

THE PROCESS OF ISRAELI DECISION MAKING

MECHANISMS,
FORCES,
AND INFLUENCES



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Chapter Three

*The Influence of the Military and
Security Establishment on
Decision Making*

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First: The Security Concern and the Military Doctrine

It is fair to say that if there is one influencing factor that dominates all strategic decisions, and is the main concern for Israeli decision makers and the general public alike, this would be the concern for national security.

The traditional explanation of the security concern in Israel is that it stems from a combination of several factors; the first of which is the fundamental Zionist notion that Israel is a safe refuge where Jews can be safe from the threats that endanger their lives in the diaspora. The second factor is Israel's unique geostrategic position and its small margin of error, which are a result of its small population relative to its neighbours, its small geographic size, and its lack of strategic depth. The security concern is also explained as a result of Israel's settler nature vis-à-vis the Palestinian original population, and its history of isolation within its regional environment against which it has fought six wars to date. As a result, Israelis have a nearly total preoccupation with what they perceive as "a present threat" from their environment which they perceive as hostile, uncertain, volatile and incomparable to that of any other country, and thus warrants a special security arrangement.¹ The common wisdom is that these factors have converged to produce a society that continues to see itself as vulnerable in front what it believes are "existential threats."

However, according to this explanation one would have expected that the security concern would have reduced or diminished as a result of the changes in Israel's geostrategic position. Namely, Israel's increasing military might, its success in achieving military superiority over its neighbours, the existence of peace treaties with some of them, and Israel's success in obtaining the military backing of the United States. Since this has clearly not been the case as security issues continuing to play a major role in Israeli public life, some have suggested a psychological interpretation arguing that the concern for security was a result of an insecurity in minds of Israeli Jews, citing statements such as the one made by

¹ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

Israel's ex-Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in the 1960s when he described Israel as "*Shimshon der Nebechdiker*" which is Yiddish for "poor Samson", the strong man beset by crippling insecurity who feared a pogrom round every corner.²

This study will attempt to go beyond this simple interpretation to explain this contradiction by shedding light on the origin and development of operational and psychological fundamentals of Israel's national security doctrine.

1. Operational Principles of Military Doctrine

Ever since the early 1950s, the traditional Israeli national security doctrine has been based on a number of operational military fundamentals, which are expressed as follows:

- a. There is a massive disproportion between Israeli resources and the Arab national resources (mainly in terms of territory, manpower and gross national product) which prevents Israel from ending the conflict by military means, while allowing the Arabs to potentially do so. Consequently, the only goal of the Israeli Army³ is to defend the country against an aggressive Arab world.
- b. The most fundamental and dangerous threat to Israel's existence is an all-out co-ordinated Arab surprise attack. Hence, Israel should always maintain the ability to defend itself under the conditions of such a worst-case scenario, known as *mikreh ha-kol* (the all-out case).
- c. To counter the quantitative disadvantage against the large surrounding Arab countries, Israeli national security doctrine is to rest on three pillars: Deterrence (through the threat of massive retaliation to any incursion), Strategic Warning (on any development which might endanger its national existence); and Decisiveness (the military ability to win a decisive victory if deterrence fails).

A number of operational implications emerged from this doctrine; first, the build-up of the capability needed to provide a high-quality strategic warning and a quick response to external threats, which explains why the Military Intelligence branch, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) and the Navy remain as regular forces while the ground forces are based on reserve manpower. Secondly, the build-up of a military capability is needed to maintain operational initiative in the battlefield, which

² Ian Black, "Not David but Samson," *The Guardian* newspaper, London, book review, 11/2/2006, <http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1706250,00.html> (Accessed: 15/2/2008).

³ Known in Hebrew as *Tzva Haganah Le'yisrael*, and often referred to in with its acronym *T'sahal*.

would be able to win a decisive victory within a short period.⁴ Thirdly, Israel has adopted the principle of taking the war into its enemy's territories and a preference for short wars, due to its need to reduce human and economic costs to a minimum and to reduce the window for international military and diplomatic intervention. This has led Israel to adopt offensive maneuver warfare as a military strategy, which also gave Israel an edge since it advantages better-trained and equipped militaries such as the Israeli Army over militaries that rely on sheer numbers.⁵ Fourthly, Israel has complemented its inherent weaknesses by having a strong alliance with a superpower, in accordance with David Ben-Gurion's principle that Israel should always have at least one great power patron. For the same goal, Israel has also sought to maintain regional connections.⁶

Finally, Israel needed to establish its deterrence by building qualitatively and quantitatively disproportionate military capabilities. In the Israeli case, this meant building a nation in arms, where every capable man and woman carries out his military duties, in addition to maintaining a permanent well-armed professional military force. Israel, according to Yigael Alon (Deputy Prime Minister between 1967 and 1974), has thus adopted the concept of the "Garrison State" as established by American political scientist Harold Lasswell, but while choosing the garrison state concept clearly appears to be a direct result of its own security doctrine, it has also served Israel in achieving its strategic objective in becoming the strongest regional power.

Perhaps the most obvious result of this choice is the compulsory national military service. All Jewish and Druze men, and Jewish women, over the age of 18 are drafted for service, although exemptions may be made on religious, physical, or psychological grounds. Men in the Haredi community may also choose to be exempt while enrolled in Yeshiva religious schools and all Haredi and religiously observant Females, married females, and females with children are exempt. It is estimated that around 50% of females are exempt from serving in the Israeli Army.

⁴ Uri Bar-Joseph, "Towards a Paradigm Shift in Israel's National Security Conception," in Efraim Karsh (ed.), *Israel: The First Hundred Years, Vol. II: From War to Peace?* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 100.

⁵ David Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine: An Appraisal of the Past and a Vision of the Future," *Israel Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 4, June 2003, pp. 115–140.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Male officers serve for 48 months while male soldiers serve for 36 months. Israeli Females serve in the Israeli Army for only 21 months which are mostly spent in non combat roles.

In addition to the national military service, most Israelis also do annual reserve service (known in Hebrew as *Milo'eem*). Released soldiers may continue serving as reservists until the age of 54, contributing up to a month's worth of service each year, in both training and active service. The reserves constitute the backbone of the army's manpower needs alongside the military service. In fact, it is not rare to find two generations in the same family serving simultaneously in the army—the son in compulsory service and the father in reserves. The Reserve service has strengthened the link between reservists, who often serve in the same unit every year, and has also created a bond between the different segments of the society acting as a melting pot. The fact that reservists continue to be subject to military jurisdiction even when not on active duty,⁷ not only serves to explain the Israeli saying that “Israelis are soldiers on eleven month's leave,” but also serves to strengthen the notion of the garrison state in Israel.

In addition, military service seems to be the only way to gain certain benefits; some jobs are open only to veterans and certain welfare benefits are available only to veterans and their families. Military service also used to provide a degree of prestige, where some use their rank or position to enhance their professional and personal status.⁸

2. Psychological Principles of Military Doctrine

In addition to the operational fundamentals, the security of Israel was traditionally based on three main psychological principles:

a. The Primacy of Security

It is the dominant belief in Israel that almost every national problem is a security problem, or at least involves security aspects. As a result, every major crisis in Israel's early history was seen as a threat to national and personal survival.⁹ Such

⁷ Jonathan Kaplan, “The Role of the Military in Israel,” Jewish Agency for Israel website, Jewish Zionist Education, [http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/.../Society/9\)The+Role+of+the+Military+in+Israel.htm](http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/.../Society/9)The+Role+of+the+Military+in+Israel.htm) (Accessed: 2/6/2008).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Alan Dowty, *op. cit.*

subordination of all private and collective aspects of life to security demands was typical of the Second *Aliyah* generation with its prime proponent being David Ben-Gurion. For Ben-Gurion, immigration, absorption, and the build-up of settlements were also security issues. His following definition of security is symptomatic of this dominant belief:

Security means the settlement and peopling of the empty areas in north and south; the dispersal of population and the establishment of industries throughout the country; the development of agriculture in all suitable areas; and the building of an expanding (self-sufficient) economy... Security means the conquest of the sea and air, and the transformation of Israel into an important maritime power... Security means economic independence... Security means the fostering of research and scientific skill on the highest level in all branches of [science and] technology... Security means vocational training of a high standard for our youth... And finally, security means a voluntary effort by the youth and the people in general for difficult and dangerous tasks in settlement, security and the integration of the immigrants...¹⁰

Similarly, Ben-Gurion's Disciple, Moshe Dayan has once said that "Small nations do not have a foreign policy. They have a defense policy."¹¹

b. Resorting to Force as a Solution to all Security Problems

While, some sections of the Zionist movement were always aware that military solutions had their own limitations, other ideological streams tended to view the use of force as almost the only means to solve all security problems.

c. Self-Reliance

The principle of self reliance—where states “tend” to rely on their own military power rather than on external guarantees such as peace agreements, defense pacts, or arms control regime to ensure their survival—is extremely dominant in the Israeli national security paradigm. This has often been attributed to the traumatic history of Jews in the Diaspora including the Nazi Holocaust, which, according

¹⁰ David Ben-Gurion, “Israel’s Security and Her International Position before and after the Sinai Campaign,” in *Israel Government Year-Book 5720 (1959-1960)* (Jerusalem: 1960), pp. 22–24, quoted in Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, p. 267.

¹¹ Yoram Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 20.

to this understanding, created a siege mentality and a fundamental mistrust of Gentiles. In addition, Israel's wars against its neighbors have further magnified this sense of insecurity. Henry Kissinger once alluded to this principle when he noted, "Israel's margin of survival is so narrow that its leaders distrust the great gesture or the stunning diplomatic departure."¹² In terms of military doctrine, this self-reliance manifests itself in three distinct components: Self-reliance in manpower, self-reliance in training and doctrine, and self-reliance in arms.¹³

3. Changes to Military Doctrine

The traditional notion of national security started to change following the peace initiative by former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the initiation of the peace process with the Palestinians and the Jordanians. Israel's immediate strategic environment since then came to be perceived as considerably more complex and nuanced especially with the complex changes in Israel's external environment. To give an example on how complex these changes are, one could point to the changes that took place during the period between 1995 and 2005. Events during that period included the initiation of peace processes with the Palestinians and Syrians, the second *Intifadah* and the unprecedented Palestinian attacks inside Israel, the evolution of the Iranian and Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction threats, the first Iraq war, the withdrawal from Lebanon and the development of a rocket threat from Hezbollah, the Gaza Disengagement Plan, and a variety of domestic developments including the Rabin assassination in 1995, the rapid Cabinet turnover, the growing size and strength of the settler movement, and the rapid economic development.

In addition, there has been a change of Israel's geostrategic environment in the period since the 1973 war. The change of the balance of threats from conventional war to unconventional threats, such as low intensity warfare and weapons of mass destruction, played a major role in changing the focus of military planners from achieving defensible borders through its control of territory, to achieving defensible borders through peace treaties that contained strong security guarantees.¹⁴

Furthermore, by the 1990s, Israel's national security environment became more complex when its interests, and security environment, started to extend beyond

¹² Uri Bar-Joseph, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–108.

¹³ David Rodman, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

its borders and its “natural” interests in the Middle East, to encompass the entire world. This was also a result of a number of changes in Israel’s geostrategic position in the world, such as:

- The strategic of weapon of mass destruction (WMD) threats posed by the so-called second- and third-tier confrontation states (Iran, Iraq, and Libya) which were perceived in Israel as the primary danger to its security.
- The increasing complexity in Israel’s ties with its partners, such as the United States as well as China and India.
- Israel’s complex relationship with the European Union.
- The collapse of the Soviet Union and Russian Jewish immigration

Israel’s economic development in hi-tech and military industries which created interest in international economics for a such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹⁵

These changes to Israel’s environment led to changes in its military doctrine that attempted to respond to the complex nature of its increasingly volatile environment and to maintain its regional power. They also led to a change in the society’s security ethos that shape the fundamentals of the military doctrine. One change that took place in the security ethos is the recognition of the limits of power, which was only internalized by a section of the political class.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the security concern and the fundamental perception of Arab hostility have persisted. As a result, a large segment of the political spectrum, especially in the right wing and religious segments, continues to see a very limited range of military or diplomatic options in dealing with Israel’s neighbors.¹⁷

4. Changes to the Military Service

In spite of the compulsory nature of the army and its benefits, maintaining the “nation in arms” nation has not been without its challenges. This was primarily because of two changes, a demographic change, and a socio-economic change.

¹⁵ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Yoram Peri, “Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis,” in Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari and Zeev Rosenhek (eds.), *Military, State, and Society in Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), p. 109.

¹⁷ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

The first change is that with the increase in the population of Jewish Israelis to cross the 5 million mark, especially between the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, mostly as a result of the addition of some 800 thousand new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, the Israeli Army was faced with more recruits than it needed.¹⁸ Between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, the population of men aged 18–21 rose by more than 25% and the potential of military reservists (aged 22 to 51) rose by almost 59%. The potential conscripts continued to grow by almost 20% until the year 2000. This led the Israeli Army began to examine various possibilities for changing its recruitment policy. But although many alternatives of “selective reduction” were proposed, most of them compromised the basic principle of a nation in arms, entailing retreat from the model of a citizen’s army and turning the Israeli Army into a professional military.

In dealing with this issue the Israeli Army chose to deal with it using a number of solutions, rather than making a decision in principle. In the mid-1990s, it increased to tens of thousands the number of servicemen women it “lent out” to other civilian bodies, such as the civil service, *Magen David Adom* (the equivalent of the Red Cross), and the Society for the Protection of Nature.

In addition, the Israeli Army decided to adopt elements of selective recruitment and differential service to deal with the surplus manpower. The Israeli Army decided to make the principle of compulsory service more flexible by reducing the number of recruits, extending the differential range of service, and increasing the number who receive early release. For example, the Israeli Army responded to the requests of religious parties to increase the number of Yeshiva (religious academy) students who were exempted from military service, and their number rose from a few thousand after 1971 to over 20 thousand in the 1990s (from 2% to more than 7% of potential conscripts every year). Similarly, new immigrants received far-reaching exemption, from complete exemption for immigrants who arrived after the age of 29 to significant reduction or total cancellation of the six months period of service for those eligible for the draft, as well as exemption from reserve service. The basic entrance requirement for recruits was also raised, and the Israeli Army more easily dispensed with the Service of those who had low psychological profiles (known as “section 21”) or had difficulty in adjusting to military life.¹⁹

¹⁸ David Rodman, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Yoram Peri, “Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis,” pp. 122–128.

The second change was the change in motivation to serve in the military amongst conscripts and amongst reserves. First, there has been a drop in the potential conscripts' motivation to serve in Combat units, and particularly in unglamorous field units. According to a report by the head of the Manpower Branch, in 1996, 44% thought that for Israeli youth "service in combat units is a duty" compared to 64% who gave this answer in 1989.²⁰ This decrease in the readiness of individuals to volunteer for frontline units was coupled with a change in the sources of motivation to serve in elite units, which has moved away from patriotism towards an individual's desire for self-fulfillment.²¹

In addition, although military service is still converted into civilian status and a military career for people coming from relatively low social groups constitutes a ladder for social mobility. The societal character changes have led to the parallel existence of different types of ethos, which led to a decline in the significance of military service especially amongst Ashkenazi Jews.²² While the soldier remained for The role model for young Israelis since its establishment, a new role model has now appeared in the form of the high tech entrepreneur, the lawyer or the media celebrity. In addition, whereas in the past exemption from the military was a cause of social stigma, it is no longer so today. One indication of this is the fact that the Civil Service Commission decided to stop the practice of examining the Israeli Army records of candidates for the civil service.²³

However, it is still worth noting that the recognition of the need to serve in the Israeli Army is still quite high amongst young people who are eligible for the draft. In a study conducted in 1994 by the Israeli Army's behavioral sciences department, 50% of the subjects replied that they "would volunteer for the full three years of service if the Israeli Army was voluntary, 44% replied that they would volunteer for a shorter period, and only 6% said they would not volunteer at all". This rate has been fairly stable since the mid-1980s.²⁴

On the reserves side, this motivational crisis is more severe. Although the growth in the number of recruits each year should lead to a yearly increase in

²⁰ See *Ibid.*, p. 126, reported in *Yediot Achronot* newspaper, 23/10/1996.

²¹ Uri Bar-Joseph, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²² Yoram Peri, "Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," p. 128.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 109–125.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126.

the number of reservists available, there is an even larger flow of dropouts from reserve service before the age of exemption (45 in combat units, 51 in non-combat units). This is often attributed to reasons such as health, psychological problems, and sometimes just plain dodging. A study conducted by the Israeli Army revealed that 50% of the reservists up to the rank of captain replied that if they had the opportunity they would not report for reserve service,²⁵ this is a large change in attitude considering that a similar study conducted by the Israeli Army in 1974 found that only 20% replied in this way.²⁶ The significance of this trend cannot be emphasized with the importance of the reserves to the military, and especially to the army, which relies mostly on reserve manpower.

The Israeli Army preferred to solve this problem by informal arrangements. The commanders of the reserve units summoned many more soldiers than are actually required and ended up with the required number. Grade-A units, for example, call up a reserve of 150%, and Grade-B unit commanders summon up to 500%. In addition, the Chief of Staff decided in May 1995 to make considerable concessions in the reserve service. The period of active reserve duty for combat soldiers was shortened and the age limit for reserve service in combat units was lowered, and the number of “reserve days” was also cut by approximately 50% compared with the mid-1980s.²⁷

As a result of these two changes, the Israeli Army, which started off in the early 1950s as a citizen’s army, has in the 1990s become a military that forgoes the draft of some quarter of all the men who are eligible for military service—5% of them Israelis living abroad, 7% yeshiva students, about 3% exempt for medical reasons, and the remainder unsuitable in various ways.²⁸ This trend has also continued since the 1990s as forecasted by the Israeli Army. An internal study carried out by the Israeli Army revealed that only 52% of Israeli teenagers served in the military in 2008 compared to 59% in 2002.²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 126–127, reported in *Haaretz*, 12/9/1996.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 126–127, reported in *Yediot Achronot*, 17/10/1997.

²⁷ Yoram Peri, “Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis,” pp. 125–128.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.

²⁹ These figures include Arab in Israel and Haredim, who are normally exempt from mandatory service. See Moran Zelikovich, “IDF: 50% of Israeli teens do not enlist,” *Yediot Achronot*, 1/7/2008, <http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-3562596,00.html> (Accessed: 3/7/2008).

These changes in the Israeli Army, which have been seen by some as signs of change from the nation in arms to a professional army, have been interpreted by some as a process of normalization (whereby a society that was involved in a prolonged war or a mobilized society becomes a civil society). However this was not the only interpretation. While others saw them as a process of democratization, they have also been perceived as a mix between a process of demilitarization and the formation of a “postwar society” (where the military Occupies a smaller place in society, the social investment in it is reduced, the weight of the military and its influence declines in relation to the civilian society, and above all, the military ethos is weakened), together with a process of decolonization.³⁰

5. The Security Concern and Decision Making

In terms of decision making, the security concern has led to the development of a reactive decision making mechanism which relies more on the operational agencies of the military and security establishment, rather than on the work of those involved in policy formulation, leading to *ad hoc* solutions to immediate problems, and short term policy options that don't always fit together to constitute a long-term policy. Although this can be partly attributed to the fact that many of the problems that Israel faces provide it with a limited range of options and require clear and immediate short-term decisions in a highly charged and uncertain atmosphere, nevertheless, Israeli decision making has become more tactical than strategic as a result of this reactive approach.

This said, there are many exceptions to this interpretation of Israeli decision making as merely a reaction to changes external security environment. These exceptions include Rabin's acceptance of the Oslo process, his willingness to withdraw from the Golan, Barak's withdrawal from Lebanon and dramatic proposals at Camp David in 2000, Sharon's Gaza Disengagement Plan, and Olmert's West Bank “consolidation.”³¹ However, it should be noted that the military doctrine of preemptive wars is not considered an exception to this approach, because of its reactive nature, even though its military doctrine is based on striking first.

Nevertheless, Rabin's acceptance of the Oslo process can be explained by the changes that took place in military service. Some scholars such as Yoram Peri

³⁰ Yoram Peri, “Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis,” p. 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*

have argued that the recognition by Rabin of the change in the reservists' attitude to military service was what brought him to adopt a historic decision and choose political compromise rather than following rigid policies, which would increase the probability of future war, on which there might not be national consensus.³² Likewise, the recognition of the limits of power has also been seen as the cause that led the government to choose a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.³³

In terms of the domestic political implications of the security concern, it is not surprising that concerned Israelis have often chosen to elect leaders who have a security background. It is also not surprising that the two main "buzzwords" used in Israeli elections since the mid 1990s were Peace and Security (In Hebrew, *Shalom v'betachon*). The two words, which appeared in different combinations in different political parties' slogans, were employed by these parties as an attempt to portray themselves as the ones that would bring peace but without compromising on security.³⁴

Second: The Status of the Military and Security Establishment Within the Society

The Israeli Army are today cherished as the chief symbol of statehood. A proof that Jews can defend themselves without begging favors. The Military has also become the centerpiece of Israel's civil religion, the ceremonies, and rituals by which the state legitimizes its institutions, cements the loyalty of its citizens, and commemorates its history.³⁵

In addition, the mentality of the garrison state (or the nation in arms, as some Israelis prefer to call it) is an integral part of the Israeli social fabric, as shown by a recent study by the IDB Group presented at the 2007 Herzliya conference. The study shows that 92% of the Jewish public in Israel are willing to fight and that readiness to fight ranks first amongst activities which are most important to patriotism. The same study ranked the military forces third as a source of pride,

³² *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁴ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 260.

³⁵ Raymond Cohen, "Israel's Starry-Eyed Foreign Policy," *Middle East Quarterly* journal, vol. 1, no. 2, June 1994.

below scientific and technological achievements and achievements in art and sport, in this it comes before Israel's ethical heritage and the Jewish character.³⁶

In addition, wars have a tendency to strengthen the position of the top brass *vis-à-vis* the civilian authorities. In Israel, its successful wars have resulted in the public perception of the Military as the protector of the state, and in the great public trust that the military establishment enjoys. Wars have also resulted in the emergence of a group of military figures with a track record whom the public holds high and respects their military, security and even political views. Israel's wars also helped, together with other factors, in creating a military-political partnership where the military generals have extraordinary clout in the policymaking process.

The *Intifadah*, on the other hand, has led to the emergence of targeted assassinations as a new way of combating the resistance in the Gaza Strip and the West bank. The success of this method, which has relied heavily on intelligence, led to the emergence of the security services (especially the Israel Security Agency—ISA commonly known as *Shabak* or *Shin Bet*) within the Israeli society as a protector of the state against what it calls “Palestinian terrorism”.

This perception of the military, however, seems to be directly proportional with the military's ability to protect and provide the promised security. The same study presented at the 2007 Herzliya conference, shows that pride in the defense forces has suffered the greatest erosion, falling from 88% who said they were very proud of them in 2006 to 64% in 2007. This was because during the past year and a half the Military has disappointed various population groups, due to its performance in Lebanon in 2006 as well as the way it was used in evacuating Jewish settlers during the disengagement from Gaza, a mission that went beyond its traditional missions as a defensive force against the enemies and was seen by some as undemocratic.³⁷

³⁶ Other activities surveyed included living in Israel, voting in elections, flying the Israeli flag, establishing a new village, respecting the Jewish tradition, contributing to social organizations, demonstrating against policy, and buying Israeli products. See IDB Group, “Patriotism and National Strength in Israel after the Lebanon War,” working paper presented at the 7th Herzliya Conference, The Institute for Policy and Strategy, [http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/_Uploads/1856patriotismeng\(4\).pdf](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/_Uploads/1856patriotismeng(4).pdf) (Accessed: 9/6/2007).

³⁷ Ibid.

Third: The Chain of Command and the Structure of the Military and Security Establishments

1. The Military Forces

According to the Israeli Basic Law: The Military 1976, the Military is subject to the authority of the Government. The Minister in charge of the Military on behalf of the Government is the Minister of Defense. The supreme command level in the Military, the Chief of the General Staff—who is the Military’s Commander in Chief—is appointed by and subject to the authority of the civilian Government and is subordinate to the Minister of Defense (not the Ministry of Defense itself). This very common hierarchy is meant to ensure that the civilian authority controls the powers of the Military, by keeping it as a professional body, and curbing its desire for war.

However in the years after the establishment of Israel, the Military establishment enjoyed a degree of independence given to it by Ben-Gurion. This was evident in the attendance of the Chief of General Staff in Cabinet and security Cabinet meetings as an equal and not as a subordinate. Even after the Agranat inquiry following the 1973 war, when the roles, the powers, and the duties of the Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Chief of General Staff were clarified and the rules and standards of monitoring were established between the military and the political spheres,³⁸ the military still continued to enjoy an overlarge status on the expense of the civilian authority.

The highest authority in the military establishment is the Israeli General Staff headed by the Chief of General Staff. It is responsible for planning, organizing, training and supervising the military operation of the Army, the Navy and the Israeli Air Force (which are collectively known as the Israeli Army and which will be referred to often as the military).

Together with the Chief of General Staff (CGS), the General Staff also comprises the CGS deputy, the commanders of the Ground Forces, the Navy, and the Air Force, the Heads of the regional commands (namely the Northern Command, the Central Command, the Southern Command and the Home Front Command),

³⁸ Editorial, “The State’s Army or the Army’s State: On the Supervision of the Military level by the Political Level,” *Almash-had Al-Israeli*, 15/5/2007. (in Arabic)

and the heads of the Operations Directorate, the Intelligence Directorate (this influential directorate is also known as the Military Intelligence or *Agaf Hamodi'in (Aman)*), the Planning and Policy Directorate (which is also very influential in decision making within the Israeli Army), the Human Resources Directorate, the Computer Service Directorate, and the Technological and Logistics Directorate. Those directorates are all branches of the General Staff.

Other military members of the General staff also include: the commander of the Military Academies, the coordinator of Government activities in the occupied territories, the Israeli Army Spokesperson, the Military Advocate General, the President of the Military Court of Appeals, the Financial Advisor to the Chief of Staff, and the Military Secretary of the Prime Minister. The general staff also includes the following civilian staff: the Director-general of the Ministry of Defense, the Defense Establishment Comptroller, and the head of the Administration for the Development of Weapons and the Technological Industry. (For a complete diagram of the military structure see attached figure)

The core of the Israeli Army is composed of the forces in active duty, which currently includes 177,500 personnel, of which 140,000 are reservist. If we include the rest of the reserve forces that amounts to 429,000, the total number amounts to 606,500 personnel. An advantage that the Israeli Army has is that most of the officers come from the elite and educated sectors. Females constitute around half of the Israeli Army staff in active duty and most of them carry out desk jobs.³⁹

2. The Security Forces

In addition to the military forces, the security forces are composed of the Intelligence services, the Israeli police, the Border Police, the Prison Service, and the Knesset Guard.

The intelligence services include two of the three Israeli intelligence organisations which were established by David Ben-Gurion in 1951, namely the Israel Security Agency⁴⁰ or *Sherut ha-Bitachon ha-Klali* (better known with its Hebrew acronyms *Shabak* or *Shin Bet*), and the Institute for Intelligence and Special Tasks *ha-Mossad le-Modiin ule-Tafkidim Meyuhadim* (better known as

³⁹ Kameel Mansour and Fawz Abdelhadi, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

⁴⁰ The *Shabak* is also known in English as the Israel Security Agency.

the *Mossad*). It can also include in some instances the intelligence division with in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Shabak is the Israeli counter-intelligence and internal security service. Its work is mainly within Israel and the territories occupied in 1967. It is believed to have three operational departments and five support departments. The three operational departments are:

- The Arab Affairs Department. It is responsible for “antiterrorist” operations, political subversion, and maintenance of an index on “Arab terrorists”. Shabak detachments worked with Aman undercover detachments (known as *Mist’aravim*) to counter the *Intifadah* uprising. This department has also been active in countering the military wing of Hamas.
- The Non-Arab Affairs Department. This department concerned itself with all other countries, including penetrating foreign intelligence services and diplomatic missions in Israel and interrogating immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.
- The Protective Security Department. It is responsible for protecting Israeli government buildings and embassies, defense industries, scientific installations, industrial plants, and the *El Al* national airline.⁴¹

The Mossad (Hebrew for institute) is Israel’s intelligence agency. It has responsibility for human intelligence collection, “counterterrorism,” and covert action (including paramilitary activities, and the facilitation of *Aliyah* where it is banned). Its focus is on Arab nations and organizations throughout the world. Mossad agents are active in the former communist countries, in the West, and at the UN.

The Mossad has a total of eight departments, though some details of the internal organization of the agency remain obscure. Some of these departments are:

- The Collections Department. It is the largest, with responsibility for espionage operations, and with offices abroad under both diplomatic and unofficial cover. The department consists of a number of desks which are responsible for specific geographical regions, directing case officers based at “stations” around the world, and the agents they control.

⁴¹ Federation of American Scientists (FAS), “Intelligence Resource Program, Israel Security Service *Sherut ha-Bitachon ha-Klali (Shabak)*,” http://www.fas.org/irp/world/israel/shin_bet/ (Accessed: 28/10/2006).

- The Political Action and Liaison Department conducts political activities and liaison with friendly foreign intelligence services and with nations with which Israel does not have normal diplomatic relations. In larger stations, such as Paris, the Mossad customarily had under embassy cover two regional controllers: one to serve the Collections Department and the other the Political Action and Liaison Department.
- The Special Operations Division, also known as *Metsada*. It conducts highly sensitive assassination, sabotage, paramilitary, and psychological warfare projects.
- The Physiological Warfare Department (*Lohamah Psichologit or LAP*). It is responsible for psychological warfare, propaganda and deception operations.
- The Research Department. It is responsible for intelligence production, including daily situation reports, weekly summaries and detailed monthly reports. The Department is organized into 15 geographically specialized sections or “desks”, including the US, Canada and Western Europe, Latin America, Former Soviet Union, China, Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Iran. A “nuclear” desk is focused on special weapons related issues.
- The Technology Department. It is responsible for development of advanced technologies for support of Mossad operations.⁴²

It has also been publicly reported that in addition to the abovementioned organizations, an unnamed covert intelligence organization exists whose role is to coordinate between all the other Israeli intelligence organizations. In addition, one may also consider the military industries, the strategic study institutes, the retired officers, and the politicians affiliated with the military all as part of the Military-Industrial complex.

⁴² FAS, “Intelligence Resource Program, Mossad: The Institute for Intelligence and Special Tasks *ha-Mossad le-Modiin ule-Tafkidim Meyuhadim*,” <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/israel/mossad/> (Accessed: 28/10/2006).

Fourth: The Size of the Military and its Impact on Economy and the Society

The military is not only one of the most powerful institutions in the Israeli society, it is also the wealthiest. This is partly because of Israel's relatively high military spending. In spite of Israel's relatively small size, Israel has a very large defense budget. For example, in 2004, Israel's defense budget was the 12th largest in the world.⁴³ But before one goes into the details of the size of military and its expenditure, it is prudent to clarify the definition of the different measures of military expenditure. In Israel there are three measures of military spending:

- 1. The Defense Budget:** This refers to the cash outlays of the Ministry of Defense out of the Central Government budget. It does not include defense expenditures of other ministries and government agencies or non-governmental bodies. At the same time, it includes expenditures that do not directly finance the production of defense, at least in its narrow sense.
- 2. Defense Consumption:** This is a national accounting concept, calculated by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). It refers to defense expenditures on an accrual basis, by allocating expenditures among different ministries according to their purpose, rather than their administrative, or ministerial, affiliation. In addition to the Defense Budget, this definition includes security components within the various ministries.
- 3. The Total Cost of Defense:** This is a broader concept calculated by the CBS on the basis of the recommendation of a government committee charged with estimating the full cost of defense to the Israeli economy. Its major additions to the Defense Consumption are the full economic cost of the mandatory regular and reserve military personnel and the cost of civilian shelters construction. The Total Cost of Defense is generally around 25% higher than Defense Consumption. The total cost of defense is not calculated in other countries, and as a result, it cannot be compared internationally.

Of all three definitions, only the Defense Consumption has been calculated and published consistently for many years.⁴⁴ The details of the Defense Budget are all determined by the defense establishment and the government has no real

⁴³ Zalman F. Shiffer, "The Debate Over the Defense Budget in Israel," *Israel studies*, vol. 12, no. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

influence on its allocations.⁴⁵ In Knesset, the budget details are not debated and are only shown to five MKs who are appointed by the Defense and Foreign Affairs committee.⁴⁶ The whole Knesset then approves the total as part of the Defense Budget.⁴⁷ There are also reports that the intelligence budget for all the intelligence agencies is kept secret and is not included in the main budget.

In 2007 the defense budget stood at approximately 34.7 billion shekels (\$8.2 billion⁴⁸), which constituted about 11.7% of a total budget of 295.4 billion shekels (\$70 billion)⁴⁹ while the defense consumption rose to 48 billion shekels (\$11.3 billion) which was 16% of the total budget.⁵⁰ Such a %age is very high by comparison to western countries' defense consumption. In fact this figure is equivalent to the defense consumption of Australia, Canada, or Turkey⁵¹, all of whom have larger populations and better infrastructure and resources. A number of scholars and commentators argue that the Total Cost of Defense, which includes the costs of the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan heights, has at normal times (when there is no war) reached one third of the total budget.⁵²

In terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the Defense Consumption is currently equivalent to approximately 8% of the GDP, which is very high compared to western countries which spend an average of 3% of its GDP on defense. This figure includes the \$2.4 billion Israel receives from the United States per year in

⁴⁵ Yehuda Ben Meir, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁴⁶ Barhoom Garaysi, "Israel's Next Year's Budget is \$76 Billion," *Almash-had Al-Israeli*, 16/10/2007. (in Arabic)

⁴⁷ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 335.

⁴⁸ US Dollar.

⁴⁹ Yakov Katz, "IDF: Prospect for Conflict up in 2007," *The Jerusalem Post* newspaper, 11/1/2007, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1167467702702> (Accessed: 23/7/2007).

⁵⁰ The Defense Consumption has reduced from 20% in 1987. See Yoram Peri, "Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," p. 114.

⁵¹ Editorial, "The Debate Widens on the Security Budget in Israel," *Almash-had Al-Israeli*, 26/6/2007. (in Arabic)

⁵² *Ibid.*; also see Yehuda Ben Meir, *op. cit.*; and Netanel Lorch, "The Israel Defense Forces," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 31/5/1997, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/State/The%20Israel%20Defense%20Forces> (Accessed: 28/7/2007).

security assistance, which constitute around 2% of Israel's GDP. The Total Cost of Defense is estimated to be around 10% of GDP.⁵³

To put these military spending figures in perspective, it is estimated that the United Kingdom, which has a high military expenditure, spent only 5.4% of its \$1,174 Billion budget on defense in 2007.⁵⁴ It also spent the equivalent of 2.5% of its GDP on defense in 2005.⁵⁵

Israeli defense expenditures increased dramatically between the mid 1960s and the mid-1970s as a cumulative result of different factors. These factors were the 1967 Six Day War, the Israeli Army deployment in the Occupied Territories, the War of Attrition between 1968 and 1970, the development of an arms race with Egypt and Syria, large investments in fortifications on the Suez Canal front, the 1973 War and a massive post-war military buildup. By 1975, the Defense Consumption has become five times higher than 10 years earlier and its share of the GDP had increased from 10 to 32%.⁵⁶

In addition to its share of the budget, the military is also the biggest customer for everything and anything in Israel and as a result, it plays a dominant role in the Israeli economy. The military industries are the largest industry sector in Israel and represent around 40% of the Israeli Industries. Israel is also currently the eighth largest arms supplier.⁵⁷ With approximately 75% of the total production of Israel's military industries exported,⁵⁸ the military industries' exports are its third source of hard currency after diamonds and tourism. There are approximately 150 defense firms in Israel, with combined revenues from arms sales reaching

⁵³ "Background Note: Israel," U.S. Department of State website, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm> (Accessed: 23/7/2007).

⁵⁴ *Her Majesty's Treasury, UK budget report 2007*, Her majesty's Stationary Office, London, 2007.

⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *The World FactBook*, Country Comparison: Military Expenditures, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2034rank.html> (Accessed: 28/7/2007).

⁵⁶ Zalman F. Shiffer, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), p. 27.

⁵⁸ Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), *Arming The Occupation: Israel and the Arms Trade* (London: CAAT, 2002), <http://www.caat.org.uk/publications/countries/israel-1002.pdf> (Accessed: 8/8/2007).

\$4.5 Billion in 2006.⁵⁹ These firms can be organized into three categories; large government-owned industries such as Israel Military Industries (one of Israel's largest employers), Israel Aerospace Industries, and the Rafael Arms Development Authority, all of which produce a wide range of conventional arms and advanced defense electronics.⁶⁰ Together the three produce 69% of Israel's military revenue.⁶¹ The second category includes the medium size privately-owned industries such as Elbit system—ELOP (one of Israel's largest defense electronics and optics integrated systems manufacturers), Tadiran (which makes tactical radios and communication systems), Elisra Electronic systems, and ECI Telecom. Finally, the third categories include small privately owned industries producing a narrow line of defense products.⁶² Some scholars note that the Arms sales revenues do not form part of the budget or the Ministry of Finance's calculations; instead they are added to the military budget through a special arrangement with the Prime Minister.

Civilian high-tech industries are staffed by a mixture of military or ex-military who work closely with western military industries. The Military and the universities are intimately linked too, with joint research projects and an array of scholarships.⁶³

The role of the Israeli Army is not limited to military operations. The army was responsible for Arab areas within Israel, which were under military rule until 1966, and is responsible for policing the West Bank (and the Gaza Strip before the 2005 disengagement) after 1967. The Defense Minister is currently the person in charge of the occupied territories.⁶⁴ The Israeli Army is also involved in many other activities including building settlements through the *Nahal* units (Hebrew acronym for *Noar Halutzi Lohem* or Fighting Pioneering Youth⁶⁵) where the

⁵⁹ Alon Ben-David, "Israel's Arms Sales Soar to Hit Record in 2006," *Jane's Defense Weekly* magazine, 10/1/2007, <http://www.plasansasa.com/pdf/JDW-Jan-5.pdf> (Accessed: 24/7/2007).

⁶⁰ Hanan Sher, "Facets of the Israeli Economy-The Defense Industry," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFArchive/2000_2009/2002/6/Facets%20of%20the%20Israeli%20Economy-%20The%20Defense%20Industr (Accessed: 21/12/2006).

⁶¹ CAAT, *op. cit.*

⁶² Priya Singh, *op. cit.*

⁶³ Yitzhak Laor, "You are Terrorists, We are Virtuous," *London Review of Books* magazine, vol. 28, no. 16, 17/8/2006, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n16/print/laor01_.html (Accessed: 1/9/2006).

⁶⁴ Israel Shahak and Norton Metzvinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁶⁵ Nahal also is the name of one of the infantry regiments, alongside the Golani Brigade, Givati Brigade, Paratroopers Brigade, and others.

military/civil service units established military settlements that combined farming with regional defense in outlying and border areas. After an initial period, these outposts were turned over to civilian groups and generally became kibbutzim or moshavim. Many of the Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley and south of the Negev desert were established by the Nahal.⁶⁶

The Israeli Army has also taken an active interest in the education of new immigrants, especially in the teaching of the Hebrew language. Army instructors were sent to centers of immigrant absorption, field schools, and other educational institutions. Special army programs for teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds combine classroom instruction with work on an army base. In addition, the military provides education to its soldiers beyond the professional training required for the effective execution of military objectives. There are special Hebrew language courses for new immigrants in the army, and disadvantaged Israelis can acquire basic skills such as reading comprehension and elementary mathematics during their military service. They also participate in week-long educational seminars which focus on Jewish history and the history, geography, nature and society of the State of Israel. The army has educational units located at *Yad Vashem* (the main Holocaust museum in Israel) and the Diaspora Museum.⁶⁷ The military also organizes immigration to Israel, monitors the media, directs research and development, and keeps strong links with most of the state's bodies. This led some commentators to argue that all the other activities are there to serve the military. Practically no area of Israeli public life is immune from the impact of the military. Its impact ranges from economic decisions such as industrial infrastructure, natural resource development, and urban planning, to cultural matters such as religious law and development of the Hebrew language, to the impacts on education system such as curriculum, and reserve service coordination.⁶⁸

By association, the importance the military has strengthened the Ministry of Defense making it one of the main power centers in Israel. This may explain why prime ministers prefer to keep the role of the Defense Minister to themselves in addition to their prime ministerial role. Ben-Gurion, for example, has retained the position of the Defense Minister for the 15 years during which he was Prime Minister.

⁶⁶ Jonathan Kaplan, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 324, 327.

Generally prime ministers only surrender the post of Defense Minister—either to a rival faction leader in their party or to a leader of another party in their coalition—when they do not have sufficient political power within their coalition.

Fifth: The Development of the Military-Industrial Complex

The military and security establishments' influence on decision making is better understood in the light of the existence of the influential Military-Industrial complex. The complex includes the military, the security establishments, the military industries, and the military's political representatives. It also includes organizations like the Atomic Energy Commission (which is headed by the Prime Minister), the veterans' organizations, Civil Defense organizations, and US-based organizations such as American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) which helps bringing US military aids to Israel.

Just as the military has developed—as a result of the settlement nature of the state of Israel—and formed the backbone for the Zionist project, The Military-Industrial complex, formed the backbone for its industrial development, and through this complex the political leaders of Israel have controlled the economic growth bringing it towards capitalization and more in line with the more established US Military-Industrial complex.

To explain how the Military-Industrial complex' has developed we first have to explain the movement of high-ranking military officers after retirement. As the average age for military officers' retirement is in their forties,⁶⁹ it is rare to see a high ranking officer going back to normal civilian life. It is common, however, for retired officers, who are mostly secular Ashkenazi, to occupy key positions in the Military-Industrial complex, which can be roles in the security organisations, in the Ministry of Defense, in the military industries, or in running banks and other public and private establishments. Retired officers represent around three quarters of the executives in the various economic activities in Israel. This has created a situation where certain positions became exclusive to those within the Military-Industrial

⁶⁹ Evelyn Gordon, "Where is All the Money Going?," *The Jerusalem Post*, 8/9/2006, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154526020810&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull> (Accessed: 23/7/2007).

complex, leading to possible conflicts of interest between the officers' jobs at the military and their potential future jobs in the military industries organizations.⁷⁰

All of the parliamentary elections in Israel have featured a sizeable number of retired officers trickling into Knesset, with affiliations across the political spectrum but mainly on the left. Since 1960, an average of 10% of Israel Knesset members have been high ranking retired officers. In the 2006 general elections, for example, 15 Israeli generals along with 6 secret service agents have been elected into the Knesset. In addition, about 20% of Cabinet ministers are high ranking reserve officers. Of the three most important offices, the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Foreign Minister, at least one (usually two) has been occupied by a former career officer as in the governments of Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon.⁷¹

Military service is an important prerequisite for many positions of power and importance in Israeli life. Chiefs of General Staff have done very well politically. The list includes Yigael Yadin, Moshe Dayan, Yitzhak Rabin, Chaim Bar-Lev, Mota Gur, Ehud Barak, and Shaul Mofaz. Rabin and Barak also became prime ministers.⁷² In addition, almost all Israel's governments, to date, possessed defense, military or political experience even if key posts were not necessarily manned by former generals. In 2003, only one quarter of those elected to the Knesset have not served in the Israeli Army, and most of them were Arabs and Haredim who are exempted.⁷³ It worth noting that since the inception of Israel the secret slogan of Israeli politicians was "we shall conquer first the security apparatus, and then the Knesset and government."⁷⁴

The role of the Military-Industrial complex has grown further since the 1967 war when many people moved between military, political, and industrial organizations. The most noticeable movement was the movement of military Generals into

⁷⁰ The heads of the Mossad, the Borders Police, the Civil Guard, the civil administration in the occupied territory, the airports and ports administrations, and similar positions are all retired officers. The same pattern appears in the heads of Government corporations which are deemed fundamental to security, such as the electricity, water, oil refineries, the *El Al* airline, together with the military industries and advanced technological industries.
See Kameel Mansour and Fawz Abdelhadi, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–58.

⁷¹ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

⁷² Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 333.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁷⁴ Israel Shahak and Norton Metzvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, p. 93.

politics, which increased during the demobilization periods following the 1948, 1967, and 1973 wars. The majority of former CGSs have led a political career after retiring from the military, many of whom became Defense Ministers. In the 1950s the first generation of Officers included Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, Yigael Yadin, Israel Galilee, and Chaim Herzog. Until 1967 the majority of reservist and retired officers joined the Labor party. Following the 1967 war, the number of officers joining the political elite increases sharply but with some joining the center right, such as Ezer Weizman and Ariel Sharon, and others joining the Center left.⁷⁵ As a matter of fact many political parties aim to draw the prominent military leaders to their parties in a bid to improve their credentials and their chances for getting more votes in the general elections. Examples on this are Ben-Gurion adding Moshe Dayan to the Mapai Party, Golda Meir bringing Chaim Bar-Lev and Yitzhak Rabin to the Labor Party, and Menachem Begin bringing Ezer Weizman to the Likud.

This pattern of movement of high-ranking officers has resulted in the leadership in all three spheres becoming more homogenous, and in the establishment of social elite whose members think and act similarly, are closely connected, and have similar views on how to serve the interests of the state. Members of this Military-Industrial complex agree on the concept of Israel's national security and on that its interests are best served by the actions of the Military establishment. As a result of such views, members of the Military-Industrial complex always work towards increasing Military expenditure, procurement, and recruitment, increasing arms production, raising the intelligence activities, fighting "terrorism", and granting the military establishment independence in setting its own policies.

The existence of such group has not only increased the influence of the military and security establishments on policy and decision making, and transformed it from that of a professional instrumental to a major political player, but it has blurred the boundaries between the military and civilian spheres.

In political terms, the term "retired officers" refers to those reached one of the three highest ranks in their military service: Brigadier General, Major General, and lieutenant General. In political life 23 officers fit this description, 5 of which are from the first rank, and 9 are from each of the last 2 ranks.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Priya Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁷⁶ Giora Goldberg, *op. cit.*

Based on the works of Giora Goldberg, in a study on the militarization of the Israeli political system, recently published in the Journal of Israeli Affairs, this study presents a chronological table summarizing the flow of movement of military personnel into politics including ministers, prime ministers, defense ministers, party leaders and City heads. It also includes an index of militarization of politics proposed by the abovementioned study.

Table 3: The Growing Militarization of Israeli Political System and Its Index

	Ministers (% of gov.)	prime ministers (3 of 11 total)	Defense Ministers (8 of 13 total)	Party leaders	City heads %	Index %
50s	Total: 2 (2.4%)	0	0	0	0	0.5
60s	Total: 4 (10.8%)	0	1 Moshe Dayan	0	0	7.2
70s	Total: 8 (15.9%)	1 Yitzhak Rabin	2 Moshe Dayan Ezer Weizman	3 Average party control: 18% Yitzhak Rabin Yigael Yadin Ariel Sharon	20 Shlomo Lahat (Tel Aviv)	30.8
80s	Total: 7 (15.3%)	0	2 Ariel Sharon Yitzhak Rabin	4 Average party control: 1.5% Moshe Dayan Ezer Weizman Rafael Eitan Rehavam Ze'evi	33 Shlomo Lahat (Tel Aviv)	26
90s-00s	Total: 13 (15.4%)	3 Yitzhak Rabin Ehud Barak Ariel Sharon	5 Yitzhak Rabin Yitzhak Mordechai Ehud Barak Benjamin Ben Eliezer Shaul Mofaz	10 Average party control: 40% Yitzhak Rabin Shimon Peres Ehud Barak Benjamin Ben Eliezer Amram Mitzna Ariel Sharon Efraim Eitam Rafael Eitan Rehavam Ze'evi Avigdor Kahalani	44 Ron Huldai (Tel Aviv) Amram Mitzna (Haifa)	45.7

Sixth: The Military-Industrial Complex's Relation to the Political Establishment and Decision Making

According to the Israeli Basic Laws and other Knesset Laws, the military is meant to be monitored and supervised by the civilian establishment through several bodies; the first being the government as a whole. The government can appoint or remove the CGS and the heads of the security forces and it is also entitled to discuss any security issue. The second body is the ministerial committee for security affairs which is part of the government, and whose role is to establish the main security policies and guidelines, and to supervise their implementation. The third and fourth bodies are the Ministry of Defense and the office of the Prime Minister, which operates as a ministry in its own right, while the fifth body is the National Security Council.⁷⁷ The Military is also supervised through the Knesset committee for Defense and Foreign Affairs, and the new Knesset committee for the military budget.

However, in spite of this formal civilian supervision framework, the defense establishment, and especially the Israeli Army, remain the most influential player in the national decision making mechanism forming a partnership with the civilian political leader. The political-military partnership has always existed between the political and military spheres, even before 1948 when the role of the military was played by the Haganah forces. When Ben-Gurion abolished all the military organizations in 1948 and established a unified military under the authority of the government and the Knesset, this partnership continued to exist in order to meet Israel's two main challenges, the establishment of a political leadership of a unifying authority, and the construction of a comprehensive national security doctrine to meet the new nation's security concerns.⁷⁸ As such the political-military

⁷⁷ Aviezer Yaari, *Civil Control of the IDF*, Memoranda No. 72, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), October 2004, <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/memoranda/memo72.pdf>

Arabic Translation obtained from:

<http://almash-had.madarcenter.org/almash-had/printtemp.asp?articalid=2436>

⁷⁸ See Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*; and Moshe Lissak, "The Civilian Components of Israel's Security Doctrine: The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in the First Decade," in S. Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas (eds.), *Israel: The First Decade of Independence* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 575–591.

doctrine in Israel is closer to the Soviet model than it is to the American one where the military level is completely subservient to the political level.⁷⁹

However, in addition to this partnership, Israel, as a nation in arms, lacks integral boundaries between the military and society, which inevitably led to the militarization of certain societal spheres and the politicization of the military in other spheres. The militarization led to a military ideology with the political establishment which was compounded by the lack of a strong counter-balancing political ideology, while the politicization of the military led to a reduced autonomy represented in judicial intervention in operations and investigations, and interventions from soldiers' parents.⁸⁰

This permeability between the military and civilian spheres, this has been explained as a result of the fact that Israeli officers are not removed from the rest of the society. Officers don't live in separate military camps but with their families, which prevented the creation of a "barracks sub-culture". Officers are fully integrated within civil society, shopping, recreating, sending children to school and spouses to work, and sharing the feelings and tribulations of the broader population.⁸¹ They also interact at work with reserve "civilians" carrying out short reserve duties.⁸² Recently this partnership has evolved as a result of three main factors; the protracted war, the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the political crisis that resulted, and the two low-intensity conflicts (the two *Intifadahs*) between 1987 and 1992, and from 2000 onwards. It is worth noting that some Israeli scholars such as Asher Arian do not describe the relationship between the military and the political spheres as a partnership, but see the influence of the military as the best example of an institutional interest group.⁸³

To give an idea of how the military influences the decision making, one might like to read the descriptions given by Yoram Peri, an expert on Israeli military-civilian relationship, of this process. He draws an image of the

⁷⁹ Uri Raanan, "Contrasting Views of the Role of Strategic (Politico-Military) Doctrine: Soviet and Western Approaches," in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. and Uri Raanan (eds.), *National Security Policy: The Decision-Making Process* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984).

⁸⁰ Yoram Peri, "Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," pp. 114–115.

⁸¹ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

⁸² Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

⁸³ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 324, 327.

Israeli Army headquarters at Hakiryah in Tel Aviv with dozens and officers and civilians in the Planning and Policy Directorate working on material to serve the decision makers, while the high ranking officers participate in political forums where decisions are actually made, working with the Prime Minister's small team of confidants and the security Cabinet. He also describes the interactions between members of these teams during those meetings as informal where personality plays a large role in the debates and discussion. This relationship doesn't always suit the civilian leadership as weakens its positions. For example, the military is not just represented in civilian meetings, it is over-represented. The CGS is always accompanied by a group of senior officers which shifts the balance of the meeting towards the military positions.⁸⁴

This influence has long been recognized within all decision making circles in Israel. Even the military leadership recognizes that the military plays an enlarged role in decision making. For example, Shlomo Gazit, A former director of Military Intelligence, a former coordinator of activities in the occupied territories, and a member of the prestigious The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), claims that the core and focus of Israel's problem in decision making lies in "the relationship between the defense establishment and the government". The problem according him is that the defense establishment has the tools for policy planning, policy evaluation, coherent thinking, and systematic presentation of proposals, yet there is no alternative mechanism or factor which can present alternative options based, to the same degree, on systematic analysis and evaluation. Thus, whenever a national security issue arises, one immediately asks: "what does the general staff suggest-what does the Military Intelligence have to say?"⁸⁵

Similarly, in a recent lecture at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (which is now renamed to The Institute for National Security Studies) on the subject of military civilian relations in wartime, the former Israeli Army chief of General staff Lt General Moshe Ya'alon admitted that the military played too dominant a role in political decision making, but he, nevertheless, expressed his vision for the civil-military relationship as a reciprocal one where the military is an active partner in the political level. The moderate model he envisages for a successful political and military interface is one where the political echelon represents the initiating

⁸⁴ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

⁸⁵ Yehuda Ben Meir, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

directive, which is translated by the military into operational alternatives, and in turn is presented back to political decision makers for their approval.⁸⁶ Former CGS Ehud Barak made similar statements in 1994 when he warned the Israeli Army not to “make manipulative use of the sensitive and central security issue in Israel existence” and not to “dictate to the government the nature of the political arrangement”. However, the current civilian-military relationship doesn’t seem to be moving towards this moderate model yet.

In light of the above, this study attempts to identify the ways in which the military influences the decision making, and the causes behind its ability to exercise such influence over the civilian leadership. The list below is a summary of these influences and causes:

1. The military and security establishments have a complete control of intelligence that the political echelon receives. This allows the General Staff’s Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) and the other intelligence agencies to exclusively assess the security situation, which ultimately determines the way in which Israel’s entire political class perceives the world. The Military Intelligence is responsible for the annual National Intelligence Assessment and is the only intelligence service capable of generating comprehensive politico-military assessments.⁸⁷

In many areas, the Israeli Army is either the sole or primary entity capable of supplying information, analysis, and policy advice to the Prime Minister and Cabinet, often in areas extending far beyond the commonly accepted spheres of military competence. No other institution can compete with the Intelligence, Planning, and Operations Branches’ ability to generate rapid and sophisticated staff work around the clock. Moreover, the Chief of Staff and other senior officers frequently appear before the Cabinet and act as senior advisers on defense and foreign policy matters.

The officer who heads the MID is not only responsible for intelligence within the military, he is also the advisor on intelligence issues to the Prime Minister, the defense Minister and the Cabinet as a whole. In addition three of the last Directors of Military Intelligence (Barak, Israel Shahak, and Ya’alon) became Chiefs of General Staff.

⁸⁶ Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), “Israel’s Civil-Military Relations in Wartime,” JCSS bulletin, no. 31, September 2005, <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/bulletin/bulletin31.pdf> (Accessed: 2/9/2006).

⁸⁷ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

2. The military's domination of strategic planning using its Planning and Policy Directorate. The Israeli Army Planning and Policy Directorate is a primary player at the Cabinet level, dealing not only in military planning for the General Staff, but in strategic political-military planning, geared largely to the needs of the Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and the Cabinet.⁸⁸ As a result, it inevitably transforms the military doctrine into policies that directly influence the decision making. The General Staff also provides detailed policies which exceed the military tactics into political policies. Israel may well be the only country where the military has complete authority over the strategic and tactical issues.

This happens in spite of the fact that, the military provides the civilian leadership with only one option which the government can either approve or reject and do nothing. In addition, the option presented is based on the military's planning process which is sometimes described as being based on an extreme worst-case rationalization.⁸⁹

According to Major general Aharon Yariv, such a monopoly of the military over planning is the "most conspicuous weakness in the Israeli government system". Major General Yisrael Tal also describes the weakening of the government's status vis-à-vis the military: "When the government wants to assess situations or, alternatively, to set policy, it relies on the same source—the Israeli Army General Staff—which it is itself supposed to oversee, whose recommendations it is supposed to critically analyze, and which it is supposed to guide".⁹⁰

3. The lack of institutional subordination of the military to the civilian government and the nature of the relationship between the Israeli Army and the Ministry of Defense.⁹¹ Instead of the Israeli Army being subordinate to the Ministry, the relationship between the two is in fact a complementary one. According to Ben-Gurion's decision to separate the Ministry of Defense from the Military, The Israeli Army has authority for all matters of military organization and force structure, training, doctrine, intelligence, logistics and procurement plans, personnel, strategic planning, and operations. The Ministry of Defense, on the

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Meir Stieglitz, "Israel on the Brink," *Information Clearing House*, 10/1/2007, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article16131.htm>

⁹⁰ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

⁹¹ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel*, p. 329.

other hand, is responsible for the defense budget, arms procurement, and exports. In reality, the ministry's role is limited, for the most part, to the implementation of policies favored by the Israeli Army.⁹²

The structural weaknesses in the machinery of civilian control over the military establishment stems from a lack of constitutional and legal clarity as to formal aspects of the system. For example, the Israeli Army is only subordinate to the Defense Minister and not the Ministry itself. Thus, the ministry does not have the right or the capabilities to oversee the Israeli Army.

4. The lack of a strong alternative civilian mechanism for the government to assess military intelligence and policy. This was coupled with the reduced independence of the Knesset's prestigious Defense and Foreign affairs committee. The preoccupation of the committee's members of with domestic and partisan political activities has also contributed to its inability to take on the politically unpopular task of challenging the national security establishment, which has led Knesset officials such as Samuel Sager to complain that the committee has become a tool to legitimise government policy choices on controversial issues. In addition, members of the committee often complain that they do not receive detailed information during briefings by government officials. The government's justification to that is that the committee's members often leak details of the briefings to the media.⁹³ Moreover, the committee lacks any staff of its own, making it almost entirely dependent on the national security establishment for information and thereby further limiting its oversight capabilities.⁹⁴

In an attempt to resolve this lack of civilian assessment, Israel's government established its own version of National Security Council (NSC) in 1999 with the role of "coordinating, integrative, deliberative, and supervisory body on all matters of national policy". The Council operates as an arm of the Prime Minister's Office and reports directly to him. The head of the NSC is a National Security advisor to the Prime Minister and one of the NSC's roles is to make independent recommendations on national security policy to the Cabinet.⁹⁵ This Council,

⁹² Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

⁹³ Priya Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁹⁴ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ Jewish Virtual Library, "Israel Establishes National Security Council," <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Politics/nsc.html> (Accessed: 24/10/2006).

however, has been sidelined since its inception, and its advices are often not taken into account. It is sufficient to say that six people have served as the NSC heads since its establishment by the government and most of them complained about the absence of powers and the lack of partnership in the decision making process.⁹⁶ As a result, most NSC heads, who served an average of one year, have ended their terms feeling they were unable to fulfil their duties under the existing circumstances.⁹⁷

A number of studies on the role of NSC have also been critical of its lack of contribution to decision making. A study by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (Now The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)) entitled: *Whom Does the Council Advise?*, describes the current security decision making mechanism as one that takes place on 4 levels. The first level is the Prime Minister, followed by the ministerial security committee (with the Defense Minister having a prominent role within it). The third level is the Prime Minister's office and especially the Director General of the Prime Minister's Office, and the Prime Minister's political, socio-economic, and military secretary (the last being the link to the military and security establishment as a member of the General Staff), while the fourth and final level is the National Security Council which only takes the role of an assistant in the decision making.⁹⁸ Another study has noted the small number of staff in the council as a factor in the demotion of the council to a largely inconsequential position.⁹⁹ Furthermore, a report by the State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss on the National Security Council suggests that the role of the NSC, which is meant to have a global, comprehensive and systematic vision, has been taken by the Military secretary of the Prime Minister, who in reality is the General staff's representative in the Prime Minister's office.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Shahar Ilan, "Knesset approves expanding powers of national security chief," *Haaretz*, 29/7/2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/knesset-approves-expanding-powers-of-national-security-chief-1.250729>

⁹⁷ Ronny Sofer, "Top NSC Officials Step Down," *Yedioth Achronot*, 9/10/2007, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3447868,00.html> (Accessed: 10/6/2008).

⁹⁸ Aviezer Yaari, "Whom Does the Council Advise? A New Model for the National Security Council," *Memoranda of Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies*, no. 85, JCSS, September 2006, <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/memoranda/memo85.pdf>
Arabic Excerpt obtained from Arabs48, <http://www.arabs48.com/display.x?cid=19&sid=165&id=40841>

⁹⁹ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁰ Aluf Benn, "State Comptroller Recommends Upgrading National Security Council", *Haaretz*, 28/9/2006, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/768140.html> (Accessed: 23/12/2006).

In 2008, and following the Winograd report on the 2006 war on Lebanon, the National Security Council (NSC) was renamed to the National Security Staff (NSS), and role of its chief was expanded to include handling all matters of foreign affairs and defense seen by the prime minister. The NSS chief will also receive information updates from every state body and will be invited to every cabinet meeting that deals with matters of foreign affairs and defense, and to every committee meeting involving the heads of the secret services.

5. The unified large structure of the military, which makes it more powerful as it represents a united front in front of often-divided cabinets. The military and security establishments have also grown in recent decades in terms of size, organizational complexity, and process sophistication. New organizational structures have also been added, and existing ones greatly expanded. Staff work within agencies has improved markedly, along with intensive usage of information technology capabilities and increasing levels of professionalism. For example, the Israeli Army Planning Branch became a primary player in the Israeli Army and at the Cabinet level; the intelligence community as a whole grew greatly in size and capabilities and the Mossad, the Shin Bet, and the Foreign Ministry intelligence department, each established new research divisions; and the Ministry of Defense's politico-military policy planning branch were established.

The military and the military-related industries also employ a disproportionate share of the national labor force. Thus making the defense establishment as a whole, a major economic force.¹⁰¹

6. The political crisis and the loss of political consensus following the 1967 war. Since then the divide between the right and the left made it impossible for either side to achieve a majority vote and the military moved in to fill the vacuum. For example the inability of all Israeli governments to create a clear military policy towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly evading the territorial question, has left the whole issue to the Israeli Army to resolve. The Israeli Army devised maps for the agreements it desires, thus dictating policies to the civilian leadership. It was not the government policy that guided the military, but the military's interests that controlled the design of any political plan.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Some commentators also argue that the lack of a strong civil authority creates a vacuum for military leaders—with or without political ambition—to step into, and the lack of a clear strategic political policy creates a vacuum for *ad hoc* policies to fill. In a recent workshop at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies to assess the 2006 Lebanon war, the past chairman of the NSC Giora Eiland pointed to the lack of study and planning in the decision making mechanism. He also noted that the last four governments with which he has worked have been preoccupied with ongoing security issues with nobody to deal with the strategic issues or to present alternative political and military views to the government.¹⁰²

7. The military's influence was also strengthened by its involvement in diplomacy. Over the years, many of the diplomatic contacts with Arab and other states have been conducted by the Israeli Army, thus providing it with a leading role in foreign policy. Beginning with the Armistice Agreements of 1949, the Israeli Army played a major role in all of the peace talks, including the Camp David Accords of 1978, as well as the talks with the Palestinians, Syrians, and Jordanians since the 1990s. Military cooperation has also been an important means of fostering relations with foreign countries.¹⁰³

8. The military's control over the West Bank (and previously the Gaza Strip), and its responsibility for the civil administration in these areas. This has provided it with primary influence over an entire range of issues related to the territories, many of a purely civilian and particularly sensitive character.¹⁰⁴

9. The two *Intifadahs*. The protracted low-intensity conflicts, especially since 2000, have forced the Israeli Army to revise its strategic doctrines—which were established to deal with regular military forces—to deal with the new challenges. The military acquired responsibilities of civilian nature including policing and pacification activities for which it was neither built nor trained. The “counterrevolutionary” warfare against the *Intifadahs* is by definition a political warfare which forced the Israeli Army to develop a military doctrine that includes political elements.

¹⁰² Editorial, “Round One Against Iran,” *Almash-had Al-Israeli*, 14/11/2006. (in Arabic)

¹⁰³ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

This only served to draw the Military and Security establishments' leaders further into the domestic political arena as their roles shifted from the domain of operational tactics to that of strategic and defense policy.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the protracted low intensity conflict also required a decision making process which is continuously reliant on knowledge and systematic staff work, that can only be provided by the Israeli Army. The political civilian control has thus been weakened vis-à-vis the military, which gained a significant advantage in generating the required knowledge for managing the violent confrontation.¹⁰⁶ According to Major General (ret.) Shlomo Gazit, The first *Intifadah* completed the process of turning the CGS into a dominant force in the occupied territories and from this point on the head of the Central Command has become actively in charge of the settlements in the territories.

10. The existence of the Ministry of Defense's political-military directorate which serves as an official link between the military and the political levels.

11. Israeli Army Doctrines and its Operational Control, which can create constraints for political leaders. This includes Israel's first-strike preemptive doctrine and the broad discretion given to officers. Even at relatively low levels, military commanders are given room for maneuver, which may create situations that were not preferred by the civilian leadership.¹⁰⁷

12. The fact that virtually all ministers have served in the Israeli Army, as conscripts and reservists, and many are former senior officers strengthens the military view, and the influence of the military-industrial complex, even within the civilian establishment.

13. The military's control over the media allows it to shape decision making through its influence over public discourse and public opinion. It also makes benefit of the public respect it enjoys in comparison to the public low confidence in the politicians.¹⁰⁸ The military almost has a complete monopoly over the supply of information to media outlet and thus has the capacity to manipulate journalists and

¹⁰⁵ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

¹⁰⁶ Kobi Michael, "Military Knowledge and Weak Civilian Control in the Reality of Low Intensity Conflict: The Israeli Case," *Israel Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 28–52.

¹⁰⁷ Charles D. Freilich, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁸ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

the media. The army controls press censorship through the office of the Military Censor. According to the agreement between the Israeli Army and the media representatives, all media outlets agree to abide by the orders of the censor in order to be able to operate in Israel. Reporters are expected to censor themselves and not report any of the forbidden material.

The Military Censor, a unit in the Directorate of Military Intelligence, is to inform the media of which issues require its approval. The list of such issues is subject to ongoing change, but always includes issues related to national security and military.¹⁰⁹ The military censor has wide powers to publish an order that no material can be published; and it even has the powers to close a newspaper or shut down a station.¹¹⁰ The Defence Regulations dealing with censorship have been backed up by other laws designed to reinforce secrecy such as the Israel Penal Revision Law (1957), which included broad definitions of matters to be classified, and even penalized the unauthorized disclosure of official information that was not classified.

In addition, Most of the Military correspondents serve in the reserves in the press liaison unit in the office of the Israeli Army spokesperson, as well as members of the editorial boards of their respective newspapers. They are also organized in a separate unit within the Israeli Press Association.¹¹¹

However, it should be noted that recently a more active press and increased exposure to foreign mass media have led to a loosening of censorship restriction.¹¹² In addition, Israeli journalists have adopted the tactic of passing sensitive material on to foreign outlets and then reprinting it after it is published abroad—which is a perfectly legal practice.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Yehiel Limor, *The Printed Media: Israel's Newspapers*, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Culture/The%20Printed%20Media-%20Israel-s%20Newspapers> (Accessed: 7/10/2007); and Editorial, "Censorship by Israel: How It's Carried Out," *New York Times*, 29/6/1982, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE3DD123BF93AA15755C0A964948260> (Accessed: 7/10/2007).

¹¹⁰ Brian Montopoli, "News Out of Israel Filtered Through Military Censor, Public Eye," *CBS News*, 20/7/2006, <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2006/07/20/publiceye/entry1822256.shtml> (Accessed: 31/10/2006).

¹¹¹ Moshe Lissak, *op. cit.*, pp. 585–586.

¹¹² Jonathan Kaplan, *op. cit.*

¹¹³ Giora Goldberg, *op. cit.*

In addition to censorship, the military operates its own radio station, staffed by well known Israeli broadcasters as well as soldiers in regular service. Israel's *Galei Zahal* (IDF Waves) has a large civilian audience. The Israeli Army also publishes a popular weekly as well as a more in-depth monthly magazine, and the Israeli Army Spokesman's office provides information on army and security related issues.¹¹⁴

Based on these factors and causes, scholars such as Yoram Peri have argued that the military has become a de-facto decision maker.¹¹⁵ This military influence is understandable, and even expected, during wartime. For example it is documented that during the 1967 and 1973 wars, members of the military elite met alone with the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister more frequently than did any other group, and that in 1973 these meetings were almost as often as Prime minister's meetings with all other Israeli groups combined.¹¹⁶ A more recent example was on the eve of the Lebanon war in the summer of 2006 when the military option was discussed in the Cabinet for less than three hours, and the decision to go to war against Lebanon was not countered by any well-reasoned diplomatic alternative.

However, there have been incidents when the military's participated in the decision making in "peace time." Examples on this participation include the incident in 1975 when members of the Gush Emunim founded the first illegal outpost¹¹⁷ in the West Bank. Prime Minister Rabin, who initially saw this as a challenge to the government, demanded that the Chief of General Staff Mordechai Gur disperse the settlers. But Gur objected on the grounds that doing so either would require the use of force which is likely lead to bloodshed, or would result in soldiers refusing to follow their orders.

Rabin yielded to his view and the settlers' position was strengthened. The incident was considered a watershed moment, establishing an important precedent for future Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. It exposed the government's

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Kaplan, op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Yoram Peri, "Israel's Broken Process: Decision-Making on National Security Must Be Fixed," *The Washington Post* newspaper, 25/8/2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/24/AR2006082401330.html> (Accessed: 1/9/2006).

¹¹⁶ Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Crisis*, p. 353.

¹¹⁷ Illegal outposts are small new settlements illegal according to Israel Law.

According to international law, all settlements and outposts are Illegal. The Geneva Conventions (Protocol I) 1977 article 85(4a) defines the occupying forces importing their own population into the occupied territories as a "grave breach" of international law.

weakness and made clear to the settlers that through the use of force they would be able to impose their own will on the government. If the military has played a neutral instrumental role, such a precedent may not have been established.¹¹⁸

It is worth noting that the military's recommendations are not always the most "militaristic". There are occasions when the military played a "moderating" role calling for peace negotiations and withdrawals while it was the politicians who opposed it. It was the Israeli Army in the late 1980s that decided that it would be in Israel's advantage to engage in a peace process. The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin included the military, not only as an implementer of the peace process but as a major policy making and negotiating partner. Likewise the military played a restraining and moderating role during the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, largely because its pragmatic world outlook was indirect contrast to Netanyahu's government's ideological stance. During 1997 the Israeli Army top brass have more than once rejected suggestions for aggressive action against the Palestinians that were initiated by the political level, and especially by the Prime Minister. This confrontation reached its climax during the 1999 elections when tens of retired generals joined opposition parties and formed new ones with one aim; to topple down Netanyahu's government, which they did, bring to power a the former Chief of General Staff Ehud Barak.¹¹⁹

However, as result of the failure of the Camp David summit in 2000 and in response to the second *Intifadah*, the Israeli Army has abolished its peace drive, formulated an unyielding hard line policy, and changed its security doctrine towards the Palestinian uprising.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

¹¹⁹ Yoram Peri, "Civil Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," pp. 121–122.

¹²⁰ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room*.

This Book

This study is an attempt to understand the Israeli decision-making process, and to bridge the literature gap by relating domestic factors with decision-making and foreign policy.

It attempts to explain how elements and forces within the labyrinth of the Israeli society exert influence on the decision-making mechanism and on how foreign policy and national security decisions are made. This study expands on a number of external forces, or forces external to the decision-making process that are powerful enough to influence it. It discusses the influence of five forces; the military, the advisors, two religious groups, the relationship with the United States, and the relationship with the Jewish Diaspora.

This study attempts to take holistic approach to the decision-making process and avoid focusing its attention solely on decision-making in crisis situations.

The Process of Israeli Decision Making: Mechanisms, Forces, and Influences



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