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SOLDIERS IN LEGITIMATE POLITICS: THE ISRAELI CASE

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SOLDIERS IN LEGITIMATE POLITICS: THE ISRAELI CASE

A Master's Thesis

by
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July 2021

To my mother, Neşe

SOLDIERS IN LEGITIMATE POLITICS: THE ISRAELI CASE

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By

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Ankara

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

SOLDIERS IN LEGITIMATE POLITICS: THE ISRAELI CASE

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Why do officers enter politics after retiring from service, and how do they choose which political party to join? This thesis addresses these questions by looking at the Israeli case. Israel is an atypical case in this regard due to the large ratio of retired generals entering politics compared to other advanced industrialised countries. The answers to these questions are explored through a two-pronged method. First, an historical institutionalist perspective is employed, by looking at the institutional evolution of the Israeli state to see what practices were entrenched as institutions. Second, a pool of 84 generals from various positions was collected and coded by their dates of service and entry into politics, as well as which parties they were in. This was combined by data from the Manifesto Project on the 24 different political parties they entered.

As a result of this analysis, it was found that retired generals prefer, overwhelmingly, secularist parties. A plurality just short of a majority prefers left-wing, Labour Zionist parties, while the remaining portion is almost equally divided between centrist/liberal parties and right-wing parties. With the data at hand, it is concluded that the generals prioritise security issues, though economic issues may also play a crucial role. Overall, the findings indicate that retired Israeli generals enter politics to preserve the IDF's privileged space in Israeli society and economy, under the sense that the IDF's position is necessary for Israel's long-term prosperity. In doing so, this thesis aims to contribute to the field of civil-military relations and more specifically, applying theories of motivation for entering politics to the Israeli case.

Keywords: Civil-military relations, Israel, Israeli Defense Forces

ÖZET

MEŞRU SİYASETTE ASKERLER: İSRAİL VAKASI

Aksoy, Kaan

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Tudor A. Onea

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Subaylar emekli olduktan sonra neden siyasete girerler ve katılacakları siyasi partileri neye göre seçerler? Bu tez, bu soruları İsrail vakasına bakarak ele alıyor. Emekli olduktan sonra siyasete giren generallerin çokluğundan dolayı İsrail bu konuda olağandışı bir vaka olarak durmaktadır. Bu soruların yanıtları, iki farklı yoldan araştırılıyor. İlk olarak tarihsel kurumsal bir bakış açısıyla bakılarak, İsrail devlet teşkilatının kurumsal gelişimi takip ediliyor ve hangi uygulamaların ve normların, birer kurum olarak kalıcılaştığına bakılıyor. İkinci olarak ise 84 generallik bir havuz; hizmet yılları, siyasete girdilerse girdikleri yıl, girildiyse hangi partilerde siyaset yaptıklarına göre kodlandı. Bu veri, Manifesto Project tarafından sağlanan 24 farklı siyasi parti verisiyle birleştirildi.

Bu araştırmanın sonucunda emekli generallerin büyük bir çoğunluğunun laik partileri tercih ettiği gözlemlendi. Büyük bir çokluğun sol, İşçi Siyonist partilerini tercih ederken, kalan çoğunluğun ise neredeyse eşit bir şekilde merkez/liberal ve sağcı partiler arasında bölünmüş olduğu görüldü. Eldeki veriye göre generallerin güvenlik meselelerini ön plana koyduğu sonucuna varıldı; fakat ekonomik meseleler de önemli bir rol oynuyor olabilir. Sonuç olarak, bulgular emekli generallerin siyasete katılma sebebi olarak, İsrail'in uzun vadedeki gelişimi için gerekli gördükleri üzere, İsrail Savunma Kuvvetleri'nin İsrail toplumundaki ve ekonomisindeki imtiyazlı yerini muhafaza etmeyi gösteriyor. Bu şekilde bu tez, sivil-asker ilişkileri alanına katkı sağlamayı ve daha özel olarak siyasete müdahale etme yönelimi teorilerini İsrail vakasına uygulamayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsrail, İsrail Savunma Kuvvetleri, sivil-asker ilişkileri

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INTRODUCTION

In the developed world, the realms of the military and the civilian administration remain firmly separate. The armed forces of a country are expected to remain under the auspices of the civilian executive, in a clearly defined hierarchy that puts the civilian above the soldier. The precise nature and technicalities of this hierarchy can differ, but one thing often remains the same: Soldiers have careers as soldiers and not much else. When they do retire, their history of a military career often does not become a central point of their future career(s).

Such is not the case in Israel. Israel is one of the most developed countries in the world, ranking 19th on GDP per capita, its economy is robust and diverse, has a typical post-industrial labour force distribution, and it maintains a very high Human Development Index. It is also a parliamentary democracy that has always ranked as a full democracy since its inception in 1948. It is, for all intents and purposes, a part of the advanced capitalist industrialised countries. Yet, one difference (among others) glares out: the affluence of the military, military officers, and furthermore, retired military officers. The military as an institution is remarkably visible in Israel. Of course, this can be attributed in some part due to Israel's perception of threat. It is, from the perspective of its inhabitants, surrounded on all sides by enemies, or the sea. This naturally grants it a mindset conducive to giving the military more importance, and an overall militarism.

However, this has not fully materialised, either. Despite military service being mandatory for almost all adult citizens, Israel is not a country that has a particularly militant society. It is not an example of the "garrison state" Lasswell (1941) refers to, nor does it experience the praetorian interventions observed frequently in Turkey and

Thailand. It has no coups in its history. Not only there are no coups, there are also no instances of officers directly attempting to influence politics in any way, while they serve as members of the armed forces. This, by itself, sets Israel apart from its neighbours and surrounding states, since its foundation in 1948. In a region plagued by constant military interventions and coups, Israel has been spared from it. On the flip side, despite not experiencing any of these deficits to its liberal democratic order, its military officers have been remarkably influential and active in its civilian politics *after* their retirement, unlike other advanced capitalist countries. An unusually high ratio of Israeli officers, post-retirement, pursue political careers through electoral politics. Others enter the public sector (e.g., executive-level appointments at the state-owned water company Mekorot). Moreover, a preliminary look at 84 generals between 1948-2021 shows that a majority of those who entered politics after retirement have done so under centre, liberal, or left-wing parties, with only a quarter preferring right-wing parties. This is an interesting point, as the ethos that are commonly associated with professional armed service, i.e., discipline, hierarchy, order, and authority, are not usually associated with the ideologies these generals appear to associate themselves with in their political careers. Therefore, the central question comes in at this point: Why do Israeli generals seem to enter politics so frequently after their retirement? As a sub-question to this, why do they appear to prefer non-right-wing parties for this?

I believe that these are questions which need to be answered by looking at a period of time, as opposed to a single snapshot. This is because the ruling parties' ideologies changed and shifted with time, and it should be remembered that Israeli politics and ideologies inevitably had an effect on the military. Therefore, this thesis will look at Israeli political history along with civil-military relations from the state's inception,

in order to be able to get a full picture of the situation. It is expected that a dynamic picture, with causal relations changing as opposed to remaining the same. A general's reasons for joining politics, as well as the political party he joins, is not expected to be the same in 1950 and 2000. There is a gap in the literature in that there are few works which look upon the decision-making processes of the agents in question. While the institutional nature of the Israeli army and its connections to broader Israeli society have been covered to a great degree, studies on generals' personal preferences remain scarce today.

In that regard, the thesis intends to build upon the work of Peri (1983) by bringing it to 2021, while his analysis stopped in the 1980's. Peri (1983) explains why the officers choose to enter politics after retirement under three sub-headings: Structural (pp. 108-109), functional (pp. 109-111), and as an "exchange of power and prestige" (Peri, 1983, pp. 111-114). However, his work does not go into detail as to why these officers enter politics in the parties they do so in. Their entry into the left-wing is almost taken for granted. Therefore, this thesis is intended to fill that gap in the literature on Israeli civil-military relations, by focusing on the agents as opposed to the structure, endeavouring to understand agent decisions.

Working off of an interest-based approach, this thesis will operate on the hypothesis that these retired generals primarily have Israeli national interest in mind. I argue that Israeli generals, owing to their socialisation within the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) as well as the founding ideology of the country, view the central place the IDF has within Israel's social and political order as being highly beneficial, if not necessary, for Israel's future prospects. To be sure, this hypothesis has its limits. It is exceedingly difficult to understand their true intentions without engaging in extensive qualitative study, such as interviews with those who are alive. Therefore,

due to the problem of resources, its explanatory power is inhibited. Furthermore, the large pool of officers at hand makes it difficult to point out the reasons in a general manner. Once more, a more focused qualitative study would function better in pinpointing the reason why specific former officers elected to join politics, as opposed to a more general picture.

Alternative possible explanations do exist. A notable one is that these former officers are motivated more by personal interests, such as expanding their own personal political influence. Barred by the institutional barriers of the IDF, former officers can do little to exercise real political influence, particularly after the 1980's. Therefore, entering politics is a good way, regardless of the prestige the IDF enjoys at that time, to expand one's own influence.

This is an important contribution for two reasons. First, Israel's civil-military relationship is unique amongst its peer countries that are commonly referred to as the advanced capitalist economies of the world. In all of the other countries which are classified similarly, we generally see a very institutionalised style of interaction between these spheres, with the civilian side being on top. In Israel, this is not always the case. We see that the relations between civilians and the military is somewhat non-institutionalised, personalised, with the boundaries vaguely defined. Thus, the nature of interaction becomes fluid, and the influence of the armed forces can wax and wane depending on the government in charge. This, therefore, makes it a peculiar case amongst advanced capitalist countries. Explaining this outlier case will allow better understanding of civil-military relations in the developed world, where much of the literature appears to have stagnated, when there are new cases to be found even within it.

Second, Israel is one of the few countries where the military is afforded such influence and prestige, both by governments and by the public at large, and yet has never interfered in politics in the way we observe in Turkey, Thailand, or Pakistan. The question of why this is the case, I argue, lies partially in the personal preferences of the officers at hand. I do not believe that an explanation of democratic institutions is sufficient by itself to explain this. Turkey has had some form of experimentation with democracy since the late 19th century, and transitioned to a multi-party democracy in 1950—roughly the same period as Israel was founded as a multi-party democracy—and yet, coups and memoranda are common. Therefore, the central point of the thesis will be to enhance institutional analysis through a look at Israel's political culture, focusing specifically on the generals.

Put together, these two points comprise the core contribution of this thesis to the literature on civil-military relations. By better understanding how the military and civilian governments interact with one another within a liberal democratic framework, it is plausible that the dynamics between the two can be further optimised, and practical lessons can be drawn from the Israeli case—good or ill—to either limit military involvement in politics, to reduce the military's insulation from political oversight, or to facilitate the transfer of technical military expertise to policymakers in the civilian defence sphere. Overall, the findings will be conducive to further works elaborating upon models of more efficient, more democratic, and more transparent civil-military interactions.

The thesis will be composed of three chapters. The first chapter will cover the theoretical basis of the thesis, and as such, it will look at the literature pertaining to civil-military relations. This literature review will look at both the general state of the art in the field in a broader theoretical framework, as well as what has been written in

regards to Israel in specific. The overall literature, at first glance, is mostly US-centric especially in its formative years, though this is somewhat alleviated at the tail-end of the 20th century and onwards. This allows for the construction of a theoretical basis for the thesis, which will be based upon Finer's (1976) theories of political culture as well as motives for the military to intervene, where the phrase "intervention" is interpreted loosely and does not necessarily mean a coup or memorandum, but instead refers to overall influencing of the political sphere.

The second chapter will look at Israeli political history, starting in 1948 and ending roughly today. The purpose of the chapter is two-fold. The first aim is to contextualise the politics into which these generals entered or otherwise got involved with. The second and more important one is to allow an understanding of Israeli political dynamics and to lay out the developments in the civil-military relations. Due to the large period of time, as well as the changes that are important, the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section looks at the situation between 1948-1977, where we see a very informally established order of affairs. The division of labour between the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, and the Chief of Staff was not clearly defined by law. Instead, the first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion took onto himself the defence portfolio along with the premiership. In doing so, he defined the mostly informal boundaries of civil-military interaction. Therefore, his actions and legacy dominated much of Israeli civil-military relations between statehood to his retirement. This will be reflected in the first section of the first chapter, and will focus primarily on Ben-Gurion, Mapai, the state, and the IDF, as well as the relationships between these various actors. From 1977 onwards, we observe that the formal influence of the military declines, with the perception of failure in the 1973 Yom Kippur War greatly contributing to this decline. However,

the number of retired officers entering politics after 1973 increases dramatically. Overall, I observe a trend of the military being, rightly or wrongly, held responsible for much of the failures involving Israel's security, while the civilians in charge (e.g., the Prime Minister or the Defence Minister) are often largely absolved of their responsibility. A particular example is the report issued by the Agranat Commission, formed to investigate the events of the Yom Kippur War. Towards the 21st century, the military's influence in day-to-day affairs is minimal, and we even see top-level officers, even the Chief of Staff, being left out of the loop on critical decisions. Therefore, a preliminary hypothesis is that the military's insulation from the public political sphere, and vice-versa, has resulted in the military being scapegoated for what would ordinarily be considered civilian failure. In keeping the military and defence policy restricted to quasi-technocrats of the field, Israel made it difficult for the legislative branch—and in some cases, parts of the executive—to effectively scrutinise the military, allowing blame to be shifted.

Finally, in the third chapter, I analyse an original dataset of 84 Israeli generals. These generals have been picked through a method of convenience sampling, due to the limitations of time and resources, focusing on the top-tier (Chief of Staff and the Deputy Chief of Staff) as well as two regional commands (Southern and Central). Practically all involved were of the rank of *tat aluf* (Brigadier General) or higher, with the exception of one colonel who ended up as commander of the Southern Command. The analysis will look at trends amongst Israeli generals, such as their dates of birth, places of birth, their period of service, if they entered politics following their retirement, and the political factions they aligned with. This, coupled with the historical overview provided in the second chapter, will allow for the overlaying of large-N data with historical context. In addition, the parties these

generals have joined—24 in total—will be added into the data. The data for these parties comes from the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al., 2020a).

The overarching method to be followed is one of historical institutionalism. This will be done through a thorough analysis of Israel's institutional development in Chapter 2, while noting the certain path dependencies that resulted from this course of development, such as Ben-Gurion's informal method of running the civil-military sphere leading to a long-term deficit in institutionalisation. Essentially, Israel is considered a single case-study for why retired officers may choose to enter politics after their military careers.

The hypothesis is that the armed forces, originating as a voluntary militia (elaborated on in Chapter 2) contained certain ideological foundations. These foundations, in turn, instilled a certain outlook into its officer corps even after the transition to a non-political, all-encompassing, and non-voluntary[1] force. The core ideological foundations laid upon the armed forces, and the state as a whole, was predicated on consolidating the Jewish-Israeli hold on Israel. The IDF became a crucial part of this effort, i.e., both in integrating Jewish immigrants, and in physically defending the state, therefore cementing its position within Israeli society, as well as its economy. This, in turn, led to officers seeking to preserve this position attained by the IDF, considering it vital to Israeli national interest. Ben-Gurion, in a speech to the Knesset, emphasised the impossibility of peace prior to Arab understanding that Israel, and its Jewish population, would endure (Bar-Zohar, 1984). The objective was to secure Israel, an objective that was operationalised in the form of signing peace treaties with the Arab countries. For this to be possible, at least according to Ben-Gurion, Israel needed to make certain that it could not be defeated by force of arms.

[1] Israel maintains universal conscription for almost all of its Jewish citizens, with some exceptions.

Therefore, the officers of the IDF elected to go into politics in the Israeli left, which was decidedly a more hawkish political camp than one sees in today's left-wing parties, as it met their ideological "criteria".

However, Labour began declining in the late 1970's, reaching its nadir in 2009, where Labour won merely 13 seats out of 120 in Israel's legislative elections. This coincides with an apparent change in generals' preferences. Out of 84 generals in the dataset, 33 of them have entered politics. Of the ten generals included in the dataset that entered politics post-2000, only two have chosen to enter politics in Labour.

That being said, it would be a mistake to look only at retired officers who joined (or did not join) Labour. Israel has a very dynamic arena for political parties, and the number of parties represented in the legislature is high, even for a multi-party system. As of the writing of this thesis, thirteen separate parties have seats in the Knesset. Labour is not the sole party that is along the lines which run contrary to the military ethos mentioned earlier, with examples such as the liberal Yesh Atid, or the historical Movement for Democratic Change ("Dash") coming to mind.

While I am reluctant to use the terms "left" and "right" beyond simple heuristics due to their inherent reductionism, the issue of classification becomes a colossal task beyond the scope of this thesis, without such a classification. Therefore, the parties involved in this thesis will indeed be classified as "left" and "right", while recognising that it is not an ideal form of classification. In order to do this as systematically as possible, this thesis will rely upon the custom "rile" index as utilised by Laver and Budge (1992), which Volkens et al. (2020b) have provided within their dataset. The rile index is an index which combines mentions of various issues, ranging from human rights, democracy, positive and negative mentions of "traditional morality", "national way of life", as well as economic indicators such as

“free-market economy”, “mixed economy”, advocacy for supply-side or demand-side economic incentives, and so on. Put shortly, it is a more or less holistic indicator of where a party sits along a left-right axis. Furthermore, rile scores are available for all parties involved, which makes it useful for classification purposes.

However, there are some anomalies within this index which necessitates an in-depth look. In these cases—there exist only three such cases—the manifestos will be looked at individually, with the English translation being used if available, and if not, the original Hebrew version being used. While this will detract from the universality of the rile data, I believe that qualifying these outlier cases and explaining them will add more to the discussion than it costs in the form of data distortion. To look at it more generally, I recognise the limitations relying on manifestos impose. A chief problem is the assumption that these documents fully reflect a party’s intentions for when they come to power. Another problem, an offshoot of the first one, is that it assumes that a party will be able to push its agenda forwards with no compromises being made. When such compromises are made—and they are almost always necessary, as a built-in feature of the political system, in such a fragmented party system as Israel’s—they may be interpreted as dishonesty. All of these issues are issues inherent in using manifestos to determine a party’s stances, but the alternative methods are not possible due to limitations of time and resources.

CHAPTER 1

THEORIES OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

1.1. General Literature on Civil-Military Relations

There is a vast amount of general literature pertaining to the relations between civilian governments and the militaries under them. In this chapter, much of the literature as pertains to the questions and hypotheses presented in the introduction will be covered. Much of this literature came about following the end of the Second World War. Many of the early works focus on the types of civil-military relations that are observed in the world.

Huntington (1957) is perhaps one of the most well-known works regarding civil-military relations. If anything, it certainly is ground-breaking. While his work is quite Eurocentric (with a brief mention of Japan), its theoretical foundations cannot be ignored. In the first part, which is of interest for this thesis, Huntington goes into detail about the theory of interaction between the civilian governments and the militaries they command, both on theoretical and practical bases. Huntington divides civilian control into two: Subjective and objective. The former can be achieved either through practical government institutions, e.g., “commander-in-chief” or “the Crown”, or through the less tangible institution of democracy ensuring civilian control (1957, pp. 80-82). While he does mention a third method, one which puts social classes such as the aristocracy to the primary role, this method has largely faded out in modern times. The latter, objective control, comes through what Huntington refers to as “maximising military professionalism”, and it comes through

the diffusion of power between civilians and military officials in a way that is most geared towards creating professional attitudes in the army (1957, p. 83).

More importantly, Huntington explores what the "military ethic" is, comparing it to the political ideologies of liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, and fascism. In particular, he highlights the differences between liberal values and the "military ethos" (1957, pp. 90-91), which covers the thesis' subject matter, which is the entry of generals into politics and the motivations behind their entry. Finally, Huntington also touches upon typologies of civil-military relations, dividing them into five, of which only one is of interest: "[Pro-military] ideology, low military political power, and high military professionalism" (1957, pp. 96-97). Unfortunately, Huntington does not go into detail about what "high" and "low" in this case mean precisely, and as such, this particular typology does not suffice for defining Israeli civil-military relations. However, this thesis includes Israel roughly within that specific category as "high" political power would necessitate some sort of veto mechanism, formal or informal, over the civilian government, which the Israeli military never had.

Janowitz (1960) covers civilian control of the military in Chapter 17 of his book. While he, too, covers mostly the United States, once more the ideas are generalisable. He points out the strong power of the purse Congress—in other countries, the equivalent body— wields against the military (1960, p. 354) and in modern times, the phenomena of inter-service rivalry serving to keep the military somewhat politically weak, relative to the legislative (pp. 350-354). Janowitz also talks about post-retirement careers of generals and admirals, and it is noteworthy to point out that in his findings, he makes no reference of these senior officers entering politics. He finds that "in federal government employment, appointment has been so diffuse that the impact of military personnel is limited" (Janowitz, 1960, p. 377), but

even that refers to appointed offices, not elected political positions. This presents a stark contrast to the Israeli case, where a considerable number of senior officers go into politics, though this will be discussed later under Chapter 3.

In addition to professional and bureaucratic employment, Janowitz explains the reasons behind there being few instances of officers going on to political careers (based on the United States experience). It is aptly summarised as both sides—the civilians and the military—being reluctant to involve the soldier in politics. The soldier is reluctant for fear of the armed forces becoming politicised, whereas the civilian is reluctant as they fear the armed forces becoming a tool to generate public opinion for prospective politicians (Janowitz, 1960, p. 388). He points out that this phenomenon of soldiers entering politics after retirement was somewhat more common in the United Kingdom, with them being "…the second most frequent occupational group in the House of Commons [after lawyers]", almost all of them Conservatives (Janowitz, 1960, p. 389).

Finer (1976) proposes a theory against Huntington. He mentions professionalism and the idea of civilian control as inhibitors of military intervention (pp. 24-30), while listing the "Manifest Destiny of the soldiers", i.e., the predisposition of soldiers to assume that they are destined to "save" their countries, as well as interest of various types (class, regional, national, or purely individual) as the primary motivators for military intervention in politics. Finer makes little to no distinction between "developed" and "developing" countries in a sweeping manner, but instead looks at specific facets of development, such as political culture or institutions. A good example is his example of "military intervention" as a type of route a state may take: France, given as an example of a "well-developed [nation] with a long historic formation" falling into military intervention (Finer, 1976, p. 235).

Of these three paradigmatic works, Finer (1976) is the more useful one to engage with the hypothesis. His emphasis on the motivations for soldiers' involvement in politics is deeper, furthermore and more importantly, Finer pays attention to more subtle means of the armed forces interfering in politics, as opposed to restricting his arguments and examples to direct military takeovers or memoranda. Indeed, Finer's argument that Imperial Japan's politics were influenced—not directly, but rather covertly—by its armed forces is particularly relevant in the Israeli case. While there is no directly applicable analogy (I do not propose that the IDF indirectly influences politics as an organised cabal akin to the Japanese case), it is a model that comes far closer than what Huntington or Janowitz propose. Therefore, Finer's work also forms the theoretical basis of this thesis.

Feaver (1996) is perhaps one of the first to seriously question the explanatory paradigm established by Huntington and Janowitz. Feaver claims that their explanations "skirt crucial aspects of the civilian control problem", and that a different theory of civil-military relations is necessary (1996, p. 150). While his work focuses on the American context, the theory he puts forth is generalisable. He points out that merely preventing coups or succeeding in the battlefield is not sufficient, and that the military must also be willing to do what the civilians ask them to do; there is a precarious balance between hamstringing the military so as to prevent coups, and actually allowing them to conduct their original task of physical defence (1996, pp. 154-155). A particularly striking point he makes is that civil-military relations should not be viewed as a strict binary, i.e., should not be interesting solely on the extremes of "battlefield collapse" and "military coup" (1996, p. 157). For this new theory, he posits that civilian and military spheres need to be analytically distinct, and he recognises that increasingly, the line between combatant and non-combatant is being

blurred (1996, p. 168). This has been true ever since the two World Wars, with the advent of total war and modern warfare. Furthermore, this issue is felt particularly in the Israeli context, where universal conscription and annual reserve duty blur the line even further.

Finally—and this is the heart of his article—Feaver states that this new theory ought to move beyond "professionalisation" (p. 169). This is particularly relevant for this thesis, as Israel does not maintain a strictly professional army. Certainly, career officers exist, but a considerable component of its enlisted soldiers, as well as its non-commissioned officers and its senior officers are men and women doing their service, or their annual reserve duty. The emphasis on moving away from professionalisation serves to provide a better lens for this thesis, due to the aforementioned blurring of the line between the conscript and the professional. By shifting our focus away from this distinction, however difficult it may be, we may start to see how Israelis perceive themselves and their military officers. Certainly, there is differentiation in Israel between active officers and retired officers, between a conscript, a reserve officer, and a career officer. However, the line between the two may not as be distinct as an ordinary developed country's military may be, which inherently affects the way we look at it in the first place. Even the phrase "reserve service" carries different connotations in Israel, directly due to the fact that lines between the civilian and the military being more blurred than we are accustomed to. Therefore, Feaver's urging to move away from the concept of professionalism is highly important for the subject matter at hand.

Similarly, Bland (1999) writes in the post-Cold War period, starting his article with the assertion that there is insufficient theorising in the field of civil-military relations. He highlights the differences between the military sharing control with the civilians,

and the civilians outright controlling the armed forces, and that the new theory ought to reflect this truth (1999, pp. 10-11). He outlines four challenges that civilian governments face in regards to their militaries: Curbing the military's political power, keeping the military in good behaviour, preventing politicians from utilising the military for their own agendas, and the balancing act between the politician and the technical expert (1999, pp. 12-13). It should be noted here, however, that the challenge faced in Israel, as well as the structure of civil-military relations governing it, is slightly different than all four. While this issue shall be extensively explored in Chapter 2, the Israeli challenge is to effectively scrutinise the military while allowing it as much operational autonomy as possible. The threat is not of military takeover, but rather of military unaccountability[2].

He also compares and contrasts approaches taken by Feaver and Schiff in regards to how civilians exercise control over their militaries, i.e., Feaver's model of delegated control and Schiff's consensus model (1999, p. 19). Bland also underlines the importance of practical control, as opposed to the illusion of control. In the end, his aim—similar to Feaver—is to "[release] civil-military relations theory from the grip of undefinable 'professionalism', placing it in the hand of a testable paradigm" (Bland, 1999, p. 21).

Burk (2002) looks specifically at how democratic countries maintain their civil-military relations. He goes over Huntington's theory and contrasts his idea of objective civilian control with Janowitz's civic republican theory, where active participation in the defence of the republic is the basis for citizenship (2002, p. 10). Building on these two works, Burk (2002) points out four issues relevant to the

[2] Freilich (2012, pp. 67-68) also refers to the lack of effective accountability mechanisms over the IDF.

theory of civil-military relations: Blurring political and military spheres, the relevance of the citizen-soldier ideal, and transnational civil-military relations. Essentially, his purpose is to see if a theory which is based on preserving both the state and its democratic aspect at the same time, finding both Huntington and Janowitz' theories insufficient for this purpose. This theory, or at least the idea of such a theory, is of particular relevance for Israel as the question of whether Israel is a democratic state or a Jewish state is a question that lies at the heart of Israeli identity. Two of the three issues Burk (2002) highlights are linchpins of the Israeli defence sphere: A different configuration of interaction between the political and military—it can be referred to as "blurred"—and a fundamental foundation of every Jewish citizen[3] also being a soldier of the State of Israel. Therefore, similar to Feaver (1996), Burk's proposed theory would be very useful in cases such as Israel's. Israel's case can lead to better theorising in this field, as it represents a model largely ignored by non-Israeli scholarship.

Olmeda (2013) is worth mentioning here, as he recognises a problem in the field, taking the form of focusing too much on civilian control, and little else (p. 64). He finds that less than 10% of the articles published in *Armed Forces & Society* between 1989-2007 pertain to military involvement in (or separation from) politics, aside from coups and military regimes, while articles focused on civil-military relations and/or civilian control make up approximately 71% (p. 68). I believe that this underlines the lack of theoretical diversity in the field, where Feaver (1996) and Burk (2002) have newer ideas. Focused excessively on civilian control (or the complete lack thereof), current scholarship largely fails to see the middle ground, where the interactions are more grey than black-and-white.

[3] With exceptions, such as the ultra-Orthodox sector of Jewish society.

Overall, the theoretical foundations of the field are, regrettably, very US-centric. While this is understandable due to the context of the Cold War, and there being very little in the way of pre-Second World War literature, it is still a large gap in the literature. This is a problematic issue as it makes difficult the application and testing of theory on states whose circumstances are vastly different from the United States, be these circumstances historical or contemporary. Israel is one such case, where the founding situation and the contemporary security situation the country finds itself in being a very different beast compared to that of the United States. While the theories are applicable and useful for this thesis, looking at more case-specific literature is warranted, in order to better mesh the general literature with the case. Therefore, the following section of the chapter will look into literature that pertains specifically to Israel and its security-military-civilian interactions.

1.2. Literature on Israeli Civil-Military Relations

For literature specific to Israel, it is best to begin with Horowitz and Lissak (1989). They outline the economic and social impacts the continuous conflict and the mentality of a perpetual siege have had on Israeli society, noting "the centrality of national security concerns in the public mind" (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989, p. 196). They do mention the heightened importance of balancing between military expertise and civilian political control, citing a few examples such as the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the 1982 Invasion of Lebanon as examples where public trust was undermined by a flaw in this balance (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989, pp. 197-198). Horowitz (1982) puts forth a distinction between a "garrison state" and a "nation in arms" (p. 78). He contends that the diffusion of civilian values into the military sphere make Israel incompatible with the notion of a "garrison state", with a liberal

democratic order pushing against authoritarian tendencies, while a siege mentality prevents civilian aversion to war (p. 79). More importantly, he asserts that the entrance of former officers into politics has not militarised politics, but has instead civilianised the IDF (p. 86). The arrangement of officers retiring relatively early—around age 50—has encouraged former officers to nurture links with members of different elite groups, Horowitz (1982, pp. 86-87) argues. This situation, where "second careers" are encouraged and links with other elites are assured, it makes sense for officers to enter politics, at least relative to their counterparts in other advanced industrialised countries. I believe that the crucial point here is the early retirement age of the IDF, where officers above the age of 50 are seldom seen. Put together with Horowitz and Lissak's (1989) work, this creates an atmosphere where the IDF is prestigious and enjoys influence, but its actions—even if taken by its civilian leaders—may not be popular. Therefore, with the hypothesis in mind, it is a conducive environment to push former officers into politics, as the IDF's position needs to be defended politically. Due to the IDF's insulation from politics, however, this cannot be done from the institutional structure of the IDF itself, thereby necessitating entry into politics post-retirement.

Barak and Sheffer (2007) bring a different approach to the table. They bring together traditional, critical (perhaps even post-Zionist), and "New Critical" perspectives to Israeli civil-military relations, approaching all of them in a critical manner. They find all three approaches problematic for different reasons. The traditional approach is presented as flawed as it is far too focused on the formal and institutional, while the critical and New Critical approaches neglect a systematic analysis of the security sector (Barak & Sheffer, 2007, pp. 7-8). Thus, the authors present an alternative concept, recognising the complexity and fluidity of Israeli civil-military relations

(2007, p. 17). They refer to their approach as “Security Network”, whose primary appeal is its recognition of the blurred lines between civilian and military, as well as the recognition of NGO’s and corporations whose influence is felt in policymaking (Barak & Sheffer, 2007, p. 17). In contrast to Feaver’s position, where he defends that the civilian and the military spheres be analytically distinct, Barak and Sheffer (2007) consciously bring them together, due to the unique nature of Israel’s security sector. This is reflective of how distinct Israel is from the rest of the developed world. While international scholarship often takes the civilian and military as separate entities, Barak and Sheffer offer another route, one which provides a better perspective into how Israeli civil-military relations work.

Cohen (2006) looks at how relations between the civilian and the defence establishments have changed over time in Israel. He covers the various points of tension between the military and the government, then proceeds to claim that instead of the military becoming overly powerful, it is instead being overly submissive to the civilians (2006, p. 771). His explanation for this is a change in the nature of the IDF’s operations. It has transitioned from a traditional army—securing borders and foreign invasion—to a less conventional army which is more occupied by unconventional warfare, such as foreign long-range missile strikes and counterinsurgent operations (Cohen, 2006, pp. 779-780). Therefore, Cohen concludes that any risk of the IDF conducting a coup, or even a less far-fetched officers’ revolt, is increasingly impossible (p. 785). This is not, however, out of democratic concerns, but rather due to more practical issues preventing them from doing so. Thus, Israeli officers seeking to influence politics are inherently forced into parliamentary politics, regardless of the influence or prestige enjoyed by the IDF at any given time.

R. L. Schiff (1992) asks the question of why coups are not observed in Israel. Her hypothesis is that in spite of a high level of foreign threat, a "harmonious relationship" between the IDF and society is present, independent of formal institutions of civilian control over the armed forces (1992, p. 637). She, too, notes the difficulty of separating "civil" from the "military" in Israel due to the IDF's far-reaching influence in Israeli society, economy, and politics, and concludes that "to make the claim that Israel has a distinctly civil governmental sector is problematic" (R. L. Schiff, 1992, pp. 644, 646). Schiff's work parallels Barak and Sheffer's in a way, by way of recognising that the civilian and the military spheres are not quite as separable as they are in the rest of the developed world. The lack of a distinct civilian sector, on the other hand, I believe makes it more reasonable to see former officers enter politics.

In a case study, Bar-On (2012) looks at a specific "revolt" of generals in 1967, prior to the Six Day War. In doing so, he seeks to discover why normally calm and polite commanders such as Matti Peled or Israel Tal were so confrontational with the civilian government during the crisis. A particular finding he puts out is the generational difference between the IDF's officer corps and the civilian government in 1967, with the former being young *sabras*[4], while the latter was mostly comprised of (former) diaspora Jews who brought along the mentality of the diaspora (Bar-On, 2012, p. 36). This generational conflict created differences in understanding of both military and political matters, leading to an extraordinarily confrontational interaction between the IDF and the government. The primary take-away from Bar-On's article is that the military pressured the civilian government of the time to adjust the cabinet in line with its wishes. Yet, we see over time (this will be covered

[4] The word "sabra" refers to an Israeli Jew born in Israel.

far more extensively in Chapter 2 of the thesis) that the civilian government diverges more and more from the IDF, without the sort of tensions Bar-On describes. This divergence and lack of conflict, incidentally, appears when *sabras* occupy both the higher echelons of civilian government as well as the IDF. Therefore as the IDF corps lose their ability—however much it may have been—to influence civilian politics as the IDF, individual officers who seek to do so find their way into politics, as there appears no other way to do so.

Levy (2016) focuses on the impact of religious authority gaining influence within the IDF. This approach is important as religious officers are increasing in number within the IDF, which may affect senior officers' political leanings towards more religious and right-wing parties. Looking over the IDF's history in relation to the religious segment of Israeli Jewish population, Levy points out that an extensive network of schools which can best be described as "religious military academies" (*hesder yeshiva*) were established to combine the ultra-Orthodox yeshiva education with military service. This was further compounded on by "pre-military Torah academies (*mechinot*)" in the 1980's (Levy, 2016, p. 308). Critically, he refers to how religious authorities' perspective conflicted with the secular government's, leading to religious authority being utilised to ensure military discipline in the dismantling of Jewish settlements (Levy, 2016, p. 310). This was successful, but at the cost of undermining secular military discipline. The issue of religion is an important one in Israel, but the findings established by Levy are interestingly not reflected in the preferences of retired generals' parties. Of the 84 generals who have been coded, none have chosen to enter politics through religious parties, despite there being institutionalised religious-military education and service. This suggests that the religious influence

remains at the lower ranks, i.e., enlisted personnel and NCOs, as opposed to commissioned officers.

Libel and Gal (2015) also look at increasing religiosity in the IDF in light of what they describe as lessening secular, middle-class Ashkenazi influence. They model their work off manpower model archetypes, and establish that Israel's model of combining "cadre/conscript" and "militia service" models in order to maintain a stable officer corps is what led to a disproportionate presence of the aforementioned demographic group (Libel & Gal, 2015, p. 214). Therefore, this could well account for the lopsided political preferences of the retired generals, with highly-educated, secular, but more importantly, Ashkenazi voters preferring Labour: "The fact was that the Alignment[5] was closer to being an 'ethnic party' in this sense than the Likud was" (Arian, 2004, p. 189). This is particularly relevant considering Levy's earlier work: While religiosity is increasing in the IDF, the higher ranks are insulated from this, and their preference is towards Labour due to their socio-economic backgrounds.

Freilich (2012) criticises existing studies on Israeli government and politics for being far too focused on historical approaches, as well as for emphasising formal institutions, without giving sufficient attention to the process of decision-making itself (p. 2). A crucial point is that "…the [decision-making process] at the cabinet level is highly politicized…political considerations reign supreme, with a focus on politics making, not policymaking" and "…Israel's government is characterized by…semiorganized anarchy. The premier has few formal prerogatives; his ability to govern is almost entirely dependent on his political skills and de facto power at any

[5] The electoral coalition of Israeli left-wing parties, including the dominant Mapai (later Labour) party.

given moment" (Freilich, 2012, p. 3). This general lack of institutionalisation is, indeed, what we see causes significant problems when a leader without informal power and authority governs the state. It is also what legitimises Freilich's criticism of pre-existing studies, as this informal order of affairs is what makes a wholly institutional approach unviable when studying it.

Further into the book, Freilich identifies five problems with the decision-making process in Israel, referring to them as "pathologies". Of these five, the fifth is the one I think warrants most attention here. This is the prominence of the defence establishment. Freilich carefully makes the distinction between "primacy" and "omnipotence", stating that "…IDF primacy is based not on 'winning' every issue but merely on being the most important player in most" (Freilich, 2012, p. 61). He reveals that in an interview, former Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon complained about there being too many officers and not enough civilians in senior meetings, yet, the soldiers' better preparation permitted the soldiers to dominate the proceedings (2012, p. 62). Furthermore, the IDF holds in its hands all corners of governance in some areas, leading to opaqueness and impenetrability by civilians. This is particularly the case when it comes to the West Bank—and Gaza until Israel's unilateral withdrawal—where military governance over the area has turned the IDF into a quasi-state in the area (Freilich, 2012, pp. 63-64). As a consequence, it would not be far-fetched to assume that senior officers, following their retirement from active service, can perhaps be privier to the practicalities of governance than some civilian politicians are. Finally, Freilich also states the prevalence of former generals in politics with about 10 to 12 percent of the Knesset being former defence officials or senior officers (2012, p. 66), concluding that the IDF (and the defence establishment as a whole) is regarded as the one institution that provides reliable and objective

information (p. 67). Finally, of note is the affirmation of the IDF's connection with both Israeli and international society, underlining the fact that the IDF elite is not a closed, sequestered elite (Freilich, 2012, p. 73). The early retirement age and the constant inflow of new officers allows the IDF's mentality to remain grounded and flexible, and an overall conservatism is avoided. Ya'alon's complaints are particularly important considering the hypothesis: The IDF feels far more equipped and able to deal with Israel's problems. Coupled with the idea of primacy—being the top player in issues, not necessarily the winner—it would make sense for officers who feel similar to Ya'alon to try and make their own mark in Israeli politics. However, as shall be covered in Chapter 2, the IDF gradually lost this capability to influence civilian politics while remaining out of them, therefore pushing those who wanted to do so into the political arena.

Peri (1983) covers essentially all of Israeli political history from the perspective of civil-military relations up until Menahem Begin's fateful election in 1977 leading to a change in power from Labour to the Consolidation (more commonly and popularly known as "Likud"), an alliance of centre-right and right-wing parties. His emphasis on the nature of civil-military relations in Israel is particularly worthy of note, with Ben-Gurion establishing a highly personalised and informal style of governance, in an effort to decouple the IDF from daily political squabbling (Peri, 1983). Peri also emphasises the division between what he calls the "founding fathers" and the "sabra commanders", with the latter group actively utilising military service as a route to political power (1983, p. 33). In a similar vein, Perlmutter (1969) discusses the personalisation of civil-military relations, with the Defence Ministry being neglected, considered by the IDF as a "cluster of 'clerks and merchants'" (p. 56). Similarly, the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee of the Knesset was also a group that was

there out of formality, and was largely left out of the loop (Perlmutter, 1969, p. 57). In his work touching upon similar issues, van Creveld (1998) underlines the "weakness" Ben-Gurion had for military personnel, at the expense of the civilian Defence Ministry (p. 108). Furthermore, van Creveld goes into more detail about how pervasive the IDF as an institution is, with the lack of a national security council or overarching intelligence organisation, as well as the lack of effective oversight over the IDF, with the legislative branch having no subpoena authority, especially over the defence budget (van Creveld, 1998, p. 109). While this will, once again, be covered thoroughly in the second chapter, the preliminary conclusion is that the IDF had (and in some areas, continues to have) great operational autonomy from the civilians, while remaining under the governance of the elected civilian government, albeit usually by the Prime Minister himself, in the absence of a particularly authoritative Defence Minister, such as Yitzhak Rabin or Moshe Dayan. These are very important contributions to the literature and are highly relevant for the thesis. Peri's distinction between the former diaspora and the *sabra* officers is critical, as we see the rate of generals entering politics skyrocket just as the *sabra* officers retire. Those born after 1948, in Israel, enter politics far more frequently than those who were born in the diaspora before 1948. Perlmutter illustrates how the Defence Ministry and the Knesset's relevant organs were largely ignored; in the late 1990's and onwards, we see that the relevance of these organs increases, even if slightly. This is another reason for former officers to enter politics. One by one, over the course of four decades, the privileged position the IDF had regarding practically every defence issue was lost to civilians.

Peri (2001) touches upon relatively more recent problems the IDF faced and faces in a 2001 book chapter, referring to the failure to defeat the first Intifada being a one of

the causes for this crisis, and warns that the desynchronisation between the officer corps and the civilians could lead to praetorianism (p. 108). The military's role and prestige have declined significantly in the 1990's and beyond, which is also observed in some developments in that time as well (as shall be covered in Chapter 2); Peri looks at the reasons why. There are several factors he discovers: The impression, not necessarily the objective reality, that the IDF was simply not delivering results (Peri, 2001, pp. 110-113), the loss of the IDF's autonomy—relative to the years leading up to the 1982 Lebanon War—vis a vis the politicians (Peri, 2001, pp. 113-116), and a media more eager to criticise and question (Peri, 2001, pp. 116-117). In the end, it boils down to two core issues: The institutional structure of the state failing to reflect reality on the ground, and the lack of external conflict from the 1990's onwards (Peri, 2001, p. 131). In the same volume, Ben-Eliezer (2001) covers the IDF's role-expansion in light of how the military could not (or did not) overtake the already-present and authoritative civilian government, and thus sought to embed themselves in the process of nation-building and integration (especially important, considering Israel's policy of absorbing Jewish immigrants) as opposed to carving a space for themselves in the formal political sphere (p. 139). A particular vehicle Ben-Eliezer discusses—and is not alone in doing so—is the "parachuting" of former officers into high-ranking political positions as well as executive roles in state-owned companies (2001, p. 148). He disagrees with previous works and authors such as Peri and Horowitz, and states that descriptions of "a civilianized army" is inaccurate since the IDF, by its nature, conducts "organized violence" (Ben-Eliezer, 2001, p. 140). Finally, he makes an observation that the young retirement age of the IDF is not to avert the potential emergence of an entrenched military elite who could vie for political power, but rather to foster a young officer cadre, dynamic and prepared to

wage war (Ben-Eliezer, 2001, p. 148). These observations are important for one specific reason: They highlight the viewpoint of IDF officers regarding the centrality of the IDF—as an institution—in Israeli society, beyond being an instrument of defence. Few armies take upon themselves the role of nation-building and integration (the Turkish case is one such example), and this provides another reason as to why former officers are eager to enter politics.

In general, however, much of the literature focuses on how security issues themselves affected elections and voting behaviour, and not how the IDF—as an institution, or individual officers—took part in politics. This absence itself is telling. As demonstrated in this section, the IDF is certainly not an army completely sterile of politics and decision-making, especially when the matter at hand is defence and security. Yet, its presence seems to be completely absent from the literature relating to voting, elections, and daily politics. With this absence in mind, the question comes up yet again: Why do these generals enter politics, if they are so unremarkable so as to not warrant attention?

1.3. Theoretical Basis

At its core, the question is one asking why officers involve themselves in politics. The gap in the literature simultaneously presents a gap in the pre-existing theory, as well, due to a lack of generalisable examples. This gap is a more specific form of the overarching question of why officers choose to involve themselves in politics, for which various theories have been created (Finer, 1976; Huntington, 1957; Janowitz, 1960). Their focus is almost entirely on reasons and motivations behind direct military interventions, such as coups and memoranda. To his credit, Finer (1976, pp. 86-87) covers less direct means of military involvement in politics, such as mere

attempts to convince, then blackmail, but these are also not applicable to the Israeli case which I shall cover promptly.

Yet, there appears to be little in the way of investigating why officers enter civilian politics through pre-established and legitimate routes following their retirement. This is partially understandable, as this is not a very common phenomenon. While Israel may not be the sole country which experiences this, it still remains a rare occurrence. Therefore, there appears to be very little research regarding the causal relation between officers and their entering civilian politics legitimately.

The problem of a theoretical basis remains despite it being understandable. The foundation established by Huntington (1957) and Janowitz (1960) operates under the assumption of a fully professional military force, such as in the United States or the United Kingdom. The territory changes fundamentally when studying Israel for similar purposes. As briefly touched upon in the second part of this chapter, the Israeli military straddles what should ordinarily be a very clear line between "professional" and "militia". It has its dedicated career officers who make a living out of the art of war, who do full-time soldiering; it also has two or three years of conscription for all of its Jewish citizens, furthermore, every such citizen is recalled to reserve duty referred to as "*miluim*" until they reach the age of 40. In 2016, an article in the Times of Israel reported that "in 2015, [the number of eligible reservists serving in the IDF] dropped to 26 percent" (Gross, 2016). In other words, 26% of the population between 18-40 and had completed their initial bout of conscription was serving in the IDF.

In the face of such a problem, how can a theoretical foundation for this purpose be established? My argument is that the answer lies once more in Finer's work. Finer details out what he considers to be a "high political culture", which can essentially be

distilled down to the regime being considered legitimate by its constituents. Furthermore, he asks three questions to confirm: “Is there a legitimate method of power transfer”, “is there a public consensus on who the authority in power is”, and “is the public civil society active?” (Finer, 1976, pp. 87-88).

This provides an apt starting point, because the answer to these questions allows the pinpointing of Israel as a country of “high political culture” by Finer’s standards. This is because the answer to all three questions is, unequivocally, “yes”: Elections on the basis of universal suffrage provide the method of power transfer, the elected parties and the coalition(s) they form are considered, practically universally, as the rightful executors of power, and Israel maintains a vibrant civil sphere with freedom of speech and media. His work goes into further detail of mature-developed-low-minimal political cultures; such distinctions do not serve the purpose at hand here. This is a good starting point, because then the path towards reasons behind military involvement in such cultures, as a general statement, can be investigated. Finer states that “as long as the listed characteristics persist in such societies, the legitimation of military rule would be…unobtainable in [high political cultured countries]” (1976, p. 89).

Therefore, we can see that it would be impossible for the IDF, in a hypothetical scenario, to fully assume power by displacing the civilian government, because what then? It would be unable to govern the country meaningfully with any semblance of legitimate authority, as a military junta would have none of the legitimising bases outlined previously by Finer, as necessary in a country of “high political culture”. In the absence of a legitimate mechanism of power transfer, consensus on who the

authority is[6], as well as the necessary suppression of civil society by a junta, none of the requirements would be met. Therefore, for officers who sought to influence politics in ways they deemed fit, they are forced to resort to less intrusive means to do so. This is what Finer refers to as "influence". With an example from Japan prior to the Second World War, he establishes that the army can exercise great influence over the civilian government by being the tool by which the civilian administration survives—physically, in this case—and not by overthrowing it (Finer, 1976, pp. 90-92).

Thus, it is established that the means for militaries to exercise control over civilians can be of lawful and legitimate (if slightly questionable) influence. With the method in hand, the reasons for such can be explored. As mentioned briefly in the first part of this chapter, Finer mentions several interests as possible motives for intervening into politics. In Israel, we see very few generals interested in glorifying themselves above the rest—perhaps Moshe Dayan is an exception—and therefore, the personal motive is difficult to assume. For regional motivations, the fact is that Israel is a geographically small country, without many natural barriers. There is little regard for geographic regions beyond districts drawn up for administrative purposes, or small distinctions between well-established cities like Tel Aviv or Rishon LeTziyon and development towns such as Dimona. This, coupled with its very small size, makes regional motivations similarly impossible. The idea of "class interest" is appealing in the Israeli context, as its founders were overwhelmingly left-wing, even socialist Zionists. However, this is also insufficient as a motivator, due to the role the IDF played (and continues to play) as a socio-economic melting pot. The civilian and

[6] While the nominal head of a junta may appear to be the obvious answer, power dynamics within a junta may be different, and another officer, or a smaller group of more junior officers, may be holding practical power.

military cadres of Israel did not come from different classes—this is where conscription and *miluim* are important, as they merge the two in a melting pot of sorts—but instead, are from very similar backgrounds.

This leaves only the motivation of "national interest" as an applicable motivation. Difficult to pin down as it may be, the "nation" of the Israelis, whether conceptualised by these officers as "Israelis" or "Israeli Jews", appears to be the only applicable unit from amongst the ones Finer proposes. Therefore, this work will operate upon the assumption that these officers seek to influence the Israeli political arena for what they deem to be in the interest of the nation. In this, they are not assumed to be too different from ordinary citizens who enter politics for similar purposes. This is incidentally reflective of Israeli society, best described by a quote from the first Israeli Chief of Staff Yigael Yadin: "Every Israeli citizen is a full-time soldier who is on leave 11 months of the year". This parallel with civilian politicians is important, so as to make clear that this thesis does not argue that there exists a concerted, organised effort by generals to influence politics in a certain, agreed-upon direction. It argues that the primary motivator for their entering politics is in order to advance what they perceive as national interest; *what*, precisely, constitutes national interest surely varies significantly from individual to individual.

With this in mind, the goal is to understand what these generals understood as "national interest". Oftentimes, the notion of national interest can fluctuate greatly from an individual to another, and in this case, every party can have a different understanding of what Israel's greater interests are. Historically, left-wing parties were in favour of settling, permanently, the pre-1967 borders of Israel so as to ensure a Jewish majority for the foreseeable future, but were willing to give up land conquered in the 1967 Six Day War in return for peace (e.g., the Sinai Peninsula to

Egypt, after which peace was signed in 1979). In contrast, the right-wing parties, be they nationalist, religious, or both, were—at least in theory—reluctant to give up land, including the West Bank and Gaza, considering them a part of historical Israel, referring to the West Bank by its ancient name "Judea and Samaria". However, the practical application of this is questionable, given Begin's peace treaty with Egypt giving up the Sinai Peninsula, and Sharon's unilateral disengagement from Gaza.

Therefore, with this base established, the rest of the thesis aims to explore what the national interest perceptions of the generals were/are, building upon Finer's theoretical foundation, and in a more specific vein, building upon Peri's pre-existing analysis of the officers by following in his footsteps, bringing a similar analysis to 2021.

CHAPTER 2

ISRAELI CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS BETWEEN 1948-2021

In liberal democracies, we generally observe that the realm of the military and the realm of politics remain separate, referred to as "civilian control" and divided into "subjective" and "objective" forms by Huntington (1957, pp. 80-81) as mentioned in the previous chapter. Such control over the military is often viewed as a prerequisite for a democratic regime. Despite scoring relatively less on the Varieties of Democracy liberal democracy index compared to advanced capitalist countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom (Coppedge et al., 2020), Israel has consistently been classified as a democratic regime, albeit falling into the "flawed" category at times. For its Jewish citizens, Israel may as well be a fully-fledged democracy. Yet, the prestige, prominence, and the influence the military enjoys in Israel is one thing that sets the country apart from its peers in the advanced industrial economies of the world. This influence is not the same manner of influence enjoyed by the Turkish Armed Forces, but of a different nature. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have never attempted a coup, nor have they threatened a civilian government with a coup if their demands were not met. Instead, the IDF has been given autonomy in certain aspects of its policy-making in Israel's formative years, specifically regarding Israel's policy regarding defence and to some extent, its foreign policy.

In this chapter, I will explain the shifts and changes that have occurred in Israeli civil-military relations in a continuum beginning with Israel's establishment in 1948, looking at it through the lens of the thesis' hypothesis. The reasons for this specific timeframe are twofold: One, it will present Israeli civil-military relations in a larger

time, therefore allowing the observation of changes based on different exogeneous and endogenous factors. Two, it will permit the exploration of the variation in civil-military relations across time. This, I argue, is important as the answer given may not necessarily be equally applicable throughout Israeli history. Reasons for former officers entering politics in the 1970's may be drastically different than their reasons for doing so in the 2010's.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first part will cover events from 1948 to 1977, starting roughly from Israel's establishment to the founding party's loss of power in the 1977 elections. This part will trace the Workers' Party of the Land of Israel (Mapai) led by David Ben-Gurion establishing the unique and largely informal relationship between the civilian government and the Chief of the General Staff, up until his permanent retirement from politics in 1970. The second section of the chapter will cover the state of affairs after 1977, and end with the First Intifada in 1987. In 1977, in part due to the disastrous beginning of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the ruling Israeli Labour Party lost power to the Likud, causing a political earthquake in Israel and changing the face of politics in Israel. This, naturally, caused the previously mentioned informal relations between the IDF and the civilians to change in some aspects, while remaining the same in others. The third and final part will cover events from 1987 to today, and will largely focus more on the politics of Israel, consciously so, as we observe a decline in the military's political activity.

The chapter will, inevitably, also touch upon Israeli political events, affairs, and elections that are not directly linked to the military. This is because—as I will demonstrate—politics and defence are not completely separable from one another in the Israeli political environment. It can be argued that such is the case in every country, yet it is my strong belief that Israel is among the few countries where this

inseparability is felt far more intensely. With a country so dominated by the issue of its neighbours, the ever-looming threat of war, and since the late 1980's, the notion of Palestinian uprisings, it becomes practically impossible to decouple domestic politics from the high politics of defence and foreign policy. Therefore, political events which do not initially appear connected to the national security can and do have consequences for military-civil relations.

2.1. From Foundation to the Aftermath of Yom Kippur: 1948-1977

The history of the IDF reaches back as far as the late-19th century, with a need for defence for the settlers arriving in the country to settle the cities of Rishon LeTziyon, Rehovot, Hadera, and so on. Therefore, I will briefly touch upon the Hagana ("The Defence"), the precursor to the IDF. The Hagana, for all intents and purposes, served the functions of a military, except one that operated underground within the confines of Mandatory Palestine governed by the British, where the Jewish and Arab communities were not permitted to maintain armed forces openly. Prior to the establishment of the IDF, there were a number of paramilitary and militia forces operating in Mandatory Palestine. Their differences were not solely those of organisation and methods, but also in political goals. The Hagana was predicated on defence of the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine.

On the other hand, organisations such as the National Military Organization in the Land of Israel (Etzel) and the Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (Lehi) were revisionist Zionist organisations which utilised terror tactics and reprisal attacks against both British authorities as well as Arabs in order to achieve their political goals. A crucial component of modern statehood is to centralise and monopolise the use of legitimate force, and the creation of the IDF would be the means to achieve

this. The Hagana was under the control of the Jewish Agency, which in those days was essentially the counterpart of a government. This, by 1948, had made it a largely Labour Zionist organisation, headed by David Ben-Gurion and the Mapai party. A part of the Hagana, the elite Palmach, was headed by officers who were more sympathetic to the more left-wing United Workers' Party (Mapam). Meanwhile, the Etzel organisation's Revisionist Zionist ideology would later be embodied by the political party Herut, one of the predecessors of the modern Likud party.

The Lehi's radical, even pro-fascist and pro-Nazi outlook during the Second World War, as well as their successful plot to assassinate Count Bernadotte in September 1948 doomed their prospects at having an independent political future in Israel after independence. The challenge the IDF, and therefore David Ben-Gurion faced was to integrate these different groups together while maintaining Jewish unity in the face of an all-out Arab assault. Ben-Gurion was willing to antagonise fellow Jews to achieve unity in the armed forces.[7] Schiff notes that the low quality of the immigrants immediately following the War of Independence sowed the seeds of intra-Jewish (i.e., Ashkenazi and Mizrahi) conflict in Israel, with the Israeli-born (*sabra*) and Ashkenazi elite dominating the officer ranks (1974, p. 56).

The political structure of the newly formed IDF is worthy of consideration. The IDF was not a force bereft of political influence, but instead torn between the Mapai and Mapam parties. Indeed, Luttwak and Horowitz (1983) note that "[f]or many officers…there was another reason for leaving the Army…many Palmach officers belonged to the…Mapam party and political pressures led to their resignation from an Army which Ben-Gurion and his Mapai party were…determined to control". Peri

[7] A particular example is the 1948 Altalena Affair, where skirmishes between the IDF and the Etzel resulted in fatal casualties.

(1983, pp. 39-40) disputes whether the IDF truly underwent a "de-politicisation" process as was claimed: Mapai evolved in the direction of a "Western European Labour Party" as opposed to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the Communist Party of China in spite of its leaders' Eastern European origins. Despite this difference in evolution, which did not put forth loyalty to the party first and foremost, Mapai did happen to have control over the state as a whole, albeit through democratic elections.[8] This naturally created some overlap between the "party" and the "state", similar to the Early Republican Era (approximately 1923-1950) in Turkey, though there existed a very real and concrete opposition to Mapai in contrast to the Turkish case. Ben-Gurion's formulation of the depoliticised IDF was, markedly, a two-way avenue. The IDF was meant to remain out of the realm of politics, yes, but the realm of politics was also meant to stay away from the domain of the IDF, i.e., security and defence. Through this manner of thinking, the IDF was granted an autonomous sphere of its own where it operated, insulated—at least, theoretically—from political bickering and infighting that came naturally with the type of political system the newborn state of Israel operated under. This, perhaps paradoxically, granted the IDF even more influence and weight on security policy than its Western counterparts. The defence ministry in Israel was underestimated by Ben-Gurion, seen "no more than an organisation charged with providing whatever the IDF wanted" (van Creveld, 1998, p. 108). This mindset, coupled with the fact that Ben Gurion held the defence portfolio alongside his role as Prime Minister, stunted the development of the Israeli Ministry of Defense (MoD) as an influential political force in relation to the Prime Minister and the IDF. Perlmutter puts it

[8] It should be noted that Arab participation and resulting seat count in the Knesset was minimal in the 1949 Israeli elections. The one Arab party that won seats in the Knesset was sponsored by Mapai itself.

succinctly and aptly, stating that "…the Defence Ministry has always ranked second to [the IDF]. The army fell heir to the reputation and role of its predecessor, [Hagana], while the Defence Ministry was relegated to the unglamorous task of quartermastership" (1969, p. 56). He further goes on to state that Ben-Gurion, acting in his capacity as Defence Minister, consolidated the position of the IDF relative to the MoD. This was a deliberate design formulated by Ben-Gurion. In seeking to maintain *personal control* over the IDF, under the guise of seeking to distance the IDF from politics, Ben-Gurion utilised Mapai to control the IDF, as "state control was insufficiently effective" (Peri, 1983, p. 50), but this naturally had the effect of politicising the armed forces, not the opposite, ironically in direct opposition to what Ben-Gurion wanted. Arian (1989, p. 58) reflects that in 1967, Mapai suffered from a shortage of individuals knowledgeable in the defence sphere as a result of Ben-Gurion's departure from the party in 1965 to form the Israeli Workers' List (Rafi). More interestingly, Arian also notes that "Cabinet ministers who had primary responsibility for security and foreign affairs…tended to be from a military background *and not* historically associated with Mapai…" (1989, p. 59), and that there exists a practice of senior military officers being "parachuted" into politics, bypassing ordinary means of climbing the party's hierarchical ladder (1989, p. 60). Medding (1990, pp. 134-135) underlines that while formal party control (as was the case in the pre-state era) had given way to a more institutionalised, non-partisan state of affairs, this was largely on paper. With the transition from the Hagana to the IDF, Mapai formally relinquished its control over the military. The armed forces had turned from a voluntary and political force into a mandatory and non-political force. However, while Mapai was not formally in charge of the armed forces, it unofficially remained so, by way of controlling the parliament and its organs. To refer once more

to Medding (1990, p. 47), Mapai set the state above the party as necessitated by its ideology of *mamlakhtiut*[9], but held itself responsible for much (but not all) of the state's successes. It is not, in my opinion, far-fetched to believe that this understanding of success also stretched to the security sphere, where Mapai portrayed itself as the guarantor of Israel's safety. To summarise, even though the formal links between the party (Mapai) and the armed force (first the Hagana, then the IDF) had been severed, unofficial links remained due to the party's dominance over the democratic political arena. At this stage, officers did not necessarily need to enter politics in order to influence policy. Their expertise in the security sphere was taken seriously by Ben-Gurion. Insulated from political backlash, both institutionally and by Ben-Gurion's own personality, they were more or less able to dictate defence policy to the civilian government who was, for their part, more than happy to listen.

What came afterwards was a scandalous affair involving the Israeli intelligence and the defence establishment, shaking the relationship between the different civilian factions to its core. Ben-Gurion resigned in 1953, being replaced by Moshe Sharett. Sharett governed Israel for less than two years, however, he did not take the defence portfolio upon himself as Ben-Gurion had done. Instead, Pinhas Lavon was appointed Minister of Defence, and this would have repercussions on the nature of civil-military relations in Israel going forwards. A botched covert operation was undertaken in Egypt in 1954 under Lavon's ministership, known today as the "Lavon Affair". It was an intricate plan, where Egyptian Jews recruited by Israeli military intelligence would conduct terrorist attacks on Egyptian, American, and British targets, pinning the attacks on various factions within Egypt so as to prove the

[9] Medding (1990) notes that *mamlakhtiut* is difficult to directly translate into English, but it can be approximated into "étatism".

instability of Nasser's regime to the US. The operation was a disaster. After its scandalous failure, the highest echelons of the Israeli government were shaken, underlining a rift in the government between the old guard and the newer generation (Arian, 1998, p. 112). Lavon denied his involvement, while secretary-general of the defence ministry Shimon Peres testified against Lavon. Eventually, Lavon was fired, being replaced by Ben-Gurion as Defence Minister. However, in the government, competition between Ben-Gurion, Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, and Sharett emerged. Dayan sought to push Israel into the Sinai War in 1956—also known as the Suez Canal Crisis—and succeeded in doing so, despite Sharett's protests and moves to prevent such an event from occurring. His reasoning was that Israel needed better negotiating conditions for peace than it had in 1949 (Golani, 2001, p. 50). It was a case of the military pushing the civilians into military action, with the defence establishment in favour of war. However, Ben-Gurion himself was not particularly reluctant to enter war in this specific case, though he may have been persuaded by Dayan to agree. Whatever the case, the governing arrangement between Ben-Gurion and Sharett did not last long, and Sharett himself resigned as Prime Minister in November 1955, with Ben-Gurion taking the helm once again. He would rule Israel until his permanent retirement in 1963, with Levi Eshkol to succeed him as Prime Minister.

In 1960, the Lavon Affair once more came to occupy the spotlight, after it was found that the original investigation had been mishandled. The subsequent investigation revealed that Lavon had indeed been out of the loop, while Sharett and Eshkol attempted to assuage both Lavon and his detractors. Ben-Gurion refused. A rift eventually formed between Ben-Gurion and Eshkol, with the former splitting from Mapai to form his own party, the aforementioned Rafi. The 1965 elections saw Rafi

being defeated by Alignment, the electoral partnership between Mapai and Ahdut HaAvoda (Labour Unity), and in 1968, the three parties would merge to form the Israeli Labour Party.

Upon replacing Ben-Gurion as both Prime Minister and Defence Minister in 1963, Eshkol attempted to continue things as they were, i.e., holding both the premiership and the defence portfolio, simultaneously. However, Eshkol lacked the political and personal experience to guide the country as Ben-Gurion did. Therefore, this led to the creation of a different style of management of the IDF, with Yitzhak Rabin being appointed Chief of Staff in 1964, allowing Eshkol to take a more hands-off approach to governing the defence sphere (Bar-Or, 2001). In order to establish a unity government and bring Rafi into the fold, Eshkol later appointed Ben-Gurion loyalist Dayan as Defence Minister from Rafi, once more splitting the portfolios. Unlike Ben-Gurion's time, when the position of leadership was certainly secure (such security in leadership would also be observed with Menahem Begin's premiership from 1977 onwards), Eshkol's relatively weaker position turned the military leadership into a crucial part of political calculations (Arian, 1998, p. 294). 1965 saw another crisis between the military and the civilian government. An assassination in Morocco was found to be a joint French-Moroccan-Israeli effort, with the Israeli foreign intelligence service, the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations ("Mosad") being involved in this act. Much like the Lavon Affair, the question of authority and the authorisation of the mission became a question and a political crisis. The informal way of doing things, with the lines of authority and jurisdiction blurred and confused, had given rise to a political fiasco. It was not clear just who was calling the shots: Was it the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, or the Chief of Staff, or some entirely different institution?

Peri (1983), however, notes that unlike the Lavon Affair, this crisis was not exactly one between the civilian and military establishments, but that the problem arose from the same source. The structure of the intelligence community was complicated, leading to this precise problem, with Peri (1983, p. 241) accusing Ben-Gurion of not having learnt the lessons from the 1954 Lavon Affair. The head of Mosad, Meir Amit, was institutionally responsible to the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister as a fundamentally civilian organisation. However, he was also the head of the Military Intelligence Directorate ("Aman"), which is a military intelligence organisation and thus is responsible to the Chief of Staff. Amit's relationship with Prime Minister Eshkol was strained when Eshkol sought to establish a new layer of bureaucracy between himself and the intelligence chief. Once more, scandals erupted with legislative elections on the horizon: "The questions of 1954 were raised again. Was the approval explicit? Had it been given retroactively? Even if the Prime Minister had not instructed the [Mosad], was he not responsible for the actions of his civil servants?" (Peri, 1983, p. 242). What followed was a political firestorm, with perhaps one of the darker moments for Israeli democracy. A newspaper publishing the story was raided by police, its copies confiscated, and the journalists responsible sentenced to 12 months in prison. Information was curtailed by the military censors. The crisis turned into one of press freedom and eventually, the journalists had to be pardoned by the President to cool down tensions. The problem between the civilian and military spheres was resolved over time, with Amit's term in the Mosad expiring in 1968, to be replaced by somebody else, which allowed a smoother transition, and allowed civilian control to be reasserted over the intelligence branch. However, the infighting between the parties of the Labour Zionist camp, specifically Mapai and Rafi, would not end here.

Eshkol's leadership could be considered weak relative to the IDF, so that they were able to make several demands of him: War against Egypt and Syria, relinquish the defence ministry, form a national unity government by bringing both Gahal—the predecessor to Likud—and Rafi into the cabinet, and make Dayan the Defence Minister (Peri, 1983, p. 249). Furthermore, Eshkol had a good relationship with then-Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin (Maoz, 2009, pp. 100-101), who was also a national hero after the 1967 Six Day War, having overseen the unification of Jerusalem as well as the overall triumph of the war. Whether or not they were successful in getting what they wanted, I argue, is irrelevant here. What matters is that they could make such demands in the first place, to a man who was meant to be their superior in every manner.

Following the Israeli victory in the Six Day War of 1967, the Defence Ministry and the IDF found itself to have a newfound role in administering the territories occupied by Israel, specifically, Gaza and the West Bank. As these were occupied territories and not a part of Israel proper, Dayan was practically day-to-day governor of these territories, through six regional military governors (Peretz, 1983, p. 179). Practically speaking, this gave the IDF a significant role in governance, albeit not over Israeli citizens but over Arabs under occupation. Despite this victory, the Six Day War sowed further divisions between the Israeli government and defence establishments. Eshkol was ambitious, seeking to create an autonomous or even independent state in the West Bank, negotiating with Arab leaders to do so (Oren, 2002, pp. 316-317), believing that Israel's security and political spheres could be decoupled from one another. Eshkol died less than a year later in 1968, being replaced by Golda Meir who became Israel's first (and thus far, only) female prime minister.

Meir was honest about her own lack of experience in the defence and security sphere, refraining from interfering with the soldiers while “admitting she did not know exactly what a division was” (van Creveld, 1998, p. 108). This, of course, naturally meant that the soldiers in the IDF itself had more leeway and movement capability in regards to creating policy. She kept Dayan along as her Defence Minister, whose influence over the defence sphere was considerable. The Yom Kippur War occurred in 1973, with Egyptian forces defeating Israeli defenders on the border, advancing rapidly into Israel. In the north, Syrian forces made considerable way into Israel through the Golan Heights. Eventually, the war turned around and resulted in an Israeli military victory, but its psychological impact on the Israeli establishment and public was profound. It could even be termed as a psychological defeat. The sense of invincibility Israel had developed following the Six Day War had shattered into dust, with the eventual military victory unable to provide the psychological reinforcement necessary for recovery (Rabinovich, 2004, pp. 497-498). In Ariel Sharon’s autobiography, he talks about how the Yom Kippur War left a feeling of a lack of national purpose and motivation in the Israeli psyche (Sharon & Chanoff, 1989, p. 335).

The intelligence community, intended to serve as the eyes and ears of the IDF against precisely this event, had failed (Z. Schiff, 1974, p. 285). The elections of 1973, which had been postponed due to the war, immediately demonstrated the deteriorating situation for the left. The joint electoral list between Labour and Mapam, known as Alignment, lost five seats in the Knesset, while the right-wing Likud gained seven seats. Meir succeeded in forming a government, while the Agranat Commission—formed to investigate the reasons for Israel being caught unaware—published its initial report on 1st April 1974, and was controversial as it

put the blame on the soldiers, not the civilians responsible, i.e., Prime Minister Meir and Defence Minister Dayan, with the Chief of General Staff David Elazar resigning as a result. The IDF had effectively footed the entire bill, while they felt that civilians were also responsible for the lack of preparedness.

Even though the report did not hold Meir responsible for the initial setbacks in the war, she resigned on the 11th of the same month, along with her cabinet. Rabin, the former general who had commanded the IDF during the Six Day War, was now tasked with forming the government headed by Alignment, but barely so: He got the recommendations of only 61 members of Knesset (MK) while Likud's Menahem Begin got 59 MK's to recommend him. Immediately, the fallout of the Yom Kippur War was beginning to hurt Labour, though the worst had yet to come.

With Rabin at the helm, Peres was appointed Defence Minister. Peres had stuck with Ben-Gurion during the latter's stint away from Mapai, joining Rafi, while Rabin had stayed with Mapai and Labour. Now, the two were together under the Alignment, and Rabin had defeated Peres in a leadership contest for the Labour Party. The rivalry between the two would continue up until Rabin's assassination in 1995. While Rabin held the premiership, Peres was assigned to the post of Defence Minister. The 1976 hostage crisis where an Air France flight was hijacked by pro-Palestinian terrorists and brought to Uganda (then under Idi Amin's rule) highlighted the differences in perspective between Rabin and Peres: Peres recognised that Israel would need to rescue the hostages itself—in a daring rescue operation—while Rabin was pondering on how to handle the situation peacefully (David, 2015). This is perhaps one of the few times in Israeli political history that the Defence Minister managed to outmanoeuvre the Prime Minister when it came to military operations. Up until Operation Thunderbolt, the operation to rescue the hostages from the

Ugandan city Entebbe, the Prime Minister had dominated the defence sphere alongside the IDF senior command, bypassing the Defence Minister, as has been elaborated upon in the prior subsection. This time around, however, things went differently. Peres gathered a committee to organise a rescue plan, and discussed it with the commander of the planned mission. Only when he got support from the ministers and other personalities did he go to Rabin (Bar-Zohar & Mishal, 2016). The operation was a tremendous success, and all the hostages were rescued with only a single casualty, Lieutenant Colonel Yonatan Netanyahu, who was killed in action at Entebbe. The disagreement and rivalry between Rabin and Peres would later go on to wear down the civilian side of affairs, as the two played a political tug of war to push themselves further onwards.

This had the effect of strengthening the IDF's, specifically the Chief of Staff's position relative to his civilian superiors. 1976 also saw another event occur, this one a legislative event. The Knesset passed a Basic Law[10], regarding the military. This single-page Basic Law, in theory, institutionalised the division of labour and relationship between the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, and the Chief of Staff. It aimed to streamline the relationship's hierarchy, with the Prime Minister at the top, the Defence Minister below him, and the Chief of Staff below the Defence Minister. However, in practice, according to Bar-Or (2001, p. 327), this did little to change interactions between the three sides, due to "vague legal phraseology".

To summarise, Israeli civil-military relations between 1948-1977 were wracked by a lack of institutional regulation. Where they did exist, they overlapped and caused operational confusion, as evidenced by the Lavon Affair and the Moroccan fiasco. At

[10] Israel has no single constitutional text. Instead, it has a series of "Basic Laws", which are regarded to be constitutional-level legislation.

other times, the defence establishment—especially in the absence of strong premiership—could push Israel into war, as evidenced by the 1956 Sinai War. These problems were not merely tactical level issues whose effects influenced only military operations, but had drastic consequences in Israeli political life as well, e.g., Defence Minister Lavon's removal from his position, triggering Ben-Gurion's return to government. Peri (1983, pp. 259-260) points out that these issues were not due to the personal characteristics of those involved, but instead occurred due to institutional weaknesses, specifically a lack of a checks-and-balances system to constrain these individuals. The idea of depoliticising the IDF failed. Not only did political considerations influence decision-making in the IDF, so too did the defence establishment—the IDF, but also sections of the IDF and the intelligence community such as Aman or smaller groups within the IDF and the MoD—interfere in political matters. Active-duty officers' public criticism of the government did not occur (at least frequently), but that is an exceedingly low bar to set.

Throughout this period, we see that the influence the IDF enjoyed over setting policy was high. Therefore, there was no real reason to enter electoral politics in order to affect policy. While officers being "parachuted" into higher party positions was observed, this does not necessarily mean they entered such politics to influence policy. Indeed, these cases could well be instances of rewarding politically compliant officers post-retirement, or mere publicity stunts by promoting prestigious and well-regarded officers to party positions after their retirements.

2.2. From the Fallout of Yom Kippur to the First Intifada: 1977-1987

However, the real change was to come in 1977, with the fateful elections held on the 17th May 1977. Torn by infighting and squabbling, mostly over the disaster that had been the Yom Kippur War, the Labour Party was divided. Rabin, even though he had beaten Peres in the leadership contest, had been forced to resign due to a scandal involving his offshore bank account. Other senior officials involved with the Labour Party were also involved in financial scandals. In the end, the final straw that broke the camel's back was a disagreement with the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael political party: a breach of the Sabbath on a military base prompted a no-confidence vote. The Knesset was dissolved and elections were called. What happened, retrospectively, was of little surprise. Labour lost the election handily. The party that had been merely five seats short of an absolute majority in the Knesset back in 1969 had now been reduced to 32 seats out of 120. More importantly, the Israeli left's perennial opponent and former Etzel leader Menahem Begin's party, Likud, had the most seats with 43 out of 120. The famous news personality Haim Yavin rightfully referred to the event as a "turnaround". Of particular note is the actions of a former Chief of Staff, Yigael Yadin, who—along with other well-known personalities—formed the political party Democratic Movement for Change ("Dash"), which competed with Labour for votes, allowing Likud to become the party with most seats. Lochery (1997, p. 40) points at military men not being the best at political organisation as one of the reasons for this decline, with retired general Chaim Bar-Lev being appointed by Rabin to manage the Labour campaign. Other reasons he

cites for this decline are Labour's break with the religious parties and the Likud's campaigning on Labour's corruption and shortcomings (p. 41). Inbar (2010) meanwhile attributes this decline to several factors, such as Labour's abandoning of state symbols, cosmopolitanism failing as a social model, the stresses of the peace process, and demographic shifts (pp. 72-77). Dash, while a very new party, was highly successful, winning 15 seats out of 120 in its first (and only) election, therefore putting it in a kingmaker position. This was achieved at Labour's expense, owing to problems associated with the economy and settlers' issues (Arian, 1998, p. 108; Peretz, 1977).

At this point, the entire structure fostered by Ben-Gurion had collapsed. First and foremost, the informal and non-institutionalised model of civil-military interaction that Ben-Gurion had established was predicated on Mapai (and its successors Alignment and Labour) remaining in power. Small factional and personal differences, such as those between Eshkol and Ben-Gurion, or Rabin and Peres were one thing, while losing political power outright—to Begin, no less—was another. It was the culmination of the utter lack of institutionalisation present between the civil and defence spheres in Israel. Of course, "institutionalisation" in this context probably would have meant veering closer to a more authoritarian form of governance, akin to the political control the Eastern Bloc countries exercised over their militaries, but it would have been some institutionalisation nonetheless.

Intra-party conflicts could be managed, and ranks could be closed to some extent, though the early 1970's had so many scandals that even that did not work. On the other hand, loss of political power was impossible to rectify within the confines of a liberal democratic state. Begin's first government ended up being a broad one, with many moderates being included despite Begin's reputation for being a hardliner. It

should be noted that at this point, the Likud was an alliance of five separate political parties, as opposed to a single unified movement. Even Dash was included in the government after its inclusion, expanding it to have 77 seats out of 120. Dayan was offered to become Foreign Minister in Begin's cabinet, an offer he accepted, prompting his alienation from Alignment and his expulsion from the party, resulting in him sitting as an independent MK in the Knesset. He ended up resigning in about two years, over disagreements regarding the status of Palestinians. The former Chief of Staff, Ezer Weizman, was appointed Defence Minister in this new government, less than a day after he formally retired (Lissak & Maman, 1996, p. 226). Weizman had, of course, taken up the post when the position of the Chief of Staff was relatively empowered against the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister. During his tenure, facing a strong IDF that he himself had commanded, Weizman attempted to establish the National Security Advisory Staff, in order to circumvent his own dependence on the Chief of Staff, but encountered problems with Prime Minister Begin, and soon resigned from the government in protest (Bar-Or, 2001, p. 328) in 1980. He was replaced in 1980 by Begin himself, who took on the defence portfolio until the 1981 elections.

During Begin's first term as prime minister, a relatively small but important event occurred: Operation Opera. Opera was a pre-emptive strike against the Iraqi nuclear reactor Osirak, intended to prevent Saddam Hussein's regime from obtaining nuclear weapons. While Begin was not strictly the person who established the Israeli policy against against weapons of mass destruction—the Begin Doctrine, as it was named—he certainly made it into a long-term commitment to be undertaken by successive governments (Spector & Cohen, 2008, p. 16). More importantly and relevant to the topic of the thesis, however, was the fact that Begin had authorised this strike and

assumed full responsibility for it, publicly, during a lead-up to a general election. He was accused of acting with political considerations, not security ones, and had "broken the 'code of ambiguity'" by informing a radio station in Israel immediately after the strike took place (Weitz, 2014, p. 154). While there was no known backlash from the senior command of the IDF at Begin's unprecedented actions, this was still a break from the past. This break can be viewed as one of many that will be observed in the following years: Gradually, the civilians will do more and more things without the IDF's approval or endorsement.

Begin would go on to win the elections of 1981, albeit only being able to form a narrower coalition this time, being forced to include far more hawkish politicians (including ones that did not support his 1979 peace deal with Egypt) in his government. This government held the barest majority possible, merely 61 seats out of 120 in the Knesset. It was also a diverse coalition, including four minor parties aside from the staples Likud, Mafdal, and Agudat Yisrael. Weziman's replacement as Defence Minister was to be Ariel Sharon, whose short-lived Shlomtzion party merged with Likud immediately after the 1981 elections. Begin's second government would be marked by one incredibly important event in Israel: The Lebanon War. Following an attack against the Israeli ambassador in London, the IDF invaded Lebanon on 6th June 1982.

The 1982 Lebanon War changed things once more, both between the interaction between the political elites and the IDF, but also in the relationship between the IDF and the public. This was because the Lebanon War was Israel's first war into which it had entered as the attacking side, with even the pre-emptive strikes of the 1967 Six Day War being framed as defensive in nature. Therefore, the attitudes towards not only the war, but also towards the IDF were subject to change. While Begin was the

Prime Minister, it was Defence Minister Sharon who actually governed the war (Shlaim, 2008, p. 421). Sharon, put short, was a loose cannon, refusing to listen to differing opinions, being accused of seeing lives as expendable, all of it culminating in his inability to become Chief of Staff (Shindler, 2001, pp. 111-112). However, he had another crucial role. With Weizman's departure from government, Begin needed a strong military man to govern the IDF, and believed that—working with Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan—Sharon's more problematic sides could be controlled, and to top it all off, he needed Sharon's two seats in the Knesset. (Shindler, 2001, p. 113). This is a good place to mention Eitan. Shindler (2001, p. 115) makes it clear that Eitan was quite willing to share his ultranationalist views with both the public and his subordinates. This was highly unusual, in that while generals entering politics after their retirement was not uncommon, it was indeed unusual for active officers to share their views, something that was observed even by Eitan's contemporaries (Beinin, 1980, p. 8). While Eitan was not the first general by far to enter politics, he may have been the first and only to be so vocal about his beliefs, indeed, there has not been a Chief of Staff after him who was so vocal. This may be indication of an increasingly politically involved IDF, or Eitan could merely be an outlier case. Regardless, such behaviour would most likely not have been observed during Ben-Gurion's leadership of Mapai and Israel as a whole.

The military, in general, was not fond of the war, whatever Eitan may have thought. An officer, Colonel Eli Geva, refused direct orders to open fire in his area for fear of killing civilians, the debacle ending with his discharge (van Creveld, 1998, p. 299). As for the civilian aspect of things, the "citizen-army" model employed by Israel showed one of its significant drawbacks. In the absence of national consensus on the war's legitimacy—something that had never been a problem for Israel up until this

point—operational capability was adversely affected. This turned the war into a "political issue and a practical problem of the defense establishment" (Horowitz, 1987, p. 288). For practically the first time, Israelis reacted against the IDF's actions, especially in the wake of the Sabra and Shatila Massacre where Christian Phalangist militias massacred Palestinian refugees in camps. Sharon allowed these militias to enter the aforementioned camps on his own authority (Benziman, 1985, p. 258). Hundreds of thousands of Israelis protested their government in Tel Aviv (Hamilton, 2011, pp. 129-130). The massacre would have further effects on Begin and his government. A commission to investigate the massacre, called the "Kahan Commission" after its chairman Yitzhak Kahan, concluded that while Phalangist militias were primarily responsible for the massacre itself, it also stated "[Prime Minister] Begin was found responsible for not exercising greater involvement and awareness in the matter of introducing the Phalangists into the camps…" and that "it is impossible to justify the Minister of Defense's disregard of the danger of a massacre", and also found Eitan to have disregarded the danger Phalangist militias posed to the refugees (Kahan, Barak, & Efrat, 1983). However, Sharon refused to resign and Begin refused to fire him, standing with Sharon against pressure. As protests mounted, one person was killed and ten were wounded, while Begin remained unable to act. Eventually, Sharon resigned as Defence Minister but remained in the cabinet as a minister without portfolio; Begin withdrew more and more into seclusion until his resignation in 1983 (Z. Schiff & Ya'ari, 1984, p. 284). Moshe Arens replaced Sharon as Defence Minister, a man with no military experience to speak of, instead coming from an engineering background. Bar-Or (2001, p. 329) points out that Arens was a Defence Minister who was unable to establish his authority over the IDF. Begin was replaced by Yitzhak Shamir, a former

Lehi militant albeit one with no military experience, besides a decade operating in Mosad. The controversial general Eitan retired soon afterwards, replaced by Major General Moshe Levi, and Eitan promptly entered politics. This, too, was not unusual, and following his far-right views, Eitan joined the Tehiya party. He would be elected to the Knesset, and then he would form the Tzomet party as a right-wing albeit secular party. Aside from a brief stint in the government holding the Agriculture and Environment portfolios, Eitan's political career was unremarkable. He is primarily notable for being a Chief of Staff who was unusually vocal about his political views (one might say unorthodox views, for an IDF commander) while he was in office. With Arens' inability to project his authority on the IDF, it would not be far-fetched to say that Eitan's replacement Levi had considerable sway on defence policy.

Shamir, upon assuming the Prime Minister's role with Begin's retirement, led the government to the 1984 elections. This time, a national unity government was forced, with Peres and Shamir (from Alignment and Likud, respectively) holding the premiership for two years in a rotation agreement. This government was largely unimpactful in regard to the interactions between the civilian and military spheres. The 1988 elections saw a similar result albeit with Alignment losing the first place, with a national unity government being formed once again. This time, Shamir was to be Prime Minister for the duration of the government, which ended up being dissolved in 1990. However, there is one thing to point out with these governments from 1984 to 1990: The defence portfolio was held by Alignment, and more specifically, by Rabin throughout their terms. As mentioned, and demonstrated earlier, the lack of issues with the Chief of Staff or the IDF in general during this time could be attributed to the Defence Minister being, himself, both a highly regarded person and a successful officer during his military service. Rabin had been

the illustrious commander of the IDF during the Six Day War. While Dayan had generally stolen the spotlight from him and reaped the political rewards, Dayan was no longer present in the political sphere, having passed away in 1981. That said, Rabin had now another challenge with which he was presented.

The First Intifada, or the first Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, broke out in 1987, about a year before the 1988 elections. The number of factors leading up to the Intifada were many, but can be summarised as general suppressive measures utilised by the occupation administration of the IDF (and the MoD) and collective punishments such as curfews and demolishing of houses. The rumours pertaining to Jewish worshippers being permitted access to the Temple Mount, under Israeli control since 1967, was also influential. In any case, tensions soon boiled over into a full-blown uprising, presenting a challenge which Israel had not faced before.

2.3. The First Intifada and the 21st Century

The challenge was that quite a lot of the action called for by the Palestinians was, in nature, non-violent. Tessler (2009, pp. 693-694) shows that just about 50% of the activities called for were non-violent, with 26 of proposed 27 methods of resistance being non-violent. This was a challenge for the IDF, because the Intifada naturally happened in the Occupied Territories—which were governed by the IDF in practice—but were not of a military nature. The IDF was experienced in dealing with foreign invasions and low-intensity internal conflict. However, due to the decentralised nature of the Intifada, the IDF could not find a specific military target to eliminate as one would in a war (van Creveld, 1998, p. 342). The Israeli response to the activism was all too predictable: Brutal dispersal of demonstrations, the detention of activists, and overall a use of overwhelming force. Special units

speaking Arabic and mingling with Palestinians, the *mista'arvim*, were employed to pose as activists to sabotage the demonstrations from within. Defence Minister Rabin defended his policy by putting forth the argument that there was no other choice (Tessler, 2009, p. 699). The Intifada had assumed a new form by 1991, with three features distinguishing it from the constant low-intensity conflict the IDF was used to: the political aspirations underlining it, the synchronisation of non-violent resistance acts, and the acts of terror—assassinations, more specifically—that accompanied it (Cohen, 1994, p. 8). Overall, however, "the army's image, as well as that of the [Chief of Staff], was…blemished by the military's lack of readiness for dealing with this worsening situation" (Bar-Or, 2001, p. 330). With the 1992 legislative elections, change was upon Israel once more: Rabin led the Labour Party to victory with 44 seats in the Knesset. His coalition was a narrow one, with the left-wing Meretz and the ultra-Orthodox Shas combined giving him a total of 62 seats. The Arab parties, Hadash and Mada, also gave votes of confidence but did not participate in the government. Rabin immediately moved to sign an agreement with the Palestinians. Bar-Or (2001, p. 330) points out that Rabin's extensive military background combined with his political savvy allowed him to assume both the Prime Minister and Defence Minister posts in a way that made negotiations possible. The Intifada also forced the Jewish people in Israel to consider the future of the occupied territories more objectively and realistically, with the Intifada seriously affecting Israeli Jewish perceptions (Arian, 1991, p. 272). This changed perception influenced the following Oslo Accords (in 1993 and 1995) as personal physical security took precedence over a vision of uniting historical Jewish lands (Rynhold, 2007, p. 425). The IDF's role in this, naturally, was one of withdrawal, with Ehud Barak at the helm as Chief of Staff. However, the Oslo Accords did not foresee the creation of an

independent Palestinian state, and more than half of the West Bank, designated as "Area C", remained under Israeli military administration. These territories were meant to be gradually transferred over to the Palestinian Authority; this never materialised.

The Intifada and its aftermath require some discussion. Contrary to previous conflicts Israel was embroiled in, the Intifada was very much at home for millions of Israelis. It was a defence affair that impacted their lives very directly. Inevitably, it exposed the defence sphere to more public discussion than a foreign, unseen war. Combined with the gradual liberalisation and opening up of Israeli society in the 1980's and beyond, and the perceived unreadiness of the IDF to deal with the issue, the IDF suddenly found itself under public—not necessarily political—scrutiny. Over the decades, little by little, the IDF was becoming more and more exposed to politics, not necessarily restricted to the Knesset, and moving further and further away from the insulated, quasi-technocratic model as foreseen by Ben-Gurion. This, I argue, made it more necessary for officers to enter politics if they desired to influence policy, or at least defence policy. This is because as such events occurred and their effects accumulated, the IDF lost more and more of its privileged status in defining defence policy.

On 4th November 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing extremist who opposed Rabin's peace plan. The assassination sent shockwaves through Israeli society, and in a twist of fate, Rabin's lifelong political rival Peres became acting Prime Minister. While Rabin's death may have galvanised the peace process and the Israeli left, such hopes were certainly dampened with the 1996 elections, which were a first for Israel: The Prime Minister would be elected separately, akin to a presidential system, while the Knesset would be on a separate

ballot. Benjamin Netanyahu won the vote for Prime Minister, while Labour was the largest party. Regardless, Netanyahu managed to form a government, with former general Yitzhak Mordechai becoming Defence Minister, while the Chief of Staff was Amnon Lipkin-Shahak. There were reportedly disagreements between Netanyahu and Mordechai regarding Palestine, culminating in Mordechai being fired, with the erstwhile Moshe Arens replacing him, albeit for a very short period of time before the early elections of 1999. The elections were a loss for Likud and Netanyahu, and this time, a previously mentioned figure entered the picture: Ehud Barak. Barak's "One Israel" alliance (really nothing more than a rebranding of Labour) came out as the largest party, and he formed a government. Crucially, Barak—perhaps leaning on his former position, as well as status as Israel's most decorated soldier—merged the roles once more, taking the defence portfolio as opposed to appointing a Defence Minister. Under his premiership, Barak took unprecedented moves to foster peace, such as withdrawing from Lebanon in 2000, while continuing negotiations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization. It should be noted that Barak withdrew from Lebanon in the face of opposition from the military (Kaye, 2002, pp. 561-562, 567-569). Similar to the late Rabin's successes, Barak presumably drew upon his colossal reputation as a soldier as well as public opinion turning against the Lebanese quagmire, allowing him to disregard the concerns and priorities of the security establishment as he saw fit. With the momentum, Barak embarked on the Camp David Summit in the summer of 2000, where he met with Yasser Arafat, hosted by U.S. President Bill Clinton. The talks were initially successful, but eventually slowed down, especially with former Defence Minister Sharon's—now leading the Likud—visit to the Temple Mount triggering the spark that lit the fuse for the Second Intifada. Once more, violence escalated dramatically. The talks ground to a halt and

an early election for the prime ministry—the last to be held separately from parliamentary elections—was called. On the 6th of February 2001, Sharon defeated Barak handily, and with that, the Camp David talks of 2000 were dead in the water.

Sharon needed to form a government, though this put him in an incredibly odd position as there had been no simultaneous parliamentary election. This left Labour as the largest party with 26 seats, while the Likud only had 19. The result was a national unity government once more, with Peres becoming Deputy Prime Minister, while former general Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, also from Labour, became Defence Minister. Little of note occurred for this government, and two years later, regularly scheduled elections saw the anomalous co-habitation come to an end. The Likud, led by Sharon, won by a large margin, and Sharon established the government once more. The most controversial event this new government presided over was, arguably, the disengagement from Gaza. This was not controversial because it entailed the withdrawal of troops, but also the dismantling of Israeli Jewish settlements that had been established, or were in the process of construction. For senior Likudniks, such as Ehud Olmert, this was a necessity out of demographic concerns, but Sharon did not refer to the issue as one of demography, instead justifying it with the tested and true justification of security, while Peres (as Vice Prime Minister) directly referred to demography (Cook, 2006, pp. 103-104; Peleg & Waxman, 2011, pp. 121-122). Meanwhile, the military establishment was also warm about the prospects of withdrawing from Gaza, with the Chief of Staff during the Second Intifada, Moshe Ya'alon drawing a very distasteful analogy between Palestinians and cancer, also referring to demographics (Cook, 2006, p. 109). Regardless of the arguments' controversy, Israel withdrew from Gaza, but the

political shock was so much that Sharon had to leave the Likud to form his own party, Kadima, to be able to push his agenda forwards.

There is a specific trend that can be observed in the last two decades, especially during and after Sharon's disengagement from Gaza. Much of the events past the disengagement from Gaza have occurred under the framework of what we would consider to be normal civil-military relations. Indeed, the military's own voice, aside from certain outlier cases such as Rafael Eitan, is barely heard after the 1980's. The influence of the military in politics, and even the security sphere, has visibly declined. This is not to say that the military does not involve itself in areas which are ordinarily under the purview of civilian authorities, such as police forces. Counter-insurgency and domestic intelligence gathering are two examples of such. Nor do I imply that former military officers have washed their hands of politics. Former officers continue to retire from the military (at a noticeably early age) and continue into politics, with the most recent and notable example being Benny Gantz's formation of Blue and White in 2019 to unseat current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (and failing spectacularly in the process). Gantz's political views were not too much of a secret prior to his retirement, with daily newspapers such as HaAretz and Yisrael Hayom commonly speculating that Gantz would launch a political party to oppose Netanyahu following his cooling-off period. He is not alone in this, either, with another recently retired general, Gabi Ashkenazi, joining him. Rather, what we see is that the military no longer seems to be involved in the policy-making and decision-making process as much as it used to be. Long gone are the days that followed Ben-Gurion's retirement from politics. Instead of being consulted long after their retirement for approval (e.g., Peres' consultation of the retired Dayan for Operation Thunderbolt), they could well be side-lined in favour of the civilians'

decision-making. Cohen (2006, p. 776) shows that regardless of political affiliation, Prime Ministers were perfectly willing to keep their Chiefs of Staff out of the loop regarding critical security decisions, giving the examples of the Oslo Accords for Rabin and the disengagement from Gaza for Sharon. Recently, in 2020, an article in the Times of Israel newspaper stated that the IDF was completely out of the loop regarding plans to annex areas of the West Bank (Gross, 2020), with all the ramifications it would have, and yet, needed to prepare for something they were not knowledgeable about. This is no doubt a far cry from the days where the IDF could dictate when to go to war to the civilian government, as had occurred with Levi Eshkol. Netanyahu had seen it fit to keep them completely out of the loop, and he faced no real repercussions because of this.

Overall, the IDF has come under far more parliamentary, media, and public scrutiny. It no longer enjoys the privileged position it used to occupy in the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War. It is still a prestigious institution in Israel, and continues to be the locus of civic rituals—such as annual reserve service "*miluim*", or its role in bringing together citizens of various socio-economic backgrounds in a melting pot—but its untouchable nature has been worn away. This process appears to have begun following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, with the veneer of "invincibility" having come crashing down, and further sped up when the legitimacy of the IDF's actions began to be seriously questioned with the Lebanon War. The Intifada further hastened this process, as large-scale disobedience and protest struck the IDF's prestige, as they were perceived to be unready to deal with such. Furthermore, the Intifada being a low-intensity violent conflict that was still very much at home for Israelis opened the IDF, its decisions, and the entire security sphere up for criticism, discussion, and

scrutiny for the general public, to a degree that need not be present for a distant foreign war.

In this chapter, I have strived to explain the history of Israeli civil-military relations from the establishment of the state onwards. The initial picture is idiosyncratic, with David Ben-Gurion's preference towards personal control over the armed forces conflicting with his desire for a professional military which remained outside of the realm of politics. In an effort to have both at the same time, we see that Ben-Gurion created a system that was unique amongst its peers that are advanced capitalist countries: The military was governed by civilians, as is the standard, but it also operated in some degree of opaqueness from the system of checks and balances, such as the legislative branch. The Israeli military remained out of politics indeed, but the realm of Israeli public politics also stayed away from the realm of security.

For Israel, "security" has a broad meaning, and therefore, the elected representatives of the people often found themselves locked out of the process involving matters of foreign affairs and defence. The IDF no doubt enjoyed the most privileged position in its history after 1967, being responsible for the massive victory over the Arab countries surrounding Israel. However, this would not last, as the same IDF was also implicated in the Agranat Commission's report for being largely responsible for the initial failures of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. From then on, the order Ben-Gurion established collapsed rapidly, with the 1977 elections heralding victory for the Likud, being the final nail in the coffin. From then on, especially after the fiasco that was the Invasion of Lebanon in the 1980's, we are able to see that the armed forces have less and less say in matters of security and defence on the policy-making level. This may be attributed to several reasons, one of them being that the governments formed by the Likud had less generals to draw upon, with the generals—owing to their

education and lifestyle—being closer to the Labour ideology. Alternatively, the Defence Ministers were able to establish a more authoritative relationship vis a vis the Chief of Staff, allowing them to run security affairs as opposed to the Chief of Staff being the de facto administrator for the security sphere.

This culminates, ultimately, in them being kept in complete darkness when serious and very high-level events occurred, such as the Oslo Accords and the withdrawal from Gaza, in 1995 and 2005 respectively. From then on, the military is barely seen or heard in its capacity as the IDF, while officers continue to pursue successful careers in politics or as high-ranking members of state-operated businesses. One important difference is that unlike Israel's early years, retired officers are not recruited or "parachuted" into pre-existing parties by the parties, but rather join or form new ones as they themselves see fit.

In the next chapter, I will explore a dataset of 84 retired and active generals, and cross-examine them with a database of 24 parties' manifestos to determine where they stand and why they may have chosen these parties.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF ISRAELI GENERALS

3.1. Overview and the Datasets Used

This chapter will deal with the analysis of a dataset of 84 Israeli generals who have served in the year 1948 or beyond. To complement this dataset, the data provided by Volkens et al. (2020a) of the Manifesto Project will be utilised in order to provide information on the political parties these generals have joined. Together, these two datasets will allow for analysis of Israeli generals' post-military career political preferences. Therefore, this section of the chapter will touch upon the two datasets which are used, in order to establish a foundation for the analysis and discussion in the latter parts of the chapter.

This analysis and discussion will be done through the theoretical basis established in the last section of the first chapter, with Finer (1976) being used as the theoretical foundation. With this foundation, the analysis operates under the assumption that these retired officers act under what they consider to be Israeli national interest, this will be elaborated upon in the following sections. This theoretical, general base will be coupled with the extensive historical background provided in Chapter 2, and overall, the trends observed in this chapter will be placed into the context of the events described in the second chapter. Finally, this coupling of theory and historical background will be combined with the practical data, to come up with one or more reasons as to why these officers joined the parties they joined.

There are certain drawbacks to using manifestos as a means to pinpoint parties' positions on a left-right basis, such as the assumption of honesty and the assumption of no compromises being made once in power. However, alternative means of categorising parties are unfeasible within this thesis due to constraints of time and resources.

3.1.1. The Generals

Within the dataset of 84 generals, there are some striking trends. The first, and the most noticeable, is the increasing number of generals who have entered politics after 1973, following the Yom Kippur War. The dataset contains 24 generals out of 84 whose service ended in or before 1973. Of these 24, 13 have entered politics, which is just one more than half of them. An overwhelming majority of these 13 entered politics *after* 1973 (9 of them) while the others (4 generals) entered politics in or prior to 1973. This is especially important considering Israel's cooling-off period for retired officers entering politics was, until 2007, only six months, which meant that these 9 generals could have entered politics within the same or next calendar year. Furthermore, of the 60 generals whose service ended after 1973, 20 have entered politics (approximately 33%). The overall ratio of generals entering politics after retirement is 33 out of 84 (approx. 39%). Therefore, we see that the trend of joining politics after 1973 is an evident one.

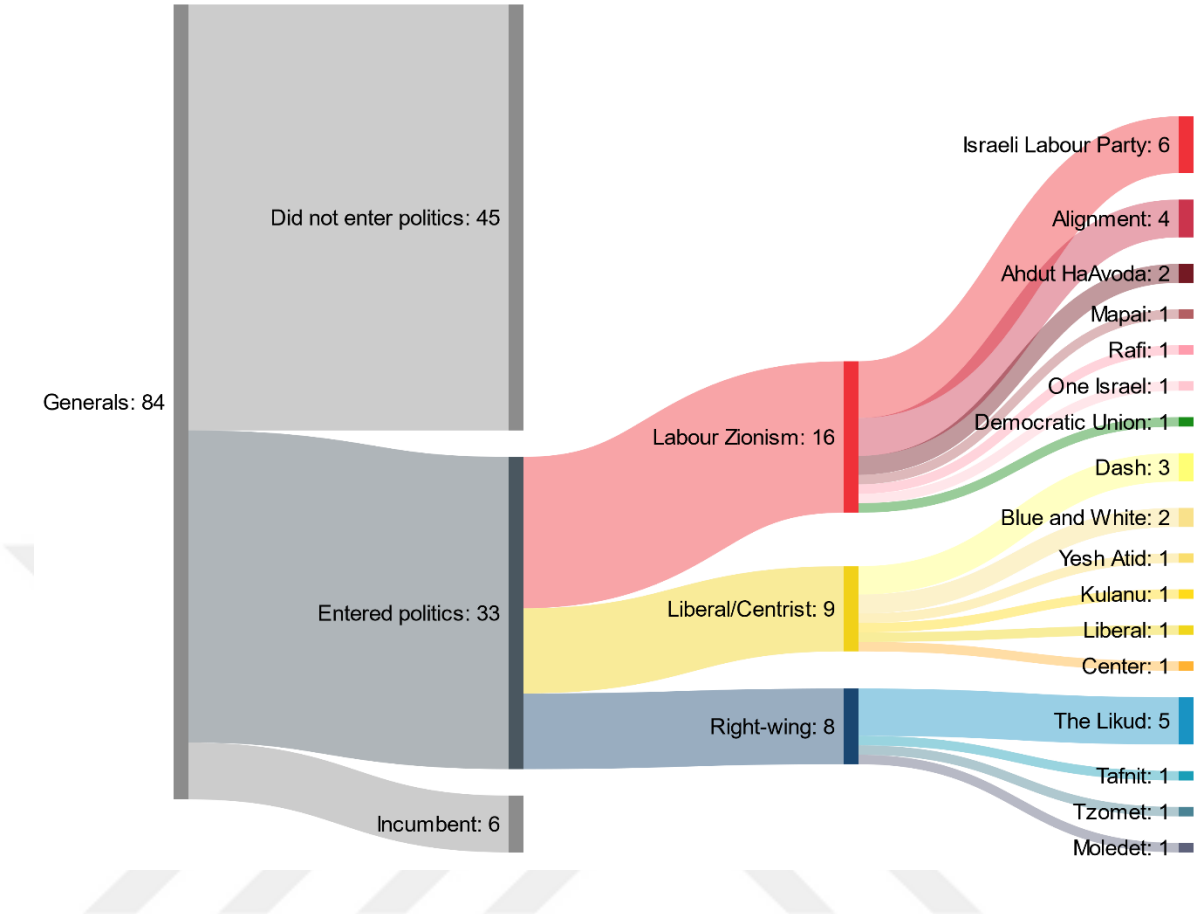
The second trend is one of preference for left-wing parties. 15 out of 33 generals who entered politics (approx. 45%) directly started their political careers in the Israeli Labour Party, or its predecessors such as Mapai, Alignment, Rafi, and One Israel. These parties were (and in the case of Labour, still continue to be) Labour Zionist, secular, and in favour of a mixed economic model, while their stance on security has changed over the years, with the Labour movement demonstrating hawkishness

between 1948-1995, particularly under Ben-Gurion and Eshkol, then shifting strongly to a dovish position under Shimon Peres and his successors. The primary cause for this change is Yitzhak Rabin's leadership and premiership, where—despite his hawkish reputation and past as a successful IDF officer—he signed a landmark agreement with the PLO, paving the way for eventual Palestinian statehood. Finally, one general out of 33 joined the Democratic Union, the predecessor to the social democratic and progressive Meretz party, a Labour Zionist party but not from the Mapai tradition, warranting not grouping it with the previously mentioned parties, which leaves 17 generals whose parties are not necessarily "left-wing".

The remaining 17 generals of the 33, on the other hand, did not universally join what would ordinarily be considered "right-wing" parties. A considerable portion started their careers in liberal parties: 9 out of 33 (approx. 27%) entered centrist and/or liberal parties, such as Dash, Yesh Atid, Blue and White, Center, Liberal,[11] or Kulanu.[12] Finally, only 8 out of 33 (approx. 24%) began their political careers in the right-wing. This information is visualised in Figure 1.

[11] The Liberal Party, merged into Likud in 1988.
[12] It should be noted that the sole general who entered Kulanu eventually joined the Likud.

Figure 1. Retired generals' political distribution



It should be noted that Figure 1 sacrifices some details in order to visualise the situation. Almost all of the parties shown under “Labour Zionism” eventually ended up merging into the modern Israeli Labour Party, with the exception of Democratic Union which became today’s Meretz, which is the reason for its different colour theme. Illustrating this would give the false impression that all the generals who entered these parties eventually ended up as MK’s of the Israeli Labour Party (or Meretz, in that case) which is not necessarily the case. Similarly, under “Liberal/Centrist”, the Liberal Party merged into the Likud in 1988, but prior to this merger it was very much a liberal party, and provided the liberal foundation of the Likud after the merger. The Center Party was an offshoot from the Likud and Labour; it positioned itself in the centre, hence the classification. Finally, Tafnit under “Right-wing” eventually merged into the Likud, while Moledet would

eventually turn into a component of today's Religious Zionist Party, hence its different colouration.

A connected third trend is that after the year 2010, the preference for the Israeli Labour Party appears to plummet. Of the 6 generals who entered politics post-2010, only one chose Labour (approx. 17%), compared to the 45% general average. From 2010 onwards, party preferences seem to diversify, with two generals being prominent (Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi) for forming their own party and achieving great electoral success with this party.[13] The liberal Yesh Atid party also sees a former officer join, as does Democratic Union, the predecessor to Meretz.

Differentiating this data within specific time-frames also allows us to see a different picture. Taking the space between establishment in 1948 to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, we see only 5 out of 33 retired generals entering politics, all of them in Labour Zionist parties (Ahdut HaAvoda, Mapai, Alignment, and Rafi). This is despite there being generals who could have entered politics, i.e., their mandated "cooling-off" period had expired prior to the Yom Kippur War. An example is Maj. Gen. Meir Amit, who retired in 1968 but entered politics in 1977, almost a decade after his retirement. Another is Maj. Gen. Chaim Herzog (father of current Israeli president Yitzhak Herzog and a former President himself), who retired in 1962, entering politics in 1981. Further examples are also present. The number of retired generals who enter politics after 1973 increases sharply, with the remaining 28 entering post-Yom Kippur.

[13] Gantz and Ashkenazi are not the only generals to have formed their own party (Rafael Eitan comes to mind with his Tzomet party), but their immediate success is remarkable (35 out of 120 seats in their first election).

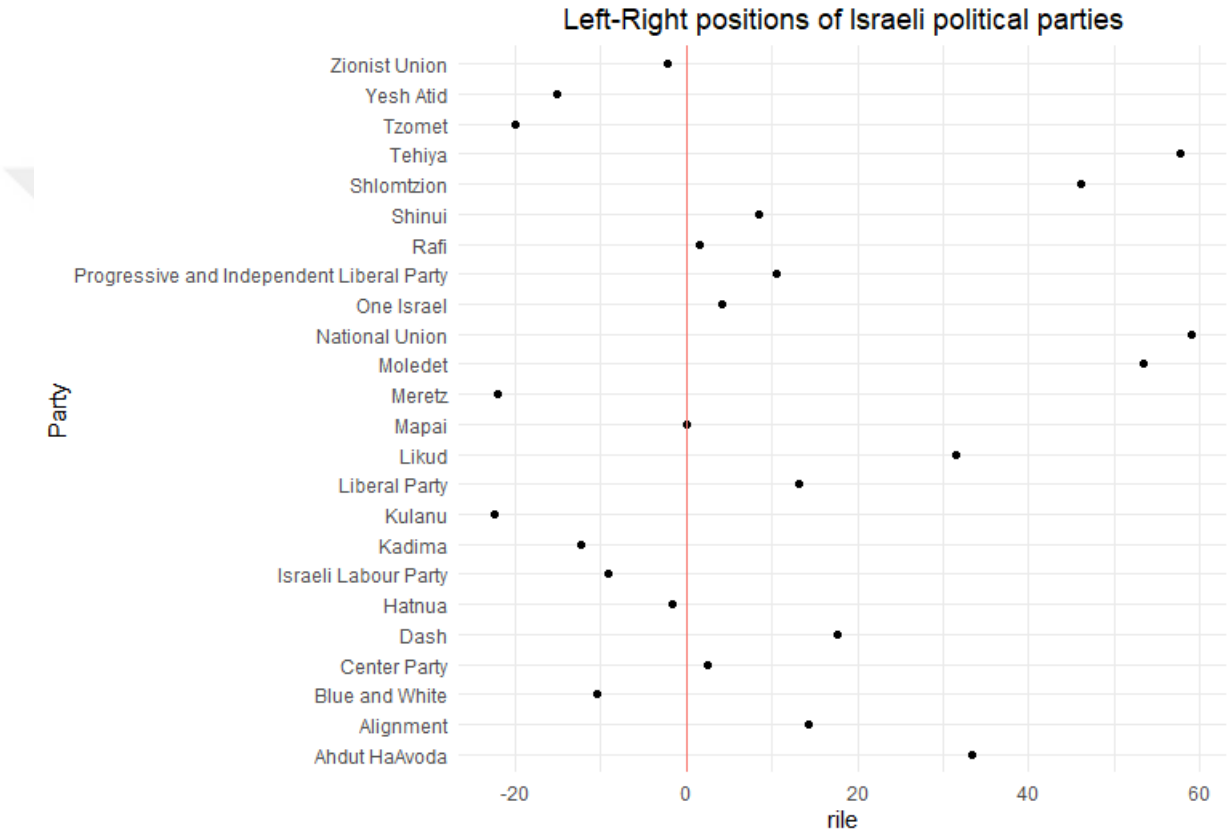
This a subject that needs to be discussed. The Yom Kippur War, despite ending with an Israeli military victory, was a psychological defeat for Israel, and it is not surprising to see generals, frustrated with the outcome and the lack of adequate civilian responsibility, being more eager to enter politics. However, this will be discussed extensively in the analysis and discussion section.

3.1.2. The Manifesto Project Data

The second database is that of manifestos belonging to political parties which Israeli generals entered, by Volkens et al. (2020a). These manifestos are electoral manifestos. Therefore, there are some caveats to the dataset. The Israeli political sphere is very dynamic and is a fertile breeding ground for parties. Parties are born and promptly die without seeing an election, or merge into a larger party (such as Labour or Likud) prior to an election. Therefore, these small, short-lived parties inevitably do not have manifestos to code, when they do, data is scarce. Ariel Sharon's "Shlomtzion" party is a perfect example of the latter, the party joining Likud almost immediately, though it does have a manifesto of its own coded in the dataset. Some parties are simply not coded, such as the Movement for National Renewal ("Telem") party formed by Moshe Dayan in 1981, even though it participated in the later 1981 elections. Another party, led by Moshe Ya'alon and also named "Telem" in reference to Dayan's party, suffers from the same problem. The manifestos of some parties, such as the aforementioned Shlomtzion party, are not available to be manually perused either in their original Hebrew or in translated English, which makes detailed evaluation of their contents impossible. In short, using the dataset collected by Volkens et al. (2020a) presents its own set of problems, which necessarily require sacrifices for the sake of accuracy.

That being said, it is still possible to gain some considerable information through the data presented by Volkens et al. (2020a). Figure 2 illustrates the positions of political parties involved in the thesis on a left-right scale, with "0" representing the centre (highlighted by a red line). The negative values are left-wing, while the positive values are right-wing.

Figure 2. Left-Right classification of Israeli political parties



Some parties which were not visible in Figure 1, showing the distribution of the parties the generals joined once they entered politics, are visible here in Figure 2. This is because Figure 1 omitted parties which the generals transferred to, either of their own volition or due to a merger, in order to keep the visualisation coherent. The Democratic Union party, shown in Figure 1, is not present here. Instead, its successor Meretz is shown.

There are some anomalies in Figure 2 which necessitates explanation, which will be achieved through looking through the original manifestos in question. The cost of simplifying the political arena to a left-right scale can be seen clearly, as sophisticated as the scale may be. Tzomet, a party which would normally be considered “right”, falls sharply on the left side, while on the flip-side, Alignment and Ahdut HaAvoda appear to be on the right-wing, with Ahdut HaAvoda further right-wing than Likud itself (33.333 and 31.561, respectively).

First, Tzomet: Tzomet’s 1992 manifesto is surprisingly short, but it gives some crucial details. For one, unlike many “right-wing” parties, Tzomet’s economic and welfare approaches are remarkably statist and left-wing, advocating for a society where resources are fairly distributed, a national health insurance law, an admittedly very scant mention of education policy, and hard-line separation of state and religion. While their approaches to social and security issues are characteristically right-wing—a particular example is their advocacy to bar those who have not or do not serve in the IDF from voting and running, which would, in practice, disenfranchise almost all Israeli Arabs—the economic and social sides weigh heavier. Practically speaking, Tzomet’s manifesto has more frequent mentions regarding socio-economic issues than security issues, and this is reflected in its coding, thus placing it in its unexpected position on the rile scale.

Alignment’s manifesto from 1984, on the other hand, is also unsurprising when looked at in depth. Its left-wing emphasis is barely visible, with settlement in the Occupied Territories being endorsed, alongside an opposition to a Palestinian state. Meanwhile, economic and social issues are given far less space, and are mostly passed over by general, ambiguous statements which contain little to no details as to

how these goals will be accomplished, i.e., “ensuring full employment” without any other details given.

Finally, Ahdut HaAvoda’s manifesto from 1961 is illustrative of the rift between itself and the rest of the Labour camp. The rhetoric espoused by then-Transport Minister Ben-Aharon is highly critical of Mapai. In particular, he accuses the government of not spending enough on immigration and on settlement, as well as on security, and implies Mapai of being corrupt. He is followed by another member, which accuses Mapai of being an undemocratic element and Ben-Gurion of essentially monopolising power. Essentially, it is feasible to conclude that Ahdut HaAvoda’s position was established as a reaction to Mapai, as opposed to being right-wing on its own. This leaves it as an anomalous case in the illustration.

All three anomalies make the drawbacks of using this data clear, with the objective method of coding the data making it difficult to understand how much weight is given to specific issues, by looking solely at an electoral manifesto. An example is Tzomet’s advocacy for a law that would tie voting rights to military service, which would in effect disenfranchise almost all of the Israeli Arab population as they are not conscripted, and few serve voluntarily. This is a very radical and important stance to take, yet, its weight is not incorporated into the scale. Regardless, the data for most part remains explanatory and sufficient.

Otherwise, the picture is clear, with much of the Israeli political spectrum falling on the right, with some notable mentions such as Kadima and Kulanu falling more left-wing than expected. It is useful to keep in mind that where the “centre” of the political left-right axis falls is a highly subjective matter, and that different countries may have very different “centre” positions. This is generally defined by the mainstream of the country in question. In Israel, the political mainstream—both

historically and today—is Zionist (albeit of different types, i.e., Labour Zionist, religious Zionist, or liberal Zionist) and while the modern left is no longer supportive of occupying the West Bank, the historical Israeli left (roughly prior to Rabin's second premiership which ended in 1995) was in favour of such. In particular, Ahdut HaAvoda was a proponent of establishing Jewish settlements in the West Bank, despite being, for most part, a left-wing party.

3.2. The Generals' Place in the Picture

With all of this data, where do the generals fall? Of the 33, 18 entered politics in parties which were left-wing, 9 into the centre/liberal camp, while the remaining 8 entered into the right-wing. In regards to tradition, however, the rift is apparent. Only six have entered into parties which espouse "traditional values" and five into Likud, whereas the other 22 have all entered parties which have negative views on traditional morality. In this case, the Manifesto Project codes positive mentions of traditional morality as "prohibition, censorship, and suppression of immorality and unseemly behaviour; maintenance and stability of the traditional family as a value; support for the role of religious institutions in state and society" (Volkens et al., 2020b, p. 19), while negative approaches to traditional morality is more or less the opposite of this, i.e., secularism. An overwhelming number of generals, 28 out of 33, have entered politics after the 1973 elections.

This, by itself, warrants some discussion. As described in the second chapter of this thesis, while the 1973 Yom Kippur War was not a military defeat for Israel, its psychological effect was very significant, and the sense of invincibility the IDF as well as the Israeli public in general had felt after the 1967 Six Day War had crumbled to dust. Furthermore, the investigation undertaken by the government—by

the Agranat Commission—found the soldiers and officers to be neglectful, and largely absolved the civilian government of wrongdoing, though Prime Minister Meir resigned over it regardless. To state that such findings must have frustrated the senior command of the IDF would not be too presumptuous. It is always useful to keep Moshe Ya'alon's complaint about the lack of civilian preparedness in mind, and with that in mind, it is very feasible to say that these generals wished to enter politics so that they could, in the future, refrain from making the mistakes they believed prior civilian politicians did. This implies that the officers wanted to serve the interests of the IDF by way of influencing policy in a fashion that either allowed the IDF to use its full potential, as well as to prevent the scapegoating of its soldiers and officers when, in their view, civilian failure was the cause for a crisis.

The second point which ought to be discussed is the generals' preference for parties which largely espouse negative views of traditional morality. Considering the IDF's institutional history, this is not too surprising. The IDF has a core that was strongly rooted in Labour Zionism; this core was never intended to be clearly apolitical and solely instrumental in defending the State of Israel from outside forces, as one would expect in an advanced capitalist country. The IDF, as with other pre-state and state institutions in Israel prior to independence, had been built precisely to foster a specific ideology in Israeli Jews. Alongside the Histadrut and the collective farming communities (kibbutzim and moshavim), the Hagana and then the IDF was meant to create a new "Israeli nation" out of diaspora Jews. When the transition to a fully-fledged state was realised on the 14th May 1948, the Hagana transformed into the IDF, but Mapai's control over the armed forces was only formally relinquished—described in detail in the second chapter—while it maintained practical control by having almost unfettered control of the state apparatus.

Therefore, the institutional path the IDF was taken in meant that officers as well as new conscripts into the IDF were socialised strongly along Labour Zionist thought. This was the mechanism of maintaining Mapai's control over the IDF despite relinquishing official control, while maintaining a Western-style democratic system (as opposed to the single-party dictatorships of the Eastern Bloc). Labour Zionism was inherently secular and even distanced from religion; it is not far-fetched to say that years of socialising within this environment fosters, at some level, a similar secularism within inbound officers over time. However, there is one aspect that this thesis has not been able to cover due to constraints of time and resources. This is the disparity between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, especially their religiosity and their representation within the IDF. As stated in the first chapter, Ashkenazim are over-represented in the officer corps of the IDF (Z. Schiff, 1974, p. 56). Therefore, this preference may also due to Ashkenazi Jews being, on the average, more secular than Mizrahi Jews.

What do these mean for the purposes of this thesis? Economics may not appear to play a strong role, but I do not believe this to be the case. There are two reasons, one of which I believe is highly important, for this. The first and less important one is the factor of socialisation which has been covered in the previous paragraph. The intense socialisation within a left-wing—specifically Labour Zionist—environment is sure to have contributed to the officers' economic outlook on politics.

The second, and far more important effect, is the IDF's involvement in the Israeli military-industrial complex, and the space this complex occupies in the Israeli economy. Mintz (1985) covers this thoroughly, with the crucial points being "[t]he military system's expansion over vast sectors of the economy is not expressed in the defense budget" and "Israel's defense system is autonomous in terms of budget and

use of military aid" (p. 105). There would be great interest to see the IDF's large budgets and growing expansion remain on a steady, upwards trajectory. While a more free-market economy need not create a smaller defence budget—a simple look at the US case is sufficient as an example—it certainly would necessitate curbing the expansion of the IDF's own industries and activities in the economy. This is because the IDF is inherently state-operated (as opposed to being privatised) and therefore, its economic ventures, too, are state-owned, which is naturally antithetical to a free-market economy.

Thus, economics beliefs are certainly a considerable factor for retired officers' entry into politics, if only to maintain the IDF's extensive resources and economic activity in the face of potential review. This makes even more sense when considering their preference for left-wing parties as opposed to parties such as the Likud. As the Likud ran (and continues to run) on a platform of a free economy and liberalisation, their position naturally conflicts with the goal of preserving the IDF's economic significance, thus making Labour more attractive.

This factor makes it easier to understand why officers chose Labour despite Labour's (and the left, in general) waning fortunes within the Israeli political sphere. While the goal of their entering politics was more to wield practical power as opposed to only making a statement, it would be impossible to do so within the Likud or other economically liberal parties due to inherently conflicting stances. Of course, this is a general argument based off of the larger trend, and obviously does not apply to the generals who did indeed choose the Likud or other similar parties. For these generals, it is safe to assume that other concerns—socio-political, religious, or moral—outweighed their stances on the economy.

We can see a larger picture, at this point. Under the assumption that the retired generals acted in favour of what they perceive to be Israeli national interest (again, with the caveat being that the word "Israeli" may be defined in various different ways by different ideologies), it can be said that these generals believe in the economic ideas espoused by the parties they join. The other factor is their approach towards security, alongside the economy. Labour's strategy of "land for peace", where lands captured in war would be given back in return for a lasting peace, was a tested strategy, one which worked. Ironically, the government that tried and tested this was none other than one led by Menahem Begin, of the Likud, when he signed a permanent peace treaty with Egypt's Anwar Sadat in 1979. This peace treaty involved not only giving the Sinai Peninsula back to Egypt, but also dismantling the Israeli Jewish settlements that had been established following the 1967 Six Day War.

This point is important for one specific reason. It illustrates that despite the Likud's fiery rhetoric in favour of territorial maximalism, it was willing to "play by the book" that Labour had written when it came to power. It is not too far-fetched to assume that this act could have played a considerable role in lessening the Likud's radical and maximalist image in the eyes of retired officers, who were, by and large, parts of the establishment that had been completely dominated by Labour (and its predecessors) until recently. Therefore, the Likud became a faction that could not only be tolerated, but also trusted to properly safeguard Israel's security—without resorting to radical policies. This, therefore, could have made the Likud palatable to officers whose primary concern was not economic, or at least insofar as the IDF's economic activity was concerned. If they prioritised Israeli security over the IDF's economic fortunes, entering the Likud may well have been a very good option to exercise real power, as part of the winning coalition.

The Likud often led governments in the years following 1977, and more often than not Labour would be relegated to either junior coalition partner, or outright opposition. Labour only led four governments after 1977: 21st (Peres I) as a coalition with the Likud, 25th (Rabin), 26th (Peres II), and finally the 28th (Barak). In contrast, the Likud (and its offshoot Kadima, with Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert) led 14 separate governments between 1977-2021. Today, neither party is in a leading role, but Labour is a very small coalition partner while the Likud has been consigned to the opposition. However, the data at hand still shows that the generals continued to prefer Labour over the Likud. The puzzle remains: Why, despite Labour chronically being unable to hold onto power, do generals prefer it?

I believe that the answer ultimately lies in the institutional structure and culture of the IDF. With its core being the Labour Zionist ideology, its formation based out of strongly socialist militias such as the Hagana, this armed force, as described thoroughly in Chapter 2, was governed by the Labour movement. While ostensibly having no direct political influence on the IDF, unlike the countries of the Eastern Bloc, Labour shaped the socialisation process of the IDF. It was utilised not only as a tool to defend Israel from foreign incursion, but also as a tool to facilitate the absorption of immigrants, as a melting pot, to the goal of creating and "Israeli" nation. Thus, it is not very surprising that officers should choose Labour more than they choose other parties.

That being said, a particular trend that appears to begin in the 2010's is worthy of note. Up until 2013, most of the retired generals who enter politics begin their careers in either Labour (or its predecessors) or the Likud (or its predecessors), with only 6 of 27 doing otherwise. Even then, two of those end up in either Labour or the Likud. On the other hand, out of six generals who enter politics after 2009, only one

has done so in Labour, while another ended up joining the Likud later on. Two formed their own party, one which has become a common household name in Israeli politics: Blue and White. Another joined the liberal Yesh Atid party, while the last one ended up in Meretz, a strongly left-wing, progressive party (though still Zionist). It should be noted that none of these parties, Blue and White, Yesh Atid, or Meretz, are non-Zionist.

I believe that exploring this peculiarity is warranted. It could be several things, but the most prominent one that comes to mind is Labour's flagging performance in elections, as well as a perception of institutional failure to adapt to changing circumstances. This flagging performance is particularly striking in the years after Rabin's death, when looked at over the long-term. It fell below 20 seats after Barak's tenure as leader, before collapsing to below ten seats after Isaac Herzog's leadership. During the 2019-2021 Israeli government crisis, there were times Labour polled below the electoral threshold of 3.25% (roughly equalling four seats), but managed to win seats with alliances nonetheless. Only recently with Merav Michaeli's ascension as Labour leader has the party's fortunes gone up, but it is too soon to say whether Labour will once again become the preferred party for officers entering politics. In light of this information, it is not surprising to see that, as his cooling-off period neared its end, Benny Gantz did not even seem to entertain the notion of entering politics in Labour. Instead, the popular rumour was that he would form his own party, which he eventually did with the "Israeli Resilience Party", quickly forming the Blue and White alliance, which constantly polled close to the Likud, and on occasion won more seats than it did—while Labour danced dangerously close to the threshold. This is equally applicable to Yesh Atid, which polled between 15-20 seats ever since its inception in 2013, even prior to the Blue and White alliance. It

won 19 MK's in its first election in 2013. Put simply, Blue and White as well as Yesh Atid had become the new loci for non-Likud routes to power, displacing Labour.

Therefore, the simple idea that Labour was nowhere near power is a powerful reason to not join it. The effective way to wield any sort of influence in the Israeli system of governance is to either be a government minister, or to be an MK whose vote is crucial in holding the balance of power, i.e., being necessary for a vote of confidence or a budgetary law. Labour, until extremely recently (the March 2021 elections), did not have any influence of the sort. For a retired general seeking to influence Israel's security policy, Labour was simply the wrong address. Coupled with the overall troubled situation of the Israeli left, forming a new party, with a left-wing outlook on social and economic issues but a hawkish stance on security—Blue and White—can easily be seen as a better option. This option, taken by Benny Gantz and his associate Gabi Ashkenazi (also a former general), paid off. In the first election it participated in, April 2019, Blue and White won 35 seats. Its performance continued in the subsequent elections, never falling below 33 seats, at least until the electoral alliance with Yesh Atid fell apart, but even then, Blue and White persevered, achieving eight seats in the March 2021 elections.

3.3. Analysis and Discussion

In conclusion to this chapter, several things become clear when combined with the theoretical framework established in Chapter 1, with Finer (1976) providing the basis, as well as the historical overview given in Chapter 2. The theoretical basis is that the retired officers operate under concerns for national interest. Regional and class interests are practically impossible: Israel has no practically distinct regions to

speak of, being a geographically small country. Meanwhile, class-based conflict is minimalised with 2 or 2.5 years of universal conscription[14] and annual reserve service known as *miluim*,[15] turning the IDF into a socio-economic melting pot. Individual desire for political power remains plausible, yet, there are very few examples of officers who appear to strive for such, or even glorify themselves while in office: Moshe Dayan is the sole example that comes to mind. Therefore, concern for national interest—however this may be conceptualised—is assumed.

Their primary concern appears to be security, with the economy as a secondary concern. On the economic front, Labour and the Likud are diametrically opposed. The former is in favour of maintaining some degree of state involvement in the economy (though this has somewhat lessened since the end of the Cold War, with the wave of neoliberalism), while the Likud has always been in favour of a freer economy, a trend that has picked up pace under Binyamin Netanyahu's leadership.

On the security side of things, Likud appears far more hawkish. This is true following the Oslo process, but prior to Rabin's milestone negotiations with Yasser Arafat, this was not always the case. Labour (and its predecessors) was in favour of hawkish policies, especially under Ben-Gurion and Eshkol, while Sharett and Meir were its more dovish leaders. Therefore, here, we once again observe a change with time. With Rabin's second premiership, and the Oslo process, we see Labour's hawkish credentials weaken significantly. The Likud did pledge to honour the Oslo Accords when it came to power, but this was not realised under Netanyahu, who slowed the process down and ground it to a halt after assuming power following

[14] As of the writing of this thesis, men serve for 30 months while women serve for 24 months. All Israeli Jews, unless objecting on grounds of religion or health, are subject to conscription.
[15] All Israelis who have served in the IDF are subject to reserve duty as long as they are below the age of 40.

Rabin's death. While the Likud remains nominally in support of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its practical position is that of maintaining the status quo, which critically includes the construction and maintenance of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Meanwhile, Labour remains committed to the two-state solution, a position which has increasingly been unpopular following the collapse of the Oslo arrangements. This is a good explanation for generals veering away from Labour in the last three decades. What is crucial is a relatively hawkish stance on security, which can also explain Labour's falling popularity amongst retired generals post-Rabin, as Labour's position has gotten noticeably dovish. This could have well prompted Benny Gantz to create his own movement, one which was hawkish on security issues while being slightly left-of-centre on economics, as opposed to joining Labour.

Another factor to consider is a simple power dynamic. If a party overall has insufficient seats in the Knesset to influence policy or the formation of a government, the incentive to join that party decreases considerably, especially if one's primary goal in entering politics is not to simply make a statement, but rather to actively influence policy. As explained in the previous section, Labour's fortunes post-Rabin have been discouraging, to say the least. Coupled with a preference for Labour's overall worldview, owing to the IDF's institutional culture inherited from decades of pre-state socialisation and institutionalisation, as well as decades of Labour Zionist governance over the state, this can be said to push generals to the left side of the spectrum even if they do not join Labour, and form their own parties.

Overall, the chapter supports the idea that generals join parties based primarily on security issues, with economic stances being a secondary consideration. The Israeli left is not in all ways identical with the Western European left, it is considerably

more hawkish when it comes to security issues, especially until the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Even now, its primary opposition is to settlements on grounds that they are unconducive for Israel's security and because they prevent a political settlement, not because of a particular ideological opposition ("Vision and Fundamental Principles," 2021). Finally, Labour has lost its appeal to the retired generals because it no longer has a realistic chance of being in an influential position in the government. However, this may change in the future, depending on Labour's performance in the current 36th Government of Israel, with the left-wing finally having a chance to involve itself in government, and potentially increase its votes (and therefore its seat count) in the years to come.

Therefore, to conclude this chapter, there are a few primary takeaways from all the data. The first is that the generals generally prefer to join left-wing parties. The right-wing, especially the religious right-wing, is not appealing to retired Israeli generals. When they do join the right, they tend to do so with the Likud, but this by itself is not surprising considering that the Likud is essentially Israel's catch-all right-wing party.

Among the left, the Israeli Labour Party is the overwhelming preference. While Figure 1 shows many political parties on the left-wing (Mapai, Rafi, Alignment, etc.) all except one (Democratic Union) merged together to form what is known today as the Israeli Labour Party. Post-2010, a preference for other parties appears to be clear. The most apparent example of this is former Chiefs of Staff Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi's preference to form their own party, Blue and White, as a hawkish, socially liberal yet economically closer to the Labour tradition, to contest elections in order to oust Netanyahu.

The right is not as popular and common wisdom might push us to believe. The centre/liberal camp appears to be just as strong as the right-wing, with a particular

emphasis on liberal parties. In the immediate aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and during the path to the 1977 elections, three out of six officers who join politics in that period enter Dash, a party which sought to reform Israel and effectively tried to become a third party, to break the Labour-Likud dichotomy. It ultimately failed in this task, but the fact that 50% of the generals joined this movement says something. It suggests some degree of frustration with how the left-wing governed the country (especially after the trauma of the Yom Kippur War) but also an unwillingness to join the Likud. This reluctance may also be attributed to the "push factor" of its leader, Menahem Begin. Begin, as former leader of the terrorist organisation Etzel and known as a hardliner regarding peace and Arabs, may have been influential in pushing these generals to a more liberal and centrist party.

Taking all of these together, we can come at some conclusions. Retired generals will most likely continue to enter politics in the following years. In fact, I argue that the more their influence with politicians decreases while serving (e.g., Chiefs of Staff being left completely out of the loop by Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon on crucial security-related matters), the more they will seek to enter and influence politics post-retirement. Politics for these officers is a way to influence policy. In Ben-Gurion's day, up until 1973, generals could influence policy without needing to be in electoral politics. Security was a field given to them and entrusted to them. Following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, they were blamed (rightly or wrongly) for the setback; Menahem Begin involved himself in military affairs despite his utter lack of experience after 1977, and the post-1982 state of affairs saw Rabin, then Sharon cut the IDF's highest echelons from decision-making on very crucial issues (the Oslo Accords and the disengagement from Gaza, respectively).

CONCLUSION

The question of why officers enter politics following retirement, while within a system with no history or tradition of military intervention in politics, is a puzzling one. To see retired officers enter politics so frequently alongside a political system best described as "liberal democratic" is peculiar. This thesis sought to study why this was the case in Israel, as well as why these retired officers so often seemed to prefer left-wing parties to do so in. The contribution of this work is to build upon pre-existing literature on civil-military relations by looking at an anomalous case, where the civilian and military spheres are not as clearly delineated as they are in the rest of the developed world. In doing so, the thesis aims to provide a different perspective of looking at civil-military relations, by hopefully providing a case where looking beyond or past the idea of "professionalism" as mentioned by Feaver (1996) and Burk (2002) is more helpful as opposed to sticking with older theories.

The literature regarding the military's intervention into the political arena was analysed. When looked at broadly, the literature primarily focuses on US civil-military relations, its progression in the immediate post-war era, as well as its more recent developments. Theoretical ground is mostly built up on how the balance of civilian control is achieved, in various political systems. Crucially, Finer (1976) provides a relatively larger and more applicable theoretical basis for this thesis. Therefore, by utilising Finer's method of classifying political cultures, Israel was placed in a category of countries of "high political culture" based upon the existence of free and fair elections with universal suffrage, legitimate political authority, consensus on who this authority is, and civil society with free media and press. With this in mind, the motivations for retired officers' involvement in politics was

considered. Class-based and region-based interests were ruled out, the former due to the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) nature of being a socio-economic melting pot, while the latter was ruled out due to Israel lacking distinct geographical regions beyond those used for administrative purposes. That leaves solely individual and national interest. Individual interests, while deemed to be plausible, was set aside due to the sheer lack of Israeli generals who appeared to glorify themselves and their achievements—Moshe Dayan being noted as an exception—and therefore, did not seem far too motivated by desires of personal power, influence, or wealth. Through this process of elimination of Finer's motivations for intervention, the thesis worked with the assumption that these retired officers entered politics based on what they deemed to be the best for Israel's national interest.

The thesis followed a two-track method. The first track was a historical analysis of Israeli political and military institutions and their interactions between 1948-2021. This was done in order to understand the trajectory of Israeli civil-military relations in a given period of time, in this case the history of the state. The second track involves using an original dataset of 84 generals. These 84 generals are classified according to their entry into politics following retirement or not, and which parties they became representatives of. This was combined with the Manifesto Project dataset, drawing on the rile (left-right position) index for 24 separate parties. Through this two-track method, the thesis aimed to test the hypothesis that the generals were primarily motivated by their conceptualisations of national interest in joining politics.

There are certain obvious limitations to the explanatory capability of the hypothesis, as well as the methodology utilised. The hypothesis, for one, needs far more rigorous testing, be this qualitative or quantitative in nature. Due to limitations of time and

resources, this was not possible to achieve. This work is held back significantly by the absence of primary documents, such as newspaper articles, brochures, or even more specific manuals of the IDF itself. These have not been used as the language barrier is a significant one. Working with the original Hebrew documents would have been far too time-consuming and resource intensive to be viable in a work of this scope. A qualitative design focusing more on individual officers' testimonies would explain far more on their motivations than the current design; a quantitative design would be able to go through a far higher number of officers, and need not be restricted to merely generals, which may yield different results or alternatively, support the conclusions reached by this thesis. Once more, due to reasons of scope, time, and resources, this thesis collected only 84 generals within the IDF. Past research includes more, but none are as recent as this. Therefore, future research could do the same, including possibly hundreds of officers, to provide a better base for the conclusions reached. In addition, other categories can be coded. Two that readily come to mind are ethnic background (Ashkenazi or Mizrahi) and religious orientation (secular, traditional, religious, or ultra-Orthodox).

Furthermore, alternative explanations can also be made. Personal interests, such as pursuing power and individual influence, is always a viable alternative, even if this thesis has not found evidence of such. Additionally, with research focusing on non-political second careers for retired officers (ideally expanding the dataset to include more officers), it can be found that politics is not the primary preference, but is secondary to second careers in state-owned businesses (Mekorot, Amidar, Israel Aerospace Industries, etc.) at the executive levels.

The historical overview discovered that the realm of civil-military relations was highly informal (and remains so today), with the first Prime Minister David Ben-

Gurion arranging the distribution of power in a fashion that was most conducive to strengthening his personal authority over the IDF. The defence institutions are given autonomy, free of political interference, in what can be considered a quasi-technocratic approach to defence. The consequences of this path are seen clearly in the years that follow, with the lack of institutionalisation and unclear boundaries as well as hierarchies causing a few political scandals and international crises. While steps are taken to alleviate this situation to some degree in 1976, the boundaries of Israeli civil-military relations still remain nebulous and unclear.

Following the psychological defeat of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, generals started to enter politics more frequently following their retirement. This has been attributed to one particular reason: The first is a perception of unpreparedness on part of the civilians regarding security issues, as well as their willingness to scapegoat the IDF for their failures, using the lack of scrutiny on the armed forces to also shift blame without being held accountable for it. The 1982 Lebanon War also sees a changing military, where the first war Israel entered by choice is observed to be very unpopular. This reveals the double-edged nature of Israel's "citizen-army" model, where the IDF gets bogged down in a war that is highly unpopular, even with the people who are fighting that very war, resulting in cases where soldiers and officers refused direct orders.

The 1990's and onwards show that the IDF lost more and more prominence, with Prime Ministers on both the left and right leaving the IDF's top commanders out of the loop regarding critical security decisions. Interestingly, both Prime Ministers who did so came from military backgrounds (Yitzhak Rabin and Ariel Sharon, respectively). Rabin left the IDF out of the loop regarding the historic Oslo Accords which would have seen an independent Palestinian state established out of the

Palestinian Authority. Sharon left the IDF in the dark with his consequential decision to withdraw from Gaza in 2005, and furthermore, made the IDF dismantle Jewish settlements which already existed in Gaza, causing a fracture in his own party (the Likud). Today, generals' influence is not observed while they are in the IDF, but rather after they have retired, such as with Benny Gantz, who was at the front of the bloc to oust Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu until recently.

The analysis on the dataset found that 33 of these 84 generals entered politics after their retirement (approx. 39%), quite a high figure. It should be noted that this is enabled due to Israeli officers' relatively younger retirement age, where retiring around the age of 50 as a general is highly common. Entry into politics skyrockets in 1977, indicating an increase in political interest following the 1973 Yom Kippur War. To give some numbers, out of 27 generals eligible to enter politics prior to 1977, only 7 did so (26%). In contrast, out of the 51 eligible to enter politics after 1977, 26 did so (51%). Put in other words, following 1977, every other general who retired entered politics afterwards, which is an astonishingly high rate. This entry into politics picks up particularly in the 1990's and onwards, with 18 of the 33 generals who entered politics entering politics in 1992 or later: Every decade from then on sees about 5-7 generals enter politics in various parties, though the left and the liberal/centrist bloc is the overwhelming preference.

This analysis was combined with data drawn from the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al., 2020a). The Manifesto Project data was utilised to classify the political parties the retired generals entered (or formed) when entering politics—24 of them in total—along a left-right axis, by utilising the "rile" index as conceptualised by Laver and Budge (1992). Through this classification, it was possible to draw more concrete conclusions regarding the generals' motivations. It was seen that after left-wing

parties, generals largely preferred to join centrist or liberal parties, followed by right-wing parties. This preference has been attributed to two factors: Long-term socialisation within the IDF, of a left-wing Labour Zionist nature, as well as a desire to preserve the IDF's status within Israel. This status is not merely one of prestige, but also one of economic volume. The IDF is involved in a large number of enterprises within the Israeli economy. The Israeli right, with the Likud at the helm, is largely pro-free market economics, which would necessarily mean the shrinking of the IDF's economic enterprises in lieu of private enterprise taking their place. Therefore, both economic and political factors are concluded to have affected retired generals' decision to enter political parties. They appear to favour more hawkish parties when joining parties. While Labour is not "more hawkish" than the Likud, this is a relatively more recent position, taken by Labour in the lead up to the Oslo Accords. Prior to Rabin's leadership—and premiership—Labour was considerably more hawkish. Ben Gurion was particularly among the more hawkish Labour leaders.

With the 2010's, retired generals seem to favour a more diverse array of political parties, with some even joining the progressive left-wing Democratic Union (later Meretz) and the liberal Yesh Atid. They are largely secular, even if they are nationalist, thus making religious parties unappealing. This is most likely the reason why "nationalist religious" (or *hardal*) parties do not appear in the dataset: Prominent *hardal* parties such as the Jewish Home, Otzma Yehudit, or the Jewish Home do not appear, while one such party, Moledet (and its successor National Union) appears only once.

Put succinctly, the generals appear to be divided regarding economics, almost by half, between parties who advocate for a more liberal economic model for Israel and

those who prefer to keep the relatively more state-involved economy. Therefore, without further research into their economic preferences, through surveys or interviews, it is impossible to come to a definite conclusion regarding how much weight the parties' economic policies had on the generals' decisions. They do, however, seem to overwhelmingly prefer parties of a secular nature, regardless of their economic stance. There is only one general in the dataset who has joined Moledet, a nationalist religious party, which is the only distinctly free market *and* religious party in the dataset. All of the other nationalist generals in the dataset, such as the particularly vocal Rafael Eitan, were staunchly secular. This is despite the slow creeping in of religious units and combined religious education and military service being introduced.

Therefore, several things become evident. The first is that the institutional structure of the IDF lends itself to the creation of staunchly secular, albeit somewhat nationalist officers. The latter aspect would be expected from practically every armed force. The former part, however, is interesting given the disproportionate influence the ultra-Orthodox sector of society wields in the political arena, which goes as far as to force the inclusion of religious units in the IDF, or the observance of Shabbat or kashrut dietary restrictions on army bases, or creating conflicts between religious and military superiors that turn out in favour of the religious authority.

This is because the IDF's autonomy from the legislative, alongside its opaque nature, has become a liability for it. What was supposed to shield the IDF from political infighting has instead resulted in the IDF being made a convenient scapegoat for potential civilian failures. This is most evident with the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, where a state investigation regarding the setbacks in the war essentially

cleared all the civilians involved of wrongdoing, while placing much of the blame on the military officers involved.

It is observed that the number of officers joining politics after this period skyrockets, despite there being many officers who were eligible (i.e., were no longer in active service, and their legally mandated cooling-off period had ended) to join politics *prior* to 1973. Many of them ended up in the two major Israeli parties: the Israeli Labour Party and the Likud, though the latter has led more governments since then. Thus, one conclusion is that these generals, in entering politics, sought to influence political decisions in order to avoid the issues that caused the IDF's own influence to be diminished. In other words, the officers saw the IDF's diminishing influence in the non-public sphere, and diverted their efforts to influence the government towards the public sphere.

With this in mind, it can be concluded that retired officers sought to join politics in order to maintain the IDF's influence, or rather its position vis a vis the civilian government, in the evolving Israeli political environment. It should be underlined that this does not mean there was a concerted, organised effort by the IDF's officers and former officers to enter politics and to steer it in a certain direction, in some praetorian manner of influencing politics. There is no evidence of such. The evidence at hand suggests that these generals had simply individual reasons for entering politics, but not for the purposes of personal political power or affluence.

By entering politics, the generals are able to accomplish a few things. The first is to involve themselves in the political process directly, the process that led to issues such as the Lavon Affair and the Agranat Commission. In these cases, the military's insulation from the political arena—by way of tying it to the Prime Minister—had paradoxically made them a convenient scapegoat for the civilians. By way of being

an opaque, impenetrable structure, the IDF was easy to criticise while being difficult to scrutinise. In this sense, Ben-Gurion's vision for an IDF insulated from political infighting backfired. The second success the generals claimed by entering politics was the preservation of the IDF's position in society. While more research needs to be done in order to truly deduct the causality of this, the IDF's presence in the Israeli economy and society has persevered despite the 1980's and 1990's ushering in a new era of liberalism—neoliberalism. What the IDF has lost in the field of direct political influence as once exercised by generals such as Moshe Dayan, it has managed to reinforce with its former members entering legitimate politics of the electoral arena. While it cannot be said that these retired generals entering politics was the absolute necessary condition for the IDF maintaining its influential position in society, I believe that there is a strong argument for such.

In the end, parliamentary politics is a numbers game, especially in Israel where governments are formed with the slimmest of majorities, such as with only one MK holding the balance of power. With a distribution of generals across the political spectrum—entering both the Israeli Labour Party and the Likud, as well as other, newer parties—it may become nigh impossible for any government, regardless of political orientation, to pass laws (and survive) which infringe upon the privileged position the IDF has, at least compared to its equivalents in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, or the United States.

To conclude, I find that the retired generals often enter politics in order to preserve both the reputation and the status of the IDF. This motivation is created by their conceptualisation of Israeli national interest, which places the IDF in a central role within Israeli society. The task of the IDF is one beyond mere defence, and is involved in nation-building and immigrant absorption. Thus, its functions stray into

the realm outside of security. Therefore, it is not far-fetched for Israeli national interest to be conflated with the IDF's own standing within society. These two topics are not neatly separated from one another. Instead, they can be seen as interchangeable, and this is not peculiar to Israel. A similar behaviour and stance can be observed in the Turkish Armed Forces, particularly prior to the 2010's.

The implication of these findings is that more Israeli generals will enter politics following their retirement. The recent success achieved by Gantz in his first electoral bid, and his clinging onto power (by way of remaining a necessary coalition partner and government minister) despite tremendous political mistakes is sure to be a good motivator for ambitious generals.

The future of Israeli civil-military relations is blurred, due to the lack of clear institutionalisation which continues to the present day. One can only predict that the IDF will continue to lose influence; the model of an autonomous IDF, working quasi-independently of the Knesset and as a semi-technocratic model has all but collapsed. In turn, however, its influence will most likely increase in a different manner as its retired senior officers join politics of their own volition.

There are some trends to follow, for potential future research. The briefly mentioned "nationalist religious" (*hardal*) parties are gaining influence in the military, with special schools and units for such soldiers and officers. Their weight in the officer corps may increase, thus creating a change in the political preferences of senior officers following their retirement. On the other hand, with the new government in Israel, not being beholden to religious parties, may dismantle some of the religious influence in the IDF, reversing the trend. At the same time, with this same government, Labour (along with the centre and the left) once more has a chance to prove its capability in government, and this can translate into more seats. That, in

turn, may see generals prefer Labour once more, should it rise under Michaeli's chairwomanship.

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