CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

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Prepared for:

Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Advanced Systems and Concepts Office

Comparative Strategic Cultures Curriculum
Contract No: DTRA01-03-D-0017, Technical Instruction 18-06-02

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STRATEGIC CULTURE DEFINED

For the purposes of this project, strategic culture is defined as:

> Shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives.

This definition is well-suited to consideration of the Israeli case. As explained below, Israel has cultivated—some would say imposed—a set of beliefs and assumptions on its citizenry as a means of simultaneously building and defending the fledgling Jewish state in the face of deep Islamic hostility. This belief system is rooted, in part, in such ancient texts as the Bible but is under considerable pressure from contemporary demographic, ideological, and religious changes in Israeli society. As a result, there is both continuity and change in what passes for "appropriate" ends and means of achieving security in Israeli terms. Indeed, the strategic culture framework could provide a useful tool for anticipating how the Jewish state might come to grips with its ongoing internal, as well as external, security challenges.

STRATEGIC CULTURE PROFILE

Summary Description

Israel's is a strategic culture in transition. The dominant or "hegemonic" strategic culture might be summed accordingly:

The Jewish people have been subject to exile and persecution since antiquity, as manifested in various pogroms, particularly in the late-19th century and the Nazi Holocaust, which claimed the lives of some six million Jews. In order to preserve their religious, ideological, political, cultural and physical existence as a people, Jews require a national homeland. That homeland is their ancestral Israel.

With conflicting claims over this land from Palestinians who are backed politically, militarily, and economically by the larger Arab world (and, increasingly Iran), the state of Israel

is under constant threat of annihilation. Thus, Israel must be actively defended by all the resources the state can bring to bear, particularly its citizenry and technological base, which must be organized into qualitatively superior military forces. Because its resources are limited and it lacks strategic depth, Israel must rely on deterrence, backed by a rapid mobilization capability, and be prepared to act preemptively should deterrence seem to be eroding. In any event, Israel must immediately "carry the fight" to the enemy's territory to achieve a quick victory and spare the Israeli home front.

To hedge against conventional military defeat, international isolation, and attack with weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Israel must have its own WMD options, particularly a nuclear weapons capability. To avoid alienating Israel's international supporters and further enflaming Arab enmity, that capability should remain officially unacknowledged for as long as possible. Finally, Israel must further reinforce a perception of national inviolability by minimizing the impact of terrorism on Israeli society, while simultaneously preserving Jewish norms of ethical conduct in war.

A variety of factors, such as disillusionment with the performance of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), particularly since 1973, and the changing complexion of Israeli society have given rise to competing subcultures, as detailed below. With areas of overlap as well as divergence, these sub-groupings add complexity and dynamism to Israeli strategic culture.

Origins of the "Shared Narrative"

A full recounting of the Jewish saga is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it is necessary to highlight the major events and circumstances that haven given rise to Israel's distinctive strategic culture. To begin, it bears recalling the ancient roots of Judaism.

According to Hebrew mythology, around 1200 BC, the Israelite tribes under the leadership of Joshua conquered part of the land of Canaan. This nascent, monotheistic Jewish civilization was built up under the reign of King David. Legend has it that God had promised this land, which later became known as Palestine, to the Jewish people. Under David, bitter battles were fought over the so-called "promised land," resulting in the annihilation of the Philistines residing there. In 587 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judea and deported much of its population to Babylon. Judea was later re-established, only to be destroyed again, this time by the Romans, in AD 70. It was during this era that a group of Jewish zealots took

refuge in Masada. Legend holds that rather than submit to Roman slavery, these Jews committed mass suicide—a heroic, "freedom fighter" myth that is propagated to this day, for example, in the indoctrination of IDF soldiers.[1] Forced exile, the Diaspora, resulted in four-fifths of the Jewish world population residing in Eastern Europe by the beginning of the 19th century, although a "culture of return" to the Holy Land had long since taken root.

Anti-Semitic persecutions, or pogroms, swept through the Russian empire in 1881-1882, triggering Jewish immigration to America and, to a lesser extent, "Zion," the biblical name of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The so-called Zionist movement, led by these Ashkenazi or Occidental Jews, gathered momentum in the late-1890s, raising funds, purchasing land in Palestine, and then settling it. Socialist and communist ideas combined with nationalist goals, resulting in a Zionist strategy to establish an exclusively Jewish communal society that would later become the basis for a state. To further this goal, underground Zionist militias were set up to protect Jewish settlements from the growing frictions with the local Palestinian community. These activities set the stage for a culture of secrecy and militarism in the eventual Israeli state.[2]

With the end of British colonial rule on May 14, 1948, the Jewish community in Palestine declared its national independence. The following day, troops from several Arab states launched an invasion. Born of war, Israel prevailed and nearly quadrupled its territory from the 5,000 sq. km. proposed under the 1937 British partition plan, to 21,000 sq. km. following an armistice with the Arabs in 1949. Israel's strategic culture has been shaped by subsequent waves of Jewish immigration and violent struggle over land—a country comparable in size to the state of New Jersey—and national existence ever since.

Characteristics of Israel's Strategic Culture

Keepers of Strategic Culture

Israel's strategic culture has been carefully crafted over the past six decades. The primary vehicles for doing so have been state institutions. Among these, the IDF is paramount. The IDF has various means at its disposal to indoctrinate Israeli Jews, particularly recent immigrants, into the dominant security culture. Mainly, this is accomplished through universal

[1] Recent Israeli scholarship casts doubt on this heroic account. See Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 18, n. 2.
[2] Ibid., 27.

conscription. Israeli men ages 18-21 must serve in IDF three years while women must serve two years, with certain exceptions and caveats. In addition, following conscription, Israelis must remain in the IDF reserves with annual call-up for training, up to age 54 in some cases. This is a powerful means by which the IDF penetrates civil society and inculcates it with a sense of constant threat and need to sacrifice in the name of "security." Because IDF service is a prerequisite for state welfare benefits, and helps open doors to well-paying civilian jobs, the Israeli state uses economic leverage to further solidify this indoctrination. Those prohibited from IDF service, namely Israeli Arabs, are condemned to the margins of Israeli society and are not intended to participate in the state's strategic culture and related benefits. The IDF further propagates its image and reach into civil society by engaging in various non-military activities, such as popular entertainment (e.g., via Army Radio).

The IDF also makes tremendous demands on the Israeli economy and industry, amounting to some 16-20 percent of national government expenditures. This is a decrease from previous levels which reached as high as 40 percent in the mid-1980s but still represents one of the heaviest national defense burdens globally. In short, the Israeli military-industrial complex plays a major role in reinforcing Israel's self-image as a "nation in arms" and one that must permanently maintain military superiority in the region.

The state has further inculcated strategic culture by various forms of military commemoration. This includes national holidays of war remembrance, sanctification of military cemeteries, parades and other military displays. Israeli artists and the media have traditionally supported this effort by using stories, poems, movies, and newspaper supplements to honor the heroism of Israeli soldiers. The state has consciously used other symbols to reinforce its strategic culture, such as the choice of the Star of David for the national flag, as a link between the State of Israel and its ancestry in the Holy Land. Other state institutions reinforcing the sense that Israel is under current threat and that all national and personal goals should be subordinate to national security are the educational system, which helps serve as a preparatory school for the IDF, and the court system.

These efforts over the years have built considerable public support for, and trust in, Israel's national security ethos. Despite its occasional misfortunes (see below), the IDF remains one of the most highly respected institutions in Israel, as measured in public opinion polls, .second only to the corruption-battling State comptroller, and far ahead of Israeli politicians and

Knesset members.[3] Also telling is the willingness of Israeli youth to serve in the IDF, even if it should become an all-volunteer force.

Strategic Subcultures

Baruch Kimmerling, a scholar representing the "third wave" of Israeli sociologists, has identified three "orientations" within Israeli society, essentially strategic cultures that have some commonality in strategic beliefs, as well as important differences. These are the "security orientation," the "conflict orientation," and the "settlement" or "peace orientation." Each is briefly summarized below (see also Figure 1).[4]

The "security orientation" believes that Israel is locked in a battle for survival with its Arab neighbors, and that a major Israeli military defeat would mean annihilation of Israeli Jews. The primary means to prevent this is absolute and permanent Israeli military superiority in the region. It is the supreme duty of every member of Israeli society to do his or her utmost in military service to the state. The authority of the state to determine the nature of that military service is absolute. However, it is not unconditional, as the state is expected to not abuse this readiness for self-sacrifice and to use the military only for what are believed to be matters of survival.

The security orientation is said to be highly heterogeneous and the political culture of most mainstream social groups. Politically, this orientation channels its votes to the two largest parties, Likud and Labor.

The "conflict orientation" assumes that the Jewish-Arab conflict is just another incarnation of historic anti-Semitism. Given the current geopolitical situation, no peaceful settlement with Israel's neighbors is possible in the foreseeable future. Apparently influenced by realist thought, this group believes that power and military strength are the only factors that matter in relations between different national, ethnic, or religious groups. Periodic wars are inevitable and must be won. All other collective or private goals are subordinate to this.

The "conflict orientation" has a very strong, indeed moral and sacred, connection to the Land of Israel and insists that the state must hold to as much of this territory as possible. This grouping is highly ethnocentric in nature and gives priority to Hebrew or Halachic law over

[3] Luis Roniger, "Organizational Complexity, Trust, and Deceit in the Israeli Air Force," in Daniel Maman, et al, eds., *Military, State and Society in Israel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 371-372.
[4] Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, 208-228.

democratic and legal institutions and practices. Settlers in the occupied territories of the West Bank form the nucleus of this orientation.

The "peace orientation" is diametrically opposed to the "conflict orientation." The former sees the Jewish-Arab conflict as no different from any other negotiable dispute and is unconnected to the persecution of Jews in the past. This grouping frames the conflict mainly in terms of material interests, such as land, markets, boundaries, and water. According to this view, peace is the road to further Israeli development of democracy, economic growth, and cultural progress. It is defined as Israel's acceptance in the region as a legitimate state and society and is equated with security. To achieve peace and security will require compromise.

In this orientation, state and society have a universal civilian basis, without discrimination according to religion, ethnicity, or race. There is mutual reciprocation in state-citizen relations. The state must provide security, well-being and human rights, while citizens are obligated to obey the state's laws, perform military service (if needed), and pay reasonable taxes.

The institutional expression of this orientation is the peace protest movement and the large output from journalists and artists. The peace orientation is reflected mainly in the upper-middle-class Ashkenazi strata of Israeli society, which is politically identified with the Meretz party. The national daily newspaper, Ha'aretz, is identified as a major outlet of the "peace orientation."

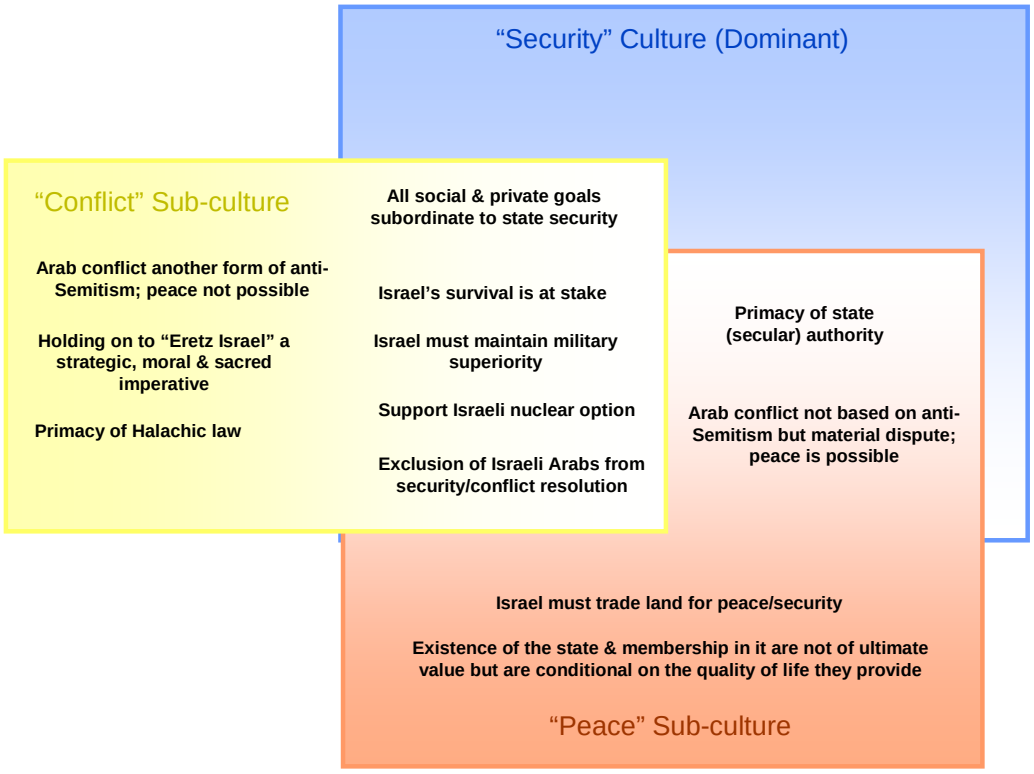

Figure 1: Notional Mapping of Strategic Culture in Israel

Despite the differences among these three cultures, there are important similarities. They all perceive a real threat to the survival of Israel as a Jewish settler society. They also acknowledge that Israeli military might is central to that survival. Indeed, peace-oriented advocates of returning the occupied territories are ardent supporters of Israel's nuclear capability as the ultimate protector of a smaller Israeli state. This support for Israel's nuclear capability is not universal, however. A small minority of right-wingers, who believe that territorial depth is the key to Israeli security, are suspicious of the nuclear program precisely because it undermines the rationale for holding on to the occupied territories. Finally, all three orientations believe that Israeli Arabs have virtually no role in the state security apparatus or in conflict resolution.

Kimmerling contends that these three orientations cut across most of the cultures comprising Israeli society writ large, such as the Ashkenazi, traditional Mizrahim (Oriental

Jews), "national religious" (a euphemism for religious fundamentalists), Orthodox religious, and new Russian immigrants.

Strategic Culture in Transition

Of these three groupings, the "security orientation" has effectively provided the basis of Israeli strategic culture since the inception of the Jewish state. The dominance of this culture has been eroded, however, since 1973 as a result of IDF wartime and training mishaps, demographic and generational changes, shifts in the role of the media and academia, the rise of individualism, and the emergence of religious nationalism. Indeed, such changes are responsible for the very emergence of the "conflict" and "peace" strategic sub-cultures.

The early stages of the 1973 Yom Kippur War went very poorly for the IDF, raising the prospect that Israel might be overrun by the combined armies of Egypt and Syria. While the IDF fought brilliantly to avert this catastrophe, irreparable harm was done to the institution as the linchpin of Israeli security and strategic culture. Further doubt was cast upon the professional competency of the IDF in the wake of the ill-fated 1982 war in Lebanon which, as current events underscore, failed to secure Israel's border with Lebanon. The inability of the IDF to suppress militarily the 1987 Intifada by the Palestinians cast further doubt on the institution's ability to "get the job done."

In contrast to all prior wars, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon was deemed to be a "war by choice," and consequently at odds with traditional Jewish definitions of a just and legal war (see below). This triggered a national debate that deepened the questioning of fundamental beliefs and assumptions at the core of Israeli strategic culture. Influential in this regard was the shifting role of Israeli media and academia. Previously, these institutions were full subscribers to the infallibility of the IDF, that is, critical examination had been subsumed in the name of national security. From 1973 onwards, however, Israeli media, academia, and even artists increasingly became vocal critics of the national security ethos. For example, instead of the customary articles run on Rosh Hashanah (New Year's) and Independence Day praising Israeli military heroism, the media began to run exposés on the IDF's operational failures, the harsh fate of

prisoners of war, and victims of battle fatigue.[5] There remains one important bastion of press deference, however: Israel's nuclear capability (as described below).

For its part, academia spawned a so-called "third wave" of sociologists more inclined to critically assess the relationship between the Israeli military and civil society than its predecessors. Second-wave sociologists defend their work, in part, by acknowledging that over time, they have too have increasingly questioned many of the assumptions behind Israel's national security ethos.[6]

Other changes in Israeli society have challenged the traditional consensus on strategic culture. The influx of 800,000 Russian immigrants following the demise of the Soviet Union posed a major challenge of absorption, assimilation, and preservation of national identity. Here again, the IDF has served as the nation's melting pot, helping to make self-evident to the new immigrants the sense of constant threat and need for military sacrifice on behalf of the Israeli state. Yet, because this pool of manpower has become so large, the IDF cannot absorb it. This has led to modifications in IDF conscription and reserve duty policy and has diluted the concept that all Israelis must make sacrifices in the name of national security.

This influx of Russian immigrants has coincided with changing values, particularly amongst the previously dominant ethnic and cultural community, the Ashkenazi. Whereas military service was highly valued by this group, a broader trend now casts the high technology entrepreneur, lawyer, or media celebrity as the "ideal Israeli."[7] This is reflected in a growing trend of evasion of reserve duty. According to a 1997 estimate, for every eleven IDF reservists, only two actually serve.[8] The deterioration of reservist morale forced the IDF senior command to exclude reservists from service in Lebanon during the controversial 1982 war and from security service in the occupied territories beginning in 1997. While this policy underscored the IDF's adaptability, it also introduced new constraints on the military's operations that would have been inconceivable during the first half of Israel's existence. Indeed, one Israeli analyst contends that it was this decline in reservists' willingness to serve that finally convinced Prime

[5] Yoram Peri, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis," in Maman, et al, op cit., 110. See also, Uri Ben-Eliezer, "From Military Role Expansion to Difficulties in Peace-Making: The Israel Defense Forces 50 Years On," in Maman, et al, op cit., 153-154.
[6] See "Preface," in Maman, et al, op cit, i-v.
[7] Peri, op cit., 109.
[8] Ibid., 126.

Minister Yitzhak Rabin to reach a political settlement with the Palestinian Liberation Organization at Oslo.[9]

While some segments of Israeli society have become alienated from Israel's military ethos in recent years, other communities have stepped forward to fill the breach. In particular, the so-called "national religious" groups have previously been on the margins of Israeli society. Yet, since the late 1980s they have made a focused and sustained effort to utilize the IDF as a vehicle to gain greater influence and access. Particularly noteworthy is the growing representation of national religious youth in the IDF's elite military units. By the end of 1996, for example, this community comprised 15 percent of the IDF's overall manpower but 30 percent of its voluntary elite units, which have been the traditional path to advancement in and beyond the IDF. National religious students have comprised 40 percent of the members in certain officers' courses. What makes this shift worrisome from the perspective of Israeli analysts is that, whereas other groups were motivated to serve in the IDF mainly because they accepted the dominant ethos of sacrifice in the name of national security, religious soldiers appear to be largely motivated by hatred of Arabs and a desire for revenge on them. This could produce a radical change in the value system of the IDF's senior officer ranks in the next few years.[10] Already by 1998, the first national religious officer was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General, with a seat on the IDF General Staff.[11]

Thus, while Israel succeeded in rapidly creating a national identity as an immigrant settler society and promoted the Israeli soldier as the natural inheritor of that heroism, within the span of roughly two generations, various internal and external pressures have significantly diluted the original conception of that ethos. This is evident in the emergence of alternative strategic sub-cultures and other trends reflective of the growing pluralism within Israeli society, such as the rise of the national religious generally, and within the IDF officer corps in particular.

Indeed, the 2005 implementation of the Israeli government's decision to withdraw unilaterally and permanently from the Gaza strip and from four settlements in the West Bank put to the test whether the IDF's religious soldiers would obey rabbinical or secular authority. Following the Knesset vote to implement the withdrawal plan, the Judea and Samaria Council of

[9] Ibid., 128.
[10] Information in this paragraph is taken from Peri, op cit., 130-131.
[11] Stuart Cohen, "The Scroll or the Sword? Tensions between Judaism and Military Service in Israel," in Cohen, op cit., 271, n. 13.

Rabbis declared that no government had the right to give away "God's land" and that it was "God's will" that soldiers not obey the orders to remove Israeli settlers. In the end, only about 30 officers and soldiers out of the 11,000 involved in the disengagement refused to carry out the eviction orders. Punishment for the soldiers came swiftly in the form of jail time, while officers were mustered out of the IDF. This very small rate of insubordination belied earlier concerns voiced by Israeli analysts and scholars over the potential for a large-scale IDF mutiny or even military coup over the issue of withdrawal.

The flare-up between Israel and Hamas/Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 provided a timely window into the impact these various societal trends are having on the redefinition of Israeli strategic culture. For example, to the extent that the kidnapping and killing of Israeli soldiers by these extremists in July 2006 were commonly viewed by Israeli Jews as clear provocations—and the IDF succeeded in suppressing if not eliminating these threats—there could be restored faith in the armed forces. Such developments would tend to reinforce the dominant, "securitist" culture. Similarly, if the preceding withdrawal of the IDF from Gaza and south Lebanon were seen as having invited these attacks, support for the "peace" sub-culture could be significantly reduced, to the benefit of the "securitist" and "conflict" orientations. Moreover, achievement in battle during this latest conflict could further the careers of religious soldiers, thereby advancing within the IDF officer corps and perhaps the broader national security establishment the "conflict" sub-culture's influence over national policy. By the fall of 2006, many Israelis had indeed concluded that the policy of withdrawal from occupied territory had been a mistake, and the movement to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank was experiencing a revival.[12] As for the performance of the IDF, it was clear to Israelis that their military strategy and force posture, which relied heavily upon high-tech stand-off attacks by the air force to reduce the exposure of Israeli ground forces, failed the test of battle against an enemy like Hezbollah.[13] Further soul-searching on fundamental Israeli security issues can be expected in the wake of the 2006 conflict with Hezbollah.

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[12] Scott Wilson, "War Turns the Tide For Israeli Settlers," *Washington Post*, September 25, 2006, A1, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/24/AR2006092400757.html

[13] Molly Moore, "Israelis Face 'New Kind of War'; High-Tech Tactics Fail to Halt Rocket Fire," *Washington Post*, August 9, 2006, A11, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/08/AR2006080801229.html

Threat Perception

At the heart of Israeli strategic culture is an immutable threat perception, the huge demographic disparity vis-à-vis the Arab (and increasingly pan-Muslim) world. Israeli political and military thought sub-divides this macro threat into a series of concentric circles that are roughly geographic in nature (see Figure 2).[14] The most proximate threat is the "Palestinian circle," which includes Palestinian citizens of Israel, as well as Palestinians living in the occupied territories and in exile elsewhere. This circle corresponds to "internal security threats" in Israeli parlance, that is, insurgent activities and guerrilla-type attacks against Israeli civilian and military targets emanating from within the state's borders, the Gaza strip, or the West Bank.

In the next ring are the immediate Arab states, comprising Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Here the threat is perceived largely in terms of cross-border incursions. This threat has fluctuated between raids by marauders operating from neighboring states (e.g., Palestinians and Lebanese Hezbollah) to large-scale attacks by massed Arab armies.

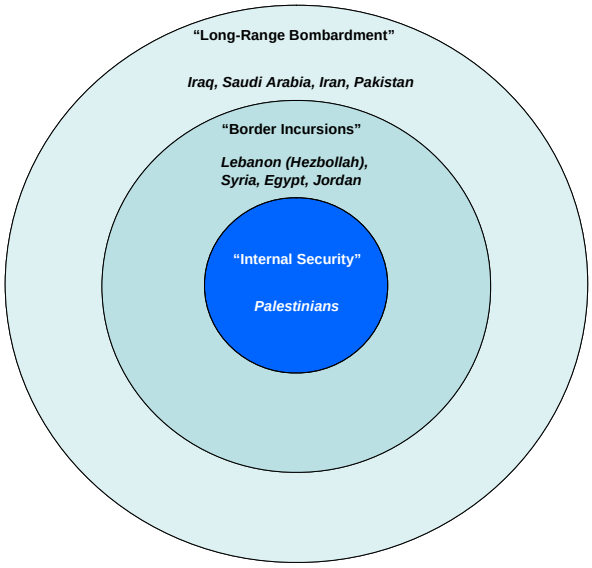

Figure 2: Israel's Threat Perception Framework

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Beyond this ring lies the broader Arab (e.g., Iraq, Saudi Arabia, etc.) and Muslim (e.g., Iran, Pakistan) world. Traditionally, this has been viewed in Israel as a remote threat, but Saddam Hussein's use of long-range missiles against Israel in the 1991 Gulf War and Iran's suspected instigation of the July 2006 attacks by Hamas and Hezbollah underscore the ability of "peripheral" states to inflict damage on the Jewish state, directly or indirectly. For a time, the Soviet Union was considered by some also to lie within this outermost ring, in light of its military support to the Arab confrontation states. Direct Soviet

[14] Baruch Kimmerling, "The Social Construction of Israel's 'National Security,'" in Stuart Cohen, ed., *Democratic Societies and Their Armed Forces: Israel in Comparative Context* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 221-222. See also, Rueven Gal, "The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF): A Conservative or Adaptive Organization?," in Maman, et al, op cit., 364.

intervention would likely have transformed the Arab-Israeli conflict into a superpower showdown, however, as suggested by the 1973 war. In any event, the "threat" from contemporary Russia lies more in its missile and nuclear trade with Iran.

The Necessity of Violence and Laws of War

As noted above, the state, acting through the IDF system of universal conscription and reserve duty, has socially constructed a sense of imminent threat of attack bordering on fatalism. Indeed, former IDF Chief of Staff Rafeal Eitan recalled in his memoirs how he was once called home from abroad to participate in a military action: "I know that I am back home…there is war. I do not complain: each people with its destiny."[15] Eitan's comments capture the widespread belief in Israel in the inevitability of war, consonant with Judiasm's historic struggle for survival in a hostile environment.[16]

While war may seem inevitable to Israelis, it is by no means desired or, to use the Clausewitzian formulation, simply a continuation of politics by other means. Indeed, Clausewitz is widely renounced in the Israeli military ethos. In a speech to IDF senior officers, Prime Minister Menachem Begin declared:

> Clausewitz['s] famous quote that war is the continuation of policy by other means has no place in today's reality. War does not continue anything. It is a break from everything; it is a world in itself, primarily because it is associated with killings; politically it is also an entirely different issue.[17]

Because war is a strictly negative phenomenon in Judaism, the Israelis have developed a prism that transfers responsibility for war to the party that initiates it. In essence, Israeli Jews have embraced as part of their strategic culture the biblical distinction between wars that are forced upon the state (i.e., "obligatory") and those that are undertaken at the discretion of the ruler (i.e., "optional"). Ethically, the former are considered "just" wars that require full public support, while the latter lack consensus and, by extension, moral clarity.[18] In secular terms, this

[15] Quoted in Efraim Inbar, "The 'No Choice War' Debate in Israel," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, March 1989, 23.
[16] Ibid., 23-24.
[17] Quoted in Inbar, op cit., 33. Clausewitzian thought was further discredited in Israel due to its association with extreme rightist politicians.
[18] Charles Ben-Dor, "War & Peace: Jewish Tradition and the Conduct of War," *Israeli Defense Forces Journal*, vol. 3, no. 4, Fall 1986, 47-50.

duality is expressed as "no choice war" vs. "war by choice." Generally, Israelis regard all of their wars to date as being "no choice," with the exception of the 1982 and 2006 warsin Lebanon.

Israeli scholars draw a more nuanced distinction, encompassing "defensive" wars, where the enemy "fires the first shot;" "preventive" wars, which are launched to destroy the potential threat of the enemy; and "preemptive" wars, where strikes are initiated in anticipation of immediate enemy aggression. Accordingly, they characterize the wars of 1948, 1969-70, and 1973 as purely defensive; the 1956 war as preventive; and the 1967 war as preemptive.[19]

The 1982 invasion of Lebanon sparked a far-reaching national debate in Israel. Political and military leaders at the time tried unsuccessfully to justify the conflict as a no-choice war. Their subsequent efforts to change the well-understood national political terminology of conflict (by introducing the phrase "war by choice") likewise failed, and as the goals of the operation expanded, and Israeli casualties mounted, initial public support for the war dissipated.[20]

Other biblical teachings are said to set the parameters for Israeli conduct in war. Among these is the stipulation to seek peace before resorting to war. This is typically equated with the ten-day "waiting period" between Israel's mobilization in 1967, in response to the massing of Egyptian troops, and the launching of Israel's devastating pre-emptive attack. Indeed, this waiting period is seen in Israel as reinforcing the 'justness" of that war. Israel's efforts to warn Saddam Hussein off the path to nuclear weapons prior to launching its pre-emptive attack against the Osiraq reactor in 1981—and similar efforts in recent years to dissuade Iran—are consistent with this self-image.

Efforts to imbue Israeli soldiers with high ethical standards are institutionalized through the IDF Chief Education Officer, a Brigadier General, the Military Rabbinate, and various military training programs. As noted on the IDF website:

> IDF soldiers will operate according to the IDF values and orders, while adhering to the laws of the state and norms of human dignity, and honoring the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. [21]

Among these values is the concept of "purity of arms," which traces back to the origins of the IDF. According to this "value":

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[19] Inbar, op cit., 23. Ben-Dor, op cit., 47-49.
[20] Inbar, op cit.
[21] Official IDF website: http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=32

> The IDF servicemen and women will use their weapons and force only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent and will maintain their humanity even during combat. IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property.[22]

The reported refusal of some Israeli Air Force pilots to drop their bombs during the 1982 war in Lebanon because of the risk to civilians is consistent with this value.[23]

Not all IDF Chief Education Officers have embraced the purity of arms concept, however.[24] Rather, there is an acknowledgement, if not expectation, that because IDF soldiers operate in an emotionally charged atmosphere, some will engage in unethical behavior. The aim is to contain such incidents. This expectation is rooted, no doubt, in past atrocities by some of the extremist pre-Independence Jewish militias, as well as the IDF proper. Among these:

- In April 1948, the Jewish right wing National Military Organization (IZL) retaliated against an Arab attack by massacring and then mutilating the bodies of 200 Arab men, women, and children.[25]
- Another retaliatory raid, this time by the IDF commando "Unit 101," under the command of then-Major Ariel Sharon, against the Jordanian village of Kibbiya in 1953 left 69 civilians, including women and children, dead. Under international pressure, the IDF disbanded this unit.
- In 1967, IDF soldiers killed nearly 50 unarmed Egyptian prisoners. With the discovery of the prisoners' remains in 1995, the Israeli government offered compensation to the families of the victims and asserted that Israeli prisoners had also been killed by Egyptian soldiers.[26]

By the late-1980s, Israeli civil society had become less deferential to the military. This greater scrutiny of the armed forces led to a wave of civil court cases in Israel for "deviant acts"

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wager, *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume I: The Arab-Israeli Conflicts, 1973-1989* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 113-114.
[24] See "An Interview with Brig. Gen. Nehemia Dagan, Chief Education Officer, IDF," *IDF Journal*, vol. 3, no. 4, Fall 1986, 51-52.
[25] James Burk, "From Wars of Independence to Democratic Peace, Comparing the Cases of Israel and the United States," in Maman, et al, op cit., 96.
[26] Youssef Ibrahim, "Egypt Says Israeli's Killed P.O.W.'s in'67 War," *NewYork Times*, September 21, 1995, A1. See also, "Rabin: POW Question Could Open 'Pandora's Box,'" Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-NES-95-165, 22 August 1995, 47-48.

committed by IDF officers and soldiers, particularly those of the elite "Mistarvim" (special hit units), during the Intifada.[27]

More recently, a team of Israeli professors, commanders, and former judges developed a code of conduct to address the specific challenges of low-intensity warfare. Regular and reserve IDF units are taught the following eleven rules of conduct, which supplement the military's "spirit" and "values":

- Military action can only be taken against military targets.
- The use of force must be proportional.
- Soldiers may only use weaponry they were issued by the IDF.
- Anyone who surrenders cannot be attacked.
- Only those who are properly trained can interrogate prisoners.
- Soldiers must accord dignity and respect to the Palestinian population and those arrested.
- Soldiers must give appropriate medical care, when conditions allow, to oneself and one's enemy.
- Pillaging is absolutely and totally illegal.
- Soldiers must show proper respect for religious and cultural sites and artifacts.
- Soldiers must protect international aid workers, including their property and vehicles.
- Soldiers must report all violations of this code.[28]

As another indicator of Israel's desire to adhere to humane standards of war, by 1994, the Jewish state joined the international moratorium on the sale of anti-personnel mines. The following year, it signed two of the three protocols of the international treaty banning the use of inhumane conventional weapons. These protocols limit the use of landmines, as well as anti-personnel weapons that rely on fragments that are too small to be detected by x-ray, thus impeding medical treatment.[29]

STRATEGIC CULTURE IN ACTION

Role of Strategic Culture in Shaping Israel's Security Organization and Decision-making Style

Organization

In many respects, Israel's strategic culture is indistinguishable from its national identity. Case in point is the organizing principle of its armed forces. The 1948 War of Independence was

[27] Peri, op cit., 112-114.
[28] See "Code of Conduct Against Terrorists," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces
[29] "Government Signs Treaty Banning 'Inhumane' Arms," Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-NES-95-106, 2 June 1995, 39. Israel did not sign the protocol banning the use of incendiary weapons, such as napalm.

fought by various militias cobbled together into the nascent IDF. That force structure was heavily depleted as a result of casualties, demobilization, and purges designed to remove extremists from its ranks. The IDF then faced a choice of moving to a model based on small elite units or a "people's army." Facing an influx of immigrants, Israel opted for the latter with the intent of using military service as the chief means of molding the immigrants into ideal Israeli citizens committed to self-sacrifice on behalf of the state.[30] As noted, this has been accomplished through the policy of universal conscription and reserve duty.

By design, the IDF thus relies upon a small cadre of professional officers (historically, less than 10 percent of the total force), a conscript base (105,000 troops in 2006), and a larger manpower reserve (exceeding 500,000). The standing conscript force is intended to defend Israel against a major attack for 24-36 hours, by which point, the reserves will be fully mobilized, enabling the IDF to conduct strategic counter-attacks into enemy territory.

In the 1980s, the IDF senior command under Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan made a far-reaching decision to organize Israeli settlers in the occupied territories into special reservist units under the "area defense" system. In so doing, he intentionally institutionalized a close link between the religiously-inspired settlers, who believe in the sanctity of Israeli land, and the IDF in the hopes of thwarting any future efforts to relinquish the occupied territories.[31] This politicization of the IDF has produced a legacy of embarrassment, including the use of an army-issued sub-machine gun by Baruch Goldstein in a 1994 attack that killed 29 Muslims and wounded another 125 in Hebron.[32]

Decisionmaking

Unable to bridge the gap between its secular and religious constituencies, the fledging Jewish state had to forego the adoption of a written constitution. Instead, Israel has relied on so-called Basic Laws passed by the Knesset over the decades to define governmental authority. In the national security field, a Basic Law governing the relationship between civilian authority and the military was not put in place until 1976, and even then only as a result of the 1973 near-disaster. This delay and the inherent ambiguity in the law underscore the degree of informality and fluidity that lies at the heart of Israeli national security decision-making.

[30] Kimmerling, "The Social Construction of Israel's National Security," 224.
[31] Ben-Elizer, op cit., 156-157.
[32] Ibid., 157.

Ben-Gurion established the principle that the IDF is unconditionally subordinate to the civilian government in 1949.[33] In essence, the elected government—embodied in the Knesset members who comprise the Cabinet and Prime Minister—is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. However, because Ben-Gurion (and a number of his successors) simultaneously held the posts of prime minister and defense minister, the relationship between those positions and the IDF Chief of Staff has been in constant flux. This has, for example, resulted in defense ministers who, like Ariel Sharon in the 1980s, wielded enormous influence over military affairs—effectively operating as a "super Chief of Staff."

Despite the give-and-take nature of this triumvirate, by monopolizing military expertise and related staff resources, as well as exploiting the permeable boundaries between it and civil society, the IDF has enjoyed significant advantages in advancing its corporate interests over the years. For example, the IDF Intelligence Branch alone prepares the national intelligence estimate for Israel's top political leaders. Efforts to create a National Security Council, alternatively in the Defense Minister and the Prime Minister's office, as a counter-weight to the IDF General Staff have amounted to little since the late-1970s. By contrast, the mandated early retirement of IDF officers (usually by age 45) ensures that a significant number of higher ranking officers enter the civilian sector annually. In many cases, these officers "parachute" into Israeli politics with very explicit agendas. For example, when Maj. Gen. (Res.) Ori Orr became Chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, he made it clear that his mission was to protect and advance the interests of the IDF.[34]

By the same token, the IDF has learned the hard way that getting too close to policy formulation can carry a stiff price. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's utilization of IDF generals to help negotiate the implementation of the Oslo compromise with the PLO (to better exercise his control over the process and co-opt military opposition) carried with it an ideologically-driven backlash against the IDF command by the successor Netanyahu governmentt.[35]

[33] Amir Bar-Or, "The Link Between the Government and IDF During Israel's First 50 Years: The Shifting Role of the Defense Minister," in Maman, et al, op cit., 323.
[34] Ben-Elizer, op cit., 149.
[35] Bar-Or, op cit., 330-333.

Role of Strategic Culture in Shaping Israeli Doctrine and Operations

The development of Israeli military doctrine and its execution in war, including limitations thereon, provide numerous examples of how strategic culture helps to determine the appropriate means and ends of achieving security. For example, Israel's lack of strategic depth and limited resources has historically precluded the adoption of defensive war-fighting strategies. Indeed, the very high social and economic cost of full mobilization, which puts virtually the entire male population under arms, signifies that war is all but inevitable. Such was Israel's dilemma in 1967. It had perceived Egypt's troop mobilization and closure of the Straits of Tiran as clear signs that deterrence was eroding and that another Arab-Israeli war would be needed to re-establish it.[36] The government decided that it could not sustain the IDF's mobilization beyond 10 days, and so the decision was made to launch a pre-emptive attack. Israel's inability to remain mobilized for extended periods without suffering major economic damage likewise compelled the Jewish state to escalate its strikes against Egypt in 1970 in order to break Cairo's year-long attempt to ensnare Israel in a war of attrition.

The stunning military success of the 1967 war was seen by many Israelis as divine intervention that reinforced their self-identity as "God's chosen people."[37] However, it was not matched by political foresight that could secure the peace, since the newly acquired territory carried with it an enormous and hostile Arab population. Given the collective's own experience with genocide, Jewish leaders could not bring themselves to conduct an ethnic cleansing of that magnitude.[38] Nor, could they accept a bi-national state, which would deprive the Jewish state of its raison d'etre. Hence, core ethical beliefs and identities that transcend partisan politics have prevented Israel from de jure annexation of the occupied territories.

The Jewish military ethos is also evident in Israel's response to the 1972 massacre in Munich, Germany of its Olympic athletes at the hands of the "Black September" Palestinian terrorist group. In essence, Prime Minister Golda Meir formed a secret committee that authorized the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, to hunt down and kill Black September members involved directly or indirectly in the massacre. General Aharon Yariv, who oversaw

[36] Kimmerling, "The Social Construction of Israel's National Security," 229.
[37] Ibid., 231.
[38] Kimmerling contends that Israel, in effect, conducted an ethnic cleansing of the territory it conquered during the 1948 war, turning some 700,000-900,000 Palestinians into refugees. *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, 40.

what became known as "Operation Wrath of God," echoed the "no-choice" theme and other biblical sources of Israeli strategic culture when he explained the rationale behind the decision:

> We had no choice. We had to make them stop, and there was no other way ... we are not very proud about it. But it was a question of sheer necessity. We went back to the old biblical rule of an eye for an eye...[39]

Other interpretations of what constitutes appropriate means of achieving security can be found in the IDF's handling of the 1987 Intifada. As noted above, the IDF decided that rather than risk a broader break-down in its mobilization capability—the key to Israel's overall military power and national integrity, it would accept constraints on its operations and exempt reservists from operations to suppress the Intifada. Eventually, the IDF command publicly acknowledged that it could not engage in the types of operations needed to eliminate the Intifada without violating societal norms. In essence, IDF Chief of Staff Dan Shomron declared that there was no acceptable military solution to the uprising and that it had to be resolved politically. While principled, this stand proved to be highly unpopular with Israeli political leaders and some sections of Israeli society.[40]

Impact of Strategic Culture on Israel's WMD posture

The Legacy of the Holocaust

As a small state in a hostile environment, Israel very much fits into the realist model—needing to amass power to ward off attack. As the realist framework lays out, Israel had two basic options, to develop its internal sources of power or to seek strong allies. During the critical early period of statehood, Israel actually pursued both paths. Under the highly charismatic leadership of Ben-Gurion, Israel sought an alliance with one or more Western powers that would guarantee Israel's security. It also embarked on a program to develop WMD.[41] Arguably, the latter path has proven more fruitful. Still, realism alone is insufficient in explaining Israeli behavior with respect to WMD, for Israel has staked out a unique posture—one in which it is widely perceived as possessing nuclear weapons without any official acknowledgement of that

[39] See "Munich Massacre," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich_Massacre . See also, Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince* (Boston: Houghton Miffilin Company, 1990), 184-192.
[40] Peri, op cit., 111.
[41] Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 66.

being the case. Strategic culture has helped shaped this and other aspects of Israel's attitudes and policies governing WMD.

The historical legacy of the Holocaust and Arab refusal to accept the Jewish state despite its victory in 1948 weighed heavily on Ben-Gurion's mind. Utmost was his fear that a future unified Arab attack—the *inevitable* "next round"—would lead to the destruction of Israel. Ben-Gurion and a very small circle of advisors immediately grasped that the only way to avert another Holocaust would be to attain the capability to inflict one. This "never again" and "no choice" mentality is evident in a private letter of Ernst Bergmann who, as the first director of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, played a key role in helping Israel achieve its nuclear goals:

> There is no person in this country who does not fear nuclear war and there is no man in this country who does not hope that, despite it all, logic will rule in the world of tomorrow. But we are not permitted to exchange precise knowledge and realistic evaluations for hopes and illusions. I cannot forget that the Holocaust came on the Jewish people by surprise. The Jewish people cannot allow themselves such an illusion for the second time.[42]

It is the perceived lessons of the Holocaust that give full meaning to Ben-Gurion's pursuit of not just nuclear weapons but also chemical weapons. With not just the Israeli state hanging in the balance but also the fate of the Jewish people, the moral ironies of pursuing WMD, including "poison gas," [43] were subsumed by the "no-choice" rationale.

Other facets of Israel's strategic culture influenced the path by which the Jewish state pursued nuclear weapons. As Israel's pre-eminent "founding father," Ben-Gurion established decision-making patterns that endure to this day. Chief among them is the informality and secrecy that govern military decision-making in general, and nuclear decision-making in particular. Because of the highly sensitive nature of the nuclear project, Ben-Gurion kept the number of personnel "in the loop" to an absolute minimum. To underscore, he did not:

- Bring the decision to construct the Dimona reactor before the Cabinet,
- Formally consult with IDF leaders besides Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan,
- Specifically mention or leave a written record of the nuclear project by name,
- Identify the project in the national budget, or rely solely on state funds to pay for it.

[42] Ibid., 16.
[43] Ibid., 48-49.

The nature of that sensitivity stemmed from a variety of factors including: debate amongst Israel's scientific cadre that it could build such a reactor on its own; France's own reluctance to make known its unprecedented negotiations and subsequent agreement with Israel to help build the reactor and a plutonium reprocessing facility; and, concern that if Dimona was discovered prematurely, the Arabs would launch a preventive war. This issue became even more sensitive when U.S. intelligence uncovered the project between 1958-1960, and particularly the Kennedy Administration made known to Ben-Gurion and his successors that the United States—a potentially major benefactor—was opposed to Israeli nuclear proliferation.

Israeli politicians and the public at large helped solidify this culture of informality and secrecy governing nuclear affairs.[44] Both communities accepted the notion that Israeli national security would be compromised by a public discourse on the subject. Alternative but limited consultative arrangements were devised for select lawmakers, and the combination of self- and military-censorship helped ensure that only a sterile and inconsequential public debate took place. Indeed, while Israeli media, academics, and the public at large have become more critical of the national security establishment over the years, the nuclear issue remains perhaps the last area of tacit agreement on the need to maintain pubic silence.[45]

Behind the scenes in 1962, the real debate was taking place between two schools of military thought as to the posture Israel should adopt now that Dimona was nearing completion, namely, should Israel shift its defense posture from conventional to nuclear forces.[46] A small group of protagonists from each school met with Ben-Gurion to make their respective cases. According to accounts from the participants, their debate reflected many of the functional issues faced by Western powers at the time. Among these was the argument that nuclear weapons could not substitute for conventional forces, and if the former were funded at the expense of the latter, a weakened conventional defense might actually invite (Arab) attack. Notably, this "conventionalist" school asserted that Israeli deployment of nuclear weapons would only precipitate Arab nuclearization, to Israel's overall detriment. By the same token, conventional force proponents did not rule out the need for a nuclear "bomb in the basement" that could be quickly brought to bear if needed. In the end, Ben-Gurion appears to have concluded it would be

[44] Avner Cohen, op cit., 143-146, 147.
[45] Kimmerling, "The Social Construction of Israel's 'National Security,'" 242.
[46] Avner Cohen, op cit., 148-151.

unwise to put all of the IDF's "eggs in the nuclear basket." In the realist paradigm, Israel's pioneering and far-reaching decision not to acknowledge openly its possession of nuclear weapons represented a rare case of a state constraining its military capability in explicit recognition of the so-called "security dilemma"—wherein increasing one's own security can bring about greater instability as the opponent builds up its own arms in response.

"Nuclear Opacity" and Deterrence

Still, for Israel to derive any hoped-for deterrent effect from the possession of a "bomb in the basement," it had to strike a balance between alluding to this capability without provoking a counter-productive Arab response. Here, Israel has managed to achieve what has been described as "nuclear opacity"—the ability to influence other nation's perceptions in the absence of official acknowledgement of nuclear weapons possession and with only circumstantial evidence that such weapons exist.[47] It has done so using a skillfully devising declaratory policy that "Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East"—a construct Shimon Peres apparently improvised during an impromptu private talk with the President Kennedy in early 1963, but which has become Israel's nuclear mantra ever since.[48] The cause of nuclear opacity was likewise served, intentionally or not, by the 1986 revelations of Mordecai Vanunu, a technician at Dimona who had been laid off for his pro-Palestinian views. Vanunu asserted that Israel had some 200 nuclear weapons in its "basement." The information and photographs Vanunu provided to the London *Sunday Times*—before he was kidnapped by Mossad and jailed for revealing state secrets—suggested that Israel's nuclear arsenal included sophisticated boosted-fission and thermonuclear designs.[49]

The growing concern that Saddam Hussein might use chemical and biological weapons against Israel in an effort to widen the 1991 Gulf War brought the following exchange between reporter Chris Wallace and General Avihu Ben-Nun, then-Commander of the Israeli Air Force, during a broadcast of ABC's *World News Tonight*:[50]

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[47] The phrase "opaque proliferation" was coined by Benjamin Frankel in 1987 and jointly elaborated with Avner Cohen in 1991.
[48] Avner Cohen, op cit., 118-119, 380, n. 21.
[49] Seymour M. Hersh, *The Samson Option* (New York: Random House, 1991), 196-207.
[50] John Pike, "Nuclear Threats During the Gulf War," Federation of American Scientists website, 19 February 1998, http://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/ds-threats.htm

Ben-Nun: “Would they really decide to send a non-conventional missile on the population of Israel? My own opinion is that that's very unlikely.”

Wallace: “Because?”

Ben-Nun: “Even if Saddam Hussein is crazy, he's still not going to commit suicide.”

Wallace: “And would it be suicide if he were to use chemical weapons against Israel?”

Ben-Nun: “He should think that he's going to commit suicide, I believe.”

Wallace: “There has been talk that if he uses chemical weapons he might face nuclear counter-response.”

Ben-Nun: “Maybe.”

Wallace: “Maybe?”

Ben-Nun: “Maybe that's what he should think about.”

While Ben-Nun’s comments are a rare exception to the IDF’s customary silence about Israeli nuclear capabilities, they underscore how deterrence is waged under conditions of nuclear opacity. While Saddam did fire some 40missiles into Israel during conflict, none of them were armed with WMD.

Under the constraints of nuclear opacity, it cannot be known with any degree of certainty what doctrine would guide the actual use of Israel’s nuclear weapons. Consistent with Israel’s strategic culture, however, we might expect the Jewish state to employ nuclear weapons:

- *Only after it had made major diplomatic and political efforts to warn off an aggressor*. In a severe crisis, this might entail the erosion or complete abandonment of the official Israeli policy of nuclear opacity.
- *When the political leadership perceives that it has “no alternative.”* Such a perception might arise from a strategic defeat of Israeli conventional forces that left the home front open to attack—along with a sense of abandonment by Israel’s erstwhile allies in the West. It could also arise from indicators that the enemy was about to use WMD against Israel. This suggests the possibility of last-resort escalation to shock the enemy into a cease-fire and nuclear preemption, respectively.

- *In retaliation for WMD use against Israel.* Given Israel's small size and the concentration of its population, it has been characterized by some analysts, and ominously by Iran,[51] as a "one-bomb state"—able to be destroyed with a single nuclear explosion. In such an event, Israeli behavior might once again be driven by biblical notions of vengeance. Metaphorically, this has been expressed as the "Samson Option,"[52] and translates into a determination by Israelis to "take down" with them as many Muslims as possible. Such a desire would likely entail measures to ensure that Israeli nuclear forces could survive a nuclear attack in such numbers, and with adequate command and control arrangements, as to strike the major population centers of the Arab states and the "outer-rim" of Iran and Pakistan, if necessary.

Non-Proliferation and Counter-Proliferation

Concerns about the acquisition of WMD, particularly nuclear weapons, by its enemies have compelled the Jewish state to devise strategies to forestall that event. Essentially, the choices lay in two areas: efforts to build norms against acquisition of WMD (i.e., non-proliferation) and active measures to disrupt physically such acquisition (i.e., counter-proliferation). Of these, Israel has clearly favored the latter.

With the advent of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, Israel, under heavy pressure from the United States, initially indicated its willingness to sign the NPT—even voting for a non-binding resolution in the UN General Assembly endorsing the treaty. However, this posturing only temporarily concealed Israel's steadfast unwillingness to surrender its "bomb in the basement," particularly in the absence of a meaningful security guarantee from the United States. Concern that Israel's failure to sign the NPT could stimulate further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East appears not to have weighed heavily, if at all, in the leadership's calculations at the time. To the contrary, Israel asserted privately to US officials that continuing ambiguity about its nuclear status served to deter Egyptian aggression. In short, Israel saw a greater threat

[51] In December 2001, Hashemi Rafsanjani, head of Iran's influential Expediency Council, said: "If one day…the world of Islam comes to possess the weapons currently in Israel's possession [i.e., nuclear weapons] - on that day this method of global arrogance would come to a dead end. This…is because the use of a nuclear bomb in Israel will leave nothing on the ground, whereas it will only damage the world of Islam." "Former Iranian President Rafsanjani on Using a Nuclear Bomb Against Israel," Middle East Media Research Institute, *Special Dispatch*, no. 325, January 3, 2002, http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=iran&ID=SP32502

[52] This phrase was coined by Norman Podhoretz in 1976 and popularized by Seymour Hersh in 1991. See Hersh, op cit., 137 n.

from the Arab conventional military threat and contended that until general disarmament could be achieved, nuclear disarmament was meaningless to the Jewish state.[53]

With little trust in multilateral nonproliferation, Israel preferred direct action to disrupt enemy efforts to acquire WMD and long-range delivery systems. For example, in the early 1960's, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser recruited German rocket scientists to help him build missiles capable of striking deep into Israel. The involvement of Germans in a project designed to kill Jews triggered obvious connections to the Holocaust. Israel's response was "Operation Damocles," a covert action plan using letter-bombs and other tactics to intimidate the German scientists from providing further technical assistance to Nasser.[54] In time, the Germans ceased their cooperation the rocket program collapsed.

Two decades later, Israel launched a daring air strike against the Iraqi nuclear reactor nearing completion at Osiraq, just outside Baghdad. Publicly defending the operation, Prime Minister Begin touched on a central tenet of Israeli strategic culture:

> If the nuclear reactor had not been destroyed, another Holocaust would have happened in the history of the Jewish people. There will never be another Holocaust…Never again! Never again![55]

This strike, which is widely acknowledged as pushing back Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons timetable by a decade—before the Iraqi program was eventually ended by US and UN actions—laid the basis for the so-called Begin Doctrine, which asserted that, "under no circumstances would we allow the enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against our nation; we will defend Israel's citizens, in time, with all the means at our disposal."[56] In reality, Israeli considerations of preemptive counter-proliferation are more nuanced and include such criteria as the magnitude and severity of the threat, the feasibility of a military strike, and the domestic and international costs of the action.[57]

Nonetheless, these issues have taken on greater saliency with the convergence of a number of troubling developments that touch on fundamental tenets of Israel's strategic culture, namely, the sudden emergence of an extremist Iranian president in 2005, Mahmoud

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[53] Avern Cohen, op cit., 293-338.
[54] Raviv and Melman, op cit., 122-125.
[55] Quoted in Hersh, op cit., 10.
[56] Israeli government statement quoted in Shlomo Brom, "Is the Begin Doctrine Still A Viable Option for Israel?," in Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, eds., *Getting Ready for A Nuclear-Ready Iran*, US Army Strategic Studies Institute, October 2005, http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub629.pdf
[57] Ibid, 140-145.

Ahmadinejad, who has publicly denied that the Holocaust ever happened and has called for Israel to be "removed from the page of history"; Iran's enrichment of uranium in 2006, in defiance of the United Nations Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency; and the continuing lack of an international consensus over how to thwart Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. Israel's response to these provocations encapsulates the preceding analysis of the Jewish state's strategic culture. Speaking in December 2005, Raanan Gissin, a spokesman for then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon noted, "Just to remind Mr. Ahmadinejad, we've been here long before his ancestors were here. Therefore, we have a birthright to be here in the land of our forefathers and to live here. Thank God we have the capability to deter and prevent such a statement from becoming a reality."[58]

While certainly not the only methodology available, further refinement and use of strategic culture may provide a useful framework for helping scholars, analysts, and decision-makers anticipate how the Jewish state might respond to the growing threat of Iranian nuclear proliferation and, if necessary, cope with the loss of its decades-old nuclear weapons monopoly in the Middle East. Indeed, by the fall of 2006, Israeli scholars and strategists were turning to this issue in earnest.[59]

[58] Paul Hughes, "Iran's Ahmadinejad Casts Doubt on Holocaust," *Reuters*,December 9, 2005. Available at http://in.news.yahoo.com/051208/137/61g2k.html

[59] Dan Williams, "Israel Seen Lifting Nuclear Veil In Iran Stand-Off," *Reuters*, September 2, 2006. Available athttp://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=284838&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__international_news/#

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