

The Idolatry of Force (Part II): Militarism in Israel's Garrison State



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Building on “The Idolatry of Force: How Israel Embraced Targeted Killing,” published in the Autumn 2017 issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, this companion piece examines the practices through which Israel's garrison state normalizes aggressive militarism and indifference to the pain of others. Political discourse and semantics, media, pedagogical instruction, religious training, and the shared experience of army service all feed into a warrior code and culture where combat and preparations for combat become second nature, and where violence, no matter how extreme and disproportionate, assumes collective legitimacy. A broad rhetorical repertoire is deployed to craft a narrative of virtue, sacrifice, and necessity. Key to this narrative are the threat to national survival posed by demonic enemies and the spiritual valor embodied and replenished in the struggle to vanquish them.

One aspect of [Gandhi's] genius lay in finding a way to speak to that part of the British soul that was, for its own historical reasons, already sympathetic to the values that Gandhi embodied in his struggle. He would have had little or no effect on the Nazis or Stalinists or the Khmer Rouge or the Chinese in Tibet; it remains to be seen what widespread Gandhian resistance would do to Israelis.
—David Dean Shulman

Eyes Wide Shut

IN 1943, THE NAZIS ARRESTED HANNA LEVY-HASS, a Communist, a partisan activist, and a Jew, transporting her from Montenegro to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Lower Saxony. The trip took days, and the train made long layovers at sidings. She remembers ordinary Germans staring through the slats of the cattle cars to take stock of the crammed human cargo. Their gaze was blank. For Amira Hass, Hanna's daughter, this image of stupefied detachment became a powerful motif in her own career as a furiously honest Israeli journalist who continually returns to the same question: how is it that we can so easily turn a blind eye to the suffering of others, seeing and yet not seeing what is directly in front of us?

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Freud was fascinated by the craftiness (which he said “almost deserve[d] to be described as artful”) that allows people to have it both ways, to acknowledge and simultaneously disavow uncomfortable facts.¹ While Freud analyzed this artful way of dealing with reality at the level of individual psychology, evasion and denial are also politically institutionalized, particularly when systems rooted in oppression and inequality have need to dull the moral wits of citizens so that they become either passive onlookers to crimes or willing perpetrators. There is no template for collective indoctrination, no gauge to measure the relative degree to which conscience, and consciousness, become bent to shape under various regimes, and no fixed prosecutorial code or criteria to judge those who abandon ordinary human sympathy. The German voyeurs of Levy-Hass were numbed in their own particular way. “When we diagnose an illness, it is in order to find the remedy; it’s not in order to compare,” said Amira Hass, who has worked ceaselessly to identify the nature of the paralysis that grips her country.²

A photograph from 30 March 2018, when Palestinians in Gaza launched the Great March of Return (see *JPS* 47 [3]), shows Israeli snipers splayed out on the top of a berm, one of a series of earthen barriers that forms a raised fortification straddling the perimeter of Gaza.³ Their telescopic scopes provide precise details of the demonstrators penned in on the other side of the fence. The line of sight is clear, the distance child’s play. For some in the sniper team, this might be sport, a chance to bag prey from a blind.⁴ Others are no doubt more businesslike in their approach to the task at hand. But the rules of engagement remain loose. For the last eleven years, Gaza has been defined as a “hostile entity,” helping to make all who live there fair game.⁵ During the latest round of carnage, B’Tselem’s executive director, Hagai El-Ad, urged Israeli soldiers at the Gaza border to refuse illegal orders to shoot to kill. No one heeded the call. Taking aim, snipers saw targets to strike rather than a black flag warning against the commission of a crime.⁶ As the death toll passed 150, with protestors maimed and crippled in their thousands, Israeli society remained implacable and unmoved. The few voices in the wilderness, like El-Ad and Avner Gvaryahu, executive director of Breaking the Silence, the activist group of Israeli army veterans, went either unheard or scorned. “Ninety-nine percent of the public believe that Gaza is getting what it deserves, that it needs to be taught a lesson. There’s a total lack of awareness about the reality of peoples’ lives in Gaza, a total lack of concern or responsibility,” commented a Hebrew University lecturer, who requested anonymity, given what he said was the growing, systematic harassment of dissident critics.⁷

Israel has often been labeled a “garrison state.” A heuristic concept rather than a precisely delineated model, the term originated in a 1941 article written by Harold Lasswell.⁸ A pioneer in the field of political psychology, Lasswell worked for the U.S. government as an expert on Nazi propaganda, and later, with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a strategist in the Cold War “battle of ideas” waged against Communism. “The trend of our time is away from the dominance of the businessman, and toward the supremacy of the soldier,” he wrote.⁹ For Lasswell, the distinctive frame of reference in a fighting society is fighting effectiveness, that is, the ability to have all social change translate into battle potential. Because “society is honeycombed with cells of separate experience, of individuality. . . . Concerted action under such conditions depends upon skillfully guiding the minds of men; hence the enormous importance of symbolic manipulation in modern society” in order to flatten out “profound

ideological divergencies” and create a sense of collective “destiny and mission.” From the earliest years, “youth will be trained to subdue—to disavow, to struggle against—any specific opposition to the ruling code of collective exactions.” The end result is what Lasswell describes as “mystic ‘democracy’” where “authority and control are highly concentrated yet where part of the established practice is to speak in the name of the people as a whole,” where “influence is measured by control over values,” where fighting morale is maintained through “a spider web of ceremony,” and where “bloodletting is needed in order to preserve those virtues of sturdy acquiescence in the regime.” Although Lasswell cautioned that his essay represented an effort to create a “developmental construct” rather than to offer a “dogmatic forecast,” many of his insights and formulations have proved prescient and solid, helping to establish a framework for what has come to be known as “the critical perspectives” approach to the study of civil-military affairs.¹⁰

Over the last several decades, Israeli practitioners of this approach have scrutinized the hegemonic role of military and security structures in their own country. With the possible exception of North Korea, there is no other state than Israel where armed forces have been so dominant in society for so long, where war and preparations for war are so integral to collective meaning and identity, and where martial dispositions and attitudes are so assiduously inculcated. Potent networks link former elites within the Israeli army, the Mossad, and the Shin Bet to their partners in the civilian sphere, from the media to politics, from the economy to foreign affairs. What Zeev Moaz calls “structural militarization” provides effective control absent any putsch, thereby preserving the facade of a vibrant democracy operating under civilian rule.¹¹ As an Israeli army colonel told scholar and author Edward Bernard Glick, “If I tell my men to march to Damascus, they will follow me blindly. But if I order them to stage a coup and take over the Knesset, the Prime Minister’s Bureau, the President’s Residence, the Supreme Court Building, the newspapers, and the radio and television stations, they will just stand there and laugh at me.”¹² It is precisely the point that there has never been a need for such overt praetorianism, given the armed forces’ decisive influence on Israeli institutions and modes of thought.¹³

Militarism, says Uri Ben-Eliezer, has “crystallized into a value, a formula, and an ideology.”¹⁴ The essence of ideology lies in its matter-of-factness, entirely unsolicited and spontaneous, as natural as breathing.¹⁵ But its organic appearance belies a relentlessly systematic process of cultural production. The Israeli social scientist Mirta Furman examines how nursery schools and kindergartens serve as sites where young children are inducted into a community of memory, with national holidays marked out for didactic rituals meant to underscore the immutable nature of the threat posed to the Jewish people and the necessity of war and sacrifice. She writes:

Totemic time, as distinct from chronological time, is guided not by the principle of temporal continuity but by thematic continuity—in our case, the theme of war. The thread of war runs through the whole of this history. . . . Two thousand years and more do not affect the essence of the message.

All the wars are fundamentally alike, all have the same underlying characteristics: an enemy who imposes the war, few against many, the nation’s heroism, and ultimate victory. Even the enemy is essentially the same, constituting a uniform category whether Greek, Roman, Nazi, English, Arab, or Palestinian.¹⁶

Passages read to children during Independence Day ceremonies tell a story of perpetual menace and miraculous triumph. Furman provides the following as examples:

- The chronicles of the Jewish people are laden with suffering and tears. The precept 'in thy blood, live' has accompanied this nation since its appearance on the stage of history.
 - Pharaoh decided to torment them in their agony and cast their sons into the Nile.
 - Haman ordered them to be destroyed, killed and obliterated.
 - Chmielnicki massacred them in huge numbers.
 - Petlura perpetrated programs against them.
 - . . . And what the evil regime of Hitler did—the annihilation of the Jewish people.
 - The country's gates were closed, British soldiers watched the beaches.
 - The Arab states, which did not accept Israel's existence, tried to wipe it off the face of the earth.
- [. . .]

Following the glorious and brief six-day war, the State of Israel grew and expanded. The borders were distanced from all settlements, with the enemy on the other side. There was a sense of security, well-being—of a greater Israel and all of it ours.

Furman also describes the following exchange—Teacher: “The state of Israel belongs to the Jews.” Child: “The Arabs want to take our whole village but we won't let them.” Teacher: “No, we won't let them, and we will defend our village like the Maccabees did.”¹⁷

Existential Foreboding Gives Way to Messianic Redemptionism

The ruling elite that governed the state during its formative years wanted Zionism to strike a balance between existential foreboding and guarded confidence that a *modus vivendi* with hostile neighbors could be reached—once these had come to accept that belligerence against Israel was futile and self-defeating. Borrowing from his despised rival, David Ben-Gurion appropriated Ze'ev Jabotinsky's concept of the Iron Wall. In other words: cumulative deterrence, achieved through painful punishment repetitively meted out to transgressors, might eventually teach a lesson even to the most recalcitrant and thick-headed foe. But the possibility for rapprochement with Israel's Arab neighbors was always theoretical. Some, like Moshe Dayan, remained equivocal and even dubious. Dayan's brief and biblically allusive speech after the 1956 killing of Roi Rotberg (regarded by the late Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling as a key to deciphering the truth about Israeli society and militarism) is infused with a sense of fated and irreconcilable enmity:

The millions of Jews, annihilated without a land, peer out at us from the ashes of Israeli history and command us to settle and to rebuild a land for our people. But beyond the furrow that marks the border, lies a surging sea of hatred and vengeance, yearning for the day that tranquility blunts our alertness, for the day we heed the ambassadors of conspiring hypocrisy, who call us to lay down our arms. . . . Have we forgotten that this small band of youths, settled in Nahal Oz, carries on its shoulders the heavy gates of Gaza, beyond which hundreds of thousands of eyes and arms huddle together and pray for the onset of our weakness so that they may tear us to pieces—has this been forgotten?¹⁸

Dayan concludes his eulogy with an image of the gentle unsuspecting victim struck down by serpents who lay in wait: "The longing for peace deafened his ears and he heard not the sound of the coiled murderers."¹⁹

It is arguable whether the concept of the Iron Wall ever operated as firm guide to strategic practice rather than as lip service to the pursuit of diplomatic compromise. But after 1967, the question became increasingly moot. Conquest led to euphoric triumphalism. The task of subjugating a captive population demanded a vast security infrastructure built to last. No longer was armed force even rhetorically invoked as a technique of coercive bargaining aimed at bringing adversaries to the negotiating table. The center of gravity began to shift towards maximalist positions along lines that settlers would help map out and fill in. Once shunned as strange zealots with a dark vision, the lords of the land succeeded over time in colonizing not only "Judea and Samaria" but also ideological space within Israel as a whole. "Our victory or loss will be decided by the hearts of the people and the political or public mood. . . . [W]e cannot succeed without support from the majority," declared Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, one of the founders of Gush Emunim, during a 1987 speech.²⁰ In a 2015 address marking the tenth anniversary of the withdrawal of settlers from Gaza, Rabbi Abraham Wasserman sounded the same theme. "We will not [be able to] consolidate our path solely by settling in our sacred land. . . . From now on the aim is to settle within the centres of influence."²¹

No longer kept sequestered from the secular world, bound up in pietistic contemplation, young religious nationalists were sent out as pioneers to occupy structures of power and transform them from within. Over the course of four decades, successive generations have heeded this call to arms, implementing what was meant as an "avant-garde" rather than a "melting-pot" approach, "not with the aim of assimilating . . . and becoming 'infected,' but rather with the aim of healing."²² In this campaign of "immunized integration," the military has represented the prized target and main point of attack. A system of premilitary academies became the route of infiltration. The first of these, Bnei David, was established in 1988 on the grounds of a West Bank settlement by Rabbi Eli Sadan, who also held a senior rank in the army reserves. A boarding school with a year-long program that combined Torah studies and military training, its aim was to prepare a cadre of spiritual warriors for entry into elite combat units and eventually the officer corps. Today, there are two dozen such academies. The cumulative effect has proved dramatic. In less than two decades, the percentage of soldiers from religious nationalist backgrounds who graduate from officers' training courses increased from two and a half percent to nearly a third of the total cohort.²³ (In May 2016, Sadan received the Israel Prize for lifetime achievement. In announcing the decision, Education Minister Naftali Bennett hailed him as a "Zionist revolutionary."²⁴)

On the eve of the attack on Gaza in 2014, one of Bnei David's graduates, Colonel Ofer Winter, who served as Givati Brigade commander, wrote to his soldiers: "History has chosen us to spearhead the fighting (against) the terrorist 'Gazan' enemy which abuses, blasphemes and curses the God of Israel's (defense) forces."²⁵ Operating within the discourse of messianic redemption, Winter framed Operation Protective Edge as a cosmic struggle that could only end when wickedness was vanquished. That such a senior officer would so openly deploy biblical eschatology to indoctrinate his troops, and that Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman

would feel no hesitation about appointing him in July 2018 as his military secretary, suggests how mainstream the settler project and its bellicose supernaturalism have become.²⁶ But the rise of the religious nationalist camp has served only to add mystical theocratic elements to what was already a deep strain of irrationality in Israel's conduct of military affairs, no matter the traditionally secular orientation of Israeli army elites.

Well before figures like Winter came on the scene, with visions of divine providence assuming the shape of a cloud to protect his troops in Gaza, critical thinking about when and why to pursue armed conflict had long since atrophied. The deployment of force became not just routine but rote, a conditioned Pavlovian response rather than a meticulously reflective decision. Military violence, political scientist Ian Lustick suggests, settled into a fixed pattern—the *ratonnade* (literally, rat hunt)—a “term used to characterize the French practice in Algeria of entering casbahs and other Muslim quarters, killing inhabitants, and then quickly returning to European areas or bases.” Such strikes “against the enemy ‘on the other side of the wall’” were designed for purposes of “punishment, destruction and psychological release.”²⁷ The practice of *ratonnade* evolved into a stand-alone ritual, detached from any logical plan of action, any coherent strategic theory, any principle of prudence or reasonable sense of limits. “Repetition compulsion” took hold. Israel came to resemble Karen, “the doomed heroine of Hans Christian Andersen’s “Red Shoes,” who finds she can’t take off her weirdly possessed slippers and so dances herself to death.”²⁸

Reptiles and Demons

Lexicologist Victor Klemperer understood that words shape how we think and act. A German Jew married to a non-Jew, he survived the Third Reich by the skin of his teeth, all the while tracking in meticulous detail the events of everyday life and the steady domestication of fascist hegemony. According to one reviewer, his diaries record, the “all-encompassing derangement” of public consciousness taking place around him. The reviewer says that Klemperer paid acute attention to the “linguistic tics [that] crystallized the moral squalor of the times.”²⁹ Israel's garrison state has also given rise to symptomatic tics. These are on garish display in discourse surrounding the Gaza Strip. A set of descriptive tropes, redolent with aversion and disgust, has entered the lexicon, helping to mobilize aggression and seal off empathy. Perhaps because of its teeming population of impoverished refugees with collective dreams of return, perhaps because of the militant national identity that Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser allowed to take root (unlike Jordanian policies in the West Bank), perhaps because it served as the launch pad for popular resistance during the First Intifada and the staging ground for suicide attacks during the Second Intifada, the small coastal enclave has long held a fearsome reputation among Israelis. “‘Gaza is the problem,’ Levi Eshkol, then prime minister, said in June 1967. ‘I was there in 1956 and saw venomous snakes walking in the street. We should settle some of them in the Sinai, and hopefully others will immigrate [*sic*].’ Eshkol was discussing the fate of the newly occupied territories: he and his cabinet wanted the Gaza Strip, but not the people living in it. Israelis often refer to Gaza as ‘Me’arat Nachashim,’ a snake pit.”³⁰ That image continues to be deployed: on Facebook, Justice Minister Ayelet

Shaked reposted an incendiary piece by “former Netanyahu associate and journalist” Uri Elitzur that read: “Who is the enemy? The Palestinian people. . . . They are all enemy combatants . . . and their blood shall be on their heads. Now this also includes the mothers of the martyrs. . . . They should follow their sons, nothing would be more just. They should go, as should the physical homes in which they raised the snakes. Otherwise, more little snakes will be raised there.”³¹

At the memorial service for Sergeant Hadar Goldin, a graduate of Bnei David who was killed while fighting in a tunnel complex in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge, a speaker alluded to the transcendent struggle in which he died. “Our dear Hadar, you know what you were fighting for: not for quiet skies over the South and not for an iron dome [*kipat barzel*] or some agreement or another. You were fighting the war of the yarmulke of faith [*kipat ha'emuna*], the dome of heaven [*kipat shamayim*], the powers of purity [*tahara*] against the tunnel dweller, the cave diggers who do not know the sun's light, who sit in silence and are considered as nothingness.”³² In this narrative of apocalyptic battle, Gaza's underground network becomes the heart of darkness. Constructed as an economic lifeline to survive a draconian siege and as a means of tactical maneuver for outmatched and outgunned Palestinian fighters, the tunnel system has entered into the Israeli social imagination as a terrifying nether world. The key event was the 2006 abduction of Gilad Shalit by infiltrators who burrowed beneath the fence separating Israel from Gaza. “It takes us a little bit to our childhood fairy tales of demons,” said a resident of a kibbutz on the Israeli side. “It's a very pastoral environment I live in, the quiet, the green grass, the trees. It's not a pleasant thought that you sit one day on the patio drinking coffee with your wife and a bunch of terrorists will rise from the ground.”³³ Quick to stoke this sense of dread, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to destroy the tunnels, whose sole purpose, he claimed, was “the destruction of our civilians and the killing of our children.”³⁴

Even as it carried out massive attacks on unarmed demonstrators, most of them young, Israel framed its 2018 response to the Great March of Return as a last stand against the slaughter of innocents. In a government video produced to coincide with the outbreak of the protests, footage shows a young girl playing with a dollhouse, which then cuts to an image from the bloodstained aftermath of a 2016 terror attack in the West Bank, in which a twelve-year-old Israeli girl was stabbed to death in her bedroom. “On Monday May 14th, the Hamas terrorist organization plans to send armed terrorists, among 250,000 violent rioters to swarm and breach Israel's border with Gaza and enter Israeli communities,” warned the flashing text. “Hamas plans to carry out a massacre in Israel. The Israel Defense Forces [IDF] will not let them.”³⁵ Joining the campaign of demonization, Lieberman denounced Hamas as “a bunch of cannibals.”³⁶ The intent of such rhetoric is clear—unlimited force is justified in fending off a zombie horde. Lieberman's stance won praise from a rightwing blogger: “We are commanded to eternally remember what Amalek did to us and how they planned to slaughter us. Their Palestinian offspring are no different! Happily, our Defense Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, sensibly gave permission to our military to use live ammunition and force to kill, together with the usual riot-controlled rubber bullets and tear gas. I simply have no concern and no compassion for any number of Palestinians who are killed or seriously wounded.”³⁷

“All the Suspense of 24 and Twice the Political Poignancy”

To sustain what Lasswell calls “a sense of collective destiny and mission,” Israel’s garrison state draws upon a differentiated repertoire of argument and appeal tailored to audiences at home and abroad. In its campaign to “generate legitimacy for Israel (including freedom of action for the IDF), while simultaneously delegitimizing the enemy (and thus restricting its actions),”³⁸ popular culture has emerged as a weapon of strategic importance.

First aired domestically in 2015 and a year later marketed internationally, the Israeli television drama series *Fauda* follows an elite *mistaravim* commando unit as it goes undercover in the West Bank to stop terror attacks. The distributor, Netflix, calls *Fauda* a “global phenomenon” viewed in 190 countries. Critical acclaim has been lavish, with the *New York Times* leading the way. “All of the suspense of 24, and twice the political poignancy,” says the *Times*.

Concealed bombs, revenge murders and undercover infiltration are the order of the day as the two forces attempt to get the jump on each other. Shot with the gritty you-are-there realism of a great war film, the show also delves into the turbulent personal lives of its cast even as it advances its cracking cops-and-criminals narrative. . . . The program attempts to untangle the complex web of grudges and allegiances that have fueled the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since time immemorial. The show takes great pains to find empathy with both sides of the conflict, so those looking for simpler or more immediate pleasures may be best served elsewhere.³⁹

Toronto’s *Globe and Mail* strikes a similar note:

The latest sensation from Israeli TV just arrived. . . . It’s a doozy of a political action thriller, a grabber from the get-go, and wildly compelling. *Fauda* . . . is anchored squarely in the authentic complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. . . . In Israel, the series has been called more than a television series, but also ‘a political event’ and it’s easy to see why. The undercover unit members are trained in the culture and customs of Palestinians and are immersed in Palestinian life because they must pass as locals. They are so immersed at times that the obvious theme becomes the closeness between one side and the other. If it is easy to assume the identity of those perceived as the enemy, is it not also easy to sympathize?⁴⁰

The plot revolves around Doron Kabilio (played by series cocreator Lior Raz), a brooding veteran of the unit. Now retired with a wife and two children, he lives on a ranch where he works to produce wine and to keep at bay the personal demons that continue to haunt him. When he learns that Abu Ahmad, nicknamed the Panther, the terrorist mastermind he thought he’d killed has in fact survived, Doron feels compelled to return to active duty, track him down, and finish the job. This sets in motion a cat and mouse game, full of twists and turns. Aided by Shin Bet interrogators, IDF snipers, and air force drone operators, Doron pursues Abu Ahmad and his cell as well as—beginning in season two—Nidal el-Makdessi, an even more “fanatical” adversary. The son of a Hamas shaykh who is taken hostage, fitted with an explosive vest, and then blown up by Doron and his crew at the end of season one, Nidal has come back to Nablus from Syria to avenge his father and establish a Palestinian branch of the Islamic state. Doron foils various plots through his remarkable ability to trade places and “go native.” He penetrates so deep inside a terrorist cell that he is able to pass himself off as a would-be suicide bomber. He seduces a Palestinian doctor

while posing as a Palestinian Authority intelligence officer. Along the way, he pays a price. His marriage falls apart after his wife's brother, a new member of the team whom Doron was meant to protect, is captured and gruesomely executed. Doron's father is kidnapped and beheaded on camera. His Palestinian lover hangs herself in custody after Doron abandons her, suspecting falsely that she helped in his father's death. His son is also abducted by terrorists. Events push Doron to the dark side. During one episode, for example, he tortures a prisoner, smashing his fingers with a hammer to extract information, after which other members in the unit shoot the bound man in the back of the head. Though Doron shows sign of trauma (his capacity for anguish sets him apart from his demented targets), the violence he enacts is depicted as part of a necessarily dirty war. If Doron and his team function as a death squad, it is to protect Israelis from mass murder. What drives the Palestinians in their bloodlust remains as obscure as the metaphysical enmity of Amalek. Though *Fauda* purports to give voice to both sides—the dialogue mixes Hebrew and English, and scenes shift between Israeli and Palestinian protagonists—leached out is any sense of a larger political context. In its absence, terrorist violence becomes reduced either to motiveless malignancy, the expression of a revenge-soaked tribal culture, or the eruption of frustrated sexuality. (This last point is brought home during a scene where Nurit, the sole female on Doron's team, falls prey to a frenzied mob that seeks to strip her bare.)

Giving full vent to the perpetrator's mawkish self-pity, former Shin Bet head Yaakov Peri once told an interviewer:

We get sent, evening after evening, morning after morning, day after day, to missions which are sometimes at the outskirts of the law, sometimes adjacent to the law, sometimes legal; no one supports us. If we get caught, there's no one to protect us. Yossi Ginossar said it well when he said, "We get sent the gutter, we poke around in the gutter, we come out covered with what the gutter delivers, and no one bothers to rinse us off, or to offer us a warm shoulder. We're alone in the battle. We're orphans."⁴¹

The Israeli public's rapturous response to *Fauda* provides a collective "warm shoulder."⁴² The show celebrates daring, bravery, and masculine prowess. No longer in "a shtetl in the Pale where Jews had no choice but to cower before the Cossacks." Doron and his crew are "third-generation Zionists who fight like their forefathers did except with drones and data bases, not with home-made Sten machine guns."⁴³ The reference to historical continuity remains telling. As economic fault lines grow wider and egalitarian principles have given way to the onslaught of free-market fundamentalism, as politics becomes a sinkhole of corruption and partisan self-interest, more and more Israeli Jews look to the military as the last symbolic bastion of a vanishing group ethos, an enduring touchstone of communal pride, sacrifice, and identity. Doron and his team function not just as a ruthless death squad but as an emblematic national family whose members are prepared to die for one another. Extreme violence becomes the crucible to forge a collective character that keeps faith with a mythic past and that embodies heroic Zionist ideals.

A vast global marketing campaign elides *Fauda*'s idolatry of force. In interviews, the cocreators of the show, a former soldier with the Duvdevan *mista'arvim* unit and war journalist Avi Issacharoff, repeatedly describe the series as bridge building between communities in conflict. "In the TV

industry in Israel, nobody shows the Palestinian side,” Raz told *Variety* magazine in May 2018, upon the release of the series' second season. “We really wanted to open a window. We didn't intend to do this, of course, but at the end of the day, the left wing thought it was a left-wing show, the right wing thought it was a right-wing show, and the Palestinians thought it was a Palestinian show.”⁴⁴ The feature writer then explains that although “TV can't bring peace,” in Raz's words, “audiences are experiencing an increased awareness of the complexity of the clash between Israelis and Palestinians, and they are also learning compassion.”⁴⁵ Elsewhere, Raz derided the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, claiming that its criticisms had inadvertently expanded the scope and reach of “the PR campaign for our show. I just received an email from a girl in Turkey who claimed she hated us Israelis until she watched *Fauda*, and after watching it could finally understand the conflict's complexity.”⁴⁶ For his part, Issacharoff has talked about how his experience working in Gaza and the West Bank made him want to show that there was “good and bad on both sides.”

Even when we meet real terrorists with blood on their hands, people who are wanted by the Israeli army for six years, seven years, with all Israeli intelligence trying to hunt them down, you meet them at a secret place and the funny thing is sometimes you get to like them on a personal level. . . . You understand that they have done terrible things. You understand that if you weren't a journalist they would probably shoot you. And still the conversation becomes, ‘Hey, what's going on, dude?’ and every time you meet there are hugs and kisses, you sit with them and you eat and drink. It's ridiculous, but you understand that even those devils have some kind of human aspect, something that you can relate to: family, kids, a woman that they love, a dream that they have.⁴⁷

According to Issacharoff, the series is also a hit with Hamas. “Hamas, actually, they love it, but can't say this in public. Just last week I was in an Israeli jail meeting with Hamas officials. It became a huge hit in the Israeli prison.”⁴⁸

On the show, Itzik Cohen plays the role of Captain Ayub, a soft-spoken and cunning Shin Bet interrogator as ruthlessly determined as anyone on Doron's hunter-killer team. In exchange for information, he promises a Hamas leader a kidney transplant for his dying daughter. In another episode, he warns a pregnant woman that he will make her have a miscarriage unless she tells him what he wants. In a blog post he wrote for Creative Community for Peace, a Hollywood-based organization dedicated to countering the BDS movement, Cohen states:

Hardly a day goes by where I don't get a good word or pat on the back because of Captain Ayub, whether it's from Jews, Muslims, Christians, in Tel Aviv, Nazareth, Haifa, Akko, or Eilat. When, due to Waze, I accidentally found myself on the Palestinian side of Barta'a [a town that's partially Israeli and partially Palestinian], not only did I receive a police escort, but also a selfie and a hug! *Fauda* builds bridges between nations, and develops a discourse of cooperation and brotherhood. I have been approached so many times by people who wish to learn Arabic as a direct result of the series which makes me feel that *Fauda* has become a great force for bringing people together. . . . But there was one incident in particular that I remember that happened at the airport. There was a very tough border officer at passport control who signaled for me to cut in front of all 50 people in front of me in order to smile at me and say that *Fauda* changed everything she thought about Israel and the Jews, and that she herself was a Muslim.⁴⁹

How can ritual obeisance to liberal pieties (compassion, complexity, cooperation, and brotherhood) be reconciled with the show's homage to ferocious patriotic violence? The attempt to have it both ways may in part reflect cynicism, hypocrisy, or advice on "messaging" from a marketing team. At a deeper level, the double discourse represents the power of ideology to mold consciousness so that contradictions are juggled and inconvenient truths are prevented from coming into full awareness. With seamless efficiency, Israel's garrison state operates to promote a sense of moral and political exceptionalism and to police the representation of Palestinian experience.

Greeted with rapturous applause at the 2017 American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) conference in Washington, Raz and Issacharoff came on stage where they were interviewed by Dan Senor, *Fox News* commentator and coauthor of *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle*.

"The show which films in an Arab city, Kfar Kassem [*sic*], near the border with the West Bank, has been a driver for economic opportunity and coexistence for Jewish and Arab Israelis," Senor said. "So it is an Israeli Arab town. There you were . . . with a mix of . . . Israelis and Arabs, how did that work? What was going on behind the scenes?"

Raz responds: "Actually, in the beginning, Protective Edge was started while we were shooting. . . . And we cancelled the first day of shooting in Kfar Kassem [*sic*] because we were afraid. . . . [But] that night 150 people came to work there for a month and a half . . . Jews and Arabs living for a month and a half during the war . . . all together, working in a creativity bubble. . . . And we had an argument . . . just like me and my wife. We love each other, but we have some argument."

Later in the conversation, Senor comments, "What does it say about Israeli society, that a show—that a society that is so transparent, so democratic in all of its messy ways, self-critical, self-questioning . . . that if you look . . . throughout the Middle East, it seems that only Israel could produce a show that is so brutally honest as this one."⁵⁰

To turn the question around: what does it say about Israeli society, the *Fauda* cocreators, Senor, and the thousands of attendees at the AIPAC conference that there was not the slightest pause at the mention of Kafr Qasim, a place synonymous with slaughter, now used as a TV series location celebrating the feats of Zionist warriors? Not only did the irony go unobserved, but the name itself went unregistered. A symptom of extreme disassociation, such collective amnesia falls under what Klemperer called derangement.

Walid Khteif and Susan Slymowics write about what happened at Kafr Qasim, including the Israeli government's efforts to ensure that memories of the event would be buried with the dead. The first instinct of Ben-Gurion had been to suppress news of the 1956 massacre, in which forty-eight villagers were executed, twenty-three of them children. Word only got out because of the valiant efforts of two Communist Knesset members, Tawfik Toubi and Meir Vilner. Ben-Gurion then did damage control, claiming that Israel's "purity of arms" remained unblemished since the attack had been carried out by the newly formed Border Police, rather than his beloved Tsahal (the Hebrew term for the IDF). In Kafr Qasim, the military governor was instructed to put the lid on. "The village mukhtar was brought to identify the dead bodies of his villagers, and then discovered among the dead the corpse of his own son, and turned to the officer in charge: 'Why was my son killed? What did he do?' The military governor replied, 'Tomorrow you will eat *saviv*—an eggplant and chickpea dish—and everything will work out.'" A *sulha* was organized, a traditional ceremony

of reconciliation. Villagers were pressured to attend under threats of being deported or losing their jobs. An Arab-style meal was served by Shaken, the Israeli army catering organization. "Villagers were able to endure the ceremony and gain ironic relief from the Ashkenazi Jewish Israeli mispronunciations of *sulha* that mistakenly transferred the consonant 'h' to 'kh.' Thus, *sulha*—reconciliation—whenever articulated by Jewish Israeli voices during the ceremony, was heard and understood by Kafr Qasim villagers to mean *sulkhah*, which means "a butchery" or a "flaying."⁵¹ In the aftermath of the ceremony, Ben-Gurion declared, "The inhabitants of Kafr Qasim forgive, so there is no reason for the murderers to remain in jail. It is a moral obligation to free them." As the authors observe, "Shared notions of political or historical truths, or minimally, a shared consensus between the two opposing groups were strikingly absent." So also today do they remain strikingly absent.

In Pursuit of Bears

Israel's insatiable hunger for security is codified in the doctrine of anticipatory self-defense, which calls for threats to be preempted before they materialize. Armed to the teeth, the garrison state remains hypervigilant, on perpetual hair trigger. Moaz notes that while it may have been a genuine perception, the siege mentality propagated by Ben-Gurion "was also a very useful social mobilizer. And it may have also been an important aspect of the ruling party's strategy for maintaining its political power. Finally, inflating the security threat emerged as an extremely effective strategy for raising funds from Jews all over the world."⁵² Leaders still conjure up enemy hordes at the gate—no matter the supine Arab regimes flocking to buy Israel's weapons and cooperate with its intelligence services, no matter the unprecedented drift and disunity among Palestinians. Among an Israeli public nurtured on a discourse of eternal Jewish victimhood and steeped in the fatalism of *ein brera* (Hebrew for "no alternative" or "no choice"), the idolatry of force still commands a cultic following.⁵³ "If we wish to found a State today, we shall not do it in the way which would have been the only possible one a thousand years ago," wrote Theodor Herzl in 1896. "It is foolish to revert to old stages of civilization, as many Zionists would like to do. Supposing, for example, we were obliged to clear a country of wild beasts, we should not set about the task in the fashion of Europeans of the fifth century. We should not take spear and lance and go out singly in pursuit of bears; we should organize a large and active hunting party, drive the animals together, and throw a melinite bomb into their midst."⁵⁴

To advance colonial modernity, it is necessary to cleanse the land, however savage the techniques that might be required. Lebanese Australian anthropologist Ghassan Hage interrogates the logic of Herzl's justificatory syllogism, commenting:

Since he didn't know where 'Israel' would be, [Herzl] couldn't have known whether there would be bears there or not. His bears could only be metaphoric bears. And the question of course is: why would someone who is trying to imagine a concrete nation for himself think about rounding up and blowing up bears? . . . Narcissistic nationalism is a nationalism where the nationalist always feels that the 'bears' are out of control and becomes totally self-obsessed with self-affirmation at the expense of being with others. . . . The link between narcissistic

fantasies and fantasies of omnipotence is a well-known psychoanalytic fact: 'I will be all-powerful; I am not going to be weak I am going to be all-powerful.' The history of this fantasy of omnipotence in Israel has been quite crucial if we are to understand how the whole situation we are in today has developed. No people have ever come close to caressing their fantasy of omnipotence as much as the Israelis have . . . Israel's most euphoric moment is perhaps its most tragic: it had a taste of omnipotence in 1967. In the 1967 war, there was a sense that omnipotence was not just a fantasy but an actual possibility. And I think that this has become part of the way, even one might say the standard that various Israeli governments use to legitimise themselves to their population. After 1967 many Israeli people started believing that this is the very function of Israel—'I am here because the government is going to give me omnipotence.'⁵⁵

Israel's current ascendancy has helped indulge the taste for omnipotence, feeding dreams of a perfectly secure organic community living in sacred exclusivity, uncontaminated by the presence of others. Among religious nationalists, calls increase for a campaign of purification. Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Bezalel Smotrich talks openly about transfer:

When Joshua ben Nun [the biblical prophet] entered the land, he sent three messages to its inhabitants: those who want to accept [our rule] will accept; those who want to leave, will leave; those who want to fight, will fight. The basis of his strategy was: We are here, we have come, this is ours. Now too, three doors will be open, there is no fourth door. Those who want to leave—and there will be those who leave—I will help them. When they have no hope and no vision, they will go. As they did in 1948.⁵⁶

There is no reason to doubt either Smotrich's seriousness or the increasing possibility that his divinely inspired plans will eventually become enacted. Zionism has grown giddy with success. The garrison state's ideological control has never been as hegemonic. Violent and obscurantist fantasies and fixations are given free reign, and the country has yet to pay a price. Indeed, the rise of messianic and apocalyptic thinking has coincided with a booming economy, a near disappearance of domestic political dissent, and an emerging global trend towards ethnocentric authoritarianism for which Israel stands as a model and harbinger.⁵⁷ The status quo works.

As Jacqueline Rose notes, "Like an individual in thrall to his passion, his perversity, and his symptom, a nation can be both self-defeating and unerring in its aim."⁵⁸ Even if this diagnosis rings true, no one can say what form Israel's self-defeat will take or how long it will be before it unravels or hacks itself (and others) to pieces.⁵⁹ With this caveat, the instability and irrationality of Zionism grow more unbounded and more dangerous as triumphalist euphoria gains ground. "The psychology of war, peace and national security is characterized by a seeming contradiction—frequent fluctuations between a siege mentality and an attitude of arrogance," writes Maoz. "This fluctuation from one extreme—characterized by deep paranoia—to another—characterized by contempt and condescension of others—has served to underlie a wide array of policies and behaviors in Israel's history. . . . A thorough and detailed study of the political psychology of Israel's national security and foreign policy is urgently needed. If we are to help Israel alter its fundamental behavior, it needs to be put on the couch."⁶⁰ It is hard to imagine this happening. Far more likely is a vista captured by Isaac Deutscher's bleak and pithy Yiddish observation in the wake of Israel's 1967 military victory: "*Man kann sich totsiegen* (One can win oneself to death)."⁶¹

About the Author

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ENDNOTES

- 1 For the full English text of Freud's essay on this topic, see Jürgen Braungardt, "Freud: Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense. 1938," *Philosophical Explorations Blog*, <http://braungardt.trialectics.com/projects/psychoanalysis/sigmund-freud/splitting-of-the-ego/>. Here, I draw on the insights of Stanley Cohen in *States of Denial* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 28.
- 2 Amira Hass, "Diary of Bergen-Belsen, 1944–1945: Amira Hass Discusses Her Mother's Concentration Camp Diary" (transcript), *Democracy Now!*, 8 June 2009, https://www.democracynow.org/2009/6/8/diary_of_bergen_belson_1944_1945.
- 3 So too, in 2002, when the situation along the Gaza barrier fence became reminiscent of the Wild West, in the words of an Israeli general. There were no-holds-barred, and "do as you see fit" was the message conveyed to troops, he said. See Amos Harel, "The Cold Calculation behind the Israeli Army's Sniper Fire on the Gaza Border," *Haaretz*, 6 April 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-the-cold-calculation-behind-army-s-sniper-fire-on-gaza-border-1.5977338>.
- 4 Michael Bachner and Judah Ari Gross, "Widespread Condemnation for Video of Soldiers Cheering Shooting Palestinian," *Times of Israel*, 9 April 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/widespread-condemnation-for-video-of-idf-snipers-cheering-shooting-palestinian/>; See also Alexander Fullbright, "Bennett Defends Soldiers Filmed Cheering Gazan's Shooting," *Times of Israel*, 10 April 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/bennett-defends-soldiers-filmed-cheering-gazans-shooting/>
- 5 Scott Wilson, "Israeli Panel Declares Gaza a 'Hostile Entity,'" *Washington Post*, 20 September 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/19/AR2007091901156.html>. According to the former head of the National Security Council, Major-General Yaakov Amidror, "At every stage in Israel's war against terrorist and guerrilla forces, the enemy was able to rest, redeploy, and later carry out more terrorist attacks until we brought the principle of continuity of action into play. Only when the IDF understood this concept and decided to tenaciously use what it called 'the lawnmower tactic'—killing or detaining everyone who appeared on the terrorist chain—did it overcome terrorism. . . . A country like Israel can successfully cope with terrorism and guerrilla tactics only if it retains the ability to respond disproportionately; otherwise, it will find itself fighting according to the enemy's rules." See Yaakov Amidror, "Winning Counterinsurgency War—the Israeli Experience," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 23 August 2010, <http://jcpa.org/article/winning-counterinsurgency-war-the-israeli-experience/>.
- 6 See also, Hagai El-Ad, "Dying on the Fence of the Gaza Prison," *Ynetnews*, 2 April 2018, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5215487,00.html>. El-Ad writes, "As usual, the official propaganda declares that Hamas is responsible for it all, just as it declared Hamas responsible for the annihilation of dozens of families and the death of hundreds of children and youths during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in 2014. The IDF spokesperson outdid himself, boasting in a tweet (that was later deleted): 'Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed.'" A very different picture emerges from testimony given by sixty combat veterans of Operation Protective Edge. According to one soldier, formal rules of engagement and disciplined command and control gave way to a no-holds-barred approach where extreme violence was actively encouraged:

"Anything you see moving in the neighborhoods you're in is not supposed to be there. The [Palestinian] civilians know they are not supposed to be there. Therefore whoever you see there, you kill."

Who gave that order?

The commander. "Anything you see in the neighborhoods you're in, anything within a reasonable distance, say between zero and 200 meters – is dead on the spot. No

authorization needed." We asked him: "I see someone walking in the street, do I shoot him?" He said yes. "Why do I shoot him?" "Because he isn't supposed to be there."

In another piece of testimony, a soldier describes competition between tank gunners:

"You're a gunner, let's see if you're a real man, let's see if you manage to hit a moving car." So I picked a car – a taxi – and tried to fire a shell, but didn't manage to hit it. Two more cars came by, and I tried with another shell or two, and didn't hit. The commander said, "OK, enough, you're using up all my shells, cut it out." So we moved to a heavy machine gun. . . . After three weeks in Gaza, during which you're shooting at anything that moves – and also at what isn't moving, crazy amounts – you aren't anymore really. . . . The good and the bad get a bit mixed up.

Breaking the Silence, *This is How We Fought in Gaza: Soldiers' Testimonies and Photographs from Operation 'Protective Edge' (2014)* (Jerusalem: Breaking the Silence, 2015), pp. 65, 100–101. A PDF of the publication is available at <https://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/pdf/ProtectiveEdge.pdf>.

- 7 Anonymous (Hebrew University lecturer), interview with author, Jerusalem, June 2018.
- 8 Harold B. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (1941): pp. 455–68, <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/218693>.
- 9 Lasswell, "The Garrison State."
- 10 See Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak, *Israel's Security Network: A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- 11 Zeev Moaz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), p. 537. In 1937, a Haganah commander developed a plan, code-named Avner, for Jewish forces to take over Palestine in the event of British withdrawal. According to the commander, the program's success depended less on preponderant armed might than seamless coordination of national purpose. "Neither numbers or equipment is the decisive factor, but the spirit, the correctness, the sacrifice . . . we must change our mentality. We must organize the militarization of the Yishuv in all domains of life—in settling the land, in education, in the press, in public life. In the Yishuv, a regime of defense must reign." See Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 25.
- 12 Edward Bernard Glick, "Israel's Democratic Garrison State Turns 60," *American Thinker*, 14 May 2008, https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2008/05/israels_democratic_garrison_st.html. The colonel continues as follows: "The Israeli army's devotion to civilian control and to the peaceful transfer of political power is a wondrous feature of Israeli democracy, a democracy that dates from the earliest days of British Mandatory Palestine. But while a military coup is utterly unthinkable, there are senior officers who fear, as I do, that, if not soon jettisoned, the military restraint imposed by Israel's present political leaders will lead to the demise of the modern Jewish state."
- 13 In Israel, what has taken root is a stealth praetorianism. Military takeover is achieved not through violent seizure but instead through the collective internalization of martial values and dispositions and through a matrix of cross-sectoral influence that confers decisive de facto power on elites from the armed forces and security services.
- 14 Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism*, p. x.
- 15 Yonatan Mendel, one of the most trenchant analysts of Israeli militarism and ideological hegemony, commented as follows on the second carnage in Gaza since the so-called Israeli disengagement in 2005:

The state called up more than 10,000 reservists, and even people who had not been called also travelled to military bases and asked to be sent to Gaza. This shows once again how efficient the Israeli propaganda and justification machine is, and how naturally people here believe in

myths that have been disproved again and again. If people were saying, 'We killed 1000 people, but the army is not perfect, and this is war,' I would say it was a stupid statement. But Israelis are saying: 'We killed 1000 people, and our army is the most moral army in the world.' This says a lot about the psychology of the conflict: people are not being told what to think or say; they reach these insights 'naturally.' . . . I have a friend whose brother is a pilot in the IDF. I asked to speak to him. I told him what I thought about Israel's behaviour and he seemed to agree with my general conclusions. He said, however, that a soldier should not ask himself such questions, which should be kept to the political sphere. I can't agree. But the second thing he told me was more important. He told me that for pilots, a day like the first day of the war, when so many attacks are being made simultaneously, is a day full of excitement, a day you look forward to. If you take these words into account, and bear in mind that in Israel every man is a soldier, either in uniform or in reserve, there is no avoiding the conclusion that there are great pressures for it to act as a military society. Not acting is damaging to the IDF's status, budget, masculinity, power and happiness, and not only to the IDF's. This could explain why in Israel the military option is almost never considered second best. It is always the first choice.

Yonatan Mendel, "Responses to the War in Gaza," *London Review of Books* 31, no. 2 (29 January 2009): pp. 5–6, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n02/gaza-writers/responses-to-the-war-in-gaza>.

- 16 Mirta Furman, "Army and War—Collective Narratives of Early Childhood in Contemporary Israel," in *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, ed. Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 158.
- 17 Furman, "Army and War," p. 157. The online magazine +972, a collective of Palestinian and Israeli left-wing bloggers, ran an article titled "Ad for Israeli Maternity Ward Portrays Fetus as Future Soldier" that was prompted by a full-page advertisement taken out by Tel Aviv's upscale Ichilov Hospital to encourage women to give birth in its Lis maternity ward. The ad, which appeared in the right-wing weekly, *Makor Rishon*, showed the fetus, in utero, wearing an Israeli army Armored Corps beret and saluting. *Makor Rishon* is managed by *Israel Hayom*, the free daily bankrolled by U.S. billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson. It is Israel's most widely circulated print media and what many describe as Prime Minister Netanyahu's mouthpiece. See Mairav Zonszein, "Ad for Israeli Maternity Ward Portrays Fetus as Future Soldier," 23 May 2018, <https://972mag.com/ad-for-israeli-maternity-ward-portrays-fetus-as-future-soldier/135694/>.
- 18 As quoted in Shaul Mitelpunkt, *Israel in the American Mind: The Cultural Politics of U.S.-Israeli Relations, 1958–1988* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 21; Kimmerling described the eulogy as having "popularized Israel's duty to be a drafted nation." As the *Journal of Israeli Affairs* points out in the introduction to the issue that published a translation of it, Dayan's funeral oration "is considered a keystone speech" of Zionism, not only in the military but also among the Israeli public. See *Journal of Israeli Affairs*, no. 50 (2013), <https://www.madarcenter.org/en/journal-israeli-affairs/israeli-affairs-issue-no-50>.
- 19 Aluf Benn, "Doomed to Fight," *Haaretz*, 9 May 2011, www.haaretz.com/1.5009947.
- 20 Avner Inbar, "The Israeli Right Has All the Power—but No Endgame," *World Politics Review*, 16 August 2016, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/19686/the-israeli-right-has-all-the-power-but-no-endgame>.
- 21 As quoted by Udi Lebel, "The 'Immunized Integration' of Religious-Zionists within Israeli Society: The Pre-military Academy as an Institutional Model," *Social Identities* 22, no. 6 (2016): p. 3. See <http://www.civil-military-studies.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/A3AADA2D-07F3-498D-470C-6F3DBDED29FD.pdf>.
- 22 Lebel, "The 'Immunized Integration' of Religious-Zionists," p.3. Lebel goes on to quote (pp. 8–9) a prominent opponent of Israeli secularism, Rabbi Eli Horwitz, from his book, *The culture war* [in Hebrew], which he authored in 2007: "Following years in which young religious men were encouraged to become learned scholars, they are now urged to become brave soldiers. . . . When war is upon us we shall not turn our backs or cry over our bitter fate. War is not like a bothersome fly that we can wish was not there. War is a challenge that we need; it deepens our

self-knowledge and requires us to find and expose among ourselves and our people the powers and spiritual insights that were unknown to us until now." Lebel then explains: "The book [The culture war] is actually a collection of his articles, collated by his students after his death. Horwitz speaks out against two values which, to his view, entered Israeli discourse and 'polluted' it: peace and feminism." As quoted by Lebel, Horwitz goes on to say, "The war strategy of the other nations involves penetration of our internal spiritual world in order to influence us with their immoral ideas and vices. In contrast, our own strategy should be one of purifying our internal world from the negative influence of foreign cultures that infuse hatred between us and our Father in heaven. Everything depends on this war!"

- 23 While the Israeli army does not formally collect data on the religious orientation of those who serve, the estimate cited here accords with a range of unofficial sources. See Amos Harel, "Sharp Rise in Number of Religious IDF Officers," *Haaretz*, 15 September 2010, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5113223>. In 2017, *The Economist* pointed to a continued trend: "National-religious Jews, who account for about 10% of the population, make up about 40% of junior and mid-level infantry officers. Many secular Israelis worry that, through this group, religious settlers will take over the army." See "The Army's New Elite: Israel's Army Is Recruiting Ever More Religious Officers," Special Report, *The Economist*, 20 May 2017, <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2017/05/20/israels-army-is-recruiting-ever-more-religious-officers>. On the larger political implications of this shift, see Ofer Aderet, "Groundbreaking Pew Survey: Almost Half of Israeli Jews Back Transfer or Expulsion of Arabs," *Haaretz*, 8 March 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/pew-almost-half-of-israeli-jews-back-transfer-or-expulsion-of-arabs-1.5414660>. "Among religious Jewish citizens," Aderet writes, "the percentage who agree to expulsion, according to the poll, is higher than among Jewish Israelis as a whole: Seventy-one percent among the religious community, 69 percent among the ultra-Orthodox and 54 percent of traditional Jews support transfer."
- 24 Tamar Pileggi, "General, Rabbi Win Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement," *Times of Israel*, 1 April 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/general-rabbi-win-israel-prize-for-lifetime-achievement/>.
- 25 TOI Staff, "IDF Commander Seeks God's Help to Fight 'Blasphemous' Gazans," *Times of Israel*, 12 July 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-commander-calls-on-troops-to-fight-blasphemous-gazans/>.
- 26 JP Staff, "Brig.-Gen. Ofer Winter Appointed Military Secretary to Defense Minister," *Jerusalem Post*, 25 July 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Brig-Gen-Ofer-Winter-appointed-military-secretary-to-Defense-Minister-563375>.
- 27 Ian S. Lustick, "Abandoning the Iron Wall: Israel and The Middle Eastern Muck," *Middle East Policy Journal* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2008), <https://mepc.org/abandoning-iron-wall-israel-and-middle-eastern-muck>.
- 28 Adina Hoffman, "Lives on the Ground," *The Nation*, 31 January 2008, <https://www.thenation.com/article/lives-ground/>. In the article, "repetition compulsion" referred to the Oslo process, but it is also an appropriate diagnosis for Israel's spellbound militarism.
- 29 "The Canon: The Language of the Third Reich by Victor Klemperer," *Times Higher Education*, 17 June 2010, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/cn/books/the-canon-the-language-of-the-third-reich-by-victor-klemperer/412045.article>. "Klemperer's focus is always on the ambience of everyday life under Hitler. Frequently he marvels at the success of the Nazi propaganda machine in moulding not merely opinions but one's entire cast of thought—in Nazi argot, one's entire Weltanschauung. On the basis of his painstaking ethical-linguistic examinations, Klemperer is one of the most valuable witnesses to the methods of totalitarian mental corruption. The lasting message of this book is one of constant vigilance: wherever the machinery of atrocity is in motion, the misuse of language will be supporting it."
- 30 Ilan Pappé, "Israel's Message," *London Review of Books*, 14 January 2009, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/2009/01/14/ilan-pappe/israels-message>.
- 31 Gideon Resnick, "Israeli Politician Declares 'War' on 'the Palestinian People,'" *The Daily Beast*, 7 July 2014, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/israeli-politician-declares-war-on-the-palestinian-people>.
- 32 James Eastwood, "Meaningful Service: Pedagogy at Israeli Pre-military Academies and the Ethics of Militarism," *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 3 (September 2015) pp: 671–95,

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066115594855>. Eastwood notes, "By eulogising Goldin in this way, military participation in 'Operation Protective Edge'—in which over 2,200 Palestinians were killed, many of them in the bombardment of Rafah that took place in the frantic search for Goldin—is constructed as a demonstration of ethical character. Moreover, the trait of purity is almost explicitly racialised in these remarks, through the direct comparison with Hamas fighters in tunnels. This ethical value of purity pursued through ascetic self-cultivation comes to constitute an ethnic and national marker, cementing the ideological belief in the IDF as a moral army." For a critique of the "ethical value of purity," see Eyal Weizman, "Thanatotactics," in *Indefensible Space: The Architecture of the National Insecurity State*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 325–50.

- 33 Jodi Rudoren, "Tunnels Lead Right to the Heart of Israeli Fear," *New York Times*, 28 July 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/29/world/middleeast/tunnels-lead-right-to-heart-of-israeli-fear.html>.
- 34 Benjamin Netanyahu, "Statement by PM Netanyahu," Press Room, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 July 2014, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2014/Pages/Statement-by-PM-Netanyahu-28-Jul-2014.aspx>.
- 35 The video was embedded in a tweet posted by Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), "This is NOT the video that anyone wants to see this week," Twitter, 13 May 2018, 1:13 P.M., <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/995728702548914176>.
- 36 Almog Ben Zikri and Yaniv Kubovich, "Israeli Defense Chief: Hamas Leaders 'Bunch of Cannibals Who Use Kids as Ammunition,'" *Haaretz*, 16 May 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-defense-chief-hamas-bunch-of-cannibals-who-use-kids-as-ammunition-1.6094330>.
- 37 Esor Ben-Sorek, "Amalek Again," *The Blogs, Times of Israel*, 31 March 2018, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/amalek-again/>. As a gauge of hysteria, see also, Paula R. Stern, "Change the IDF Rules of Engagement," *Arutz Sheva*, 30 March 2018, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/21927>. Stern writes:

We will not fire in the air. Forget firing at their legs. Shoot to kill. Thousands of years ago, the Jewish people were born and tomorrow, perhaps hundreds or thousands of Palestinians will choose to die. It was our choice to have faith, choose life, and leave Egypt; it is their choice, to choose death if they attack us. That simple. Change the rules of engagement now. The Palestinians are banking on what they consider our cowardice. They don't think we have the guts to shoot them down in mass numbers and that our hesitation will enable them to attack us. They'll come tomorrow in vast numbers, across fences and through tunnels. In the water and over the hills. And the only way to stop them, the only way to protect our children, our lives, our country, is to change the rules of engagement today. Shoot to kill. Nothing less. Approaching our borders means you want to kill us. Our laws, the Torah, the Ten Commandments, all that Judaism and Christianity are based on, demands that we protect ourselves. That we kill in order to stop them from murdering us.

For a very different perspective, see Meron Benvenisti, "An Explosive, Dangerous Balance," MIFTAH, 1 March 2008, www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=16333&CategoryId=5. "The fear that nonviolent protest will take root among the Palestinians," he writes,

has accompanied the conflict for many years, and the response of the Israeli authorities to nonviolent protest has been no less severe than their reaction to violent acts. . . . The way to prevent the spread of nonviolent resistance is to threaten that it will be met with a violent response, including the use of firearms, in the hope that the threat will be taken seriously, serve as a deterrent and preclude the need to follow through and actually use such means. And indeed, until now the deterrence has worked: the Palestinian population is showing little willingness to adopt a strategy of nonviolent resistance. This may be because such a path is incompatible with its nature, or because the Israelis have managed to persuade the Palestinians that they have no inhibitions when it comes to using force, even gunfire, against

unarmed protesters, and that they make no distinction between violent and nonviolent demonstrations.

- 38 Ahmad Samih Khalidi, "Original English Translation of the 2015 Gadi Eisenkot IDF Strategy," *JPS* 45, no. 2 (Winter 2016): pp. 127–46, www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/198526.
- 39 Charles Bramescio, "NYT Recommendation: *Fauda*," NYT Watching, *New York Times*, n.d., <https://www.nytimes.com/watching/recommendations/fauda>.
- 40 John Doyle, "John Doyle: Israel's Latest TV Sensation is a Great Thriller," *Globe and Mail*, 5 December 2016, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/john-doyle-israels-latest-tv-sensation-fauda-is-a-great-thriller/article33205833/>.
- 41 Dror Moreh, *The Gatekeepers* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2015), p. 38.
- 42 "It's like we lift up the curtain to a place that nobody talks about," one of the creators of the show tells the *New York Times*. See David M. Halbfinger, "*Fauda*, an Israeli TV Hit, Lets Viewers Escape—into the Conflict," *New York Times*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/arts/television/fauda-an-israeli-tv-hit-lets-viewers-escape-into-the-conflict.html>.
- 43 Josef Joffe, "What Critics Left and Right Get Wrong about *Fauda*," *Tablet*, 11 June 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/263878/what-critics-left-and-right-get-wrong-about-fauda>. See also, Hagar Shezaf, "How *Fauda* Has Romanticized the Most Repugnant Aspect of Israel's Occupation," *Haaretz*, 11 March 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-fauda-has-romanticized-repugnant-aspects-of-israel-s-occupation-1.5890569>.
- 44 Malina Saval, "Israeli Drama *Fauda* Draws Viewers from across the Political Spectrum," *Variety*, May 2018, <https://variety.com/2018/tv/features/israeli-drama-fauda-netflix-1202818969/>.
- 45 Saval, "Israeli Drama *Fauda* Draws Viewers."
- 46 Ran Boker and Raz Shechnik, "BDS Campaign Sets Sights on Taking *Fauda* off the Air," Ynetnews, 6 April 2018, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5222026,00.html>; Victoria Craw, "*Fauda*: Hit TV series Has United Arab and Israeli Audiences," *News.com.au*, 14 November 2015, <https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/tv-ratings/fauda-hit-tv-series-has-united-arab-and-israeli-audiences/news-story/1805966d1ac114156b65a1da163ee12f>.
- 47 Craw, "*Fauda*: Hit TV Series."
- 48 "Transcript: Inside *Fauda*," AIPAC Policy Conference, 27 March 2017, www.policyconference.org/article/transcripts/2017/fauda.asp.
- 49 Itzik Cohen, "*Fauda* Star Itzik Cohen: The Show Has Become a Great Force for Bringing People Together," *The Blogs, Times of Israel*, 18 June 2018, <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/fauda-star-itzik-cohen-the-show-has-become-a-great-force-for-bringing-people-together/>. Creative Community for Peace (CCFP) describes itself as "an entertainment industry organization that represents a cross-section of the creative world dedicated to promoting the arts as a means to peace and to countering the cultural boycott of Israel." CCFP, "Our Mission," CCFP, n.d., <https://www.creativecommunityforpeace.com/our-mission/>.
- 50 "Transcript: Inside *Fauda*," AIPAC Policy Conference.
- 51 Waleed Khleif and Susan Slymovics, "Palestinian Remembrance Days and Plans: Kafr Qasim, Fact and Echo," in *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), pp. 198–99.
- 52 Moaz, *Defending the Holy Land*, p. 584.
- 53 See Idith Zertal, "Oh, What a Beautiful Death! Cemeteries, Remembrance, and Nationalism," trans. Aya Rupin, Israeli Pavilion Catalogue, International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 10 September–19 November 2006, http://tulaamir.co.il/files/biennale/html/Catalogue_Zertal.html:

The hegemonic discourse of "no option," the thesis of the totally innocent victim that release[s] the nation from any responsibility for its choices and deeds, and their consequences, that is the

death of its own children and the death of the enemy's children. In the national discourse we are forever a nation pursuing peace, we do not hate, war has been forced upon us, we are the victims and will never forgive our enemies who force us to kill and be killed. The victims and the unending cycle of vengeful violence, of attack and counterattack, are always the responsibility of the other side. This is the national rhetoric that is produced and reproduced again and again according to circumstances, to forge the self-righteous nationals and make possible the unquestionable and self-explaining perpetuity of war. History, as it is written, interpreted and bequeathed, ideologized and politicized, conveniently begins at the moment the enemy attacks us, never with the sequence of events that led to the violent occurrence, nor with the historical background which has made the enemy an enemy and thrust him to act the way he does. Thus the prospect of a perpetual conflict and its dead is assured.

- 54 Theodor Herzl, "The Jewish Question," in *The Jewish State*, trans. Sylvie D'Avigdor (1986 repr., New York: American Zionist Emergency Council, 1949), <https://israeled.org/resources/documents/herzl-the-jewish-question/>.
- 55 Ghassan Hage, "On Narcissistic Victimhood," in *Gaza: Law, Morality and Politics*, ed. Raimond Gaita (Perth: UWA Publishing, 2010), pp. 101–26.
- 56 Ravit Hecht, "The Face of Israel's Far Right Wants to 'Abort' Palestinian Hope," *Haaretz*, 3 December 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-the-face-of-israel-s-far-rightwants-to-abort-palestinian-hope-1.5468417>. Another example of the normalization of violent rhetoric is evident in Smotrich's Twitter remarks following the arrest of Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi, famously arrested and imprisoned for slapping an Israeli soldier. Smotrich was reported to have tweeted that "she should have gotten a bullet, at least in the kneecap. . . . That would have put her under house arrest for the rest of her life." See "Israeli Lawmaker: Ahed Tamimi 'Should Have Gotten a Bullet, at Least in the Knee,'" *Haaretz*, 22 April 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israeli-lawmaker-ahed-tamimi-should-have-gotten-a-bullet-1.6015411>.
- 57 Gidi Weitz, "Signs of Fascism in Israel Reached New Peak during Gaza Op, Says Renowned Scholar," *Haaretz*, 13 August 2014, <https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-signs-of-fascism-in-israel-peaked-during-gaza-op-1.5259272>. In this interview, Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell, who was himself the target of a rightwing bombing attack, notes:

Democracy rarely falls in a revolution. Not in Italy, not in Germany and not in France with the Vichy regime—which is a crucial thing, because France was a democratic country that fell into the hands of the right wing with the support of the vast majority of the population. It was not the fall of France that generated this ideology. It was the result of a gradual process in which an extreme nationalist ideology took shape, a radical approach that perceives the nation as an organic body. Like a tree on which human individuals are the leaves and the branches—in other words, people exist only thanks to the tree. . . . You have to remember that democracy ceased to exist in the territories long ago. The Palestinians there have no human rights, you rule them by force . . . and you can make the life of the population hell, because you can do as you please. That has been the case for decades, and it corrupts. . . . What goes on there constantly leaks into Israel. Democracies don't collapse suddenly, they encounter a serious crisis. We could find ourselves in a serious crisis in which the whole shebang will go up in smoke.

See also, Amira Hass, "A New Palestinian Generation," *Haaretz*, 17 May 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-a-new-palestinian-generation-1.5472958>, where Haas writes:

What is the Achilles' heel of the IDF, I was asked by activists of the anti-occupation soldiers' NGO Breaking the Silence at a meeting discussing the growing sophistication of the Israeli occupation apparatus. I didn't answer, 'You and those like you'—that is, the Israelis trying to spoil the Israeli joy of domination. Disastrously for us, there are not enough of them. Israeli

society is closer and more responsive to MK Bezalel Smotrich. . . . In short: Smotrichism is not a foreign language here; it's a dialect whose speakers are growing. The boots of Israeli society are very thick and the heels are reinforced.

- 58 Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 21.
- 59 In the absence of effective political movements, radical critics often look to teleological prediction as a source of solace and consolation. A case in point is the term "late capitalism," which came into vogue as a veiled form of historical prophecy that assumed the system's inevitable decline and fall.
- 60 Moaz, *Defending the Holy Land*, p. 557–58.
- 61 Fred Halliday, "Maxime Rodinson: In Praise of a 'Marginal Man,'" *Open Democracy*, 8 September 2005, https://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization/Rodinson_2819.jsp.