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# War, Democracy, and Internal Conflict

## Israel in a Comparative Perspective

*Gad Barzilai*

Many scholars of international relations still aim to conceptualize the phenomenon of war as a predominantly international event. This article shifts the analytical outlook. It looks at wars from the perspective of domestic politics, where war is perceived not only as a result of internal propensities but also as a cause of internal upheavals, dissent, or consent. How is internal political order in democracies influenced by wars? The relevant dilemma is how dissent and consent are formed in wartime. I examine how contrasting political dilemmas and attitudes regarding military force interact with characteristics of wars and military operations, state apparatuses, fear responses, threat concepts, cultural values (mainly those affecting political behavior), and political institutions (primarily ruling coalitions).

My main concern is not how wars are conducted militarily, but rather how a society is mobilized, managed, and affected by adverse security conditions. I combine an analysis of the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict with studies about conflicts and order to show how dissent and consent, international conflicts, and state power and legitimacy are linked in democracies. Political order in democracies, including Israel, is not a direct outcome or mere reflection of wars. Instead, consent and dissent in times of international military emergency and its effects on constitutional fundamentals of democracy are to great extent internal political phenomena strongly influenced by internal causes.

This study emphasizes the prime importance of political institutions in the historical context of cultural contingencies. It finds that political institutions, primarily ruling coalitions, are forces that generate political order due to structural constraints and political interests. In contrast to most studies of the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict and military conflicts, this study investigates the much broader context of internal political processes and the blurred, overlapping boundaries between international and domestic affairs.

### **Two Facets of Order: Observations on the Political Phenomenology of War**

Numerous studies have discussed how and why wars are launched, conducted, and ended. Only a few studies have asked how and why wars and other variables affect

politics in democracies during and after wars, but even these studies have produced partial findings.<sup>1</sup> We must therefore turn to history to learn how wars have helped forge consent but also caused bitter conflicts in domestic politics.

Since World War I the outbreak of war has generally brought political consent to democratic regimes. In thirteen instances in which a democracy participated as a belligerent in a war, twelve involved no overt political opposition to the war.<sup>2</sup> At most, only weak protest by small groups opposed war involvement. These cases also show that wars have displaced controversial topics to the bottom of the political agenda. On occasion, for example, in Britain in 1915, consent was accompanied by public enthusiasm that heightened political awareness, in contrast to the political apathy of the population in most democracies in peacetime.

Consent was also articulated by widescale volunteering for military service and civilian work in support of the home front. Consent legitimized government decisions to go to war. It helped mobilize resources for the military struggle and prodded the hinterland to adapt to the state of war. Consent in total or protracted wars eased the burden of war. Britain's success against Nazi Germany was aided significantly by nationwide consent. Such support fueled national morale despite massive air raids and heavy losses. It also fed an unprecedented nationwide economic and military mobilization, greater than during World War I.<sup>3</sup>

But consent also has authoritarian and antidemocratic aspects. It legitimizes massive state interference in social and political life during security crises. *Inter alia*, the political establishment imposes compulsory recruitment of people and economic resources, controls information, and curtails individual freedoms of expression, association, and demonstration. The state promotes the emergence of exacting sociopolitical and legal norms and endorses severe sanctions against the opponents of war. In essence, wars and the liberal principles of democracy are mutually incompatible, and consent might make this fundamental antinomy even more prominent.

Dissent can also accompany the use of military force. There are many instances of wars' producing consent for only a limited time, especially in protracted conflicts. Of the twelve wars launched since World War I with no dissent at the outset, six came to be disputed over the course of time.<sup>4</sup> Extensive public opposition took place in France and Britain during World War I, especially during and after 1916. European statesmen and generals had predicted an end to the war in six months, yet two years into the war there was no sign of abatement of hostilities, and both France and Britain numbered their losses in the hundreds of thousands. Even more clamorous instances of dissent occurred after World War II. Different processes operated to render war the subject of open opposition: the evolution of the electronic media as a means of political criticism, the increasing potency of weaponry and greater awareness of the deadliness of war accompanied by more insistent objection to the use of military force, the increasing weight of political protest in western political culture, and the development of legalistic liberal discourse that imposed more procedural

constraints on warfare. Dissent in wartime can be found in Britain during the Suez campaign (1956), in France during the Indochina (1946–1954) and Algerian (1954–1962) wars, and in the United States during the Korean (1950–1953) and, most notably, Vietnam (1964–1975) wars.

These events indicate that wars can produce political and social rifts that are so divisive that they call into question the legitimacy of government. France during the Algerian war and the United States during the Korean war experienced this problem at the hands of radical right-wing groups. Left-wing groups lambasted the U.S. administration and its values during the Vietnamese war. These cases teach that dissent in times of war can significantly affect political stability.<sup>5</sup>

The initiation of war, costly victories, and losses have sometimes resulted in the ouster of the incumbent administration and rethinking of the regime's ideology. Examples include Britain following the Suez campaign and France during the Algerian war. The French experience is especially indicative as the war fueled the transformation from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic. Even where controversial wars have not resulted in the ousting of regimes or governments, contentions have resulted in constitutional reforms, as in the U.S. during the Vietnam war when congressional legislation passed in 1973 imposed new restraints on presidential powers to initiate military action.

Thus, at the beginning of wars public opinion has tended towards permissive consent, and the general population has been inclined to support the government.<sup>6</sup> Two clear examples are the broad support of the American public for its government's pre-1968 Vietnam policies and of the Israeli public for Prime Minister Menachem Begin's Lebanon war policies during the first two weeks of that conflict.

Western democracies have sustained profound changes both during and following wars. They have known social rifts (France, the United States), political violence (France, Britain, and the United States), and processes of delegitimization of the administration (France, Britain, and the United States) and of the regime (France). They have experienced increasing difficulties in maintaining effective government (the United States, France). These developments stemmed mainly from the efforts of political groups during the Korean, Suez, Indochina, Algerian, and Vietnam wars.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Etiology of Democratic Political Order in War**

The study of this subject has been largely distorted by the oversimplified and erroneous functional premise that war as an exogenous factor leads directly to consent in democracies, with no effects of endogenous variables, such as values, images, attitudes, political concepts, and institutions. This assertion derives from two claims. First, people will support the political establishment in its war aims in order to attain victory. Second, people aspire to assimilate into society and externalize aggression,

thereby lending a sense of definition to their personal identities that becomes essential to their sanity. War allows aggression to be externalized and provides the individual with a social mechanism for assimilation. The national excitement generated by war enables the individual to submerge into the collective and to express aggression in the guise of the fulfillment of a national obligation.<sup>8</sup>

In practice the question is far more complex. In a pioneering study, written from a somewhat functional perspective, Pitirim Sorokin concluded that the effects of war on public behavior in democracies are contingent on several endogenous variables. He underscored the degree of popular support for war goals, the degree to which the lives and safety of the population are threatened, the likely damage in case of defeat, and the potency of the "sense of allegiance, patriotism and morale of the population." Another variable was government interference in the life of the individual through restrictions on freedom of association, increases in taxation, imposition of censorship, and arrest of political opponents.<sup>9</sup>

The last variable discussed by Sorokin was more fully elaborated by writers within the elitist approach.<sup>10</sup> In their view the political elite takes advantage of or initiates wars to realize its vested interests and to secure obedience and political order. The effect of war is not exogenous but completely contingent on state-controlled political institutions. Militarism is explained by the organizational and cultural weight of armies as bureaucratic bodies that control information and are highly skilled in the use of violence. These features enable armies to exert a decisive influence on the architects of policy, whether in formal or informal frameworks, particularly when policymakers are, or claim to be, confronted with security threats.<sup>11</sup> If the army or any other organization of collective violence becomes too prominent politically, it becomes vulnerable to political manipulation by the ruling elite for economic or electoral purposes. The elitist approach mainly emphasizes the net contribution of political institutions and ruling elite on the generation of political order in times of warfare.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of socioeconomic factors in explaining the nature of military force has been strongly emphasized by Marxists and neo-Marxists. The Marxists' main contention is that war results from basic tensions between social classes. War is meant to serve the bourgeoisie, since it diverts the attention of the proletariat from its real problems while enabling the bourgeoisie to conquer new markets (with the exception of wars whose purpose is the destruction of the bourgeoisie). While the Marxist school confines itself mainly to exploring the causes of war, the neo-Marxist approach emphasizes the repercussions of war. Armed force is considered the means whereby political and military elites control the masses. Armed force is exerted against external enemies with a view to swaying the public to support the bourgeois state. The state claims that solidarity is vital to state security. In truth, so assert the neo-Marxists, armed force is of service to none but the ruling elite and the bourgeois class.

Common to both these approaches is the essential argument that the general public is unaware of the bourgeois characteristics of wars. Therefore any consent is arti-

ficial.<sup>13</sup> Neo-Marxists concentrate narrowly on the structural aspects of state control over the mechanisms of oppression (army, courts, and bureaucracy, for example). However, they neglect various political factors that may be relevant to an understanding of consent and dissent during warfare and deal only very slightly with the dispersal of political power and the dynamic changes to political power foci. Marxists concentrate heavily on social classes, so as to exclude historical analysis of the evolution of institutions and plurality of domestic political attitudes.<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, liberals have concentrated on the structure of public opinion and attitudes. Liberal thinkers contend that the scope of acquiescence in time of combat depends on the breadth of basic consent regarding the fundamental prewar goals of the political community. Accordingly, consent must be generated in relation to two key issues: whether the oncoming danger is a threat to the survival of the entire populace and whether the use of military force is reasonable in attaining the goal of social preservation. Hence modes of response to war have been determined by the cohesiveness of the political communities.<sup>15</sup>

Because of accelerated industrialization, economic development, and growing wealth after World War II, western democracies experienced general political stability. This stability has been explained with the hypothesis that western democracies are based on compromise and pragmatic decision making, which reflect their postindustrial stage where ideology counts less and social groups realize their interests. Stability, then, has been conceived as a product of liberal, democratic society. War was not assumed to be capable of causing significant changes in the general stability-seeking nature of western societies.<sup>16</sup>

The public outcry over the Vietnam war, the inner city riots of the mid and late 1960s, and the student riots of the 1960s and 1970s produced an alternative concept of dissent. Accordingly, widespread public controversy became conspicuous in democratic political participation and challenged the legitimacy of constitutional arrangements. Public support for the Vietnam war decreased after 1968 as the antiwar movement grew in strength. After 1970 demonstrations grew in size and frequency. The outbreak of (partly violent) riots against the political establishment during a time of economic affluence led liberal scholars to a number of conclusions.

Studies asserted that in the democratic West a politics-of-conflict was evolving, characterized by attempts by broad strata of the public to intervene in decision-making processes, including in foreign and defense policies.<sup>17</sup> This "new" political culture of protest was attributed to claims of governmental mismanagement, a sense of relative deprivation, and dissatisfaction with and even alienation from the political establishment and its constitutional arrangements. The electronic media, especially television, enabled extraparliamentary groups to influence decision-making processes. In this context wars with aggressive goals engendered political, ideological, and moral dilemmas that accommodated the expression of severe rivalries among competing elite and social groups.<sup>18</sup> This argument, however, does not provide a clear definition of mutual rela-

tions among institutions, attitudes, culture, and the attributes of the use of armed force.<sup>19</sup> It ignores the significance of the state as the architect of sociopolitical order.<sup>20</sup>

Affinities of intellectual influences have existed between the different schools of thought. *Inter alia*, Marxists and neo-Marxists have dealt with the functional premise of war as an exogenous variable that affects domestic politics. The liberal school, however, has begun to focus increasingly on how social tension affects mutual relations between military force and consent and dissent. A corollary of this idea is the diversionary theory. The diversionary theory holds that in western democracies the executive sometimes boosts popularity and forges consent in the domestic front through the deployment of military force against external enemies.<sup>21</sup> The functionalist, liberal, Marxist/neo-Marxist, and elitist approaches, despite certain common features, suggest four competing assertions that will be tested in the Israeli case. In the functionalist approach wars are exogenous variables that tend to be a sufficient condition for internal domestic consent. In the liberal approach wars are exogenous variables whose effects are contingent on internal sociopolitical characteristics, primarily attitudinal plurality and political culture. In the Marxist/neo-Marxist approach wars are endogenous variables that reflect socioeconomic stratification and bourgeois state control over society in which war is used for the generation of an oppressive bourgeois order. In the elitist approach wars are endogenous variables that reflect the structural autonomy of the state and its ambition to take advantage of military force to forge consent.

Consent is not necessarily a corollary of a situation in which the public knows of, correctly understands, and accepts government policy. Rather, consent is a condition in which the public does not incline to reject a certain sociopolitical situation. Hence passivity is treated as consent. Consent does not suggest that in the political world true debate or negotiation necessarily occurs among the public or between the public and the political elite. Debate or negotiation can neither be presupposed nor automatically excluded. Dissent, in contrast, is any situation in which conflict between different positions and interests finds public expression in political behavior against the political establishment.

Consent and dissent are neither negative nor positive since each has diverse, even contradictory, meanings for society and politics. Dissent is neither a deviation nor a depravity but rather a phenomenon that can generate social and political developments in a more useful and equitable direction. Consent is neither natural nor necessarily desirable in politics, as it sometimes precludes the discussion of social and political options that are vital to policymaking. Political order is not one-dimensional. Rather, consent and dissent intertwine and find various forms of expression.

## **Mechanisms of Order: Israel and Other States**

**Arab-Palestinian-Israeli Wars** Israel is well suited to the elucidation of political



order in democracies during national security crises and wars. This case study covers the period from the termination of the 1948–49 war to the rise of Likud premier Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996. The ongoing legal and practical state of the national security emergency has complicated the evolution of Israel and its patterns of consent and dissent. From 1920 the prestatehood Jewish setting (*yishuv*) was embroiled in a protracted military struggle. The formal founding of the state on May 15, 1948, merely aggravated the Arab-Palestinian-Zionist struggle.

Since 1948 there has existed a constant, alternately latent, pattern of domestic controversy over how military force is to be conceived and deployed. Beyond modifications of style, secondary political changes, and events, such as the Egypt-Israel peace agreement of 1979, intrinsic alteration in the ingredients of the controversy did not take place until the Oslo Accord of 1993. Israeli society was divided. Socialist or dovish liberal groups, such as Mapam and Meretz, articulated a passive stand.<sup>22</sup> Labor and centrist liberal parties, such as Mapai, expressed a reserved militant stand.<sup>23</sup> Religious and secular nationalist parties, such as Likud and Mafdal, generated the activist military approach.<sup>24</sup> The first camp supported the use of force only in response to war or large-scale terrorist activities. The second advocated preemptive military strikes and, under exceptionally risky strategic conditions for prime state interests, even preventive war. The third endorsed a policy of offensive (preventive) wars to be initiated when the strategic conditions were appropriate.

In the strict sense of attitudinal pluralism and fragmentation of dispositions, all of Israel's wars were controversial. Yet controversy was not always mirrored in public political behavior during wartime. A deep gap existed between the infrastructure of the political conflict regarding military force and external political behavior and consent. Nevertheless, some events, such as the 1973 war, the 1982 Lebanese war, and the Intifada, had a distinctively traumatic impact on Israel's political order.

The war of 1956 was characterized by insignificant dissent. It was expressed by Maki, the peripheral Arab-Jewish communist party. Maki was outside the authoritative Zionist ethos and therefore unable to protest effectively or influence the ruling elite. During the war its leaders and activists were socially prosecuted and accused of being a fifth column.<sup>25</sup> The war of 1967 was characterized by all-encompassing consent, as represented by a national unity government, a grand coalition of 101 of 120 members of parliament, including Mapai and its main rival Herut.

The war of 1969–70 generated more dissent than any of its predecessors. Despite the national unity government, Zionist and non-Zionist parties alike opposed the government's policies. Members of Mapam and very dovish members of Labor and even Mafdal were displeased with the policy of the Labor-led grand coalition of refusing to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967. The protest activities were organized by a large extraparliamentary movement "peace and security." In addition, several dozen high school students declared their willingness to refuse compulsory military service unless the government changed its policy.<sup>26</sup>



The war of 1973 fueled dissent within the ruling Labor elite and its supporters. The government's failure to respond to the signs of coming war raised widespread criticism in the closing days of the war, when the tide of battle turned in Israel's favor and fear of defeat was less prominent. Nevertheless, Likud demanded that Israel reject any ceasefire before Egypt and Syria accepted unconditional surrender. This partisan contention was the first signal of the much broader dissent that followed the cease-fire. The protest against Golda Meir's government was expressed not only by opposition parties but, also, by extraparliamentary groups and members of Labor who hoped to take advantage of it to replace the traditional leadership of Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan.<sup>27</sup> Afterwards, Labor lost the hegemonic position in Israel's political system that it had held since the prestatehood period. It lost its image as the only political body capable of leading the country. Likud was ready to take power and defeated Labor in the 1977 national elections.

The war of 1982 was different from previous Arab-Israeli clashes. First, it was initiated as a preventive war against a guerrilla organization, the PLO, that did not pose a danger to the survival of the state or its territorial integrity. The war's aims were not focused against a tangible existential threat to the state. Instead, the military campaign was intended to solve the Palestinian problem by eliminating the PLO's military infrastructure and weakening its political status.<sup>28</sup> Second, the war became a protracted military involvement in heavily populated areas. Hence the army was confronted with the severe dilemma of how to conduct a costly war in the context of an intercommunal conflict while preserving a certain level of morality and efficiency. Third, the war was initiated in the midst of unprecedented political polarization, when Likud and Labor held equal electoral power and the opposition party, Labor, was better liked by the counterelite, the mass media, and labor organizations. Hence, after a short period of permissive consent, parliamentary opposition and extraparliamentary protest, led by Peace Now and several small protest groups, fueled public opposition that national institutions could not counter.

Dissent was clearly expressed among high senior military officers in the midst of their service, as thousands of officers made known their unwillingness to serve in Lebanon and their intention to disobey orders. Such massive challenge to the constitutional framework, which had sanctified military service and obedience, was unprecedented. The extensive dissent led to Begin's resignation in February 1983, the establishment of a national unity government in 1984, and withdrawal from most parts of Lebanon and termination of the war in summer 1985.

The Intifada (1987–1993) polarized the Israeli political system and weakened the state and its institutions. In one respect the Intifada was similar to the Lebanese war: the military was directly involved in an intercommunal conflict. Yet the Intifada was more problematic for democratic tenets than any other war in Israel's history. The army had to fight a hostile civilian population and quell its desire for national self-determination. It generated sharp debate over how to react militarily without ruining

the fundamental democratic principals of the Jewish state. Furthermore, the civilian leadership expected the military to quell the uprising, but the military was unable to respond fully within the limits imposed by the democratic regime.

Consequently, tension developed in the relations between the high military command and the ruling political elite. It was reflected in military trials where officers and soldiers were accused of abusing their power over the Palestinians in the territories. In their testimony the accused blamed the government for putting the army in a conflicting situation, calling on them to obey government policy, then convicting them of crimes. The government defied these accusations. The constitutional crisis reflected a deeper problem. Severe public controversies regarding the future of the occupied territories weakened the state and increased contention between its organs. The elite was divided over the possibility of resolving the Intifada militarily. The inability to govern the intercommunal conflict led to increasing public resentment of the territorial status quo. Yet opinions varied as to possible political solutions, from a two state solution to the forced expulsion of the Palestinians.<sup>29</sup>

The Intifada was interrupted by the Gulf War (1991). Most of the public and the political elite supported the government's restraint in that war because of the low number of casualties and America's willingness to carry the burden of war. There was basic agreement that Israel should rely on the U.S. unless Iraq used nonconventional weapons. But this agreement was not based solely on shared views. A harsh curfew was imposed on the occupied territories, and a heavy veil of censorship and secrecy was initiated within Israel. Controversy ensued immediately with the end of fighting. The war exacerbated contention over the importance of territorial depth. Right-wing parties, including Likud, asserted that the PLO's support of Saddam Hussein, Jordan's fragility, and Iraq's brutal attack on Kuwait taught the importance of controlling the territories captured in 1967. Left-wing parties and Labor claimed that the missile attacks refuted the notion that "territorial depth" was an important defense.<sup>30</sup>

**Structures of Cooperation, Values of Consent, and the Politics of Fears** These historical examples, like the non-Israeli ones, refute the almost axiomatic premise that extreme military emergencies extraneous to the political system necessarily create consent and social integration. Not every war creates a sense of shared fate or a feeling that harm to the state means harm to the community or the individual. In addition, the goal of military victory does not always create cooperation. Even though the outbreak of hostilities often leads to permissive consent, pluralism of attitudes remains.

Political institutions are of great importance. Consent is generated by structures of cooperation, institutions that internalize political pressures and prevent the externalization of domestic conflicts. Lacking such a structure, parties opposing war have no political interest in refraining from dissent, as occurred in 1973 at the end of the

Yom Kippur war when Likud objected to the acceptance of U.N. Resolution 338. The same phenomenon occurred in the Lebanese war when Labor and its supporters finally learned the true aims and scope of the fighting and in the course of the Intifada, following the breakdown of the national unity government in 1990. In other wars, however, mutual government interests prevented protest from reaching full-scale dissent. While Mapam objected to the Suez campaign in 1956 and Gahal opposed some moves in the war of attrition in 1969–70, both parties shared collective governmental responsibility. Their positions can be attributed neither to formal legal principle nor to constitutional commitments.

Major factors in this behavior were party interests and power sharing abilities. War issues alone do not determine how politicians react to emergency situations. Also important is their party's ability to influence policymaking, even in a government that is waging a war wholly at odds with their outlook. As long as political groups have a vested interest in the existence of a structure of cooperation, as during the Six Day war, the war of attrition, and the last stages of the Lebanese war, any number of issues regarding the conduct of war can be resolved within government. A good example is the formation of the national unity government in September 1984 during the Lebanese war, which reduced dissent at the political center. With the two leading parties holding a roughly equal number of seats, neither faction was able to form a governing coalition. Labor leaders, on the one hand, retracted their declared intention of calling for a commission of inquiry to examine the events of the war. Likud, on the other hand, refrained from overtly criticizing what it deemed the lack of adequate military initiative in the sphere of security.

The use of wartime structures of cooperation is by no means unique to Israel. In Britain national unity governments were formed during both world wars to reduce friction among the Conservative, Labor, and Liberal parties.<sup>31</sup> In France in June 1958, at the height of the political crisis over the Algerian war, de Gaulle formed a national unity government that delegated him unlimited emergency powers to bring the crisis to an end. Opposition to his policy was gradually displaced to the political fringes, where it was confined mainly to the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (OAS), the violent right-wing military underground.<sup>32</sup> Thus, once political cooperation is institutionalized in a structure, it reduces the possibility of dissent.

Values of consent and fears are additional components in domestic order. The public in western democracies tends to presume that dissent in wartime is injurious to the morale of the fighting forces, to war preparedness, and to the judgment of policymakers. Thus, during the Korean war, 40 percent of the war's supporters in the U.S. believed that "communists and disloyal persons in the State Department have caused serious damage to the national interest." They articulated the McCarthyite view that anyone opposing the war could be branded a Communist. During the Vietnam war, 48 percent of the war's opponents were reluctant to give public expression to their objections, believing "we must support our fighting men."<sup>33</sup>

Feelings and concepts regarding a shared fate, militaristic feelings, and the manipulations of the ruling elite all combine to create values of consent which in turn produce structures of cooperation and conformity. Individuals in wartime tend to assimilate themselves into the collective, waive their right to criticize the administration, and unquestionably accept, for a while, the *raison d'état*. This position implies that victory must come before all else, even at the price of democratic values. Fears of annihilation might dwindle as the war continues. A high toll of casualties might turn people against the war; its continuation might be perceived as more dangerous than enemy attacks. Under these conditions the efficiency of the structures of cooperation is significantly reduced.

Israel was even more susceptible to the influence of the values of consent. Some of Israel's wars have been fought only a few hundred kilometers from Israel's population and economic centers and sometimes a few dozen kilometers. The enemy has generally enjoyed quantitative superiority while stating its intent to destroy Israel's Jewish population. Accordingly, most of the public has viewed some of the wars as life and death struggles. In contrast, the wars of European countries and the United States since World War II were fought thousands of kilometers away and, even though they were perceived as vital national interests, were not thought to endanger the population's survival.<sup>34</sup> Britain's position in summer and fall 1940 may be likened to Israel's in 1967. The British armed forces were dwarfed by the mighty *Wehrmacht*, and a deep anxiety seized the British public. In both the British and the Israeli situations national unity was deemed a precondition of repulsing the danger and gaining victory.<sup>35</sup> But Israel has had to face fears not only in 1967. In general, Israeli Jews feared the Arab world. They feared dangers likely to materialize in the near future, within months, as following the Egyptian-Czech arms deal in 1955. And they feared annihilation, a possibility that in their minds could come to fruition in a matter of days or weeks at most, such as in the first stages of the 1973 war. Fears affected the willingness of individuals and groups to construct common threat concepts and put their trust in the establishment. Hence they figured significantly in generating values of consent, and they incited the formation of structures of cooperation.

Consent was more encompassing when military objectives matched the common denominator shared by advocates of force. In the absence of widespread public support for pacifist concepts in Israel, a broad consent has emerged during wars perceived as imposed upon Israel, such as the Six Day and Yom Kippur wars. When individuals and groups concur in their principal objective, victory in a war of exigency, controversy on other issues is often pushed aside. This conclusion does not hold true of wars conceived as being a direct outcome of ideological or partisan political, hence nonessential goals, such as the Suez campaign, the war of attrition, and most especially the Lebanon war and Intifada. In the first two, consent prevailed at the center and secondary centers of the political system, while in the latter two the very center was riddled with controversy. Important explanations of this difference

were the combination of contradictory approaches to the issue of military force and the polarization of the political map.

The endogenous mechanism of political order during warfare is not autonomous from the type of war. While domestic politics will to a considerable extent dictate the type of war to be fought, the nature of the fight will in turn facilitate the internal mechanism of political order. The time dimension is critical. Protracted combat incites political dissent for several reasons: the toll of casualties increases; economic costs increase; opposition to the constant mobilization of human and material resources becomes more efficiently organized; the damages the war inflicts on the quality of life become greater. All of Israel's protracted wars, including the war of 1948, the war of attrition (17 months), the Lebanese war (36 months) and the Intifada (69 months), were controversial and characterized by dissent. The same trend existed in other democracies. World War I was initially conducted with public consent in England and France, where even most pacifists were part of the overall war mobilization. Widespread dissent was raised only after 1916.

Another distinction can be made between wars of choice and imposed wars. All of Israel's controversial wars were perceived as wars of choice. The war of 1969–1970 was perceived by certain non-Zionist and Zionist groups to be over the Sinai peninsula, and thus not necessary for Israel's survival. The war of 1982 was defined by many as a preventive action and therefore unnecessary, while the Intifada was conceived by many as a clash over the territories of the West Bank and Gaza and not as a campaign for the state's survival. Empires and powers are less sensitive to these distinctions. Yet this taxonomy is relevant to them as well. Thus, one of the main causes of dissent during the Vietnam war, especially after 1968 was its image as an imperialist campaign that the U.S. chose to pursue in order to impose its ambitions on the world.<sup>36</sup>

The differences between interstate and intercommunal conflicts are crucial as well. Intercommunal conflicts make distinctions between enemy and friend much more complex. They raise severe dilemmas of how to fight in civilian areas, and they generate debate as to the scope and meaning of national identity and democracy. Hence intercommunal conflicts such as the Lebanese war and the Intifada fostered dissent. Britain, France, and the U.S. experienced similar dissent during their involvement in the Middle East, Algeria, and Vietnam.

### **The Decline of State Power: Long-Term Processes and Political Order**

Every endogenous mechanism of internal political order is contingent to some degree upon long-term processes. In Israel two processes were of importance: war fatigue and the conflict between liberalism and Jewish fundamentalism in a polarized political setting.

**War Fatigue** War is hard to get used to, even in a society living under constant threat. While the public adapts to an enduring state of emergency, war stands out as an extraordinary event.<sup>37</sup> Adjusting Israeli society to emergency situations required the setting up of legal, security, and economic apparatuses that ensured an efficient domestic wartime social machine.<sup>38</sup> But the average Israeli never became completely accustomed to war. In wartime public fears for collective and individual survival have increased.<sup>39</sup> At the same time there have been outbursts of enthusiasm and patriotism (usually in short wars) or a sharp downturn in the national mood (usually in protracted wars). Israeli society, also notably sensitive to the subject of war victims, can hardly be said to have adjusted to war.

The demands made by war on small states such as Israel are tremendous. In combat Israel is forced to mobilize up to more than 90 percent (and in any case not less than 50 percent) of its fighting age manpower. All wars, especially protracted ones, heavily burden the collective and the individual. The stress on the citizen (and especially the reservist) is not only psychological, but also economic.<sup>40</sup> The public is also tired of war and of the unremitting emergency situation with its attendant large measure of uncertainty. Partly due to such fatigue people were less willing to resign themselves to the casualty toll. Motivation to fight was also damaged. Fatigue caused dissent and intensified demands for an immediate end to the fighting. The erosion and weariness set in due to Israel's succession of wars. The earliest manifestations of this process came after the 1967 war. With the occupation of territories in 1967, there appeared to be a greater chance that a peaceful alternative might be found, whereupon the public began to question the inherent inevitability of wars. Acquiring strategic depth also boosted confidence in Israel's might and her ability to defeat the Arab states.

During the attrition and Yom Kippur wars conclusion of the military campaign was no longer sufficient. Likud and groups to its right sought forcefully to dictate peace. Labor and groups to its left wanted Israel to use the cease-fire to launch diplomatic negotiations and achieve a fair political settlement. While the right aspired to destroy the Arab will to fight, the center and left looked for definite political achievements, and not necessarily absolute military victory. Prior to the 1979 peace agreement with Egypt, when war was still likely to erupt and terrorism was still rampant, some political groups vigorously demanded the resolution of the conflict by radical means. It was their way of expressing fatigue with the status quo. The "dovish-dovish" groups left of Labor called for political settlements to be furthered by an Israeli peace initiative encouraging the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories.<sup>41</sup> Hawkish groups on the right favored solving strategic problems by military might. While the first aspired to expand the "peace for territories" formula, the latter wanted to prevent its fulfillment.

The key party in this hawkish camp, Likud, rose to power in 1977, and its leaders initiated the Lebanese war. Its initiation was in itself an expression of fatigue.



Fatigue motivated the use of the most radical coercive means to terminate the protracted conflict. But the attempt to overstep the bounds of military force that had been customarily employed against terrorism created dissent. The longer the war lasted, and the more clearly it was perceived to be deviating from the declared aims of campaign, the more the public came to doubt their government, allowing latent fatigue to surface to the point of dissent. On the one hand, fatigue helps create dissent in relation to wars; on the other hand, it is another motive in the development of extreme power-based concepts.

During the Intifada the burden of guerrilla fights increased, while the strategic aims of the governments were unclear. In a gradual process the majority among the public and elite came to advocate a territorial and ethnic separation between Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The main reason for the change of attitude was the growing sensitivity to casualties and the growing desire of the average Israeli to ease the socioeconomic burden of engagement in a protracted war.<sup>42</sup>

### **Polarization, Modernization, and Jewish Fundamentalism and Extremism**

Polarization involves the fragmentation of political power foci based on significant political distances and the shift from democracy under the hegemony of a dominant party to democracy ruled by a nonaxial party. In Israel it was associated with modernization, with more liberalism and greater readiness of increasing numbers of citizens for direct political action. When consent prevails, modernism based on liberal values may generate high degrees of political stability. However, in states such as Israel, where political awareness is prominent, society fractionalized, the political center torn by severe public controversy, and a militaristic tendency predominant, modernism will aggravate dissent.<sup>43</sup> When democratic rules are insufficiently defined, when nationality is defined by religion, when parties proliferate and competition is rife, modernism fosters political destabilization.

Mapai's dominance began to falter in the 1960s. Milestones in its decline were quarrels among its leaders that resulted in the resignation of Ben-Gurion in 1963, the establishment of Ben-Gurion's independent party, Rafi, in 1965, and the hesitation to initiate war in 1967. In addition, the distinctive party lines on peace became blurred in the national unity government (1967–1970), the Yom Kippur war blunder (1973), the weakening of the political alliance between Labor and the religious Zionist camp, and economic mismanagement. Herut, by contrast, gradually established its legitimacy through its alliance with the Liberals as an opposition party both worthy and capable of governing. Due to its inclusion in the government it could share the credit for the brilliant 1967 military victory, without getting the blame for the 1973 war.

Conflict as to the future of the occupied territories accelerated, and polarization weakened the political center. Likud's signing of the peace agreement with Egypt and the ensuing evacuation of the Jewish settlements in Sinai increased the support for radical right-wing groups that promoted annexation of the West Bank and abro-

gation of the peace accord. Labor avoided advancing a peace initiative in the 1970s and 1980s, and dovish groups therefore urged the government to initiate territorial compromise on the West Bank or retreat completely from it. As Likud came to power in 1977, a bipolar political status quo emerged. It was characterized by the absence of an axial ruling party capable of settling controversy before it created political rifts.

The increasing prominence of nonruling and extraparliamentary groups was an expression of dissatisfaction with the absence of any clear solution to the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These groups called for radical and absolute solutions to the problem of the occupied territories, while Labor and Likud proposed vague solutions that would allow them to remain at the political center and reinforce their public standing. Gush Emunim (Block of Faith) on the right and Peace Now on the left were founded in 1974 and in 1989, respectively. Both controlled satellite protest groups. Nonruling groups were better able to publicize their demands and criticisms as the mass media became stronger and technically more sophisticated. After the mass media failed to report about the preparations of the Arab military forces on the eve of the 1973 war, they became more critical and sensitive to a wider range of political forces. Multidirectional political communication detracted from the administration's omnipotence and gave the public greater ability to intervene in decision-making processes. The clamor that resulted from the Lebanese war was due, *inter alia*, to the broad range of communication options enjoyed by the protesters to convey their messages.

The occupation of the West Bank fostered political dilemmas involving social rifts which in turn contributed to political radicalization and violence that reached their tragic climax in the assassination of Premier Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995. Two rifts within the Jewish population, the ethnic tension between Israelis of European (Ashkenazi) and Middle Eastern (Sephardic) origin and the division between religious and secular Jews, are particularly relevant. After the 1967 war these rifts were strongly linked to the severe controversies over settlements in the occupied territories and the issue of permanent borders. Religious or observant Jews, especially Sephardis, tended toward political hawkishness and were more supportive than secular, especially Ashkenazi or native-born, Israelis of the drive to rule the West Bank and to use brute force toward the Palestinians as a means of solving the conflict. Hence ethnic and religious rifts were expressed with unprecedented political fervor.<sup>44</sup>

These tendencies became more complex as a few segments of the Jewish middle and upper classes became more liberal. Liberalism embodied more secularization, growing sensitivity to individual rights, a legalistic discourse, broadening use of high technology, accumulation of private property, and increasing criticism of traditional symbols of Zionism, including the army and compulsory service. The growth of Liberalism since the 1970s incited dissent. Jewish bourgeois society inclined to be

more critical than ever before of the protracted military conflict and wars that imposed heavy socioeconomic burdens on the citizens.

Historically, Israeli Jewish society was militarized. The military enjoyed a high level of public prestige, and its involvement in the public sphere was extensive.<sup>45</sup> In 1948 it was coopted into the political structure of the ruling party, Mapai, and it subordinated itself to democratic procedures.<sup>46</sup> The military participated significantly in national decision-making processes, and the high command, in turn, embraced the position that democracy was the most instrumental regime for security purposes. The liberal trend and polarization weakened this process of militarization. Liberalism encouraged resentment toward protracted military conflicts, which are counterproductive to private property accumulation, and polarization subjected the army to political debates, sociopolitical rifts, and partisan animosity.

Secularization and liberalism stimulated religious fundamentalism among nationalistic religious-Zionist groups and ultranationalism among non-Zionist ultraorthodox groups. Fundamentalism accelerated extremism and a readiness to disobey state laws, to criticize severely the legitimacy of the supreme court as an agent of liberalism, and even to use violence to prevent withdrawal from the occupied territories. Religious nationalism drew greater support for strong-arm approaches toward Arabs and Palestinians, and thus also for an offensive, divinely ordained war. The conflict between moderate liberalism and violent religious fundamentalism weakened the legitimacy of state apparatuses, which could not resolve it. The state apparatuses themselves reflected, articulated, and generated basic tensions between those forces. Hence such a conflict over constitutional arrangements, political order, and force is a source of dissent in wartime.

## **Conclusions**

Social science has traditionally depicted the sociopolitical essence of external violence as a cause of consent. However, historical and comparative examples show that warfare has immensely challenged the ordinary course of politics and often incited dissent. In contradiction to functionalism, wars are not merely exogenous variables; they affect the domestic political setting only through the internal mechanisms of the political order. In contradiction to Marxist and neo-Marxist arguments, the increasing bourgeois characteristics of Israeli society, however problematic from many aspects, have softened the militaristic trend and fostered dissent during and after war. Neo-Marxist and especially elitist theorists are correct in emphasizing the importance of state control and institutions in fostering consent and controlling dissent. Yet, in some contradiction to the elitist arguments, the state was never wholly autonomous from sociopolitical processes. In accordance with the liberal approach the long-term processes of modernization and liberalism have significantly influenced the mechanisms of political order.

From the Israeli case I would conclude that the elitist approach is the most useful theoretical tool in understanding the effective power of political institutions and the ruling elite in generating structures of cooperation. However, the liberal approach is useful in understanding aspects and repercussions of declining state power under specific conditions of modernization, liberalism, and polarization. In Israel, where state power is declining and the ability of the state to generate order is becoming more inefficient, the state's ability to mobilize resources for a protracted war is doubtful, and the ability of the political elite to prevent internal conflict is in decline. The internal mechanism, which led to consent in previous Israeli wars, has become less prominent in the 1980s and 1990s.

Yet Jewish-Israeli society is not nonmilitaristic. While the drive of politicians to initiate a preventive war might be very limited and perceived as irrational, the tendency to initiate short-term, low level action might become even stronger if the strategic environment were sufficiently conducive for this type of military action. When patriotic actions are the issue, the internal mechanism of order is still effective enough to forestall dissent or its escalation into the breakdown of democracy. The frequency and timing of military action significantly depends on the political establishment and its management of strategic conditions for internal purposes. While domestic polarization might deter policymakers from initiating war, limited military action might create consent in the short term and precipitate popularity and populism among various constituencies when elections loom.

## NOTES

I would like to acknowledge the constructive comments made by the anonymous referees.

1. For example, see Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization*, 32 (Autumn 1978), 881–911; Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Zeev Maoz and Bruce M. Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986," *American Political Science Review*, 87 (September 1993), 624–38; Bruce Martin Russett, *Controlling the Sword* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Manus Issachar Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18 (Spring 1988), 653–73; Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

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4. Britain and France during World War I, France during the Indochinese and Algerian wars, and the United States during the Korean and Vietnamese wars.

5. Joll, pp. 202–29; Kerkheide, pp. 188–350; Mueller, pp. 23–175; Robert A. Diamond, ed., *France under de Gaulle* (New York: Facts on File, 1970), pp. 28–48; *Sondage: Revue Française de l'Opinion Publique*, 2 (1959), 27–38; *Sondage: Revue Française de l'Opinion Publique*, 3 (1960), 39–62.

6. V. O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York: Knopf, 1967).

7. See note 5.

8. Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956); Lewis Alfred Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956), p. 144; Georg Simmel, *Conflict* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955); Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (New York: The Free Press, 1951). Coser, pp. 92–95, also recognized that war can sometimes cause disintegration in the social system.

9. Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity*, 2nd ed. (Westport: 1973), pp. 88, 133–44, 274–75.

10. Michael Stohl, *War and Domestic Political Violence* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), pp. 82–95; Robin Brooks, "Domestic Violence and Wars: A Historical Interpretation," in Davis Hugh Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Violence in America* (New York: Signet, 1969), pp. 503–21.

11. Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology*, 46 (1941), 455–68.

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15. For example, Robert Edwards Lane, *Political Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1972).

16. *Ibid.*

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19. Louis Kriesberg, *Social Conflicts* (Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1982); Arthur A. Stein, "Conflict and Cohesion," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 20 (1976), 143–66.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Levy, pp. 259–88; Migdal, p. 274.

22. Mapam, a socialist political party founded in 1948, condemned military force based on Marxist and socialist interpretations. Meretz, founded in 1992, included two dovish groups, Ratz and Shinui, and Mapam. It condemned military force based on moralistic arguments.
23. The Labor Party was established in 1968 and was the largest Israeli party until 1977. Its major component was the social democratic party Mapai, the dominant party since the 1930s. The Liberal party was founded in 1961 and divided into two factions in 1965. The Liberals joined Gahal in 1965 and Likud in 1973, and the Independent Liberals joined Labor in 1984. These parties established their positions from pragmatic considerations about the limited value of military force.
24. Likud was founded in 1973 as the major right-wing party in Israel. It is the successor of Herut (1948) and Gahal (1965). It based its military activist approach on ideological attachment to Greater Yisrael and security considerations. Mafdal was established in 1956 as the major Israeli religious Zionist party. After the 1967 war it based its activist approach on primarily religious messianic considerations regarding the need to settle the Holy Land, mainly the West Bank.
25. Gad Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order: A Jewish Democracy in the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 1996), pp. 40–49.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 83–101.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–22.
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36. Robert Warren Tucker, *Nation or Empire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968).
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39. For detailed surveys, see Gad Barzilai, "Democracy in War" (Ph.d. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987).
40. Kimmerling, pp. 45–81.
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42. Gad Barzilai and Ilan Peleg, "Israel and Future Borders: Assessment of a Dynamic Process," *Journal of Peace Research*, 31 (1994), 59–73.
43. David Ernest Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 1–80, 422–63.
44. Arian, Shamir and Ventura, pp. 317–34; Arian, *Security Threatened*; Gad Barzilai and Efraim



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45. See Gad Barzilai, Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar, and Zeev Segal, *The Israeli Supreme Court and the Israeli Public* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus, 1994).

46. Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Emergence of Israeli Militarism 1936–1956* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1995).