their comrades-in-arms likewise sometimes act as though Druze lives are more disposable than those of other troops.[4] The prospect of professional military careers, they concede, certainly provides them with economic opportunity (almost 40 percent of Druze wage earners rely on the security services for their incomes or pensions). It also provides a helpful stepping-stone to subsequent employment by local government agencies in their own communities. Otherwise, however, they have little to show for their service. Beyond the confines of their own villages, even Druze citizens in possession of a distinguished military record report experiencing discrimination when applying for jobs in both the private and public sectors. According to Amrani, awareness of that situation explains why almost 50 percent of male Druze high-school students now

attribute little or no legitimacy to the imposition of the draft on their community.

Among Bedouin soldiers, the sense that the societal rewards of enlistment do not live up to expectations is even more pronounced. In their case, moreover, disappointment is compounded by susceptibility to fluctuations in the state of relations between Palestinians and Israelis. Both factors explain why, financial inducements notwithstanding, only 80 Bedouin youngsters enlisted in 2001, a decline of over 60 percent since 1999. A recruitment drive specifically aimed at this sector, coupled with the appointment in December 2004 of a Bedouin as CO of the desert reconnaissance battalion, exerted only a temporary effect. After a short surge in 2003 (Sapir 2003; State Comptroller of Israel 2004: 131), they were four years later reported (*Ba-Machaneh* May 4, 2007) to have reached new lows.

New immigrants

As already noted, conscription has at best, and even then only slowly, managed to moderate differentials between the predominantly *mizrachi* new immigrants of Israel's first decade and her *ashkenazi* veterans. The impact of military service on more recent arrivals has moved even further away from the ideal of 'eradication', and instead provides another example of 'reflection'.

Almost as a matter of course, the IDF enlists young immigrants from an enormous span of countries that stretches from Afghanistan to the United States and from Syria to Chile. Attention necessarily focuses, however, on the two most populous groups of new arrivals since the 1980s: immigrants from Ethiopia, who together with their dependents numbered some 105,000 persons by 2005; and those from the former Soviet Union (FSU: principally the Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan) who total almost one million. Together, these two groups were primarily responsible for a rise of almost 20 percent in Israel's population between 1987 and 1997, by which time one in every dozen new recruits IDF soldiers was an 'immigrant' (*oleh*), i.e. born outside of Israel to non-Israeli parents and resident in the country since age 16 (S.A. Cohen 1997a: 93–95).

FSU and Ethiopian immigrants have very little in common. They emanate from vastly separate cultures and reached Israel under very different circumstances. Most Ethiopian immigrants arrived traumatized, penniless and physically exhausted by the vast distances that they had covered on foot before reaching the airlift centers in Addis Ababa. On arrival, they discovered that few Israelis understood their language and customs. Post-Cold War immigrants from the FSU, by contrast, although also frequently impoverished, were by reason of their education often highly qualified to take advantage of the opportunities offered by Israel's expanding economy. Moreover, they were welcomed by a host society whose links with Russian

culture dated back to the *Yishuv* and which, as recently as the 1970s, had already successfully absorbed thousands of 'Russian' *refuseniks* from the Baltic republics and Georgia. In their case, therefore, the retention of a separate identity and the patronage of Russian-speaking theaters, newspapers and TV channels are deliberate. Unlike Ethiopians, FSU immigrants constitute an enclave in Israel's societal fabric out of choice rather than necessity (Leshem and Lissak 1999: 137–171; Weingrod 1995: 252–257).

IDF enlistment practices unwittingly help to ensure that both groups, in their separate ways, will continue to be marginalized. Even at the end of the 1990s the IDF was still under-utilizing the human resources that immigration placed at its disposal, a fault to which attention had been called some 20 years earlier (Azarya and Kimmerling 1980). According to the State Comptroller (1999: 84–92), new immigrant 18-year-olds were four times less likely to be drafted into service than their secular *sabra* peers (*vatikim*), and – if enlisted – three times more likely to be reported AWOL and/or receive an early discharge. Moreover, although new immigrants, especially from the FSU, attained high *KABA* scores, they were assigned in disproportionate numbers to low-grade technical occupations (drivers and general services). Of those who served in combat units, many bunched together in the Givati infantry brigade, so much so that it became known as Israel's 'Red Army'. Only 2 percent went on to officers' training courses (as opposed to 14 percent in the case of *vatikim*).

Available statistics with respect to soldiers of Ethiopian origin reveal similar discrepancies. On June 20, 2007, www.nfc.co.il (a news agency) reported that the minister responsible for Immigrant Absorption, Mr. Zeev Boim, had been informed that only 35 percent of Ethiopian recruits are assigned to combat units and 20 percent to technical support facilities (the averages for *vatikim* are, respectively, 45 percent and 35 percent). Conversely, 20 percent of Ethiopian recruits serve as basic maintenance staff and drivers, compared with just 5 percent of *vatikim*.

IDF sources contend that all such discrepancies are easily rationalized and repeatedly assure the State Comptroller's office that steps are under way to ensure that they will soon narrow. Immigrants themselves, however, remain skeptical about the image of enlistment as a gateway to societal integration. Ethiopian immigrant soldiers, who remain an understudied subject, reportedly express their feelings of persistent marginality *sotto voce*, using such expressions as 'the melting pot works only externally and not internally' (Shabtay 1995: 177). Recent arrivals from the FSU, who have been studied more widely, tend to be more outspoken.

Research shows that FSU immigrants tend to retain the negative view of military service that they and (even more so) their parents entertained toward the Red Army draft. The idea that enlistment might be token patriotism is simply absent from their discourse (Carmeli and Fallon 1997: 389–405). So, too, is the notion of service as a catalyst of national identity. Once drafted, male FSU immigrants typically evince little enthusiasm for

the IDF, to which they apply the circumspect attitude that has become common to the armed forces in their countries of origin. Especially indicative is their attitude toward authority, particularly if personified by a female officer. At its mildest, it takes the form of evasive refusals to cooperate (e.g. by feigning ignorance of Hebrew; Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2003); at its most extreme, and especially when expressed by persons who had come of age during the years of *perestroika*, it has taken the form of open rebellion (Epstein 2002). Equally negative are the postservice effects. Once discharged, few FSU immigrants maintain whatever friendships they may have formed in the IDF with native Israelis. 'At the end of their service, most interviewees of both genders decided to return to their secluded premilitary world' (Eisikovits 2006: 299).

Enlistment especially tends to reflect the pre-existing status of new immigrants whose marginality is compounded by anomalies in their religious status. This is rarely an issue where new arrivals from Ethiopia are concerned; only a minority (principally the 'Falash Mura') is not considered fully Jewish by most orthodox rabbinic authorities, and even they invariably undergo a token form of conversion to Judaism prior to their enlistment. FSU immigrants, however, present greater difficulties. Although all received Israeli citizenship under the provision of the Law of Return, over a third (who according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics together with their offspring in 2007 totaled some 310,000 persons) did not meet orthodox rabbinic criteria for membership of the Jewish people.[5] Most seem indifferent to the niceties of that anomalous status, and are content to remain non-denominational citizens of a Jewish state. But over 10 percent have registered themselves as Christians.

Service in the IDF exerts scant influence on those preferences. Statistics presented by the IDF to the *Knesset* committee on conversion showed that between 2001 and 2007 only 6,191 non-Jewish FSU immigrant recruits, just 5 percent of the total, bothered to register for *Nativ* ('Path'), a conversion program sponsored by military authorities; and less than a third of the participants completed the course. By contrast, every year some 600 conscripts insist on taking the oath of allegiance on the New Testament (*Haaretz* June 28, 2007, July 12, 2007). Not even death in a common cause dilutes these differences between many immigrant and native comrades-in-arms. Keeping to the letter of rabbinic law, IDF chaplains refuse to bury non-Jewish combat casualties in military cemeteries consecrated for Jewish use. Instead, military practice accords with the civilian norm, which assigns Jews and gentiles to separate plots. On occasion, the results can be macabre. The body of Lev Paschov, an FSU immigrant soldier killed whilst on duty in August 1993, was interred, exhumed and then re-interred at a new location when it was discovered that although born to a Jewish father, and hence granted Israeli citizenship, Paschov was the son of a gentile mother, and hence not considered Jewish by rabbinic *halakhah* (Shaviv 1994).

Toward an army of 'peripheries'?

Professor Yagil Levy, one of Israel's most incisive analysts of civil–military affairs, has persistently argued that the phenomenon here termed 'reflection', far from being restricted to ethnic minorities and new immigrants, in effect embraces all segments of Israeli society. Over a number of years, he has advanced that thesis in a series of bold and panoramic studies, most originally published in Hebrew (Levy 1998, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2007a), which he capped in 2007 with the publication of an English-language overview entitled *Israel's Materialist Militarism* (Levy 2007b).

Baldly summarized, Levy's basic contention is that hierarchies within the IDF have always replicated civilian differentials, which they do not change. 'Military service reproduces civilian inequalities and returns veterans to their pre-military categories because its structure mirrors the social hierarchy.' Universal conscription, in this view, abets that process, allowing the almost seamless interchangeability ('convertibility') of military and civilian status. Primarily, this is thanks to the play of market forces. Because the military and civilian spheres constitute two points on a single loop of 'materialist militarism', the skills and qualifications acquired in one become 'capital', commodities which are easily transferable to the other. As long as this balance between potential rewards and sacrifices is sustained, the 'republican equation' necessary for the health of relations between the nation's civilian and military spheres remains in a state of stable equilibrium. Matters become far more fluid, however, once the gains offered by military service become socially devalued relative to the level of sacrifice that it demands, as a result of which the perceived 'convertibility' of military service declines.

Drawing upon a powerful arsenal of theoretical insights drawn from other contexts, Levy deploys his notion of 'materialist militarism' as a meta-framework for analyzing periodic alterations in the sociological composition of the IDF's ground combat formations. Particularly crucial, he argues were the changes in this area that commenced in the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s, shifts that he attributes to modifications in public perceptions of combat service and its rewards. Thanks principally to the computer revolution and globalization, and in part too to the increasing prevalence of anti-Palestinian constabulary duties in the IDF's operational agenda, scions of bourgeois Israeli society, the old elite, became increasingly convinced that hi-tech proficiency offers a faster and less morally problematic route to societal advancement than does battlefield renown. Their apparent reluctance to perform combat duty ('the motivation crisis' of the mid-1990s) thus expressed a view that enlistment now hindered social advancement; it delayed the stage at which the advantages of inherited wealth and good schooling could be traded for integration into civilian career tracks. Pari passu, the eagerness of the old elites to join hi-tech units reflected their knowledge that such formations can constitute

nurseries for the highly competitive world of commerce. By contrast, 'peripheral' (i.e. hitherto disadvantaged) groups in Israeli society took the opposite route. They now flocked to frontline units in the belated, and in Levy's view ill-advised, hope that combat service might bestow on them the societal status and material rewards that it once conferred on the secular upper and middle classes.

In outline, this interplay of perceptions produced a situation resembling the movement of a revolving door. Sons and daughters of the old elites, whose fathers had supplied the IDF with most of its combat personnel and a vastly disproportionate number of combat officers, were by the 1990s moving to the IDF's hi-tech and 'white-collar' support units, which were then expanding in size and prominence thanks to the IDF's growing reliance on state-of-the-art C4I systems. The gaps thus created in frontline ranks were filled by 'peripheral' population segments, whose contribution to Israel's battlefield victories had thereto been marginal: lower class *mizrachiyim*, new immigrants, Druze soldiers, female conscripts and – above all – members of the national-religious community. According to Levy, one result of this change of guard has been what he terms the increasing militancy of IDF operational conduct – which accounts, he suggests, for the aggressiveness displayed by Israeli troops during the second [Al-Aksa] *intifada*. Inevitably, another has been a disproportionate rise in the representation of 'peripheral' groups amongst IDF combat casualties.

For all its persuasiveness, even at the level of abstraction, 'materialist militarism' seems ill-equipped to provide a definitive explanation for attitudes to military service, in Israel or anywhere else for that matter. Principally, this is because of the extent to which it plays down ideals and anything other than essentially material aspirations as incentives for joining the ranks of combat formations. Indeed, essential to the robustness of the thesis is the implicit reduction of individuals to the status of class-conditioned robots whose attitudes toward military service reflect little other than their perceptions of its convertibility into societal rewards (S.A. Cohen 2004). The empirical evidence more specifically relating to Israel likewise indicates the need for some refinements in the approach, especially since reality in some crucial instances fails to match the tidy categorizations of the 'revolving door' thesis and its inferences. For instance, Levy's admirably detailed tables of IDF casualty figures, especially as relating to the second Lebanon War, reveal deviations from the sociological pattern supposedly established during the course of the second *intifada* that he honestly acknowledges but seems only able to explain away by what comes across as quasi-rabbinical casuistry (Levy 2007b: 229–233). Equally problematic is his contention that changes in the composition of IDF combat units after the mid-1990s of themselves explain the allegedly more militant nature of their behavior thereafter. Even if the hypothesis is correct, itself a mute point, its verification surely requires that more attention be paid to a wider range of contexts, Palestinian as well as Israeli,

than is allowed by Levy's virtually exclusive focus on domestic societal dynamics (compare Peri 2006: 231).

From the perspective of the present study, however, the most serious flaw in *Israel's Materialist Militarism* is that its examination of the societal–military interaction, for all its comprehensiveness, in fact does not go far enough. Specifically, it fails to acknowledge that conscription practices in Israel can, and do, produce a far wider variety of societal outcomes than are portrayed in Levy's account. Precisely because of the importance that he attaches to military service as a mechanism that reflects and reproduces existing communal hierarchies, he affords the IDF no more than what is essentially a passive role in the interplay between the armed forces and society at large. In so doing, he underplays the negative effects that the military institution can itself exert on public perceptions of its societal role. As the final sections of this chapter will show, conscription does not just reflect societal divisions. It can, and does, exacerbate some societal tensions and, worse still, create others.

Exacerbation

In situations of 'exacerbation', military service aggravates societal disparities, thereby increasing their salience in civilian life too. Three separate phenomena illustrate that process: the non-enlistment of Muslim Arab citizens; gender relationships in the IDF; and post-1967 interactions between religious and secular troops.

Arab citizens

No Muslim Arab has ever been drafted into the IDF. Even in 1954, when Palestinian nationalism was latent, Muslim response to an attempt to open the draft to all Arab citizens was low and it seems far-fetched to suggest that 'Israel missed an opportunity in the 1950s and 1960s to win over its Christian and Muslim citizens' by imposing on them the draft (Krebs 2006: 48). Prior to 1966, the only contacts that Israel's Muslim Arab citizens had with the IDF were via the Military Government to which most were subjected and with which some co-operated as informers (H. Cohen 2006: 37–45). Since then, relationships have been virtually non-existent. All Arab women are exempted from service en bloc. On or near their eighteenth birthday, all Muslim Arab men receive a note announcing that the Minister of Defense is exercising the prerogative granted by article 36 of the Security Service Law to excuse them from military service (for the text, see Zeidman 1996: 168–170). Only handfuls volunteer for employment in the IDF, principally in constabulary roles (Kanaaneh 2003).

The justification for that executive order is easily understood. Both Arabs and Jews appreciate that Muslim citizens of Israel cannot reasonably be expected to fight their own co-religionists on behalf of the Jewish

state. Its effects, nevertheless, are devastating. By automatically excusing 17 percent of Israel's male population from the draft solely on the grounds of their ethnicity, a single stroke of the bureaucratic pen underscores their marginalization. Unable to claim membership of the Jewish people, which the Law of Return enshrines as the primary ethnic qualification for Israeli citizenship, Israeli Arabs are also excluded from what Ben-Gurion declared to be the most influential component in the process of national homogenization.

Gender relationships

Although imposing conscription on women as well as men, Israel's military service system clearly privileges masculinity. Gender distinctions are embodied in the National Security Law, which grants women alone the right to conscientious objection (on religious grounds), and are entrenched by male–female differentials in most conscript terms and reserve duty obligations. In 1949, Ben-Gurion famously pronounced that 'no destiny is more important than motherhood' (Berkovitch 1997: 610) and ever since mothers and expectant mothers have generally received blanket service discharges.

More symbolically, in battle chronicles and iconography the epitome of the 'new Jew' created by the Zionist enterprise has traditionally been the male warrior. Official history downplayed the contribution of women during the War of Independence (Tydor Baumel 2002). Other than as objects of mildly erotic attraction, women soldiers were still more decisively absented from the illustrative material printed in IDF publications during the 1950s and 1960s (Bronfeld-Stein 2005). None even mention that 108 women died whilst on active service – mostly due to accidents and suicides – during the War of Independence (2.2 percent of the total); 48 in the 1950s (3 percent) and 59 in the 1960s (1.8 percent).

Much of the IDF's gender bias has been circular and self-fulfilling. Precisely because women are less likely than men to perform reserve duty, during their conscript terms they have been considered undeserving of the investment that training for high-quality assignments requires. For the most part, women were only considered fit for 'rear' duties and hence not qualified to participate in the military's most important and prestigious tasks, which are carried out 'at the front' (Yuval-Davis 1985). At best, they could be given such obviously 'feminine' assignments as social work and nursing. At worst, which was the fate of the majority well into the 1980s, girl conscripts found themselves performing basic and often demeaning office duties, by far the most important of which was making coffee for their male commander and his cronies.

As thus implemented, conscription imposed on Israel's female population what Iris Jerby (1996) termed 'a double price'. By denying women access to military positions that might have allowed them to realize their

potential, the service system not only made them second-class soldiers but it also impeded their chances of advancement in subsequent civilian careers. Hence, by creating a binary social construction that categorically distinguishes between women and men, the IDF 'preserves the logic of the civilian system, strengthens gender stereotypes and deepens the differences between the sexes in society as a whole' (Jerby 1996: 121. See also Izraeli 1997; Levy-Schreiber and Ben-Ari 2000; Klein 2002).

Responding to the overall *zeitgeist* of gender equality, the IDF in the mid-1990s at long last addressed not only the problem of sexual harassment (see Chapter 4) but some of the more glaring anomalies in women's service too. CoS Mofaz was – again – a prime mover and the crucial initial steps were taken during his term of office. Thanks largely to his initiatives, girl conscripts with appropriate psychometric scores now possess access to a growing range of duties. Indeed, several battle-related technical and support units have become almost entirely dependent on the services of women as radar monitors, air-traffic controllers and operators of computerized communications systems. Gender integration is also widespread in some field postings, where females serve as tank instructors, medical orderlies and staff officers.

Two emblematic changes occurred in the year 2000. In June, the IDF dismantled the IDF's Women's' Corps (*CHEN*), a framework whose very existence had both institutionalized gender segregation and articulated the essentially decorative function that women soldiers were thought to perform (*CHEN*, an anagram for *Cheil Nashim* [Women's Corps] also translates as '[feminine] grace'). As a result, the position of CO of Women's Corps was replaced by that of a (female) adviser to the CoS on Women's Issues (*YOHALAN – Yoetzet ha-Ramatkal le-Inyanei Nashim*). An even more emotive threshold was crossed the following September, when – much to the dismay of some observers – the Knesset overcame traditional Israeli opposition to placing women in combat situations.[6]

Other gender barriers meanwhile tumbled in quick succession.

- In June 2001, Roni Zukerman, a granddaughter of two of the most famous participants in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, became the first Israeli woman to pilot a combat aircraft. (Batya Vorensky-Orni had graduated from the pilot's course as early as 1953, but had thereafter been assigned the role of navigator, in which she served during the 1956 Sinai Campaign.)
- The same year, women began to be assigned to counter-insurgency operations in the territories (the first casualty, a young conscript in the Military Police, was killed on duty in Hebron in December 2002).
- In 2003 the IDF opened a 'gender neutral' officer's course which subjected men and women cadets to identical tests of physical and mental stamina, and in the same year announced a plan to establish mixed-gender field units.

- With General Staff order no. 33.0207, promulgated in January 2005, the IDF leapfrogged to the very vanguard of gender equality (cf. Harries-Jenkins 2002). Now, 'Every male and female soldier possesses an equal right to fulfill any function in military service …'.

The practical results of all such endeavors, however, appear to have been far more modest than their declaratory impact. For one thing, the new policies have done nothing to reduce the numbers of women who exempt themselves from duty by resorting to the simple expedient of signing a form that 'declares' their inability to enlist on religious grounds. In fact, the proportion of women granted exemptions on those grounds grew from 27.4 percent of all potential women draftees in 2001 to 29.9 percent in 2004 (State Comptroller of Israel 2006: 177–178). Likewise, marginal has been the impact of change on the occupational patterns of those who do serve. More opportunity has not resulted in equal opportunity. Despite all the fanfare, less than 2 percent of women conscripts serve in combat formations; the majority is still assigned to mundane secretarial duties. Many of the remainder, although given less insulting job descriptions, likewise find themselves consigned to offices where the superfluity of personnel is rife and the likelihood of under-employment and/or early discharge consequently high.

Neither have reforms removed the glass ceiling of discrimination against women career officers. If anything, it now appears, the abolition of the Women's Corps might have hindered their career advancement since it thrusts them into a male-dominated arena without the protection that *CHEN* once supplied. True, two women officers were recently appointed successive IDF Spokespersons (Brigadier General Rut Yaron in July 2002 and Brigadier General Miri Regev in June 2005) and others have attained positions of similarly unprecedented responsibility: military attaché to Poland; head of the Israeli Air Force (IAF) planning and resources department; and CO of a mixed-gender conscript base. Overwhelmingly, however, the IDF remains a male preserve, in which most women are very much subordinate. Indeed, their representation at the highest levels of the IDF hierarchy, always disproportionately low, now seems to be declining still further. A study carried out on behalf of the Knesset feminist lobby (reported in *Haaretz* November 1, 2006) found that whereas 24 women had held the rank of colonel and above in 2005, only 15 did so two years later.

Extensive fieldwork carried out by Orna Sasson-Levy (2003a, 2003b, 2006) indicates that even the placement of women into combat units – the very flagship of gender integration – can likewise backfire. More often than not, it aggravates gender distinctions, principally by enticing the women concerned to assume what Enloe termed 'honorary masculinity'. When placed in combat units, Sasson-Levy reports, women tend to comply with the androcentric military gender order, which thus becomes yet

further entrenched. Specifically, they mimic male mannerisms and conduct, deliberately swearing, speaking in a deep voice and wearing baggy clothes that de-accentuate their bodies. In a generally unsuccessful attempt to gain the respect of their male peers, they likewise favor the misogynist attitudes conventional amongst male combat personnel, disparaging women soldiers who avoid doing 'men's work'. Most troubling of all, they trivialize incidents of sexual harassment, which they shrug off as 'coming with the territory' and hardly worth fretting about. In sum, far from re-defining gender relations in the military (and by extension in the civilian sphere too) the introduction of women soldiers into combat formations frequently merely intensifies the very male predominance that it sought to subvert.

Equally significant are Sasson-Levy's (2007) findings with respect to the far larger proportion of women conscripts who are still assigned to clerical functions, and thus to classic 'feminine' roles. Skillfully deploying the theory of gendered organizations, she shows that the way they are under employed and treated as their (male) CO's 'trophies' not only reflects clear discrimination, but also generates amongst the women themselves feelings of frustration and alienation. Indeed, as a nation-building exercise their conscription largely boomerangs.

> For them, military service is not a practice that expresses their citizenship or enhances feelings of national belonging. On the contrary, their military service teaches them how state mechanisms discriminate against women in an unmediated fashion and thus estranges them from the state and its organizations.
>
> (Sasson-Levy 2007: 502)

Religious–secular relations

Processes at work since the 1980s, especially, have transformed conscription's impact on relationships between the religious and secular segments of Israeli society. Instead of performing a bridging function, as had largely been the case until the 1970s, the experience of common service now tends to widen the cleavages that divide the two communities.

At the broadest level, responsibility for the change lies with the demise of the old spirit of 'consociationism', itself largely brought about by the different ways in which traditional and non-traditional Israelis have responded to the new cultural climates that began to emerge in the 1980s (Cohen and Susser 2000). Much can also be attributed to shifts in attitudes that resulted from the territorial conquests of 1967, which injected an element of messianic purposefulness into the consciousness of many national-religious Israelis, which growing proportions of their secular fellow-citizens found discomfiting. In a far more specific sense, however, the current level of secular–religious dissonance in the IDF reflects the changes that have taken place in the pre-enlistment

educational backgrounds of a significant proportion of national-religious soldiers.

Unlike the vast majority of both their predecessors from their own community and their contemporaries in secular Israeli society, many national-religious soldiers do not now enlist in the IDF directly after high-school graduation at the age of 18. Rather, they are entitled to delay their draft for a year, during which they can attend either an 'arrangement' academy of advanced Jewish learning (*yeshivat hesder*), recognized by the IDF, or a similarly certified pre-conscription religious college (*mekhinah kedam tzeva'it toranit*). Institutions of the former name offer conscripts a program that extends over five years, during which short spells of military service, totaling some 20 months, are interspersed with study periods. *Mekhinot* require a commitment of just one pre-enlistment year, which is spent on physical as well as spiritual preparation for military duty (S.A. Cohen 1997b: 105–140; Rossman-Stollman 2005).

Both frameworks are comparatively new. Although a prototype 'arrangement' academy was established as early as 1964, not until the 1970s did other institutions of that name begin to sprout up. No pre-conscription college existed prior to 1988. By 2007, however, male national-religious high-school graduates could choose from amongst over 30 *yeshivot hesder* and a dozen *mekhinot* distributed throughout the length and breadth of the country, including the territories. According to figures released by the IDF, in 2007 almost half of all male national-religious draftees – i.e. some 4,000 individuals – took advantage of that option, a proportion that had risen by almost 20 percent in just five years. There now also exist three *hesder*-type institutions for women religious soldiers, the first established in 1997, and one pre-conscription *mekhinah*, which began operating in 2006. Partly as a result, enlistment amongst the female sector of national-religious youth, despite continued rabbinic opposition, has likewise mushroomed. Although most graduates of girls' national-religious high schools still prefer to perform a year or two of civic service, in 2006 fully one third elected to serve in the IDF, in one capacity or another.

When originally established, both the *yeshivot* and the *mekhinot* declared that their purpose was to provide prospective orthodox recruits with whatever spiritual 'fortification' they might require before and during their conscript service. In practice, they have done much more. For one thing, by teaching that enlistment in the IDF is a religious imperative as well as a civic duty, their principals and teachers function as military recruitment agencies in the national-religious community. Second, and with equally striking success, the *yeshivot* and *mekhinot* also operate as character-forming frameworks. Their graduates come to the IDF with a greater sense of purpose than do most secular recruits (Gal 1999). They are also especially aware of the distinctiveness of the way of life in which they have been brought up.

Judged by the standard gauges of propensity to service the results seem entirely positive, and are easily observed. Once rare, the sight of a *kippah serugah* (knitted skullcap) – the most conspicuous sign of male national-religious affiliation – on the head of an Israeli soldier on front-line active duty had by the early twenty-first century become commonplace. This was particularly so in the elite *sayarot*, volunteer units that operate an especially rigorous selection procedure. Informal surveys suggest that in those sectors of the IDF the number of national-religious recruits now exceeds their proportion in the annual conscript cohort by as much as a factor of two.

Where available, statistics with respect to non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and junior officers reveal a similar pattern. At a rough estimate, some 30 percent of all IDF combat troops at those ranks now wear a *kippah serugah*. Moreover, as from the late 1990s, as many as 60 percent of personnel passing out in the first class of annual NCO infantry courses have been graduates of the *mekhinot*, many of whom have subsequently gone on to perform with equal distinction in junior officers' courses. The records of the very first *mekhinah*, named 'Bnei David' and situated in the West Bank settlement of Eli, are symptomatic. Of the institution's first 1,000 graduates half became officers (compared to a national average of 5 percent). Moreover, 41 earned pilot's wings, 70 served in *sayarot*, over 400 in other elite combat units and 200 in armored or artillery brigades. Inexorably, or so it seems, increasing numbers of *kippot serugot* are also making their way up the military hierarchy. At one point in 2006, when four Major Generals wore a *kippah serugah*, the General Staff contained as many products of the national-religious educational system as graduates of the Air Force Academy.

But there is also another side to the picture. Pre-enlistment bonding in a *yeshivah* or *mekhinah*, it transpires, divides as much as it unites. Specifically, it intensifies amongst national-religious recruits a sense of particularism, which invariably has in any case been fostered by their having spent much of their childhood in the cocoons of gender-segregated schools and youth movements, which cater exclusively to children from religious homes. Against that background, enlistment can prove a fragile encounter. It brings national-religious soldiers for the first time into close contact with members of the opposite sex and with secular contemporaries, who grew up in a vastly different milieu.

Trauma, indeed, is a primary motif in the communications that pass back and forth between religious conscripts and their spiritual mentors in the *yeshivot* and *mekhinot* at which they have studied. I have elsewhere analyzed parts of this sizable corpus of correspondence, portions of which are occasionally printed in book form and/or made available on the websites maintained by the individual institutions (S.A. Cohen 2006, 2007b). Research revealed an almost obsessive concern with the preservation of a way of life to which military service seems to present a threat. Hence,

whilst many of the letters raise military-ethical issues, most focus on questions of personal conduct. What principally worries the troops and their mentors is the corrosive danger that contact with the secular world might exert on their traditional mores.

One response has been to establish educational programs specifically designed to prepare national-religious recruits for their first encounters with non-religious conscripts (S.A. Cohen 2007e: 313–340). More common, however, has been a preference amongst national-religious troops to bunch together in specific formations. That tendency toward segregated service is particularly pronounced amongst students of *yeshivot hesder*, whom the IDF has long assigned to their own company formations for basic training. But similar patterns can be found elsewhere. *Mekhinot* graduates, as already noted, flock to elite combat units, in some of which they constitute a majority. Thus concentrated, they not only find it easier to satisfy specific ritual requirements such as the maintenance of a quorum for daily prayer, but they are also able to create an ambience more conducive to their religious sensibilities.

Major General Elazar Stern, who was appointed CO of the Human Resources Branch in 2004 (he had previously been IDF Chief Education Officer) has long expressed reservations about the preference of national-religious troops for segregated service. Although himself an orthodox Jew who wears a *kippah serugah*, Stern maintains that the rise in registration for the *hesder* program, which allows servicemen to spend less time on military duty and more in the academies, not only deprives the IDF of scarce manpower, it also reduces the chances that religious and secular troops can integrate whilst on service. In the summer of 2007, he announced that he had decided to overcome that difficulty by limiting the numbers of *hesder* enlistees who could jointly serve in the units of their choice (Stern 2007).

Notwithstanding such measures, religious and secular troops will doubtless continue to find themselves behaving differently at several stages of military life. Basically, this is because instead of constituting the gateway to a shared and integrative experience, conscription will still mark the stage at which religious and secular troops begin to articulate their differences. An early instance occurs during induction ceremonies into service. Drawn up on the parade ground, secular recruits respond to the oath of allegiance to the IDF (read out by their CO) by shouting, in unison, 'I swear' (*ani nishba*). But religious troops equally loudly proclaim 'I declare' (*ani matzhir*) – a less committal undertaking, dictated by the traditional caution against infringing the third of the Ten Commandments. Since the two shouts are simultaneous, the result is a cacophony of sound that violates military protocol and bodes ill for troop cohesion. A similar atmosphere of divergence permeates later stages of the service cycle. CO's commonly provide religious and secular troops with separate programs on 'culture days', and troops often celebrate their completion of a spell of

training at different venues. Observation suggests that few religious and secular troops socialize off base, and that their post-service contact is minimal.

Most marked of all, however, are the divergent attitudes that the two segments of the Force evince toward the thorny issue of mixed-gender combat units. Ever since the mid-1990s, secular liberal circles have proclaimed the establishment of such formations to be a litmus test of the IDF's commitment to equal rights for women. With equal passion, rabbis and their pupils have pronounced them an affront to traditional Jewish standards of 'modesty'. After protracted and acrimonious debate, Mofaz, in 2001, set up a high-powered committee to suggest how the opposing positions might be reconciled. But the compromise eventually found, which involved retaining some all-male formations in which national-religious troops might serve (*Haaretz* July 26, 2002), in fact merely accentuated the problem. Religious and secular troops were finding it necessary to go separate ways.

Arguably, a charismatic Chief IDF Rabbi might nevertheless have exerted a bridging influence. But Rabbi Goren's retirement from active duty as *rav tzeva'i rashi* in 1971 (see p. 112) left a void that none of his successors was able to fill. As a result, the IDF Chief Rabbinate has been reduced to performing little more than a logistic function. It maintains synagogues on every base and ensures that all IDF kitchens conform to Jewish dietary laws. But its influence on the hearts and minds of secular troops is virtually non-existent. Sensitive to this vacuum, in 2004 the General Staff authorized what amounted to the 'out-sourcing' of its basic Jewish educational program. The contract is shared by two civilian institutions: the Center for Jewish Identity and Culture established within Beit Morashah of Jerusalem, which is now responsible for teaching Jewish identity and values to successive cohorts of IDF conscripts (www.bmj.org.il/identity.asp) and the Shalom Hartman Institute, also in Jerusalem, which runs a similar course for all captains slated for promotion to the rank of major (www.hartmaninstitute.com/ShowContent.asp?id=51).

In addition to thus losing much of its educational influence on secular troops, the military rabbinate also now carries little weight with religious troops. Graduates of the *yeshivot hesder* and *mekhinot*, in particular, rarely turn to the IDF rabbinate for spiritual guidance. As their correspondence shows, they instead seek religious advice from their civilian rabbis and mentors, with whom they discuss, often in stunningly erudite detail, the minutiae of rites totally beyond the ken of their secular comrades. Acknowledging that circumstance, and in an attempt to recoup some of the lost ground, the IDF ultimately changed the conventions that had traditionally governed appointments to the position of *rav tzeva'i rashi*. When the office fell vacant in 2006, candidates from within the military rabbinate were passed over and the choice fell on an outsider, Rabbi Avichai Rontzki. This was an imaginative selection, but not one that

necessarily assured a revival of religious–secular rapport. Although in possession of a distinguished service record (a parachutist, he had served as a battalion commander whilst in professional service and rose to the rank of Colonel in the reserves), Rontzki's prime qualification for the post of chief military chaplain was his protracted experience as principal of one of the largest *hesder yeshivot*. He had no prior experience of counseling non-observant troops or of establishing religious–secular dialogues. His apprenticeship was bound to be lengthy.

Creation

As Kimmerling (1979) long ago pointed out, enlistment automatically architectures two distinct 'tiers' of citizenship. It differentiates between persons who do and do not serve in the IDF, thereby creating a divide between those included in the most meaningful of all Israeli citizen rites and those excluded from it. Within the Jewish population, for many years that classification operated principally at the micro level, and with respect to individual citizens. Persons who conformed to the stereotype of the gung-ho (and male) *sabra* 'fighter' became objects of veneration: they were the legitimate heirs of the fallen of 1948, the band of heroes whose deeds were the stuff of legend and whose appearance (*yefei ha-blorit ve-ha-to'ar:* 'handsome forelocks and countenance') was immortalized in song. Whoever did not fit that mould was made to feel inherently inferior. An especially severe price was paid by young men who were assigned to combat duties, despite their protests that they were emotionally and psychologically incapable of firing a weapon. Unable to withstand the relentless pressure to behave in the manner expected of IDF soldiers, some gave final expression to their sense of exclusion by committing suicide.[7]

Recent decades, however, have witnessed a significant expansion in the 'insider/outsider' divide that conscription creates. Its current principal focus is the fact that, notwithstanding Israel's formal commitment to universal conscription, in practice the draft is applied selectively. Two groups of Jewish citizens are especially noticeable by their absence from the IDF ranks: members of the Jewish ultra-orthodox (*haredi*) community; and persons who the IDF considers superfluous to its needs. In both cases, non-enlistment acts as a societal marker, whose fissiparous effect is to distinguish between one set of citizens and another.

The ultra-orthodox (haredi) Jewish community

Generically denominated *haredim* (lit. 'pietists', see Isaiah 66: 5), members of Israel's ultra-orthodox Jewish community, comprise roughly 11 percent of Israeli society. Claiming to be the authentic guardians of Judaism's traditional values, their resistance to the draft is uncompromising. *Haredi* spiritual leaders insist on service exemptions for women on the grounds

that military duty violates orthodox standards of modesty. They are equally adamant that *haredi* males too deserve to be excused conscription, primarily so that they might dedicate themselves to studying the sacred textual canon. After all, and as Rabbi Eliezer Shach, the then president of the 'Council of Torah Giants' declared in 1986: 'Other than the *Torah* we have no security; without it, neither soldiers nor the IDF will save us' (cited in Doron 1988: 504).

A mixture of motives induced Ben-Gurion to promise some concessions to these demands as early as 1947. A charitable interpretation suggests that he sympathized with the need to salvage a way of life that the Holocaust had all but wiped out. Political pragmatism was probably equally germane. At a time when the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry was pondering its opinion with respect to Palestine's future, it was important to give the *haredim* as little reason as possible to voice opposition to the establishment of an independent Jewish state (Friedman 1995: 51–82). Whichever the case, when the IDF came into existence the following year, *haredi* females were excused duty altogether and draft deferments were granted to some 400 male students.

Since then, however, the scope of that arrangement has been transformed. Especially is that so with regard to males who claim that 'the study of the *Torah* is their profession'. Thanks principally to the growing power and cohesion of political parties representing *haredi* interests, the number of *haredi* deferrals jumped to 8,257 in 1977, the year that *haredi* parties first joined a government coalition. Thereafter, the figures exploded, reaching 16,000 in 1985, 35,000 in 1999 and almost 50,000 in 2007 (*Haaretz* July 17, 2007). By then, some 4,000 *haredi* male 18-year-olds were receiving deferments every year, thereby depriving the IDF of about 11 percent of its annual Jewish conscript potential.

One side effect is economic. Because deferment is conditional on the recipient devoting himself to full-time study, *haredi* youngsters cannot openly join the national workforce. This situation deprives the economy of a potential pool of productivity – and increases *haredi* dependence on charity and social security welfare. More important still are the wider social repercussions. Over the years, *haredi* and secular groups have clashed, sometimes violently, on a wide range of issues that both communities consider to be cultural markers: the flow of traffic through *haredi* localities on the Sabbath; the conduct of post-mortems; the location of archeological digs; parades by gays in Jerusalem; the application of family law (Zambreski 2005). But instead of helping to alleviate the tensions thus generated, conscription (more precisely, the non-application of conscription to *haredim*) very much aggravates discord. Secularists have voiced increasingly vehement resentment at the way in which *haredim* shirk a burden that their own sons and daughters still bear. *Haredim*, for their part, complain that their unique 'other-worldly' contribution to national defense is under-estimated: 'If the government knew how much

[*Torah*] students protect the state's well-being through their study, it would put guards in the schools, making sure that learning is never interrupted' (cited in Selengut 1994: 245).

As the twentieth century drew to a close, *haredi* non-enlistment became an increasingly sensitive bone of contention. Repeatedly debated in the *Knesset* and investigated on several occasions by the State Comptroller, the legality of the Defense Minister's blanket grant of thousands of deferments on the basis of group affiliation was also challenged in the Supreme Court. In December 1998, the court invalidated the existing arrangement, and gave the *Knesset* a year to introduce legislation. Clearly eager to pass the buck, the government established a committee of enquiry, chaired by former Supreme Court judge Zvi Tal.

Although the Tal Committee worked long and diligently, it failed to find the panacea. Its principal suggestion was a complicated scheme designed to provide *haredim* with the opportunity to enter the workforce by offering them exemption from military service at the age of 24, provided they first undertook the largely symbolic step of enlisting for an abbreviated spell of military or civil service (Tal 2000: chap. 5). After acrimonious debate, the 'Service Deferral Law' incorporating this proposal was passed in July 2002. Fifty-one *Knesset* members voted in favor, 41 opposed, five abstained and 22 absented themselves from the chamber. With far less fanfare, the law was extended for another five years in 2007, when the voting was 56 to nine.

In the interim, however, the Tal program had been proved utterly impracticable. Figures submitted to the Supreme Court in December 2005 indicate that barely a fraction of *haredi* males have felt it necessary, or indeed possible, to depart from former practice. Just 3 percent (1,432) of the *haredi* males who deferred their military service chose to consider the options offered by the law, and only 74 ended up enlisting. (Another 103 opted for civil service, only to find that because of the small numbers involved, no provisions had been made to absorb them (Supreme Court 2005: paragraph 15). In other areas, recent research detects a growing readiness on the part of *haredim* to abandon the old paths of introspection (Caplan 2007: 254–261). But that process does not extend to military service. Hence, the IDF remains the most obtrusive symbol of the gulf that separates *haredi* and non-*haredi* societies.

That impression is confirmed by the record and reputation of the segregated IDF battalions established with the specific purpose of accommodating *haredi* religious sensibilities (Drori 2005b). One such unit was set up as early as 1960, only to be shut down 14 years later when the miniscule quantity of *haredi* volunteers finally convinced IDF manpower authorities to abandon their efforts to salvage its precarious existence. Another version, launched in 1999 at the initiative of a few enthusiastic individuals well connected to Israel's traditional security establishment, initially promised to fare much better. Most critically, this was because it

was sanctioned by leading rabbinic figures in the *haredi* world, some of whom regarded the unit as a potentially convenient dumping-ground for young *haredi* men whose lack of aptitude for intensive studies was bringing bad habits into the Talmudic academies. Even under those circumstances, however, *haredi* negotiators with the IDF drove a hard bargain, placing a ceiling on the numbers of *haredi* youth who could be drafted, and insisting that they serve in an environment completely their own. Thus, they demanded guarantees that the young men concerned would be sequestered from contact with females (a sine qua non), allowed regular contact with their rabbis and granted all the freedom required for the observance of Jewish orthodox rituals in accordance with stringent *haredi* requirements.

It is a tribute to the forbearance of Major General Yehudah Segev, the then CO of the IDF's Manpower Branch, that these conditions were all met, and that 'Battalion 97' was in 1999 established as an almost totally segregated formation under the designation '*Netzach Yehudah*' ('Eternal Judah'). The formation's website (www.nahalharedi.org) strikes an altogether upbeat note, highlighting its contribution to providing 'military, educational and economic opportunity to (sic) Israel's growing Haredi community'. Other observers, however, are more skeptical. For one thing, they point out, by 2004, roughly half of the battalion's intake did not in fact come from *haredi* homes at all. Increasingly, it was being populated by national-religious troops who were attracted by its more stringently orthodox ambience, especially respecting gender segregation (Drori 2005b: 82). More importantly, *Netzach Yehudah* has in no way helped to integrate into Israeli society the small number of authentic *haredi* recruits who enlist in its ranks (Hakak 2003). If anything, they now suffer a double indignity. Largely ostracized in their native worlds, and often shunned by their own families for having joined the IDF, they are also regarded as troublesome by their officers, few of whom stay with the battalion for very long.

Altogether, then, *Netzach Yehudah* has failed to perform a bridging function. If anything, as one of its past commanders admitted in a remarkably frank audit of the unit published in *Ma'arachot*, quite the opposite might be the case. So inflexible are the conditions governing life in the unit that they in fact discriminate against its few secular members, who consequently feel alienated, as much from Orthodox Judaism as from their comrades in arms. In effect, 'equality [of service] has created polarization' (Peleg 2006: 105).

Don't call us, we'll call you

Notwithstanding the relatively small size of Israel's population, in many military occupations the IDF reports a surfeit of personnel. Hence, in an effort to repair that situation – and, not incidentally, to reduce their

manpower outlays – Israel's force planners resort to discriminatory draft practices. Indeed, as early as the mid-1990s it was clear that persons thought capable of contributing substantively to Israel's security were being singled out for intensive training and retention programs whilst others were being excused the draft, granted early discharges and/or simply not called to reserve duty (S.A. Cohen 1995c). Since then, the trend at each stage of the military life-cycle has become still more apparent.

Enlistment. Although the IDF's official policy is to minimize draft exemptions, the proportion of potential draftees who are in fact not conscripted continues to grow (S.A. Cohen 2007f). Thus, whereas only 12.1 percent of the available male pool did not enlist in 1980, the figure grew to 16.6 percent in 1990 and had reached 25 percent in 2007. *Haredim*, who account for 11 percent of the total 25 percent, constitute by far the largest single group in this category. But it also includes young men resident abroad or deceased when called to service (4 percent), those who possess a criminal record (3 percent – a figure that has doubled in a decade), and persons exempted on grounds of either physical disabilities (2 percent) or psychological incompatibility (5 percent – up from 4 percent in 2006).

Early discharge. At the exit point of the military system, deviations from the norm of equality are similarly pronounced. According to IDF figures, in 2007, 17.5 percent of the males who had earlier been drafted were receiving early discharges. Once women are included in the audit, the figure jumps to almost 40 percent.

More significant than the dry facts are their breakdown, since it transpires that there exists a clear inverse correlation between the length of service and its potential dangers. Early discharges, often after as little as nine months of duty, are most commonly granted to the men and (predominantly) women who, after basic training, are assigned to very simple blue or white-collar duties, usually in bases sited in or near to major cities. By contrast, the persons least likely to enjoy such conditions, other than on the grounds that they have to be located near to elderly and/or needy parents, are those who are assigned to, or volunteer for, combat occupations, involving protracted periods of strenuous training and, thereafter, extended and often dangerous spells of active combat duty.

Reserve duty. Once considered a fairly cheap resource, reservists began to become a burden on the IDF's budget in 1988, when legislation transferred from the Social Security Institute to the Ministry of Defense responsibility for funding the payment due to every reservist as compensation for loss of earnings whilst on service. Ever since, the IDF has sought to cut back on reserve outlays, principally by reducing the number of days that the entire complement of reservists spends in service per annum. Between 1990 and 1995, the total of 'reserve days' was slashed by over 40 percent (from almost 30 million to just under 17.5 million; Lifshitz 2000: 92–95) and, notwithstanding occasional fluctuations during the second

intifada, by a further third (to approximately 11.6 million) overall during the course of the following decade.

Here, too, more relevant than the size of the numbers involved are the disparities in their distribution. Although no precise figures are available, the inequalities seem inevitably to replicate the differentials produced by early conscript discharges, by which indeed they are for the most part caused. Once again, it is persons who have been most fully trained and battle tested who are likely to be most frequently summonsed to duty, especially if they are officers. By contrast, ex-servicemen who received early discharges and hence possess little or no military expertise, even though nevertheless officially liable for reserve duty, are almost entirely ignored.

Apologists frequently make the point that most such distortions in the distribution of the service burden are an unavoidable feature of military life, analogous to progressive taxation. In both cases, the heaviest loads will inevitably be imposed on the most capable carriers. Be that as it may, observation suggests that the societal implications remain disconcertingly stark, and (albeit for different reasons) affect persons on both sides of the service/non-service divide. Conscripts who perform their full terms of duty, together with serving reservists and – even more – their families, report an understandable feeling that they now constitute a dwindling band of suckers (*freierim*; Fishman 2006). Observation suggests, however, that equally noteworthy, albeit often overlooked, is the sense of frustration – and, in some cases degradation – likewise experienced by persons who are excused from duty for no other reason than that the IDF has classified them as superfluous. Thus excluded from what is publicly paraded as the most meaningful expression of citizenship, they too become victims of recruitment's discriminatory application.

Minor adjustments to the present recruitment and retention system can hardly be expected to rectify the consequent image of military service as a national divider and to resolve the dilemmas to which it gives rise. As will be suggested in Chapter 8, they ultimately seem to require a program of far more fundamental reform, one that extends to the abandonment of conscription altogether.

7 The appropriate application of force?

Writing in 1987, Major General Shlomo Gazit, the first Israel Defense Force (IDF) co-coordinator in the territories conquered in 1967, smugly looked back on 'twenty years of relative quiet' in the areas under his command (Gazit 1988: 53–68). Thanks to the almost complete absence of insurgency in either the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, the IDF had been able to keep a remarkably low profile, maintaining in those regions just a skeleton force. But hardly had the ink dried on Gazit's memoir before the situation was transformed. In response to the first (1987–1993) and second (2000–2005) *intifada*s, IDF forces in the territories mushroomed into a massive army of occupation whose primary mission was to suppress the uprisings, if necessary by resorting to overwhelming violence. On both occasions, the troops involved confronted dilemmas of targeting and force applications that hinged on judgments that were moral as well as operational. How they responded necessarily affected, first and foremost, Israeli–Palestinian relations. But their conduct also profoundly influenced relations between Israel's armed forces and the conscience of the society that its actions were designed to defend. The present chapter traces that record.

'The Spirit of the IDF'

In June 1991, at the height of the first *intifada*, Lieutenant General Dan Shomron, then IDF CoS, instructed the Military Advocate General (MAG) to coordinate with the Chief Education Officer and the CO of Manpower Branch in drafting new guidelines for troop conduct during insurgencies. In keeping with common bureaucratic practice, the officers concerned delegated the task to an advisory committee that, after working through several drafts, in November 1994 presented Lieutenant General Ehud Barak, who by that time had succeeded Shomron as CoS, with a document entitled *Ruach Tzahal* ('The Spirit of the IDF'). Following a round of General Staff discussions, Barak unveiled *Ruach Tzahal* to public inspection in June 1995 and ordered its immediate dissemination throughout the Force.

The authors of *Ruach Tzahal* went much further than Shomron had originally intended. Instead of compiling a straightforward list of rules of engagement akin to those inscribed on the 'yellow cards' then used by British troops in Northern Ireland, they composed a code of military ethics far more comprehensive than anything currently available to members of armed forces elsewhere in the world (Hauser 1997: 64–71). In the mid-1990s, a time when the US Army was still tinkering with its list of army values and five years before the publication of the British army's *Values and Standards*, the IDF possessed a fully authorized document laying down the norms in accordance with which all ranks were to comport themselves.

The person principally responsible for the extensive character of *Ruach Tzahal* was Asa Kasher, professor of philosophy at Tel-Aviv University, and the only civilian member of the committee that produced the text. From the start, Kasher's voice dominated committee meetings, not least because he came to them with a far clearer idea than anyone else of the required end-product. In addition, Kasher's views carried the weight of convictions that had been tragically reinforced when his son, a major in the armored corps, was killed in a hiking accident whilst on leave from active duty in 1991. Kasher intended *Ruach Tzahal* to be a fitting monument to a young man who had personified the blend of qualities that the document sought to promote: courage and wisdom, modesty and excellence.

Notwithstanding Kasher's professional–academic interest in the philosophical underpinnings of military ethics, *Ruach Tzahal* deliberately eschews abstract discussion of the norms of civilized behavior that prescribe humanity in war. Even so, as presented in 1995, the document was neither concise nor entirely focused. Comprising several pages of original Hebrew text, it deliberately addresses a wide variety of situations. It lays down rules for the conduct of IDF troops not just vis-à-vis their enemies, civilians and soldiers alike, but also for their relationships with their comrades (off as well as on the battlefield), their government and the wider public – after retirement as well as whilst on active duty as conscripts, regulars or reservists.

Aware that so vast a range of situations cannot be incorporated within a single framework, *Ruach Tzahal* divides its rules of conduct into hierarchical tiers of 'values' and 'guiding principles'. However, the result is somewhat cumbersome. The preamble describes 'the obligation to execute the mission and to win in the war' as the 'compass' for all troop conduct, action in accordance with which 'will permit the preservation of the IDF as a principled and high-quality organization, which properly executes all its obligations and missions'. This declaration is then followed by a list of 11 specific 'values', each of which is amplified in a few sentences of commentary.

The roster opens with 'Tenacity' (*devekut ba-mesimah*), a sequence that reinforces the priority of the obligation 'to execute the mission'. But the

remaining 'values' are simply listed in Hebrew alphabetical order: responsibility; integrity; personal example; human life ('The sanctity of life in the eyes of IDF troops will be manifest in all of their actions'); purity of arms ('The soldier will use his weapon and his power to vanquish the enemy only to the degree required, and will exercise self-restraint in order to prevent unnecessary harm to human life, body, honor and property'); professionalism; discipline; loyalty; representation ('The soldier will see himself always as the representative and agent of the IDF, acting only within the bounds of his authority and orders') and camaraderie.

The 34 'guiding principles' next enumerated in the Code provide explicit examples of the ways in which the 'basic values' are to be implemented in various situational contexts. Battle provides a necessary starting point, and the Code (paragraph 4: *In Military Service*) rules that every soldier will be prepared: 'to endanger his life when encountering the enemy and to save human life (to the extent necessary), but will do everything possible to preserve his life and that of his comrades in any other military activity'. Other circumstances receive equally specific treatment. Thus, the Code enjoins the soldier to 'treat enemy soldiers and civilians, in areas controlled by the IDF, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the laws of war, and only within the bounds of his duties' (paragraph 22: *Encountering the Enemy*). 'The soldier will give preference to the aims of the IDF, in keeping with its directives, orders, principles and basic guidelines, over the advancement of any civilian organization, in any case of conflict between the aims of the IDF and those of the organization' (paragraph 26: *With Regard to Civilian Bodies*). Likewise, 'The soldier will take care, in any public appearance (especially in the media), to secure prior approval, to express absolute and unflinching loyalty to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF, to represent the policies and decisions of the IDF, and to contribute to the public's faith in the IDF' (paragraph 30: *With Regard to Civilian Bodies*).

In a series of lectures that he broadcast on the IDF's radio station in 1996–1997 and that were subsequently published, Kasher denied any claim to originality. *Ruach Tzahal*, he insisted, said nothing that was not already well entrenched in conventional IDF discourse; it merely articulated accepted norms in a more systematic fashion than had hitherto been the case (Kasher 1996: 246). Implicitly, the preamble to the document makes the same case, identifying one of its sources as: 'The traditions of the IDF and its battle heritage.' Although technically correct, both assertions of continuity were disingenuous. For one thing, they belied the novelty of the moral challenges posed by the fuzziness of distinctions between combatants and non-combatants that became characteristic of the *intifada*. Equally fundamental, *Ruach Tzahal*'s claims to continuity also masked the inchoate pedigree of the prior IDF traditions from which they claimed descent.

Doubtless, the intended historical allusion was to the principles of 'self-

restraint' (*havlagah*) and 'purity of arms' (*tohar ha-neshek*), both coined by Labor Zionist leaders during the Arab rebellion of 1936–1939. By the 1990s, however, the IDF's links to such sources had become tenuous in the extreme.[1] By no stretch of the imagination could its canon of military ethical teachings deserve depiction as a coherent corpus of requirements, carefully preserved by each generation and handed down intact to the next in an unbroken chain. Rather 'tradition' in this area amounted to little more than an amalgam of occasional legal pronouncements and command guidelines, which although ultimately enforceable by the military justice system, was for the most part held together by nothing more substantial than scattered rhetorical flourishes. Moreover, whilst some of the relevant slogans, such as *tohar ha-neshek*, resonated with associations that approached the sublime, others were more mundane. One popular metaphor, derived from the warnings posted by beach lifeguards in stormy weather, spoke of a 'black flag' (*degel shachor*) fluttering over an order that was manifestly unlawful because it was unethical.

It speaks volumes for the innate humanity and morality of the vast majority of IDF troops that, by and large, this rather ramshackle framework of ethical constraints usually served its purpose. Especially that was so during the period spanned by the armistice agreements of 1949 and the outbreak of the first Lebanon War in 1982, years during which the IDF was still principally concerned with conventional warfare against recognized and recognizable combatants, and hence a time when such terms as 'a-symmetrical' warfare and *ha-imut ha-mugbal* (see p. 60) were unknown. Throughout that period, the vast majority of IDF servicemen behaved with civility, treating enemy prisoners humanely and showing respect for the lives and property of the Palestinian civilians over whom they exercised military government – within Israel until 1966 and in the occupied territories after 1967.

Even so, the record certainly has its blemishes. Matters got off to a shaky start in 1947–1948 when central and unified control over Jewish fighting forces was still weak and when opportunities for the maltreatment of enemy residents in the battle zones were plentiful. Verbally, leaders of the *Yishuv* insisted on the observance of moral restraints – albeit, it appears, as much in order to preserve troop discipline and to avoid international opprobrium as out of concern for the human rights of potential Arab victims (Shalom 2002). But only Yigal Alon, as both CO of the *PALMACH* and commander of IDF forces, made it standard practice for officers to issue written orders to the effect that violation of the basic laws of war would be severely punished. Elsewhere, trust generally seems to have been placed in intuitive troop decency – sometimes, it appears, unjustifiably so. Allegations that civilians had been massacred and prisoners of war (POWs) murdered became rife. Also frequent were reports of indiscriminate fire, of forcible deportations, of occasional rape and, most prevalent of all, of looting, euphemistically described as 'commandeering'

enemy property. Ben-Gurion tried to get to the bottom of the most serious allegations (Gelber 2001: 226). So too did the nascent and chronically understaffed military justice system. But although convictions were notoriously hard to secure (Inbar 2005: 659–661), it is clear that the incidence of outrage was higher than anyone would have wished.

Worse still, similar incidents thereafter recurred, especially when Arab infiltration into Israeli territory rose to particularly murderous levels in the years 1951–1953. In an effort to stem the tide, IDF soldiers – sometimes acting on orders to shoot on sight and sometimes on their own initiative – were reported to have either deliberately killed the perpetrators or severely beaten them after capture (Ronen 1991: 13). With the expansion in the scope of Israel's 'reprisal' strategy in the 1950s, the moral stakes of conflict rose yet higher. Two notoriously bloody blemishes blot the record. In October 1953, over 60 Palestinian residents of Qibiya, a village in Jordanian territory, were unnecessarily killed in the course of an operation carried out by Ariel Sharon's 'Unit 101' (a crime compounded by Ben-Gurion's initial brazen denial of any IDF responsibility for the incident, Morris 1993: 227–262). Three years later, on the first day of the 1956 Sinai War, members of a Border Guard unit shot 43 Palestinian residents of the Israeli village Kfar Qassem, despite knowing that their victims were unaware of the curfew that they were accused of violating (Rosenthal 2000).

To their eternal credit, individual Israeli opinion-makers soon called public attention to the most blatant of such crimes. Four names stand out.

1 Natan Alterman (1910–1970), who on November 21, 1948, published in *Davar*, the leading Labor Zionist daily, a poem entitled *Al Zot* ('On This'). Responding to rumors of IDF misconduct in the recent fighting, Alterman insisted that the paeans of praise sung to the new State's martial triumphs had to be balanced by laments chronicling the moral lapses that had accompanied their attainment: 'Let us sing then also about "delicate incidents"/ For which the true name, incidentally, is murder/ And let songs be composed about conversations between sympathetic interlocutors/ who with collusive chuckles make concessions and grant forgiveness' (reprinted in Alterman 1962: 149–151).
2 S. Yizhar (the nom de plume adopted by Yizhar Smilanksy, 1916–2006), who in 1949 published two short novels that highlighted the ugly side of Israeli conduct during the conflict: *Sippur Hirbet Hizzah* ('The Hirbet Hizzah Story'), in which the protagonist finds himself unable to prevent the expulsion of Arab residents from their village; and *Ha-Shavui* ('The Captive'), in which the anti-hero can do nothing to stop his colleagues – and himself – from humiliating the simple Arab shepherd whom they hold prisoner for no particular military reason.
3 Yeshayau Leibowitz (1903–1994), a professor of organic chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who in an article entitled *Le-*

Achar ('After') *Qibiya*, published in 1954, portrayed the previous year's carnage as an inevitable outcome of Zionism's distortion of Jewish values. 'We must ask ourselves: what produced this generation of youth, which felt no inhibition or inner compunction in performing the atrocity when given the inner urge and external occasion for retaliation?' (translated in Goldman 1992: 185–190).

4 Jerusalem District Court Judge Binyamin Halevi (1910–1996), who as president of the military court that sentenced the members of the Border Guard unit responsible for the Kfar Qassem massacre of 1956, made famous the 'black flag' metaphor as a depiction of a patently unlawful command (Rosenthal 2000: 235).

The reception accorded to these protestations was not at all uniform. *Al Zot* immediately received ringing endorsements – not unexpectedly, since Alterman's verse commentaries on current events, published as weekly columns in *Davar* during the last years of the British mandate, had by 1948 firmly established his reputation as the Yishuv's poetic voice of conscience. On the orders of Ben-Gurion, no less, the poem was distributed throughout the IDF. So, too, eight years later, was Halevi's verdict, which, quite apart from becoming binding on the military justice system, also immediately entered Israeli folklore.

But Yizhar and Leibowitz had to wait much longer for recognition. When first published, *Hirbet Hizzah* was condemned as treacherous and consigned to virtual oblivion. *Le-Achar Qibiya* suffered a similar fate. Altogether, Leibowitz was at the time still considered something of an oddity: a chemist who was also a humanist philosopher and an observant Jew who nevertheless poured wrath on the religious establishment. He had no chance of gaining a wide following in a public atmosphere whose overall indifference to the Qibiya massacre was rooted in the belief that the lengthy series of prior murderous attacks on Jewish settlements in any case exonerated, and perhaps even justified, extreme IDF reprisals (Morris 1996).

One of the many ironies of the Six-Day War of 1967 lay in that it merely reinforced the Israeli public's sense of complacency where military ethics were concerned. Conquests that left-wing circles subsequently condemned as moral millstones around Israel's neck were, when first attained, widely celebrated – amongst others by Nathan Alterman – as blessings from on high. Moreover, the belief that the IDF was an altogether virtuous military seemed to be confirmed by the causes of its success. 'Our victory', announced CoS Rabin in the publicly broadcast speech that he delivered when receiving an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew University on June 28, 1967, 'was a victory of the morality and spirit of the IDF' (Brosh 1993: 60–62).

If any doubts remained, they were silenced by the publication the following October of *Siach Lochamim* ('Soldiers Talk'), a collection of

monologues by participants in the Six-Day War, mostly members of secular *kibbutzim* aged 25–35. Skillfully edited by Avraham Shapira, who ran the most prestigious Israeli literary journal of the day, *Siach Lochamim* was an instant best seller. In its Hebrew version, the book sold 98,000 copies within less than a year and was soon translated into several languages. In 1970, Deutsch brought out an English edition, entitled *The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk About the Six-Day War*, which subsequently also appeared in paperback.

As Tom Segev points out in his portrait of the period, recent research proves that Shapira exercised considerable editorial license when handling the transcripts of the soldiers' monologues (Segev 2005: 465–70). In fact, he doctored the materials so that they told Israelis what they wanted to hear. Consequently, IDF soldiers emerge from *Siach Lochamim* as uniformly sensitive to the moral poison of the battlefield. Some candidly confessed that 'the concept of "purity of arms" doesn't exist today as strongly as we knew it from the stories of the War of Independence' (Shapira 1970: 123). But they too agonized over the brutalizing effects of war and emphasized the care that they and their comrades took in combat not to lose 'the semblance of humanity'. With those assurances to hand, Israeli society seemed to have every reason to believe that justly fought wars continued to constitute the IDF norm.

By and large, such remained the case until Israel's invasion of the Lebanon in 1982. Thereto, there were occasional reports of military malpractice in the territories, such as the assassination of suspected terrorists in the West Bank and the large-scale destruction of property during the suppression of the Gaza disturbances in 1971. Street talk also spoke of looting in the course of the Litani (south Lebanon) Operation of 1978. All such incidents, however, were either excused on grounds of operational necessity or dismissed as aberrations – which, indeed, they were. But with every decade that subsequently passed, the IDF seemed to forfeit more of its claim to the moral high ground. In the wake of the Sabra and Shatila massacres carried out by Lebanese Christian militias in 1982, Israeli commanders were found guilty by a domestic tribunal (the Kahan Commission) of being accessories to murder. By the 1990s, pictures beamed from both the Lebanon and the Palestinian territories suggested that Israelis might be as much the perpetrators of terror as its victims.

Gil Merom (2003) argues that critical constituencies in Israeli society were far too squeamish to permit that image to persist. Accordingly, although Israeli forces continued to fight in the Lebanon until Ehud Barak withdrew them to the international border in the year 2000, their campaign was doomed to fail. Like the earlier French and American wars in Algeria and Vietnam, respectively, it ended not with defeat on the battlefield but in 'the marketplace of ideas'. There, according to Merom, the balance of forces was tilted by spokesmen for the secular Jewish Israeli middle class, who refused to tolerate both the brutality required for effect-

ive counter-insurgency and the toll in troop casualties that is its inevitable corollary.

Even if Merom's specific analysis of the reasons for Israel's failure in Lebanon is correct, the wider utility of his overall thesis with respect to the corrosive influence of liberalism remains doubtful. For one thing, his database is not exhaustive. It takes no account of the numerous 'small wars' that have been lost by brutal authoritarian regimes and won by liberal democratic states (Arreguin-Toft 2005: 15–18). Second, and with more specific reference to Israel, neither does his framework accommodate Israeli military reactions to the first *intifada*. After 1987, IDF conduct in the territories, far from exhibiting a reluctance to react forcefully to life-threatening provocations, in fact became relentlessly more punitive. Curfews, traffic restrictions, school closures, house demolitions, deportations, collective punishments, administrative detainments – all measures whose imposition had hitherto been sporadic and dependent upon the specific permission of the Minister of Defense now became customary and left to the discretion of local divisional commanders (Inbar 1991). When Palestinian violence nevertheless persisted, the IDF resorted to beatings, to tear gas and then to plastic-coated metal projectiles, euphemistically termed 'plastic bullets' – and all notwithstanding the protests of precisely the sort of liberals whom Merom accuses of undermining Israel's resolve in the Lebanon (Ezrahi 1997).

What can be said is that every turn of the screw seemed to cloud more of the old certainties. Even amongst trained jurists and educationalists, *tohar ha-neshek*, once regarded as the self-explanatory sheet anchor of the IDF's ethical discourse, became a matter of dispute. According to one contemporary account, 'during officer training, Israeli soldiers spend hours arguing about how to handle particular cases' (Singer 1990: 138). To judge from the proceedings of a seminar on *tohar ha-neshek* organized in 1991 by the Israeli Society for Military History, so too did jurists and educationalists (Pa'il 1991). For the troops on the ground, the dilemmas posed by the eruption of an unexpected form of violence were especially acute. As Eyal Ben-Ari (1998) both experienced and observed, many combat soldiers attempted to invest constabulary duties with the aura of 'soldiering', thereby masking their essentially punitive purport. But this stratagem did not always work. With distinctions between combatants and non-combatants becoming increasingly obscure, rules of engagement had to be made more specific – and often drafted de novo.

Even so, not until the early twenty-first century did the IDF provide the vast majority of servicemen, including most officers, with formal instruction in the internationally recognized laws of armed conflict, nor even with a rudimentary introduction to the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention, to which Israel had formally adhered in 1951. Initially, public interest in such topics was also sporadic. Attention focused on just the most severe instances of troop misconduct: the death of a Palestinian beaten by

members of the Givati brigade; the trial of a colonel who had ordered his troops to manhandle rioters; and, most contentiously, the instant death penalties carried out by members of the IDF's masquerader units – which Leibowitz, now a loquacious octogenarian reveling in his self-appointed role as the Grand Old Man of Israel's conscience, compared to SS death squads (S.A. Cohen 1993a).

Overlooked in the ensuing outcry was the growth in the number of crimes that covered a far wider spectrum. Between December 1987 and February 1989 alone, the Military Police Investigative Department lodged complaints against 9,243 defendants. By 1992, furthermore, military courts had filed indictments against 241 individuals (54 officers, 183 regular troops and four civilians employed by IDF), principally on charges of unlawful use of weapons; cruelty toward Palestinian civilians; and the theft or destruction of their property (Yahav 1993: 92). Notwithstanding the enormous pressure exerted on the judicial system by senior field officers, who throughout the *intifada* claimed that the rigid application of military justice on the part of IDF lawyers was undermining troop motivation and restricting their own freedom of operational maneuver, 194 of the accused were eventually found guilty. Reviewing the evidence, Brigadier General Amnon Strashnov, who served as Military Advocate General (MAG) in the critical years 1986–1991, repeatedly warned the General Staff that the IDF's moral health was at risk. His fears of a spreading malaise were heightened by revelations in 1990 that Brigadier General Rami Dotan, the head of the Israeli Air Force's (IAF) Materiel Directorate, had over several years received enormous kickbacks from American firms vying for Israeli military contracts. Clearly, the time had come to stop the ethical rot by re-emphasizing older norms (Strashnov 1994: 157–197, 371–403).

The Jewish dimension

In its preamble, *Ruach Tzahal* traced the inspiration for its principles and values to three sources. Two were entirely modern: 'The traditions of the State of Israel, as expressed in its democratic principles, its laws and its institutions' and 'The traditions of the IDF and its battle heritage as the defense forces of Israel.' The third, which in order of appearance in fact came first, was much older: 'The traditions of the Jewish people throughout the generations.'

Only in part does the latter claim to ancient pedigree ring true. Certainly, traditional Judaism had amplified Old Testament teachings respecting the virtues of peace and the vision of a warless world in which swords could safely be beaten into ploughshares. But the rabbis had not developed – and, as already noted (see p. 19), probably had good reasons not to develop – an articulate body of teachings more specifically related to warfare and its conduct. Even as theoretical concepts, principles of combat morality are relegated to the margins of most Jewish canonical texts.

Updated lists of more concrete battlefield do's and don'ts are simply non-existent. As painstaking modern scholarship has shown (Solomon 2006: 39–80; Walzer 2006a; Schiffman and Wolowelsky 2007), whatever prohibitions Jewish medieval theory may have imposed on certain types of battlefield behavior were invariably tucked away in obscure obiter dicta or embedded in elliptical snatches of scriptural commentary and Talmudic exegesis. Even then, instruction frequently remained at the level of generalities, focusing on Deuteronomy's exhortations to 'keep yourself from evil [in a military camp]' (23: 10) and – more broadly still – to strive for *imitatio dei* ('And you shall walk in His ways', 28: 9).

Given the long absence of warfare and its pursuit from the autonomous Jewish experience, it is hardly surprising to find that the available rabbinic materials on battlefield ethics suffer from several deficiencies. Even when most sympathetically and systematically collated (e.g. Ravitzky 1996a: 115–127), they project nothing comparable to the majesty, clarity and sophistication of the distinction between just and unjust wars that centuries of familiarity with military ventures enabled western culture to finesse. Moreover, the rabbinic texts also carry the unmistakable odour of age. Traditional Jewish analyses of the *ius ad bellum* make few advances on the Talmudic taxonomy of 'commanded' and 'licensed' wars (respectively, *milkhamot mitzvah* and *milkhamot reshut*) summarized in Maimonides' great Code (S.A. Cohen 2005). References to the *ius in bello* are still more anachronistic and firmly tied to the sparse injunctions concerning battlefield behavior laid down Deuteronomy chapter 20.

True, during the course of the twentieth century, various attempts were made to turn a new rabbinic leaf (S.A. Cohen 2007b). Some efforts originated in the Diaspora, especially in the United States where during the Vietnam era several rabbis combed the sources in attempts to put together an orthodox Jewish view on issues as novel as conscientious objection to the draft or the use of weapons of mass destruction. But most advances in the field took place in Israel. Spiritual leaders of the pre-state *Yishuv* had wrestled in some detail with the ethical implications of a Jewish resort to military force against their Arab neighbors as early as the debates on 'restraint' in 1936–1939 (see p. 21). With the creation of the IDF, interest became much more specific. Even before the guns ceased firing in 1949, a new rabbinic journal devoted to clarifying orthodox Jewish queries raised by statehood (*Ha-Torah ve-ha-Medina,* 'The Torah and the State') published a brace of tentative rabbinic comments on *ius in bello* issues (Lipkin 1949; Tkorsh 1949; Ushpezai 1949). Following the Qibiya massacre of 1953 (see p. 140), the same venue hosted a still more ingenious exposition of the circumstances under which traditional Jewish sources did – and did not – forbid collateral damage to non-combatants (Yisraeli 1954; see also Blidstein 2002: 13–15).

It did not take long for Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the IDF chief chaplain, to enter the lists with a typically panoramic contribution entitled 'Combat

Ethics According to the *Halakhah* [Jewish Law]' (Edrei 2005). Displaying the scholarly breadth and intellectual originality characteristic of all his writings, Goren sets the tone of his argument in the very first lines of this extended essay: 'Human life is undoubtedly a supreme value in Judaism, as expressed both in the *Halachah* and the prophetic ethic. This refers not only to Jews, but to all men created in the image of God' (translated in Goren 1987: 211). At the same time, he also emphasized the benchmark status that he attributed to this teaching when publishing his essay as the opening chapter to the multivolume edition of his collected writings that was to be his most lasting literary monument (Goren 1983: 3–40).

Ehud Luz, who has most closely studied such writings, cautions against pre-dating their practical influence (Luz 2003: 222–237). National-religious soldiers, he finds, took little part in the ethical discourse generated by the Six-Day War and were noticeably absent from the pages of *Siach Lochamim*. Given what we now know about the cherry-picking practiced by the editor of that work (see p. 142), deliberate exclusion cannot be discounted. Even so, most of the responsibility seems to lie with the religious soldiers' own spiritual mentors who, with few exceptions, at the time showed little interest in the *ius in bello*. As late as 1980, national-religious rabbinic literature paid only limited attention to combat ethics. It lavished incomparably larger quantities of ink and intellectual effort on two other topics of military relevance: one was highly charged interpretations of the meaning of Israel's wars (which in the apocalyptic aftermath of the 1973 battles, especially, were invested with cosmic associations); the other consisted of intricately technical studies into the ways in which soldiers could avoid infringing orthodox ritual obligations, such as traditional Sabbath observance commandments and dietary regulations.

By the 1980s, that imbalance could no longer be sustained. Instead, detailed analyses of specifically ethical relevance then became more prominent in the rabbinic discourse on matters military. Much of that change reflected the public debate that, from the first, queried the legitimacy of several aspects of the Lebanon campaign launched in 1982.[2] But far more salient an influence was the shift in the service patterns of national-religious soldiers. As already noted (see pp. 126–127), as from the mid-1980s, graduates of national-religious pre-conscription academies, *mekhinot* and '*hesder*' *yeshivot*, began enlisting in large numbers in IDF combat units – precisely the formations that were then assigned to the counter-insurgency operations necessitated by the outbreak of the first *intifada*. Partly because of the intensity of the ties between the new breed of national-religious soldiers and their spiritual mentors in the academies, and partly no doubt because the military rabbinate had suffered a precipitous fall in prestige and authority since Rabbi Goren's retirement, few were inclined to turn to sources within the IDF when seeking advice as to how to behave in situations of moral ambiguity. Instead, and with ever-increasing frequency, they appealed both orally and in writing to their

former teachers, to whom they addressed queries on battlefield ethics that, from the perspective of traditional Jewish discourse, had thereto been *terra incognita* (S.A. Cohen 2007b).

- What, indeed, are the points of agreement, and of dispute, between the *halakhah* and the IDF's Rules of Engagement where civilians are concerned?
- In view of the use that Palestinian insurgents are known to make of women and children as 'human shields', does the *halakhah* permit IDF soldiers to likewise parade Palestinian civilians in front of them when seeking out suspected terrorists?
- To what extent do halakhic teachings conform to the classic western military ethic, which demands that soldiers risk their own lives in order to bring their fallen comrades home for burial?

The response to this grassroots demand for instruction has been an unprecedented outpouring of rabbinic pronouncements on all matters of military ethical relevance. True to traditional Jewish practice, much of the information is transmitted in the form of written replies (known as 'responsa') to individual inquiries. Many such epistolary communications are private and hence remained unpublished. But literally hundreds have been either subsequently collated by their authors within volumes specifically devoted to military topics or printed in the newsletters that *hesder* academies and *mekhinot* periodically send to their students on active service. Since the late 1990s, many more have been placed on such websites as www.moreshet.co.il/web/shut/shut.asp and www.kipa.co.il/ask/cat.asp?cat=10, which are dedicated to providing young servicemen and women with instantaneous answers to whatever dilemmas they face.

Over the years, two other literary genres have also appeared. One consists of the published proceedings of symposia specifically devoted to exploring the contours of Jewish military ethics (e.g. Rimon 1994); the other takes the form of analytical articles on individual issues published in learned journals that specialize in contemporary Jewish law (e.g. Ariel 2003; Gutal 2003; Rosenfeld 2003; Sharir 2005). Thanks to all this activity, student-soldiers can now access an entire library of texts in an area where there once existed nothing but a void.

Even more revolutionary than the style of the rabbinic response has been its content. From a methodological perspective, initial rabbinic inquiries into the battlefield conduct that Orthodox Judaism permits and disallows tended to be conservative. Instead of formulating novel rules of analysis, commensurate with the uniqueness of war's environment, most scholars – albeit Goren, typically, apart – had allowed themselves to make do with a technique of transference. Principles regarding self-defense that had been developed over centuries with respect to inter-*personal* relations were applied, almost without change, to the domain of war. Thus, the state's

rights to pre-emptive strikes, and even the soldier's rights to take violent action against hostile civilian populations, were framed as expressions of the standard obligation of persons to insure their own survival. Specifically, both were seen as derivatives of the license allowed to individuals to take action against a 'pursuer' (*rodef*), as encapsulated in the rabbinic dictum: 'If someone intends to kill you, kill him first' (Broyde 2007: 1–44).

The greatest heuristic advantage of the transference technique was that it projected a single bar of moral standards. In the terms used by one highly respected principal of a *hesder yeshivah* at an early stage of the first Lebanon War: 'It is most important that a person going out to war knows that he is not moving from a world with one scale of values to a world with another scale of values' (Rabbi Aaron Lichtenstein, cited in Blidstein 1996: 43–44). Much of the literature published since the outbreak of the first *intifada*, however, has tended to question whether Judaism does indeed bind the military and non-military environments in ethical uniformity. More recent exegeses of the Biblical narratives and their Talmudic commentaries were by the early 1990s allowing many national-religious rabbis to depict warfare as an almost autonomous legislative category. That being the case, behavior on the battlefield is governed less by what Goren and his disciples termed the 'supra *halakhah*' of moral justice (Goren 1987: 225; see also Sherlow 2002) than by the 'strict *halakhah* of military necessity'. Hence:

> Although we are all in favor of ideals and of educating [our students] to correct conduct, it is obvious that all such considerations give way, not just to the imperative of self-survival … but also to the Divine commandment to carry out war 'until [the enemy] is subdued' (*ad ridetah*, Deut. 20: 20).
>
> (Rozen 2002: 135)

Unintentionally, that formulation further compounded the dilemmas facing national-religious troops. They were now expected to make life-and-death decisions that, in addition to testing their moral instincts, would also reflect their understanding of the place of traditional Jewish teachings on the contemporary battlefield.

The challenge of the *Al-Aksa intifada*

From the beginning, the ethical dilemmas raised by low-intensity conflict had also troubled other sectors of Israeli society (Liebes and Blum-Kulka 1994). Anguish became yet more intense after the outbreak of the second *intifada*, whose costs, to both sides, far exceed any incurred during its predecessor.[3] Suicidal Palestinian terror attacks, car bombs, roadside shootings and rocket attacks (from the Gaza Strip) became perennial features of Israeli life on both sides of the 1967 borders. IDF actions, too, were more

forceful than ever before, and for the most part pre-meditated. Long suspicious that the on-again, off-again dialogues with Arafat were doomed to failure, CoS Mofaz and his deputy Yaalon had ever since 1998 prepared the IDF for a new bout of conflict. They had also determined that this time – in accordance with the emerging doctrine of 'limited confrontation' (*imut mugbal*, see p. 60) – the futility of terror would be 'seared into Palestinian consciousness' (Yaalon 2001).

Consequently, not only did the IDF intensify its use of such old practices as administrative detentions and travel restrictions, it also reverted to house demolitions and deportations, which had since 1995 been put on ice. To these were now added an entire range of new measures: targeted killings (from the air as well as by ground snipers); the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure facilities; small-scale expeditions by special forces sent to effect midnight roundups of suspects pinpointed by the General Security Service (*SHABAK*); occasionally large-scale incursions into towns nominally under the control of the Palestine Authority (e.g. Nablus and Jenin in 2002; Gaza in June 2006) and protracted blockades of entire regions.

Whilst Israeli military action thus escalated, the levels of tolerance evinced by international legal opinion for such uses of force steadily declined. Especially influential has been the greater consideration that international tribunals have shown for human rights law in recent years, and the burgeoning authority of the mechanisms developed for its enforcement. As Israel's own Supreme Court Justices recognize, standards – at least as applied to Israel – have become very much tougher. Some Israeli justices consider this to be a positive development, since it acknowledges that Israel usually adheres to western norms (Benisch 2004: 386). Even so, the result has been increasing international criticism. In 1991, William O'Brien, a highly regarded professor of government at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, had been ready to give the IDF a fairly respectable scorecard, concluding that 'notwithstanding some actions that are questionable, Israel's overall compliance with the conditions both of just war doctrine's war-decision and war-conduct law is sufficient to characterize its war with the PLO as a just war' (O'Brien 1991: 309–310). Fifteen years later, the atmosphere was very different. In 2005, suits were filed against the Israeli government by the family of Rachel Corrie, an American peace activist killed two years earlier when trying to obstruct an IDF bulldozer operating in the Gaza Strip. In 2007, the UK Attorney General announced that he might seek the extradition of Israeli troops involved in the shooting death of James Miller, a British cameraman, in the same region. Indeed, it seemed only a matter of time before Israeli generals would be hauled before the International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes.

How much IDF troops might have been brutalized by their counter-insurgency assignments is an especially sensitive bone of contention.

Several observers, including Strashnov (1994: 175–176; see also Henkin 2003), vigorously deny any such charge, claiming that the ordinary IDF soldier's record of humanity in the face of extreme provocation easily betters that of his French counterparts in Algeria and of American troops in Vietnam and Iraq, not to speak of Russians in Grozny. Numerous instances of individual acts of kindness toward Palestinians, they claim, belie the accusation that the average Israeli soldier has dehumanized the enemy. So too do detailed surveys of attitudes amongst snipers (Bar and Ben-Ari 2005), which report that ' "Human being" is the most common term found in our interviews when snipers refer to their enemies.'

Other observers, including several Israeli sources, are, however, less complaisant. Even those who discount the grossly inaccurate and lurid accusations of 'massacres' and 'ethnic cleansing' irresponsibly bandied about from time by individuals and NGOs with an obvious bias discerned 'a serious devaluation … in our readiness to subordinate military considerations to moral values' (Pa'il 2003: 178). Specific examples to that effect were documented on the website maintained by *Shovrim Shetikah* ('Breaking Silence', www.shovrimshtika.org), a movement founded by IDF reservists on their return from service in the Hebron region in 2004. The prolongation of the conflict, they claimed, quite apart from increasing the risk of violence also numbs individual sensitivity to its effects. Conduct once considered exceptional became routine.

As is argued by Amichai Cohen (2005: 71), analysis of what he delicately terms 'problematic military behavior' must differentiate between its two principal manifestations. One consists of actions performed by troops in direct compliance with orders to implement policies framed at the very highest levels of the military superstructure. The other takes the form of crimes committed sporadically by individual soldiers on their own initiative and in contravention of military orders. Each category presents different dilemmas and has evoked a separate response.

Actions in compliance with orders. In his 'black flag' judgment on the Kfar Qassem operation (see p. 140), Judge Halevi as early as 1957 laid down the rule that troops must disobey commands to perform actions that are patently illegal. But that rule of thumb had over the years been undermined by a sense of indeterminacy, which the operations decided upon by the General Staff after 2000 did nothing to dispel (Bohrer 2006). On the contrary, with the resort to new practices, new doubts arose. Targeted killings, the use by IDF troops of Palestinian civilians as human shields when arresting terrorist suspects in their neighborhood (known as 'the neighbor practice'), 'the separation barrier' and the formulation of practices for conduct in its vicinity – all trod a fine line, the legality or illegality of which became subjects of learned debate, both domestic and international.[4] In the summer of 2007, moreover, the Winograd Committee announced that it would extend its investigation to include inquiries into allegations that the IDF had during the previous year's fighting committed

war crimes (e.g. by using cluster phosphorous shells and by targeting urban locations in which Hizbollah forces had located command posts and rocket launchers).

At issue in all cases was not just the validity of an individual action but the relevance of the entire existing framework governing combat behavior. Clearly, the intentionally immoral way in which terrorists fudged accepted distinctions between combatant and non-combatants, on both sides of the firing lines, disqualified efforts to simply transfer to the new situation laws of war that had been framed for either conventional clashes between armies or domestic law enforcement operations. Nevertheless, the norms of human dignity, proportionality, minimal collateral damage, fairness (universability), discrimination and the like could not be dismissed out of hand. Rather, they had to be re-interpreted (Hoag 2007: 205–222).

IDF responses to this first category of 'problematic military behavior' have generally focused on matters of principle. Thus, a team set up in 2003 by Major General Amos Yadlin, then CO of the National Security College, and which Professor Asa Kasher co-chaired, formulated a set of 11 'principles for fighting terror' that they widely published in order to refute the argument of immorality leveled against many types of Israeli action (Yadlin and Kasher 2003; Kasher and Yadlin 2005a, 2005b). In the same period, IDF lawyers likewise sought to convince Israel's Supreme Court that IDF operations were vindicated by the uniqueness of the situation created by protracted terror, which itself justified the classification of the *intifada* as 'an ongoing armed conflict short of war' and its Palestinian perpetrators as 'illegal combatants'.

For the most part, the Court accepted this argument, thereby continuing its tradition of 'rationalizing virtually all controversial actions of the Israeli Authorities, especially those most controversial under principles of International Humanitarian Law' (Kretzmer 2002: 187). Nevertheless, its compliance was not now automatic. Increasingly sensitive to the dictates of international humanitarian law, justices have urged the IDF to reinstitute its former practice of automatically opening an investigation every time a Palestinian is killed by Israeli fire. More formally, in 2005 and 2006, respectively, the Court placed restrictions on the use of both the 'neighbor practice' and targeted killings (Cohen and Shany 2007). As a result of this pressure, IDF practice has indeed apparently changed. Almost as a matter of course, judicial officers are now consulted at the planning stage of counter-insurgency strikes in the territories. During the latter stages of the second Lebanon War, they were attached to senior command posts and granted what amounted to a virtual veto power over air strikes that they considered might be judged disproportionate (Noiman 2007).

Sporadic violations committed by individual soldiers. These generally involve an altogether different type of action. Rape and other forms of sexual molestation, which for over five millennia of recorded military history have been appallingly common amongst all armies of occupation

and which in both the Balkans and the Africa became pandemic in our own age too, seem – for reasons that are not at all clear – to play no part whatsoever in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Sexual crimes are entirely absent from the list of allegations hurled against IDF troops.[5] Otherwise, however, reports of felonies cover a wide spectrum, running from the indiscriminate use of fire power in violation of the rules of engagement, to looting and larceny whilst on active duty and thence to the wanton destruction of means of livelihood (olive groves and taxis) and, ultimately, to the vengeful harassment and unnecessary humiliation of Palestinians requesting passage through IDF checkpoints. In 2005, a military psychologist in the Golani Brigade, which had been assigned to extensive duty in the territories, reported that improper behavior at the checkpoints, especially, had long passed the stage at which it could be termed exceptional. If anything, it was on the way to becoming accepted practice (Minka-Brand 2005).

To its credit, the IDF has attempted to reduce the incidence of such offenses. One demonstration of resolve is manifest in the tightening of judicial supervision over troop behavior. A symbolic step was taken in September 2001, when the Minister of Defense accepted the CoS's recommendation to create a precedent by promoting the incumbent MAG, Brigadier General Menachem Finkelstein, to the rank of Major General and to make him a full member of the General Staff. Finkelstein, whose previous appointments included Chief Military Prosecutor and Deputy Chief Justice of the Military Tribunal of Appeals, went on to institute a number of reforms of his own. As from 2002, especially, he considerably augmented the numbers of service personnel assigned to the Military Police Investigative Department and to the Military Court Judge and Military Prosecutor, in the latter instance by drafting larger numbers of civilian attorneys into reserve duty (Finkelstein 2002). Reporting to the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee of the *Knesset* two years later, Finkelstein testified that his staff had filed 90 indictments (34 on counts of property violations, 23 for inappropriate violence, 22 for unwarranted shootings and 11 for maltreatment at checkpoints) and secured 54 prosecutions (*Haaretz* August 19, 2004).

On the principle that prevention works better than cure, growing attention was also paid to the need for instruction in appropriate behavior vis-à-vis Palestinian citizens. Thus, Central Command in 2003 initiated special courses for the female and male personnel dispatched to checkpoints, in which – for the first time in IDF history – troops not designated for intelligence missions were taught the rudiments of colloquial Arabic. Insisting that the international legal arena now constitutes a 'front' of strategic importance, Finkelstein also persuaded the Command College to include a course on the subject in its curriculum for senior officers (Raviv 2004). Moreover, he considerably raised the profile of the IDF's School for Military Law, which was provided with the budgetary and human resources

necessary both to maintain a website (www.aka.idf.il/patzar/klali/default.asp?catId=48021&docId) and to produce several handbooks on international humanitarian law for distribution to all officers. Other ranks were exposed to an entire 'kit' of films and discussion guidelines entitled 'Values in Warfare – Checkpoints'.

Finally, the IDF in the same period also revised *Ruach Tzahal*, the code of ethics that Asa Kasher had been instrumental in framing in 1994. After an extensive round of consultations with area commanders and several additional academics, amongst whom Kasher was now in a minority, the Chief Education Officer in 2000 drafted a new version of the document, which received General Staff authorization in the autumn of 2001. Consisting of just one printed page (translated on www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=32), the new text is considerably more focused than the old.

In part, this effect is achieved by the insertion of new material. Thus, the Code now opens with a declaration expressing the IDF's commitment to:

1 The protection of the State of Israel, its citizens and inhabitants.
2 Patriotism and loyalty to the state.[6]
3 Human dignity ('All human beings are of inherent value regardless of race, creed, nationality, gender, status or role').

Elsewhere, portions of the older document have been revised. For instance, the problematic mention of the 'traditions of the Jewish people' is now demoted to the third in the list of the IDF's sources of inspiration and is followed by an entirely new reference to 'Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of all human beings.' Other key passages are more subtly rephrased so as to take account of the idiosyncrasies of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Inserted into the original definition of 'Purity of Arms' (see p. 138), for instance, is a new and explicit injunction to troops not 'to employ their weapons and power in order to harm non-combatants and/or prisoners'. Likewise, under the heading *Vocation* (an IDF value that now incorporates the original Code's references to both 'Loyalty' and 'Representation'), the soldier is enjoined 'to contribute all he can to defend the state of Israel, its citizens **and residents** (my emphasis)'. Altogether omitted, however, are the 34 'norms' originally used by Kasher to illustrate the varieties of non-combat situations in which *Ruach Tzahal* was to make its influence felt.

The experience of other armies indicates that, all too often, even the most skillfully crafted and elegantly phrased ethical codes fail to attain their purpose because of deficiencies in the way they are imparted to the troops (Robinson 2007). There are fears that even in its newer and more attractive form *Ruach Tzahal* might labor under a similar burden. The Education Corps issues each member of the IDF with a glossy and

pocket-size edition of the document. Distribution, however, does not of itself guarantee receptivity. Moreover, although General Staff orders now require a weekly commander's discussion on *Ruach Tzahal* and the inclusion of detailed references to its provisions in the mission guidelines given to all troops prior to operations, those requirements are reportedly not always fulfilled (Eitam 2004). Even where they are, they often fail to achieve their purpose. Two young military correspondents, who together wrote the fullest account of IDF operations during the second *intifada* publicly available from an Israeli perspective, are on this point admirably frank (Harel and Isacharoff 2004: 336):

> Senior officers in the Territories admit that their control over the rank and file is low, whilst soldiers say that above the rank of battalion commanders officers are unaware of what really happens on the ground …. The moral strength of the chain will always be only as sturdy as that of its weakest link. When [even] the lowest ranks are invested with enormous power to rule over the life of a Palestinian, there will always be someone who exploits the situation.

And as long as that situation persists, there will always be Israelis who will feel it their duty, national as well as moral, to depart from the norms of self-censoring silence practiced in an earlier age. Instead, they will continue to demand that the IDF and its personnel be held accountable for their actions, no matter what the cost in terms of overall societal cohesion.

Part III
Prospects

8 Future challenges and their resolution

Clearly, then, relations between Israelis and their army have turned a corner. The Israel Defense Force (IDF) no longer stands at the very core of Israeli society, assured of virtually automatic adulation and esteem. With the reputation of the armed forces tarnished by revelations of misconduct as well as incompetence, and their once sacrosanct status in any case undermined by deep shifts in popular values, the old image of a uniquely unruffled symbiosis between Israelis and their army can no longer be sustained.

Clarity gives way to uncertainty, however, when attention turns to the possible future directions that the relationship might take. Israel's domestic and external environments are far too volatile and complex to permit detailed forecasts, even with respect to the overall complexion that the IDF's public status is in the foreseeable future likely to assume. At most, analysts can hope only to identify the general clusters of topics that seem most likely to shape the roles that the armed forces might wish to play, and be allowed to play, in Israeli society at large.

Such is the purpose of the present chapter. It suggests that the tone and content of future relations between Israelis and their army are likely to be contingent on their joint ability to cope with three principal issues, which are here labeled 'governmental', 'doctrinal' and 'structural'. Although none of the concerns subsumed within these three categories are new, all have in recent years generated unprecedented public debate. The pages that follow will, first, define the issues relevant to each of these three clusters. Thereafter, and by way of conclusion, there will follow an assessment of the chances that the problems specific to each category might successfully be resolved.

The clusters in outline

Governmental issues focus on relations between Israelis and their army at the very apex of the political and military pyramids, where the country's most senior soldiers and statesmen interact. Hence, the concerns that governmental issues generate relate to what Peter Feaver (1996) terms the

civil–military 'problematique': the need to find a balance between, on the one hand, supplying the armed forces with sufficient resources to defend the realm and, on the other, insuring that military institutions will not become so powerful that they effectively rule over the polity that they are supposed to protect.

This problem is not of course unique to Israel. It has vexed political philosophers and practitioners since the very dawn of civilization and, as is shown by contemporary anguish over the civil–military 'gap' in the United States, continues to do so in even the most modern of cultures. What distinguishes its Israeli version, nevertheless, is the especially stark nature in which the two sides of the coin present themselves. Barring the miraculous advent of a *deus ex machina* capable of injecting an elixir into the middle east peace process, geopolitical realties in the region seem bound to mandate the retention of an IDF strong enough to deter, and should deterrence fail to defeat, Israel's various adversaries, present and potential. After all, nothing is more counterproductive than an army starved of resources. If its commanders admit to weakness, they simply invite outside aggression. If they do not, they lull their political masters into a false sense of confidence and thereby entice them to take risks that the military cannot underwrite – which is precisely what seems to have occurred when the Israeli cabinet sanctioned the offensive in the Lebanon so rashly advocated by CoS Halutz in the summer of 2006.

Conversely, however, the IDF must not be allowed to prey on the society that its soldiers swear to defend. Concerns here are not limited to fears that the armed forces might exploit their prestige and coercive strength in order to seize power directly. More realistically, attention focuses on three other scenarios. For one thing, and as Zeev Maoz has forcefully pointed out (see pp. 69–70), the IDF's almost Pavlovian tendency to resort to force whenever opportunity arises could involve the country in conflicts that the civilian echelons have neither fully discussed nor properly authorized – as was indeed the case before and during the first Lebanon War of 1982 (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984). Second, military tendencies to adopt worst-case scenarios and to be skeptical of diplomacy as a means of conflict resolution could exacerbate what are in any case highly inflammable situations – which is one interpretation of how violence spiraled out of control during the early stages of the Al-Aksa *intifada* (Peri 2006: 91–107). Finally, and perhaps most sinister of all, in its quest for ever greater strength as a hedge against Israel's external foes, the IDF might subvert national priorities, principally by draining the country of resources required for domestic welfare purposes. Critics of Israeli 'militarism' consider that process to be already so well advanced that in some areas, such as the allocation of land reserves, they consider it to have reached almost catastrophic proportions (Oren 2005).

Peter Feaver (2003) suggests that the key to overcoming this 'problematique' lies in the establishment and maintenance of an extensive framework

of civilian 'monitoring' systems, some of which can be more intrusive than others. Thus, as a matter of course, the monitoring spectrum should encompass arrangements for screening entrants to the officer corps, for the exercise of supervision over military budgeting and for the formulation of clear rules of combat engagement. But at moments of heightened international tension, precisely times when the military is most likely to insist on unimpeded control over troop conduct, the civilian echelon might choose to become still more intrusive. For instance, politicians might intervene in the selection, or rejection, of specific mission assignments and keep a close and real-time watch on the operations ultimately sanctioned (Feaver 2003: 76–86). Feaver (87–89) suggests that such monitoring systems, especially when combined with the imposition of occasional punishments and sanctions, enable civilians to insure a more finely calibrated degree of supervision over military conduct than was allowed by Huntington's 'objective control' model, which has commanded the theoretical terrain since its first presentation in 1957. Indeed, Feaver argues, only by manipulating the levers of control that monitoring systems allow can civilians insure that soldiers are indeed 'working' (here defined as carrying out their functions in the ways that the civilians want) rather than 'shirking' (acting in ways desired by the military).

Mutatis mutandis much of what Feaver has to say about the requirements for a state of equilibrium in civil–military relations in the United States is equally applicable to Israel. In this case, too, central to analysis is the distribution of formal authority and informal power between the two spheres. For years, it has been clear that, notwithstanding the military's ritual incantation of its subservience to civilian rule, the existing situation manifestly tilts in the IDF's favor. Whether, and if so to what extent, the present imbalance might be rectified will not only exert a critical impact on the quality and efficacy of Israeli decision-making with respect to national security, but in the present climate of public demands for accountability and transparency, the nature of the steps taken will also influence the level of overall societal confidence in the IDF's readiness to subordinate its institutional interests to those of the country at large.

The *doctrinal* issues that seem most likely to affect the tone and substance of relations between Israelis and their army in the foreseeable future are more narrowly focused. This second cluster moves away from the broad polarities of the governmental–military dichotomy. Its main concern is with the need to adapt the IDF's traditional operational preferences to the changing realities of Israel's security environment.

In outline, this topic has been on the public agenda for some two decades. It was first openly discussed in 1988 by Dr Ariel Levite, then a young research fellow at Tel-Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Security Studies, who later went on to hold a number of senior posts in various Israeli security agencies. In *Israel's Military Doctrine: Defense and Offense* (which was also published in English, Levite 1990), Levite argued that the

time had come to consider changing Israel's military modus operandi. Principally, he argued, this was because developments in battlefield technologies, and especially the emergence of laser-guided weapons' systems, combined with geopolitical shifts and greater domestic Israeli sensitivity to battlefield deaths, were undermining the assumptions that the IDF had hitherto considered to be unchanging facts of life. Israel no longer needed, and could no longer afford, to place as high a premium as in the past on first-strike offensives. Rather, she needed to focus more on a defensive posture, based on the presumption that the IDF would have to absorb an enemy attack before launching a second-strike counteroffensive of its own.

Subsequent events seemed merely to confirm the validity of that thesis. In quick succession, Israel experienced the first *intifada* (1987), attacks by Iraqi 'Scud' missiles (1991) and then the initial flowering of the Oslo process – all events that, in one way or another, apparently confirmed Levite's basic thesis that Israel confronted a new operational environment. That, certainly, was the conclusion drawn in the mid-1990s by two distinguished contributors to an issue of *Israel Affairs*, dedicated to Israel's security thinking: Brigadier General (res.) Shimon Naveh (see pp. 104–105), who was at the time writing a doctorate at the Department of War Studies at King's College, London, and Dr Avi Kober, a one-time intelligence officer who had likewise moved into academe. True, both of these authors only obliquely followed Levite's earlier work, which Kober cited in just three non-committal endnotes and Naveh in only two. Naveh's critique of Israeli military postures and structures was especially idiosyncratic. Clearly influenced by his readings of Soviet texts on 'Deep Operations', Naveh moved the discussion into regions that Levite, like many others, probably found barely intelligible.

At the level of premises, however, all three analyses had much in common. Like Levite, Naveh agreed that Israel's 'cult of offensive preemption', whose status as dogma he compared to the French pre-1914 commitment to 'l'attaque à l'outrance', was outdated and its rationale vitiated by the emergence of a new generation of strategic challenges (Naveh 1995). In his own concluding remarks, Kober dared to be predicative. Under the new circumstances, he suggested, Israel's war objectives were already 'assuming a more "negative" character'. Should that trend continue, 'there will probably be a greater emphasis than before on defensive measures – of both passive and active nature' (Kober 1995b: 207).

In fact, such was already beginning to be the case. Sometime before the Scud missile attacks of 1991 informed the general Israeli public that a new age of warfare had dawned, official Israeli strategic thought had already embarked on a process of fundamental re-assessment. A particularly significant psychological threshold was reached – and crossed – as early as 1988. The 'war of the cities' waged by Iran and Iraq in the spring of that year, during the course of which each side hurled missiles against the

capital of the other, provided stark reminders of the destructive power of ballistic projectiles and demonstrations of the readiness of at least some Middle Eastern regimes to resort to their use. Yitzchak Rabin, who was then Israel's Minister of Defense, was quick to see the implications for the country's security and to draw several major institutional and budgetary conclusions (Inbar 1999: 126–128).

First, Israel had to revise the attitude of nonchalance toward civil defense that had thereto characterized her security thinking – and that indeed had in retrospect been justified by the almost total absence of air attacks on Israeli urban centers in any of her major wars since 1948.[1] Instead, now that ballistic weapons of mass destruction had appeared over the operational horizon, steps had to be taken to dust down the civil defense regulations originally legislated in the 1950s but that had thereafter been neglected (Bitzur 2003). Certainly, military responsibility for the safety of the rear could no longer be entrusted to *HAGA* (the Civil Defense unit originally established in 1948) that, very much like the British Home Guard of World War II on which it was modeled, was principally staffed by a motley collection of well-meaning but untrained and often infirm old-timers and only loosely under IDF control. Instead, the IDF had to shoulder the burden more directly, inter alia by establishing a fully fledged Rear Command (*pikud oref*), invested with all the authority and prestige of the three, traditional regional commands (North, Center and South). Although the *pikud oref* did not begin to function until after the 1991 Gulf War was over, the staff work required for its establishment had in fact been completed prior to the Scud attacks of that year.

At the same time, and again before the experience of the 1991 missile attacks, preparations for 'active defense' were also stepped up. Particularly informative in this respect is the chronology of Israel's investments in the Arrow anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system and in the development of a homegrown satellite capability capable of giving warning of incoming attacks and directing Israeli countermeasures onto their airborne targets.[2] The record suggests that official minds were not always as unimaginative as their critics would often have us believe. Provided a steady and bountiful supply of American funds was assured (in the event, according to some reports, they flowed at the rate of some five billion dollars annually for the Arrow project alone between 1987 and 2007), Israel's defense establishment was prepared to invest enormous sums in developing and perfecting weapons' systems for whose use no provision whatsoever had been made in prior IDF planning. Results duly followed. In 2004, after over 15 years of research and testing, the Arrow was declared to be operational – the first system of its kind to reach that stage. In a related move, the IDF spokesman announced the successful launch of two new state-of-the-art high-resolution surveillance and communication satellites in May 2002 (*Ofek-5*) and June 2007 (*Ofek-7*).

Members of the Meridor Committee (see p. 39), who presented their

report on Israel's future security needs and doctrines in May 2006, attempted to conceptualize the implications of these developments. One of their principal recommendations was to append a fourth 'pillar' to the holy trinity that had upheld Israeli strategic thought ever since 1948 (*Jane's Defense Weekly* May 3, 2006). Elegantly preserving the convention of Hebrew alliteration, they suggested adding *hitgoneneut* ('protection') to the triad of *harta'ah*, *hatra'ah* and *hakhra'ah* ('deterrence', 'warning' and 'decision') that had thereto held sway. The need was as much military as societal. Absent adequate defenses, they warned, a hostile rocket attack on Israel's rear could seriously dislocate efforts to mobilize the reserves and thereby make it impossible for the IDF to respond to a surprise ground invasion as quickly as had been the case in 1973.

Officers in the strategic division of the Planning Branch, the IDF unit formally responsible for formulating grand military strategy, did not reject the new defensive paradigm out of hand. In retrospect, however, they seem to have been hesitant to commit themselves wholeheartedly to so drastic a revision of the traditions that they had inherited. As a result, and as the second Lebanon War of 2006 demonstrated, Israelis got the worst of both worlds. Ground formations, especially when manned by reservists, were deprived of the training required to carry out the offensive missions to which they were ultimately assigned. But because the IDF nevertheless remained atavistically attached to operational perspectives that continued to prioritize air offensives (especially), entire areas of civil defense continued to receive low priority. After an initial spurt of interest in the late twentieth century, the Ministry of Defense wound down investments in 'Nautilus', a tactical high energy laser (THEL) rocket intercept system that promised to supply some defense against short-range *kassam* and *katyusha* attacks. Less understandably, even though the southern town of Sederot was subjected to persistent *kassam* bombardment as from 2001, few funds at all were allocated either there or anywhere else to such basic 'passive defense' facilities as communal shelters and stockpiles of essential stores. As the State Comptroller found during the course of successive investigations, the *pikud oref*, too, was consigned to second-class status, and its budgets, never large to begin with, were repeatedly slashed until they plumbed ridiculously inadequate depths (State Comptroller Reports 1999: 79–100, 2000: 50–72, 2007). Given that background of disdain, an air of tragic inevitability surrounds the Home Command's woefully inadequate performance in the summer of 2006.

The first and most obvious victims of that situation were the large numbers of Israeli citizens thus left virtually defenseless, especially if they were aged, infirm or poor (and, in 2006, all three categories frequently fitted single individuals). If post-war public protests are any guide, however, the IDF's failure to protect the rear, together with the other flaws in its operational performance, in a wider sense also harmed the country's societal–military relations at large. True, the protest demonstrations held

in 2006 attracted smaller crowds than had been the case in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and after the Sabra and Shatila massacres of September 1982. In terms of relations between Israelis and their army, however, the 2006 demonstrations were probably far more significant phenomena. Thereto, public anger had been principally directed against the political echelons, who in 1973–1974 were accused of adopting policies that jeopardized Israel's security and who in 1982 were condemned for engaging the country in a war that was unjust as well as pointless. Thus, Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan were pilloried in 1973–1974 and ultimately hounded out of office; in 1982, Ariel Sharon (then Minister of Defense) was likewise demonized. By comparison, on both occasions the popularity of the military leadership – even though several of its representatives were judged to have failed in their duties by the government's own commissions of inquiry – remained virtually unscathed. Such was also the case during the first years of the second *intifada*, when a popular bumper sticker called upon the government to 'Let *Tzahal* win', an exhortation that clearly exonerated the military echelon of responsibility for the persistence of terror attacks and implied that weak-kneed politicians were curbing military retaliation.

No such graffiti were apparent in 2006. On the contrary, the traditional patterns of the public distribution of blame seemed then to have been reversed. Political responsibility for the war and its conduct were not of course ignored, and demands for the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the government's decision-making process were accordingly rife. But the principal complaints voiced at the protest meetings held after the second Lebanon War, and thereafter reported and amplified in the media, related to the incompetence exhibited by the IDF's high command and its senior field officers. Singled out for especial denigration was the way in which the military authorities had virtually left the rear to its own devices. As one of the platform speakers was reported to have declared: 'The public has a right to know whether or not *Tzahal* possesses a defense strategy. Soldiers cannot be expected to fight well at the front if they fear for the safety of their wives and children back home' (*Haaretz* September 10, 2006).

The third cluster of issues encompasses *structural* matters, and is probably the widest in scope. Principally, this is because the crux of their concern is the composition and complexion of the IDF, the institution that has for so long incarnated Israel's character as a 'nation in arms' and fostered the notion that most (Jewish) Israelis are 'citizen-soldiers'. Given that context, decisions to modify, or – alternatively – to retain, the militia-type character of Israel's force structure must be expected to exert a societal impact far in excess of their immediate professional compass. In the last analysis, what is at stake is not simply the IDF's combat efficiency but the self-understanding and identity of the society on whose way of life its influence has, over time, been so profound.

Contemporary pressure to amend Israel's existing military service patterns can be traced to several sources. In small part, it emanates from groups ideologically opposed to any form of conscription, which they regard as just the most visible tip of an iceberg of militarism that has altogether frozen Israel's development as a liberal and democratic state. Far more influential, however, have been the arguments advanced in favor of reform that appeal to two other criteria: military–professional necessity and societal equity.

As concisely summarized by Jones and Murphy (2002: 53), the military–professional case in favor of changing the IDF's structure rests on the claim that its present 'three-tier' framework, in which large contingents of conscripts and compulsory reservists buttress a small professional cadre, is no longer appropriate to Israel's defense needs. The changing nature of the IDF's military commitments suggests, rather, that Israel now requires a professional force, consisting entirely of volunteer regulars and reservists, who will receive salaries commensurate with their rank, seniority and assignments. Long-term contract personnel, runs the argument, are by reason of their maturity and accumulated experience better suited than young conscripts to perform the complex constabulary duties necessitated by friction between Israelis and Palestinians. Professionals are also better qualified to service, develop and exploit the enormous range of hi-tech weapons and support systems upon which the IDF has come increasingly to rely on its efforts to stay abreast of the 'revolution in military affairs' (see pp. 42–45). As much has long been recognized in the Israel Air Force, always the most sensitive of the branches to the effects of technological advance, where ever since the early 1950s a condition of entry to the pilot's training school has been an undertaking on the part of successful applicants to contract for an extensive period of professional service.[3] Increasingly, similar conditions are now applied in other parts of the military framework too.

Not even the most ardent proponents of reforms to the existing service system suggest that the IDF will be able to meet its foreseeable commitments without recourse to reservists. Once again, much can be learned from the Air Force where reservists still account for some 50 percent of the current complement of combat pilots. As has always been the case, other branches too will continue to require a reservoir of personnel committed to attend military training exercises at regular intervals and who, thanks to the skills thereby acquired and honed, can be called to duty at short notice and fed into battle when and where their services are required. Like their counterparts in other western armies, however, personnel called to reserve duty will receive a form of recognition that is material as well as symbolic.

The social equity argument adds a complementary layer of justifications for that program of military structural reform. Basic to its argument is the observation that, in many essentials, the demise of the IDF's traditional

'three-tier' service system does not need to be formally legislated, since the process is in any case under way. Implicitly recognizing the validity of the military professional case for a more selective attitude to manpower, the IDF has of its own volition virtually dismantled the militia-type framework to whose retention its commanders ostensibly remain faithful. Largely as a result, the draft has become decreasingly universal in scope, especially since as many as 17.5 percent of all young male conscripts in 2007 received discharges before completing their compulsory stints of service (see p. 134). Inevitably, the reserve system has experienced a knock-on effect. Unofficial analyses estimate that just 30 percent of the entire reserve complement (a category of citizens in any case shrunken by the almost total absence from that register of women, of Muslim Arabs and, increasingly, of *haredi* males) was in 2002 performing over 90 percent of all reserve duty (S.A. Cohen 2002: 162–188).

It is a tribute to the enduring resonance of the draft in Israeli society that, notwithstanding such glaring disparities, overall levels of response to summonses to duty remain high. 'Motivation to combat service' amongst conscripts, despite suffering a dip in the 1990s (see p. 159), has since then apparently returned to its earlier high averages. This is the case even in the national-religious sector, where it was at one time feared that propensity to enlistment would be adversely affected by the IDF's dismantlement of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria during the 2005 disengagement operation. Still more remarkably, comparatively few of the reservists summoned to duty seek to dodge their obligations. In their case, especially, primary group loyalties, 'the buddy syndrome', seem to overcome the potential countervailing pull of family and work pressures (Cantignani 2004). Bound to each other by ties forged over several years of service together in the same unit, they turn up for service with extraordinary regularity and, especially at moments of high tension, in full force (Ben-Dor and Pedahzur 2006).

Beneath this surface of apparent equanimity, however, there lurk several tokens of troop discontent. As early as 2001, CoS Mofaz publicly admitted to being troubled by reports that feelings of dissatisfaction amongst reservists were 'on the point of explosion', an eventuality that he sought to avert by a series of preemptive gestures: the appointment of a full-time Chief Reserve Officer at the rank of Brigadier General; personal messages of encouragement and appreciation addressed to reservists by the high and mighty of the land and – most drastic of all – a package of material benefits that included tax concessions and employment guarantees (*Haaretz* June 11, 2001). Mofaz's own intentions were indisputably conservative. He wished merely to make minor adjustments to the existing military service system, which he trusted would thereby be shored up and preserved. Unwittingly, however, the measures that he initiated may speed up the process that they were intended to stall. After all, implicit in the acknowledgement of the need for several immediate reforms was an

admission that others, some far more drastic, could yet be required. More significant still were the symbolic signals that Mofaz's measures sent out. By retreating from the principle that service in the IDF was an equally shared privilege undertaken by citizens voluntarily and without regard to its rewards, they dislocated the entire national narrative. For the first time since 1948, the prospect that Israel might, sooner or later, field a professional military entered public consciousness.

Assessing the likelihood of change

In none of the three areas of societal–military interaction outlined in this chapter is reform inevitable. On the contrary, it would be difficult to exaggerate the degree of commitment that persists in Israel to the retention of existing norms and procedures, as much in the governmental and doctrinal spheres as with respect to the IDF's force structure. Sheer bureaucratic inertia constitutes one obvious brake on change; vested interests (political and organizational) a second; and the well-known reluctance of all military organizations to take leaps into the dark, especially when they have lengthy agendas of unfinished operational business, a third.

But above all there is the influence exerted by Israel's political–military culture. Although essentially an amorphous assortment of collective assumptions, attitudes, memories and biases, this mindset nevertheless plays a crucial role in fossilizing what Charles Freilich (a former deputy Israel national security adviser) terms Israel's decision-making 'pathologies': shorter-term perspectives; extreme politicization of the decision-making process; deteriorating governmental capabilities and a chronically 'uninstitutionalized' decision-making process that, needless to say, is dominated by the defense establishment (Freilich 2006).

Basically, the influence wielded by Israel's political–military culture derives from the fact that, like its counterparts in other societies, it incorporates

> an integrated 'system of symbols' (e.g. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.
>
> (Johnston 1995: 46)

In a nation that was born into war, and whose leaders have ever since considered themselves to be governing a state under siege, attachment to long-standing components of the military–political culture is likely to be particularly marked. As a result, the governmental norms and styles that have traditionally been its expressions can also be expected to resist

change. The process of realigning existing practices in the governmental, doctrinal and structural spheres of societal–military interaction – even if it ever gets off the ground – will therefore at best be protracted.

That said, it is nevertheless important to point out that the pace and extent of change could well vary from one sphere to another. Each of the three categories here discussed therefore warrants independent assessment.

In immediate terms, movement seems most likely to occur (or, more realistically, least unlikely not to occur) in the area of national security decision-making, here labeled the *governmental* sphere of societal–military interaction. Basically, this is because there now exists a broad degree of consensus about both the problem and its remedy. Boiled down, the problem is the apparently congenital tendency of Israeli governments – invariably ad hoc coalitions of politicians, harnessed together by a temporary mixture of electoral chance and personal advantage – to trivialize strategy by making policy decisions on the hoof and almost entirely on the basis of military advice. The remedy is to mandate the existence of a permanent advisory body, consisting principally of non-military officials.

The establishment of a National Security Council, a body that could provide ministers with an effective counterweight to the IDF's diagnoses and prognoses, was one of the principal administrative recommendations tabled by the Agranat Commission in 1974. Thereafter, a plethora of official reports and academic studies fleshed out that proposal, culminating in a special report published by the State Comptroller in September 2006 (State Comptroller of Israel 2006: 17–67). To wade through this mass of materials is to experience a sad sense of déjà vu. All itemize the deficiencies in the rump Council in existence since 2000, and all demand that it be strengthened by the establishment of a suitably qualified team, permanently stationed adjacent to the Prime Minister's office and hence at the very hub of the decision-making matrix. The Winograd Committee, which investigated government conduct during the first days of the second Lebanon War, made precisely the same arguments in the interim report that it submitted in the spring of 2007. This was hardly surprising, since one member of that tribunal was Professor Yehezkel Dror, recipient of the Israel Prize in political science in 2005, who had for almost two decades been advocating that 'in order to facilitate high-grade grand-strategic thinking … it is essential that there exist a professional policy planning staff alongside the government and the Prime Minister, who should also have available a bureaucratic framework for crisis management' (Dror 1989: 334).

An important new milestone in the same area was reached in June 2007 when yet another official committee of inquiry, headed this time by David Brodet, a former director general of Israel's Ministry of Finance, reported on the country's defense budget (Brodet 2007). Comprising almost 200 pages of text, charts and tables, and based on the testimony of dozens of witnesses, the Brodet report constitutes a model of its kind. It was also a

breakthrough. For the first time, an official inquiry managed to unravel at least some part of the murky machinations and deceptions long suspected of swirling around Israel's defense budgeting, but never before fully investigated.[4] Visibly shocked, albeit not altogether surprised, by its own revelations, the Brodet committee presents a damning critique of the entire process. Page after page of its report itemizes the waste and inefficiency resulting from the almost complete absence of civilian oversight into how the IDF uses the monies that a disingenuous government and *Knesset* provide so liberally – and in the committee's opinion so irresponsibly too.

At the macroeconomic level, the Brodet committee advocates the introduction of a multiyear budget and, after an interim pause, placing a cap on its size. Within the context of the present discussion, more salient – and probably more realistic – are its procedural recommendations. In order to augment government oversight, the Committee advises reducing the areas of the defense budget not open to full *Knesset* inspection (a process in fact already under way). Moreover, in order to insure appropriate government input into the budgeting process, it insists that all IDF estimates be subjected to a civilian audit based on unitary standards of measurement. Implicitly suggesting that both the Finance and the Defense ministries are too tarred with the brush of collusion to carry out the task, the Committee recommends that it be entrusted to the National Security Council, which thus here too emerges as a linchpin in the new arrangement.

As every student of Israeli administrative practice knows, many a gap separates bureaucratic advocacy from ministerial implementation. Hence, it would clearly be naïve to expect that either the Brodet or the Winograd recommendations will be adopted as expeditiously as the gravity of the situation that they uncovered demands. What can be said, however, is that the data required for informed decision-making now lie to hand. By mid-2007, even Israel's notoriously lethargic political apparatus showed signs of succumbing to pressure that the information be put to use. Prime Minister Olmert's immediate reaction to the interim Winograd report was to establish a taskforce, chaired by former CoS Lipkin-Shahak, with a mandate to suggest how its recommendations ought to be implemented. When, not unexpectedly, Shahak's team underscored the urgency of strengthening the National Security Council and establishing a political–military advisory bureau independent of the IDF in the Prime Minister's office, Olmert immediately promised to set in motion the administrative and legislative steps required (*Haaretz* July 3, 2007). He also placed the Brodet Committee's recommendations on the Cabinet's agenda, using many of its arguments as a reason for rejecting the IDF's demands for yet another supplement to its budgetary allocations for fiscal year 2008 (*Haaretz* July 30, 2007).

Pressure of a similar sort can also be observed, second, in what has here been termed the *doctrinal* sphere. Again, the pace of change must not be exaggerated, especially since the ingrained predilection for offensive mili-

tary action that has always been one of the most pronounced expressions of Israel's laager mentality remains apparent. Indeed, even as late as the spring of 2003 it was explicitly endorsed in 'Project Daniel', a position paper that a small group of self-appointed advisers (one of whom was Major General [res.] Yitzchak Ben-Yisrael, see p. 43), then presented to Ariel Sharon (Beres 2007). Nevertheless, here too considerable progress has been made in putting together the basic research that is an essential prerequisite of any shift to a more defensive posture.

Much of the theoretical work has been carried out by academics, whose studies of the new realities of Israel's military concerns have considerably clarified its implications. Notwithstanding differences of nuance and emphasis – and, indeed, of political intention – there now exists a broad measure of agreement with Levite's original proposal that Israeli strategic thinking ought to embark on a new era. Many, indeed, think that it has already done so. As early as 1996, Efraim Inbar (1996: 80–103) considered that the shift from a threat-based to a vulnerability-based paradigm of strategic thought had induced the virtual abandonment of 'self-reliance', a concept that encapsulated the get-up-and-go belief that autonomous offensives were the surest path to battlefield 'decision'. In the wake of the 2005 disengagement, Barry Rubin wrote more synoptically of a 'revolutionary transformation' in Israeli security doctrine, fuelled for the most part by the realization that 'Arab armies and arms appeared less dangerous, and occupying territory became less important than having clear defensive lines that did not enclose a hostile population' (Rubin 2006: 117).

As has been seen, in the sphere of aerial defense, the development of the Arrow project and its various ancillaries provide one indication of that shift. On the ground, however, its most obtrusive expression is the construction of the security barrier that separates some areas of Jewish and Arab settlement in the West Bank and is designed to prevent the free movement of potential terrorists between them. Compared with the Arrow, the barrier is a comparative latecomer. It hardly figured at all in strategic discussions prior to January 1995, when a spate of especially horrendous terrorist attacks in Tel-Aviv induced Yitzchak Rabin to take it seriously. Even thereafter, planning for the barrier did not get beyond the draft stage until the spring of 2002 when, after another round of suicide bombings, Ariel Sharon formally proposed that the Cabinet sanction its alignment. Since then, however, the pace of construction has been relentless (Kershner 2005). The barrier, in parts no more than a series of barbed wire fences, but over long stretches a wall made up of massive concrete slabs, by 2007 already snaked its way around considerable portions of Samaria, Judea and greater Jerusalem, irrevocably disfiguring much of the landscape en route. IDF sources assign to the construction of the barrier much of the credit for the reduction in terrorism after 2003–2004. They are convinced that, once completed, the barrier, together with its elaborate system of guard-towers, no-go environs and crossing-points will prove to

be even more effective (D. Almog 2004; Abman 2006). By then, it will doubtless also represent the most obtrusive symbol of Israel's new posture and its most lasting geographical testimony too.

Environmentalists aside, the most vociferous opponents of the barrier have been spokesmen for the Palestinians whose livelihoods and property it has affected. Some have appealed against the barrier's alignment on the grounds that it denies Palestinians access to lands that they have farmed for generations. Others claim ownership of property upon which it is constructed and which is alleged to have been illegally expropriated.[5] Significantly, however, even Israelis who are supportive of these claims, and who therefore insist that the barrier be restricted to the Israeli side of the pre-1967 borders, endorse the strategic logic that underpins the concept as a whole. Two prominent examples are Azar Gat and Martin Van Creveld, Israel's most distinguished military historians. Adopting a panoramic view, both have independently reached similar conclusions, summaries of which have been made available to IDF audiences through the medium of separate articles in *Ma'arachot*. Gat suggests that the barrier on the West Bank is as necessary for Israel's survival as a 'first world' country as are the similar constructions that now impede 'third world' infiltration across the American–Mexican border and into the tiny Spanish enclave of Ceuta in northern Africa (Gat 2005). Van Creveld is yet more explicit.

> The one way to solve the problem [of terrorism] once and for all is to build a wall. Not a fence, let me hasten to add, but a wall. To prevent people from trying to dig under it, the wall's foundations must be sunk as deep into the earth as the financial means will allow. Whatever culverts are left to let through rainwater should be blocked by means of grates, and the grates should be fitted with alarm systems. To prevent terrorists from trying to cross it, it must be backed by a death strip, perhaps ten meters wide. The strip will be sown with anti-personnel mines and guarded by automatic machine guns.
>
> (Van Creveld 2003, 2004: 65–66)

Thinking with respect to more conventional aspects of civil defense has similarly advanced. Especially is this so since the debacle of July–August 2006, which exposed just how vulnerable Israel's population centers were to attack and how woefully ill-prepared both municipal and national frameworks were to meet the needs. Reports subsequently tabled both by a high-powered *Knesset* sub-committee and, in yet greater detail, by the State Comptroller have exposed the most critical of the deficiencies.[6] They have also made detailed proposals with respect to the steps that have to be taken in order to prevent a recurrence of the chaos rife in 2006. Two recommendations have attracted particular attention, generating a momentum for change that gives the appearance of being too powerful to be easily stopped. One is the establishment of a national 'home defense' coor-

dinator, in possession of a far wider scope of discretion to activate vital services than the law presently allows to the director of the Emergency Management Administration (known by its Hebrew acronym as *MELACH*), a framework established as long ago as 1955 within the Defense Ministry and now showing definite signs of age. A second is the re-formulation of the duties and tasks of the IDF's *pikud oref* and its subordination to the new coordinator's overall direction.

Neither of these recommendations is novel. In rudimentary form, both were formally proposed at the very beginning of the twenty-first century by none other than the then CO of *pikud oref*, Major General Gabi Ofir, who suggested that his command be shut down and its duties and budget transferred to an alternative framework under civilian direction (*Haaretz* September 27, 2000). By 2007, however, the public climate that had once permitted all such recommendations to evaporate was clearly changing. Public sensitivity to the inadequacies of the present civil defense arrangements was becoming too blatant for politicians to ignore. Meshing with the tangible and incremental shifts that, as noted, were independently taking place in overall perceptions with respect to the required balance between offensive capabilities and defensive needs, the new mood suggested that prospects for doctrinal revision were, in 2007, brighter than ever before.[7] Certainly, the materials required for an informed debate and analysis are now available.

That is not (yet) the case with respect to the *structural* issues associated with the IDF's composition, here identified as the third and last of the cluster of issues likely to influence on the future texture of relations between Israelis and their army.

True, the notion that the existing service system might be obsolescent has been in the air for some time. As early as 1992, Colonel (res.) Emanuel Wald (see p. 101) advocated the establishment of 'a different IDF', to be structured as a 'professional, regular force, in which most officers and soldiers will be career personnel, who will view their service as a life-time profession' (Wald 1992b: 169–170). Similar ideas were in the following year put forward by Colonel (res.) Shemuel Gordon, a former fighter pilot whose CV included several years of professional and salaried service, in an article that was published in *Ma'arachot* under the provocative title: 'In Favor of Selective Conscription' (Gordon 1993, 1997: 294–303). The present author elaborated on similar themes in a series of papers subsequently published in Hebrew and in English (S.A. Cohen 1995a, 2000, 2001: 19–41), some of which also attracted the attention of the national press. But the apogee of popularization was reached in 2003, when Ofer Shelah, a journalist who had originally made his name as a sports columnist before becoming a military commentator, published a book-length layman's analysis of the IDF and its complement, the critical tone of which was set in the very first chapter: 'It's Already Not a People's Army' (Shelach 2003). Enviably, his work held a respectable position in the best-seller lists of Israeli non-fiction works for 17 weeks.

But in the corridors of military power, no similar calls for comprehensive re-assessment could be heard. Typically, Ehud Barak did promise to depart from that convention. Soon after becoming CoS in 1991, he asked Major General (res.) Herzl Shaffir, a former CO of the Manpower Branch, to undertake an inquiry into 'the maximal utilization of IDF manpower resources' (S.A. Cohen 1995b). But nothing came of this initiative. Shaffir's proposals were conservative in the extreme and limited to recommending differential service for different categories of recruits, an idea that was not pursued. Worse still, Shaffir's was considered to be the last word on the subject. For several years thereafter, suggestions that IDF re-examine its conscription policies in toto were dismissed as entirely unnecessary. Shaffir had spoken, and there was nothing more to be said.[8] Not until 2001 did the IDF Manpower Branch commission a systematic study of service systems in other countries (Zak and Ravid 2001), and not until 2004 did Brigadier Ya'akov Zigdon, then CO of the Inter-service Command and Staff College (*PUM*), publish an in-house version of his lectures on force design and structure, which included a discussion of the IDF's posture as a 'post-modern' military (Zigdon 2004: 262–263). But both works deliberately avoided taking a non-conformist stand. The official institutional line remained unequivocal. Adherence to the principle as well as the practice of conscription was essential to the preservation of the armed force's sense of mission. Even to speak of its abandonment was to break faith with its very soul (Levy 2004).

The 'noli me tangere' stance thus characteristic of the IDF's official attitude to structural reform did not prevent it occasionally attempting to deal with some of the most glaring abuses of the existing service system. As already noted (see p. 165), particular attention was paid to modifying reserve regulations in such a way as to moderate at least some of the effects of the inequalities in the distribution of the burden. Brigadier General Dr Ariel Heymann, the first incumbent of the post of Chief Reserve Officer created by CoS Mofaz in 2002, was especially active in this regard. Within a year of his appointment, Heymann had drafted 'Guidelines for a Different Reserve Model', copies of which he distributed far and wide (Heymann 2004). By the time he retired in 2006, much of his program was in the throes of realization. In 2002, the *Knesset* passed one bill that guarantees life and disability coverage for reservists on active duty and, in 2003, adopted another that prohibits the government and local authorities from using the services of companies found guilty of firing employees called to reserve duty. Above all, the *Knesset* also accepted in principle the recommendations tabled in the spirit of Heymann's paper by a commission chaired by the then president of Ben-Gurion University (the Braverman Commission). The result, in 2005, was the preparation of an entirely new Reserve Law. Besides setting restrictions on the purposes for which reservists could be summonsed (i.e. they were to be called solely for training exercises and large-scale combat, not for constabulary duties in

the territories), the bill also proposed limiting the length of annual stints of reserve duty and increasing the financial compensation to which reservists are entitled.[9]

Conscript service conditions likewise received attention. Two problems (both referred in pp. 133–135) aroused especial concern. The first is the growing proportion of the country's youth not being recruited into the IDF at all for one reason or another and hence not undergoing what was supposed to be a rite of passage to full citizenship. The other is the feeling of frustration generated by the fact that while all conscripts are drafted for three-year terms, many are not in fact required to complete their terms, often because the tasks to which they have been assigned are superfluous. Here, too, the government's knee-jerk response was to have both problems investigated by independent and well-qualified committees: one chaired by Major General (res.) David Ivry, a former deputy CoS who since retirement had continued to play a key role in Israeli security thinking by serving successively as director general of the Defense Ministry, head of the National Security Council and Israel's ambassador to the United States; the other by Professor Avi Ben-Bassat, an economist at the Hebrew University and one-time director general of the Ministry of Finance.

Without explicitly saying so, both committees in effect accepted the inevitable and recommended steps that were bound to distance the IDF from the old notion of a 'people's army' based on a system of entirely unpaid and universal conscription. Thus, the Ivry Committee, which presented its report to Defense Minister Mofaz in February 2005, suggested expanding the existing civic service track (presently almost monopolized by young women from the national-religious community who volunteer for a year or two of non-military duty in public services) and making it available to other groups excused from the draft: Arab youths, *haredim* and other Jews who the IDF rejects on physical grounds (*Haaretz* 19 December 2005).[10] The Ben-Bassat Committee, which completed its work in February 2006 and whose report is available at www.mod.gov.il/pages/general/dochvaada.pdf, tabled even more drastic proposals. A central element of its program was the reduction of all conscript duty to two years, with service personnel in combat units being paid a full wage for the third year of service to which they alone would be obligated.

Thus placed in sequence, the list of recent inquiries into various aspects of Israel's military manpower policies certainly seems impressive, especially when measured against the inflexibility that earlier characterized official thinking in this sphere. Appearances, however, can be deceptive. Closer examination reveals that all of the various committees thus far established have operated autonomously, with each addressing only one, limited aspect of the present service system and its implications. When confronted with a similar need to consider the validity of existing force structures, other countries granted authorized commissions a far more comprehensive mandate, which enabled them to analyze the military

framework as a whole. Thus, in 1949 the British Government established an inter-departmental Committee on Defense Needs (the Harwood Committee), which was instructed to advise whether the United Kingdom ought to retain or abandon conscription (Scott 1993: 225–236). Two decades later, President Nixon appointed a similarly empowered Commission on an All-Volunteer Force (the Gates Commission). The Israeli approach, however, has been piecemeal. Rather than take a hard and potentially drastic look at the subject as a whole, both the IDF and the government have deliberately restricted themselves to examining nothing more than its most glaring faults. Hence, even were all of the recommendations thus far tabled to be accepted (and most, although officially endorsed by the government, were in fact quietly shelved in the immediate wake of the 2006 Lebanon War), the results would necessarily be limited. Far from overhauling the IDF's structure, they would merely tinker with its various components.

Only the foolhardy would dare to try and predict whether or not resistance to a more fundamental reconsideration of the IDF's composition can be sustained, and if so for how long. Realism suggests that the gaps between the image of universal conscription and its reality are becoming so vast that a grand public debate on the future of the system is inevitable. Alternative currents, may, however, still prove strong enough to retard that development. Especially, this is so since much of the attachment to the retention of the present system is essentially cultural. Notwithstanding all the transformations and upheavals that they have experienced since 1948, large numbers of Israelis continue to invest the IDF with the aura of a 'people's army', a term that still resonates with heavy historical associations and comes freighted with considerable emotional edge. As far as they are concerned, even to consider dismantling universal conscription is to undermine one of the bedrocks upon which Israel's entire identity has been constructed.

When and how the tension between these two approaches might be resolved are questions that exceed the bounds of conventional military–societal inquiry. As has repeatedly been stressed throughout this book, relations between Israelis and their army have always been intimately linked to other parts of the national narrative and have therefore been affected by debates involving issues that are ethical as well as operational and cultural as well as material. Moreover, at each juncture, relations have been influenced by numerous exogenous developments, domestic as well as external, and have interacted with them. In that sense, the chronicle described here has always been a component in that of the Middle East as a whole and seems likely to continue to be so for many years to come.

Notes

1 Frameworks of analysis

1 Interestingly, in this area, the lines of contact and influence have been almost entirely one way.

> While many studies of Israel use theories developed elsewhere, very rarely has Israeli data been used to develop major theories related to military and war, or to offer alternative theoretical models to those dominant in Western (mainly American) political science
>
> (Rosenhek *et al.* 2003: 472)

One exception is the 'concordance' model proposed by Rebecca Schiff (1992, 1995) – but that too has not won recognition as a tool of analysis in other contexts.

2 Forging a relationship

1 He compounded that achievement by commemorating his forces' exploits in Hebrew verse, written in a style unmatched since the Psalms. See, e.g., 'The War with Yadir', translated in Cole (1996: 49–51).
2 In this respect, the right-of-center minority within the *Yishuv* took the lead. The Revisionists, who broke away from the mainstream Zionist movement in 1935, established the *ETZEL* (*Irgun Tzevai Le'umi*: 'National Military Organization') as early as 1931; nine years later, an even more radical group of dissentients established *LEHI* (*Lohamei Herut Yisrael*: 'Fighters for the Freedom of Israel'). The Labor movement soon followed. By degrees, the *Haganah* (which itself evolved into a widespread militia) was supplemented by far more cohesive and aggressive forces: the *FOSH* (*pelugot sadeh*: 'field squads', founded in 1937) and the *PALMACH* (*pelugot machatz*: 'shock troops', founded in 1941).
3 Hence, their depiction as 'secular yeshivah students' (Almog 2000: 18–22). Almog calculates that members of this sociological group never numbered more than 10 percent of the *Yishuv*, but they stamped their influence on the entire community. For their education, and the prominence that it accorded to military themes, see Almog (2000: 23–72).
4 An. Shapira (1985) is rather more suspicious of Ben-Gurion than is Gelber (1986a).
5 Two especially prominent examples were (1) the eulogy delivered in May 1956 by Moshe Dayan, CoS at the graveside of Ro'i Rotenberg, a member of Kibbutz Nachal Oz who had been murdered by Palestinian *fedayeen*.

> We are a generation of settlers. Yet without a steel helmet and gun barrel we

shall be unable to plant a tree or build a house.... This is the fate of our generation. The only choice we have is to be armed, strong and resolute.

(2) The speech delivered on June 28, 1967, by CoS Yitzchak Rabin, when receiving on behalf of the IDF an honorary doctorate bestowed by the Hebrew University. 'The IDF's mission is to strengthen the nation's cultural and moral power.' For texts, see Brosh (1993: 61–63, 103).

6 It has been calculated that at the height of the war, over 30 percent of Israel's workforce was mobilized, causing GNP to drop by over 12 percent. Massive demobilization in 1949 enabled the economy to rebound by over 20 percent (Barkai 2004: 759–791).

7 In that month even Yadin, a somewhat dour intellectual not normally given to flights of optimistic fancy, reported to the government: '70,000 reservists, in addition to the conscripts, already know where they are supposed to be stationed in the event of an emergency.' Confidence in the system increased even more in November 1950, when over 90 percent of the reservists summoned to the IDF's first major exercise reported for duty, most of them enthusiastically (Greenberg 2001: 121, 128–133).

8 Zikhroni was ultimately excused from service and later became one of Israel's most prominent civil rights' lawyers. See Keren (2002).

9 Two of the most popular, both still very active in 2007, were the *va'ad le-ma'an ha-hayyal* ('committee on behalf of soldiers'), which in 1948 inherited the functions of the 'organization' (*agudah*) of the same name established in the *Yishuv* period, and *LIBI* (lit., 'my heart', the acronym of *lema'an bitchon yisrael*; 'for the sake of Israel's security') established in 1980.

3 The changing operational landscape

1 Not even the arrival of US-supplied HAWK ground-to-air missiles in 1965 changed this picture very much. The primary operational impetus behind their acquisition was not a new-found interest in civil defense but two other considerations. One was a desire to gain a foot in the door of the American arsenal (D. Tal 2000); the other, and more immediate, was the need to provide Israel's recently constructed nuclear facility with as much protection as could possibly be attained. Indeed, the first HAWK battery Israel deployed in 1965 was situated around Dimona (Av. Cohen 1998: 269).

2 Always high, international sensitivity to Israel's nuclear policies peaked in the late 1980s as a result of the revelations of Mordechai Vanunu (a one-time employee in the Dimona installation), and his subsequent abduction, imprisonment in Israel and the restrictions placed on his movements even after his release in 2004. Necessarily, this record has given rise to speculation that Israel has good reasons for keeping interest in her nuclear capabilities alive. See Y. Cohen (2005). The shift from nuclear 'ambiguity' to nuclear 'opacity' is discussed in Av. Cohen (1998: 277–338).

3 I am grateful to my graduate student Mr Tamir Libel for supplying me with this information.

4 In Hebrew, *lochamah mevuzeret*. This concept emerged in studies conducted by a group established by CoS Yaalon in 2004 in order to devise new IDF strategies for non-conventional wars. Yedidia Groll-Ya'ari (CO of the Israel Navy 2000–2004) and Haim Assa (a strategic adviser to several governments) produced a non-classified version of the committee's report in 2004, which appeared in English translation three years later (Groll-Ya'ari and Assa 2007). The latter edition also attempted to incorporate findings from the second Lebanon War, concluding – not very helpfully – that 'this war demonstrated the

extreme strengths and weaknesses alike of linear and diffused concepts of warfare in a real-world confrontation' (see p. 108).

5 In an interview that he gave to the newspaper *Yedi'ot Aharonot* on July 13, 2007, Major General (res.) Yoram Yair, who Halutz had commissioned to report on command performance in the Lebanon War, put it this way:

> In low-intensity confrontations we said that a result of 1:0 is better than 3:1 – in other words, if the price of killing three terrorists was the loss of one of our own men, we preferred to kill just one of the enemy. After all, we could always come back tomorrow and try to get the rest. Real war doesn't give you that luxury. What you don't achieve today, whatever the cost, may not be possible tomorrow.

4 The new societal setting

1 Legislation passed in 2007 removed the means test thereto imposed to determine the compensation to which bereaved parents are entitled and established a monthly uniform rate of 5,600 New Israeli shekels (approximately $1,300). War widows, too, have always been entitled to a pension. See Shamgar-Handelman (1986).

2 For an English language translation of the most authoritative rabbinic call for refusal to serve, followed by samples of the intricate discourse that it generated, see Carmy (2007).

3 The most outstanding was Ms. Naomi Ungar (1933–2007), a holocaust survivor whose son was accidentally killed during the course of a training exercise in May 1984. She thereafter dedicated herself to pressurizing the IDF to set up a standing framework for the investigation of such incidents (Ungar 1988) – a step ultimately taken in the early 1990s.

4 That said, note must also be taken of a bizarre recent twist in the military–judicial relationship. In March 2007, the IDF discovered that it, too, could use the tool of Supreme Court petitions for its own ends. Major General Jerry Gershon, CO of the IDF Home Command, then announced his intention of petitioning the Court in order to prevent the State Comptroller publishing a report on the 2006 Lebanon War, which Gershon considered misinformed and (because he had not been given an opportunity to respond) premature. Matters became even more tangled when the Attorney General backed Gershon, warning that he would refuse to represent the State Comptroller in court. The State Comptroller eventually agreed to postpone publication until Gershon's wishes had been satisfied.

5 A 'smaller and smarter' Israel Defense Force?

1 Although still in his early thirties in 1948, Gronich (aka 'Fred Harris') was treated by Ben-Gurion as a military eminence grise, a status envied by old guard members of the *Haganah*, some of whom suspected Gronich of being an American spy (Melman and Raviv 1994: 47–51).

2 *Ma'arachot* devoted its entire issue of April 1998 (no. 358) to an exposition of this program. In addition to a brief introduction by Mofaz (then deputy CoS), the issue contained articles on 'The Central Idea and the Concept Behind its Application', 'The Paradox of Systems Change in the IDF' and 'Resource "Baskets" for Field Forces'.

3 The qualifying clause is necessitated by the persistence of the ban on unionization in the IDF. However, there are signs that, as is already the case in some other western militaries, pressures for change might soon increase in that sphere too (Ofek-Gendler 2007).

4 In a development that the program's founders could not possibly have anticipated, many *Talpiyot* graduates, on retirement from service, have gone on to make an equally substantial contribution to the national economy by founding several of the startup companies that have helped make Israel a hi-tech superpower. See Rhoads (2007).
5 Yehoshofat Harkabi (1921–1994) presents an outstanding example. Appointed head of the Intelligence Branch in 1955 at the rank of brigadier general, Harkabi was dismissed from the post in 1959, after issuing a general call-up of IDF reserves on his own initiative. Clearly frustrated by his new status as a fallen *wunderkind*, Harkabi embarked on the path that was eventually to turn him into an equally remarkable grand old man. After leaving the IDF, he taught international relations at the Hebrew University, where he also enrolled as a PhD student. His doctoral thesis, entitled *Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace*, was published in Hebrew in 1964 and thereafter soon translated into English and five other languages. Appointed full professor of international relations in 1973, he went on to produce several further works, mostly on the Arab–Israel conflict, ending his career with what he personally considered to be his magnum opus: *Milkhamah ve-Estrategiah* (Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publications, 1990) a 700-page study of war and strategy, which reviews and summarizes many of the classic texts in both subjects. He was awarded the Israel Prize in political studies in 1992.
6 Rapid promotion and job rotation is yet another by-product of Moshe Dayan's insistence on early retirement (see p. 98). Reuven Shapira (1992) has long argued that the imminence of retirement creates enormous pressures on senior staff to improve their prospects in the post-service civilian market by adding as many positions to their CVs as time allows. The result, however, is that their experience in any one position is very slim and their opportunities to innovate almost non-existent.
7 Typical in this respect is his article 'A-Symmetric Conflicts: An Operational Critique of Hegemonic Strategies' (Naveh 2004: 101–145), which he contributed to the collection of essays on *Ha-Imut Ha-Mugbal* (see p. 48). Fully, half of the article's 44 pages are devoted to 75 dense and detailed footnotes.

6 From nation-binder to nation-divider?

1 There was, however, a happier sequel. Bygones began to be bygones in 1993, when Yitzchak Rabin became the first Defense Minister to lay a wreath at the monument in the Jerusalem hills that commemorates the 119 overseas volunteers killed in action in 1948–1949. Ever since, the IDF has made several new efforts to build bridges to the Diaspora. As of 2000, it began accepting a small number of Jewish foreign nationals as volunteers under a new *MACHAL* program (www.mahal2000.com). It now also cooperates with 'Birthright' and 'Friends of Israel Scouts' (www.chetz-vkeshet.org.il/scouts_garin.html), frameworks that arrange for groups of Diaspora Jewish youth to visit Israel.
2 I owe this insight to Ms. Dana Kachtan of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar-Ilan University, who is writing a PhD dissertation under the supervision of Dr Orna Sasson-Levy entitled: 'Transparent Army, Colored Soldiers: The Construction of Ethnic Identity in the Israeli Army'.
3 Attention will soon have to be paid to a fifth category, consisting of children born in Israel to foreign non-Jewish parents who have come to Israel to work and who sometimes stay beyond the time allowed by their visa. On June 23, 2006, *Ba-Machaneh* carried an interview with the first draftee in this category, the son of two migrant workers from Thailand, neither of whom is an Israeli citizen.
4 These suspicions became particularly rife when Mofaz, then CoS, refused to

mount an operation to rescue Midhat Yusuf, a Druze serviceman who was left to bleed to death when surrounded by a Palestinian mob in Nablus on the afternoon of October 1, 2000. Resentment dragged on until 2003, when the Supreme Court finally rejected an appeal to open a public inquiry into the incident.

5 Other than conversion, the principal Orthodox requirement is birth to a Jewish mother. Israel's Law of Return, as emended in 1990, also grants citizenship to spouses of Jews, children of Jews and their spouses, and grandchildren of Jews and their spouses. For the effects on FSU immigrants, see As. Cohen (2006).

6 Although women fought alongside men in the *Haganah*, they were withdrawn from the battle lines in 1948 following the death of a female soldier in the course of fighting in Jerusalem. For the argument that their re-integration into combat units in Israel (and elsewhere) 'merely accentuates the decline of the military', see Van Creveld (2000: 135–149).

7 Until very recently, a conspiracy of silence (to which the families of the deceased were as much party as the IDF) hid this entire subject from public view. The barrier broke with news of the suicide of Rotem Shapira, a young man whose repeated pleas to be re-assigned from a combat unit were ignored, and whose suicide note, signed on July 26, 2000, ended with the words of 'Tonight, Tonight', the hit song recorded in 1996 by the American alternative rock band 'Smashing Pumpkins'. See Algazy (2006).

7 The appropriate application of force?

1 So much was this so that, at the height of the *intifada* and well before the publication of *Ruach Tzahal*, the official IDF monthly then issued to all officers felt it necessary to commission a lengthy description of the origins and implementation of the *tohar ha-neshek* principle. See Ronen (1991).

2 Thus, in 1982, Goren composed an analysis of the IDF's siege of Beirut earlier that year (reprinted in Goren 1996: 402–423). Three years later, a leading *hesder* academy published a collection of halakhic inquiries under the title *Arakhim Be-Mivchan ha-Milkhamah* ('Values in the Test of War', Efrat: Yeshivat Har-Etziyon, 1985).

3 According to the Israeli Human Right's Watch, *Btselem*, between December 1987 and September 1993, 850 Palestinians were killed (almost 400 by Palestinians themselves) and over 2,000 wounded. Israeli casualties during the same period amounted to 54 (20 of whom were military personnel) and some 1,000 injured. Between September 2000 and April 2007, over 4,000 Palestinians were killed by IDF forces (550 in targeted killings, of whom 340 were not the intended victims) and over 25,000 injured. www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp The IDF website records 1,121 Israeli fatalities during the same period (of whom 331 were military personnel) and over 8,800 wounded. www1.idf.il/dover/site/mainpage.asp?sl=HE&id=7&docid=58089.HE.

4 Thus, in a special double issue published in 2005, the *Israel Law Review* (vol. 38, nos 1–2) devoted 16 articles to the issues raised by the 'separation barrier'. Targeted killings are discussed in Gross (2003) and David (2003).

5 The absence of any known (or alleged) rape of Palestinian women by Israeli troops between 2000 and the summer of 2007 defies the models developed in Enloe (2001: 108–152). It also contradicts the precedents summarized in Münkler (2005: 81–87). The absence is especially puzzling in view of the fact that rape is known to have occurred during some previous Israeli wars and continues to be a troubling feature of male–female relationships *within* the IDF. For a pioneering attempt to solve this puzzle (which itself ultimately resorts to a multi-causal analysis), see Nitzan (2006).

6 The inclusion of a reference to patriotism represented a victory for Kasher's critics, who had vigorously protested its omission from the original Code. Kasher registered his opposition to the change in *Ma'arachot* [382 (2002): 83–86, 383 (2002): 86–89].

8 Future challenges and their resolution

1 Tel-Aviv, especially, had experienced several air raids by Egyptian bombers in 1948, as a result of which 133 civilians had been killed and scores more wounded. Fears of renewed attacks were rife prior to the 1956 Sinai campaign (which was why, at Sèvres, Ben-Gurion insisted that French aircraft spread a protective umbrella over Israel's skies as soon as the operation commenced) and on the eve of the Six-Day War (when in anticipation of heavy losses, the government ordered mass graves to be dug in Tel-Aviv). Both alarms proved false. No Israeli town was targeted in 1956; in 1967, only the coastal resort of Netanya was attacked (ineffectively) by an Iraqi TU-16 on June 7.

2 The milestones on this particular road can be briefly enumerated. The first of any practical significance occurred in 1987, when Israel jumped at President Ronald Reagan's invitation to participate in the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program, thus becoming the first non-American country to do so. Two years later, and with considerable American financial backing, Israel began to develop its own program (significantly code-named *Homah*, which translates as 'Wall'), with the Arrow as its linchpin. As an interim measure, and again before Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Israel had in 1989 also begun negotiations to purchase the PAC-2 version of the Patriot surface-to-surface missile which, although essentially an anti-aircraft weapon, had – so its manufacturers claimed – also demonstrated some anti-missile potential. Meanwhile, and as part of the same effort, Israel in September 1988 launched its first independent high-resolution reconnaissance satellite (*Ofek-1*, followed in April 1990 by *Ofek-2*). See S.A. Cohen (2003: 101–102).

3 As part of the reforms initiated by Mofaz (see pp. 86–90), that system was extended. As of 2003, the pilots' training course has been extended to nine years (three of which are devoted to acquiring an academic degree). Cadets undertake to perform an equal number of years of professional service after their graduation.

4 The only previous attempt to fathom the shark-infested waters of Israel's defense budgeting was undertaken by Dr Liora Meridor on behalf of the Bank of Israel in 1994. The differences between her report and that submitted by Brodet are instructive, not least since they illustrate the revolution in the atmosphere that has taken place in the decades separating the two texts. First, while the Meridor report was distributed to only a small coterie of insiders, the Brodet report is freely available on the Internet. Second, whereas Brodet was able to present detailed tables and graphs, Meridor from the start admitted that her findings were only speculative, since the IDF denied her access to the statistics without which no realistic economic assessment is possible. Finally, whereas Meridor's report attracted very little media attention, Brodet's remained a headline item for several weeks.

5 For two of the most important responses, see International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion: *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (No. 131) (July 9, 2004) and Supreme Court of Israel: *Beit Sourik Village Council v. The Government of Israel* (HCJ 2056/04) (June 30, 2004). Both documents are available at www.asil.org/ilib/ilib0712.htm#j2 and are discussed in Wedgwood (2005).

6 Report of the parliamentary investigation into the preparedness of the rear, September 2006, www.knesset.gov.il/committees/heb/docs/bitachon06.htm#fnB18, and Report of the State Comptroller into the preparedness and functioning of the Rear Command in the Second Lebanon War, submitted July 18, 2007, www.mevaker.gov.il/serve/contentTree.asp?bookid=493&id=188&contentid=&parentcid=undefined&sw=1280&hw=954.

7 In early August 2007, officials at Rafael, the Israel national authority for the development of weapons and military technology, reported that they had been commissioned to by the Ministry of Defense to have a short-range rocket-based missile interception system (code-named 'Iron Dome') operational within 18 months. According to the same source, the government is also considering resuming funding for the advanced laser-based Skyguard missile protection system, which had been allowed to lapse in 2005. *Haaretz* August 9, 2007.

8 CoS Lipkin-Shahak said as much to me in person, during the course of a closed dialogue hosted in the autumn of 1997 by the Israel Democracy Institute.

9 The principal provisions of the Bill, which passed its first *knesset* reading in May 2007, are summarized on the Chief Reserve Officer's website, www.aka.idf.il/kamlar/klali/default.asp?catId=47784&docId=.

10 The Ivry committee's recommendations were not altogether unprecedented. Legislation mandating civic service for every woman granted exemption from the draft on religious grounds had been passed as early as 1953. Although the law was never formally implemented, and hence no national framework for civic service ever established, various public organizations have since the 1970s taken upon themselves the task of recruiting young religious women for work in such public service facilities as hospitals, schools, old-age homes and the police force (and in some cases, Jewish communities abroad) and have received government funding for that purpose. *Shlomit*, an organization founded in 1993, similarly coordinates the assignment of secular youngsters excused from military service. The Ivry committee found that as of 2003, some 6,000 religious young women and almost 1,000 secular youngsters voluntarily performed civic service, usually for periods of between 12 months and 24 months. Its own recommendations were to buttress that situation (1) by establishing an official government civil service administration; (2) by attracting to civic service *haredim* and Arab youngsters too (in both communities, resistance was stiff). However, the committee stopped short of suggesting that civic service in Israel become, rather like the *Zivildienst* in Germany, a compulsory alternative to the draft. Neither did its recommendations cover such exceptional cases as that of Ben Sahar, the talented sportsman, who prior to being drafted in 2006 had contracted to play for Chelsea Football Club in London. Sahar applied to be excused military service and allowed to perform alternative civic service in the Anglo-Jewish community. (As of 2007, his case was still under review.) In December 2006, nevertheless, the government authorized the establishment of a Civic Service Authority under the direction of Dr Reuven Gal (see p. 110), who had long advocated the idea (Fleischer and Gal 2007: 60–73).

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Index