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«A good Jew is in the IDF!»

A study of the role of religion in a military
universe of meaning

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Faculty of Humanities

Department for Archaeology and Religious Studies



NTNU – Trondheim
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“Soldiers in the *Tsahal* [Israel Defense Forces] are just as much Israeli as a result of the military. But, then again, the military is Israeli... Or, I mean, it is not just Israeli as in citizenship-Israeli. It is, after all, *Jewish*. Well, yeah. *Tsahal* soldiers represent the truly Jewish. First and foremost.”

(Interview with IDF Brigadier General 07/04/09)

Preface: Meeting "Shlomi"

(Extract from field diary: 24 June 2007)

Shlomi's eyes have turned inwards, as if he tries to look into his own thoughts to find the right words. He chews slowly on a mouthful of chocolate. I have treated him to a piece of cake and a large ice coffee in a Jerusalem café, and he eats it with such intense pleasure that there is little doubt that this is a rare occasion. On the day of our meeting he celebrates his 21st birthday – and exactly two years as a combat soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Today, he has just returned from a mission, and he is exhausted.

We sit in silence for a while, and I look at the young man sitting in front of me. He met me in his dusty uniform, but quickly slipped into his civilian clothing. Now, only a green armband around his wrist indicates his unit affiliation. He is fit and tanned, wearing a tight blue t-shirt, cool jeans, and the sandals that may be considered part of the national costume among secular, kibbutznik Israelis. He has an intense presence and fellow recruits in his unit have, with envy, told me that he is popular among the girls. But Shlomi comes across as someone who has experienced too much for his age: He is constantly throwing glimpses over his shoulder, is restless, and on several occasions struggles to keep the tears off his face. His fingers constantly fiddle with the M16 he keeps on his lap; he is clearly at ease with having a gun within reach and treats it with the same comfort as the bottles of water we all carry in an effort to survive the burning Middle Eastern summer.

Shlomi wipes the sweat off his forehead and places his gun on the table between us. Then he takes a small sip of ice coffee, fixes his eyes on me and says:

"Listen: I wish I was more religious, but I am a good Jew, you know. I am. So let me just put it this way: clearly, if you can be a good Jew, there is no reason why you shouldn't. That's where the IDF comes in. Because, you see, the IDF is totally kosher – totally. Which is a part of the army that I really like. A good Jew is in the IDF! As I said, just by entering the IDF, you are a good Jew and you live a good Jewish life. I like that, I really do."

Then he pauses again, fiddles some more with his gun, and then leans back. He looks down. He sighs and his face goes dark:

“You know that I was in the Lebanon War, right? That sucked... When it all broke loose we just looked at each other and thought ‘what the fuck do we do?’ So, we had to enter Lebanon. And that was, that was... it was so... different... We were stuck in the middle of nowhere in enemy territory and then it seemed as if they [the IDF leadership] forgot all about us! You stand there and feel so fucking alone. Can you imagine how that feels..?! But – then again, you can’t be individual about these things, when it is for a greater cause.”

Shlomi leans over the table. He examines my face thoroughly, smiles and then says:

“I’m glad you’re asking us this, you know. Too often I hear people assume that soldiers either only follow orders, that we don’t think for ourselves, or that we’re some evil creatures – God damn it, it is a bloody insult! Fuck them. Those people obviously haven’t been at war, they can’t have been soldiers. I mean - real soldiers. We think, we analyse – and we fight for something.”

His says it with such a convincing and earnest expression that I believe he is being honest. Yet, I am curious. I have heard so much about these young men and the institution they represent, and it is both fascinating and alluring finally to hear their voices. But although they fight in an institution that is anything but alien to the press, so many questions remain unanswered. How can he say that a soldier in the IDF is “a good Jew”? I cannot help but wondering: What is this “something” that he fights for?

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Hanne Eggen Røislien

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1 THE DISSERTATION: PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This dissertation is the result of my attempt to combine the three research topics that intrigue me the most: Religion, the Military, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Accordingly, this dissertation offers an explorative analysis of the role of religion within the empirical context of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The foundation of the dissertation is comprised of a combination of data gathered through in-depth interviewing with 34 religiously non-practicing soldiers in the 50th Battalion of the Nachal Infantry Brigade over a period of four years (2006-2009), supplemented by official documentation published by the IDF.

By focusing the analysis on a non-observant unit in the study of a conscript army, this dissertation draws attention to the role and relevance of religion in an officially non-religious institution. In the case of conscript armies, the members are recruited on the basis of legal obligation, not out of choice. Accordingly, the military provides a unique locus in the study of how meaning systems are stimulated and maintained, as it provides a context wherein the individual's choices are restricted and where unity is necessitated. A theme throughout this dissertation is thus the attempt to apply the scholarly study of religion onto domains it has thus far only minimally engaged in, thereby exploring the wider potential of the discipline.

I will argue that religion serves crucial functions in the IDF: Judaism provides the IDF with a cultural repertoire that constitutes a compass that helps both the army and its soldiers to navigate in complex socio-cultural and political environs, as well as forging a multi-layered sense of unity: Judaism helps to create unity in values, judgment, purpose and opinion, and it forges a sense of moral unity that situates the individual soldier within the context of a larger community with a particular mission and outlook.

The dissertation is comprised of five articles, four of which deal with the various dimensions of the role of religion in the IDF's universe of meaning. One discusses the methodological quandaries of generating and validating oral data. Article I explores my application of social media in the recruitment of interviewees; Article II explores the role of religion in the IDF's recruitment policies; Article III analyses the interrelationship between Judaism and the IDF's ethical codex; Article IV explores the role of religion in the interviewees' notion of territory; Article V provides a multi-method and statistical analysis of IDF's data on the target choice of Palestinian terrorism.

In the following chapter, I will introduce the basic theme for this dissertation, situating the empirical case within the scientific study of religion.

The Puzzle

It is intriguing to observe how little attention the contemporary military has received within the scholarly study of religion. We live in a period in time in which religion has entered the limelight of international affairs with considerable strength. The role of religion and religious actors as feeding into warfare and peacebuilding receives great attention in politics, in the press as well as in academia (for example Alger 2002; Appleby 2000; Boulding 1986; Bruce 2003; Carter and Smith 2004; Coward and Smith 2004; Gopin 2000; Harpviken and Røislien 2008; Heft 2004; Johnston and Cox 2003). Yet, while scholars of military sociology have – mistakenly, I will argue – long since dismissed and neglected religion as a decisive motivational factor for soldiering in conventional armies¹ (e.g. Catignani 2004; MacCoun 1993; Watson 1994), scholars of religion on their end have engaged extensively in the explicit aspects of the consequences adherence to religion may have for world peace, above all studied at length in relation to Islamism and jihad (Alexander 2002; Esposito 2002; Gardell 2003; Gieling 1999; Hoffman 2003; Hoffman 2008; Johansen 1997; Keppel 2003; Lincoln 2003; Pape 2003; Toft 2007: to name but a few).² Analysis of the role of religion in the military thus tends to focus on aspects that fall outside of the context of conventional armies.³

Still, the interrelationship between religion and the military extends far beyond the mere domain of Islamism or the Crusades, and today our empirical knowledge of the role of religion within the context of state armies is limited, although the need for such knowledge is

¹ Such an assumption appears to juxtapose religion with theology. Accordingly, it is arguable that religion plays a marginal role in the military. However, the scientific study of religion's emphasis on its object of study as a multifaceted and compound phenomenon, therein analyzing it in part as a culturally constituted meaning system, implies that it is not limited to certain spaces or segments of human activity.

² Noteworthy here are the studies that explore Islamism and jihad in relation to the specific military contexts of Pakistan. See: Nawaz, Shuja. 2008. *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Siddiq, Ayesha. 2007. *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. London & Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press.

³ That is of course not to say that the military as such has not been explored by scholars of religion. Examples are e.g. *Zen at War* by Brian Daizen Victoria where he analyses the cooperative role that Zen and other Buddhist leaders played with Japan's military hierarchy during the 1930s and 1940s; Ivan Strenski's *Contesting Sacrifice* wherein he argues that the French army's strategy in World War I owe much to Catholic theology of sacrifice and Protestant reinterpretations of it; or, C.L. Crouch's exploration of the inter-relationship between religion, war and ethics in the ancient near east. Yet, none of these explore the role of religion within contemporary state army contexts. For references, see: Crouch, C.L. 2009. *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East: Military Violence in Light of Cosmology and History [Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft]*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter; Strenski, Ivan. 2002. *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism and Social Thought* Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Victoria, Brian Daizen. 1997. *Zen at War*. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill.

pressing. Despite crucial differences, NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, US Forces' deployment in Iraq and the Israel Defense Forces' continued presence in the West Bank share one determining characteristic: The argumentation for the legitimacy of their actions does not rest merely on immediate security concerns, but rather circles around values that are said to be worthwhile fighting for. It is thus tempting to ask: By what standards of evaluation do military actors consider some wars meaningful, while others are not?

When recruiting and training soldiers, every army faces the problem of having to rework elements of prior socialization, in particular with respect to their ethical framework, their moral judgments and their identity. Soldiers must re-learn and be re-educated, prior socialization must be softened and re-written, yet not deleted. A soldier must learn to make individual moral judgments that benefit – and are in line with – what the respective military would define as 'the collective good'. In other words: The individual soldier must identify himself or herself with the military community and consider it and its activities meaningful. How is this challenge processed within the military?

Being a soldier puts the individual in demanding situations that can neither be fully legitimized nor grasped merely through the application of the standards of evaluation that the individual learns in civil society. The life and actions of militaries and their soldiers do in many respects take the concept of "normalcy" to the extremes: Soldiers may be required to act upon an order whether or not they agree with it, they are demanded to act swiftly in spite of sleep deprivation, hunger or thirst, and they are in principle obliged to accept that in situations of life and death, death may be a feasible option. Still, soldiers continue to perform their relatively extreme duties. What motivates soldiers to comply with fighting certain wars and oppose fighting others?

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is an intriguing case in point: The IDF operates in complex socio-cultural environments. As a conscript army, it has a very distinct function, i.e. to provide security to the State of Israel and its citizens. At the same time, the IDF represents a highly heterogeneous society and operates in a conflict-environment where ethnic and religious belonging play a crucial part in creating conflict lines. Yet, in order to fulfill its duties properly, it is crucial for the IDF to create a system of meaning that creates plausible boundaries and that locates its soldiers within a community and moral order that the soldiers find credible, acceptable and reassuring – perhaps even taken for granted - in this turmoil of cultural clashes.

The IDF has for decades enjoyed a position in its nation's civil society that equals that of few other militaries, and motivation to serve in the IDF has remained extraordinarily high for decades, with 78.6% of the population declaring its readiness to serve in the army (Arian et al. 2007: 90).⁴ As I also will explore thoroughly in Article II "Religion and Military Conscription: The Case of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)", the IDF is conscript army: Recruitment to the IDF rests on the resources of the nation's general population, and the IDF takes great pride in being a conscript "People's Army" – that is, an army of and for the people of Israel (IDF 23/09/08; IDF n.d.-c; Missri 20/11/08). This fundamental principle has been reiterated repeatedly throughout the years of Israel's existence. For example, at the "Senior Officer's Assembly" held on 22 September 2008 in an Israel Air Force (IAF) Base in Israel, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi stated that "Despite all of the obstacles, *the IDF will remain an army of the people*. A professional army is not an option for us because our skill will deteriorate significantly".⁵ In a similar line of argumentation, Major General Dan Harel stated in a talk on 17 November 2008 that "As representative of the IDF, we believe we are not only the army of Israel but the army of the Jewish nation in Israel and abroad".⁶ The IDF leadership leaves no doubt: The IDF is a People's Army - and at the same time an army of the Jews.

⁴ This is 17% higher than e.g. Poland, figuring second on the list, with 60%. In Norway, readiness to serve is below 45%.

⁵ IDF. 23/09/08. "An Army of the People." in *Today in the IDF*. Jerusalem: Israel Defence Forces Spokesperson's Unit.

⁶ Missri, Eduardo. 23/11/08. "The Army of the Jewish People in Israel and Abroad." *Ibid.*: Israel Defense Forces. Cf. the intensity of the numerous discussions about the question of whether the IDF's extraordinary status as the key symbol and institution of the Israeli-Jewish population is deteriorating. See for example: Cohen, Stuart. 1999. "From integration to segregation: The role of religion in the Israel Defense Force." *Armed Forces & Society* Spring: 387-406; —. 2008. *Israel and its Army: From cohesion to confusion*. New York: Routledge. Ben-Ari, Eyal, Daniel Maman, and Zeev Rosenhek. 2000. "Military Sociological Research in Israel." Pp. 91-115 in *Military Sociology: The Richness of a Discipline*, edited by Gerhard Kümmel and Andreas D. Prüfert. Baden-Baden: Nomos Publisher; Inbar, Efraim, and Shmuel Sandler. 1995. "The Changing Israeli Strategic Equation: Toward a Security Regime." *Review of International Studies* 21pp. 41-59; Kasher, Asa. 2003. "Public Trust in a Military Force." *Journal of Military Ethics* 2,1 20-45; Kimmerling, Baruch. 1993. "Patterns of Militarism in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology* 34:196-223; Lomsky-Feder, Edna, and Eyal Ben-Ari, eds. 1999. *Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

The Research Questions

The work on this dissertation has been guided by the two following research questions:

- What is the role of religion in the IDF's universe of meaning?
- What is the role of religion in the IDF 50th Battalion soldiers' standard of evaluation⁷ whereby their military duties appear meaningful?

I have chosen to explore both of these questions throughout my research project, as they refer to two intertwined but still separate dimensions of the role of religion in the IDF: As will be shown below, despite primarily resting the analysis on oral data gathered through interviews with soldiers, I analyze the interview data in relation to institutional documents. Thus, by exploring both of these questions, I accentuate that my analysis explores the interplay between the more static⁸ institutional framework and the dynamic process wherein recruits turn into the soldiers that the IDF needs. It thus feeds into an important thematic focus amongst scholars of religion, which discusses the maintenance of meaning systems in an historical context that is characterized by various degrees of individualization and fragmentation (see Barker 2008; Beckford 1989; Beckford 2003; Beyer 1994; Davie 2008; Hervieu-Léger 2008).

Although signaling the overall direction of the research project, these questions are not exhaustive. Thus, to be clear, these research questions imply that this scholarly study is:

- * Explorative – and primarily sociological - aimed at understanding the role of religion within a particular empirical context.
- * Emphasizing the functional aspects of religion.⁹

⁷ By “standard of evaluation” I simply refer to the fact that when a comparison or judgment is made, it is made on the basis of a normative framework that indicates what is considered as “good “ or “bad”. Thus by “standard of evaluation” I refer to these contextual criteria.

⁸ By “static” I do not mean to imply that it is fixed and unchangeable. Rather, the intention is to emphasize that institutional documents, practices, forms of organization or other institutional attributes are less dynamic – or at least experienced as such – than are for example the soldiers' judgments, opinions or social bonds.

⁹ Although any study of religion also implies some clarification of the demarcation of the object in the initial phases, it is nevertheless the role and consequences of religion that is the primary focus. Religion is approached and utilized as an analytical category, “created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of

- * Analyzing religion outside of the conventional confines of religion.¹⁰
- * Exploring different stages or dimensions of a process.
- * Drawing attention to how the institution acts on the recruits. Accordingly, inherent to these questions are also the identification of the following capabilities that will enable a further analysis:
 - What is the IDF's religious and cultural repertoire?
 - How is this meaning system conveyed to the soldiers?
 - How are soldiers transformed by the transmission of this meaning system?

In line with this, my articles can be read as successive chapters that each deal with one dimension of the IDF's universe of meaning. For example, whereas Article II explores how the IDF's conscription criteria in consequence contribute to drawing a boundary between "us" and "them" on the basis of cultural and religious criteria, Article III looks at the interplay between the role of Judaism in the IDF's cultural repertoire and the reorientation of the soldiers' standard of evaluation. Article IV discusses how religion contributes to shaping the soldiers' notion of territory.

As this study is founded within the overall framework of the scientific study of religion, it is an underlying endeavor to try to "stretch" the discipline beyond its more conventional domains of research and explore its potential for analytical contribution elsewhere: What knowledge can an analysis of military institutions within the scientific study of religion contribute to in our understanding of the military? Clearly, I am of the opinion that the study of religion should engage in a wide set of topics. Accordingly, there are two themes that pervade this dissertation, one empirical and one theoretical: Empirically, I hope to further our knowledge both about the IDF, one of the most influential military institutions of our time, as well as about Judaism, a complex religion that we know takes on multiple forms and functions, but that we yet have limited knowledge about in the context of the contemporary

comparison and generalization. Religion has no existence apart from the academy" Smith, Jonathan Z. 1988. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. I will return to this issue below.

¹⁰ Religion is undoubtedly institutionalized in the context of the IDF, and may thus resemble "traditional" religion. Yet, as this dissertation explores the role of religion within the context of the military, it focuses on religion within a context that is not necessarily associated with religion and religious life, as would be the case in the study of e.g. a synagogue, and its purpose is not primarily religious.

military when it comes to non-observant and non-practicing soldiers. Thematically, I hope to feed into the scholarly discussions within our discipline and contribute to develop it further.

Situating the Study of Religion in the Research Context

My present concern, then, is to apply the discipline of religion¹¹ in an explorative study of the 50th battalion in the IDF. The IDF is "the state of Israel's military force" (IDF 2001a) with a mission "To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel. To protect the inhabitants of Israel and to combat all forms of terrorism which threaten the daily life" (IDF 2001b). Its purpose thus lies within the domain of security. It is therefore perhaps not surprising to note that the IDF is an officially non-religious institution, seen in the complete absence of explicit references to Judaism in official documents published by the IDF as well as by Israeli government agencies regarding vital aspects, such as its doctrine, purpose or basis of recruitment. Moreover, the members of the 50th battalion – that form the basis for this study - are generally religiously non-practicing, some would even say secular. Still, my data reveals that the IDF is what may be considered a profoundly Jewish institution, with reference both to the ethnic, cultural as well as religious aspects of the word. Consequently, the secular construction of the IDF is contradicted in many components in the institution's practices, discourse and organization.

Applying the "discipline of religion" to the study of the military is an endeavor that demands further clarification. Besides, both the article format and the inter-disciplinary aspect of this dissertation have implications for the research project: Whereas the article format allows for the active scholarly engagement in different research environments, it is also a format with at times rigid criteria for design and lay-out, such as – depending on the journal – possibly reducing the space for methodological and theoretical thinking around internal "discipline-specific" predicaments. For example, in my case, the explorations in the empirical data have given little room for methodological reflection in the articles. In addition, the inter-disciplinary aspect – i.e. combining the discipline of religion and military studies – has enforced me to "explain" the scholarly basis of the study of religion to genres that are thus far not so familiar with our discipline's dilemmas and advantages. Thus, whereas the methodological

¹¹ I here paraphrase Russel McCutcheon with the label he applies to the scientific study of religion (McCutcheon, Russell T. 2003. *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, meaning, rhetoric*. London and New York: Routledge Publ.) Labeling the scholarly study of religion is contested. I will discuss this issue further below.

explanations in my articles may be self-evident to most scholars of religion, scholars of the military may feel estranged. Still, the scope and analytical foci undertaken in this dissertation are far from arbitrary. As a result, I will in the following seek to situate myself and my project within the field upon which this research project is based, and thus expand on some of the issues that have had to be omitted in the articles.

Studying Religion Scientifically

Scholars of religion are certainly not alien to contemplations concerning their research object, the scope of their discipline or the methodological approaches they apply. As something of a hybrid discipline, “its nomenclature, definition, methodology, and even subject matter have provided causes for contention” (Joy 2000: 69). Reading the literature on scholarly studies of religion, then, the degree and persistence of self-reflexivity and self-criticism is striking. As the professor of Judaic studies Michael Satlow writes (do we hear him sigh?): “Indeed, we continue to hotly debate the meaning of our subject matter – or is it a discipline? – ‘religion’” (Satlow 2005: 287). Accordingly, the scholarly study of religion has evolved into becoming a highly diverse field, caught in what appears to be a chronic state of imprecision: On the one hand, it is multi-disciplinary leading to a steady fragmentation into more specialized - and at times even competing - splinter-disciplines.¹² On the other hand, the study of religion is faced with ontological questions of “ownership” of its core object – who is best equipped to understand religion; the believer or the scientist? And what if these overlap?

Should the scientific study of religion rightfully maintain its position as an independent discipline – and I think it should – it is difficult to see how normative ambitions or ontological positions concerning the validity of “religion” *sui generis* can be included into the discipline’s scope. The domain of the scholarly study of contemporary religion can

¹² To this, one may add that a consequence of separation into splinter-disciplines is the potential lack over overall coherence in the scholarly debates and research focus, a consequence accentuated by the fact that “What is ‘new’ and relevant is context-specific, with academic debate having become increasingly multifaceted so that it is nearly impossible to determine with any finality what is ‘new’ on a world-wide scale”, see: Antes, Peter. 2004. "A Survey of New Approaches to the Study of Religion in Europe." Pp. 43-62 in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion: Volume 1 – Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches* edited by Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz and Randi R. Warne. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.

perhaps be viewed as covering a middle-position between theology on the one side¹³, and anthropology on the other. At the same time, it is clearly separated from the two above all due to its fundamentally non-normative project: The study of religion as I see it can neither engage in theologians' discussions of truth-claims (see Smart 2000 [1995])¹⁴, nor modern anthropologists post-colonial emancipatory project and close affiliation with critical theory. Yet, while we still employ the methods of anthropologists – and, I agree, we have a lot to learn from them (Smart 2000 [1995]: 25) – I consider the separation between theology and the scholarly study of religion as crucial.¹⁵

The discipline of religion has undergone a noteworthy development during the past two decades or so, mirroring the developments in the international climate: Advancing tides or religious nationalism, terrorism and fundamentalism have boosted the interest in the scientific study of religion – but also its research focus. Witnessing a declining hegemony of phenomenology and theology in the study of religion and the rise of critical methodologies in the wake of post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism, the discipline is now “far more attuned to the production of knowledge and the authorization of power” (Pennington 2005: 1). Perhaps a result of my time, then, I am also intrigued by a scientific study of religion that approaches it as a dimension that helps us to understand social

¹³ Perhaps it is unavoidable that theology continues to be Religious Studies' “fiercest enemy”. But, it is tempting to quote the professor of Judaic Studies Peter Ochs' comment on the separation between the two in his paper “Comparative Religious Traditions” (2006): “By now, you may feel, as I do that discussions about “religious studies vs. theology” are beginning to look like those interminable academic debates that stimulated the classical pragmatists to be pragmatists. [...] The error here is lived and not merely formal: it is not to have thought errantly but to have gotten confused about the relation of thinking to everyday practice. And the consequence of the error is not some illusion about ideas but actual suffering: not that it hurts to debate on and on (to the contrary, academics may enjoy this too much) but that the time, effort, and intentionality that fine minds put into such debates deflect their and a broader public's attention away from something really amiss in the underlying, interpersonal world” Ochs, Peter. 2006. “Comparative Religious Traditions.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74,1 March: 125–128.

¹⁴ As Russell McCutcheon boldly – but nevertheless correctly - claims: “*theologians are fair game as data*” McCutcheon, Russell T. 2003. *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, meaning, rhetoric*. London and New York: Routledge Publ.. It should be noted that my reluctance in adhering fully to Russell McCutcheon's argumentation is due to his absolutism: McCutcheon appears to take an ontological position to the very category of religion and its contents, not merely to the methodological approaches of the scholarly study of religion. Although I do not necessarily disagree with him, I question the relevance of his ontological contemplation as I consider them to fall outside of the discipline's domain.

¹⁵ Richard K. Fenn noteworthy points out that the increasing diffusion of the boundaries between sociology and anthropology also blurs the differentiation between the scientific study of religion and these disciplines, including the sociology of religion, which may potentially jeopardize our discipline's particular character. See: Fenn, Richard K. 2003. “Editorial Commentary: Looking for Boundaries of the Field: Social Anthropology, Theology, and Ethnography.” Pp. 363-370 in *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Richard K. Fenn. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

experiences and institutional practices, as well as explaining a wide range of social attitudes and behavior (Dillon 2003: 8).¹⁶

James A. Beckford advocates an appealing approach to the study of religion, which implies “examining critically the social processes whereby certain things are counted as religious”. He continues: “The approach that I am taking to the social scientific study of religion is, broadly speaking, a ‘social constructionist’ one” (Beckford 2003: 3). This is not to be confused with an ontological philosophical position, but merely implies drawing attention to the creation of meanings that occur when human beings interact with each other, leaving aside the possible ‘reality’ of the research object.

Dismissing to undertake a *sui generis* position towards religion, it follows that I consider it essential to our discipline that we do not adopt a notion of religion as a first-order category, which is to be seen as a universal response to something numinous and therein requires its own unique disciplinary tools and approaches. Rather, as a second-order category “religion” implies a certain analytical focus for research on human consciousness and society (Smart 2000 [1995]: 2). Accordingly, the approach differs markedly from that of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, which despite its many important contributions to our discipline nevertheless implies a problematic ontological stance: Their line of argumentation posits a phenomenology of mental categories that are supposedly constitutive of all human meaning, and rests on assumptions about the ‘anthropological necessity’ for human beings to fend off chaos and anomie by socially constructing sacred frames of meaning (Berger 1967; Berger and Luckman 1966).¹⁷

In a by now well-known statement, Jonathan Z. Smith asserted that “there is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study” (Smith 1988: ix)¹⁸. To this,

¹⁶ For an interesting discussion on such themes, see: Manza, Jeff, and Nathan Wright. 2003. "Religion and Political Behaviour." Pp. 297-314 in *Handbook in the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michele Dillon. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷ For similar reasons I dismiss Ninian Smart’s analytical stance below: I am reluctant to adhere to Smart’s claim that the modern study of religion necessarily is phenomenological: Insisting on a phenomenological approach may imply that the study of religion is the study of explicitly religious phenomena, which leads us into problems of definition of “religion” and appears limiting to what the scholarly study of religion should engage in. See: Smart, Ninian. 1991. *The Religious Experience*. New York: Macmillan; —. 2000 [1995]. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

¹⁸ Michael Satlow noteworthy criticizes Jonathan Z. Smith for not answering his question. Satlow writes that “In his definitional essay, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” even Jonathan Z. Smith problematizes the term “religions” by using scare quotes but dodges the definitional quandaries that the term presents” Satlow, Michael

Gustavo Benavides notes that Smith's dismissal of religion by now is so frequently cited that "one would be tempted to say that Smith's dictum fulfills now the role once fulfilled by Rudolf Otto's notorious advice to those who are not able to remember, or who never have had, an episode of religious excitation: namely not to continue reading his book on the holy" (Benavides 2003: 895). Yet, whereas Smith's statement is appealing, I nevertheless find Benavides objection noteworthy: If there are no data for religion, one may also inevitably question whether there then also is no data for a second-order reflection of the concept. Thus, we must ask ourselves: What it is that we study when we study "religion"? Telling of the dilemma concerning what the scholarly study of religion is "actually" focusing on, is the strife concerning what label to put on it. "Comparative Religion" has gradually been left aside due to its phenomenological and at times even essentialist connotations; it "is rather awkward and is in any case dated" (Smart 2000 [1995]: 17), the study of religion figures today under both "Religious Studies" and "History of Religion". None of them are in my view satisfactory. As Lincoln stated in his Theses on Method, the 'of' in the History of Religion implies that history is the method (Lincoln 1999b), which is of course not always the case. It is a multi-disciplinary field and I am inclined to side with Russell McCutcheon who applies the more sober "Discipline of Religion", stressing the thematic core field of the discipline (McCutcheon 2003). We study religion, and there is nothing religious about it.

Several scholars have questioned the utility of the very concept of religion. Tim Fitzgerald argues that it even distorts socio-cultural analysis as the comparative study of religion rather is a form of liberal ecumenical theology than an academic enterprise:

[R]eligion is not a genuine analytical category since it does no useful work in helping us to understand the world we live in. While it appears to have something important and meaningful to say about societies, institutions and personal experiences, when one looks at its actual use in a wide spectrum of texts it becomes clear that so much is included in the term that it becomes indistinguishable from 'culture'. It fails to specify any distinctive kind of experience or social institution.¹⁹

Fitzgerald is correct in pointing out the in-built ambiguity – or perhaps even lack of utility - of the category "religion". Indeed, *all* categories of knowledge in the humanities and social

L. 2006b. "Defining Judaism: Accounting for "Religions" in the Study of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74,4 837-860

¹⁹ The paragraph is taken from an essay in which Thomas Fitzgerald introduces his book *The politics of Religion* at the Oxford University Press website www.oup.co.uk/academic/humanities/religion/viewpoint/fitzgerald/#TOP

sciences are cultural constructs, thus vulnerable to the varieties inherent to wide diversity of contexts that we explore. As Michael Satlow correctly states: “Scholarly studies can only be as precise as the language they use; and not a few recent and otherwise outstanding scholarly studies have been caught in terminological muddles” (Satlow 2005: 287). Our concepts are abstractions inherent to – and created by – our language, and can hardly be seen as representing something in and of themselves. Although the study of religion constructs and employs *etic* categories, therein containing a comparative dimension, Fitzgerald’s criticism appears to be targeted against applying “religion” as an analytical category in itself, not as a generic term: Few scholars of religion would claim that religion is a meaningful category to be employed in itself: Whereas it does point to a thematic field – thereby also indicating that the modern scholarly study of religion embraces a particular domain of inquiry – it necessitates further clarification in order to be operationalized.

Accordingly, I find the approach undertaken by Bruce Lincoln as particularly clarifying, functional and constructive. Let me briefly recapitulate his approach to religion:²⁰ In his book *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after 9/11* (2003), Bruce Lincoln changes his empirical focus unto the modern – even contemporary – era and demonstrated the “common inner working of religious discourses ostensibly at odds with each other” (Pennington 2005: 4-5). In this study, he proposes a four-part definition of religion that can be conducted in the “spirit” of his continuous call for scholarly rigor: According to Lincoln, a

²⁰ This way of categorization may bear resemblance on the six-fold model presented by Ninian Smart. According to Smart, then, “religion” is a collective category which includes the Doctrinal or philosophical dimension; the Mythic or narrative dimension; the Ethical or legal dimension; the Ritual or practical dimension; the Experiential or emotional dimension; and, the Social or institutional dimension Smart, Ninian. 1991. *The Religious Experience*. New York: Macmillan; —. 2000 [1995]. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. In addition, Smart argues, the modern study of religion – which he labels “worldview studies” – sees religion or worldview as an aspect of human existence; is multidisciplinary; tends to overlap with other aspectual studies; is necessarily crosscultural; is non-finite; makes use of phenomenology, which he prefers to call “informed empathy” —. 2000 [1995]. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Smart’s two six-fold models of religion and the study of religion provided a significant contribution in the tidying up of what scholars of religion should deal with: He highlights the complexities of the phenomenon of religion, and offers simultaneously an approach that emphasises the significance of approaching religion as any other dimension of human existence; as an object of critical inquiry. And, although insightful and clarifying, Smart’s model of religion contains elements that analytically may be difficult to separate and thus operationalise: For example, the social dimension of religion may analytically overlap with the “Ritual or practical dimension” or the “Experiential or emotional dimension”; the “Ethical or legal dimension” may in turn overlap analytically with the “Mythic or narrative dimension”.

religion is a domain that generally can be analyzed through a focus on the following thematic subfields (the following points are quoted from Lincoln 2003: 5-7):

1. A *discourse* whose concerns transcend that human, temporal, and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status [...]
2. A *set of practices* whose goal is to produce a proper world and/or proper human subjects, as defined by a religious discourse to which these practices are connected [...]
3. A *community* whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices [...]
4. An *institution* that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendent value.

Bruce Lincoln's "working definition" of religion has a series of advantages²¹: Firstly, by providing a delimitation of these four domains, Lincoln is able to avoid the hypostatized categories that are so often termed "manifestations" (such as myth and ritual); secondly, by including the community, he does not only situate religion, but also restores the human and social element. Thirdly, by separating different dimensions, Lincoln's definition sharpens the analysis – or, to paraphrase Beckford, his definition has the result that "Religion is good to think with" (Beckford 2003: 104). And, fourthly, as he also includes further parameters of maximalist versus minimalist models of religion, he "amplifies his critique of the universalization of the belief-centered model of religion that he finds to have been ironically normalized" (Geller 2005: 22), in the wake of Asad's recognition of the historically specific emergence of conventionally definable religion. The study of religion should thus not be the object of normative definition, which would rather be the consequence of historical struggles (Asad 1993; Asad 2003; Lincoln 1999a; Lincoln 1999b; Lincoln 2003; Lincoln 2007).

It should be noted that in Lincoln's delimitation of these core aspects of a complex term, discourse holds primacy as practices "render religious discourses operational" (Geller 2005: 20; Lincoln 2003: 6). He thus highlights its discursive capacity to cement social identities and authorize temporal power through appeals to constructed trans-human realities. Interestingly, though, his notion of discourse – both in this "definition" and in previous work, is as much structured by what is left unsaid, as it is by what is said (Geller 2005; Lincoln

²¹ I here paraphrase Jay Geller's timely observation made in the following article: Geller, Jay. 2005. "En Jeu: Lincoln Logs or Pick-Up Sticks." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17,1 18-26.

1989; Lincoln 1999a). And, besides suggesting ways of understanding the field as such, Lincoln underscores that the study of religion should be considered as being an enterprise clearly separated from the spheres of believers. As he writes in such an elegant manner: “Reverence is a religious, and not a scholarly virtue. When good manners and good conscience cannot be reconciled, the demands of the latter ought to prevail“ (Lincoln 1999b).²²

Seen from the above, the study of religion is thus a thematic field. As will be shown below, I have applied Lincoln’s four-fold model throughout the work on this dissertation in multiple ways.

Applying the Study of Religion: A Summary

There are several particular strengths inherent to the discipline of religion. It is “an exercise in (i) determining the limits of what social groups understand as credible and (ii) identifying the mechanisms used to police and contest those limits” (McCutcheon 2000: 352). In other words, the scholarly study of religion is an academic discipline studying human behavior caused by notions of meaning, legitimacy and authenticity (Lincoln 1999a; Lincoln 1999b). In this “Economy of Signification” – to paraphrase Jonathan Z. Smith - it “is an economy efficiently managed by cognitive and social classifications that delineate this from that, important from unimportant, saved from damned, good from evil, and, finally, us from them” (McCutcheon 2000: 352; Smith 1995; Smith 1998).

Furthermore, constructing and employing *etic* categories, the scholarly study of religion is inherently taxonomic (see e.g. Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]; Lincoln 1999b; McCutcheon 1997; Satlow 2005; Smith 1995; Smith 2004; Wiebe 1998; Wuthnow 1987). The analytical approach that provides the scientific study of religion with a tool box that

²² In a similar line of argumentation, Donald Wiebe in his *The Politics of Religious Studies* enters the core of this debate, namely whether to approach religion as a science, free from the dissemination of beliefs and evangelizing, or to study it as a form of faith and therefore draw lines between believers and nonbelievers. Wiebe argues convincingly for the former, claiming that if taught in a university religion must be treated as a science, with all the objectivity and research that are brought to other subjects. He further maintains that the study of theology should take place in seminaries, which are the proper places for the pursuit of religion as a creed. Wiebe, Donald. 1998. *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy* New York: St. Martin's Press.

allows for interpretation and taxonomization of our data, is a particular strength.²³ As I explore the role of religion in the interrelationships between the individual and the socio-cultural context, I adopt what may be viewed as a typical starting point of the sociology of religion in the Durkheimian tradition.²⁴ But, more importantly: I neither explore the informants' view of a god, nor their conformity with normative Jewish orthodox theology as conveyed by the Military Rabbinate. As we will see below, the interviewees' line of argumentation reflects a "godless religion", a version of Judaism that contains a series of elements and dimensions that undoubtedly can figure under the canopy of "Judaism" but that nevertheless lacks a notion of – or belief in – a transcendent being, it is thus a notion of religion that is in line with the argument posited by Danièle Hervieu-Léger about "religion as a chain of memory" (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]). To illustrate: While the interviewees do not *believe* in a god, it is interesting to detect that what they accentuate as being significant is rooted in a cosmology that is based on a mythical narrative and that organizes the environs on the basis of symbolic criteria, such as their territorial surroundings (see Article IV). Thus, despite not accepting the ontological status of god(s), the cultural narratives that has evolved from Jewish groups' notion of a god, is in consequence a historic supposition for the soldiers' Judaism.

The discipline of religion deals with a phenomenon that contains multiple *socio-cultural* dimensions, and refers to a series of highly complex areas in human culture.²⁵ The

²³ In addition to the taxonomic approach referred to above in line with Bruce Lincoln, I find studies by scholars such as Eileen Barker, Meredith McGuire and Margit Warburg to provide especially instructive and inspirational works: Barker, Eileen. 2008. "The Church Without and the God Within: Religiosity and/or Spirituality?" Pp. 187 in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford*, edited by Eileen Barker. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd; McGuire, Meredith. 2008. "Toward a Sociology of Spirituality: Individual Religion in Social/Historical Context." Pp. 215-232 in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life*, edited by Eileen Barker. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited; Warburg, Margit. 2008. "Theorising Conversion: Can we use Conversion Accounts as Sources to Actual Past Processes?" Pp. 131-145 in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James Beckford*, edited by Eileen Barker. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

²⁴ Some argue that Durkheim is experiencing a revival, with an increased emphasis on analysis of the social aspects of religion. A noteworthy study is offered by Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*. Here, he offers a tripartite typology of modern Durkheimian analytical forms; a *paleo-Durkheimian* social form is one in which religion is deeply embedded in the entire social structure so that it is not a differentiated sphere, or only very partially one; a *neo-Durkheimian* social form is one in which religion is partially embedded from the traditional social structure of kinship and village life but comes to serve as an expression of a larger social identity; and a *post-Durkheimian* social form which is as a kind of expressive individualism in which there is no necessary embedding of our link to the sacred in any particular broader framework, whether 'church' or state Bellah, Robert N. 23/11/2007. "After Durkheim." *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere*; Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

²⁵ As Russell McCutcheon so clearly states: "I am therefore part of a scholarly tradition that sees theology and its practitioners as nothing more or less than informants; they are but one more group whose reports and actions are in need of study" McCutcheon, Russell T. 2000. "Like Small Bumps on the Neck...": The Problem of Evil as Something Ordinary." *Journal of Mundane Behavior* 1,3 339-359.

contemporary study of religion and all its facets rests on the fundamental position that religion can and should be approached as any other social and cultural phenomenon (see e.g. Fitzgerald 2000; Lincoln 1999b; McCutcheon 2000; McCutcheon 2003; Wiebe 1998; Wuthnow et al. 1984). Sociology of religion is thus no exception: The project of the sociology of religion is to treat religion “in the way that sociology treats any social phenomena” (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]: 18), thus making them the object of critical inquiry. A sociological functional analysis implies a focus on the human, and more specifically the social, context into which phenomena occur, the expectations placed upon it by its users, how they are socially constructed, and the purpose they serve.

Still, to be clear: These are general considerations. The specific methodological approaches undertaken in each article will be clarified in the articles and thus contextualized according to the theoretical question posed and the particular empirical data explored.

From ‘Religion’ to Judaism and Zionism

The extent to which we struggle with delineating our unifying, generic term “religion”, we are faced with similar challenges when moving down the ladder to the individual traditions that we explore in our research enterprises. Religion per se cannot be studied, but rather a variety of religions, each a subject in its own right as a self-contained, complex system. In that regard, it may be worthwhile reminding ourselves about the by now well-known and apt objection to the applicability of the category of “religion” offered by Talal Asad in his book *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and reason of power in Christianity and Islam* (1993). Showing the problems inherent to the utility of the category “religion” when applied to different empirical data, Asad claims that “religion” is a construction of European modernity that in consequence authorises a particular western form of history making (Asad 1993: 123). In view of that, we can see how Asad concludes that “The attempt to understand Muslim traditions by insisting that in them religion and politics (two essences modern society tries to keep conceptually and practically apart) are coupled must, in my view, lead to failure” (Asad 1993: 28).

The religions of the Middle East – if one may make such a claim – emphasize the practical dimensions of religion, therein stressing not only attitudes but actions. Neither Islam nor Judaism can be limited to the private sphere, but relates to the whole social order

(Neusner et al. 2000: vii). As seen throughout my articles, the interviewees are concerned with how to *act* Jewish: Besides being crucial in the formation of their identity, the military's Code of Ethics is interpreted as providing them with a framework for a particular Jewish way of behavior in the field (this is the topic of Article III). In view of that, we may begin to see the contours of how Judaism may be "at work" also in the IDF. But how do we delimit Judaism? In his definitional article in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Louis Jacobs locates the essence of Judaism in its beliefs and norms (Jacobs 1971). Still, essentialist or *sui generis* definitions of individual traditions never succeed. As Michael Fishbane opportunely stresses, as a consequence of the plurality of Judaism, there are inevitable and critical problems in trying to group thousands of religious communities under the collective rubric (Fishbane 1985). At the same time, dismissing the category of Judaism all together would be misleading, as it is still beyond doubt that Jews worldwide "were and are one people sharing deep bonds" (Fishbane 1985: 11-12). Visualising how Judaism is pluralistic and at the same time coherent, representing both continuity and change, Fishbane writes:

Judaism is thus the religious expression of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present day as it has tried to form and live a life of holiness before God. It is, on the one hand, an expression of recognizable uniformity, practiced commonly and communally by Jews across the centuries in different lands. But, on the other, it is also a religious expression with great historical variations. Never static, Judaism has changed and challenged its adherents for over two millennia, even as it has been changed and challenged by them in different circumstances and times (Fishbane 1987: 12)

Still, delimiting Judaism poses a particular challenge as it plays on the strings of yet other problematic and – in Anthony P. Cohen's words – "somewhat abused label" (Cohen 2003 [1989]: 104), namely that of "ethnicity". In the case of Judaism, religion bounces between being about living a life in accordance with the *mitzvot* and representing an ethnic sense of belonging. As Jacob Neusner states: "The distinction between the Judaists, people who live by and believe in a Judaism, and the Jewish people, who are all those born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism, is fundamental" (Neusner 1993: xiii). To complicate things further, the divide between Judaism and Zionism is sometimes blurry.

A weighty factor in both secular and religious Jewish identities and self-perceptions, relates to notions of the Land of Israel. The connotations of 'Israel' vary substantially

amongst the myriad of different religious and secular Jewish groups, and the Land of Israel – both as a symbolic and legal unit – lacks borders and clear demarcation lines. Yet one can claim without much exaggeration that the majority of Jewish collective identities contain some sort of notion of ‘Israel’, wherein this particular place has a particular significance, be it as an idea or a topographically fixed place (see article IV).²⁶ In line with that, Baruch Kimmerling correctly pointed out that the state building project in Israel found resonance amongst Jewish populations due to “The basic need for a territory and the cultural-religious attachment to the Land of Israel” (Kellerman 1993: 38), the Zionist movement being no exception. With the invention of the Zionist movement in Europe many Jews began to see “Judaism” as a national phenomenon, although with great variations: Revisionist Zionism – represented on the right-wing of the political spectrum – considers territory as an absolute value, with the need for possession and attainment. Socialist Zionism, on the other hand, also perceives territory as major value, but considers its geographical extent to be conditional (Kellerman 1993: 38-39). Still, common to nearly all groups is the accentuation of a fundamental cultural connection of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, nurtured in particular throughout the past two centuries through the perception of the territory as representing a national homeland.

“Judaism” is thus the complex of distinctive customs and practices of the Jewish nation. As a consequence today, we can witness how Jewishness, “Israeliness” and Judaism are inextricably linked (Ravitzky 1990).²⁷ And with it, we inevitably return to our previous argument, namely the dual references of Judaism, pointing at both a religious and an ethnic

²⁶ To illustrate some of the gaps in the notion of territory: Both Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups interpret the scriptures as asserting that the Land of Israel was given to the Israelites by God.²⁶ However, the national-religious groups – generally situated within Orthodox Judaism and commonly known as “the settler movement” - juxtapose the borders of Israeli state land as signifying the borders of the divine kingdom on earth – which need to be expanded Aran, Gideon. 1987. "From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Origins and Culture of Gush Emonim, a messianic movement in modern Israel (Hebrew)." in *Sociology and Anthropology*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem; —. 1990. "Redemption as a Catastrophe: The Gospel of Gush Emonim." Pp. 157-176 in *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, edited by Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman. Albany: State University of New York Press; —. 1991. "Jewish Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim) " Pp. 265-342 in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Ravitzky, Aviezer. 1996 (1993). *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Sprinzak, Ehud. 1981. "Gush Emunim: The Tip of the Iceberg." *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 21 Fall: 29-47; —. 1991. *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*. New York: Oxford University Press; —. 1999. *Brother against Brother: Violence and extremism in Israeli politics from Altalena to the Rabin assassination*. New York: The Free Press.

²⁷ However, it is worthwhile noticing that contrary to what is commonly assumed, the state of Israel is not officially a Jewish religious state, despite practicing a “state-version” of Orthodox Judaism. See: Shetreet, Shimon. 20/08/2001. "Freedom of Religion in Israel." in *World Conference Against Racism* Durban.

“dimension”. As Green states, “Although all who practice and affirm Judaism are Jews, not all Jews affirm(ed) and practice(d) Judaism. This habit of mind subsumes Judaism under Jewish social identity and mistakes ethnicity for religion” (Green 1989: 9-10).²⁸

This “brings into focus the very blurriness of the relationship between the first-order definitions of religion and their use as second-order, academic, and value-neutral categories of organization”, to use Michael Satlow’s words (Satlow 2006b: 843). The renowned Judaic scholar Jacob Neusner is among the few scholars who have attempted to develop a second-order definition of Judaism, wherein he appears to apply an approach to religion - that perhaps echoes the heritage of Geertz – stresses that *a* Judaism is a “religious system” that can best be described as being composed of three elements: A world view, a way of life, and a social group that in the here and now embodies the whole.²⁹ He writes: “The world view explains the life of the group, ordinarily referring to God’s creation, the revelation of the Torah, the goal and end of the group’s life in the end of time. The way of life defines what is special about the life of the group. The social group, in a single place and time, then forms the living witness and testimony to the system as a whole and finds in the system ample explanation for its very being. That is *a Judaism*” (Neusner 1993: 8, emphasis original). Noteworthy, implicit to Neusner’s delineation is also how a Judaism also presupposes a canon (the Torah) and a creator (YHWH).

Neusner’s delineation has an empirical focus. Michael Satlow thus points out that this delineation of Judaism “brings with it the basic elements of its first-order formulation—either the notion of an objective essence and a normative set of belief and practices, or, following Kaplan’s influential definition³⁰, a messier cultural complex that gives no place to religion, however defined, *per se*” (Satlow 2006b: 843-844). Instead, Satlow develops a more generalisable model of religion that focuses on three domains or “maps”, wherein “map needs to be charted with sensitivity to how a community or individual creates a Judaism from the various resources available to it, him, or her” (Satlow 2006b: 855):

²⁸ See e.g. Dan Cohn-Sherbok’s telling intellectual pondering concerning the question “who are the Jews” Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 2003. *Judaism: History, Belief, and Practice*. London: Routledge.

²⁹ Embodiment theory – or, the body as symbol – is an analytical focus within the anthropology of religion that is enjoying increasing attention. See ch. 2 in: Bowie, Fiona. 2006 [2000]. *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*. Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.

³⁰ Satlow here refers to the “reconstructionist” Mordechai Kaplan’s seminal definition of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization: Kaplan, Mordechai M. 1934. “Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American Jewish Life.” New York: Macmillan.

Identity (in what ways does the community identify itself as “Jewish” and why); a discourse transmitted by texts (which texts does the community accept as authoritative, what level of authority does it ascribe to them, and how does it read them); and practice (what does the community do and how does the community ritualize and understand what it is doing) (Satlow 2006b: 855).

If we read Satlow’s model of Judaism with Lincoln’s model of religion in mind, we see how these overlap. One may therefore object that Satlow’s choice of omitting the organizational or institutional aspect is a shortcoming. Judaism is upheld by a specific institutional framework. Undoubtedly, the Rabbinate is an important aspect of Judaism. The generalisability of Satlow’s model comes at the cost of the contents: If we read Satlow’s “definition” of Judaism separate from Neusner’s more essence-based delineation, it loses its meaning – there is little in Satlow’s definition that accentuates what is “unique” about Judaism, i.e. what separates it from Islam or other traditions. Thus, although Satlow’s aspiration is to move down the ladder from theorizing about religion in general to Judaism in specific, Satlow nevertheless appears to do the opposite, thus presenting a more general definition of the generic category “religion” rather than delineating Judaism. Accordingly, Satlow’s delineation loses its utility. For, “how shall we know when we have a Judaism?” (Neusner 1993: 7).

I would suggest that we apply the classical definitional strategies within the scientific study of religion – i.e. separating between substantive versus functional definitions – in a tentative delineation of Judaism. Accordingly, to start with the former and read Satlow and Neusner combined, though without making absolutist assumptions of its generalisability and instead undertaking a non-denominational approach, the following image of Judaism comes to the fore:

- It is a generic term that unites numerous sub-traditions
- It refers to a religious tradition that includes a series of overall themes, all of which are subject to interpretation amongst different Jewish groups, some of which are:
 - The canon of the “Dual Torah”, marked “by its doctrine of the dual media by which the torah was formulated and transmitted, in writing on the one side, in formulation and transmission by memory, hence, orally, on the other” (Neusner 2003 [2000]: 17).

- The covenanted relationship between the Jewish People, a god and the Land of Israel
- The particular affinity with Israel, both as a symbolic and legal entity (see Satlow 2006a: ch.1).
- A narrative of exile and return, uniting the Land of Israel with the Jewish People.
- These themes are transmitted and maintained formally through teachings at synagogues and yeshivas, informally through the cultural matrix of Jewish societies.

This list is by no means exhaustive, nor intended to be so. Rather, it indicates some core themes in the Jewish tradition I have extracted on the basis of scholarly studies of Judaism in general in combination of scholarly studies of Israeli Judaism, yet with removing its normative positions (Avishai 1985; Deshen et al. 1995; Kimmerling 1983a; Liebman 1995; Neusner 1989; Neusner 1993; Neusner 2003 [2000]; Neusner et al. 2000; Ravitzky 2002). Moreover, these themes that repeatedly occur in the interview data.

Added to this, there is also a significant functional dimension inherent to Judaism, which reflects the above-mentioned theoretical stance of Hervieu-Léger, wherein it is posited that religion is “the expression of believing, the memory of continuity, and the legitimizing reference to an authorized version of such memory, that is to say to a tradition” (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]: 97). As I will show in for example Article IV, through a notion of Judaism as a cultural, uniting meaning system, the secular soldiers of the Gdud 50 convey a diversified notion of “we” that includes both secular and religious Jews, but that at the same time draws a determining boundary between themselves and an exaggerated and stereotyped image of the Arabs. Judaism as a “chain of memory” thus serves crucial functions for collective cohesion. In short, Judaism offers a system that “seeks the principles of order and proper classification, identifying as problems the occasions for disorder and improper disposition of persons or resources” (Neusner 1993: 39).³¹ It is hence a weighty and effective community boundary marker, allowing for wide variations internally, based on a limited set of “variables”.

³¹ It is virtually impossible here not to indicate the affinity with the theory presented by Mary Douglas about cultural classification systems: Douglas, Mary. 1996 [1966]. *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul ltd.

What this Study is *not* About

The IDF is a state body and not a “traditional” religious institution, such as for example a Church or a Yeshiva. Accordingly, when analysing the role of religion outside of its traditional confines, one may expect this dissertation to imply for example a “Civil Religion” analysis. The “Civil Religion”-thesis was introduced in the contemporary study of religion by Robert Bellah in 1967 (Bellah 1967), and has been popularised repeatedly since. Due to the character of the State of Israel, the thesis has been extensively treated also by Israeli scholars of Jewish Studies, one example being Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehia (Liebman and Don-Yehia 1983). According to Liebman and Don-Yehia, Civil Religion “embodies characteristics of traditional religion – it projects a meaning system, expressed with symbols – but at its core stands a corporate entity” (Liebman and Don-Yehia 1983: 4). Although an intriguing analytical tool, the Civil Religion thesis’ emphasis on the *corporate* entity as the primary agent in the meaning system invalidates it in our context.

Furthermore, the Civil Religion thesis may resemble other approaches, such as Thomas Luckman’s “Invisible Religion”-thesis (Luckman 1967) or Edward I. Bailey’s “Implicit Religion”-thesis (Bailey 1997). To start with the latter: Bailey is a reverend with a distinct ontological position. Accordingly, his theory of “Implicit Religion” is the collection of unconditional knowledge about the sacred that has been put together by individuals or collectivities as they interact in different settings and determine these experiences to be more meaningful than others. Yet, if religion is implicit – does that imply that religion *is*, that it is merely a question of its form, not its factuality? This position is incompatible with scholarship.

Luckman on his side outlines a phenomenological approach to the study of religion with an emphasis on its sociological characteristics seeing the institutionalization of religion as caused by the forces of socialization. In line with the works resulting from his cooperation with Peter Berger, Luckmann focuses his analysis on meaning, labeling “religion” any meaning system which in his judgment is a universal and functional or specific and substantive meaning system for a society or an individual. In consequence, “the invisible religion of modern man may be familism, careerism, sex, mobility, etc.” (Weigert 1974b: 181). However, it may be argued that this produces a particular bottleneck when it comes to assessing issues of agency, as it leaves little or no room for meaning systems to be chosen. Besides, Luckmann’s over-emphasis on meaning and his wide delineation of “religion” leads

the analysis into conceptual confusion, which parallels our previous discussions. Undoubtedly, one may identify a specific form of e.g. civil religion in the IDF, and the analysis accentuates the provision of meaning in the formation of soldiers. Still, there is little doubt that mere traditional and explicit forms of religion are at work in the IDF. It is the identification of the role and presence of traditional religion that is at stake in this context. Accordingly, this dissertation is not about civil religion.

Lastly, let me briefly comment upon why this study is also not about nationalism. Anthony D. Smith defines nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintain autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Smith 1991: 73). It is undeniable that the “universe of meaning” of the IDF as portrayed throughout the articles below, may resemble nationalism in many ways. Yet, there are two reasons for why I have not framed this study within the canopy of nationalism: Firstly, I intend to keep a distinct analytical focus on religion. In my opinion, by including the aspect of nationalism, too many studies lose track of the religious aspect in the analysis of religious meaning systems in Israel (for example Aran 1987; Aran 1991; Ben-Yehuda 1995; Feige 2001; Friedman 1992; Sprinzak 1991; Sprinzak 1999). Secondly, my data reveals that by including religion into the analysis, a “scientific study of religion approach” can further our understanding of the constitution and maintenance of the IDF’s universe of meaning – as well as its outlook, i.e. how “the other” is portrayed. Hence, I retain a firm focus on religion in this analysis, not on nationalism.

The Military and the Discipline of Religion

Is the discipline of religion, then, applicable to the study of the military? Needless to say, the different religions' potential for motivating to warfare has become manifested throughout history a number of times; the expansion of Islam in the 7th century, the Crusades in the 11th-13th centuries or the French Wars of Religion in the late 16th century provide us with only three out of many examples of explicitly religious armies – that is, soldiers fighting under the canopy of one specific confession. In more recent times – and not least since 9/11 – the Islamic concept of *jihad* has been given massive (and at times unwarranted) attention for offering a potentially explosive blend of religion and war motives. But, how is the discipline of religion applicable to military institutions that do not have a religious purpose or that are not explicitly religious? To answer this question and therein identify the discipline of religion's potential for the study of the military, it is useful to get an understanding of the existing literature on the military. Although the discipline of religion has no significant tradition for studying the military, it does not imply that the military is an understudied institution. Far from it: Scholars have for decades engaged in the study of the many intriguing aspects of the military and its activities, and military sociology has by now become a well-established. In a dissertation like this, where a scholarly discipline is applied to the study of an object or sphere that it does not conventionally engage in, there is therefore an alternative, huge bulk of literature 'looming' in the background. In the following part, I will look at the potential for the discipline of religion in the study of the military by exploring previous literature on some core issues in military studies and thereafter argue towards a model for the study of religion in the military, based on the above-mentioned four-fold model developed by Bruce Lincoln.

Why do Soldiers Fight? An Old Question but still No Answer³²

Academia has long-since established the knowledge that military success cannot be achieved without acknowledging "the human element in combat" (Henderson 1985). Rather, the

³² The headline is in polemic with MacCoun 2006: MacCoun, Robert J., Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin. 2006. "Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat? An Old Question with an Old Answer." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,4 July: 646-654.

significance of social and cultural factors for the soldiers' military performance, for their morale and motivation, should not and cannot be underestimated. The scholarly studies of these socio-cultural and interpersonal aspects of the military are dominated by cohesion theory to such an extent that cohesion by now has "become so central a concept in the sociology and psychology of the military that one gets the impression that its mere existence in a military unit is enough to predict combat effectiveness" (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005: 64).

The "Cohesion Tradition"³³ dates back to the widely cited study by Shils and Janowitz published as early as in 1948, wherein they theorized the contribution of primary group cohesion to resilience in combat in a work based on interviews with *Wehrmacht* prisoners (Shils and Janowitz 1948).³⁴ Shils and Janowitz came to the conclusion that rather than being motivated by values or ethics, soldiers expressed interpersonal relationships with their primary reference group as the most crucial motivating factor for acting in battle (Shils and Janowitz 1948; Wong et al. 2003). The emphasis on interpersonal relations for soldiers in combat - labeled *buddy relations* by the sociologist Roger Little in 1964 - have led scholarly work to establish the consensus that in order to ensure the necessary motivation for continued

³³ For a fuller account of Cohesion theory, see e.g. Ben-Ari, Eyal. 1998. *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit*. New York: Berghan Books; Ben-Shalom, Uri, Zeev Lehrer, and Eyal Ben-Ari. 2005. "Cohesion During Military Operations: A Field Study on Combat Units in the Al-Aqsa Intifada." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,1 October: 63-79; Catignani, Sergio. 2004. "Motivating Soldiers: The Example of the Israeli Defence Forces." *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly* 34,3 July: 108-121; MacCoun, Robert J. 1993. "What is Known About Unit Cohesion and Military performance." in *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment*, edited by RAND. Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute; MacCoun, Robert J., Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin. 2006. "Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat? An Old Question with an Old Answer." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,4 July: 646-654; Oliver, Laurel W., Joan Harman, Elizabeth Hoover, Stephanie M. Hayes, and Nancy A. Pandhi. 1999. "A Quantitative Integration of the Military Cohesion Literature." *Military Psychology* 11,1 57-83; Shils, Edward A., and Morris Janowitz. 1948. "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12,2 Summer 280-315; Siebold, Guy L. 2001. "Core issues and theory in military sociology." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* July; Stoessinger, John G. 2008. *Why Nations go to War*. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth; Stouffer, Samuel A., Arthur A. Lumsdaine, Marion Harper Lumsdaine, Robin M. Williams, M. Brewster Smith, and Irving L. Janis. 1949. *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Wong, Leonard. 2006. "Combat Motivation in Today's Soldiers." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,4 659-663; Wong, Leonard, Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter. 2003. "Why they Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War." Pp. 1-29: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War college; Yagil, Dana. 1995. "A Study of Cohesion and Other Factors of Major Influence on Soldiers' and Unit Effectiveness." Tel Aviv: Israel Defence Forces Tel-Aviv Department of Behavioral Sciences

³⁴ By referring to a number of "landmark studies", Military Strategist at the U.S. Army War College. Wong et al (2003) have shown in the monograph *Why they fight: Combat motivation in the Iraq War* how the research responding to the question has evolved through a series of studies in the aftermath of several highly profiled as well as crucial wars during the last 60 years, above all World War II, the Vietnam War and the Korean War.

battle soldiers must experience a certain level of cohesion amongst themselves.³⁵

Being in principle defined as an institution at the brinks of civil society, the military is in many ways an extraordinary community with a very distinct and crucial function. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that cohesion and combat motivation largely has been described in instrumental terms, i.e. based on the problem concerning how we can improve and enhance soldiers' performances. Explanations to the "why soldiers fight"-question thus tend to proceed in two directions:

Firstly, the question of "why soldiers fight" is replaced with the inter-twined - yet essentially different – question dealing with "how can we make the soldiers fight better", namely by providing well-developed interpersonal relations and internalizing a plausible doctrine into the soldiers' outlook, enhanced in the conceptual framework of *social cohesion* and *task cohesion* (see e.g. Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999; Little 1964; MacCoun 1993; MacCoun et al. 2006; Nadelson 2005; Shils and Janowitz 1948; Siebold 2001; Stouffer et al. 1949; Watson 1994; Wong et al. 2003; Yagil 1995). Whereas the former "refers to whether group members like each other [...] *task cohesion* refers to whether they share the same goals" (MacCoun 1993: 647). This distinction has been considered necessary, as "scholars have found it to have profound consequences for predicting and influencing unit performance" (MacCoun 1993: 647). In other words: It is not sufficient that members of a combat unit like each other; they must also share the same goals. That is in other words to say that for military training to be successful, the soldiers must internalize a shared standard of evaluation wherein their military duties appear as meaningful, plausible and rational.

Secondly, combat motivation is described in terms of contextual, temporary factors, such as the individual soldier's economic situation, social class, rights in civil society or educational level (see e.g. Levi 1997; Levy 2008a).³⁶ Needless to say, the particular empirical reasons concerning what motivates each individual soldier in warfare are highly contextual, and rarely generalizable. As Charles Tilly so neatly showed us, we all live in multiple

³⁵ The Israeli psychologist Dana Yagil has underscored the relevance of this "postulate" also for the IDF. According to a study published in 1995 in which she analyzed intervening effects of professionalism on cohesion and effectiveness, she shows that the results indicated a clear, significant correlations between cohesion and unit effectiveness Yagil, Dana. 1995. "A Study of Cohesion and Other Factors of Major Influence on Soldiers' and Unit Effectiveness." Tel Aviv: Israel Defence Forces Tel-Aviv Department of Behavioral Sciences .

³⁶ Here, it is worthwhile paying attention to Margaret Levi's analysis of why civilians comply with conscription as a form of state taxation, as she introduces the issue of *fairness*; compliance to military service stands in a direct relationship to the extent to which it is experienced as just. See: Levi, Margaret. 1997. *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

environs with competing interests and messages (Tilly 1999; Tilly 2005). It is intriguing in this context to observe that attempts towards the conceptualization of the motivational factors of meaning in the research on the military is relatively absent in the literature, both on the military per se, and on the IDF in particular.

Being relatively lonely in his research focus, Samuel J. Watson (1994) draws non-military rationales amongst soldiers back into the spotlight, on the basic assumption that research has tended to overemphasize the functionality of cohesion: “If this were true [cohesion as *the* determinant of morale in combat], one would have difficulty explaining the obvious differences in morale between the armies of different nationals and among units and individuals within them. In its blunter popular forms, the stress on ‘not letting your buddies down’ is a virtual caricature” (Watson 1994: 31).³⁷ I concur with Watson’s claims as my data contradicts some of the inherent suppositions inherent to the cohesion-theorization. Moreover, in order to create the sentiments that social cohesion presupposes, one necessitates stability, clear boundaries and routine amongst a certain, limited group of people. However, as Ben-Shalom et al note in a study of the IDF operations during the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000: “The actual frameworks that waged the fighting were rarely the units depicted in training manuals. Rather, these ‘instant units’ were often composed of constantly changing constituent elements that came together for a mission and then dispersed upon its completion” (Ben-Shalom et al. 2005: 64). Thus: The IDF combat units that fought during the al-Aqsa intifada were not characterized by groups of soldiers who knew each other well.

There is thus an indication that despite cohesion-theory’s magnitude and popularity amongst scholars of the military – and this short summary has by no means done the tradition justice – its nomenclature may be limiting, rather than explanatory: It fails to grasp the cultural and collective aspects such as sense of belonging to a larger community and share a meaning system. My study of the 50th Battalion in the IDF has revealed that neither social cohesion within the units nor adhering to the military’s security-related tasks sufficiently explains the soldiers’ motivation, sense of unity or morale. Rather, the soldiers also stress the significance of a sense of belonging to a shared moral community, whose cause is just and

³⁷ Lately we can also witness a growing number of publications based on material from the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and it can be interesting to follow the results of these scholarly endeavors in the future (Wong, Leonard, Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter. 2003. "Why they Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War." Pp. 1-29; Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War college.

whose mission is for a common good. Thus, to be clear, I will – in a cohesion-theory vocabulary - argue for what I may tentatively label as “pervasive cohesion”: By this concept, I refer to the socio-cultural factors that penetrate, encompass and maintain the entire military community, leading to a reinforcement of both task cohesion and social cohesion. It is likely to assume that pervasive cohesion is more prevalent in conscript armies – where “everyone” is called up to serve – than in professional armies, where conscription is voluntary and the soldiers have the army as their permanent work place. In short: By looking beyond the segregated disciplinary debates, we may move one step further.

Armies and Religions: Pretty similar after all?

At first glance, conscript armies and religions are substantially different. Seen in somewhat stereotyped and oversimplified ways, the military is an institution engaged in “outward” tasks (such as state security, defense, borders), whereas religions rather relate to more “inward” dimensions (for example meaning, belonging, culture). Added to this, there are – at least - two crucial divergences between religions and militaries:

The first point is related to *meaning* and *temporality*, and thus distinguishes religions from militaries as such. Whereas religious meaning systems claim an ontological status with reference to the eternal and transcendent – i.e. that these meanings systems represent an eternal truth - the *raison d'être* of the military are of a more temporal character.

The second point is that of *voluntarism* and distinguishes conscript armies from both religious organizations as well as from professional armies. Whereas adherence to a religion by and large is based on the members sharing a fundamental outlook on the world, participation in an army is to the recruits in a conscript army such as the IDF an obligation of national law (see Article II below for elaboration). Members of a religious community are by and large members as a result of factors such as voluntarism, heritage or cultural tradition. In contrast, recruits of a conscript army are there because they are obliged to. Some of them may of course also want to, but the bottom line is that they are recruited as part of state law and if they refuse, they will have to suffer legal action and violate national jurisdiction. Therefore, whereas members of a religious community may be considered to be largely well-disposed to

the message, the members of an army are far more heterogeneous in their views about the army and the values it conveys. Unity must thus be taught.³⁸

Yet, forming recruits into qualified soldiers is a composite process, and it is beyond doubt that not everyone is well-suited. Thus, as we shall see in Article II below, in addition to physical criteria, the IDF selects its manpower on the basis of a multifarious template of ideological, cultural, ethnic and religious criteria, wherein e.g. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups are exempted from service or have their military duty adjusted to fit with their religious obligations. At the basis of this study of the IDF, lies a series of interviews with combat soldiers who are or have been part of the army as regular conscripts.³⁹ They are in other words enrolled in the army due to the simple fact that recruitment into the IDF rests on a principle of universal conscription, in which all Israeli men and women – in principle – are obliged to serve 36 and 24 months respectively in the State of Israel's armed forces. Thus, the interviewees are in the army because it is a compulsory national duty, not because they volunteered. Does that render irrelevant the relevance of the discipline of religion to the military? In my opinion, it does not. In the following, I will explain why.

The military in Religious Studies: Towards an Alternative Explanation

Let us on the basis of Lincoln's delineation of religion look at some general characteristics of conscript armies⁴⁰. To be clear, the list is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is intended to point out some dimensions of the military institutions that show the relevance of the discipline of religion in the study of the military:

- Inclusion/exclusion practices: Membership into the military is regulated by a series of institutionally defined criteria, which defines the boundaries between the outsiders and the insiders. Membership is marked by a process of training, culminating in an inauguration ritual. Military life is in turn also regulated by a series of rituals. In

³⁸ This concerns armies that rest upon principles of compulsory conscription. It does not apply to elite units, where soldiers volunteer to have the army as a professional career.

³⁹ It should be pointed out, that doing military service for Israelis stands in relatively sharp contrast to that of military service in e.g. Norway or Switzerland. Independent from the politics related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, compulsory military service in the IDF implies being engaged in highly real, intense military activity.

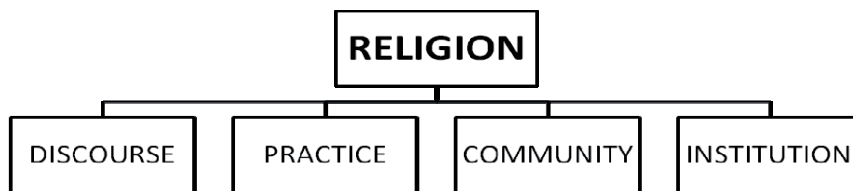
⁴⁰ I stress the differentiation between professional and conscript armies to highlight the principal fault lines between choice on the one hand, and being subject to legal obligation on the other.

particular in Article II ("Religion and Military Conscription: The Case of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)"), I will explore how the IDF through its conscription practices select and recruits people who can fit into the institutional notion of "we". In Article IV ("Religion and Territorial Possession: Notions of Land amongst Combat Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)") I explore how the creation of a "we" also has consequences for the soldiers' notion of the territories that they fight in and fight for, i.e. how boundaries are a result of contested meanings.

- **Unifying Discourse:** Membership in the military forces the recruits to face issues of life and death, making concerns of anomie pressing. Conscription thus implies a process of moral formation. The military represents a particular, contextually contingent meaning system that is presented to its recruits. The interrelationship between, on the one hand, the IDF's religious and cultural repertoire and, on the other hand, the reorientation of the soldiers' standards of evaluation, is the primary focus of Article III ("Coming to Terms with Soldiering: Religion and the Role of the Soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)").
- **Community:** When inside of the military, the military establishment strives towards fostering a particular bond amongst its recruits (cf. "social cohesion") and making the recruits share a common purpose (cf. "task cohesion"). The processes that contribute to forging a sense of moral unity include a series of practices designed not merely to cultivate military skills, but also to produce a very specific sort of moral agents that represent qualities such as being obedient, loyal, determined, resolute and acting on behalf of what the military considers to be the common good. This is a recurring theme throughout all of the articles.
- **Institution:** The military is organized and maintained by an institutional framework, upheld not merely by a military hierarchy aimed at increasing functionality, but also reinforced by a moral authority fused throughout the organization through the influence by the Military Rabbinate's representatives and the implementation of their orders. Although a recurring theme throughout all of the articles, I pay particular attention to it in Article III, where I explore the organization of the religious and cultural repertoire. See also Appendix VII for examples on the role of the Military Rabbinate in the organizational set-up.

While determining the subject matter constitutes the initial operation in any scholarly endeavor, an exhaustive definition of the contents of religion is impossible to reach, a fact acknowledged and discussed extensively amongst scholars (Berger 1967; Berger 1974; Beyer 1997; Geertz 1966; Koch 2006; Lincoln 2007; McCutcheon 1997; Satlow 2005; Smith 1995; Smith 1998; Weigert 1974a). I have taken Bruce Lincoln’s model of religion as the starting point for my analysis of the role of religion in the IDF, as it is polythetic and flexible, highlighting four domains wherein a particular kind of activity and mindset is expressed. Although not solving the whole problem of definition – nor do I expect that it is intended to do so – I view this model as offering an “operationalizable” approach to the analysis of the wider, generic category of religion. I have therefore applied this four-fold model in my analysis as a toolbox for the study of the interrelationship between religion and the military. In order to clarify my line of argumentation, let me visualize how I have applied Lincoln’s model onto the military.

Lincoln suggests the following analytical model of religion:

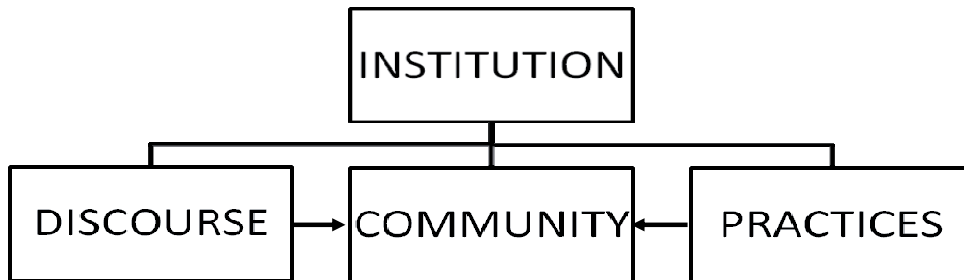


Model 1: General analytical model of religion

This model is relatively general, wherein it is the contents of each sub-theme that indicates the form and function of religion. As clarified in the chapter “Studying Religion Scientifically” each of these dimension represent several sub-themes with their separate functions and contents.⁴¹ Its biggest potential, as I see it, is that it helps organizing the analysis, distinguishing different elements of religion, therein facilitating a more pointed analysis.

⁴¹ For a fuller account of this model, see page 5-7 in Lincoln, Bruce. 2003. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about religion after September 11*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

If we apply this general model as a focus lens for further analysis, we reach the following and slightly differently organized model:

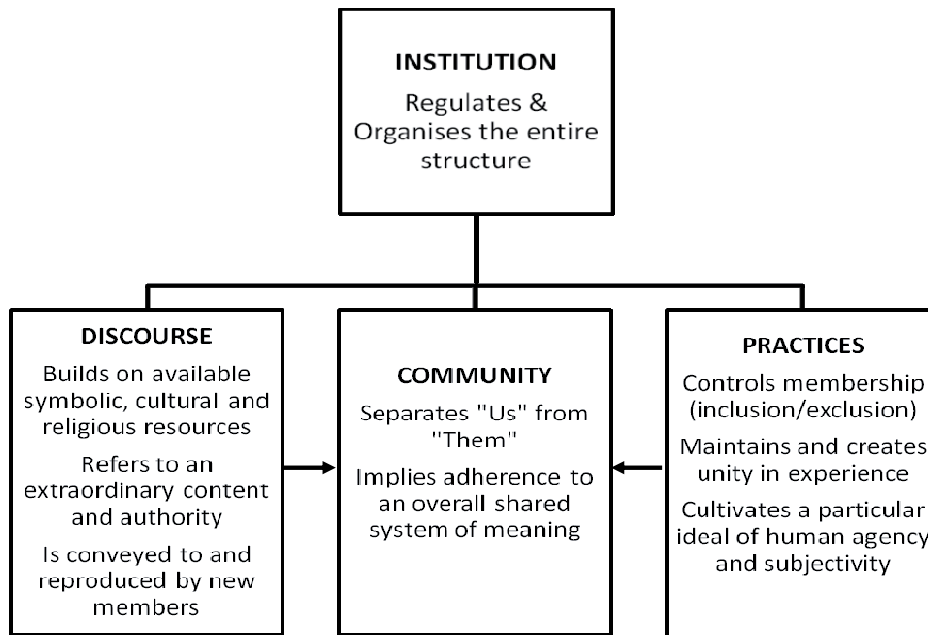


Model 2: General analytical model of religion applied to the military

The form and function of these four dimensions differ substantially. In Model 2, I have re-organized the four domains in order to visualize their inter-play in the context of the military. I have placed the Institution as the crucial variable for two reasons: Firstly, it is the military institution that is the focus and thus provides framework of analysis. Secondly, it is the internal organization and institutionalization that regulates the impact of religion within the institution.

In contrast to Lincoln’s focus on the discourse, this model emphasizes the institutional framework. As is also shown in this model, whereas the Institution provides the focus and framework for analysis, the community is the result of the other dimensions; a sense of belonging to a community is based a shared discourse rooted in a particular moral authority and forged through participation in common practices. To be clear: The issue of discourse in the context of religion is not equal to the general discourse of the military, although it is ‘at work’ within the military context. Rather, it refers to an extraordinary content and authority, which may in consequence reinforce the military’s moral authority. Of crucial importance are its claims to authority and status beyond – or at the limits of – normal human contingency and fallibility, i.e. a discourse that quells all doubt and at the same time commands the deepest respect and obedience.

If the general model is applied as a focus lens for further analysis and we move on to briefly look at their contents, we can also begin to see the contours of their function and how this interrelationship in consequence visualizes their function:



Model 3: Detailed analytical model of religion applied to the military

Several of these aspects can only be separated analytically, but do in practice overlap. The crucial variable here is the degree to which religion is given the possibility to influence the various other aspects of the institution (i.e. discourse, community and practices). The institutional practices regulate one ‘channel’ wherein the discourse is conveyed and maintained such as through military rituals and ethical training. It is thus the institutional regulation and organization that determines the role religion de facto can play: If organized as a marginal component, the end-result may be a minimalist impact on the different segments of the institution. In contrast, if organized in such a way as it may influence several – or all – segments of the institution, the end-result is a maximalist impact on the institution (Lincoln 2003: 59).

As I will show below, the IDF is organized in such a way that religion acquires a maximalist role: Religion in general, and Judaism in particular, is a core component for criteria of selection and inclusion; for the organization into units; for the ritual life; for the overall discourse; and, for the community and therein the soldiers’ sense of belonging. To illustrate: Although the Military Rabbinate is a separate Brigade, “each unit in the IDF must

have a representative of the Rabbinate advising them” (IDF 2010a). As a result, the IDF represents a social field wherein a certain form of Judaism with a particular function is produced and maintained. IDF is therefore a framework wherein the functions of religion “outweigh” narrowly defined social cohesion in units, and provides a more pervasive moral compass of greater significance than the provisional tasks the soldiers are given. I will expand on this argument throughout the articles. In the following, however, I will clarify the empirical context this dissertation investigates.

2 THE EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

This study explores the role of religion in the IDF, based on interview data from the 50th Battalion in the IDF's Nachal Infantry Brigade, which is primarily a secular battalion. These data are triangulated and complemented with a variety of other types of data. In the following section, I will expound the empirical context of this dissertation further, by focusing on three topics: Firstly, the previous scholarly studies of the IDF, including the history of the institution; secondly, the data upon which this study is based; and, lastly, the fieldwork, including an explication of the central characteristics of the 50th Battalion and the brigade of which it is part. I will in this section also thoroughly present the interviews and interviewees.

The IDF: A Brief Introduction

The IDF serves multiple roles in the Israel society: It provides security to its citizens, it is the only institution that all Israelis in principle are obliged to devote years of their lives to, it has the role of a social leveler, it is responsible for immigrant absorption in a country that has increased from 758 700 in 1948 to 7 472 700 in 2009 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2006; Central Bureau of Statistics 2009a) as well as for the socialization of all Israelis; its personnel are “involved in day-to-day basis with the very texture of national life, and (...) is drawn from the mass of citizenry” (Cohen 2005: ix). Army service has traditionally been an entry ticket to Israeli society in general and to political life in particular, and army service marks the secular moral identity of the average Israeli: The IDF is thus “a living symbol and a metaphor” as the story of the Israeli citizen is a story of “a soldier on eleven months annual leave” (Linn 1996: 4, 5). It is time to take a brief look at this peculiar military institution.

History and Magnitude

The IDF originates from the Jewish resistance movement *Haganah*⁴² during the British Mandate Period. It was transformed into the military of the State of Israel when its independence was declared on the 14th of May 1948. Immediately, it was engaged in battle in

⁴² Hebr. Lit.: “Defense”. The Jewish self-defence force in British Mandate of Palestine before 1948.

the Arab-Israeli War, known as the War of Independence [*Milhemet Ha-Atzma'ut*] in Hebrew.⁴³ These circumstances around the formative period of the IDF as a state army, have had crucial impact on the IDF in two ways: Firstly, it is widely held that the IDF was formed in battle: "Many characteristics of the IDF which are evident today, originated in the fighting of the IDF: The total mobilization of the society behind the war effort, the constant introduction of new weapons and techniques during the fighting, and the need of young commanders to establish their authority by successful leadership" (Michelsohn n.d.). Another result is found in the structure, where the IDF maintains relations between the ground forces, air force and navy.⁴⁴

Secondly, the IDF has from its inception been intimately tied to the Jewish-Israeli population and has for decades taken great pride in being "A People's Army"⁴⁵. As Reuven

⁴³ For insight into various aspects of the history of the IDF, see for example Arikan, Mehmet O. 2004. "Transformation of the Israel Defense Forces: An Application of the U.S. Military Transformation." Pp. 109 in *Department of National Security Affairs*. Monterey C.A.: Naval Postgraduate School; Cohen, Stuart A. 1995. "The Israel Defense Forces (IDF): From a "People's Army" to a "Professional Military" - Causes and Implications." *Armed Forces and Society* vol.21,no. 2 (Winter) pp.237-254; —. 1997b. "Towards a New Portrait of a (New) Israeli Soldier." *Israel Affairs* vol.3, Spring/Summer pp.77-117; Creveld, Martin van. 2002b. *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israel Defense Force*. New York: PublicAffairs; —. 2004. *Defending Israel: A Controversial Plan Towards Peace*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books & St. Martin's Press; Inbar, Efraim. 1998. "Israeli National Security, 1973-96." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555pp.62-81; Kimmerling, Baruch. 1993. "Patterns of Militarism in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology* 34196-223; Luttwak, Edward N., and Daniel Horowitz. 1975. *The Israeli Army*. London: Allan Lane; Maman, Daniel, Eyal Ben-Ari, and Zeev Rosenhek, eds. 2001. *Military, State, and Society in Israel*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers; Perlmutter, Amos. 1969. *Military and Politics in Israel: Nation-Building and Role Expansion*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd; Rosenhek, Zeev, Daniel Maman, and Eyal Ben-Ari. 2003b. "The Study of War and the Military in Israel: An Empirical Investigation and a Reflective Critique." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35,3 461-484; Shalem, Motti. 2004. *Searching for Meaning in the Creation of a Jewish Fighting Force [Tseva mechapes mashma'ut] (Hebrew)*. ?Jerusalem: Ministry of Defense Publishing, Israel; Williams, Lt.Col. (Res.) Louis. 2000 [1989]. *The Israel Defense Forces: A People's Army*. Lincoln: Authors Choice Press.

⁴⁴ Noteworthy, the state of Israel's development of high technology cannot be seen independent from the many conflicts Israel has been involved in since its foundation. Fundamental to the Israeli security and defense doctrine is the concept of *ein brirah*; literally meaning "no choice", referring to an Israeli notion of its wars being forced upon the state. In accordance with the notion is also the insistency of being self-reliant. Thus, instead of relying on foreign sources to establish a combat-ready fighting force Israeli scientists and researchers have developed high-tech defense systems and machinery, and Israeli researchers have developed national forms of weaponry, such as the *Uzi* submachine gun and the *Merkava* tanks. See e.g. Heller, Mark A. 2000. "Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy." in *Adelphi Paper no 335*, edited by Mats R. Berdal. New York: The International Institute for Strategic Studies; Izenberg, Dan. 02/07/1998. "Science and Technology in Israel." edited by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Israel(MFA). Jerusalem: Israel(MFA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mass, Michael. 1992. *Warmachines no.II: Merkava MK2-MK3, Israel Defense Force*. Mallekot: Verlinden Productions.

⁴⁵ The significance of this principle is also reflected in the intensity of the numerous discussions about the question of whether the IDF's extraordinary status as the key symbol and institution of the Israeli-Jewish population is deteriorating. See for example: Cohen, Stuart. 1999. "From integration to segregation: The role of

Gal – Col. (res.) and IDF's Chief Psychologist from 1976 to 1982 (Eberly and Gal 2006) - stated: "The Israeli military, being a true civil military, is different. Its norms and ethics come from its people and return to them. The sources from which they derive are the historical, cultural and societal essence of the people of Israel" (Gal 1986: 241).

One distinguishing feature of the IDF as a "People's Army" is its conscription of women. Since its foundation, the IDF has rested its recruitment on the principle of universal conscription, calling up both men and women for service (see Article II below); women 24 months and men 36 months. As a result, the whole population has - in principle - spent time in the IDF's service and has intimate knowledge of military affairs. Scholars argue that this has turned Israelis into "a paradigmatic example of a modern 'nation in arms'" (Cohen 2005: ix).⁴⁶ Another example is that the IDF since its early days has been given decisive nation-building tasks, responsible for both education and immigration absorption. Added to that the simple but brutal fact that the IDF has been engaged in military battles - be it in open state-to-state warfare or Low Intensity Conflict (Catignani 2008) - every decade since the foundation of the state, it is no surprise to witness that the IDF has enjoyed an extraordinary status amongst its civilian population. It is striking in Israel the extent to which the military is able to stir engagement in the population: The IDF has been subject to an everlasting scrutiny in Israeli media, and amongst Israelis who never say no to a good political discussion, the IDF is intensely discussed over dinner tables, in the *Knesset*⁴⁷, in taxis⁴⁸, and at cafés.

religion in the Israel Defense Force." *Armed Forces & Society* Spring: 387-406; —. 2008. *Israel and its Army: From cohesion to confusion*. New York: Routledge. Ben-Ari, Eyal, Daniel Maman, and Zeev Rosenhek. 2000. "Military Sociological Research in Israel." Pp. 91-115 in *Military Sociology: The Richness of a Discipline*, edited by Gerhard Kümmel and Andreas D. Prüfert. Baden-Baden: Nomos Publisher; Inbar, Efraim, and Shmuel Sandler. 1995. "The Changing Israeli Strategic Equation: Toward a Security Regime." *Review of International Studies* 21pp. 41-59; Kasher, Asa. 2003. "Public Trust in a Military Force." *Journal of Military Ethics* 2,1 20-45; Kimmerling, Baruch. 1993. "Patterns of Militarism in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology* 34196-223; Lomsky-Feder, Edna, and Eyal Ben-Ari, eds. 1999. *Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁴⁶ Several scholars have argued that universal conscription in effect contributes to creating a militarisation of the Israeli civil society, often coined as a "nation in arms". As men also do *miluim*, i.e. repetition service, approximately four weeks per year until their late 40s - depending on unit, rank and so forth – General Yigael Yadin described the Israeli citizen as "a soldier on ten months' leave". See e.g. page 148 in: Ben-Eliezer, Uri. 2001. "From Military Role-Expansion to Difficulties in Peace-Making: The Israel Defense Forces 50 Years On." Pp. 137-172 in *Military, State, and Society in Israel*, edited by Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari and Zeev Rosenhek. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.

⁴⁷ *Knesset* - The Israeli Parliament.

⁴⁸ On a personal note: It is interesting to note that among the most popular radio shows in Israeli broadcasting are political debates, where also the public are permitted to call and participate live in the shows. Therefore, it is strikingly common to find e.g. taxi drivers listening intensely to political debates about the state of affairs in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Today, the IDF is an enormous body with 1,474,966 men and 1,404,712 women available for military service in the age between 17 and 49 (CIA 2009).⁴⁹ With a manpower that counts 6.45% of the total labor force, the IDF is the world's 5th largest army (NationMaster.Com 2010). In 2009, the IDF's regular personnel were 176,500 of which the Ground Forces constitutes 133,000 men and women, thus 75, 4%. In addition, the IDF's Reserve Personnel counts 445 000. According to the Israel Democracy Index 2007, Israel's defense budget was 50.6 billion New Israeli Shekel (NIS) in 2006, which equals about 17% of Israel's state budget (Arian et al. 2007). As pointed out in the index, this figure "does not include the budget of the Mossad, the GSS, the border Police, the Home Front, and the assistance to the defense industries" (Arian et al. 2007: 92, fn.98). Accordingly, the budget is *de facto* much larger.

However, it should be pointed out that the IDF's standing in Israeli society is undergoing a process of change, and many raise concerns regarding the apparent drop in motivation to serve in the IDF have run high the past few years, in particular since the Second Lebanon War in 2006. Army service motivation has been a widespread norm in Israel, and "the motivation to serve in the army in wartime is very high by international standards" (Arian et al. 2007: 90): On average, 80% of Jewish Israelis on average are highly motivated to serve in the IDF. But, it has weakened over the years. As Yigal Levy describes, the public opinion in Israel was in 2007 "inflamed over figures released by the IDF, according to which 25 percent of potential Jewish male draftees do not take part in military service" (Levy 2009: 135). Telling is therefore the eruption of scholarly works with titles such as "From Cohesion to Confusion" (Cohen 2008) and "Is there a motivation crisis in military recruitment in Israel?" (Levy 2009). Feeding into this is a new wave of studies by a loosely-defined group of Israeli historians such as Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé and Tom Segev, who have challenged traditional assumptions about Israeli history.⁵⁰ This group is labeled "The New Historians", which is a term that coined in 1988 by one of the leading New Historians, Benny Morris.

⁴⁹ Numbers according to the CIA The World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html#Military> (Accessed 11/05/09).

⁵⁰ As an example, we see how the historian Martin van Creveld in his book *The Sword and the Olive* thoroughly describes what can be summarized as "the rise and the decline of the IDF". His book is therefore considered to be based on a distinctive political conviction: In a highly dense book, van Creveld examines in depth how the IDF evolves from the PALMACH (*Plugot Machats* [Hebrew]. Storm-troops, shock-troops. Haganah's pre-1948 strike force) companies into a strong army seam lined to fit the needs of symmetrical warfare to its unavoidable decline as its security environs change into an asymmetrical relation for which the forces are not trained.

Previous Studies: A Brief Overview of Topics

With such a magnitude and intensity of activities, it is of little surprise to witness that also Israeli academics have engaged extensively in analyzing the military force of their state. When approaching the literature on the IDF, two aspects are striking: Firstly, we see how the security surroundings within which the IDF – and thus also the state of Israel – is situated influences scholarly engagement. Secondly, it is noticeable how orienting oneself in the literature on the Israeli army in many respects can be juxtaposed to orienting oneself in the Israeli society at large, reflecting how the IDF is both integral to as well as set apart from the general society.⁵¹ Thus, a few topics “stand out” in the literature that are relevant in our context:

Security concerns in everyday life

Security related issues are strikingly present in the Israeli society and its discourse, both in civil, political and military spheres (Etzioni-Halevy 1996; Feder and Ben-Ari 1999; Kimmerling 1993). Ever since 1948, national security thinking “has been predicated on the fact it is the fate of the State of Israel to be permanently and irreversibly in the position of the ‘few against the many’, from the standpoint of the demographic and geographic balance of power between itself and the Arab world” (Tal 2000: 41). Israeli security policies rest on the principle of “having no other choice”, coined in the idiomatic expression ‘ein brirah’ (No [other] choice) (see Heller 2000).⁵² The significance of the concept of *ein brirah* is not merely

⁵¹ It should be noted that the literature tends to have been written in two periods of time that were significantly different from the reality Israelis live in today: Firstly, there is a considerable amount of literature written pre-1987, i.e. prior to the first *intifada*, or post-Oslo, i.e. in the mid-1990s. This implies that the literature was written within two periods of time that were dominated by a radically different socio-political environment that the one we find both in Israel as such, but of course also of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Accordingly, when reading the literature, one easily gets a feeling of the literature being “outdated”, in the sense that the socio-political reality to which it refers and thus also places itself within is no longer valid. For, needless to say, any significant change in the external threat environment to any armed force has vital impact on both its mission and its organization.

⁵² As an example of a “New Historian Rhetoric”, the historian Martin van Creveld argues that the principle of *ein brirah* served as the ideological justification for Israeli wars up until the Yom Kippur war in 1973 Creveld, Martin van. 2002b. *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israel Defense Force*. New York: PublicAffairs., where after Israel has engaged in wars by choice Heller, Mark A. 2000. “Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy.” in *Adelphi Paper no 335*, edited by Mats R. Berdal. New York: The International Institute for Strategic Studies; Inbar, Efraim. 1989. “The ‘No choice War’ Debate in Israel.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 12March: 22-37.

militarily, but has also generally been integral to Israeli hegemonic thinking, if one may use such an expression. Thus, although militarily Israeli strategic analyst Efraim Inbar is able to point at a *strategic* shift after 1973 from *ein brirah* [no choice] to *yesh brirah* [there is a choice], this paradigmatic shift is not necessarily reflected in the Israeli public discourse (Inbar 1989).⁵³ To illustrate, a report on Israeli public opinion in relation to national security published by the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies in the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War provides a telling example of the role of security and the IDF in Israeli society: According to the survey, the construction of the so-called “security fence” continues to be *the* issue in Israel with the highest level of consensus and the IDF is *the* institution in which some 80% of the Israelis trust the most (Meir and Shaked 2007).⁵⁴

Due to the position the IDF has enjoyed in Israeli society, there is little surprise in finding that much scholarly work has been devoted to analysing the role of the institution within society at large “characterized by a preponderance of discussions placed at the macro level of analysis” (Ben-Ari 1998: 14).⁵⁵ Thereby, we find studies of the relations between the IDF and for example the economic sphere (e.g. Mintz 1976; Nevo and Shur-Shmueli 2003), the IDF and Israeli politics (e.g. Cohen 2000; Peri 1981; Peri 2006; Perlmutter 1969) and the IDF and the Israeli social system with the influential Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling as a leading figure (e.g. Kimmerling 1984; Kimmerling 1993; Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999), in addition to two relatively recent edited volumes on the role of the military in Israel (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999; Maman et al. 2001).

⁵³ In addition, it should be noted that *ein brirah* is in polemic with the biblical phrase *Milkhemet Mitzvah*, literally meaning “Commandment war”, and is the term for a war during the times of the Tanakh when a king of the Kingdom of Israel would go to war in order to fulfill something based on, and required by, the Torah without needing approval from a Sanhedrin. A *Milkhemet Reshut*, literally meaning “authorized war”, on the other hand, represents a discretionary war, which according to Jewish law requires the permission of a Sanhedrin. Unlike *Milkhemet Reshut* wars, which tended to be fought to expand territory or for economic reasons and had exemption clauses, *Milhemet Mitzvah* tended to be invoked in defensive wars, when vital interests were at risk.

⁵⁴ In many respects, the simple fact that there *is* an institute for National Security Studies doing regular surveys on the Israeli public’s moods and attitudes towards security issues is characterizing in itself.

⁵⁵ See e.g. Ben-Ari 1998:14 for further literature suggestions Ben-Ari, Eyal. 1998. *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit*. New York: Berghan Books. It is noteworthy that although Ben-Ari points at the necessity of drawing attention to the micro-level of the Israeli army, he is himself co-editor of two books that focus on the macro-level of analysis (see Feder, Edna Lomsky, and Eyal Ben-Ari, eds. 1999. *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press; Maman, Daniel, Eyal Ben-Ari, and Zeev Rosenhek, eds. 2001. *Military, State, and Society in Israel*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

The "Cultural Place"

It is only during the last two decades that research on the IDF has increased and developed into a diversified field of study, whereby it has also become a central topic in anthropology and sociology.⁵⁶ One of these sub-fields with relevance to our context, is the “‘cultural’ place of the IDF and of wars in Israel” (Rosenhek et al. 2003a: 465), first and foremost explored amongst a group of scholars at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Within this domain, we find publications on ritual sites such as e.g. the Masada (Ben-Yehuda 1995), gender roles and homosexuality (Ben-Ari and Dardashti 2001; Levy 2008b), military ethics (Kasher 1996; Kasher and Yadlin 2005) or identity and moral consciousness (Ben-Ari and Dardashti 2001; Linn 1996; Lomsky-Feder et al. 2009).

One of the forerunners to these micro-studies is a widely cited book published in 1985 by the psychologist and former Israeli officer Reuven Gal. In his *A Portrait of an Israeli Soldier* Gal looked at the influences on the Israeli soldier and their impact on the IDF’s performance. Dealing with issues such as motivation and camaraderie, leadership and heroism from a human viewpoint, he presented an analysis of the “lifeworld” of the Israeli soldier (Gabriel and Savage 1978; Gal 1986). In polemic with Gal, political scientist Stuart Cohen published in 1995 the article “Towards a new portrait of the (new) Israeli soldier” (Cohen 1997b). In the introduction, he acknowledges the findings that this dissertation is based on, namely the gap in the literature on the motivations and cultural values that figure amongst Israeli soldiers. Cohen states that the “present paper constitutes an initial attempt to fill the need for an updated analysis of the IDF human profile. That need is now acute, especially in light of current changes in the society from which Israel’s force complement is drawn” (Cohen 1997b: 77). Another publication that explores the experiences of the soldiers, is Eyal

⁵⁶ Eyal Ben-Ari has in a series of publications along with co-authors such as Edna Lomsky-Feder, Daniel Mana, or Zeev Rosenhek, explored the IDF literature, both in terms of its volume and scope. See e.g. Ben-Ari, Eyal. 1998. *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit*. New York: Berghan Books; Ben-Ari, Eyal, and Edna Lomsky-Feder. 1999. "Introduction: Cultural Constructions of War and the Military in Israel." Pp. 1-36 in *Military and Militarism in Israel* edited by Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari. Albany: State University of New York Press; Ben-Ari, Eyal, Daniel Maman, and Zeev Rosenhek. 2000. "Military Sociological Research in Israel." Pp. 91-115 in *Military Sociology: The Richness of a Discipline*, edited by Gerhard Kümmel and Andreas D. Prüfert. Baden-Baden: Nomos Publisher; Lomsky-Feder, Edna, and Eyal Ben-Ari, eds. 1999. *Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*. Albanay: State University of New York Press; Maman, Daniel, Eyal Ben-Ari, and Zeev Rosenhek, eds. 2001. *Military, State, and Society in Israel*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers; Rosenhek, Zeev, Daniel Maman, and Eyal Ben-Ari. 2003a. "The Study of War and the Military in Israel: An Empirical Investigation and a Reflective Critique." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35,3 461-484.

Ben-Ari's *Mastering Soldiers* (Ben-Ari 1998), wherein Ben-Ari reflects on experiences from his reserve duty periods through an ethnographic study of his unit in the IDF.

Nevertheless, religion is noticeably marginal: Whereas Norman Solomon has treated the ethics of war within the overall framework of Judaism (Solomon 2006) and Yigal Levy has religion as an aspect for the analysis in one of his articles (see Levy 2008) only Stuart Cohen and his student Elisheva Rosman-Stollman have published scholarly work on the role of religion as such in the IDF (Cohen 1999; Cohen 1997a; Rosman-Stollman 2005b; Rosman-Stollman 2007; Rosman-Stollman 2009). Yet, these studies are focusing on explicitly religiously observant groups, and the challenges in integrating them into the military structure. There are, however, no scholarly works focusing on the social and cultural construction, development, or consequences of the IDF's Code of Conduct. Accordingly, an explorative analysis of the role of religion in the military is needed.

Conscientious and Political Literature

Undoubtedly, many Israeli military actions are controversial. It is therefore interesting to notice the development of what might be termed a set of "conscientious" or "political" literature". This includes titles such as e.g. the fascinating work *Conscience at War: The Israeli Soldier as a Moral Critic* by Israeli psychologist Ruth Linn and Israeli political scientist Yaron Ezrahi's *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel* (Ezrahi 1997; Linn 1996). Both of these books deal with some of the moral and conscience-related issues all IDF soldiers unavoidably are faced with, although in a highly different manner.

These books are paralleled by publications that include testimonies by soldiers who after their service have chosen to inform the public of the moral wrongdoings IDF soldiers are responsible for (e.g. Carey and Shainin 2002; Chacham 2003). These soldiers have become infamous in Israel as they address a highly sensitive and controversial issue, are members of organisations such as *Yesh Gvul* (lit. There is a limit!), *Ometz le-Sarev* (lit. Courage to Refuse) and *Shovrim Shtika*⁵⁷ (lit. Breaking the Silence).

Another sector that has contributed much to the documentation of the Israeli army's activity in the conflict is the sector focusing on the many human rights violations, first and

⁵⁷ Several of the soldiers of *Shovrim Shtika* have served in Bazelet 50, which is the primary unit this dissertation is based on.

foremost represented by B'Tselem⁵⁸. B'Tselem persistently documents Israeli human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, above all those made by the IDF. This has led to the generation of a number of statistics and reports, such as “Statistics on Palestinian minors in IDF detention”, “Operation Defensive Shield: Soldiers’ Testimonies, Palestinian Testimonies” and “Excessive Force: Human Rights Violations during IDF Actions in Area A”.⁵⁹

Primary versus Secondary Sources: An Illustration

Questions of validity have given many case study researchers in the humanities and social sciences a serious, prolonged headache. It is an issue that relates to both social and cultural distance, in addition to the fluidity of social settings. The scholarly study of religion has always been faced with the challenge that those who belong to a religion claim to be better equipped to understand its fullness than a researcher on the outside.⁶⁰ Yet, scholars generally tend to adopt the position that the academic study of religion should not be mixed with the religious adherents’ accounts of the same community, as it would undermine scholarship:

“When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one’s interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between ‘truths’, ‘truth-claims’, and ‘regimes of truth’, one has ceased to function as historian or scholar” (Lincoln 1999b).

⁵⁸ B'Tselem was established in 1989, and strives to document and educate the Israeli public and policymakers about human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, combat the phenomenon of denial prevalent among the Israeli public, and help create a human rights culture in Israel. See http://www.btselem.org/English/About_BTselem/Index.asp). The origin of the *name* of this organization – *B'Tselem* – is worthwhile paying attention to, as is highly symbolic, playing on the strings of religion and culture: “B'Tselem in Hebrew literally means ‘in the image of,’ and is also used as a synonym for human dignity. The word is taken from Genesis 1:27 ‘And God created humans in his image. In the image of God did He create him.’ It is in this spirit that the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that ‘All human beings are born equal in dignity and rights’” (www.btselem.org/English/About_BTselem/Index.asp).

⁵⁹ All reports are available also online: www.btselem.org.

⁶⁰ Examples of such insider/outsider-discussions are many. See for example: McCutcheon, Russell T., ed. 1999. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London & New York: Cassell.

Similar concerns can be raised regarding scholarly study of the IDF: The field is heavily dominated by Israelis who – as a result of the IDF’s recruitment policies based on obligations of state law - are or have been members of the institution, and who thus have fought in the IDF's service. Alternatively, for immigrants who came to Israel at an age where military service was no longer obligatory, it is not themselves but their children who serve in the IDF. Accordingly, many authors display a striking proximity to and familiarity with the institution. Let me offer three illustrations:

Firstly, in the book *The Sword and the Olive*⁶¹ by the influential military historian Martin van Creveld, one can read that “He and his wife Dvora live in Jerusalem. Four of their children serve, or have served, in the IDF” (Creveld 2002b: backcover). Although van Creveld thoroughly documents his argument in the book – namely that Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza slowly stagnates the IDF – he nevertheless also offers *policy recommendations* and suggests that the Israelis must pull back from these territories.

Secondly, Ruth Linn spends time in her attention-grabbing book *Conscience at War* on clarifying how it was a challenge to acquire the necessary distance to the data, as “Israel has suffered from continuous terrorist attacks on all of its frontiers ... For years we were proud to attend the military parades and felt protected when we heard the noise of aircraft” (Linn 1996: 4). However, a solution – although also a further challenge for data collection – was found in the fact that “Since refusers were not part of my close circle of friends, it was easy for me to approach them from a separate position” (Linn 1996: 30).

Lastly, it is worthwhile paying attention to the consequences this tight relationship between researchers and the researched has for ethnographic data collection. In his book *Mastering Soldiers* which offers “an interpretative ethnography of Israeli infantry reserves”, Eyal Ben-Ari writes that it “is based on eight years of participant-observation during which I served as an officer in the battalion” (Ben-Ari 1998: ix). Ben-Ari’s publications have contributed substantially to consolidating research on the IDF as a scholarly field, and it is not my intention to question his academic achievements.

Nevertheless, I allow myself to question whether a soldier on duty in a military institution can take on the dual role as a scholar and a regular recruit. All of these above-mentioned works are interesting, well-documented, important and thought-provoking. Still, the question then comes to mind: Can we choose – and manage – to step out of one “life world” and examine it from the outside? Are these publications of the IDF to be considered

⁶¹ The title of the book is in polemic with the symbol of the IDF – a sword and an olive branch.

secondary or primary sources? What should, then, be the criteria for categorizing something as “secondary”?

In the case of the IDF, the degree to which the scholars hold a vast repertoire of “common knowledge” is considerable. As a consequence, I am inclined to argue that the dominance of former IDF personnel amongst the scholars of the IDF has had an impact not merely on how things are studied, but also on *what* is studied. As a scholar of religion, I am “liable” to ask: Why are there no scholarly works focusing on the social and cultural construction, development, practice or consequences of the IDF’s Code of Conduct – the code that *all* recruits must learn? Is it perhaps the case that some issues simply are taken for granted?

The IDF is the biggest employer of sociologists in Israel (Azarya 2005). As the influential Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling points out: “The armed forces have their own ‘history branch’, whose aim is not only to document ‘everything that happened’ in the army, but also to ‘determine the truth’ about events under dispute” (Kimmerling 1995: 57).⁶² In this study, he examines the interplay of the creation of an Israeli historiography with the process of building a settler society. He concludes that “within a highly ideological and mobilized society, which within a relatively short span of time created a culturally heterogeneous immigrant-settler society and shortly thereafter a state, the agents who create the ‘past’ occupy a central position” (Kimmerling 1995: 56-57). As will be shown throughout the articles, the maximalist integration of religion in the institutional set-up of the IDF allows for religion to acquire and maintain a key role in the IDF’s universe of meaning. Religion is, in other words, “consigned to a function of nostalgic or exotic remembrance, apart from fulfilling the function of memory and upholding the survival of tradition in the world of modernity” (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]: 80). Yet, as also Hervieu-Léger notes, religion should not be limited to merely being about “tradition”: Religion influences the dynamics of social relations whereby a society creates itself and creates its own history and locates the individual in the social setting, allowing for individuals to make sense of their social worlds and act accordingly (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]; McGuire 2008). Thus, as state agencies such as the IDF aspire to establish a monopoly of legitimate force, it is likely to conclude that its instruments of force would also like to establish a monopoly of truth. In view of that,

⁶² This reflects the argument made by Kimmerling who in his article “Academic history Caught in the Cross-Fire” argued that Israeli academia was caught in the so-called “Jewish Bubble” Kimmerling, Baruch. 1995. “Academic History Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography.” *History and Memory* 7,1 41-65.

anything that originates from the IDF should be approached as a primary – and not as a secondary – source. The desire to speak for or with the IDF rather simply about it should also indicate that a given source needs to be handled with critical care.

The Data

This dissertation explores the role of religion as conveyed by a consciously selected group of men who have served in a specific battalion in the IDF as part of their regular, military service. This has two crucial consequences for the data collection: Firstly, as the military is per definition an institution with distinct esoteric traits, wherein membership is limited and requires procedures of selection, information flow is restricted. Doing fieldwork in a conflict setting restricts the spaces available for field research and excludes a number of qualitative options, such as observation in their ‘natural’ setting (i.e. military camps or in battle), or the use of so-called “natural sampling”. Secondly, I have studied one specific contemporary battalion in a large army, implying that there simply has not been any prior academic work published on this group: All data thus had to be created.

Accordingly, this dissertation primarily rests on interviews. However, interviews do not provide sufficient data in and of themselves, both due to epistemological as well as empirical concerns. It is widely accepted amongst qualitative researchers that the research interview does not provide a clear window into the interviewee’s experience; in the dualistic objectivist-constructivist continuum, only positivists aim for the creation of a ‘pure’ interview that ultimately enables the interview to provide a “mirror reflection” of the reality that exists in the social world (Alldred and Gillies 2005 [2002]; Miller and Glassner 2006 [1997]; Silverman 2006). How can we, then, “saturate” the data; that is, how can we reach the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest et al. 2006: 59)? Data saturation in qualitative studies is a murky field, as guidelines are virtually non-feasible to reach.

Accordingly, I have been faced with a pressing necessity for employing a wider methodological approach in the collection of data, applying a number of supplementing, qualitative approaches. Thus, before I clarify the interview data collection, I will look at the other forms of data that have been made use of in this dissertation. Overall, the data are collected through accessing *formal* and *informal* sources. This distinction comes from the

form of the sources. Whereas for example the official scripts published by the IDF are presented by the IDF's press office and are therefore representative of the institution, personal websites where an individual soldier blogs does only represent himself. Yet, by adding also the informal data sources, one can identify convergences and discrepancies amongst the two levels, as well as reaching towards establishing confirmation and completeness (Arksey and Knight 1999).

This has led to the use of methodological triangulation in the Data Collection phase, illustrated in Table 1 below:

LEVEL	TYPE
Formal	Interviews Documents and postings on the Official IDF Website Israeli governmental publications
Informal	Untailored conversations with previous and current soldiers Web-surfing on relevant unofficial web domains used and accessed by Israeli soldiers (Facebook and YouTube). Various media commentaries, above all Israeli Army Radio - <i>Galei Tzahal</i> ⁶³

Table 1. Types of Data Collection

Although not authorized and representative for an organization, body or other types of institutions, informal sources are an invaluable source in adding details and perspectives to the formal level. The informal sources of data are chosen both due to their relation to the formal sources as well as to the Israeli society at large. Accordingly, the data are comprised of the convergence of primarily two types of evidence shown in Table 2 below: Interactive data from the internet, combined with formal documentation and the transcription of qualitative

⁶³ *Galei Tzahal* - "Galatz" - is a nationwide Israeli radio network operated by the IDF and funded mainly by the Israeli Ministry of Defense. It literally means "*IDF Waves*". *Galatz* staff includes both soldiers and civilians. The history of Galatz is closely tied to the Israeli army: It started its official transmissions in 1950 as a continuance of the Haganah transmission to the Jewish public during the Israeli War of Independence. In 1956, its status was defined within the Israeli Broadcasting Authority law (paragraph 48), whereby the IDF has a free hand as long as the Army Radio broadcasts information for soldiers. See <http://www.fromil.com/radio/index.php?radio=10&bb=1#> (Accessed 24/04/08).

semi-structured interviews. Added to this is the transcription of informal interviews with previous and current soldiers, as well as the field diary written during the course of the fieldwork.

LEVEL	TYPE	SPECIFICATIONS
Primary Sources	Oral Data	Interviews with soldiers Interviews with IDF officers
	Written Data	Official IDF publications IDF Website
Secondary Sources	Audio Data	Israeli Military Radio Online: <i>Galei Tzahal</i>
	Interactive Data	Facebook YouTube Various soldier chat rooms
	Private Data	Field Diary Transcription of informal interviews with previous and current soldiers

Table 2. Data Summary: Primary and Secondary Sources

The Fieldwork: Selecting Interviewees and Interviewing Them

This study is primarily based on data collected in the field. During the work on the dissertation, I visited Israel 8 times. Each trip lasted between 1 and 3 weeks (see Appendix II). Noteworthy, these trips were based on networks and knowledge gathered over a period of more than a decade prior to the fieldwork: As I had both lived and work in the region for several years prior to the PhD, I had already spent a considerable amount of time in the region, which meant that I had a wide private and professional network in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, I was well acquainted with both area, and I had acquired Hebrew skills enabling me to access Israeli sources in their original language. Thus, I had a clear image of the research domain and had established “entry points” into the field prior to commencing the project.

Due to the size of the IDF, merely talking to any soldier in the army would invalidate all attempts to acquire any sort of representativity and coherence in my data. The question was therefore not about finding soldiers *per se*; it was about finding a particular group amongst the soldiers. I was particularly interested in finding relevant interviews amongst IDF's secular recruits: Although they constitute the majority of IDF's soldiers⁶⁴, scholars have primarily focused their endeavors on expanding our knowledge about the religiously practicing segments of the Jewish-Israeli population (Aran 1991; Cohen 1993; Cohen Spring 2007; Cohen 1997a; Kellermann 1996; Kimmerling 1983b; Ravitzky 1996 (1993); Rosman-Stollman 2005b; Rosman-Stollman 2009; Røislien 2007; Sprinzak 1991).⁶⁵ The selection of informants was hence primarily strategic and theoretical, aimed at minimizing the differences between the interviewees in order to enable the accentuation of typical traits or characteristics in the group to contribute to data saturation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]; Morse et al. 2002: 16, fn.14). For that reason, I chose to limit my study to the 50th Battalion in the Nachal. Furthermore, I chose to focus my study on a cluster of soldiers that had served in the IDF during one particular time period - 2005-2009 – as this implied that I could follow my interviewees throughout the period of my own project.

To me the 50th Battalion came across as an intriguing group: It is a battalion known for being comprised by overall non-observant recruits. In addition, it is a renowned battalion, well known for their high spirits, morale and decent behavior. The attention of the 50th Battalion was boosted with the establishment of the *Breaking the Silence* movement in 2004, which originated from it.⁶⁶ The selection of the IDF's 50th Battalion was thus the result of a

⁶⁴ There are no official statistics published by the IDF on the demographic composition of the IDF. However, the IDF practices exemption from military service for ultra-orthodox groups Hoffnung, Menachem. 1995. "Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in Applying Israel's Conscript Law." *Law & Polity* 17,3 July: 311-340; Røislien, Hanne Eggen. forthcoming. "Religion and Military Conscript: Exploring Conscript Practices in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)." *Armed Forces & Society*. In addition, Yigal Levy has in an interesting study collected casualty data with reference to ethnicity, social class and religious adherence. His analysis reveals that although the casualty ratio amongst secular upper-class Ashkenazis is declining, there are still a majority of seculars serving in the IDF. See: Levy, Yagil. 2007. *Israel's Materialist Militarism*. Lanham: Lexington Books. See in particular Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ According to Israel Democracy Index 2007, only 32% of Israel's Jewish population observes tradition, 7% report that they observe tradition meticulously, whereas 25% report that they observe tradition to a large extent. See: Arian, Asher, Nir Atmor, and Yael Hadar. 2007. "Auditing Israeli Democracy - 2007: Cohesion in a Divided Society." in *The Israeli Democracy Index*, edited by The Israel Democracy Institute. Jerusalem The Israel Democracy Institute & The Guttman Center.

⁶⁶ Breaking the Silence – *Shovrim Shtika* – is an organization "of veteran Israeli soldiers that collects testimonies of soldiers who served in the Occupied Territories during the Second Intifadah" http://www.shovrimshatika.org/about_e.asp (accessed 30/03/10). I interviewed Shovrim Shtika's founder, Yehuda Shaul, on 14 June 2007. He commented on his choice of serving in the Bazelet 50 with the following: "I wanted to do the infantry, and the Bazelet 50. It is a good unit. They're better educated, they're a good crowd. Like, most people don't believe it, but we do sit and discuss Marx and Nietzsche in the barracks at night. We're

conscious choice based on primarily three reasons: Firstly, the battalion has a specific form of recruitment, and is often described as “a fast track to commander positions”, making it a highly qualified and cognizant group. Secondly, as a result of the recruitment process, the unit members have a relatively similar background, increasing coherence in the interview data. Thirdly, it is a combat battalion. Consequently, its soldiers act and fight on behalf of the IDF out in the field.

Still, there is a long process between selecting a target group for an academic study and finding and recruiting interviewees from the group. In the following, I will clarify the rationale behind my selection of interviewees, and the methods that I have applied in the collection of the oral data. Noteworthy: I have made extensive use of Facebook and social media as part of my attempt to explore their potential as research tools for fieldwork studies. Article I – “Via Facebook to Jerusalem” - provides a clarification and reflection on this attempt. The recruitment process is thus not included in the following chapter.

The IDF Brigade: The Nachal

The *Gdud 50* is part of the *Nachal* Brigade, which may need some clarification in order also to understand the *Gdud 50* better. “Nachal” is the Hebrew acronym for *Noar Halutzi Lohem*, which literally means “Fighting Pioneer Youth”. It is a regular service brigade under the Central Command (Hebrew: מרכז פיקוד normally - abbreviated to Pakmaz (פקמ"ז)), which is a regional command of the IDF. Nachal is strongly associated with its origins, which is also reflected in the name: The Fighting *Pioneer* Youth.

According to the IDF, the goal of the Nachal “was to supply soldiers with large amounts of military resources as well as providing the basic needs for the founding of kibbutzim and new communities” (IDF n.d.-b). Service in the “Nachal” has traditionally included program for Israeli youth in which they could combine their compulsory three-year military service with volunteer-type, “civilian” service. This practice reaches back to the foundation of the state of Israel, when in 1948 a *Gar'in*⁶⁷ committee sent a letter to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion requesting that he allow all *Gar'in* members to enlist into military

interested in that kind of stuff, you know – asking questions” Shaul, Yehuda. 14/06/2007. "Commander, Gdud 50 / Founder, Breaking the Silence." West Jerusalem.

⁶⁷ *Gar'in* – lit. Seed

service as *one group*. To the request forwarded by the Gar'in, Ben Gurion created the Nachal-program, which allowed the Gar'inim (pl.) to combine their military service with volunteerism, and the *Gar'inei Nachal* served together in various army units (Gal 1986: 7, 66; Luttwak and Horowitz 1975).⁶⁸

To explain this request, one has to turn attention to the tasks and members of the Gar'in: A Gar'in can be described as one member group within a larger youth movement, such as the Israeli Scouts. Gar'inim are thus youth groups with strong bonds between the members, and are often identified with communist or democratic socialist philosophies (Creveld 2002b: 155-156; Luttwak and Horowitz 1975: 361-363, appendix I). The Gar'inim are therefore associated with the kibbutzim, and it is also not uncommon that the soldiers continue to live in the kibbutzim also long after their military service (Gal 1986: 7). Perhaps more importantly: In the years around the creation of the State of Israel, the Gar'inim were above all involved in settlement building (Ben-Eliezer 2001: 147), though they have expanded their activities to all manner of charitable volunteerism. The Nachal has thus been intimately associated with the construction of settlements in areas of security concerns to the IDF, such as in the Jordan Valley and along the Green Line (Creveld 2002b: 155-156).

Today, there are two distinct units carrying on the historical tradition and name of the Nachal. The first is a large, non-combat command belonging to the IDF Education Corps, whose primary responsibility is to organize and coordinate the volunteer-type programs and activities that made the original Nachal unit famous in the 50s, 60s, and 70s.⁶⁹

Still, the soldiers interviewed in this project are part of another Nachal section; Nachal is also the name of one of the Israeli Defense Forces infantry regiments, alongside the *Golani Brigade*, *Givati Brigade*, Paratroopers Brigade, and others. This brigade was created in 1982 as a result of an increased need for infantry manpower in the IDF; which in turn was a direct consequence of the conflict in southern Lebanon. The name Nachal was given to the brigade because the first battalion attached to it - *the 50th* - was the Airborne Nachal battalion, transferred over from the Paratroopers brigade and compensated with the raising of a new

⁶⁸ Most famously in the *Nachal Mutznach* battalion (Airborne Nachal) of the Paratroopers (*Tzanchanim*) Brigade, the reserve battalion of which was instrumental in the Israeli victory in the Battle of Jerusalem during the Six Day War (1967).

⁶⁹ This command has a full staff of educational officers and soldiers, and also sponsors other endeavors such as Gadna, a week-long 'introduction' to the military for "high-schoolers" in which they become acquainted with the history, traditions, and routines of the military that they are about to join.

battalion.⁷⁰ Nachal brigade soldiers are distinguished by their light green (“stick light”) berets.⁷¹

The Battalion: The Gdud 50⁷²

The *Gdud 50* – commonly known as the Bazelet 50⁷³ - represent a pride within the IDF system: On the 16th of March 2007 the IDF Spokesperson issued a press release declaring it their “number 1 combat unit”.⁷⁴ It currently has a rather uncommon military makeup, and is split into two contingents:

1. Two thirds of the battalion’s companies are made up of *gar’inim*, who serve one year prior to drafting to the army running programs in lower socio-economic communities, one and a half years training and serving in the IDF in the same manner as other infantry units, one more year participating in community service followed by ten months of combat infantry service.
2. The other one third of the battalion, including the battalion’s veteran combat companies, are made of *Bnei Mashakim LePikud*, nicknamed *Mishkonim*.⁷⁵ The *Mishkonim* are youths from kibbutzes and moshavs, who, prior to their military service were invited to and completed/passed a two-day *Gibush*, which is a military

⁷⁰ Two former patrol units, the 931st and the 932nd were also converted into infantry battalions and attached to the new regiment. Today, the 931st and 932nd are both high-quality, regular infantry battalions whose soldiers are drafted from the general population and serve a full three-year combat service.

⁷¹ See IDF website for further details on the brigade and its ‘standing’ within the IDF: <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/units/forces/ground/infantry/nachal/default.htm>

⁷² There is no literature on Gdud/Bazelet 50 specifically; there are no previous academic studies of the battalion, and the IDF does not publish data on the separate units within its forces. The following outline of the Battalion is thus based on information gathered through interviews. I have presented the data given by the Bazelet 50 soldiers to high-ranking officials in the IDF, for validation and elimination of personal judgments and imprecisions. Nevertheless, the outline of the Bazelet 50 is based on data by soldiers and employees in the IDF, and can thus be juxtaposed with an *emic* account.

⁷³ The *Gdud 50* is known under several names, first and foremost as *Bazelet 50*. Whereas the other “names” make use of the various Hebrew words for military organization units, “Bazelet” is simply the Hebrew term for the rock basalt and reveals a way of labeling within the IDF. Brigades have numbers, units have names. All units in the infantry have names after rocks; and e.g. all units in the Air Force have names after snakes.

⁷⁴ Regrettably, this was published online by the IDF Spokesperson on the IDF’s official website but was removed some time in 2009 and the documentation is no longer available. However, the soldiers express a deep pride in this distinction.

⁷⁵ The *Mishkonim* all serve a full three-year service and many continue on to Officer Candidates School.

trial period prior to selection for elite army units involving various physical, mental, and socio-metric challenges.⁷⁶

The 50th is considered to be the IDF regular infantry battalion with the highest quality manpower, even more than the Paratroopers Brigade, as a result of the selection phase that the soldiers must pass prior to admittance and the fact that nearly 70% of its soldiers are qualified command sergeants, though only a few are picked to actually serve in this regard. After their initial training, most are sent - usually within the first year - to Command Sergeants School. They also, as a continuation of 50th Battalion tradition, complete a paratrooper course after their advanced infantry training.

The selection phase is something the soldiers are tremendously proud of, and Arieh phrased many soldiers feelings, when he said “It is all in all, I would say, an over qualified group – it is unfair to the other units!” (“Arieh” 03/02/08). An important consequence of this group identity, is thus the extent to which it also affects how the soldiers view the other units and battalions:

The other divisions are much more hardcore, and also much more Israeli – like the world sees us, I mean. So, I wanted to be part of something that I would fit in to. The Givati and Golani [the two other infantry battalions in the IDF in addition to the Nachal] - they’re tougher. They’re trained differently. They *are* different. The Golani, for example, are very pride-based in an arrogant way... I am glad I didn’t serve in the Golani. Or in the Givati for that matter. We are chicken. You don’t send us to make a mess. Just send bullies, like the Golani or the Givati, but not us. We’re too good. I mean – contrary to the others, we actually know how to behave. We’re known for that, you know – being good. For behaving. It is in our blood (“Meir” 05/04/09).

Still, it is the so-called *Perek Messima* that perhaps distinguishes the Gdud/Bazelet 50 the most explicitly from other combat units. The *Perek Messima* is a period within the military service where the soldiers step out of the traditional military framework and spend time within the domains of what the soldiers describe as “informal education of underprivileged

⁷⁶ *Gibush* - selection phase involving various physical, mental, and socio-metric challenges.

children”. My interviewees reiterated that the Perek Mesima turns the battalion into “a special battalion because it allows such a special course of duty and it is noticeable in the Gdud’s spirit, which is very special” (“Tzvi” 04/10/08). In addition, these soldiers also conclude their military service with 4 months of work in a kibbutz. In consequence, the military service of my interviewees in the Gdud 50 soldiers is a total of 3 to 4 years and generally has the following structure:⁷⁷

- 1 year and 6 months of combat training , including regular combat activity (“Then we’re like every other combat unit” (“Nadav” 05/02/08)).
- 1 year of *Perek Mesima* (“We’re still in the army, doing the community work as soldiers, but we’re kind of not soldiers” (“Shlomi” 24/06/07)).
- 6 months of ‘regular’ army service (“Then we’re placed mainly around peace borders, but still we’re combat soldier, so we were for example sent into Lebanon in 2006” (“Shlomi” 24/06/07)).
- Last 4-6 months in a kibbutz.

As shown, the soldiers serve for a longer period of time than the regular service, which is 36 months for men. On the one hand, serving four years together forges particular bonds between the men in the same unit. To exemplify, in a Focus Group on 5 April 2009, the soldiers described their relationship as a prolongation of their individual self:

“We know each other better than we know ourselves. Like, I went to this Toga Party a few months back. I was wearing this big, white almost bag-like thing. I didn’t know that anyone else from our group was there. But then one of the guys sees my shadow – my baggy shadow! - and I heard somebody yell my name and then he had recognized me from my Toga-shade! Isn’t it fantastic?!” (“Misha” 05/04/09).

⁷⁷ It should however be pointed out that although the majority follows this course of duty, not all of the soldiers of Gdud 50 do: It is only the ones who did one service year before joining the army in community work living in a “gar’in” (a commune). The rest of the soldiers in Gdud 50 are regular soldiers who do 3 regular combat years.

On the other hand, the soldiers “bounce” back and forth between civil society and the military, and therefore between being soldiers and being civilians. Although they are always under military regulations during their 4 years of service, they wear civilian clothes during their service in the kibbutzes. This has repeatedly been expressed in ambivalent terms, such as in a conversation with a group of soldiers in a kibbutz in Southern Israel, wearing saggy jeans and T-shirts, thus in a big contrast to the uniform⁷⁸ ("FocusGroup" 05/04/09):

They: “We are not soldiers now!”

Me: “Are you not? But isn’t this still part of your army service?”

They: “Well, yeah, but – we’re here! So, well, we are soldiers, but, I mean, look at us – we’re not! But... [cell phone rings] Hang on, our commander is calling.”

Contrary to other units, their training thus allows them to keep the ties with society throughout all of the military service. It therefore likely to assume that the extra time spent in the army, combined with the different – and at times opposite – roles they have to undertake, give these soldiers additional time to contemplate on the process of becoming a soldier. In particular, the last 4 months of military service is spent together as a unit doing community work in a kibbutz can be seen is “acclimatization” within a secure framework before they are left by themselves in society again.

Nevertheless – and let me stress this point – the crucial selection criteria was that the 50th Battalion, the *Gdud 50*, is known for being comprised by recruits who are non-observant and who generally identify themselves as “not religious”. Their sense of viewing themselves as group that is significantly alienated from religion and religious rituals has been a striking and recurring theme throughout the interviews. Their knowledge and familiarity with religious aspects such as rituals or scriptures has been conveyed as rather superficial, as it primarily results from relatively impersonal settings, such as through Israeli national holidays. An interview with Aviner, a 23 year old machine grenade officer, is representative:

⁷⁸ That being said, the IDF soldiers’ uniforms are said to portray the IDF as “A People’s Army” as it deviates from the more traditional image of a uniform being clean and newly ironed: Israelis wear their uniforms in a distinctively casual manner, wrinkly, dusty and baggy.

Me: “Let us move on to the role of religion within the IDF. For a start – do you keep kosher?”

Aviner: “Kosher? I couldn’t care less. Like, I don’t have a problem that if I have eaten something with milk in the morning, then I still can eat meat in the evening, you know. It doesn’t bother me. But if you ask me – I think the army is very religious. *Very* religious. They may pretend that they are not religious, but that’s not right. They are super religious. But it is awkward, because many of the soldiers they are proud of, they are not religious. Us, for example. You know what, especially in Gdud 50, most would learn about the religious mitzvot for the first time in the army. We knew nothing before we came into the army. But, in the army, it is like we go through a religious education alongside the military training! Hehe, it was actually also the first time a met a settler. Never met them before, you know – I mean *met* them” (“Aviner” 05/04/09).

Aviner’s statement is intriguing: He indicates both an alienation from religion and religious groups in his own society, while he at the same time also stresses the religious character of the IDF. It is not the place here to go into these issues. But, Articles II, III and IV will return to Arieh’s statements.

Real-Politik and Interviewee Selection

Although I selected this group already in 2005 when planning my project, my choice of interviewees has had other implications than what could have been foreseen. In addition to the fact that these soldiers are called up for service in an army that has been nearly continuously engaged in military action since the state of Israel was founded in 1948, these soldiers have been exposed to particularly challenging real-political circumstances:

1. This group has served in the IDF in the post-Ariel Sharon Era: Although Ariel Sharon has been in a permanent vegetative state after he suffered a stroke on 4 January 2006 –

and, several of my interviewees were recruited the IDF in 2005 – the battalion did not partake in military action under his command.

2. A consequence of having served in an infantry battalion in this period of Israel's history is that their military service has been dominated by two wars; their first war was the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and their final military operation was Operation Cast Led in Gaza in 2008-09. In between these two wars, they have been engaged in numerous incursions and missions in the West Bank.

This has also had an impact on the whole research endeavour, and the end-results of the analysis. This group has been engaged in military activity in several different territories, with highly diverging legal and symbolic statuses. Discussing issues of territory and belonging with this group provided me with important insights into the meaning of territory for the motivation to fight. These discussions resulted in Article IV, which explores notions of land among them. See Appendix I for selection of interviewees.

The Interviews

Within the Gdud 50, I have conducted 34 in-depth interviews. Of these, 30 are so-called *sabras*, i.e. Israeli-born, and four are *Olim Chadashim*, i.e. immigrants who have made *Aliyah*.⁷⁹ Three of the *Olim Chadashim* come from various places in the United States; one comes from the United Kingdom. All are men.⁸⁰ I have interviewed these soldiers over a period of four years (2006 – 2009) in Hebrew or English after the soldiers' own choice; the interviews in Hebrew have been translated by me. Unanswered or supplementing questions

⁷⁹ *Sabra* is a Hebrew term for native Israel; *Olim Chadashim* is the plural term for "new immigrant". *Aliyah* is the Hebrew term for immigration to Israel.

⁸⁰ There are no women in this particular battalion. However, according to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, women serve a compulsory 24 months of service and constitute 20% of career officers and 33% of compulsory service personnel (Israel(MFA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 08/03/2009. "Integration of women in the IDF." edited by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Israel(MFA). Jerusalem.) The IDF takes great pride in exposing to the public that it integrates women, exemplified e.g. in the numerous pictures of women in uniform on IDF publications and the official website However, women are still underrepresented in the infantry and combat units; in the Second Lebanon War there was one woman of the 119 dead IDF soldiers (Ben-Ari, Bar. 01/08/2007. "A Woman of Valor." in *IDF Spokesperson*. Jerusalem: IDF.) Moreover, the massive presence of women in the IDF has led influential scholars engage in analysing their role. Martin van Creveld has infamously given inflammatory contributions arguing for women's inferiority in the military (Creveld, Martin van. 2002a. *Men, Women & War: Do Women Belong in the Front Line?* London: Cassel & Co.).

have been discussed with the various interviewees either in follow-up face-to-face interviews in the field, or online, through e-mails, “chat rooms” or social media. I have given all interviewees the opportunity to add complementary comments or information. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, conducted within overall three different frameworks:

- Interviews, one-to-one
- Mini-group discussion (2-3 people)
- Focus Groups (4-10 people)⁸¹

Although the interviews followed a strict research focus and specific topics were pursued (See Appendix II: Interview Guides), they were nevertheless not restricted to a set number of questions asked in a fixed order. The interviews were thus what Wimmer and Dominick describes as unstructured (Wimmer and Dominick 1994); or, as Hammersley and Atkinson describe as *reflexive interviewing* (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]: 112-113). Hence, the interview approach deviates substantially from a survey interview which uses “a standardized set of interview procedures” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]: 5), and where the same questions are asked in the identical order and often in the same interview setting with the purpose of minimizing any “effects” that the interview process may have on research outcomes.

Reflexive interviewing does not mean to suggest that there are no prepared questions. Seen in Appendix II, I have conducted the interviews on the basis of a set of questions prepared in advance. Instead the interview is free to take its own direction. During the course of interviewing, many prepared questions went unasked because the context of the discussion had covered the issues sufficiently. By stressing a reflexive approach the interviewer can:

- take advantage of the immediate situation or train of thought of the interviewee;
- uncover information from a free-flow discussion by the interviewee that structured questions could not have foreseen or covered;
- put the person at ease by allowing them to ‘control’ the discussion;

⁸¹ For elaboration on Focus Group research, see: Puchta, C., and J. Potter. 2004. *Focus Group Practice*. London: Sage; Wilkinson, Sue. 2004. "Focus Group Research." Pp. 177-199 in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, edited by David Silverman. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- allow interviewees to expand on particular issues that are important to them.

Resting the analysis on the soldiers' portrayal of religion implies that the analysis is explorative, focusing on the notions of religion amongst the individuals that together comprise the institution. How do those that are recruited into the institution and are trained into acting on its behalf portray its meaning system? The interviews enabled me to both access as well as accentuate the individual understandings, perceptions and experiences within the institution. The interviews therefore enabled me to glean insights into: fundamental constituents in their worldview; how these constituents feed into specific decisions and priorities; how they come to terms with soldiering; and how they perceive their own role within the institution of which they are part.

The attitudes and emotional repertoire of the soldiers have undoubtedly been 'cultured' by the institution. At the same time, no process of socialization and internalization is ever total as individuals continue to contemplate and put into question the institutional norms and directives (Berger and Luckman 1966; Searle 1995). In the context of the military – and, in contrast to civil society - socialization processes are enclosed with strict directives for correct versus incorrect behavior and deviances from the encouraged behavior is met with reprisals. In the attempt to forge shared standards of evaluation and social bonds amongst the recruits, the military aims at conformity with a certain norm. "Discipline" is thereby ordinarily applied in the military as a term with positive connotations, as an overall mode of regulation (Giddens 1995 [1984]: 148). In the case of the IDF, the military has since it was founded alongside the state also been given extensive socialization tasks, as the military also was burdened with the absorption of the massive immigration as well as offering the "underprivileged" programs of education and rehabilitation⁸² (see e.g. Ben-Ari 1998; Ben-Ari et al. 2000; Catignani 2004; Cohen 2008; Etzioni-Halevy 1996; Gal 1986; Guiora 2006; IDF 2010b; Lissak 1971; Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999; Luttwak and Horowitz 1975; Maman et al. 2001; Nevo and Shur-Shmueli 2003; Rosenhek et al. 2003b; Sharot 1990). A consequence of these practices is that the boundaries between civil society and the armed

⁸² One example is the "Makam"-project wherein "young people from slum neighborhoods, often with criminal records, get a second chance through military service", see page 147 in: Ben-Eliezer, Uri. 2001. "From Military Role-Expansion to Difficulties in Peace-Making: The Israel Defense Forces 50 Years On." Pp. 137-172 in *Military, State, and Society in Israel*, edited by Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari and Zeev Rosenhek. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.

forces are blurred, which increases the impact of the moral codes and standards of evaluation that are encouraged within the military context. Accordingly, it was interesting to detect in my study that the IDF cultivates the soldiers' attitudes and emotional repertoire of its soldiers through a certain sentiment; a feeling of being Jewish, of acting Jewish. This reflects one striking feature with the Gdud 50 soldiers' notion of e.g. the IDF's Code of Conduct (The *Ruach Tsahal*), namely soldiers' military action regulated by emotional and experiential constraints; not by legal boundaries. The apparent reason for this is that IDF soldiers are trained in ethical codes; not in international law.⁸³ That is to say that the soldiers enter the field with limited knowledge about International Humanitarian Law, but with extensive training in ethical behavior according to IDF standards. I return to this in Article II.

The interviews were a means of exploring the social and cultural context wherein this meaning system is produced, reproduced and maintained. Isolating an individual response from an institutional setting would raise problems of ecological validity and representativeness (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]: 10-11; 44-45). The interviews were thus a means not merely to explore the individual sentiments, but also to enable a qualified analysis of the institution at large. Consequently, the interviews had three roles: To provide information of the institution's meaning system; provide texture to how this meaning system is conveyed to the soldiers; and increase understanding and knowledge on the role of religion in the IDF.

“Generalisability” versus Particularity

This project, then, is primarily aimed at understanding the role of religion within a particular empirical context – not to develop a theoretical framework that enhances the interrelationship between the military and religion, although I in Article II offer a tentative model of religion in the IDF, i.e. in a given empirical context.

A common concern raised about a case study, is to what degree it can provide a basis for scientific generalization. Does the case study “simply” provide new knowledge about this one phenomenon, or can this knowledge also be applied to other cases or to the development of analytical frameworks? The answer is rarely straight forward. According to Robert K. Yin,

⁸³ This point is expanded upon in Article III in the sub-chapter “Religion in the military mindset”.

“the short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a ‘sample’, and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (Yin 2003: 10). Accordingly, Yin argues that case studies should pay extra attention to the deductive question of generalisability as this closely knit to the very meaning with the whole endeavor. That is to say, Yin problematizes the utility of a case study if it does not contribute to discussions with and within the research sphere.

Needless to say, these concerns are also applicable to a qualitative case study about the Israel Defense Forces. And, in a way, the answer is: Both. The IDF bounces between being an example of a ‘regular’ army and at the same time a highly unique case. The IDF is confronted with – and represents – challenges that are relevant to most armies (e.g. the training of soldiers, the organization, security responsibilities, representing a nation state) but having been engaged in warfare more or less continuously since the foundation of the state it represents, there is little doubt that the IDF now finds itself in a position that equals that of few other conscript armies. Its close affinity with one religion and ethnic group also indicates that the IDF represents a moral system that is difficult to transmit to others without imposing rather substantial alterations. Yet, as Sergio Catignani explains, “When analyzing the Israeli case study, the uniqueness of the Israeli state of military affairs precludes the possibility of using any over-arching theory that might be applicable to other countries. [...] the fact that the Israeli case study cannot be boxed into a particular strict theoretical framework does not preclude the fact that policy-relevant lessons can be learned from [it]” (Catignani 2008: 6).

There are perhaps two elements that stand out in making knowledge about the IDF a relevant case to more than just the IDF itself, namely that of recruitment and training: Firstly, recruitment to the IDF is based on compulsory conscription. And secondly, all soldiers must be trained in the ethical and moral framework of the army in order to become “good soldiers”.

Any army is necessarily compelled to produce soldiers that act in accordance with the orders and the army’s fundamental meaning system. That may in turn contradict previously learned values, the most conspicuous being the issue of killing: Whereas it is fundamental to teach all its members in any civil society that one should not kill, a soldier may on the other hand be ordered to do exactly that.

At the same time, one may argue that the IDF may be a revealing case simply because it is relatively “extreme”, in the sense that it remains particularly active and represents a state with a rather distinct affiliation to one particular cultural heritage: Whereas most armies

are trained for the hypothetical event of war in their nearby surroundings, armed conflict has been part of the everyday life of Israelis for decades. Thus, the IDF and its soldiers do not only prepare for a highly realistic threat, it is part of the cultural matrix. Military activity for the IDF is *real*.

When it comes to the core theme of this dissertation – namely that of religion – it is hard to say whether the IDF actually *is* such a peculiar case. As will be shown at length below, there is little explicit in the official documents by the IDF establishment that the Israeli army rests upon one particular religious tradition, which in the IDF's case is that of Judaism. Yet at the same time, there is little doubt that it does, both in terms of its discourse, its practices, its role in society as well as in terms of how it is viewed both by its recruits, the state it serves as well as by the general international community at large. All these factors contribute to spelling out relatively clearly that the meaning system of a state army – including its sense of purpose - is shaped in dialectic with its reference surroundings.

Seen in this way, the IDF is not a single case. One may draw attention to the role of other militaries, such as e.g. The Pakistan Military. Under the rule of Zia ul Haq from 1978 to 1988, Pakistani society – the army included – was subject to several “islamification”-campaigns. The close affinities with Islam and the Muslim community have also contributed to the Pakistani military's close ties to the Middle East. Or to put it differently: it is not merely geographical proximity and a strategic location that has contributed to developing close ties between Pakistan and countries such as e.g. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Rather, these countries also share a fundamental religious outlook (Nawaz 2008). In many ways, the Pakistan army has many similarities with the IDF. As the military analyst Ayesha Siddiqa says: “There are armies that guard their nation's borders, there are those that are concerned with protecting their own position in society, and there are those that defend a cause or an idea. The Pakistan army does all three” (Siddiqa 2007: 61). Similar arguments could be made with reference to the IDF.

Lastly, a comment should also be made on the fact that I have focused my collection of interview data on one battalion. Obviously, these 34 men cannot speak for the whole institution. And, although my data provide very clear indications of the role of religion within the IDF – also in the formation of the soldiers' standard of evaluation – future research must judge whether these findings also are valid in the context of other units.

The question of generalisability in case studies should not be judged in terms of its empirical data or empirical counterpart. Rather, a theoretically based investigation of an

[71]

empirical case can help us to further develop theoretical tools that in turn contribute to understanding other empirical data better (Yin 2003: 10). This is what I hope to contribute to.

3 THE ARTICLES: REFLECTIONS AND PRESENTATION

This dissertation is based on a collection of five articles that each deal with connected – but yet independent – issues that all relate to the overall question of role of religion in the IDF. Article-based dissertations are becoming increasingly common in the social sciences and the humanities. This dissertation is, to my knowledge, the first article-based dissertation to be submitted in Religious Studies, to use the label of the host university for this dissertation; the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. This university emphasizes cooperation and cross-disciplinarity. The scope, theme and aim of this dissertation are therefore developed with an eye to this fundamental idea.

The article format comes at a price: A possible disadvantage is found in the compressed “layout” it implies. Articles give little space for lengthy discussions on any topic, particularly when it comes to the methodologies applied. A consequence of the focus on the empirical data in my dissertation has thus been that I have had to reduce or omit a series of relevant theoretical and methodological reflections, or expand on particular details in the empirical data. Still, I have chosen to make use of the article format for above all three reasons:

Firstly, although this dissertation is submitted within the scientific study of religion and I have a strong sense of belonging to this discipline, my work nevertheless has a strong inter-disciplinary dimension as it draws upon the insights and competence from a number of other disciplines. As has been noted throughout this introduction, the study of the military has predominantly been conducted within other disciplines and genres, and the scholarly debates on the military occur in journals such as *Armed Forces and Society*. Accordingly, in order to draw upon the insights of these other disciplines and at the same time be in dialogue with other research milieus I chose to make use of the article format.

Secondly, a central theme in this dissertation is the ways in which the scientific study of religion can contribute with significant analytical insights also within domains we have thus far only minimally engaged in. I have consequently structured the articles in such a way that each of them focus on a separate dimension of the military, thus situating each article in relation to different topics with prevalence in the study of the military.

Thirdly, the scientific study of religion is a multi-method discipline. Although primarily engaging in qualitative methodologies, also quantitative approaches are gaining

momentum.⁸⁴ An example is the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, which now primarily accepts quantitative studies. Yet, also scholars who are otherwise known first and foremost for their qualitative contributions engage in multi-method and quantitative studies, in particular with relation to out discipline's taxonomic potential. An example is Eileen Barker's "The Church Without and the God Within" where she explores the patterns and opinions in people's views on spirituality (Barker 2008).

My own article "The Logic of Palestinian Terrorist Target Choice? Examining the Israel Defense Forces' official statistics on Palestinian terrorist attacks 2000-2004" – which constitutes Article V in my compilation – is a result of similar considerations. The article is written in collaboration with my brother, who holds a PhD in statistics from the Department of Mathematics and the Department of Petroleum Engineering, Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The article rests on a multi-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. As will be shown in Article V, the statistical analysis of the IDF's data would be literally meaningless without combining it with the context sensitive and culture oriented analytical approach that the discipline of religion offers.⁸⁵

Lastly, it should be noted that as this dissertation rests on qualitative interview data gathered over several years (2006-2009) with a group of soldiers who have been at war twice during this period, data collection has been a prolonged concern with implications for the final analysis. Apart from Article V, the articles are based on an analysis of the interview data as a whole, and the articles were thus written more or less in parallel. Accordingly, they could not be sent out sent journals for peer-review earlier in the process. Consequently, only Article V has thus far been published, although Article I is accepted for publication and Article II is awaiting a final acceptance from *Armed Forces and Society* after it received a "revise and resubmit".⁸⁶ The articles have been formatted according to the lay-out requirements of each journal.

⁸⁴ For an interesting discussion on the contemporary scientific study of religion's use of quantitative methods, see page 112-116 in: Davie, Grace. 2007. *The Sociology of Religion*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi & Singapore: Sage Publ.

⁸⁵ For editorial purposes set by the publication journal, the nomenclature of Religious Studies had to be excluded. This, in turn, explicates one of the challenges that are inherent to a multi-method approach: Different disciplines have their own "tribal language", which may offer problems of clarity. In our case – i.e. in Article V – the statistical findings constituted our most weighty contribution. Thus, we had to emphasize this aspect at the cost of "cultivating" a vocabulary more in line with the discipline of religion.

⁸⁶ Article II has also gone through several rounds with the editor-in-chief in order to "seamline" the document with *Armed Forces and Society* formatting demands. The changes have been integrated into the manuscript that is included in the dissertation.

The Articles: A Brief Presentation

Article I - “Via Facebook to Jerusalem: Social Media as a Toolbox for the Study of Religion”: This article attempts to combine Internet research with fieldwork, and takes as its starting point some of the obvious challenges that were ahead of me when I started on this project: How could I identify and recruit interviewees and how could I gather data that would provide a qualified analysis? Qualitative fieldwork methodology applies concepts such as “Gatekeeper” and “Snowballing” to offer solutions to these challenges. Yet, these tools are primarily applicable when in the field. In order to explore an alternative methodological approach to the above-mentioned questions, I employed social media to explore its potential as a research tool in the scholarly study of contemporary religion. Approaching Facebook as a toolbox rather than an object, I attempted to “demystify” social media in general and Facebook in particular. Utilizing these media forms proved to be efficient tools throughout the research process. In the article I thus look at primarily two phases of the process; pre-fieldwork and post-fieldwork, and explores the various components of Facebook in combination with these two phases. I conclude by arguing that Facebook represents a “Hub-Keeper”, which I apply as a generic term referring to three primary methodological functions: It is a Gate-Keeper that enables identification and recruitment of interviewees; it is a hub containing a variety of data; and, it is a Gateway for validation of data.

Article II - “Religion and Military Conscription: Exploring Conscription Practices in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)”: This article contains a distinct inter-disciplinary aspect. Conscription is a widely discussed theme within the scholarly study of the military, and the literature is vast. Yet, as the literature generally has dismissed the relevance – and therefore the inclusion – of religion to conscription, a crucial dimension to understanding conscription is in my opinion lost. Thus, by applying the analytical tools offered by the discipline of religion, a critical element in the IDF’s conscription criteria comes to the fore. The article is rooted in a classical distinction in the functional study of religion, namely between its integrative and disintegrative functions. Thematically, the article departs from discussion on how conscript armies assess and categorize potential manpower, and on what basis its conscription criteria contribute to drawing a necessary boundary between “us” and “them”. The article explores these quandaries through an analysis of a combination of interview data and official IDF documents. The data indicates that religion offers a pervasive framework that

allows for the IDF to foster a sense of “us” in complex socio-political environs. The IDF thus provides a revealing case in the analysis of the function of religion within the military. I argue that the “dual face of religion” is at work in the IDF, as it serves both integrative and disintegrative functions by marking distinct community boundaries on several levels; both externally, marking the boundary between Israel’s Jewish community versus the other minorities, and internally, accentuating fault lines between different Jewish groups. Religion thus helps the IDF to navigate in a complex socio-cultural setting.

Article III - “Coming to Terms with Soldiering: Religion and the Role of the Soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)”: This article addresses the interrelationship between religion and soldiering in the context of contemporary conscript armies. The discussion departs from the following question: How do recruits come to terms with soldiering? At its backdrop is the theoretization of post-modernity’s characteristics of individualization and fragmentation. Conscript armies represent an intriguing contrast to the dominating lines of argumentation amongst scholars of religion regarding the relation of religion to social systems in post-modernity. The needs and aspirations of conscript armies thus radically collide with the trends within civil society and face the individual recruits with a glaring contrast. Whereas one in civil society seem to have more choices to make about religion and meaning systems, conscript armies possess the right to recruit its manpower into a system that strives to engender coherence and unity on the basis of state law. Conscript armies operate within relatively restricted confines, and they select, recruit and train their manpower in order to implement their primary function as providers of state security. Its functionality necessitates that the soldiers adhere to the military’s purpose and mission, and conformity with the military’s meaning system is consequently engendered. On what basis is this achieved? How does religion and cultural context feed into this seam lining? How do soldiers come to view the institution they are recruited represent? In other words, how do soldiers find meaning in their role as military representatives? The article reveals that without paying decisive attention to religion these questions cannot be understood. The analysis reveals that Judaism is crucial for how IDF soldiers comprehend their role as soldiers: Judaism is constitutive in the creation of unity in experience amongst the soldiers, as well providing them with cosmology that locates their role as individual soldiers within a larger framework of collective meaning.

Article IV - “Possession, Belonging and Warfare: Notions of Land amongst Combat Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)”: The Land of Israel constitutes a fundamental building block in Jewish history, culture, identity and religion. It is both an abstract as well as a concrete entity, being a theological and biblical concept as well as a historic concept concerning a particular place. This multi-referentiality and inherent ambiguities turn it into a rather unwieldy entity. Regardless of interpretation of its demarcation lines, Eretz Israel has continuously been a scene of contention. Today, the significance and controversy of what territories Eretz Israel should comprise, is as intense as ever. However, we still know surprisingly little about the group that is perhaps most explicitly faced with the more concrete consequences of the lack of state borders, namely the combat soldiers in the IDF. These men comprise the state of Israel’s spearhead in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. So, what comprises Israel’s “territorial integrity” in the eyes of those who are set to defend it? This article provides an explorative functional and sociological analysis rooted in the scholarly study of religion. I will argue that the IDF operates with a graded notion of the territories that the institution’s activities are targeted against. Whereas Israel and the Arab world – marked in the north by the border to Lebanon, in the west by the border to Egypt and in the East by the Jordan river and the border to Jordan – are at the two opposite poles of the graduation of territory, the West Bank is a complex grey area where places are graded as “ours” and “theirs” primarily with reference to national, cultural and religious factors. Yet, crucial to the argument is the role the religious Zionist settlers play in the development of this notion of map. During their military service, the secular soldiers repeatedly interact with the observant settlers, internalizing their notion of territory and boundary creation, giving prevalence to symbolism over legal boundaries.

Article V - “The Logic of Palestinian Terrorist Target Choice? Examining the Israel Defense Forces’ Official Statistics on Palestinian Terrorist Attacks 2000–2004”: This article is the first to explore the IDF’s official statistical data on Palestinian terrorism toward Israeli targets during the al-Aqsa intifada 2000–2004. The purpose of this article is twofold; firstly, to explore the IDF’s data on Palestinian terror with the aim of identifying an underlying logic in the choice of targets, and secondly, to attempt to apply aspects of the scientific study of religion onto domains that are thus far unconventional within the discipline. The analysis supported our assumption unambiguously: Palestinian terrorism has a clear tendency to be targeted toward carefully selected places and population groups. By combining

statistical content analysis with a culture analysis that is sensitive to the local context, the article has been able to identify that attacks carried out in the Occupied Territories and those within the state of Israel, are on the whole fundamentally different. With respect to form, this analysis has identified how suicide bombings are far more likely to occur within the state of Israel, whereas shooting incidents are more likely to occur within the Occupied Territories. This distinction does in turn respond to the questions of where and who, respectively: Attacks in Israel tend to strike in public places that gather large crowds of Israeli civilians, whereas attacks within the Occupied Territories are targeted toward settlers and IDF soldiers who are within—or close to—ideological settlements.

The article is co-authored together with my brother, Jo Røislien, Department of Biostatistics, Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Oslo, Norway

4 CONCLUSIONS

Seen from the above, the discipline of religion represents a “tool box” of analytical approaches that is applicable to areas that extend far beyond the domain of the more traditional confines of religion. Departing from the observation that the scientific study of religion has engaged only minimally in the study of the military, the dissertation is based on the nearly normative assumption that our discipline both can and should engage in a wider set of topics.

Based on 34 in-depth interviews with soldiers in the 50th Battalion of the Nachal Infantry Brigade, I have in this dissertation offered an explorative – and primarily functional and sociological - analysis of the role of religion in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The analysis was based on the following research questions:

- What is the role of religion in the IDF’s universe of meaning?
- What is the role of religion in the IDF 50th Battalion soldiers’ standard of evaluation whereby their military duties appear meaningful?

With this as the starting point, I have explored different stages in the IDF’s recruitment and training of the soldiers, focused on the soldiers themselves and how the institutional level works on them. By focusing the analysis on a non-practicing unit in the study of a military institution, the dissertation applied “religion” as a generic term and rested the analysis on the fundamental assumption that the military is a cultural agent. My data and analyses lead me to conclude that the IDF is an institution that is profoundly influenced by Judaism, and where religion consequently serves crucial functions in the IDF.

The IDF operates in complex, heated and contested environments where issues of culture, ethnicity, religion and identity are crucial to the overall image of its security environs. However, Judaism provides the IDF with a cultural repertoire that constitutes a compass that helps the army to navigate in complex and intricate socio-cultural and political environs, as well as forging a multi-layered sense of unity: Judaism forges unity in experience amongst the soldiers, it helps to create unity in values, judgment, purpose and opinion, and it forges a

sense of moral unity that situates the individual soldier within the context of a larger community with a particular mission.

I apply the metaphor of religion as a compass, due to its multiple references. As a compass, Judaism represents a reliable instrument for guidance that indicates the IDF the cosmological order of its surroundings, telling how things are in and by nature. It also charts a proper path that allows for profound orientation. Ideally, this is of course the ‘ambition’ of every religion. Yet, without adherence to its principles, guidelines or meaning system, it serves no function. Accordingly, I have in my study explored how the IDF engenders a sense of unity rooted in a particular repertoire. I have therefore explored the role of religion in the recruitment and conscription process (Article II); the role of religion as a community constitutor within the institution (Article II, III and IV) and I have explored various dimensions of the soldiers’ notions of their surroundings, focused on two issues: The meaning system of the institution of which they are part (Article III) and the territory for which they fight (Article IV). In Article V I showed how symbolic significance inflicts on the security environs. As this study is based on interviews with members of a closely guarded community, the methods I applied in recruiting interviewees demanded further explication and reflection, resulting in Article I.

Let me be clear: Arguing that religion is present throughout the military institution of the IDF, I do not argue that religion is a *sui generis* phenomenon ‘disclosing’ itself through hierophanies. Neither do I argue that the members of the military are ‘actually’ religious, although not committing to it themselves. What I do argue, however, is that adherence to religion is not necessarily about god and transcendence: Religion is a compound term, with crucial social functions such as being a cultural taxonomizer, a boundary marker, a community unifier and a provider of meaning within the group. I have thus neither explored the informants’ view of a god, nor their conformity with normative Jewish orthodox theology as conveyed by the Military Rabbinate. At the same time, it has become clear that the interviewees’ line of argumentation reflected a notion of Judaism that contains a series of elements and dimensions that undoubtedly can figure under the canopy of “Judaism” but that nevertheless lacks a notion of – or belief in – a transcendent being. Thus, despite not accepting the ontological status of god(s), the cultural narratives that has evolved from Jewish groups’ notion of a god, is in consequence a historic supposition for the soldiers’ Judaism.

The study of religion has thus far only minimally engaged in explorations of the military. At the same time, the discipline has a significant potential for pushing our

knowledge of the military further. My findings thus imply that the study of religion provides us with an approach that may contribute to increasing our understanding of several dimensions of the military.

Yet, this dissertation has focused on the empirical case of the IDF. Accordingly, we are left with several questions: To what extent does religious and cultural context influence the meaning systems of other militaries? Empirically, my findings can feed into further analysis in other topical context. For example: How do soldiers fighting in the ISAF forces view their role? How can we better prepare NATO's forces to perform their tasks in complex socio-cultural environs?

Although I on the one hand would argue that the discipline of religion provides us with a much needed approach in the study of the military, I would on the other hand like to point more pragmatically to the fact that we, scholars of religion, in the military have an intriguing vast domain of data ready to be analyzed. I hope that when having read the articles, the reader is left with a more comprehensive understand of both the dynamics of military communities, of the Israel Defense Forces, and of religion in the context of the military.

It is thus my hope that I have contributed to triggering an interest in the military amongst scholars of religion, while at the same time making scholars of the military open their eyes to the significance of religion to their field of study.

5 APPENDIXES

Appendix I: Fieldwork and Interviewees

Fieldwork: Visits to Israel and the West Bank			
2005	September	9 days	
2006	June	15 days	
2007	June	22 days	
	October	11 days	
2008	February	15 days	
	October	10 days	
2009	March / April	19 days	
2010	April	8 days	
Participation in Relevant Events			
19.- 23. September 2005:	Participation in the seminar: "The military disengagement in Gaza", Jerusalem Center for Ethics, led by Professor Asa Kasher in cooperation with the Israel Defense Forces		
2008	Observation: Military Service - Education Branch in Southern Israel		
2009	Participation: Garin Ethical Training in a kibbutz in Central Israel		
Soldiers: Face-to-face interviews & Facebook communication			
when	anonymisation'	where	position in IDF
13.06.2007	Yoram	Jerusalem	Sniper, Bazelet 50 - Infantry Brigade
14.06.2007	Yesaiah	Jerusalem	Seargent, Bazelet 50 - also: Machine grenade Officer
18.06.2007	Gidi	Tel Aviv	Combat Soldier, Bazelet 50
20.06.2007	Uri	Jerusalem	Combat Soldier, Bazelet 50
24.06.2007	Shlomi	Jerusalem	Sergeant, Machine grenade Officer, Bazelet 50
24.06.2007	Uzi	Jerusalem	Sergeant, Machine grenade Officer, Bazelet 50
27.06.2007	Shay	Tel Aviv	Combat, Golani
13.10.2007	Amitai	Ashkelon	Commander, Bazelet 50
13.10.2007	Barak	Tel Aviv	Commander, Tanker, Bazelet 50
14.10.2007	Niv	Jerusalem	Commander, Semi-sniper, Bazelet 50
16.10.2007	Kobi	Jerusalem	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50
17.10.2007	Yoel	Jerusalem	Sergeant, Machine grenade Officer, Bazelet 50

17.10.2007	Dor	Ra'anana	Commander, Semi-sniper, Bazelet 50
19.10.2007	Avishai	Rehovot	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50
03.02.2008	Arieh	Tel Aviv	Commander in the Bazelet 50, Nachal. From 2006: Reserves, Bazelet 50.
04.02.2008	Benny	Jerusalem	Un Until 2007: Commander, IDF Intelligence
05.02.2008	Nadav	Jerusalem	Commander, Gdud 932: Hesder - Nachal
05.02.2008	Nir	Jerusalem	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50
06.02.2008	David	Tel Aviv	Sergeant, Machine grenade Officer, Bazelet 50
06.02.2008	Amos	Rehovot	Sergeant, Bazelet 50. From 2007: Education Corps
07.02.2008	Gilad	Tel Aviv	Sergeant, Bazelet 50. From 2007: Education Corps
10.02.2008	Moshe	Ashkelon	Reserves, Bazelet 50. Until 2007: Sergeant, Sniper, Bazelet 50.
02.10.2008	Eytan	Tel Aviv	Officer, Magav Nikim
04.10.2008	Roi	Haifa	Commander, Bazelet 50
04.10.2008	Tzvi	Tel Aviv	Commander, Bazelet 50
27.03.2009	"Eyal"	Jerusalem	Commander, Bazelet 50
31.03.2009	Aviram	Tel Aviv	Commander, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	Yitzak	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, Tanker, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	Yaron	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, Semi-sniper, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	Oren	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	Sami	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	Meir	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, semi-sniper, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	"Elad"	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	"Mischa"	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, Bazelet 50
05.04.2009	"Aviner"	Kibbutz in Southern Israel	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50

07.04.2007	Haim	Tel Aviv	Commander, combat, Bazelet 50
Facebook only			
	Sharon	Officer, Education Corps, Nachal	
	Samuel	Sergeant, Bazelet 50	
	Yitz	Sergeant, Bazelet 50	
Focus Group			
05.04.2009	Focus Group	Mixed	Commanders, Snipers and Tankers
Senior IDF Staff*			
<p>*This dissertation includes interviews with 9 high ranking IDF Officers that have had significant impact on the training and activities of the soldiers that this dissertation is based upon. However, due to issues related to political sensitivity and personal considerations, all interviewees demanded full anonymity. Their wish has been respected, and accordingly, neither names, nor titles appear here.</p>			

Appendix II: Interview Guide

Interview Guide for one-to-one Interviews and Focus Group with *Gdud 50*

The Interview Guide has been used as a “Conversation Guide”, thus as a starting point for dialogue. This approach gives more flexibility for interviewees to talk freely and therein also to create more saturated data. I have used the same Interview Guide for Focus Group research, which was comprised in the aftermath of a series of individual interviews. I then gathered the soldiers in order to discuss – and validate – findings that had been the “revealed” during individual discussions.

Thank you very much for being willing to participate in this interview. It is good to finally meet, after having communicated so much before!

As you know, this is an interview. So, before we start I would like to give you some pieces of information:

First, it is important to emphasize that this interview is confidential. Everything you say here will be only between you and me. Quotes and comments that might be used in the articles will be anonymised: I will not use your name, and delete all references that would otherwise make the statements traceable back to you.

Second, as this interview is based on volunteer participation you should feel free to not answer questions you may not wish to reveal answers to. If you wish to stop the entire interview, you are also free to do that whenever you want.

Thirdly, it is important for me to find out how you think about the different questions that I have. I don't sit here “template”: There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, you are the expert and it is my goal to try to understand how you make sense of your thoughts and your situation. The interview normally lasts for 2 hours. However, we can stop whenever you wish, and we can also continue at a later stage should you wish to do so.

Interview No.:

Age:

Nationality:

Rank:

Time spent in the army at the time of the interview:

Background information

- Where are you from?
 - In Israel
 - Before Israel
 - Ashkenazi/Sephardi
- Religion: Practicing / non-practicing family
- Brothers and sisters in the army

1. General sentiments towards the institution

- For how long have you been serving in the IDF?
- What is your unit and rank in the IDF?
- What is your particular training? (sniper, machine gun etc.)
- What are your tasks?
- What is it like serving in the IDF? Did you appreciate/not appreciate it?
- What do you appreciate?
- What do you *not* appreciate?

2. The Ruach Tsaah; the Spirit of the IDF

According to the IDF Doctrine, the “Spirit of the IDF” draws on four sources:

1. The tradition of the IDF and its military heritage as the Israel Defense Forces.
 2. The tradition of the State of Israel, its democratic principles, laws and institutions.
 3. The tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history.
 4. Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life
- Can you explain to me what these sources mean to you?
 - The sources of the Ruach Tsaah are both universal and national. Why is that, in your opinion?
 - Are they equally important?
 - Why / why not?
 - Can you categorise them to me?
 - Can you elaborate on what is meant by this categorisation?

- The Ruach Tsahal is described as “the identity card of the IDF values” by the IDF establishment. How do you feel about it?
- Can the Ruach Tsahal be applied by other armies, too?
 - Why / why not?
 - (In case of emphasis on national imprint on the Ruach Tsahal: How do you think the Spirit of the IDF is different from that of other armies - what is Jewish and what is Israeli about it?)

3. Religion: Kosher and Jewish religious rituals.

- The IDF keeps kosher and celebrates Jewish rituals. What do you think about that?
 - Which rituals are important to you?
 - Which rituals are not important to you?
 - Describe a regular Shabbat; what do you do?
- The IDF does not celebrate other religious feasts. Should it?
 - In what way is the IDF Jewish?
 - Is it important/not important to you that the IDF that the IDF is Jewish?

4. The IDF's mission

The mission of the IDF is “To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel. To protect the inhabitants of Israel and to combat all forms of terrorism which threaten the daily life.”

- Please explain to me what is meant by this.
- The State of Israel has border disputes with its neighbours. Can you explain to me where Israel's boundaries are?
 - Why do you draw the boundaries here?

5. The service and the territories

- Which areas have you served in?
 - Were you in the West Bank? Where?
 - Were you in Gaza?

- Were you in Lebanon?
- Describe how you experienced first coming to those areas.
- Describe how you were prepared for entering into those areas.
- The Gdud 50 generally spends a lot of time in Hebron.
 - Describe your service there.
 - How does it differ from e.g. Gaza and Lebanon?
- In the spirit of the IDF, it is also emphasised the significance of “Love of the Homeland and Loyalty to the Country”. How do you feel about that?

6. The settlers

- You have served to protect the settlers in many places in the West Bank, but you are not yourself living in those areas.
 - Describe how you feel about the settlements.
 - Describe how you feel about the settlers.
 - How do the settlers treat you while you are on service?
 - How do you relate to them?
 - How is the relation between the IDF and the settlers?
 - Are there any particular incidents you would like to point out?

7. Controversy

- Many of my informants have in previous correspondence said that they have the lens of the international press in their faces during their military service.
 - What are your experiences in this regard?
 - In what way do you experience this?
- It has been reported in the press that the IDF has witnessed a change in its loyalty amongst the population.
 - Why is that, do you think?

8. Particularity

- What do you think the IDF can contribute with compared to other armies?

9. Is there something else you would like to mention that I have not asked about?

Thank you very much for you participation. Should you wish to contact me to add something you should feel free to contact me at any time. I hope we will continue our dialogue on the net also in the future. Meanwhile: Take good care of yourself!

Appendix III: Hebrew Glossary

- Aliyah* The Hebrew term referring to Jewish immigration to the State of Israel (and, before its establishment in 1948, to the Land of Israel). Noteworthy, *aliyah* is derived from the root עלה which means to ascend, go up. That this term is used for immigration to Israel refers to the Jewish cosmology in which the universe is depicted as being hierarchic. Accordingly, Jewish geography is hierarchic, and as Israel is more sacred than other lands, one has to *climb up* to enter Israel.
- Bazelet 50* The 50th Battalion of the *Nachal* (see below), known for its rather uncommon structure: 2/3 of the battalion's companies are made up of *gar'inim* (see below), whereas the last 1/3 are made of the *Mishkonim* (see below) who prior to their military service were invited to - and completed/passed - a two-day *gibush* (see below). The 50th is considered to be the IDF regular infantry battalion with the highest quality manpower, even more than the Paratroopers Brigade, as a result of the selection phase that the soldiers must pass prior to admittance and the fact that nearly 70% of its soldiers are qualified command sergeants. All interviewees in this study belong to the Bazelet 50.
- Bnei Mashakim Le-Pikud* Lit: “Children under army management”, nicknamed *Mishkonim*. The *Mishkonim* are youths from kibbutzes and moshavs, who prior to their military service were invited to and completed/passed a two-day *gibush* (see below).
- Chativa* Hebrew. Lit.: Division
- Chayalim Bodedim* Lit. “Lone Soldiers”. Soldiers who are not native Israelis, but have left their country of origin, made *aliyah*, and are *Oleh Chadashim*. They do therefore not have their family in Israel. The *Chayalim Bodedim* are offered extra caretaking services by the IDF as well as by the state of Israel – as well as by other fellow soldiers.
- Chok Shirut Bitachon* Hebrew version of the *Defence Service Law* dated 5746-1986

(www.mfa.gov.il), which serves as a judicial basis for compulsory conscription into the IDF for all citizens of the state of Israel, excluding Arabs.

<i>Ein brirah</i>	Hebrew. Lit. "No Choice". The concept has become closely associated with the assumption that has been underlining the Israeli justification for engagement in wars up to 1982, namely that Israel has had "No Choice" but to engage in warfare.
<i>Galei Tzahal</i>	Lit. "IDF Waves", commonly referred to by the abbreviation <i>Galatz</i> . Galei Tzahal is a nationwide Israeli radio network operated by the Israel Defense Forces and funded mainly by the Ministry of Defense.
<i>Galgalatz</i>	An offshoot from Galei Tzahal. A 24/7 hit music radio station.
<i>Gar'in</i>	Hebrew. Seed. A <i>gar'in</i> can be described as one member "cell" within a larger youth movement. The Gar'inim (pl.) are youth groups with strong bonds between the members, often identified with communist or democratic socialist philosophies. The Gar'inim are associated with the kibbutzim, and have been strongly involved in settlement building
<i>Gdud</i>	Hebrew. Battalion.
<i>Gibush</i>	Military trial period prior to selection for elite army units; selection phase involving various physical, mental, and sociometric challenges.
<i>Ha-Ravanut Ha-Tsva'it</i>	The Chief Military rabbinate. Advises the Chief of General staff on religious matters. According to law, each unit in the IDF must have a representative of the Rabbinate advising them. These representatives are responsible for providing all religious needs for soldiers serving in their units (http://dover.idf.il/IDF/units/moreunits/rabanut/default.htm).
<i>Haganah</i>	Hebr. Litt.: "Defense". The Jewish self-defence force in historical Palestine before 1948

<i>Kaba</i>	The Hebrew acronym for “Quality Group Score” and measures intellectual potential. It is comprised of an intelligence test and a personal interview, the latter being only for combat-destined men and women. The <i>Kaba</i> is determined for each individual through a series of tests and interviews taken at the recruitment centers during the pre-entry period. It has a number up to 56.
<i>Knesset</i>	The Israeli Parliament.
<i>Milkhemet Mitzvah</i>	Hebrew. Lit: Commandment war. Term for a war during the times of the <i>Tanakh</i> when a king of the Kingdom of Israel would go to war in order to fulfill something based on - and required by - the Torah <i>without</i> needing approval from a Sanhedrin
<i>Milkhemet Reshut</i>	Hebrew. Lit.: Authorized war. Term for the discretionary war, which according to Jewish law <i>requires</i> the permission of a Sanhedrin. Unlike <i>Milkhemet Reshut</i> wars, which tended to be fought to expand territory or for economic reasons and had exemption clauses, <i>Milhemet Mitzvah</i> tended to be invoked in defensive wars, when vital interests were at risk.
<i>Miluim</i>	Hebrew word for reserves in the IDF, referring to the military service all Israeli men (and some women) get called up for annually.
<i>Mishkonim</i>	See above: <i>Bnei Mashakim LePikud</i>
<i>Nachal</i>	One of the IDF’s three Infantry Brigade. <i>Nachal</i> is the Hebrew acronym for <i>Noar Halutzi Lohem</i> which literally means “Fighting Pioneer Youth”.
<i>Oleh Chadash</i>	Jewish immigrant to Israel who has made aliyah: “Oleh” is derived from the same root as <i>Aliyah</i> (see above for details)
<i>Pakmaz</i> [פּאָקמאַז]	The regional command of the IDF.

<i>PALMACH</i>	Acronym of the Hebrew <i>Plugot Machats</i> Lit.: Storm-troops, shock-troops. The Palmach was the Haganah's pre-1948 strike force. The Palmach was also the predecessor to the Nachal.
<i>Perek Mesima</i>	The “informal education period” in the military service of the Bazelet 50/Gdud 50 wherein the soldiers step out of the confines of traditional military work, and instead work in kibbutzim or assist in the education or support of under-privileged segments of Israeli society.
<i>Plugah</i>	Military Company
<i>Profil</i>	Refers to the medical profile based on a numerical scale, wherein 97 is the highest score and 21 is unsuitable for service; 72-97 means fit for combat. The <i>Profil</i> is given to each candidate that is relevant for service prior to recruitment. Combined with the <i>Kaba</i> , it determines whether, on one end of the spectrum, a recruit is suitable for an elite combat or reconnaissance unit or a non-combat, more administrative-oriented or labor job on the other.
<i>Ru'ach</i> [hebr. רוח]	”Spirit”, ”Wind” or ”Ghost”, though in our context it has the reference ”Spirit” as in “Character” or “Strength of Mind”. E.g. the IDF's doctrine is denounced the <i>Ru'ach Tsahal</i> .
<i>Ru'ach Tsahal</i>	“The Spirit of the IDF”. Document outlining the ethical principles and guidelines of the IDF. The document – a small leaflet – is compulsory for all IDF soldiers to carry 24/7 whilst in the military.
<i>Sabra</i>	Hebr. Native Israeli, i.e. a Jewish-Israeli born in Israel.
<i>Shnat Sherut</i>	Litt. “Service Year”. An optional year after high school that may postpone the army service by one year. During the past decade and more - people have postponed their army service by one year, in order to volunteer somewhere in the country. People do this through youth movements usually and volunteer in poor neighborhoods in the periphery, in kibbutzim etc.

<i>Tanakh</i>	The Hebrew Bible. Acronym formed by the initial Hebrew letters of the Tanakh's three traditional books/divisions: The T orah (the Five books of Moses), N evi'im (the Prophets) and K etuvim (the Writings).
<i>Tarikh Mesima</i>	Specific for Nachal: A period during the military service where the soldiers volunteer somewhere in the country.
<i>Tironut</i>	“Boot camp”/ physical training camp. The first period of all recruits' military service in which the soldiers “learn how to be soldiers” and get trained. There are different levels of <i>tironut</i> according to your service.
<i>Tsahal</i> [צה"ל]	Israel Defense Forces. Tsahal is the Hebrew acronym for <i>Tsava Haganah le-Israel</i> [צבחהגנה לישראל], i.e. The defence army for Israel (see http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English)
<i>Tsav Rishon</i>	“First Notice”, a screening that includes a series of tests that gauge one's suitability for the army and that determine where they end up. During the <i>tsav rishon</i> the army unilaterally screens the draftees according to two basic parameters:

Appendix IV: Map of Israel and the Occupied Territories



The map is taken from Middle East Maps, which is a UK-based group of international map experts (see www.MiddleEastMaps.co.uk). It should be noted that the map pinpoints Jerusalem as Israel's capital, although the UN does not acknowledge it as such.

Appendix V: Symbols – IDF and the State of Israel

The emblematic symbol of the Israel Defense Forces, in English and Hebrew respectively:⁸⁷



The official emblem of the state of Israel:⁸⁸



⁸⁷ <http://dover.idf.il/IDF>

⁸⁸ <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/State/The+State.htm>

Appendix VI: IDF's Mission Statement

The following are excerpts from the IDF's official website:⁸⁹

IDF Mission: To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel. To protect the inhabitants of Israel and to combat all forms of terrorism which threaten daily life.

Ethics

The IDF Spirit

The Israel Defense Forces are the state of Israel's military force. The IDF is subordinate to the directions of the democratic civilian authorities and the laws of the state. The goal of the IDF is to protect the existence of the State of Israel and her independence, and to thwart all enemy efforts to disrupt the normal way of life in Israel. IDF soldiers are obligated to fight, to dedicate all their strength and even sacrifice their lives in order to protect the State of Israel, her citizens and residents. IDF soldiers will operate according to the IDF values and orders, while adhering to the laws of the state and norms of human dignity, and honoring the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

Spirit of the IDF-Definition and Origins

The Spirit of the IDF is the identity card of the IDF values, which should stand as the foundation of all of the activities of every IDF soldier, on regular or reserve duty. The Spirit of the IDF and the guidelines of operation resulting from it are the ethical code of the IDF. The Spirit of the IDF will be applied by the IDF, its soldiers, its officers, its units and corps to shape their mode of action. They will behave, educate and evaluate themselves and others according to the Spirit of the IDF.

The Spirit of the IDF draws on four sources:

- The tradition of the IDF and its military heritage as the Israel Defense Forces.
- The tradition of the State of Israel, its democratic principles, laws and institutions.
- The tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history.
- Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life.

Basic Values:

Defense of the State, its Citizens and its Residents - The IDF's goal is to defend the existence of the State of Israel, its independence and the security of the citizens and

⁸⁹ <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/about/doctrine/>

residents of the state.

Love of the Homeland and Loyalty to the Country - At the core of service in the IDF stand the love of the homeland and the commitment and devotion to the State of Israel-a democratic state that serves as a national home for the Jewish People-its citizens and residents.

Human Dignity - The IDF and its soldiers are obligated to protect human dignity. Every human being is of value regardless of his or her origin, religion, nationality, gender, status or position.

The Values:

Tenacity of Purpose in Performing Missions and Drive to Victory - The IDF servicemen and women will fight and conduct themselves with courage in the face of all dangers and obstacles; They will persevere in their missions resolutely and thoughtfully even to the point of endangering their lives.

Responsibility - The IDF serviceman or woman will see themselves as active participants in the defense of the state, its citizens and residents. They will carry out their duties at all times with initiative, involvement and diligence with common sense and within the framework of their authority, while prepared to bear responsibility for their conduct.

Credibility - The IDF servicemen and women shall present things objectively, completely and precisely, in planning, performing and reporting. They will act in such a manner that their peers and commanders can rely upon them in performing their tasks.

Personal Example - The IDF servicemen and women will comport themselves as required of them, and will demand of themselves as they demand of others, out of recognition of their ability and responsibility within the military and without to serve as a deserving role model.

Human Life - The IDF servicemen and women will act in a judicious and safe manner in all they do, out of recognition of the supreme value of human life. During combat they will endanger themselves and their comrades only to the extent required to carry out their mission.

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

Professionalism - The IDF servicemen and women will acquire the professional knowledge and skills required to perform their tasks, and will implement them while striving continuously to perfect their personal and collective achievements.

Discipline - The IDF servicemen and women will strive to the best of their ability to fully and successfully complete all that is required of them according to orders and their spirit. IDF soldiers will be meticulous in giving only lawful orders, and shall refrain from obeying blatantly illegal orders.

Comradeship - The IDF servicemen and women will act out of fraternity and devotion to their comrades, and will always go to their assistance when they need their help or depend


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on them, despite any danger or difficulty, even to the point of risking their lives.

Sense of Mission - The IDF soldiers view their service in the IDF as a mission; They will be ready to give their all in order to defend the state, its citizens and residents. This is due to the fact that they are representatives of the IDF who act on the basis and in the framework of the authority given to them in accordance with IDF orders.

Appendix VII: The Role of the Military Rabbinate

The following two slides are taken from the I.D.F. Military Rabbinate's Briefing (I.D.F.Rabbinate 2010). They provide examples of the role of the rabbinate within the IDF, and hence also indicate the role religion acquires within the institution.

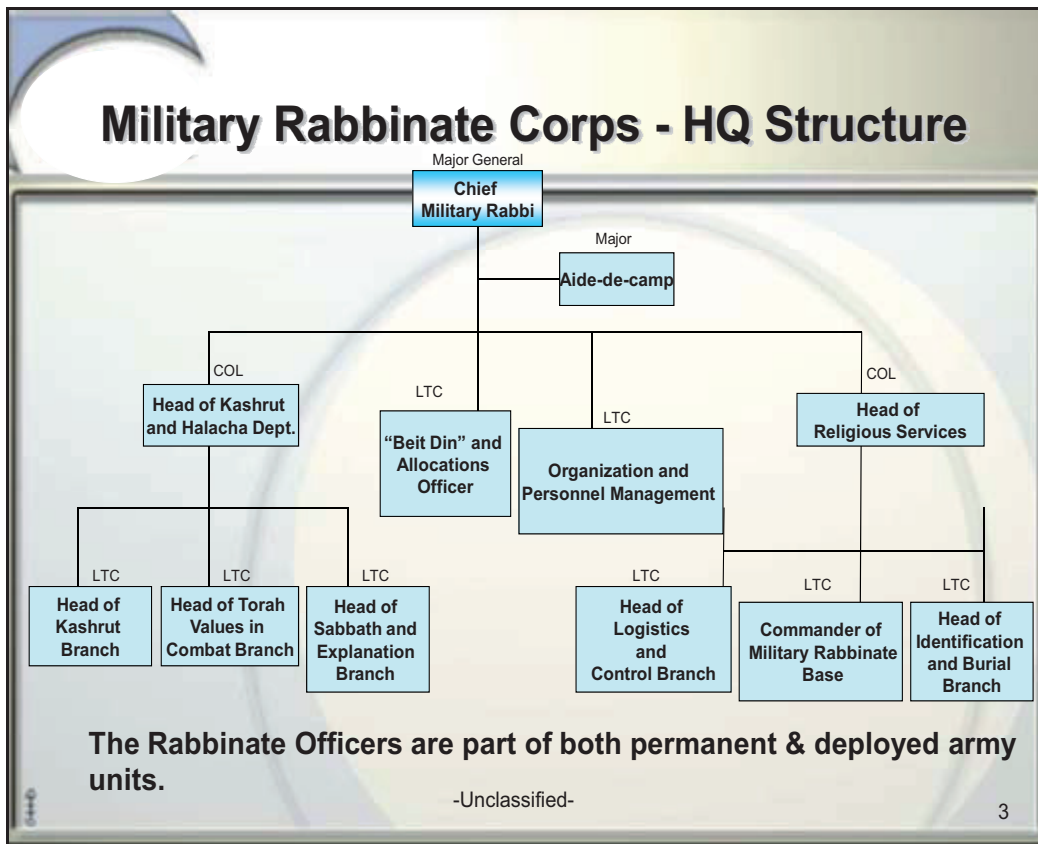


The Ideal

- ❖ **To act as the exclusive military Halachic authority.**
- ❖ **To enhance the spiritual & ethical force of the IDF units and commanders by direct involvement in all military activity.**
- ❖ **To be the primary professional authority in all religious concerns of the army.**
- ❖ **To form a common military environment with a Jewish Identity and respond to the religious needs of every soldier and commander.**
- ❖ **To be a unifying factor between the varied populations of the IDF.**
- ❖ **To establish policy and give response in the fields of Kashrut, Sabbath, Casualty Care and Personal Welfare.**

-Unclassified-

2



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7 THE ARTICLES

Article I - Via Facebook to Jerusalem: Social Media as a Toolbox for the Study of Religion

The following manuscript was submitted to the journal *Fieldwork in Religion* in March 2010 and was accepted for publication in June 2010 taken minor revisions. The revisions are incorporated here. *Fieldwork in Religion* is an internationally per-reviewed and interdisciplinary journal, which “publishes articles, review essays and book reviews relevant to the theoretical engagement with and practical undertaking of fieldwork in religion”. Its editorial board includes a wide range of leading international scholars of religion in Europe, the United States and Australia. Its Editors-in-Chief are Professor Andrew Dawson at Lancaster University, and Professor Ron Geaves at Liverpool Hope University. The article will appear in the journal in 2011.

Via Facebook to Jerusalem: Social Media as a Toolbox for the Study of Religion

Abstract

Social media contain a significant potential as a research tool in the scholarly study of contemporary religion. This article does therefore not feed into the thematic field of “online ethnography” further, but is instead an attempt to utilize the online sphere as constructive research tools to gather more thorough ethnographic data in the field. Approaching Facebook as a toolbox rather than an object, this article is an attempt to demystify social media in general and Facebook in particular. Utilizing these media forms as efficient tools throughout the research process, the article looks at primarily two phases of the process; pre-fieldwork and post-fieldwork, and explores the various components of Facebook in combination with these two phases. It is argued that Facebook represents a “Hub-Keeper”, which is a generic term referring to three primary methodological functions: It is a Gate-Keeper that enables identification and recruitment of interviewees; it is a hub containing a variety of data; and, it is a Gateway for validation of data.

Introduction

In the initial phases of my study of notions of religion amongst male combat soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the challenges in front of me were many and critical: The IDF is officially a non-religious, military institution that is closed to outsiders, and where official information is scarce. How could I - a female, non-Israeli, non-Jewish and civilian PhD-candidate - gain the necessary access to the data that would enable a qualified analysis? I found the solution by utilizing the social media Facebook. Based on experiences from my own research endeavour, this article provides a methodological reflection on how Facebook’s components comprised a toolbox that enabled 34 in-depth interviews with IDF soldiers in Israel. Thus: Facebook took me to Jerusalem.

Making use of the Internet in academia has become a matter-of-course and inseparable part of the research process. Instead of spending time in the library – or even going out to the

physical field - we “Google” and turn to search engines for help in our data collection. Overall, we see two diverging trends in the utilization of Internet:⁹⁰ On the one hand, we have “Internet Research”, which is the practice of using the Internet for research (Chesebro and Bertelsen 1996; Hargittai 2002; Rice 2005). This implies doing academic research *via* the Internet, such as “looking something up”. On the other hand, we have what we may label “Internet Studies”, which deals with the interaction between the Internet and modern society and the sociological and technological implication on one another (Hargittai 2007; Hargittai and Hinnant 2005; McLemee 2001). It is thus research *about* the Internet. Although both these approaches are valuable, their focus is nevertheless on the online sphere, be it on its contents or its consequences. I will in this article argue that by shifting our focus away from the online to the offline sphere, segments of the Internet may still prove to be highly useful also for data collection in the physical sphere.

The Internet does not only provide us with data; it offers a wide range of new methods to get *access to* data, also when the computer is switched off. Although the Internet may challenge the significance of physical place for the benefit of cyberspace, it may simultaneously facilitate face-to-face contact through Internet offshoots such as social media. Combining Online and Offline, these social-networking websites have for a whole generation “changed the dynamics of how individuals become acquainted” (Gosling et al. 2007: 1). Thus, if we stop merely observing the net as domains of data, and instead start using the available tools online for fieldwork purposes, how can we then utilize social media in our offline studies of contemporary communities?

Rooted in the discipline of religion, it is my purpose with this article to “demystify” social media and explore their research potential, thereby turning them into a tool rather than an object. This article does therefore not strive towards developing the thematic field of “online ethnography” further. Rather, it is an attempt to utilize the online sphere as a constructive research tool to gather more thorough ethnographic data in the field. Scholars of religion are highly conscious about their object of research and continuously discuss the changing form of “religion”; perhaps we could benefit from being equally dynamic concerning the changes in the available methodological tools we can apply?

⁹⁰ For further elaboration, see Consalvo, Mía, and Charles Ess, eds. 2010. *The Handbook of Internet Studies*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Fieldwork and interview based research is vulnerable to “unruly” factors such as the researcher’s social competence or the chemistry between the researcher and the researched (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]; Magolda 2000; Mauthner et al. 2005 [2002]). We can neither ignore nor control these factors. Yet, crucial to Facebook’s utility is its inherent reciprocity, and I will argue that through the application of Facebook, we can contribute to establish the necessary trust and mutual confidence; we can acquire knowledge that can be used to “stage” a beneficial interview setting; and, we can exploit Facebook’s components also after the fieldwork to validate and saturate the data gathered in the field. Social media thus represent what I label a “Hub-Keeper”: It contains a wide variety of information and possibilities for communication that - if used wisely - may offer increased control over the fieldwork-process.

To develop my line of argument, I will dwell upon two phases of the process where the components of Facebook may prove particularly useful; pre-fieldwork, which includes finding and selecting interviewees and preparing for the fieldwork; and post-fieldwork, which includes validating the information, and re-evaluate the data. An emphasis is put on the former. I will stress that while the data collection takes place in the physical world, communication in cyberspace prior to the fieldwork contributes to “staging” the first face-to-face meeting, which in turn facilitates data saturation.

Initiating Fieldwork in Religion: Gaining Access to Data

Scholars of religion are anything but alien to discussions about the analytical concepts we apply, the methods we use or let alone the object we study. All scholars of religion have – willingly or unwillingly – had to delve into the latent connotations of the concept of religion. Perhaps Jeppe Sinding Jensen is the most precise when he states that “Whatever else religion is, it is ‘many things’” (Jensen 2009: 149). Data for religion is potentially everywhere, and with the Internet scholars of religion have yet one more domain to explore.⁹¹

⁹¹ Still a scholarly field “in the making”, we can nonetheless begin to see the contours of three primary research foci: *Either*, a focus on identity management and personality impressions, seen in publications by e.g. Boyd, Danah, and Jeffrey Heer. 2006. "Profiles as Conversations: Networked Identity Performance on Friendster." in *Proceedings of the Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-39)*. Kauai, Hawai'i: IEEE

With more than 204 million hits on Google, it is perhaps no wonder that the arrival of God on the net is resulting in a fast expanding literature particularly within sociology of religion.⁹² Religion is inextricably linked to issues of culture and identity, and it is undeniable that the “Internet is changing the face of religion worldwide” (Dawson and Cowan 2004a: 1). Approaching data on religion on the net as downloadable data that have come into existence detached from the researcher turns the net into a well for data collection.⁹³ At the same time, the Internet is not merely a place where data are posted and ready to be explored in and of themselves. Rather, the net it is something we *use*: Above all, with the invention of social media, the internet has become just as much a venue for communication as for data collection. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook have quickly evolved into becoming significant venues for identity management, cultural development and networking. These domains in cyberspace are thus primarily tools, not objects of study.⁹⁴

Computer Society; Gosling, Samuel D., Sam Gaddis, and Simine Vazire. 2007. "Personality Impressions Based on Facebook Profiles." in *International Conference on Weblogs and Media (ICWSM)*. Boulder, Colorado, USA: ICWSM; Hewitt, Anne, and Andrea Forte. 2006. "Crossing Boundaries: Identity Management and Student/Faculty Relationships on the Facebook." in *Proceedings of Computer Supported Cooperative Work Banff, Alberta, Canada: Mendeley Research Networks. Or on social capital and networking* Ellison, Nicole B., Charles Steinfeld, and Cliff Lampe. 2007. "The Benefits of Facebook "Friends": Social Capital and college Students' Use of Online Social Network sites." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12,4 1-26; Walther, Joseph B., Brandon Van Der Heide, Sang-Yeon Kim, David Westerman, and Stephanie Tom Tong. 2008. "The Role of Friends' Appearance and Behavior on Evaluations of Individuals on Facebook: Are We Known by the Company We Keep?" *Human Communication Research* 34,1 28-49.

⁹² That being said, it is still noteworthy that recent publications on the sociology of religion still omit issues related to cyberspace and Internet, also in discussions about modernity, which in consequence accentuates further the distinction between research on the net and the “real” world. Instead, modernity is analyzed in terms of its institutional organization, not its terms of communication. See for example chapter 5 in Davie, Grace. 2007. *The Sociology of Religion*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi & Singapore: Sage Publ.or —. 2008. "Thinking Sociologically about Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Clarifications." Pp. 15-28 in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James Beckford*, edited by Eileen Barker. Hampshire & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd; Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. 2008. "Religious Individualism, Modern Individualism and Self-fulfilment." Pp. 29-40 in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford*, edited by Eileen Barker. Hampshire & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd; Lambert, Yves 1999. "Religion in Modernity as a New Axial Age: Secularization or New Religious Forms?" *Sociology of Religion* 60,3 Autumn: 303-333.

⁹³ Such an approach collides with the dialogical approach advocated by scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin: Bakhtin, Mikhail, ed. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas press. See also Chapter 6 in Flood, Gavin. 1999. *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*. London & New York: Continuum.

⁹⁴ Noteworthy, in the wake of this research there is also a whole new scholarly vocabulary evolving, such as “hypertheology”, “cybergrace” or “techgnosis” is introduced in publications like Brasher, Brenda. 2000. *Give me that online religion*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass; Casey, Cheryl Anne. 2001. "Online Religion and Finding Faith on the Web: An Examination of Beliefnet.org." *Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association* 232-40; Cobb, J. 1998. *Cybergrace: The search for god in the digital world*. New York: Random House; Dawson, Lorne L., and Douglas E. Cowan. 2004b. *Religion online: finding faith on the Internet*. London: Routledge; Dawson, Lorne L., and J. Henneby. 1999. "New Religion and the Internet: Recruiting in a New Public Space." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 14,1 17-39; Hoover, Stewart M. 2006. *Religion in the media age*. London: Routledge; Horsfield, Peter G., Mary E. Hess, and Adán M. Medrano, eds. 2004. *Belief in media: cultural perspectives on media and Christianity*. London: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

A reason for the reiteration of this somewhat overly simplified version of a medium, is simply to reiterate the consequences of the obvious: That our end result is relative to the sources we study and the methods we use. The distinction between the Internet and “the Field” thus highlights the consequences of what tools we apply for and the data we can get, and the analysis we can reach. The online and primarily monologue, staging of ideal versions of meaning systems lead us neither front stage nor back stage (cf. Goffman 1959). By merely studying or observing religion online we are reduced to passive and physically distanced object-watchers. Not even being in the theatre where the play is taking place, we lose the atmosphere, the interactions between the audience and the actors, and the overall context of where and how religion is produced and maintained. At the same time, the Internet is accessible in ways that contrasts it categorically to the physical field: You can “log on” and surf the web anywhere, but you cannot necessarily access a particular place or group of people.

Questions concerning how to gain access to the field, find and recruit interviewees and get good and reliable information, while at the same time making sure that research ethics are in place, are issues that accentuate the many problematic challenges that embrace all fieldwork-based research. It must be rigorously dealt with; for, “[w]ithout rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility” (Morse et al. 2002: 2). A common denominator to these challenges is how to acquire access to the data, which implies both the question of *how* to access it and *what* is accessed. As a multi-method discipline, the scholarly study of religion must consult the methodological developments within other disciplines. In the qualitative methodology literature, gaining access to field data is associated with two overall themes:

One is the more concrete challenge of how to gain admittance (Bell 2003; Benton and Cormack 2000; Berg 2004; Feldman et al. 2003; Johnson 2075; Magolda 2000; Miller and Bell 2005). A major sub-topic here is the “Gatekeeper”, i.e. acquiring access to the research site through a key person (Broadhed and Rist 1975; Campbell et al. 2006; Goffman 1959; Wanat 2008).⁹⁵ Although Gatekeepers may be beneficial in opening up “the Field” by providing admittance into their network, institution, community and so forth, using them may

⁹⁵ For an account of access through gatekeepers, see Shenton, Andrew K. , and Susan Hayter. 2004. "Strategies for gaining access to organisations and informants in qualitative studies." *Education for Information* 22,3-4 223-231; Wanat, Carolyn L. 2008. "Getting Past the Gatekeepers: Differences Between Access and Cooperation in Public School Research." *Field Methods* 20,2 191-208.

also be limiting, as they control crucial factors for the analytical output, such as interviewee selection or meeting venues.

A second theme in the literature on access is thus the question of validation of ethnographic or oral data (Atkinson 2005; Berg 2004; Morse et al. 2002; Patton 2002; Read et al. 2006; Silverman 2006; Wilkinson 2004). Some also argue for the interconnectivity between data reliability and Gatekeepers (see e.g. Antes 2004; Morse et al. 2002; Shenton and Hayter 2004; Silverman 2006).⁹⁶

However, I will argue that if we view Facebook as a “Hub-Keeper” we also see how utilizing it may in consequence blur the distinction between Gatekeepers and the Field, and between spaces for data gathering and data validation: As a Hub, Facebook is providing access both to interviewees in the field and to contextual data about the field, while it at the same time contains components that may be utilized for validation purposes.

Facebook as “Hub-Keeper”

Facebook is a social networking website where the “mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook). It allows users to communicate through their personal web pages using a simple template, the so-called “Profile”, which one has to establish in order to access the Facebook domain and therein make “friends” on the website. The individual Facebook Profiles typically represent a hub of personal information, ranging from demographic data like date of birth, national identity, political and religious orientation, to photographs and messages, both from the individual owners of the Profiles as well as from other users, turning Facebook into a well of personal information available irrespectively of their physical location.

Facebook thus represents a peculiar combination of serious and reliable data, on the one hand, and jokes and nonsense on the other; it is a place where explicit political and controversial messages and campaigns are expressed alongside with what appears to be

⁹⁶ Shenton and Hayter even argue that it may be decisive for the success of the research to include the approval of “third parties” responsible for the welfare of those whom the researcher has targeted as informants (Shenton & Heytor 2004).

merely shallow engagement. Whilst this turns Facebook into a space with an informal and at times contradictory information flow, it is nevertheless also here it acquires much of its utility: When seeking to grasp the fuller matrix of culture and religion, the informalities are highly important. As both a reflection and result of the prevailing discourses in the individual Profile owners' societies, Facebook's interactive form can contribute to giving a wider and more thorough understanding of both the interviewees and the context of the research topic.

Facebook is a success story and is part of a huge amount of people's everyday lives worldwide: With more than 350 million active users, of which over 50% log on to the website every day, Facebook has enjoyed an incredible growth since it was founded by Harvard students in 2004 (Facebook n.d.). Already in 2006 Facebook was the seventh most popular site on the web with respect to total views (Ellison et al. 2007; Gosling et al. 2007). In the initiation of the research on my empirical case, turning to Facebook appeared as a potentially rewarding option: Conscript soldiers in the IDF are generally in the age of 19 to 23 and therefore in the group of those that use Facebook most extensively. Taken into consideration that Israel is a high technology society wherein the vast majority of the Israeli-Jewish population are online, I could hence assume without much speculation that also IDF soldiers were regular Facebook-users. In the initial phases of my project I therefore presumed that turning to Facebook for help would prove gratifying in my search for interviewees within the target group of my study. Luckily, I was right.

Pre-Fieldwork: Interviewee Recruitment and Background

Information

In fieldwork-based research, selecting interviewees is crucial to the whole endeavour and its end-result. Needless to say, qualitative research differs critically from quantitative research when it comes to issues of statistical representativity and generalisability; whereas the latter has induction as a methodological and analytical principle and recruits interviewees accordingly, the selection of informants in qualitative studies should be strategic and theoretical (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]). Accordingly, the aim of my qualitative study was not to develop a general theory for the role of religion in the military per se. Rather,

the analysis was explorative, focusing on the role of religion in the process wherein recruits are turned into soldiers within a specific empirical context.

However, in the world's 5th largest army with more than 176 500 regular soldiers (Shafir and Magal 2010), merely asking any recruit would invalidate every coherency in my data. My selection of informants was thus aimed at minimizing the differences between the interviewees in order to enable the accentuation of typical traits or characteristics in the group to contribute to data saturation (Morse et al. 2002: 16, fn.14). For that reason, I chose to focus my study on one specific battalion who had served in the IDF during one particular time period (2005-2009; the post-Ariel Sharon Era⁹⁷, including the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Led). The question was therefore not about finding soldiers per se; it was about finding a particular group amongst the soldiers.

Striving towards that desired end, the various components of each Facebook Profile offered assistance to the different stages in the research process. Prior to the fieldwork I applied five components, namely Personal Information; Group Memberships; Status Updates; Photos & Videos; and, e-mailing. Whereas I used the two former primarily for interviewee recruitment, I used the two latter as part of my background preparation of the fieldwork. I used the e-mailing system repeatedly throughout the whole process. In practice, though, the utility of the components overlap. In the following, I will clarify these components further.

Personal Information

Personal Information is a field on the Facebook Profile that contains demographic data on the individual, such a name and education, civil status, political and religious orientation. It is therefore potentially important both for the selection and recruitment of interviewees, and for gathering background information to contextualise the data.

Personal Information also contains two particularly interesting categories: "Interests" and "Favourite quotes". Obviously, people are complex and the interview setting is incapable of grasping a full account of an individual. Accordingly, these fields provided additional

⁹⁷ Ariel Sharon has been in a permanent vegetative state after he suffered a stroke on 4 January 2006. Although several of my interviewees were recruited the IDF in 2005 they did not partake in military action under his command.

texture and contributed to forming a general picture of the individual. To illustrate, when filling in political and religious views, my interviewees did in consequence also indicate how benign they were to factors that were crucial in the empirical context, such as to the military, to Zionism, to religion, and to Palestinians. Thus, the various fields of “Personal Information” revealed crucial identity traits.

Group memberships

An equally important component is the group membership. On Facebook there exists a myriad of various interest groups, ranging from serious groups e.g. advocating the release of Ang Sang Sui Kii to the more jesting, such as “For us against pineapple on the pizza”. All such group memberships are posted on the Profile owners’ *Wall*, which is the front page of the Profile. As a combination of nonsense and serious topics, the group memberships play two different yet crucial roles:

Firstly, they indicate significant components of the informant’s worldview and therein contribute forming an image of a person. Interests, taste in music or political causes that stir engagement are descriptive of a person. Knowing these little things thus eases the face-to-face meeting. By utilizing the online information I could form the research context offline. In other words: I could to stage the offline interview, creating an atmosphere that was beneficial to the interview, in order to direct “the interview effectively so as to meet the purposes of the research” (Legard et al. 2005 [2003]: 144-147). As an example, I often set up the first face-to-face meetings in locations that the interviewees had pointed out as places they appreciated in e.g. fan groups on Facebook, such as specific cafès, parks or other public sites. As these men were Jewish, it was also of particular importance to avoid non-kosher places in order to accommodate the individuals’ religious and cultural needs and conversely not make the interview setting alienating.

Secondly, finding relevant interviewees to our research projects is rarely straightforward, and “Group Memberships” may represent the key that enables access into specific cultural or social communities. On Facebook I found a variety of groups both for specific IDF battalions and more general adherence to the IDF. Accordingly, based on criteria of relevance to the overall research question I could scan the Groups and their members and

recruit potential interviewees through their Facebook Profiles found under Group Membership.

This in turn had a “Snowballing” Effect (Bell and Nutt 2005 [2002]): Initiating contact on Facebook can occur either privately – that is, on a one-to-one basis outside of the public domain – or, by posting messages on the Wall of each profile, thus put on public display. As most of those I contacted responded to my enquiry by writing on my *Wall*, my connection with them was officially established, which led to online invitations into other social groups and social spaces online that enabled me to see their posts, all the information they put on Facebook and also join in their network. The Group Memberships consequently proved to be decisive for my research endeavour.

As a result, Facebook was both a Gatekeeper and a hub for access to data: By combining individual Profiles and the Groups, I could identify and recruit relevant *individual* interviewees within a restricted and limited community; and, I could also reassure myself that the *group* I had selected was a suitable choice for my research project.

Preparing for the Fieldwork: Gathering Information and Setting the Ground

Of course, all fieldwork studies benefit from entering the field as knowledgeable as possible, and to the best of our ability, we read whatever is published prior to our fieldtrips. However, when studying contemporary communities, several researchers may have shared my frustrating experience when you realize that there is not all that much written. How do you then avoid meeting your interviewees as a “tabula rasa”?

Facebook cannot substitute fieldwork. Since 1994 I have repeatedly been living and working in Israel, I have learned Hebrew, and I have also been working elsewhere in the Middle East. I was therefore already familiar with the physical and cultural context of my interviewees before I started exploring their “life worlds” through Facebook. As much of the postings on Facebook occur in Hebrew or have references to specific geographical or cultural

factors, much of what occurs on Facebook would have been straightforwardly meaningless without prior knowledge. However, as a facilitator, Facebook was invaluable.

Crucial to Facebook's utility as a research tool, is its significant online-offline potential: Research online may provide an alternative method of gathering offline information as online communication may facilitate and strengthen offline research. In other words: Communication and data collection *in* cyberspace may also facilitate communication and data collection *outside of* cyberspace. I support the presumption that "when online and offline social networks overlapped, the directionality was online to offline – online connections resulted in face-to-face meetings" (Ellison et al. 2007: 2). Online and Offline expressions are intertwined and self-renewing: People stage themselves online and select what information they wish to reveal. Offline, however, people can explain their utterances by adding texture and context to them. In addition to Personal Information and Groups, Facebook has three components that feed into this dimension and may significantly impact the data collection phase prior to the fieldwork as they contain a considerable online-offline potential: Status Updates, Photos & Videos, and e-mailing. I will in the following clarify these components' research potential.

Status Updates

This is a field on the Profile Wall wherein the Profile owner can post a comment. "What are you thinking of?" is the question posed by Facebook, leaving an open space for input. The consequence is that readers can get an insight into the Profile owners' thoughts and opinions, ranging from comments on the weather to more specific updates on their whereabouts. The Status Updates does in other words provide an accessible online channel into the field and a window into the interviewees' experiences. In short, I could "follow" my interviewees whilst not being in the same location.

As my informants were soldiers, it implied that I could get an impression of their whereabouts, what they do in the army and their sentiments towards it. The Status Updates took the form of being their compressed diary⁹⁸ from the field, giving a number of opinions

⁹⁸ "Field diaries" is a widely used method for fieldwork research Butcher, R., and J. Eldridge. 1990. "The Use of Diaries in Data Collection." *The Statistician* 25-41; Fu, Yang-chih. 2007. "Contact Diaries: Building Archives of Actual and Comprehensive Personal Networks." *Field Methods* 19 May 194 - 217; Hilton, M.E. 1989. "A comparison of a prospective diary and two summary recall techniques for recording alcohol consumption."

about the military, about military life in general and about the IDF in particular. These “diaries” thus offer an ethnographic glimpse of the interviewees’ everyday lives in the offline setting. Noteworthy, research in other empirical disciplines have revealed that when people go through a series of intense experiences such as severe illnesses, using the net to express their feelings and communicate with others in a similar situation may have a significant impact on how people manage to cope with their situation (McNamara 2007; Nardi et al. 2004).

These findings underscore my own observations of the soldiers’ use of the net: Serving as a soldier in the IDF may be troublesome and challenging for the individual recruits and in times of particular stress Facebook functioned as a “social ventilation system” also for my interviewees. In fact, IDF soldiers’ Status Updates on Facebook have overall, i.e. beyond the limited group that my interviewees comprise, been revealing to such an extent that it has led to reprisals by the IDF establishment, such as on 4 March 2010 when the IDF had to cancel a mission in the West Bank after a soldier had revealed details about it in his Status Update (Katz 04/03/2010).

Photos & Videos

All Profile owners may upload as many pictures they wish, irrespectively of quality. Of all the Facebook functions that challenge issues of privacy enhancement, the posting of pictures is perhaps the most daunting one, in particular due to the “tag”-function: Others may post pictures of you and link your name to it – a “Tag” – so that when looking up your name, other people’s pictures may come up, too. This may be flattering – but also libellous, as there obviously are pictures that not everyone in the picture would appreciate publishing, as it may violate both privacy concerns and professional regulations. The photos and the tag-function have jeopardized the IDF’s need for keeping military sites and activities hidden from the public. For example, In April 2008, a soldier from the elite Intelligence Corps unit “8200” was “sentenced to 19 days in prison for uploading photos taken on his base without approval to the popular social networking site Facebook” (BBC 23/04/2008; Ha'aretz/TheMarker 23/04/2008).

British Journal of Addiction 841085-1092..Although primarily applied by the researchers, having access to the interviewees’ thoughts and opinion *in print* does however provide a “diary from the field” seen from an emic viewpoint.

Research-wise, however, the pictures contextualise and visualise textual or oral data and may thus contribute with invaluable insight into parts of the interviewee's life where a research may otherwise not have access. For example, several of my interviewees have posted pictures of themselves in the field, in the military camps, on checkpoints and so forth. Many also posted to other social media domains and websites, such as YouTube, exposing themselves and their fellow conscripts in the field.⁹⁹

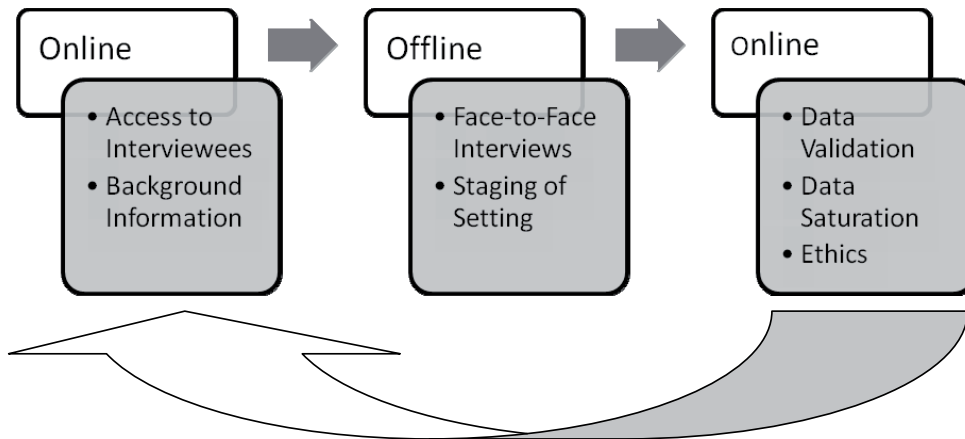
E-mailing

Facebook also contains an e-mail system, which may occur either one-to-one or between several people, and is a component available to be utilized also amongst people who are not in each other's online networks. When contacting potential interviewees, I sent each individual an e-mail where I presented my research project. This way of contacting people visualises social media's invaluable function, as it allows for individuals to communicate regardless of their physical location.

One additional distinction is the differentiation between so-called "real-time chat" and "non-real-time chat" (Mann & Stewart, 2000: 11; Ryen, 2002: 13): When chatting, people who live in different time zones across the world can have immediate contact, exceeding the hours and kilometres that are between them. E-mail, on the other hand, is also transmitting information around the globe in seconds, but is also saved and allowing communication at a later stage. Social media thus represents among other "social spaces where relationships, communities, and cultures emerge through the exchange of text and images, either in real time or in delayed time sequences" (Markham, 2004: 96).

This results in the following model of the application of Facebook in the fieldwork:

⁹⁹ YouTube's slogan is "Broadcast Yourself" and is a website where people may upload videos. Although significant, YouTube is not interactive and has thus quite different form and content than Facebook.



Model I: Facebook in the Fieldwork Process

Model 1 visualizes the process between initiating a research process and the final phase of writing up the analysis. Note that this is an ongoing process. I looped this process repeatedly by returning to the field four times before writing up my final analysis.

The repeated contact online between my interviewees and me replaced the phase that normally occurs offline face-to-face, wherein people get to know each other. Accordingly, it is arguable that one of the perhaps most explicit offline results of the online communication prior to the face-to-face interview is the fact that the first physical meeting is not the first time interviewer and interviewee correspond and communicate. Or put in other words; through the previous communication online, the “open encounter” is deleted. A similar conclusion was reached by Malcolm Parks and Kory Floyd in their quantitative article “Making friends in Cyberspace” in which they show that that relationships that began in Internet newsgroups often broadened to include interaction in other channels or settings (Parks and Kory Floyd 1996). In other words, the trust established online may potentially be transferred to the meeting that occurs offline, in consequence facilitating and improving the communication. I will return to this issue of trust below.

Back Home: Validation and Reflection

Anyone who has carried out a fieldwork or a research interview has experienced that when analyzing the collected data, some data is missing. This is not unexpected: It is widely accepted amongst qualitative researchers that the research interview does not provide a clear window into the interviewee's experience (Alldred and Gillies 2005 [2002]; Silverman 2006). How can we "saturate" the data - that is, how can we reach the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest et al. 2006)? Data saturation in qualitative studies is a murky field, and guidelines and standards are virtually non-feasible to reach. In an attempt to develop common guidelines, Greg Guest et al claim that saturation "occurred within the first twelve interviews, although basic elements for metathemes were present as early as six interviews" (Guest et al. 2006: 59). I will still argue that data saturation in qualitative studies is hard to enumerate, and I concur with Morse et al when they stress that researchers mistakenly often tend expand the list of interviewees instead of expanding the data: "One of the most common mistakes is that new investigators saturate their participants (that is, repeatedly interviewing the same participants until nothing new emerges) rather than saturating data (that is, continuing bringing new participants into the study until the data set is complete and data replicates)" (Morse et al. 2002: 16, fn.14). Hence, as visualised in Model I above, I looped the process repeatedly.

There is of course a potentially minimal distinction between validation and continued data sampling. However, as I see it, the distinction is largely related to focus – by approaching the data with the intention of acquiring increased *width*, we also gather more varied data.¹⁰⁰ Approaching the data with the intention of expanding *depth* to data we already have, contribute to data saturation, and consequently also to validation; while interviewing additional participants is for the purpose of increasing the scope, adequacy and

¹⁰⁰ An alternative way of validating data through width of the data, is made through *triangulation*. Despite being widely used both in data collection and methodologies applied, triangulation still has its adherent skeptics: Some scholars argue e.g. that triangulation is too time consuming with respect to its impact on the end result, or that it rests on a positivists philosophy of science that considers data collection as "tapping into" an objective reality, see Miller, Gale, and Kathryn J. Fox. 2004. "Building bridges: The possibility of analytical dialogue between ethnography, conversation analysis and Foucault." Pp. 35-55 in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice* edited by David Silverman. London: SAGE Publishing; Silverman, David. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage Publications. I disagree, however, and rather support the notion of triangulation offered by Arksey & Knight, in which the state that triangulation is based on the idea "that data are obtained from a wide range of different and multiple sources, using a variety of methods, investigators or theories" Arksey, Hilary, and Peter Knight. 1999. *Interviewing for Social Scientists* London: SAGE Publications.. Duly, Arksey & Knight point out that triangulation is "not and end in itself" that may provide a 'silver bullet' for solving all inherent data weakness, but it serves primarily to purposes: *confirmation* and *completeness*. It is also this usage of triangulation that is applied in my research.

appropriateness of the data, returning to interview key participants for second or third time is oriented toward eliciting data to expand the depth or address gaps in the emerging analysis while interviewing additional participants is for the purpose of increasing the scope, adequacy and appropriateness of the data (Morse et al. 2002: 16). The question is, then, how do you do this when field budgets are empty and you sit on the other side of the globe? Facebook has two components that I used extensively for validation and data saturation purposes. One is the *Wall*; the other is the e-mail system.

Validating the Information

The distinction between the Wall and Facebook e-mail is related to transparency: Whereas the Wall is open for everyone in the Facebook Profile owner's network to see, the latter is exclusive and can only be read by those who are directly involved in the exchange. Both may, however, be utilized as "Online Focus Groups"¹⁰¹: By posing a question on a Wall, I did in practice initiate "*Network Focus Groups*". In contrast, by posing a question through the e-mail system I initiated "*Targeted Focus Groups*" as it only related to explicitly selected individuals.

By posing a question on a Wall, everyone in the Profile owner's network could read the question and follow the discussion. The consequence was that I received answers and comments not only from the Profile owner, but also from a much wider audience. On numerous occasions, I have posted questions concerning issues that have been unclear to me, ranging from the IDF's meaning system to question of the legal framework for conscription. Whereas I sometimes have posted them on one or several *Walls*, I have in other instances chosen to use the e-mail system to target an exclusive group to ask them questions about more sensitive issues or particular experiences I know that these men shared as part of the same unit. Thus, whereas both components function as an online Focus Group, the e-mail system has the advantage that interviewees may keep their anonymity and privacy.

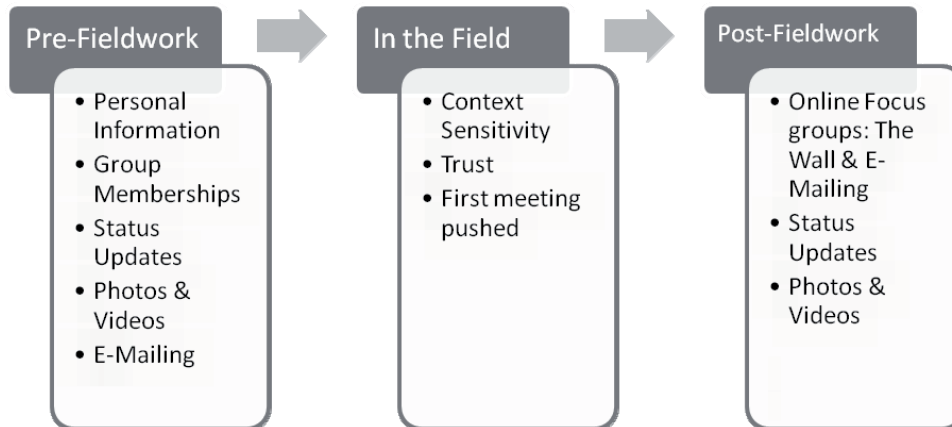
¹⁰¹ For an account on Focus Groups, see e.g. Wilkinson, Sue. 2004. "Focus Group Research." Pp. 177-199 in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, edited by David Silverman. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

The utility of these two components stretch further and also relates to issues of informed consent as well as to access. To start with the former: Gaining data from people is not merely about informing the interviewees about our research (Birch and Miller 2005); it is also a question of whether the individuals “are in a position to exercise choice around whether or not to give their consent to participate” (Miller and Bell 2005: 55). Thus, I always gave my interviewees the opportunity both to return to me with complementing information, as well as to withdraw previous statements. Noteworthy, though, whereas I have conducted 34 in-depth interviews over a period of 4 years, only one person has chosen to withdraw information. 14 times, however, interviewees have chosen to rephrase and expand their statements.

When communication is done in print, it may also facilitate both data saturation and access to interviewees: One of the biggest advantages with Facebook, is the fact that it is a civilian, social website, thus a domain outside of military control. Various forms of oppression and control often characterize military communities, and the military therefore represents a particularly guarded institution. In consequence, as a civilian doing research on the military, we are forced to rely on soldiers’ own accounts of their normative universe (Osiel 1999: 165). In order to acquire a reliable data analysis, finding relevant interviewees were a crucial concern (Kong 2001; Mann and Stewart 2000; Smith 1999).

In my project, Facebook proved to be a "Hub-keeper" as it facilitated access into a closed community and thereby recruit interviewees and informants outside of institutional control. A reason for this is that social media provided a space for dialogue outside of institutional control and the golden key for the selection of informants. Data collection on the net may therefore give the researcher access to so-called “Sensitive Accounts”, as the net may facilitate dialogue that is difficult face-to-face: People appear to find the relative impersonal format of the net alleviating honesty, and some personal issues are so sensitive that participants might be reluctant to discuss them face-to-face with a researcher (Mann and Stewart 2000: 18). Thus, rather than giving oral accounts off the record – which consequently could not be quoted from directly – some interviewees preferred to offer written statements from which I was allowed to quote. Computer Mediated Communication is thus a means of extending the possibilities of conducting research in politically sensitive or dangerous areas (Markham 2004).

We thus get the following model of Facebook as to where the different Facebook components feed into the fieldwork process.



Model II: Facebook as Hub-Keeper

The model visualizes how the various Facebook components feed into the different stages in the fieldwork process. Note that whereas the components can be directly utilized in the Pre-Fieldwork and Post-Fieldwork stages, what occurs in the field are direct or indirect consequences of the online research.

Final Reflections: The Reciprocity of Facebook

So far, I have looked at the many advantages Facebook may provide when it is utilized as a tool to reach offline data in the field; not merely as a well of data in itself. Although the research endeavor may benefit from including social media into the research process, it nevertheless demands a rather conscientious application. In other words; Facebook's flexible form is potentially a "double-edged sword".

Problems arise already at the onset: When establishing an individual – and hence personal – Profile online with the purpose of conducting research, I am not merely an observer. Engaging Facebook into the research process may highlight the problems inherent to the claim that explanation is situated (Flood 1999: 149). Yet, ‘outsideness’ is necessary for understanding: “In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture” (Bakhtin 1986: 7). Despite representing all of these attributes – placed in a radically different setting than my interviewees - a profile may turn me into a participant. Accordingly, how do I portray myself?¹⁰²

The question reflects an apparent paradox, as Facebook has both a dynamic and intersubjective format of Facebook, whilst it on the other hand also has a monologue-form, as the Profile owners may select and control what they reveal about themselves. In online social media – as everywhere else - forging and managing personal identity is a complex issue. It is beyond doubt that the dynamic mode of the net also implies that it is a venue for cultural development and identity negotiations.¹⁰³ One consequence is for example that whereas the information posted in the field “Personal Information” may play a decisive role as explicated above, providing basic demographic data about the individual Facebook Profiles, it may not necessarily offer a “true” image of the individuals behind the Profile. Instead it may reflect how they *wish* to be portrayed.

In prolongation, this may also lead to challenges in the mix-up of roles and of professional versus private concerns. For example: Soldiers are per definition part of a non-civilian institution. At the same time, they appear on Facebook as civilian individuals. In fact, IDF soldiers have used Facebook for private purposes while in uniform to such an extent that the IDF establishment have interfered (Ha'aretz 12/04/2008; Ha'aretz/TheMarker

¹⁰² For a discussion on researchers' personality portrayal, see Bell, Linda, and Linda Nutt. 2005 [2002]. "Divided Loyalties, Divided Expectations: Research Ethics, Professional and Occupational Responsibilities." Pp. 70-90 in *Ethics in Qualitative Research*, edited by Melanie Mauthner, Maxine Birch, Julie Jessop and Tina Miller. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

¹⁰³ See: Boyd, Danah, and Jeffrey Heer. 2006. "Profiles as Conversations: Networked Identity Performance on Friendster." in *Proceedings of the Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-39)*. Kauai, Hawai'i: IEEE Computer Society; Ellison, Nicole B., Charles Steinfeld, and Cliff Lampe. 2007. "The Benefits of Facebook "Friends": Social Capital and college Students' Use of Online Social Network sites." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12,4 1-26; Hewitt, Anne, and Andrea Forte. 2006. "Crossing Boundaries: Identity Management and Student/Faculty Relationships on the Facebook." in *Proceedings of Computer Supported Cooperative Work* Banff, Alberta, Canada: Mendeley Research Networks; Walther, Joseph B., Brandon Van Der Heide, Sang-Yeon Kim, David Westerman, and Stephanie Tom Tong. 2008. "The Role of Friends' Appearance and Behavior on Evaluations of Individuals on Facebook: Are We Known by the Company We Keep?" *Human Communication Research* 34,1 28-49.

23/04/2008).¹⁰⁴ This also clearly visualises that Facebook is under surveillance, and that although Facebook may facilitate access to individual interviewees outside of institutional control, it is not to be juxtaposed with “free speech”.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, also this dimension affects previously mentioned issues of identity portrayal. It also highlights how Facebook is not merely an open door ready to be used.

Another crucial issue is related to that of anonymity. Facebook potentially represents a well of information. At the same time, using this information explicitly – such as e.g. quoting from status updates or showing pictures posted – may violate the individuals’ personal integrity, challenge their anonymity, and concerns regarding informed consent, to name but a few. While anonymity is a widely-held goal in research-ethics review policies, it is a virtually unachievable goal in ethnographic and qualitative research (Hoonard 2004). And, although some profile hosts agree to make use of their posts, others in the same group may oppose. As the information posted is open and accessibly, it can easily be traced back to its “producer”. In consequence, utilizing the information posted by a few by quoting from it may challenge the anonymity concerns of the whole group.

Thus, I find it noteworthy to stress that in the same way as I have not quoted from individual Facebook profiles in this text, I did also not quote from it in the dissertation. Quoting from Facebook is potentially highly problematic. Utilizing the online information for texture and context, however, may enrich and facilitate the offline communication and access. Still, without prior knowledge of the field, it is difficult to translate online data into the field – or to make sense of the online activity, for that matter.

In the same way as problems arise with the Facebook Profile, this is also where some of the solutions are to be found: True, the Profile allows the researcher to access other individuals’ Profiles. However, this goes both ways. To the same extent that I may view other people’s profiles, they may also see mine. With data collection that occurs in the field, the gap between the researcher and the researched is difficult to overcome: There is a geographic distance between the two since there is a physical limitation between being in versus outside of the field. With Facebook, this distance diminishes. Although I could attempt to “stage”

¹⁰⁴ That Facebook has become a scene of political contestation is also made explicitly clear through e.g. the West Bank settlers’ demand for listing them as residents of “Israel” and not of “Palestine” Ha’aretz/TheMarker. 18/03/2008. “Facebook face-off: Settlers win right to list country as Israel.” in *Ha’aretz* Tel Aviv/Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁵ An interesting discussion on the debate on training and socialization of soldiers and the use of punishment is found in: Osiel, Mark J. 1999. *Obedying Orders: Atrocity, Military Discipline & the Law of War*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

myself online, or seek to employ all means in the field to gain data by potentially violating ethical concerns, with Facebook there is no escape. Put bluntly: I cannot vanish. In the field, my interviewees would examine me. Once out of the field, my interviewees could nevertheless follow me, peak into my network, and get hold of me when and if they would choose to do so. I will therefore claim that this inherent reciprocity forges a particularly conscientious treatment of the interviewees.

In sum: The reciprocity of Facebook contributes to establishing *mutual* trust that facilitates dialogue and communication between the researcher and the researched.

Conclusion

In my PhD-project, the challenges were obvious and many; the access points apparently few. However, with the invasion of social media into our everyday lives, I approached Facebook asking: How can scholars of religion utilize social media in our fieldwork? This question formed the constitutive basis of this article. As shown, integrating Facebook into my study of the role of religion amongst a battalion of combat soldiers in the IDF provided me with invaluable access, leading from online communication via face-to-face interviews to the final analysis back home. Combined with my previous experiences from Israel, integrating Facebook into my fieldwork in religion thus gave me a highly constructive toolbox. Thus, Facebook represents a “Hub-Keeper”; it contains a wide variety of information and possibilities for communication that - if used wisely - may offer increased control over the fieldwork- process.

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Article II - Religion and Military Conscription: The Case of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

The following manuscript was submitted to the journal *Armed Forces and Society* in February 2010, and received a “revise and resubmit”. *Armed Forces and Society* is “is the leading peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, and international journal publishing on topics such as Civil Military Relations; Military Organizations; Use of Force; Conflict Resolution; Logic and Consequences of War; Terrorism; Military Leadership & Professionalism; Ethics; Security; Arms Control; Peacekeeping; Defense Economics; Recruitment and Retention, Reserve Forces and Veterans, Representation Issues, Family and Health Issues, Military History”. Its Editor-in-Chief is Professor Patricia Shields at the University of Texas.

Due to the novelty of including religion in the study of the military, the article has stirred both engagement and controversy. Accordingly, the editor-in-chief has advised a “seam lining” of the format of the article, in order to integrate it into the ongoing discussions in the journal. Taken the significance and impact of this journal, I have accommodated the editors wish, resulting in a rather “untypical” article, seen from the angle of the discipline of religion. Yet, publishing in this type of journals will give an unorthodox but noteworthy venue to discuss these issues in, which also fits with my overall attempt to combine the discipline of religion with military studies.

Religion and Military Conscription: The Case of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

Abstract

The military benefits from fostering an “us-feeling” amongst its members. On what basis is this “us” formed? Rooted in the discipline of religion, the following discussion is based on qualitative data from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Combining legal documents with oral data gathered through interviews with 34 soldiers in the IDF’s combat battalion number 50, it is argued that it is through the application of religion that the IDF manages to foster a sense of “us”. The article shows how the “dual face of religion” is at work in the IDF, serving both integrative and disintegrative functions by marking distinct community boundaries on several levels: *Externally*, marking the boundary between Israel’s Jewish community versus Israel’s minorities. *Internally*, accentuating fault lines between different Jewish groups. It is consequently argued that by including religion into the analysis may enhance our understanding of the military.

Introduction

Conscript armies are intriguing: With the law in hand, these powerful institutions command inhabitants of the state to fight in their service, and pay with their lives if necessary. In contrast to professional armies – wherein soldiers serve on the basis of voluntarism – conscript armies rest their recruitment on the principle of obligation: Will is an advantage but not a prerequisite. You do not become a member of a conscript army because you want to, but because you have to. Conscript armies therefore carefully assess and categorize potential manpower, drafting some while excluding others. In consequence, conscription contributes to drawing a necessary boundary between “us” and “them”. Like any community, also the military benefits from fostering a certain “us-feeling” amongst its members, and whilst not everyone *can* become a good soldier, not everyone is *allowed* to serve. On what basis is, then,

the “us” formed? Although scholars continue to discuss whether it is *social cohesion* or *task cohesion* that is the most deterministic variable for combat, or to what extent individual or contextual factors for motivation impacts military success¹⁰⁶, there is little doubt that some degree of cohesion is a necessary supposition. But how is cohesion possible? What integrates separate members into a larger whole?

Rooted in the discipline of religion, the following discussion explores these quandaries through an analysis of qualitative data on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). It investigates how religion feeds into the selective conscription practices of the IDF. The data indicates that Judaism offers a pervasive framework that allows for the IDF to foster a sense of “us” amongst its recruited members in complex socio-political environs. It is a conscript army with a long tradition for producing qualified and highly motivated soldiers, despite being faced with critical challenges externally and internally.¹⁰⁷ Cultural, religious and ethnic factors play a crucial part in creating conflict lines; on a regional level (in the Israel-Arab conflict), on a local level (in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) as well as on the national level (in the secular-religious divide amongst Israel’s Jews). I will show that including religion into the analysis may provide significant insights into how the military processes the challenge of creating a sense of unity amongst its selected recruits, while at the same time creating the necessary contextual boundaries towards population groups that are not recruited into the army. The IDF thus provides a revealing case in the analysis of the function of religion within the military.

¹⁰⁶ Ben-Dor, Gabriel, Ami Pedahzur, Daphna Canetti-Nisim, Eran Zaidise, Arie Perliger, and Shai Bermanis. 2008. "I versus We: Collective and Individual Factors of Reserve Service Motivation during War and Peace." *Armed Forces & Society* 34,4 July: 565-592; Henderson, Wm. Darryl. 1985. *Cohesion - the Human Element in Combat: Leadership and Societal Influence in the Armies of the Soviet Union, the United States, North Vietnam, and Israel*. Washington, D.C: National Defense University Press; Levy, Yagil. 2008a. "The Linkage Between Israel's Military Policies and the Military's Social Composition." *American Behavioral Scientist* 51,11 July: 1575-1589; MacCoun, Robert J., Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin. 2006. "Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat? An Old Question with an Old Answer." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,4 July: 646-654; Nadelson, Theodore. 2005. *Trained to Kill: Soldiers at War*. Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press; Watson, Samuel J. 1994. "Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies." *Journal of Military History* 58,1 January: 29-55; Wong, Leonard, Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter. 2003. "Why they Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War." Pp. 1-29: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War college.

¹⁰⁷ Israel Democracy Institute (2007) revealed a drop in combat motivation. Yet, motivation to serve in the IDF is still high and a “motivation crisis” thus appears somewhat exaggerated. See e.g. Arian, Asher, Nir Atmor, and Yael Hadar. 2007. "Auditing Israeli Democracy - 2007: Cohesion in a Divided Society." in *The Israeli Democracy Index*, edited by The Israel Democracy Institute. Jerusalem The Israel Democracy Institute & The Guttman Center; Levy, Yagil. 2009. "Is there a Motivation Crisis in Military Recruitment in Israel?" *Israel Affairs* 15,2 April: 135-158.

The irreconcilable interests of military command versus the fulfilment of religious practices are receiving increasing attention amongst scholars.¹⁰⁸ Examples are studies focusing on issues such as the attempt to find conscription mechanisms for religiously practicing men and women¹⁰⁹; the increasing number of Zionist religious soldiers in combat units as part of the attempt of this political camp to gain veto power in Israeli politics¹¹⁰; or the changing role of the military's Rabbinical branch¹¹¹. Yet, the focus of explicit forms of religious practices overlooks that fact that religion potentially pervades all sectors of life, and extends far beyond mere explicit religious practices or normative theology: Religion is inherently social, and embraces attribute such as a collective referential framework, cultural practices and a unifying and collective discourse.¹¹² It is thus an important contributing factor in societal integration, and potentially strengthens the bonds between the individual and the society.

The analysis is based on a combination of legal documents and oral data gathered through interviews with 34 soldiers in the IDF's combat battalion number 50. Noteworthy, whereas the written documents indicate that religion is a significant variable for conscription, the interview data accentuate and expand this indication. On that basis, I will argue that the "dual face of religion" is at work in the IDF, as it serves both integrative and disintegrative functions by marking distinct community boundaries on several levels; both externally, marking the boundary between Israel's Jewish community versus the other minorities, and internally, accentuating fault lines between different Jewish groups.

To develop my line of argument, the article is split in three: In order to clarify the official jurisdiction that regulates conscription into the IDF, I will first look at the legal

¹⁰⁸ See for example: Burdette, Amy M., Glen H. Elder, Janel Benson, Victor Wang, and Terrence D. Hill. 2009. "Serving God and Country? Religious Involvement and Military Service Among Young Adult Men." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48,4 794-804.

¹⁰⁹ Cohen, Stuart. 1999. "From integration to segregation: The role of religion in the Israel Defense Force." *Armed Forces & Society* Spring: 387-406; Rosman-Stollman, Elisheva. 2007. "Mediating Structures and the Military: The Case of Religious Soldiers." *Armed Forces & Society* 34,4 615-638; —. 2009. "Women of Valor: The Garin Program and the Israel Defense Forces." *Israel Studies* 14,2 Summer: 158-177.

¹¹⁰ Levy, Yagil. 2010. "How the Military's Social Composition Affects Political Protest: The Case of Israel." *Peace & Change* 35,1 123-145.

¹¹¹ The press have focused on what appears to be the increased influence of the Military Rabbinate following the "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza in the winter of 2009 Bronner, Ethan. 22/03/09. "A Religious War in Israel's Army." in *New York Times*. New York; Freedman, Seth. 06/07/09. "Religious dogma has no place in the IDF." in *The Guardian*. London; Harel, Amos. 2008. "Chief IDF Rabbi: Army rabbinate needs to inculcate Jewish values." in *Ha'aretz*. Tel Aviv/Jerusalem; Wagner, Matthew. 08/01/09. "IDF Rabbinate uses scriptures to boost soldiers' morale." in *Jerusalem Post: Online Edition*. Jerusalem.

¹¹² A noteworthy discussion on religion as a soci-cultural constituent in modernity: Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. 2000 [1993]. *Religion as a Chain of Memory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

framework to identify and establish the general trends in the conscription practices with reference to religion. I proceed to expanding the findings in the written data by exploring the interviews with a twofold focus: Firstly, on the unifying and integrating qualities of religion in creating a macro “we”, and secondly, on the disintegrating qualities of religion on the micro-level. The line of argument is accompanied by the three-step development of a model of the functions of religion within the military context. The article is brought to a close with a discussion about conscription and the ambiguities of religion in the creation of a military community.

Data

To compensate for data scarcity, this article rests on the triangulation¹¹³ of several types of data, primarily one oral and one written segment. The written data is comprised by official documentation on conscription practices, published by the IDF or other official Israeli state agencies. I have supplemented this with interview data gathered through 34 in-depth interviews in the 50th Battalion in one of the IDF’s Infantry Brigades. I have made use of both forms of data: Whereas the soldiers talk about conscription with the legal framework as its backdrop, no legal framework is exhaustive, and complementing conscription practices have been institutionalized, although not compiled in written documentation. Furthermore, as civilians and external to the military, we are required to rely also on soldiers’ accounts of their normative universe and the legal modifications they are subjected to.¹¹⁴

The selection of informants was strategic and theoretical aimed at minimizing differences between the interviewees in order to enable the accentuation of typical traits to increase coherence in the interview data.¹¹⁵ The selection of the 50th Battalion was thus the result of a conscious choice based on a number of criteria: All interviewees are men who have served in the IDF during 2005-2009 in a battalion characterized by being manned by

¹¹³ Berg, B. L. 2004. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon; Patton, M.Q. 1987. *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks / London / New Dehli: SAGE Publications.

¹¹⁴ See page 165 in: Osiel, Mark J. 1999. *Obeying Orders: Atrocity, Military Discipline & the Law of War*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

¹¹⁵ Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 1995 [1983]. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London & New Yourk: Routledge; Morse, Janice M. , Michael Barret, Maria Mayan, Karin Olson, and Jude Spiers. 2002. "Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1,2 Spring: 1-19.

religiously non-practicing recruits. They have passed through the same military training and have served under the same conditions. Thus, in my analysis of the role of religion in the military, this battalion could help exploring how religion works not merely amongst the minority of religiously observant recruits, but also on the remaining conscripts.

I have interviewed these soldiers from 2006 to 2009 through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, both one-to-one and through Focus Groups. The interview methodological strategy was founded in the interpretative case analysis, which incorporates the method of thick description and therein allows for study analyzing phenomena with reference to their socio-cultural context.¹¹⁶ Core interview topics were the interviewees' sentiments towards the IDF's mission, the cultural character of the IDF, the role of religion to soldiering in the IDF, and experiences with the state of Israel's application of universal conscription. Unanswered or supplementing questions have been discussed in either follow-up face-to-face interviews or online, through e-mails, "chat rooms" or social media.

Reflections on Method

Approaching the military within the discipline of religion is unorthodox but nevertheless beneficial. Religion is a significant aspect of social life, and the social dimension is in turn an important part of religion. Religion shapes people's relationship with each other, while its influence on society is based on the community members' interpretation of it.¹¹⁷ Not limited or confined to specific spaces in human life, religion is relevant also in the study of the military. Resting on a multi-method – and in this context also *functional* – approach, the scholarly study of religion is *interpretative* and *taxonomic*.¹¹⁸ Scholars of religion employ the

¹¹⁶ Halfpenny, Peter. 1979. "The Analysis of Qualitative Data." *Sociological Review* 27799-825; Helman, Sara. 1997. "Militarism and the Construction of Community." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 25Winter: 305-332; Wuthnow, Robert. 1987. *Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

¹¹⁷ These assumptions have been reiterated and theorized by scholars over decades, and references are too many to mention. Examples are e.g. Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. 1987. "Faut-il définir la religion?" *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 6311-20; Lincoln, Bruce. 1989. *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press; —. 1999b. "Theses on Method." in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, edited by Russel T. McCutcheon. London: Cassel; McGuire, Meredith. 2002. *Religion: The Social Context*. Belmont: Wadsworth; O'Dea, Thomas F. . 1966. *The Sociology of Religion*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc; Smith, Jonathan Z. . 2004. *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

¹¹⁸ For a study of religion and taxonomy, see Lincoln, Bruce. 1989. *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

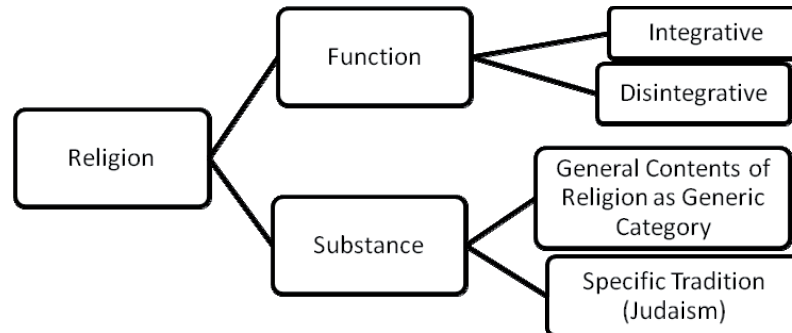
core object of analysis as a generic term. Definition is thus to be seen as a research strategy. As the aim of this article is to explore the role of religion, it follows that the analysis is primarily functional.¹¹⁹ Yet, any study of religion necessitates paying attention to both its function and its contents, and while substantive definitions say something about what religion *is*, functional definitions view religion in terms of the social functions it fulfills.

Thus, the suggested approach by Bruce Lincoln has received resonance, as he employs a polythetic and flexible delimitation of the research object, including four *domains* that indicate the potentially all-encompassing or pervasive attributes of religion: A discourse, a set of practices, a community, and an institution.¹²⁰ Although not necessarily solving the whole problem of definition, Lincoln points at the core of the scholarly study of religion: It is not about finding a universal content – it is about identifying and analyzing its various socio-cultural expressions and consequences, and view it as a socio-cultural phenomenon that extends far beyond the mere domain of theology. The analytical model of religion applied in this study can consequently be visualised with the following:

¹¹⁹ Cf remark by Michael Stausberg: “Speaking of functions does not require the idea that religion ‘as such’ has agency; rather, the ascriptions to religion by social actors observed by scholars can, when analyzed with regard to their regularities, be said to function within models” Stausberg, Michael L. 2009. "There is life in the old dog yet: an introduction to contemporary theories of religion." Pp. 1-21. London and New York: Routledge.

¹²⁰ Lincoln, Bruce. 2003. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about religion after September 11*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Figure1: Analytical Model of Religion



Seen from Figure 1 above, the function and substance have been specified further: A crucial feature of religion is its ability to integrate its followers into a larger community.¹²¹ Yet, social integration is double-sided. Thus, the importance of religion in serving as “an expression of a group’s unity also makes it significant as an expression of that group’s conflict with another group”.¹²² It follows that religion also contains disintegrative features, as the creation of a community also implies creating boundaries between members and non-members. In terms of substance, the analysis of religion implies a two-level analysis, on religion as referring both to a general phenomenon as well as to a specific tradition. At the same time, the particular affiliation between IDF and Judaism implies a particular focus on a specific tradition as the qualifying factor.

IDF’s Legal Framework for Conscription

Needless to say, conscription is subject to a series of regulations. Several scholars have pointed out that conscription is becoming increasingly selective, a trend Israel shares with Western European countries.¹²³ Inherent to the IDF’s conscription practices are a number of built-in ambiguities. In addition to physical and mental readiness, the IDF screens draftees

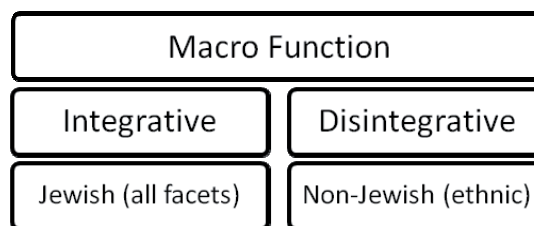
¹²¹ A noteworthy discussion on religion and social integration: Reitz, Jeffrey G., Rupa Banerjee, Mai Phan, and Jordan Thompson. 2009. "Race, Religion, and the Social Integration of New Immigrant Minorities in Canada." *International Migration Review* 43,4 695-726.

¹²² McGuire, Meredith. 2002. *Religion: The Social Context*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

¹²³ Haltliner, Karl W. 1998. "The Definite End of the Mass Army in Western Europe?" *Armed Forces & Society* 25,1 7-36; Pfaffenzeller, Stephan. 2009. "Conscription and Democracy: The Mythology of Civil-Military Relations." *Armed Forces & Society* November: 1-24; Sørensen, Henning. 2000. "Conscription in Scandinavia During the last Quarter Century: Developments and Arguments." *Armed Forces & Society* 26313-334.

according to more fluid criteria, such as ethnic affiliation and degree of religious observance, which in part also overlap. As will be shown below, the IDF applies two different notions of religion in parallel: On the one hand, religion is applied with reference to a community's ethnic and cultural affiliation. On the other hand, it is applied with reference to a narrower and more theological fundament. Whereas the former is primarily applied to non-Jewish groups, the latter is applied to various religiously observing Jewish groups. I will thus show that the written data allows for an expansion of the analytical model to indicate the following:

Figure 2: Macro Function of Religion



As Figure 2 shows, on a macro level the written documentation indicates that religion influences the IDF's conscription framework in ways that contribute to making two general distinctions, one integrative and one disintegrative, integrating Israel's Jewish population and creating boundaries towards "everyone else".

The Defence¹²⁴ Service Law

The legal basis for the IDF as a conscript army is formed by the *Defence Service Law*¹²⁵, first enacted in 1949, consolidated in 1959 and amended repeatedly further, last on 23 March 1989.¹²⁶ Here, it is stated that any "ordinary resident" - which is "a person whose ordinary place of residence is within the territory in which the law of the State of Israel applies"¹²⁷ - is in principle obliged to serve in the IDF.¹²⁸ The only exemptions from military service as

¹²⁴ Israeli official sources are inconsistent as to whether American or British English is preferred.

¹²⁵ The 1986-version of the *Defence Service Law* is found on the Israeli MFA's website: www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ Note that it is *not* available on neither the website of the Ministry of Defense nor on the website of the IDF.

¹²⁶ Constitution, Legislation and Justice Committee of the Knesset on the 10th Shevat, 5746-1986. "Defence Service Law -Consolidated Version " Pp. 107: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹²⁷ —. 5746-1986. "Defence Service Law -Consolidated Version " Pp. 107: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This also applies to Jewish residents in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

¹²⁸ Luttwak, Edward N., and Daniel Horowitz. 1975. *The Israeli Army*. London: Allan Lane.

stated in the law are either women who have children, are pregnant and/or married, or women who find military service contradictory to “reasons of conscience o (sic!) reasons connected with her family's *religious* way of life” (emphasis added).¹²⁹ In addition, conscription is regulated by primarily three supplementary screening factors, two of which are based on cultural community affiliation with roots in religious adherence: fitness, ethnicity, and, religion.¹³⁰

General Criteria: Fitness and Health

In order to establish the recruits' mental and physical readiness for service in the IDF, potential recruits are taken through a so-called “first notice”, i.e. the *tsav rishon*, which entails a series of tests that gauge one's suitability for the army and that determine where they end up. During the *tsav rishon* the army unilaterally screens the draftees according to two basic parameters: One is the physical “*Profil*”, which refers to the medical profile based on a numerical scale, wherein 97 is the highest score and 21 is unsuitable for service; 72-97 means fit for combat. The *Profil* is given to each candidate that is relevant for service prior to recruitment. The other is the *Kaba*, which is the Hebrew acronym for “Quality Group Score” and measures intellectual potential. It is comprised of an intelligence test and a personal interview, the latter being only for combat-destined men and women. The *Kaba* is determined for each individual through a series of tests and interviews taken at the recruitment centers during the pre-entry period. It has a number up to 56.¹³¹ The combination of these two scores - the *Profil* and the *Kaba* - determines whether on one end of the spectrum a recruit is suitable for an elite combat or reconnaissance unit or a non-combat, more administrative-oriented or labor job on the other.¹³²

¹²⁹ Constitution, Legislation and Justice Committee of the Knesset on the 10th Shevat, 5746 5746-1986. “Defence Service Law -Consolidated Version ” Pp. 107: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. see section 39.

¹³⁰ For further elaboration on IDF conscription laws and practices, see Hoffnung, Menachem. 1995. “Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in Applying Israel's Conscription Law.” *Law & Polity* 17,3 July: 311-340. Luttwak, Edward N., and Daniel Horowitz. 1975. *The Israeli Army*. London: Allan Lane.

¹³¹ Every job and unit in the IDF has minimal and maximal values for these two parameters. For further details, see Chapter 5 (p. 76-96) in Gal, Reuven. 1986. *A Portrait of an Israeli Soldier*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

¹³² Damkani, Goel. 2010. “IDF 101.” Pp. 1-2 in *IDF for Dummies*, edited by IDC Herzliya. Herzliya, Israel.

Ethnicity and Religion: The case of non-Jewish groups

There is perhaps little surprise in finding that the IDF's conscription practices are sensitive with regard to ethnic and religious affiliation, taken the degree to which cultural, religious and ethnic pluralism affects the state of Israel on all fronts: To illustrate the heterogeneity of Israel's population, Arabs make up 24% (1.4 million) of Israel's population; over 80% of this group is Palestinian. Amongst Israel's Arabs, Muslims - including Bedouins - make up 82%, with around 9% Druze, and 9% Christians.¹³³

A decisive policy dating back to Israel's early years extends an exemption to Arabs living in Israel within the "1967-borders". This policy is ambiguous, however, as Bedouin, Circassian and Druze men serve, all of which are Arab minorities. In practice, therefore, the exemption to Arabs applies to the Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian). The IDF argues that this exemption has been granted with reference to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to considerations concerning a blend of ethnicity, religion and loyalty as "...a community finding itself a minority in a country that they had not chosen – and one at war with neighbors of their own religious and ethnic persuasion – presented a potential security risk; even where this was not the case, Arabs [Palestinians] could hardly be expected to serve in situations where they would be required to fire on their own kin".¹³⁴ Still, given the centrality of military service in Israel, the exemption of Palestinians are by many seen as resulting in a marginalization of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship from Israeli civil society, accentuating the gap between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians further.¹³⁵

The Druze have been subject to compulsory military service since 1955, and it is an accepted fact according to the law. Conversely, any "questioning of this is not part of the Druze consensus".¹³⁶ The Circassian men comprise the only Muslim group to do compulsory service in the IDF, "making their structural position within Israel similar to that of the Druze

¹³³ See Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, and Ynet. 12/28/2006. "Statistics report: less enlisting to army." in *Ynet News*. Tel Aviv.

¹³⁴ Williams, Lt.Col. (Res.) Louis. 2000 [1989]. *The Israel Defense Forces: A People's Army*. Lincoln: Authors Choice Press.

¹³⁵ Kanaaneh, Rhoda. 2003. "Embattled Identities: Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32,3 Spring: 5-20.

¹³⁶ Atashi, Zeidan. 15/10/2007 [28 Tishrei 5762]. "The Druze in Israel and the Question of Compulsory Military Service." *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, 464 1-12; I.D.F.Spokesman. 1977. *Druze and Circassians in the I.D.F.* Jerusalem: Israel Defence Forces.

minority".¹³⁷ The Circassians joined the IDF as early as the 1948 war. Since 1958 they have done compulsory service, following a request submitted by the Circassian leaders and accepted by the Israeli government.

There is a long-standing government policy of encouraging Bedouins to volunteer and offer them various inducements. Reflecting the military's role as a step-stone in civil society amongst impoverished groups, Bedouin communities tend to take the opportunity military service offers. Still, although the Israeli government's active promotion for voluntary army service for Israeli Arabs has paid off, the numbers are still small: Bedouin recruits was in 2008 estimated to have increased from 50 to 100, making a total of about 300 Bedouin.¹³⁸

It should be emphasized that Bedouin, Circassian, Druze and Palestinian Arabs comprise a marginal minority within the ranks of the IDF's 176 500¹³⁹ regular recruits: There are no official statistics on the ethnic composition of the IDF, and the IDF's claim that the Israeli-Druze community by percentage is "the greatest contributor of enlistees to the army" may imply that they play a crucial role.¹⁴⁰ But studies assert that 1.7% of the Druze population – which constitutes less than 2% of Israel's total population – serves in the IDF, thus indicating approximately 300 people.¹⁴¹ Although the Circassians are subject to the legal obligation of military service, they only comprise approximately 3000 *in total* in Israel – i.e. less than a quarter of the Druze population.¹⁴² The impact of the Arab minorities on the character of the IDF is consequently small.

¹³⁷ "Circassian" is a term used to designate various peoples of the north-western Caucasus. The roughly 3000 Circassians in Israel are Sunni Muslims: Bram, Chen. 2003. "Muslim revivalism and the emergence of civic society. A case study of an Israeli-Circassian community." *Central Asian Survey* 22,1 March: 5–21.

¹³⁸ Estimates are taken from the press because the IDF does not publish demographic manpower data. See: Beauwens, Daan. 11/11/2008. "Arabs Uneasy About Joining Israeli Army." in *IPS Inter Press Service*; Stern, Yoav. 10/10/2008. "Number of Israeli Arab IDF recruits dramatically increases in 2008." in *Ha'aretz*. Jerusalem & Tel Aviv.

¹³⁹ See page 12, in: Shapir, Yiftah, and Tamir Magal. 2010. "Middle East Military Balance Files: Israel." Pp. 1-24 in *Military Balance Files*: INSS, The Institute for National Security Studies (Incorporating the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies).

¹⁴⁰ Blech, Dor. 09/07/2007. "10% Increase in Israeli-Druze IDF Enlistees." Pp. <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/2008n/2007/0901.htm> in *IDF Spokesperson's Unit*. Jerusalem.

¹⁴¹ Atashi, Zeidan. 15/10/2007 [28 Tishrei 5762]. "The Druze in Israel and the Question of Compulsory Military Service." *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, 464 1-12; Fakhr, Sakr Abu. 2000. "Voices from the Golan." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29,4 5-36.

¹⁴² Bram, Chen. 2003. "Muslim revivalism and the emergence of civic society. A case study of an Israeli-Circassian community." *Central Asian Survey* 22,1 March: 5–21.

Observance and Religion: The Case of Jewish Groups

For Jewish groups, exemption from universal conscription is regulated through a temporary political arrangement called the “Tal Law”. The special exemption from mandatory military service given to the Israeli Ultra-Orthodox is the result of the work of the Tal Committee, appointed on 22 August 1999 by then prime minister and defense minister Ehud Barak and was headed by the retired judge Tzvi Tal¹⁴³.

According to section 36(3) in the Defense Service Law, Ultra-orthodox men are *not* exempted from regular or reserve duty for reasons of “education, settlement, national economy or family reasons” or other reasons. However, the Tal Law is legally based on the same section, which allows for the deferment of service by religious men attending Jewish academies, i.e. *yeshiva*. This relates to two groups: One is young men engaged in religious studies who are not enlisted in the army as long as they study at a *yeshiva*. The other includes a group of *yeshiva* students who enlist in special units combining military service with *yeshiva* studies. The latter - the so-called *Yeshivot Hesder*¹⁴⁴ – is included in the fighting set-up of the IDF. Accordingly, the IDF considers the soldiers’ aspiration to exercise their Jewish religious duties to be of such significance that it qualifies for special arrangements in the military.

Ambiguities of Religion: Recruitment and Unit Placement

The functions of religion are inherently potentially contradictory. While “religion may arguably function to generate social cohesion, the activities of religions often point to disruptive effects”.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, it is noticeable that the interview data suggests that this “dual face of religion” is at work not merely between the Jewish community and other groups, but that it can also be applied internally within the Jewish community. During the conscription phase, recruits are not only selected, they are also placed into units. Commenting on recruitment into the IDF, “Haim” – a combat-soldier who fought in the Second Lebanon

¹⁴³ Navot, Suzie. 2006. *The Constitutional Law of Israel*. Alpen aan den Rijn: Kluwer Law International.

¹⁴⁴ “Hesder” is the Hebrew term for “the arrangement”. Thus, *Yeshivot Hesder* simply means “The *Yeshiva* Arrangement” or “The Religious School Arrangement”.

¹⁴⁵ Stausberg, Michael L. 2009. “There is life in the old dog yet: an introduction to contemporary theories of religion.” Pp. 1-21. London and New York: Routledge.

War in 2006 and the Operation Cast Led in Gaza in 1008-09 - made a representative statement of the 50th Battalion experiences:

If you're Ashkenazi [European Jewry] and have other plans for your life, you just play for a day and put on a weird face. If you're religious, you have a weird face anyway, and then they won't take you. Or not necessarily. It depends. They try to, though – they stretch quite far. With me who just listen to the iPod on Shabbat and don't do all that ritual stuff – with me it was more, well, a command. Not much stretching, to put it that way, he he. Why I didn't dodge army service? It's the Law – and I like the IDF! Besides, I don't have powerful friends and I am not a freak ("Haim" 07/04/09).

“Haim”'s statement *can* be seen on the background of the criteria of Fitness: All armies must set minimum standards for their manpower's mental and physical fitness. With the *Kaba* and *Profil* the IDF applies such apparently “objective” criteria criteria to differ between fit and unfit for service. However, these categories are in practice nonetheless flux and are subject to e.g. socio-economic class, individual motivation and religious observance. As also former Head of the IDF Personnel Directorate General Gil Regev admitted; “‘mental health’ is a pattern of bargaining rather than an objective condition”.¹⁴⁶ With regard to the judgment made on the basis of the combination of the *Kaba* and the physical *Profil*, it is noteworthy that the ultra-orthodox groups in Israel are generally of poorer physical and mental health than the secular middle class with respect to fitness for military service.¹⁴⁷

There is little surprise in finding that the conscription criteria are neither clear-cut nor static: Militaries are intrinsically connected with their ambient society, wherein “national

¹⁴⁶ For elaboration on social class and exemption, see: Levy, Yagil. 2008a. "The Linkage Between Israel's Military Policies and the Military's Social Composition." *American Behavioral Scientist* 51,11 July: 1575-1589; —, 2009. "Is there a Motivation Crisis in Military Recruitment in Israel?" *Israel Affairs* 15,2 April: 135-158.

¹⁴⁷ Aran, Gideon. 2008. "Denial does not make the haredi body go away: ethnography of a disappearing(?) jewish phenomenon " *Contemporary Jewry* 26,1 75-113; Devi, Sharmila. 2005. "Mental health and religion in Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jews." *The Lancet* 366,9496 1516-1517; Fishman, Rachelle HB. 1999. "Report reveals link between poverty and ill health among Israel's children." *The Lancet* 353,9147 888; Rotem, Tamar. 08/11/2007. "Current measles outbreak hit ultra-Orthodox the hardest." in *Ha'aretz*. Tel Aviv; Werner, Perla, David Olchovsky, Galia Shemi, and Iris Vered. 2003. "Osteoporosis health-related behaviors in secular and orthodox Israeli Jewish women." *Maturitas: An International Journal of Midlife Health and Beyond* 46,4 10 December 2003: 283-294.

service contributes toward the armed forces' integration with civil society"¹⁴⁸, thus making conscription relative to a series of contextual considerations. However, when combining the legal framework with the interview data, the indication of religion as a determining variable in the selection phase as well as for the placement into units is conspicuous. Baruch Kimmerling claimed that "One of the central problems of the Israeli structure is the linkage between ethnic origin and class membership".¹⁴⁹ This has in turn been intrinsically linked to the way military service has been the decisive standard by which civil rights and social mobility have been distributed in the Israeli society. Whereas motivation to serve in the IDF on a Jewish-Israeli national basis has remained high for decades, the motivation internally amongst the different Jewish social groups has varied.¹⁵⁰

Still, in addition to the accentuation of ethnic heritage, "Haim" draws a noteworthy distinct line between religiously observant and the seculars. There is no doubt the integration of religiously observant Jewish groups necessitate quite different adaptations and requirements than does the integration of seculars. And, as the set-up of the IDF is based on Ben-Gurion's credo – i.e. that both religious and secular citizens had equal civil obligations – "the entire IDF framework had to be structured in ways which would not alienated religiously observant troops by requiring them to contravene the dictates of traditional Jewish law".¹⁵¹ I will now turn to the explicit internal adaptations with regard to religion.

Recruitment: Religion as Integrative

The significance of religion was reiterated during the interviews with the soldiers. The unity amongst the different Jewish groups in Israel was repeatedly emphasized, and many soldiers expressed the unity amongst the Jewish-Israeli people as particularly strong and significant. Throughout the interviews it thus became clear that on the macro level, the IDF's principle of

¹⁴⁸ Pfaffenzeller, Stephan. 2009. "Conscription and Democracy: The Mythology of Civil-Military Relations." *Armed Forces & Society*: November: 1-24.

¹⁴⁹ Kimmerling, Baruch. 1979. "Determination of the Boundaries and Frameworks of Conscription: Two Dimensions of Civil-Military Relations in Israel." *Studies in Comparative International Development* XIV,1 Spring: 22-41.

¹⁵⁰ Paragraph's findings are expanded in: Levy, Yagil. 2008a. "The Linkage Between Israel's Military Policies and the Military's Social Composition." *American Behavioral Scientist* 51,11 July: 1575-1589; Shafir, Gershon, and Yoav Peled. 2002. *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, Stuart A. 1997a. *The Scroll or the Sword? Dilemmas of Religion and Military Service in Israel*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

universal conscription is determining and accentuates the issue of burden-sharing, as the notion of a collective Jewish identity is related to the question of burden-sharing: Conscript armies rest their recruitment on the resources of the civil population, based on a civil-military “contract” that allows for governments to demonstrate their immense power to tax by imposing military service.¹⁵² Several scholars argue along rational choice lines that “the fate of conscription” rests on “how legitimate it is understood to be”; populations’ consent to compulsory conscription is in other words contingent on how *fair* it is considered to be and “how enchanting the myths about it are”.¹⁵³ Accordingly, the civil-military arrangement is potentially volatile and vulnerable to changes in opinion in civil society.¹⁵⁴

The inter-relationship between burden-sharing and religion was expressed through an emphasis of the cultural similarities internally amongst Israeli Jews – even amongst seculars and religious groups, which are otherwise colliding in Israeli civil society. Judaism thus contributes to fostering a sense of “us” with contrast to the surrounding groups. The scholar of the anthropology religion Talal Asad has in a series of publication reiterated the important point that belonging to a tradition does not necessarily include theological pondering or engagement. He writes that “The selectivity with which people approach their tradition doesn’t necessarily undermine their claim to its integrity”.¹⁵⁵ This explains why members of the 50th Battalion – first and foremost a secular group – accentuate their compliance with the IDF having a particularly strong Jewish cultural imprint. To exemplify, in a conversation with “Tsvi”, a middle-class Ashkenazi Jew from Northern Tel Aviv, he was asked what it meant to him that the IDF is not merely an Israeli army, but a *Jewish* army:

¹⁵² Peri, Yoram. 2001. "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis." Pp. 107-136 in *Military, State, and Society in Israel*, edited by Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari and Zeev Rosenheek. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers. On civilians’ compliance with military conscription as state taxation, see: Levi, Margaret. 1997. *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Segal, David R., and Mady Wechsler Segal. 2004. "America's Military Population." *Population Bulletin: Special Issue. Celebrating 75 Years* 59,4 December: 3-39. Clarifications on civil-military theories, see e.g. Burk, James. 2002. "Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations." *Armed Forces & Society* 29,1 Fall: 7-29.

¹⁵³ Leander, Anne. 2004. "Drafting community: Understanding the Fate of Conscription." *Armed Forces & Society* 30,4 571-599; Levi, Margaret. 1997. *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵⁴ Etzioni-Halevy, Eva. 1996. "Civil-Military Relations and Democracy. The Case of the Military-Political Elites' Connection in Israel." *Armed Forces & Society* 22,3 401-417; Lebel, Udi. 2007. "Civil Society versus Military Sovereignty: Cultural, Political, and Operational Aspects." *Armed Forces & Society* 34,1 October: 67-89; Peri, Yoram. 2001. "Civil-Military Relations in Israel in Crisis." Pp. 107-136 in *Military, State, and Society in Israel*, edited by Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari and Zeev Rosenheek. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers; Pfaffen-zeller, Stephan. 2009. "Conscription and Democracy: The Mythology of Civil-Military Relations." *Armed Forces & Society* November: 1-24.

¹⁵⁵ Page 195 in Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Everything. I am secular, but ... It is what we do, you know. But I really wanted to. I am very proud in the army. ... Really. You know, we are Jews. So, taking religion away from the IDF... you can't. You would take *us* away. It is not just a job, you know. [...] Call military service a donation, if you like. I think everyone everywhere should donate back to their country. But for us Jews it is more than that. For us it is a moral issue – it is a *Jewish* issue ("Tzvi" 04/10/08).

Tzvi's answer is one among several similar examples of how experiences soldiers evoke Judaism as the core element in the construction of solidarity and identity in the IDF, As Nadav said: "In the army, you discover that the difference between the secular and the religious is much smaller than you thought before. It is not so black and white" ("Nadav" 05/02/08). Scholars of Judaism have repeatedly reiterated the diversity of Judaism, approaching it as the complex of distinctive customs and practices of the Jewish nation. According to a survey conducted by the Israeli Democracy Index of 2007, "Israeli" is a secondary label amongst the population: The state's two dominating groups in the state identify themselves as either Arab or Jewish respectively, and "the various definitions of identity adopted by the country's citizens present a rather pluralistic picture, but also one of deep cleavages and *lack of social cohesion*". Thus, merely labeling everyone with Israeli citizenship as "Israeli" eradicates crucial ethnic and religious demarcation lines.

The Jewish society in Israel is in turn made up by seculars and religious, observant and non-observant. Although the amount of Israelis who claim that the relationship between the religious and the seculars are not good is decreasing, they are still a majority with 66%: When measuring religious observance as determined by degree of adherence to Jewish religious laws and practices, 7% observe tradition meticulously; 25% observe tradition to a large extent; 47% observe tradition slightly; and 21% do not observe tradition at all.¹⁵⁶

Thus, as indicated above, juxtaposing "Jewish" or "Judaism" in the Israeli context inevitably leads to decisive problems of definition; these terms are multi-referential, ambiguous, overlapping and at times even contradictory. Whereas Judaism is a religious

¹⁵⁶ Arian, Asher, Nir Atmor, and Yael Hadar. 2007. "Auditing Israeli Democracy - 2007: Cohesion in a Divided Society." in *The Israeli Democracy Index*, edited by The Israel Democracy Institute. Jerusalem The Israel Democracy Institute & The Guttman Center.

category with its practices, traditions, its particular historiography, and its emphasis on the connection to between a people and a specific Land, “Jewish” is also an ethnic category with reference to a specific group membership within the State of Israel. In other words, inherent in these categories is the ambiguity of ethnic and religious affiliation.¹⁵⁷

Jewishness, “Israeliness” and Judaism are inextricably linked.¹⁵⁸ Judaism entails a dual reference, pointing at both a religious and an ethnic “dimension”. Accordingly, “Although all who practice and affirm Judaism are Jews, not all Jews affirm(ed) and practice(d) Judaism”.¹⁵⁹ Emphasizing the religious dimension implies highlighting that the Jewish tradition is based on a limited set of culturally constituted “variables” wherein the Biblical scriptures serve as an ethnic marker that unites both secular and religious groups.¹⁶⁰ Many would perhaps object to this by claiming that far from all Jews in Israel are religiously practicing. Still, while there are a myriad of ways of being Jewish, Judaism nevertheless provides a series of traditions, rituals, myths and institutions that contribute to providing a measure of Jewish or culture-specific continuity, mechanism elucidated by the concept of “cultural memory” upon which also Zionism is built.¹⁶¹

Religion is hence a weighty and effective community boundary marker, and remains a crucial factor for the IDF’s conscription practices.¹⁶² At the same time, it is well acknowledged that the category of religion has a built-in ambiguity; a “dual face”, with both integrative and disintegrative capacities.¹⁶³ The IDF’s conscription practices hints towards both these tendencies. Complicating the picture further, other related categories relevant to the

¹⁵⁷ Satlow, Michael L. . 2005. "Disappearing Categories: Using categories in the Study of Religion." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17:287-298.

¹⁵⁸ See: Ravitzky, Aviezer. 1996 (1993). *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁵⁹ Green, William Scott. 1989. "Old Habits Die Hard: Judaism in the Encyclopaedia of Religion." in *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism*, edited by Jacob Neusner and Alan Avery-Peck. Malden, MA: Blackwell. See e.g. Dan Cohn-Sherbok’s telling intellectual pondering concerning the question “who are the Jews” Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 2003. *Judaism: History, Belief, and Practice*. London: Routledge.

¹⁶⁰ Sand, Shlomo. 2009. *The Invention of the Jewish People*. New York: Verso.

¹⁶¹ Assmann, Jan. 1995. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique* 25, Spring 125-133 ; Mendes-Flohr, Paul. 2003 [2000]. "Secular Forms of Jewishness." Pp. 461-476 in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, edited by Jacob Neusner and Alan Avery-Peck. Malden, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell.

¹⁶² The Tal Law has been object to much controversy. It was extended in September 2009 for another 15 months, after a lengthy tug-of-war in the Israeli Cabinet and High Court of Justice. Alpert, Yair. 09/09/2009. "Tal Law Given Another 15 Months." in *matzav.com*; Ilan, Shazar. 21/01/07. "Tal Law exemption ultra-Orthodox from military service set to expire." in *Ha'aretz*; Ilan, Shazar, and Amiram Barkat. 18/02/2007. "Cabinet extends Tal Law on army service for yeshiva students." in *Ha'aretz*; Izenberg, Dan. 07/07/09. "High Court puts off decision on Tal Law." in *The Jerusalem Post*; Navot, Suzie. 2006. *The Constitutional Law of Israel*. Alpen aan den Rijn: Kluwer Law International.

¹⁶³ Appleby, R. Scott. 2000. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Israeli context are equally complex. Conscript armies must be sensitive to internal differences. Needless to say; the civil-military relations that the IDF must related to are complex, intense, and, perhaps, even impossible to fully accommodate:

Religion as Disintegrative: Examples of unit placement

In most contexts, “conscription is legitimated with reference to its virtues in constructing community”.¹⁶⁴ The IDF is no exception. Taking great pride in being a conscript “People’s Army”¹⁶⁵ the IDF has a significant nation building and immigrant absorbing role.¹⁶⁶ Yet, accommodating religious demands indicate disintegrative effects. Integrating “the people” is complex and challenging, primarily with reference to religion: Living a life in accordance with religious law is in the case of Judaism intrinsically tied to religious practices, and with 613 commandments – so-called *mitzvot* - a life according to Jewish law is a *way of life*. Integrating religiously observant groups thus implies the implementation of radical initiatives. Accordingly, the IDF is organized in order to allow for and regulate military action in coordination with religious praxis. “Shlomi” explained:

For the most part I would say that when people go to the drafting centre – unless they are ultra-orthodox and have either gotten an exemption or are someone dodging the service in another way or you express yourself in ways so that the IDF doesn’t want you there – then you are sent to where the service needs people. And in general, you

¹⁶⁴ Leander, Anne. 2004. "Drafting community: Understanding the Fate of Conscription." *Armed Forces & Society* 30,4 571-599. See also e.g. Simonsen, Sven Gunnar. 2007. "Building "National" Armies - Building Nations? Determinants of Success for Postintervention Integration Efforts." *Armed Forces & Society* 33,4 July: 571-590.

¹⁶⁵ For example, IDFSpokesperson. 23/09/08. "An Army of the People." in *Today in the IDF*. Jerusalem: Israel Defense Forces.. Cohen, Stuart. 2008. *Israel and its Army: From cohesion to confusion*. New York: Routledge. Ben-Ari, Eyal, Daniel Maman, and Zeev Rosenhek. 2000. "Military Sociological Research in Israel." Pp. 91-115 in *Military Sociology: The Richness of a Discipline*, edited by Gerhard Kümmel and Andreas D. Prüfert. Baden-Baden: Nomos Publisher; Kasher, Asa. 2003. "Public Trust in a Military Force." *Journal of Military Ethics* 2,1 20-45. Missri, Eduardo. 23/11/08. "The Army of the Jewish People in Israel and Abroad." in *Today in the IDF*. Jerusalem: Israel Defense Forces.

¹⁶⁶ Perlmutter, Amos. 1969. *Military and Politics in Israel: Nation-Building and Role Expansion*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd; Schneider, Dikla 02/01/2009. "Reassuring the Nation: The IDF Teachers Unit." Jerusalem: Israel Defense Forces; Tal, Israel. 2000. *National Security: The Israeli Experience*. Westport, Connecticut & London: Praeger Publ.

can end up anywhere. Yet, we all know that it isn't necessarily so – that we're placed with likeminded ("Shlomi" 24/06/07).

"Shlomi"'s statement is describing: He lists a number of ideologically, culturally, and religiously founded criteria that are key to where you actually end up serving. Despite Ben-Gurion's rejection of allowing religious recruits to serve in separate units, there is today a firm practice of allowing just this: For example, the IDF's minority groups tend to serve in separate units. One is the "Minorities Unit" – the so-called "300 Brigade" – established already in 1948, consisting mainly of Druze, a limited number of Circassians and some Bedouins. The IDF also put together the *Trackers Unit*, made up primarily by Bedouins but also with some Druze on the basis of their allegedly "familiarity with the terrain to play a key role in border patrols".¹⁶⁷ Today, the Druze serve in the *Herev* Infantry Battalion –known as "The Druze Battalion" - which is a ground force battalion in the regular forces. The battalion was established in 1974, following a decision made to integrate all minority units under one command.¹⁶⁸

When it comes to the IDF's Jewish recruits, there are several examples: One is the so-called *Yeshivot Hesder*, literally translated into the "Talmud Academy Arrangement", carrying the connotation of a compromise between the IDF and the national-religious community, allowing for recruits to combine military service with Talmud studies. A similar alternative is the *Shiluv*, litt. "combination", initiated by the religious kibbutz movement.¹⁶⁹ Another example is the KFIR brigade that handles the policing missions in the West Bank. Although there is still no scholarly research on this brigade, Israeli scholar Yigal Levy claims that settlers favour service in this KFIR brigade and are also permitted to do so.¹⁷⁰

A third example is the the 50th Battalion, to whom the interviewees in this article belong: The 50th Battalion is a particular battalion as conscription into it is somewhat out of

¹⁶⁷ Williams, Lt.Col. (Res.) Louis. 2000 [1989]. *The Israel Defense Forces: A People's Army*. Lincoln: Authors Choice Press. Noteworthy, in some impoverished Bedouin communities a military career seems one of the few means of (relative) social mobility available.

¹⁶⁸ I.D.F. 28/07/2009. "The Integration of the Druze People in the IDF." Pp. dover.idf.il/.../0/TheIntegrationofDruzeinIsraelEnglish.ppt. Jerusalem: I.D.F. Military-Strategic Information Section.

¹⁶⁹ Sider, Yossi. 2000. "The Hesder [Hebrew]." Pp. 101 minutes. Israel: Globus United.

¹⁷⁰ Personal correspondence with Yagil Levy 24/09/09. See also his article Levy, Yagil. 2008a. "The Linkage Between Israel's Military Policies and the Military's Social Composition." *American Behavioral Scientist* 51,11 July: 1575-1589.

the ordinary. There are two ways of being recruited into the 50th Battalion. One is the *Gibush*, which is a two-day military trial period prior to so-called “first notice”, i.e. the *tsav rishon*, and involves various physical, mental, and socio-metric challenges. The other is through the *Garinin* (pl.), which literally means “seeds” and can be described as “member cells” within a larger youth movement and are youth groups with strong bonds between the members. In a Focus Group Interview with combat soldiers who were completing their military service after having participated in both the Second Lebanon war in 2006 and Operation Cast Led 2008-09, we discussed the question of compliance to conscription. The following statement by one member of the group received applause:

Listen. We respect the religious people. They do a lot of good stuff for all of us. But the fact that some of them don't serve in the Tsahal – I mean... give me a break! I deeply, intensely and sincerely oppose that arrangement. I cannot agree. I simply cannot. Don't you see?? Here I am, cannon fodder for millions of Arabs who want to kill me. And then... I don't agree with the ultra-orthodox who don't do service. We should *all* contribute! I mean, we risk our lives to defend them! Shouldn't they also do the same for us? Are their lives worth more than ours? We're all Jews and in this together! This is what we Jews do ("Aviner" 05/04/09).

Here, both integrative and disintegrative functions are at work. On the one hand, Judaism lays at the basis of the sense of belonging to a shared “us”. Yet, the recruits also accentuate a specific unit identity. Cohesion theorists may argue that this is an expression of successful development of social cohesion amongst recruits who serve together in the same unit over time. However, Israeli military analysts have noted that the “universality” of the concept of social cohesion as a facet in military training is invalid. This objection comes from the assumption that in order to create these sentiments amongst soldiers, stability, clear boundaries and routine amongst a limited group of people is necessitated. On the basis of observations from the al-Aqsa intifada, as Ben-Shalom and his co-authors note: “The actual frameworks that waged the fighting were rarely the units depicted in training manuals. Rather, these ‘instant units’ were often composed of constantly changing constituent elements that

came together for a mission and then dispersed upon its completion”.¹⁷¹ The data from the 50th Battalion feeds into this point as their affiliation and identification with the unit exists prior to service. In other words, they end up in the unit out of their own will. Thus while religious and ethnic identity is associated with a culturally specific set of value standards, these same identity labels may subsume a number of simultaneous characteristics which cluster statistically, but which are not absolutely interdependent and connected internally. It also indicates the necessity of exploring further the significance of task cohesion in different empirical settings.

Deviations: Views on Non-Jewish Groups in the IDF

Seen above, ethnicity is not merely an identity marker: It also highlights overall, religious demarcation lines. The crucial boundary is created between Jewish-Israelis and “everyone else” and reflects that in order to provide fertile soil for forging a “we”, the military “must conscript a large number of people who are committed to the collectivity’s goals [...] Thus, the service must be universal, compulsory, and at the same time semi-voluntary”.¹⁷² Several scholarly works – as well as IDF Personnel – have argued against this intrinsic *Jewishness* of the IDF. Lt. Col. (Res.) Louis Williams, for example, addressed this issue: “It might be natural to assume that the IDF is, by definition, an exclusively Jewish army. However, the army does number among its ranks representatives of the minority communities – some as conscripts and other as volunteers, both in the standing and regular echelons”.¹⁷³

Williams is correct when he claims that the IDF is not merely an institution for Jews; seen above, the IDF drafts several non-Jewish minorities. However, as shown above, they are marginal with little impact on the identity of the IDF, and that conscription of these groups is conditional. In a discussion with “David”, a 24 year old interpreter in the IDF, fluent in Arabic, French and English, he was asked to what extent the IDF is a mixed-up Jewish Army and not merely an Israeli army. His explanation is summarizing:

¹⁷¹ Ben-Shalom, Uri, Zeev Lehrer, and Eyal Ben-Ari. 2005. "Cohesion During Military Operations: A Field Study on Combat Units in the Al-Aqsa Intifada." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,1 October: 63-79.

¹⁷² Kimmerling, Baruch. 1979. "Determination of the Boundaries and Frameworks of Conscription: Two Dimensions of Civil-Military Relations in Israel." *Studies in Comparative International Development* XIV,1 Spring: 22-41.

¹⁷³ Williams, Lt.Col. (Res.) Louis. 2000 [1989]. *The Israel Defense Forces: A People's Army*. Lincoln: Authors Choice Press.

There is no doubt about it – I mean, that the IDF is not just any mix, but a *Jewish* mix. None. (Long pause). Although, you know, there is a little asterisk: the Druze units – they have their own rules in terms of Shabbat, dietary thing, so... there are Bedouins who come in the army with their tractors and everything, so each unit will be subject to its own regulations to its reasonable extent. [...] But *within reason*. The concept is that there shouldn't be more variation than to keep the Jewish identity of the state. And the moment the Druze or the Bedouins or whoever don't accept that – trust me, they're out ("David" 06/02/08).

The IDF maintains “a Jewish character, operating out of moral obligation to the historical traditions of the Nation of Israel, and in accordance with her spirit”¹⁷⁴. Through the analytical application of Lincoln's model of religion, it comes to the fore that Judaism is fused into the institution of the IDF, not merely as an ethnic indicator but also with reference to ‘traditional’ religion: It is emblematically represented by a tripartite symbol comprised by a sword and an olive branch in the middle of the Star of David, which points to the army's responsibilities for both martial action and provisions of peace, while at the same time signifying how the IDF is a representative of the Israeli-Jewish religion and culture. Furthermore, Judaism is upheld by the Military Rabbinate, which provides *all* units with religious and spiritual guidance, as its tasks are among others to “enhance the spiritual & ethical force of the IDF units and commanders by direct involvement in all military activity; to form a common military environment with a Jewish Identity and respond to the religious needs of every soldier and commander; to be a unifying factor between the varied populations of the IDF”.¹⁷⁵ With reference to practices within the institution, it is noticeable that the IDF follows the Jewish orthodox calendar, it also celebrates all Jewish religious holidays and thus not merely those of secular and national character.¹⁷⁶ There are thus many indications of the IDF providing us with an example wherein religion is a qualifying factor.

¹⁷⁴ I.D.F.Rabbinate. 2010. "IDF Rabbinate Briefing." IDF Spokesperson's Unit.

¹⁷⁵ —. 2010. "IDF Rabbinate Briefing." IDF Spokesperson's Unit; IDF. 2010a. "Chief Military Rabbinate." Jerusalem: Israel Defense Forces.

¹⁷⁶ Such as *Yom Ha-zikaron* (litt. “Remembrance Day”), *Yom Ha-atsma'ut*, Israel's Independence Day, or other exclusively military rituals that mark transition within the military, such as e.g. inauguration rituals or promotion.

The IDF acknowledges and rewards their Bedouin soldiers, and regularly present them as an emblematic example of religious and ethnic pluralism.¹⁷⁷ Yet, in addition to the simple fact that Hebrew is the preferred language, which de facto give Israel's Jews precedence, this unanimous Jewish identity of the IDF accentuates the alienation of the minorities. For example, the alienation of Bedouins within the IDF due to their non-Jewish identity is reflected in statements as late as in April 2010, when the IDF Spokesperson's Unit announced that Bedouins were given an additional day of education about "the history and heritage of Jewish combat in order to connect the soldiers to the land they defend, especially because, unlike most IDF soldiers, they are not Jewish and are not obligated to serve".¹⁷⁸ The cultural boundaries between the Jewish majority and the other minorities also find expressions through repeated claims of uneven treatment, such as Druze claims that they are prevented from climbing the ranks in contrast to their Jewish colleagues.¹⁷⁹

Thus, I will argue that conscription of these non-Jewish groups in practice is relative to their benevolence towards the Jewish-Israeli society and therein the IDF's mission. To be more precise: Although being Arab, Bedouin, Circissian and Druze communities are *de facto* not in active – or violent - opposition to the state of Israel as a Jewish state. On the flip-side of the coin, one may without much speculation assume that the moment they should oppose the state, they would also not be conscripted into the ranks of the IDF. This feeds into the argument that the IDF is based on a meaning system representing the majority, where loyalty to the minorities is fragile and contextually contingent.

Religion serves integrative purposes in terms of creating a sense of unity amongst its selected recruits, while at the same time creating contextually contingent boundaries towards population groups that are not recruited into the army, thus being disintegrative on the collective community level. At the same time, religion is also disintegrative internally within the Jewish, as it influences e.g. unit placement. This clearly visualises that religion is a highly ambiguous category, both analytically and empirically, which becomes more explicit by looking at the micro-level, i.e. internally within the communities that the IDF drafts:

¹⁷⁷ See e.g. the speech by Ashkenazi, Lt. Gen. 23/11/2009. ""The IDF will continue to lead the way in allowing equal opportunities for Bedouin soldiers to integrate into all military roles"." *IDF Spokesperson*<http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/Press+Releases/09/11/2301.htm>.

¹⁷⁸ I.D.F.Rabbinate. 2010. "IDF Rabbinate Briefing." IDF Spokesperson's Unit; Weizman, Rotem Caro. 21/04/2010. "Bedouin soldiers learn about Israel." *IDF Spokesperson's Unit*<http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/10/04/2103.htm>.

¹⁷⁹ See e.g. Edelson, Daniel. 11/11/09. "Druze slam IDF's 'racial discrimination'." in *Yediot Aharonot*. Tel Aviv.

Figure 3: Micro Function of Religion

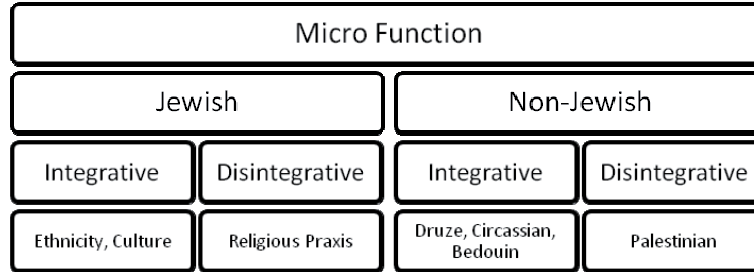


Figure 3 visualizes that whereas religion entails functions that are potentially both integrative and separating; the empirical category has multiple references, primarily being degree of religious observance, ethnicity, and culture. While these dimensions are at times overlapping, they are in other instances counteractive. In any case, they are potentially contradictory. Within the Jewish community, we have seen from the above that the overall community marker signals a differentiation from the Arab communities that the IDF drafts. In addition, whereas Palestinians are excluded from service, the remaining minorities are encouraged to volunteer, while military service will include integration into the Israeli-Jewish society. For, as shown, conscription also includes a significant civil-military component, as groups use military service as a step-stone in civil society. Yet, the internal meanings and interpretations of the term “Jewish” also have disintegrative consequences, perhaps manifested first and foremost in unit placement. In terms of the non-Jewish communities, Palestinians are categorically exempted from drafting, whereas other Arab communities are encouraged to volunteer to military service.

Discussion

Conscription into the IDF is complex and multifarious, as it is relative to a number of fluid and contextually contingent forms of categorization. The combination of both written and oral data indicates that religion offers an encompassing and pervasive framework that allows for the IDF to foster a sense of “us” in complex socio-political environs.

Conscript armies are in a peculiar situation, being part of - yet distinct from – civil society.¹⁸⁰ The IDF is sensitive to its socio-cultural setting but operates in unruly environs wherein it is required to perform its wide variety of tasks. Jacob Neusner et al (2000) stress a crucial point when they assert that how institutions and communities legislate and create boundaries “concerning the outsider – that other who falls beyond the social world that reaches expression within the system – reveals the system’s deepest convictions about itself”.¹⁸¹ The question concerning who is drafted and who is not ought therefore to be seen in relation not only to the physical abilities of the potential soldier, but also to the degree of how the recruits may feed into the creation of the military’s model of “us”. Anthony P. Cohen argues that communities rest upon a shared meaning system, defining both its collective unity, individual differences and its external boundaries. He writes that “[the] *range* of meanings can be glossed over in a commonly accepted symbol – precisely because it allows its adherents to attach their own meanings to it.”¹⁸² Accordingly, they share the symbol, but do not necessarily share its meanings. Community is such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members’ unique orientations to it.

A community is based on the members’ sense of belonging. This argument has two consequences: Firstly, that the members must experience that they belong. Secondly – and, perhaps, conversely – that those who do not have the prerequisites to acquire that feeling are also not wanted by the community’s establishment. The consequence is that the cultural systems and mechanisms act as instruments for mobilization and loyalty - excluding those whom they identify as outsiders “while simultaneously establishing their own internal hierarchy, based on varying degrees of adherence to those values that define the group and its members”.¹⁸³ Here, religion is a particularly powerful boundary marker; the combination of

¹⁸⁰ In a noteworthy study, Jeffrey Pickering argues that conscript armies “have a significantly higher propensity to use belligerent military force than states with volunteer armies”. See: Pickering, Jeffrey. 2010. "Dangerous Drafts? A Time-Series, Cross-National Analysis of Conscription and the Use of Military Force, 1946-2001." *Armed Forces & Society* xx,xx 1-21.

¹⁸¹ Neusner, Jacob, Tamara Sonn, and Jonathan E. Brockopp. 2000. *Judaism and Islam in Practice: A Sourcebook*. London and New York: Routledge Publ.

¹⁸² Cohen, Anthony P. 2003 [1989]. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge.

¹⁸³ Lincoln, Bruce. 2003. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about religion after September 11*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

religion, community and shared meaning system make up particularly strong boundary construction process.¹⁸⁴

The extensive “cohesion-debates” explore possible model developments to these challenges latent in the question: “Why do soldiers fight?” According to Robert J. MacCoun “All of the evidence indicates that military performance depends on whether service members are committed to the same professional goals, not on whether they like on another”.¹⁸⁵ One should be weary not to dismiss MacCoun’s findings. However, the case of the IDF suggests the need for taking one step back: In settings wherein cultural affiliation inflicts upon the security environs, it is of crucial impact that some like each other better than others – and some also like each other better even before they meet. At the same time, religion provides a pervasive framework with a particular identity-forming potential. It is against this background the case of the IDF reveals how the army carefully selects among its recruitment potential, not merely on the basis of physical ability, but just as much on the basis of religious and cultural factors.

Conclusion

This article departed from the quandary of the basis upon which the military forms and forges a sense of “us” formed, which enables cohesion. As I have shown, by adopting an approach based in the discipline of religion we can identify how religion is a significant factor in the IDF’s conscription practices, with crucial impact on the IDF’s ability to develop the “us”-feeling that the military necessitates amongst its recruits. In other words: Judaism integrates separate members into a larger whole within the IDF.

Conscription into the IDF is relative to a number of fluid and contextually contingent categories. Overall, we have seen that religion is a determining criterion for both conscription and for unit placement. However, this is an ambiguous category, both analytically and empirically: Whereas religion as an analytical category entails functions that are potentially both integrative and separating; the empirical category refers to its substance, and therein to

¹⁸⁴ Douglas, Mary. 1996 [1966]. *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

¹⁸⁵ MacCoun, Robert J., Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin. 2006. "Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat? An Old Question with an Old Answer." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,4 July: 646-654.

degree of religious observance, ethnicity and culture. The IDF navigates in a complex, intense and heated socio-cultural and political environment. Religion provides one determining factor that assists the IDF in this navigation.

It should still be noted that drawing conclusions from interview data with one battalion may provide critical problems of generalisability. Yet, the interview data were unanimous. I have argued that the general dismissal of religion as an integral dimension in the scholarly study of the military is counter-productive to our understanding of the military. The question remains, then, to what extent the findings and models developed in these articles can provide us with similar insights when applied to other cases.

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Article III - Coming to Terms with Soldiering: Religion and the Role of the Soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

The following manuscript was submitted to the journal *NUMEN: International Review for the History of Religions* in April 2010. It is still in the peer-review process. *NUMEN* is the leading journal of the *International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR)*, and presents itself as a journal that publishes scholarly works “representing the most recent scholarship in all areas of the history of religions. It covers a diversity of geographical regions and religions of the past as well as of the present. The approach of the journal to the study of religion is strictly non-confessional”. The editors in chief are Professor Gregory D. Alles at Westminster College, and Professor Olav Hammer at the University of Southern Denmark. The editorial board is comprised by leading scholars of religion in Europe and the United States.

The article combines the discipline of religion with scholarly studies and themes taken from the social scientific study of the military. The article feeds into one of the crucial objectives with this dissertation, namely to explore the potential contributions of adopting a “religious studies approach” to the military. Thus, while the major focus lies within the discipline of religion, the article nevertheless bears heavily on knowledge from military studies, which also frequently influences the analytical approach. Yet, as this article is included in a dissertation in Religious Studies, I have here included a series of references and data to support my line of argumentation and hence attempt to avoid the potential pitfalls that follow in the wake of inter-disciplinary studies.

**Coming to Terms with Soldiering:
Religion and the Role of the Soldier in the Israel Defense
Forces (IDF)**

Abstract

Conscript armies represent an intriguing contrast to the dominating lines of argumentation amongst scholars of religion regarding the relation of religion to social systems in post-modernity at large. Conscript armies operate within relatively restricted confines, and they select, recruit and train their manpower in order to implement their primary function as providers of state security. The military thus necessitates that its soldiers adhere to its purpose and mission, and conformity with the military's meaning system is engendered. How do recruits come to terms with soldiering? How do soldiers view the institution they are recruited to represent? Based on 34 in-depth interviews with soldiers in the infantry battalion number 50 – the *Gdud 50* - this qualitative study reveals that these questions cannot be understood without paying decisive attention to religion. The analysis reveals that Judaism is crucial for how IDF soldiers comprehend their role as soldiers: Judaism is constitutive in the creation of unity in experience amongst the soldiers, as well providing them with cosmology that locates their role as individual soldiers within a larger framework of collective meaning.

Introduction

The following article addresses the interrelationship between religion and soldiering in the context of contemporary conscript armies. Rooted in the discipline of religion, the discussion departs from the following question: How do recruits come to terms with soldiering? Conscript armies represent an intriguing contrast to the dominating lines of argumentation amongst scholars of religion regarding the relation of religion to social systems in post-

modernity¹⁸⁶. Although dissensions exist amongst scholars as to what extent religion per se is in decline, it is widely held that the age we live in is characterized by various degrees of individualization and fragmentation (see Barker 2008; Beckford 1989; Beckford 2003; Beyer 1994; Davie 2008; Hervieu-Léger 2008).¹⁸⁷ A challenge in the past few decades that has caught the attention in the scholarly study of religion is therefore “the irresistible progression of individualism and a subjectivization of beliefs and practices which have altered, from top to bottom” (Hervieu-Léger 2008: 30).

Within these historical conditions, the needs and aspirations of conscript armies radically collide with the trends within civil society and face the individual recruits with a glaring contrast. Whereas one in civil society seem to have more choices to make about religion and meaning systems, conscript armies possess the right to recruit its manpower into a system that strives to engender coherence and unity on the basis of state law. Conscript armies operate within relatively restricted confines, and they select, recruit and train their manpower in order to implement their primary function as providers of state security. Its functionality necessitates that the soldiers adhere to the military’s purpose and mission, and conformity with the military’s meaning system is consequently engendered (Osiel 1999). On what basis is this achieved? How does religion and cultural context feed into this seam lining? How do soldiers come to view the institution they are recruited represent? In other words, how do soldiers find meaning in their role as military representatives? The following study explores these questions and quandaries within the empirical context of the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF). Based on 34 in-depth interviews with soldiers the infantry battalion number 50 – the *Gdud 50* - this qualitative study reveals that without paying decisive attention to religion these questions cannot be understood. The analysis reveals that Judaism is crucial for how IDF soldiers comprehend their role as soldiers: Judaism is constitutive in the creation of unity in experience amongst the soldiers, as well providing them with cosmology that locates their role as individual soldiers within a larger framework of collective meaning.

¹⁸⁶ I employ post-modernity as defined by James A. Beckford, as a “catch-all category that loosely covers a bewildering variety of claims about the alleged supersession of modernity by social and cultural conditions, including the erosion of faith in ideological grand narratives, the emancipator power of reason and moral seriousness”, page 200 in Beckford, James A. 2003. *Social Theory & Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁸⁷ Scholars do not necessarily agree on the reasons for the presence and maintenance of religion in society. For example, whereas Danièle Hervieu-Léger and Steve Bruce argue that individuals are taking responsibility of an increasingly broad range of decision and that institutionalized forms of religion cannot provide an obligatory framework for individual piety, scholars such as Donald A. Nielsen argues along “Durkheimian” lines that societies inevitably generate their own forms of religious identity and symbolism. See e.g. Nielsen, Donald A. 1999. *Three Faces of God: Society, Religion, and the Cateogries of the Totality in the Philosophy of Emile Durkheim*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

In an setting wherein the “Individual human beings are expected to exercise their autonomous judgement in choosing what to believe and how to implement their beliefs in practice” (Beckford 2003: 209), the IDF still manages to foster a loyalty wherein 78.6% of the population is loyal to the army (Arian et al. 2007: 92). As the military force of the State of Israel, the unity between the IDF, Judaism and the Jewish People is strong. Both the state and the army have adopted symbols that stress the association with the partly historical, partly mythological - and undoubtedly symbolically loaded - House of David. Israel’s white and blue flag, the *Degel Lavan*, washes away all questions of religious affinity, and the IDF’s tripartite symbol is visually equally strong: A sword and an olive branch in the middle of the Star of David point to the army’s responsibilities for both martial action and provisions of peace, while at the same time signifying how the IDF is a representative of the Israeli-Jewish religion and culture. The IDF Spokesperson’s five announcements on the 6th of October 2008 provide a telling example of how the IDF’s meaning system cannot be understood if removed from its Israeli and Jewish context: Whereas the first informed about the fulfilment of a military training exercise, the four latter pointed to quite a different reality within the army: With headlines such as “Apples and Honey for a Sweet New Year”, “The Chief of Staff and the Defense Minister Toast held a ceremonial toast to the new year and the Rosh Hashana holiday” and “An Army of the People” (IDFSpokesperson 10/08).

Still, as is well-known amongst scholars of religion, religion is not merely about visual symbols. Thus, based on a combination of official documentation from the IDF and interviews with soldiers in the 50th Battalion, the data clearly indicates that Judaism – understood in terms of both theological postulates and cultural heritage and traditions – serves critical functions in how the IDF recruits come to terms with soldiering. This article has three primary sections: In order to contextualize the soldiers’ statements, I will first explore the IDF’s moral and ethical framework as portrayed in the IDF’s code of conduct. Thereafter I proceed to analyzing the role of religion in the soldiers’ statements about this code in relation to the army they represent. This is followed by an analysis of the rituals that enhance the sentiments and opinions detected in the interviews. Lastly, I will look into the consequences of the weight Judaism is given in this meaning system for martial action.

Studying the Military: The Need for Religion

It is paradoxical that we know so little of the role of religion in the military in general, and in the IDF in specific: The IDF is far from having a Code of Conduct with ethical regulations (for example the US and British armies: General Staff 2008; United States 1988). Given the size and scope of the IDF – in terms of manpower and impact – it is somewhat surprising to find that it is only during the previous two decades that research on the IDF has developed into a substantial field of study.¹⁸⁸

One of these sub-fields with relevance to our context, is the “‘cultural’ place of the IDF and of wars in Israel” (Rosenhek et al. 2003a: 465). Within this domain, we find publications on ritual sites such as e.g. the Masada (Ben-Yehuda 1995), gender roles and homosexuality (Ben-Ari and Dardashti 2001; Levy 2008b; Sasson-Levy 2006; Sion 1997; Sion and Ben-Ari 2007), military ethics (Kasher 1996; Kasher and Yadlin 2005) or identity and moral consciousness (Ben-Ari and Dardashti 2001; Linn 1996; Lomsky-Feder et al. 2009). Religion is marginal, with research done primarily on the friction between secular and religious interests *within* the institution (Cohen 1993; Cohen 1997a; Levy March 2010; Rosman-Stollman 2007) or colliding views amongst ultra-orthodox and the military (Stadler and Ben-Ari 2003). Nevertheless, scholars in military sociology have – mistakenly, I would argue – long since dismissed and neglected religion as a decisive motivational factor for soldiering (e.g. Catignani 2004; MacCoun 1993; Watson 1994). Such an assumption appears to juxtapose religion with theology. Accordingly, it is arguable that religion plays a marginal role in the military. However, the discipline of religion’s emphasis on religion as integral to human culture implies that it is not limited to certain spaces or segments of human activity. In consequence, today we have little thematic treatment of the role of religion in the military within the study of religion.

¹⁸⁸ Eyal Ben-Ari has in a series of his publications explored and clarified the literature on the IDF at length. See e.g. Ben-Ari, Eyal. 1998. *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit*. New York: Berghan Books; Ben-Ari, Eyal, and Edna Lomsky-Feder. 1999. "Introduction: Cultural Constructions of War and the Military in Israel." Pp. 1-36 in *Military and Militarism in Israel* edited by Edna Lomsky-Feder and Eyal Ben-Ari. Albany: State University of New York Press; Ben-Ari, Eyal, Daniel Maman, and Zeev Rosenhek. 2000. "Military Sociological Research in Israel." Pp. 91-115 in *Military Sociology: The Richness of a Discipline*, edited by Gerhard Kümmerl and Andreas D. Prüfert. Baden-Baden: Nomos Publisher; Maman, Daniel, Eyal Ben-Ari, and Zeev Rosenhek, eds. 2001. *Military, State, and Society in Israel*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers; Rosenhek, Zeev, Daniel Maman, and Eyal Ben-Ari. 2003a. "The Study of War and the Military in Israel: An Empirical Investigation and a Reflective Critique." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35,3 461-484.

The discipline of religion is experiencing a period of transition, with increasing attention and intellectual progress (Smilde 2010). Still, the discipline deals noticeably little with the military, which is regrettable: Religion, violence and warfare receives great attention in politics, in the press as well as in academia (see e.g. Appleby 2000; Bruce 2003; Harpviken and Røislien 2008; Heft 2004; Hoffman 2003; Hoffman 2008; Johnston and Cox 2003; Jordan 2006; Lincoln 2003; Pape 2003). Above all, these topics are studied at length in relation to Islamism and jihad (Alexander 2002; Esposito 2002; Gardell 2003; Johansen 1997; Keppel 2003; Toft 2007: to name but a few).

Yet, as will be shown below, adopting a “religious studies approach” to the study of the military immediately challenges the assumption of religion as “irrelevant”, and may rather increase our understanding of the military. This article is a step in filling the research gap in the literature.

Method

How can, then, the discipline of religion be applied to a study of the role of religion and soldiering? The functionality of military institutions necessitates that the soldiers adhere to the military’s purpose and mission, and the enforcement resembles features of many faith communities or religious organizations, due to their introduction of “pressures and inducements to believe certain religious things and to act in certain religious ways. Punishments for failing, or refusing, to comply with such pressures have also been a feature” (Beckford 2003: 210). Yet, engendering coherence and unity in the recruits’ worldviews also supposes a cultural resource base and the topic of the discussion implies focusing the analysis on the role religion plays in the soldiers’ notion of the role they fill. It is, in other words, a focus on the recruits, not on the mechanisms that the institution deliberately applies.¹⁸⁹

The discipline of religion in general, and sociology of religion in particular, “aims to discover the patterns of social living associated with religion in all its diverse forms” (Davie

¹⁸⁹ A short comment should be made to the objections as to why not conversion theories are applies: The sociology of religion generally discusses themes of conversion in view of the gradual transformation of the individuals’ preferences and opinions, see e.g.: Warburg, Margit. 2008. "Theorising Conversion: Can we use Conversion Accounts as Sources to Actual Past Processes?" Pp. 131-145 in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James Beckford*, edited by Eileen Barker. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.. In contrast, being recruited into the military is not based on will but on state law, and the change in worldview is enforced.

2007: 6). The discipline of religion is inherently taxonomic. Constructing and employing *etic* categories, an advantage of the discipline of religion is its methodological and analytical approach to its object of research (see e.g. Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]; Lincoln 1999b; McCutcheon 1997; Satlow 2005; Smith 1995; Wiebe 1998; Wuthnow 1987). The project of the sociology of religion is to treat “religious phenomena in the way that sociology treats any social phenomena” (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]: 18), thus making them the object of critical inquiry. This presupposes the dismissal of religion as *sui generis*, and I concur with James A. Beckford that the study of religion benefits from undertaking a constructivist approach; not due to its epistemological implications but its focus on the human creation and maintenance of it (Beckford 2003: 11-29, 193-215).

The IDF is a military institution with a distinct task performed by a heterogeneous populace. Its application and utilization of religion in the production of soldiers is therefore intimately knit to a question of function. The military requires reducing uncertainty, minimizing it in social relations by carefully patterning them according to commonly understood prescriptions. Accordingly, the “moral order is intertwined with the ideologies that dramatize it” (Wuthnow 1987: 150). In order to “reach” the core object of study, I employ a sociological, functional approach emphasizing “systemic religion” – to paraphrase Peter Beyer - which focuses on “institutionalized, organized, specialized forms of religion that [usually] have religious professionals associated with them” (Beyer 1994: 225). The article thus rests on the Sociology of Religion, arguably “the integrative discipline for the study of religion” (Ellison and Sherkat 1995: 1255).

Data

To compensate for data scarcity, this article rests on the triangulation¹⁹⁰ of several types of data, one oral and one written: The written data is comprised by the IDF’s Official presentation of its Doctrine found on the IDF Official Website (both Hebrew and English versions), which includes three subtitles, namely “IDF Mission”, “Ethics” and “Main Doctrine”, organised in this subsequent order on the website. These data contribute to contextualising the interview data and provide them with an explanatory dimension.

¹⁹⁰ Berg, B. L. 2004. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon; Patton, M.Q. 1987. *How to use qualitative methods in evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Silverman, David. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage Publications; Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks / London / New Dehli: SAGE Publications.

The interviews that serve as a basis for this article were gathered through 34 in-depth interviews (30 *sabra*-soldiers and four *Olim Chadashim*)¹⁹¹ in the 50th Battalion in the *Nachal*, which is one of the IDF's three Infantry Brigades. I have interviewed these soldiers over a period of four years (2006 – 2009) through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, both one-to-one and through Focus Groups. Core topics of the interviews were the interviewees' sentiments towards the IDF's mission, the cultural character of the IDF and the role of religion to soldiering in the IDF soldier.

The selection of informants was primarily strategic and theoretical¹⁹² aimed at minimizing differences between the interviewees in order to enable the accentuation of typical traits to increase coherence in the interview data.¹⁹³ Focusing on the 50th Battalion was thus the result of a conscious choice based on selected criteria. To illustrate; all interviewees are men, they have all served in the IDF during 2005-2009, they have passed through the same military training and they have served under the same conditions. Yet, the most crucial selection criterion was that the 50th Battalion – the Gdud 50 - is known for being an overall religiously non-practicing unit. This can most precisely be illustrated by a statement by one of the interviewees:

If you ask me – I think the army is very religious. *Very* religious. They may pretend that they are not religious, but that's not right. They are super religious. But it is awkward, because many of the soldiers they are proud of, they are not religious. You know what, especially in Gdud 50, most would learn about the religious mitzvot [Jewish commandments] for the first time in the army. We knew nothing before we came into the army. But, in the army, it is like we go through a religious education alongside the military training! Hehe, it was actually also the first time a met a settler. YES, it is true! The first time! The Gdud is secular, yes, so we don't hang out in the territories. Why should we? [...] I'll tell you what – the settler became like a rabbi for us. We had to do all kinds of religious stuff, and we had no idea how to do it. Like,

¹⁹¹ *Sabra* is a Hebrew term for native Israel; *Olim Chadashim* is the plural term for "new immigrant".

¹⁹² Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 1995 [1983]. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London & New York: Routledge.

¹⁹³ Morse, Janice M. , Michael Barret, Maria Mayan, Karin Olson, and Jude Spiers. 2002. "Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1,2 Spring: 1-19.

how do you keep a real Shabbat, for example? And how do you do any mitzvot? What *are* the mitzvot – I didn't even know that ("Yaron" 05/04/09).

Thus, in my analysis of the role of religion in the military, this battalion could help exploring how religion works not merely amongst the minority of religiously observant recruits, but also on the remaining conscripts.

***“Ruach Tsahal”*: The IDF’s Building Block**

Combat soldiers in the IDF must at all times carry a small leaflet in their pocket and they must know its contents by heart: “It is a little book that we can consult, at all times, everywhere, whenever” (“Arieh” 2008). The book contains the IDF’s Code of Conduct, known as the “Ruach Tsahal”¹⁹⁴, literally meaning the “Spirit of the IDF”. It is a concise document that lists ten values meant to pervade the entire soldier role. It contains three Basic Values: “Defense of the State, its Citizens and its Resident”; “Love of the Homeland and Loyalty to the Country”; “Human Dignity”. In addition, it contains ten values that are strictly military: “Tenacity of Purpose in Performing Missions and Drive to Victory”; “Responsibility”; “Credibility”; “Personal Example”; “Human Life”; “Purity of Arms”; “Professionalism”; “Discipline”; “Comradeship”; “Sense of Mission” (IDF 2001a). Subsequently, these values all describe and regulate the traditional role of the soldier.¹⁹⁵

The first version of the code was drafted in 1994 under the leadership of philosopher Asa Kasher, and approved by Ehud Barak, COS at the time. It was amended in 2001.¹⁹⁶ According to Kasher, it was written as “People should understand what they are doing and why they are doing it” (Kasher 05/05/2008). Now, the Ruach Tsahal is “the identity card of the IDF” and is intended to provide all of the IDF’s manpower with a framework according to which they “will behave, educate and evaluate themselves and others” (IDF 2001a). In view

¹⁹⁴ “Tsahal”: The common term for the IDF in Israel. It is the Hebrew abbreviation for *Tseva HaHagana le-Israel*.

¹⁹⁵ For example, the value of Professionalism implies that: “The IDF servicemen and women will acquire the professional knowledge and skills required to perform their tasks, and will implement them while striving continuously to perfect their personal and collective achievements”.

¹⁹⁶ The amendments involved one significant change: “Love of the Homeland” was added to the Basic Values. Noteworthy, Israel was in 2001 led by the Likud-party; the Israeli right puts greater emphasis on the symbolic significance of the concept of the Land of Israel than does the Israeli left, which led Israel in 1994.

of that, it is noteworthy that the IDF also publishes the four sources that provide the *basis* for the Ruach Tsalal (IDF 2001a):

1. The tradition of the IDF and its military heritage as the Israel Defense Forces.
2. The tradition of the State of Israel, its democratic principles, laws and institutions.
3. The tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history.
4. Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life.¹⁹⁷

These four sources are potentially multi-referential in character, as the contents of them remain undefined. According to Kasher, this is because they “are just historical sources. They are not meant to have any meaning in and of themselves. We have put them there to make people aware of what the sources of the Code of Ethics are – not necessarily what the contents are. [...] My comment to the code being abstract is simple: The idea of the code is that people should find themselves in the manuscript. All of them, all of the soldiers” (Kasher 05/05/2008).

“All of them” refers to a large, heterogeneous group of 176 500¹⁹⁸ as the IDF bases its recruitment on universal conscription, calling up men and women, religiously practicing as well as secular citizens of the State of Israel. The IDF takes great pride in being a “People’s Army”, and therein strives “to promote a religiously tolerant environment” (Rosman-Stollman 2007: 623). Needless to say, this creates an inherent tension in the IDF, wherein secular and religious meaning systems collide (Cohen 1997a; Levy forthcoming; Rosman-Stollman 2005a). Thus, in order to be inclusive for the entire group of recruits that the IDF attempts to form into becoming its soldiers, there is perhaps little surprise in finding that the values – and therein the four sources - that the IDF adopts and conveys must be wide in order to be inclusive.

¹⁹⁷ I will return to the obvious potential tension between point 3 and 4 below in the sub-chapter “A Jewish or a Universal Code?”.

¹⁹⁸ The number is taken from chapter on Israel, page 12, in: Shapir, Yiftah, and Tamir Magal. 2010. "Middle East Military Balance Files: Israel." Pp. 1-24 in *Military Balance Files*: INSS, The Institute for National Security Studies (Incorporating the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies).

Nevertheless, the third source stands out: Whereas the others refer to institutionalised, secular regulations and value systems, the third source states that the IDF is inextricably linked to one people and therein to a specific religious and cultural heritage. It is therefore implicit in the document that the IDF does not represent the de facto ethnically, culturally and religiously heterogeneous civil society of the State of Israel in its entirety.

With all these inherent and potential points of friction, the question is, then, how the soldiers perceive the code. Religion in general and Judaism in particular potentially provide a foundation from which to interpret social and natural experiences (Wilson 1982: 57). Accordingly, it is not surprising to witness that the code is not viewed in multi-referential and abstract terms by the IDF's soldiers: Rather, it is the third source that defines the IDF's combat soldiers' understanding of their very role as soldiers – also amongst seculars. All identities, both secular and religious, necessitate some degree of both boundary creation and core. Whoever we, we do not exist as isolated individuals, but belong to a hierarchy of social and cultural groups (see Bowie 2006 [2000]: ch. 3). Yet, common to all interviewees were one distinct feature: That they are Jewish soldiers in the IDF. In the military setting, the significance of clear identities may prove particularly important, as the role of the soldier inevitably faces struggles and disputes. And, in the setting of the IDF, the conflict with the Palestinians undoubtedly also contains a dimension of identity contestation and defence. As will be shown further, a consequence is that Judaism provides a source that the soldiers come to understand as the defining element for which they are prepared to fight, kill, and die.

Religion in the military mindset

Judaism entails a particular historiography, intimately knit to the more concrete ethnic, Jewish-Israeli national sentiments that emphasise both the unity between a specific land and a specific people, as well as the hardship and injustice associated with Diasporic existence (Neusner 1993; Satlow 2005). One may argue that Judaism – and therein *being Jewish* – involves the internalisation of a consciousness of a particular history, with a specific collective cultural memory, but without an emphasis on God (Assmann 1995; Assmann 2005; Halbwachs 1992; Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]). Reflecting how the IDF on the institutional level has internalised this specific historiography, the soldiers' views on the question of whether the Ruach Tsahal – a military code of conduct - is universally applicable, are

descriptive. During a military ethics training day in a kibbutz in Southern Israel I asked a group of five soldiers on active duty whether the Ruach Tsahal had some universal characteristics:

What?? The Ruach Tsahal is Israeli. But it is more than that. It is Jewish. Of course! What else! It is for us, to protect us. We are soldiers in the IDF, so of course we are Jewish! It is the IDF! It is incredibly important for the IDF – and for us – that the army keeps Judaism up. Israel is our country. It is a part of us. It is a part of every Jew. The Ruach Tsahal is a feeling, it is a way of being a proper Jew, so being an IDF soldier – you must *feel* it ("FocusGroup" 05/04/09).

Here, we see signs of how the military has encouraged the attitudes and emotional repertoire of its soldiers through a certain sentiment; a feeling of being Jewish, of acting Jewish. This reflects one striking feature with the Gdud 50 soldiers' notion of Ruach Tsahal, namely soldiers' military action regulated by emotional and experiential constraints; not by legal boundaries. The apparent reason for this is that IDF soldiers are trained in ethical codes; not in international law. According to an IDF Official this is problematic but nevertheless highly efficient: "Ethics is much more fluid. It is emotional, in a way. But it doesn't give you firm guidelines. So, even though soldiers know everything about ethics, they still don't know anything about law. That is, they don't really know what is wrong and what is right. But that's okay: International institutions only bring confusion" ("Yitzhak" 07/04/09). The IDF therefore operates in line with recent revisions in military thinking, which suggest that "concerns of ethic and efficacy are increasingly congruent" (Osiel 1999: 171), as ethics are internalized through the reorientation process where the recruits turn into soldiers. Ethics thus provide the individual with a more deep-seated guidance. As a consequence, "the designation 'evil', then, tells us far more about a particular social 'world' we occupy and the interests of the classifiers" (McCutcheon 2003: 161).

Through the emphasis on cultural affiliation, the Ruach Tsahal provides the Gdud 50 soldiers with a particular meaning system with an inherent set of guiding principles: "There is so much focus on us, you know. So we try to be our true selves – to act as a group in as a humane way as possible.... We are ethical! It is simple. Like, we try to behave as ethical as

possible, even in the most bizarre situations. You know, you see things and you do things that aren't – well, you know they aren't right"¹⁹⁹ ("Haim" 07/04/09). Accordingly, the soldiers' expressions of a deep-seated pride in the very existence of the code is in dialectics with its Jewish roots. A common phrase in this regard may be exemplified through the words of Gilad: "It is important – no, more than that - it is *crucial* that it is Jewish, that we have a Jewish code. Not just any code. When it is Jewish, it is *us*, you know. This is definitely a unique case – it is pretty unbelievable, actually" ("Gilad" 07/02/08).

In short: "The tradition of the Jewish People..." gives meaning to the codex and consequently to what the Gdud 50 soldiers see as the basis of their role. Hence, the Ruach Tsahal is Jewish, providing the axis around which the other principles circulate. Accordingly, the code both provides the soldier with a general military directive situated within a specific cultural context.

A Jewish or a Universal Code?

The sources imply an inherent tension between universality and particularity. Whilst it contains reference both to "The tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history" and to "Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life", the "The tradition of the Jewish People..." is in addition apparently a vague sentence. The question remains: Is the code Jewish. And if so, what makes it "Jewish"?

Interestingly, the soldiers responded in a highly similar vein that reflects a top-down conveyed, religious narrative emphasizing the Jewish dimension at the cost of the universal: "What it means – it is not so complicated: we are the *or-la-goyim*²⁰⁰, you know. Ha ha ha. No no, I don't believe in that religious stuff. But, we do have a responsibility that others don't. The Ruach Tsahal is about how you can be in the army, be a normal state and *still* be a full human being and be an ethical human being – to be an ethical soldier.... You know... We

¹⁹⁹ I asked Haim to exemplify: "When we take a house, for example. It is an awkward situation. It is uncomfortable for both sides! And of course – we know that. I mean, it is not that we as soldiers are not aware of the absurdity of the situation. But, soldiers are forced to act in such an environment. It is what we do. So, well, then you have to make the best out of the situation. Therefore, we usually get intelligence about which house to go to and strive towards avoiding uncomfortable situations to the best of our ability".

²⁰⁰ Or la-goyim: A Hebrew, Biblical term meaning "Light of Nations", understood in biblical terms as the Jews' obligation to build a just and compassionate society throughout the world rooted in the Land of Israel.

have a long tradition of being moral, of fighting ethically. We have like a mission, an aim, to make a better world. That's what we do in the IDF: we can change the world to a better place" ("Nadav" 05/02/08).

Here, we see how the soldiers' explication of the IDF's meaning system also reflects its dialectic relationship to the IDF's primary religion, culture and state of reference, i.e. that of the state of Israel's Jewish population. "The tradition of the Jewish People..." entails a handful of distinct associations: In fact, all 34 interviewees list of five points that this source is understood as containing (Noticeably, these points were listed in the same way by several interviewees: "Arieh" 2008; "Aviram" 31/03/09; "David" 06/02/08; "FocusGroup" 05/04/09; "Gidi" 18/06/07; "Nadav" 05/02/08; "Tzvi" 04/10/08; "Uzi" 24/06/09; "Yitzhak" 07/04/09; "Yoram" 13/06/07):

1. The Jewish tradition implies action that is ethically justifiable amongst Jews
2. It implies standing united as Jews
3. It implies preserving a cultural tradition based on Judaism
4. It implies allowing for cultural and religious diversity amongst Jews
5. It implies a deep seated connection to the Land of Israel

The similarities in their answers are striking: When it comes to the institution that they represent, the Gdud 50 soldiers convey an analogous, coherent meaning system that is founded on crucial constituents in Judaism. In other words, when it comes to describing the meaning system of the community of which they are part, their choice of phrases and words are markedly unanimous: The "Jewishness" of the code that these men convey reflects a notion of what they understand as being the crucial narrative in Judaism, namely the cultural and historical unity of a People with a specific connection to a specific Land; Eretz Israel. It is thus an identity with a collective and territorial component that entails an inherent reference to the experiences in the Diaspora²⁰¹. Being a soldier in the IDF thus includes an element of being providers of the nation's survival:

²⁰¹ Notions of the Land of Israel – *Eretz Israel* – constitute a fundamental building block in Jewish religion, history, culture, and identity: Cohen, Stuart A. 1997a. *The Scroll or the Sword? Dilemmas of Religion and Military Service in Israel*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers; Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 2003. *Judaism: History, Belief, and Practice*. London: Routledge; Davies, W.D. 1982. *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Gafni, Isaiah M. 1997. *Land, Center and Diaspora*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; Gurevitch, Z., and Gideon Aran. 1994. "The Land of Israel: Myth and Phenomenon." Pp. 195-209 in *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians*, edited by J. Frankel. New York: Oxford University Press; Kidon, Amir. 12/08/08. "Rabbis and Officers." in *Today in the IDF*. Jerusalem: Israel Defense

The Ruach Tsahal all rests on this point. If you ask me, you can take the rest away. You see, the history of the Jewish people... oohh... We have experienced so much! All the suffering, all the pain... [...] But we have our culture, our tradition, our holidays, our joy... So, for me, the history of the Jewish People and the tradition of the Jewish people – it refers to the responsibility and obligation to always defend each other. As Jews, we always have to be ready against attacks. The Ruach Tsahal teaches you to know where you come from and what you want to achieve ("Yaron" 05/04/09)

Accordingly, the Ruach Tsahal emerges as meaningful when seen in relation to the issue of “The tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history” wherein it feeds into what might be considered as an overall “IDF cosmology”, which contributes to providing the soldiers with meaning in their role.²⁰² There are many reasons for the unison in the soldiers’ statements. For example, they are part of the same battalion, undergo the same teaching, and they are Jewish, Israeli citizens.²⁰³ The manpower of the 50th Battalion is recruited from either the ideological and agricultural settlements or from the Israeli youth movements making the battalion staffed by soldiers who position themselves on the center-left of the Israeli political spectrum²⁰⁴ and who are generally not practitioners of religious rituals. They thereafter pass through a particularly strenuous selection process.²⁰⁵ These factors contribute

Forces; Lied, Liv Ingeborg. 2007. "The Other Lands of Israel: A Study of the Land Theme in 2 *Baruch*. Thesis for the Dr. Art. Degree." in *History of Religions*. Bergen: University of Bergen; Neusner, Jacob. 1989. *Judaism and Its Social Metaphors: Israel in the History of Jewish Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

²⁰² In the context of the military, remark by Freya Mathews and Fiona Bowie is interesting, as they claim that cultures and communities whose cosmology represents the world as hostile to human - or the particular group's - interests, reduces and alienates interaction: Bowie, Fiona. 2006 [2000]. *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*. Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing; Mathews, Freya. 1994 [1991]. *The Ecological Self*. Routledge: London.

²⁰³ Another issue is also the whole validity of the interview as a mode of data collection. See e.g. Silverman, David. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage Publications.

²⁰⁴ Political position is of relevance, as the religious parties by and large are found on the right in Israeli politics.

²⁰⁵ The selection phase is something the soldiers are tremendously proud of, and Arie's phrased many soldiers feelings, when he said "It is all in all, I would say, an over qualified group – it is unfair to the other units!" "Arie". 03/02/08. "Commander, Gdud 50." Pp. Interview. Tel Aviv.. An important consequence of this group identity, is also the extent to which it affects how the soldiers view the other units and battalions. To illustrate with a statement from "Meir", a 23-year old sniper: "The other divisions are much more hardcore, and also much more Israeli – like the world sees us, I mean. So, I wanted to be part of something that I would fit in to. The Givati and Golani [the two other infantry battalions in the IDF in addition to the Nachal] - they're tougher. They're trained differently. They *are* different. The Golani, for example, are very pride-based in an arrogant way... I am glad I didn't serve in the Golani. Or in the Givati for that matter. We are chicken. You don't send us to make a mess. Just send bullies, like the Golani or the Givati, but not us. We're too good. I mean – contrary to

to creating a common referential framework. They do not, however, provide a satisfactory explanation to why the soldiers to such an extent speak with one voice.

Why do they express sentiments that have such explicit religious roots? Merely encouraging the internalization of a military Code based on a general collective identity does not inevitably imply the internalization of a framework for military action. I will therefore proceed to the repertoire the IDF plays on when encouraging a collective unity amongst its recruits.

Creating Unity: Repertoire for Cosmology Construction

Depending on factors such as the organization and the available repertoire, religion can be understood as an agent for diffusing values (Capriani 2003 [2001]). The IDF is in a remarkable position: The institution possesses a rich religious and cultural repertoire that constitutes a forceful meaning system, which offers an intense potential for the creation of unity in experience when exploited in full. Having already looked into the discursive basis of the IDF through the Ruach Tsal, our analysis should hence proceed to exploring religion within the IDF's institutional framework; both within its organizational structure as well as the rituals that are practiced within the IDF canopy.

Religion in the IDF's organizational set-up

The weight religion is given in the IDF's organizational set-up is noteworthy and signals the considerable influence it in consequence acquires over the life of the soldier. The IDF is a conscript army with explicit nation-building tasks, and has thus integrated the *Education Corps* into its structure, which among others is responsible for educating IDF recruits in issues such as the tradition and history of the Jewish nation and the battle history of the IDF from pre-state Israel until today (Crevelde 2002b; IDF n.d.-a; Lissak 1971; Luttwak and Horowitz 1975; Perlmutter 1969; Rosman-Stollman 2007).²⁰⁶ A female officer in the

the others, we actually know how to behave. We're known for that, you know – being good. For behaving. It is in our blood "Meir". 05/04/09. "Commander, Gdud 50." Pp. Interview. Kibbutz, Southern Israel..

²⁰⁶ In particular in the realm of education, "the argument for assigning Zahal the mission of ingathering and integrating Israel's mass immigration – between 1948 and 1955 – was that it could penetrate areas either

Education Corps summed in an interview up the contents of this teaching as “conveying the meaning of defending Israel’s and Israel’s people’s existence, to teach them about holocaust, Zionism and of course the Bible and sources of our special bond to *ha-aretz* [Israel] in order to enable them to be convinced about the IDF’s mission...” (“Shira” 07/04/06). Hence, in addition to the mere military tasks, the IDF has institutionalized the maintenance and commemoration of a cultural tradition.

This impacts the IDF’s organizational structure. Based on Ben-Gurion’s credo – i.e. that both religious and secular citizens had equal civil obligations – “the entire IDF framework had to be structured in ways which would not alienated religiously observant troops by requiring them to contravene the dictates of traditional Jewish law” (Cohen 1997a: 42). Thus, the IDF is organized in order to allow for – and regulate – military action in coordination with religious praxis, giving religion potentially a maximalist impact within the organization (Lincoln 2003: 59). Among the most explicit organisatory consequences is the establishment of the Military Rabbinate.

The Military Rabbinate

A conspicuous feature with the IDF set-up is the inclusion of the Chief Military Rabbinate as a separate brigade with its own military emblem. The Rabbinate was founded with the establishment of the IDF in 1948, after a request from the national religious political party wherein they claimed that the interest of their constituents in uniform the establishment of a military chaplaincy, a request embraced by Ben-Gurion (Cohen 1997a: 43). The Rabbinate works in coordination with the Human Resources Branch and has as its three core responsibilities; “Matrimony and burial”, “Keeping kosher and keeping Shabbat in all IDF bases”, “Education about Judaism and tradition” (IDF 2010a). In addition, the Military Rabbinate also attends to tasks such as issuing advice and commands regarding the instilment of religious values and traditions in the IDF units, and acquire and provide religious artifacts for religious units in the IDF (IDF 2010a). Noteworthy, “According to law, *each unit* in the IDF must have a representative of the Rabbinate advising them” (IDF 2010a: emphasis added). These representatives are thus responsible for providing religious needs for soldiers

neglected or impenetrable by civilian authorities and other national institutions” Perlmutter, Amos. 1969. *Military and Politics in Israel: Nation-Building and Role Expansion*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd..

in all units, extending their tasks “addressing the needs of the entire military organization and not those of just a small percentage of the overall complement” (Cohen 1997a: 46).

Whereas the Chief Military Rabbinate in and of itself is a primary example of the role of religion within the IDF framework,²⁰⁷ each of the Rabbinate’s tasks in turn exemplify how Judaism with its religious practices are integrated into the daily life of IDF soldiers. For example, all food in the IDF is Kosher Parve: The Military Rabbinate ensures that all food supplies to IDF bases are manufactured in accordance to Jewish religious law and Jewish religious regulations, which means that all food eaten by soldiers of the IDF is under supervision and inspection of the Military Rabbinate. The observance of the dietary laws in the army is legitimized by emphasizing the lack of hardship involved in non-observant soldiers eating kosher food while the alternative policy creates severe hardship for many soldiers (Shetreet 20/08/2001). Yet, it is noteworthy that the IDF emphasizes the significance of this responsibility by explaining that “The fact that all military kitchens are kosher promotes unification among all those serving in the IDF” (IDF 2010a).

Here, we see how the introduction of kosher entails a dialectic line of argumentation: On the one hand, the IDF legitimizes the observance of the dietary laws in the army on the ground that it forges a bond with the past of the Jewish people by means of one of the most conspicuous of Jewish symbols. At the same time, the introduction of kosher in all IDF bases affirms the IDF’s “Jewishness”. In other words, the IDF’s institutionalization of Jewish customs reaffirms its bond with the Jewish religious tradition and heritage.

Embracing Prayers

Judaism gives great attention to prayer: “Life under the law means praying – morning, noon, night, and at meals – both routinely and when something unusual happens. To be a Jew in the classical tradition, one lives his or her life constantly aware of the presence of God and always ready to praise and bless God. The way of Torah is the way of perpetual devotion to God”

²⁰⁷ That the Military Rabbinate has acquired such a crucial role in the IDF has been an issue of increased concern, lately above all in relation to the “Operation Cast Led” in Gaza in the winter of 2009 Bronner, Ethan. 22/03/09. "A Religious War in Israel's Army." in *New York Times*. New York; Freedman, Seth. 06/07/09. "Religious dogma has no place in the IDF." in *The Guardian*. London; Harel, Amos. 2008. "Chief IDF Rabbi: Army rabbinate needs to inculcate Jewish values." in *Ha'aretz*. Tel Aviv/Jerusalem; Wagner, Matthew. 08/01/09. "IDF Rabbinate uses scriptures to boost soldiers' morale." in *Jerusalem Post: Online Edition*. Jerusalem..

(Neusner 1993: 101). In line with this assertion, it has been interesting to witness that when I have asked the Gdud 50 soldiers to mention or list some of the domains where they actually appreciate the presence of the rabbis the most, they have tended to start with the *Tfilat ha-derekh*; literally “Prayer for the Road”. With it, the Rabbis bless the soldiers before they are to perform a military mission. Oren, a 24-year old non-practicing Tel Avivian who fought in the Second Lebanon War and has been unfit for work ever since, stressed the significance of the prayers to how he could cope with his role as a soldier at war. He explained:

Before we go into action, the Rabbis come to us and we pray and do the *Tfilat ha-Derekh*. It is not necessarily a particularly military prayer – it says more general stuff about coming and leaving in peace, have a safe return, things like that. *It works for everything you do*, not only combat. But it feels strong if you know if you’re just about to, well, you can die within an hour... or less, for that matter. It is like you suddenly get what it is all about. If you see what I mean... Everything looks different if you know that you can die soon... (“Oren” 05/04/09)

As Oren explained, the *Tfilat ha-derekh* is a short, general prayer about both leaving in peace, coming in peace and have a safe return. Nevertheless, although it is not originally a prayer with an explicit military purpose, the soldiers experience it as such: They apprehend its deeper message – and the very fact that it is being recited right before a military mission – as comforting, calming. The soldiers thus find themselves more secure through the presence and prayers of the rabbis prior to the military mission.

This reflects a function of religion that is acknowledged by scholars, namely that religion contributes to locating the individual in a larger cosmological framework that in consequence gives meaning to his or her existence. One reason for this is undoubtedly based on the “classical” notion of religion, that is, as a particularly strong provider of meaning (Berger 1967; Geertz 1966). It is in other words beyond doubt that the “...connection between imminent death and religious fervor was recognized by soldiers and ministers long before scholars began to construct models around it” (Watson 1994: 30).

The ritual life: Living according to Judaism

Religion is not merely about thoughts or emotions; rituals are crucial to the construction and maintenance of religious communities. A dimension that contributes to explaining the unity and earnesty amongst the soldiers is found in the extensive application of rituals. Rituals may reinforce both the social order and the meaning system and are public occasions that display and confirm social and cultural structures (Bowie 2006 [2000]: ch. 6; Mack 2009 [2000]: 290). Judaism places particular emphasis on the obligation of fulfilling religious practices. The role of religion is perhaps at its most explicit in the rich ritual life of the IDF: While the IDF strictly observes the Jewish calendar with all its feasts, it is also the army of the State of Israel whereby it follows that the IDF also observes Israel's national holidays. As a result, the IDF observes a series of feasts that contribute to creating cohesion and unity in experience amongst the IDF's soldiers based on the participation in a ritualised setting (Berman 2009; Etzioni 2000; Machalek et al. 2006).

Religious feasts

One category is dedicated to the fulfilment of religious obligations. This includes the celebration of explicit Jewish religious feasts, ranging from the weekly *Shabbat* to rituals with a yearly cycle such as the religiously based *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot*. These feasts are also celebrated in the civil sphere of the state of Israel, and e.g. during *Sukkot* also non-practicing or secular families may build a *Sukkah* in their garden. Many of these feasts are thus just as much about participating in national customs as about partaking in the fulfilment of the *mitzvot*²⁰⁸.

Shabbat is one of these ritualistic days where this comes to the fore: According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is first and foremost a day families should share together, and in consequence the army allows "as many soldiers as possible to go home" (Israel(MFA) 02/05/2000). Accordingly, there is little surprise in hearing David in the secular *Gdud 50* explain that "Shabbat is good news" ("David" 06/02/08). In the military camps, soldiers share the Shabbat meal together and generally enjoy a day of rest. All soldiers thus do not share the more profound meaning contributed to this day in religious term. Rather,

²⁰⁸ Mitzvot: The 613 Jewish statements and principles of law and ethics contained in the Torah

soldiers describe the day in highly functional terms: “The old guys [the Rabbis in the Rabbinical Period; 70-500 AD] were clever. Very clever. They fixed up a system that is really excellent. Say for example, when it was established that you should rest one day per week – well, you *need* to rest one day per week, otherwise you’ll just burn out. See?? It’s brilliant!” (“FocusGroup” 05/04/09). However, there is little doubt that the fact that this is a day where the soldiers spend time together and eat together, has significant impact on the bonding amongst them.

National Feasts

A second category of IDF rituals are the secular Israeli national days such as *Yom Ha-zikaron* (litt. “Remembrance Day”), which is “a day of remembrance for those who fell in the struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel and in its defense” (Israel(MFA) 02/05/2000), and *Yom Ha-atsma’ut*, Israel’s Independence Day, from the day Israel was founded on 14 May 1948 (5 Iyyar 5708). These holidays are initially secular, commemorating e.g. the sacrifices of the IDF soldier or the shared national history of the Jewish population in Israel.²⁰⁹ Yet, the celebration of them are described in highly emotional terms by the soldiers, and the fire inscriptions – that is, when the word *Yizkaru* (“We will always remember”) is lit in barbed wire in the middle of the night - is undoubtedly a powerful and moving event (“Eytan” 02/10/08; “FocusGroup” 05/04/09; “Gidi” 18/06/07; “Gilad” 07/02/08; “Haim” 07/04/09; “Meir” 05/04/09; “Misha” 05/04/09; “Moshe” 10/02/08).

In contrast to purely religious rituals that obviously mean different things to seculars versus religious groups of the population, these two rituals appeal to the emotions of what unites them: Namely, being Jewish, being soldiers.

Military Feasts

A third set of rituals are those that mark transition within the military, such as inauguration or promotion. These rituals provide – as do religious rituals – highly functional mechanisms for

²⁰⁹ The IDF does not observe national or religious holidays of any of its minorities, such as e.g. the Druze or the Bedouin, creating a potential problem concerning the integration of other ethnic and religious groups in the IDF.

fostering soldier loyalty to the military (Etzioni 2000; Machalek et al. 2006). Within the IDF framework these rituals have been added a religious dimension, which connects the Jewish people to a common cultural and religious history, as well as to a particular Scripture and a mythical framework.

One striking example takes place the very day of inauguration: Inauguration rituals signal the esoteric character of military communities, as membership is limited and requires procedures of selection, and information flow is restricted. In the IDF, these rituals are held at specific sites that are integral to the Jewish cultic space, such as e.g. the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem or the Military Memorial site in Latrun, right outside of Jerusalem.²¹⁰ During the ritual, a Military Rabbi recites an excerpt from the text of Joshua, wherein Joshua conquers the Land [Eretz] by force.²¹¹ They are sworn in while holding their right hand on the Talmud. Interestingly, none of my interviewees recall what has been said during this ritual. However, what they *do* remember is the occurrence at the very end of it when the soldiers receive two things: Their personal gun and their copy of the Torah. The inauguration ritual is thus not merely marking the initiation into a military institution; it also signals the initiation into a community that is first and foremost Jewish; for others the symbols are in actual fact excluding. It reconfirms previous Jewish initiations in the non-military sphere, such as Brit *Milah* [circumcision] and the *bar-mitzva*, marking that the recruit takes a step out of Israeli civil society, into the esoteric Jewish community of the IDF.

Another forceful ritual takes place during Basic Training, when it has been common to include a trip to *Masada*. Here, the soldiers climb the mountain at night, reach the top right before dawn, and as they see the sun rise above the West Bank – or, the Judean and Samarian Hills – they are told about the heroic myth of the Jews who committed collective suicide in order not to be taken hostage by the Romans. The factuality of the Masada-narrative is increasingly questioned by scholars (Ben-Yehuda 1995). Nevertheless, the soldiers report that this is a highly emotional occurrence that ignites a particularly strong bond between themselves and their forefathers, which in turn inspires them to fight to protect their nation ("Amos" 06/02/08; "David" 06/02/08; "Meir" 05/04/09; "Nadav" 05/02/08; "Nir" 05/02/08).

²¹⁰ The exact location of the inauguration ritual varies from unit to unit, and from time of year, logistics etc.

²¹¹ The recitation of Joshua has received some criticism by Israel's secular population, and on what role religion should have in the IDF. See e.g. Golan, Aviram. 23/11/03. "What is Joshua doing in the Army?" in *Ha'aretz*. Jerusalem. Bronner, Ethan. 22/03/09. "A Religious War in Israel's Army." in *New York Times*. New York; Golan, Aviram. 23/11/03. "What is Joshua doing in the Army?" in *Ha'aretz*. Jerusalem; Harel, Amos. 11/05/2008. "Kfir brigade leads in West Bank violations." in *H'aaretz*. Tel Aviv / Jerusalem; —. 2008. "Chief IDF Rabbi: Army rabbinate needs to inculcate Jewish values." in *Ha'aretz*. Tel Aviv/Jerusalem.

The Masada-narrative thus acquires its status not on the basis of its factuality, but as the cultic re-actualization of a myth.

What do these military rituals, then, have in common? Both the scripture of Joshua and the narrative of the Masada are based on the myth of the powerful, unconquerable Jewish nation, and is undoubtedly an attribute that the army establishment encourages in its soldiers.

The Individual Recruit and the Collective Soldier

The interviewees have been asked not only questions about how religion unfolds in their daily lives as soldiers, but also how soldiering in the IDF would proceed if Judaism was removed from the army. It may not be surprising that the Gdud 50 soldiers take on an observer's role. Judaism is a religion that emphasizes fulfilment of the *mitzvot* (see e.g. Satlow 2006a: ch.6). Accordingly, religious and secular Jewish populations in Israel de facto live very different - and therefore separate - lives. As non-practitioners and therefore outsiders to religion in civil society, many of the soldiers in the Gdud 50 report that their first encounter with Jewish religious practices occur within the IDF. Not surprisingly, equally many also explain how this meeting triggered an intriguing curiosity. On the one hand, they draw a clear distinction between the religious and the non-religious. At the same time, they consider the practitioners as the ones who preserve what appear to be the essentially Jewish and thereby also the ideas is constitutive of his collective "Us". They are consequently not merely observers. Irrespectively of whether or not one believes in the Talmudic scriptures or engages in the fulfilment of the mitzvot, they are all part of the same community, the same fundamental "Us":

They have had a tremendous role in preserving our culture up through a tough history. They have made us not forget, to be Jews, not like everyone else. Personally, I don't do all the rituals. But I want the religious [Jews] to feel welcome. And, it is nice! Like – they do a prayer before we go to a mission. Or, we eat together on Shabbat and some pray while others listen to their iPod. Then we discuss religion and many times I don't agree in the whole God-stuff. But they [the religious] are important for remembering who we are. You know; it is they who are actually practicing something that we all are in debt to, you know. They have brought our culture forwards. They have had a

tremendous role in preserving our culture up through a tough history. They have made us not forget, to be Jews, not like everyone else ("FocusGroup" 05/04/09).

Being part of a religious community is not necessarily about faith or theology; it is a matter of culture and tradition, and “being Jewish” refers to members of both a religious community as well as a national community, which enables “prefixes” to the term such as being a “secular Jew” (Satlow 2006a), something also the soldiers are highly conscious about.²¹² “We are Jewish in the IDF. That can be many things. But it is not just about soldiering. I learned a lot about who I am and what it means to be Jewish while being in the army. It gets under your skin, it really does, it – it is to be Jewish... I can’t really explain it...” (“Yaron” 05/04/09).

Nevertheless, despite the attempts at creating coherence between the collective and the individual, the military socialisation system never works as perfectly as intended: It meets and produces resistance, is tense and contradictory and recruits have internal conflicts during the process of becoming soldiers. As Yaron said to the nodding and thoughtful silence of fellow soldiers: “I have started peeing in bed in the army. Yes, it’s true! Couldn’t sleep, had to get up every 30 minutes or otherwise I’d wet myself. Seriously” (“Yaron” 05/04/09).

Both religious meaning systems and the soldier role are inherently collective as they presuppose a community. For the soldiers, this is first and foremost symbolised through the uniforms, but equally strong is the creation of a collective consciousness, leaving little room for individual contemplation and voicing of opinion. They do their tasks not as individuals, just as actors that are representatives of an institution. At the same time, soldiering implies an inevitable dilemma: Whereas individuals should not kill, the soldier may have to. Therein lies the distinction and inevitable tension between the individual and the uniform. They may be trained to kill, but living with it as a person is something else (Nadelson 2005): “You cannot be individual about these things” is a sentence I often heard throughout the interviews.

²¹² Whereas the observant sector advocates determining a Jew in strict accordance with Jewish law, secular Jews generally support a definition based on civil criteria. The Israel MFA reiterates that this is problematic: “These conflicts of interest have given rise to a search for legal means to define the demarcation between religion and state. Until an overall solution is found, authority lies in an unwritten agreement, reached on the eve of Israel’s independence and known as the status quo, which stipulates that no fundamental changes would be made in the status of religion” IsraelMFA. 27/01/99. “Jewish Society in Israel.” Pp. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/People/Jewish%20Society%20in%20Israel> edited by Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Jerusalem..

Soldiers in the IDF are in a rather peculiar situation: Much of the IDF's activity is subject to great controversy internationally. As the IDF is a conscript army, most of the IDF's military activity is conducted by regular recruits, not by professional soldiers. Among the most direct consequences of this is that the recruits are performing their tasks literally with the lens of the international press in their faces. Several of my informants have found their picture in the international press. This accentuates the distinction between the uniform and the individual. When asked to comment on how they experience this, Gidi provides a describing example: "It is not me you see there... well, I know it is me, but it really isn't. I wish the press could see that. It is me, but it is not. Isn't that quite clear?" ("Gidi" 18/06/07).

Gidi's explanation highlights the inherent friction between representing an institution and attend to individual integrity; between having an independent worldview and accepting an institutional meaning system.²¹³ In the production of soldiers, these two dimensions will inevitably collide. Matching these two levels is thus the aim of all military socialisation process.

In the case of the IDF, this is not merely about recruits accepting a new role; it also has profound political implications as religion and controversy are intimately linked. On a collective level, the social and cultural consciousness of the IDF soldiers is encouraged on the basis of experiencing unity with a people and their culture. The IDF plays on wide, inclusive core symbols in the Jewish tradition. However, the interconnectivity between Judaism and the IDF's meaning system also entails inherent tension: Most of the IDF's activity occurs in the West Bank, a territory that many Jewish groups consider as particularly significant due to the symbolic status these territories have amongst various Jewish groups. Accordingly, the IDF's activity inevitably runs into the heated conflict on the role of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank. To exemplify: Whereas the individual recruit may oppose Israeli settlement expansion, the collective soldier in the IDF may be set to do *aftachim*; i.e. settlement protection. Thus, while religion on the one hand provides the IDF with a constructive potential for community building, it also accentuates fault lines.

²¹³ See Wuthnow, Robert. 1987. *Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

Discussion

The study of the military within the discipline of religion feeds into a classical focal point of social theories, which is the relationship between the individuals and the collectivities in and through which they live. In this respect, the military poses no unique challenges to the social scientific study of religion. Yet, the general trends in post-modernity of individualization and the increased spaces for making individual choices may prove particularly challenging to the military. The increasing expectation of individuals to exercise their autonomous judgment in choosing what to believe is counter-productive to military functionality. Uncertainties in moral and social order both provide possibilities for new worldviews to emerge and may disrupt loyalty, seam lining and hence efficiency. Accordingly, all militaries face the dilemma of how to rework the ethical and moral framework of prior socialization. Thus, turning recruits into soldiers includes the reformation of ethical, social and cultural consciousness, wherein the recruits internalize the military's collective meaning system. Thus, the military must stage and engender coherence amongst its recruits, and counteract the trends in civil society. The questions are thus both how the military manages to overcome this challenge (institutional level) and how the individual recruits respond to the role they are placed in (individual level).

Yet, post-modernity's "fragmentation" should not be juxtaposed with "free will": Individual choices take place in contexts that identify people as the kind of individuals who are capable of making certain choices (Beckford 2003: ch. 6). Factors such as state agencies, courts of law in combination with cultural context provide both a balance between rights and risks associated with certain choices, as well as providing a limited set of possible options (Beckford 2003: 210-211). Social and institutionalized influences on choices prove an important topic of discussion in sociological theory (Akerlof 1997; Bernheim 1995). Among the significant sources for choice elimination in this context are example setting – when the motivation for religious actions is to show others how they should behave – and rewards and punishments (Sherkat 1997).

The IDF is an extraordinary example: Despite caught in-between these counteractive trends, the IDF manages year after year to produce highly motivated soldiers. In fact, the IDF soldiers' degree of combat motivation is referred to as the "secret weapon" (Catignani 2004: 108; Gal 1986: 151). As we have seen in the explorative analysis above, the IDF possesses a rich repertoire of religious components that are exploited in order to create a relatively solid

collective meaning system founded on Judaism. General and fundamental themes in the Jewish religious tradition play a crucial and constitutive role. In addition, we have seen how the continuous presence of the rabbis, coupled with the implementation of the Chief Military Rabbinate's directives, contributes to making religion an integral part of all IDF soldiers' lives; not just the initially religiously practicing ones. Thus, what we see is the result of principle selection towards a desired end. In many ways, the IDF represents a system that undertakes a maximalist conception of religion (cf. Lincoln 2003); that is, that religion is an integral part to the whole institution and constitutes a basic building block for the fundamental meaning system it represents.

Nevertheless, the fact that the IDF's meaning system is Jewish also reflects an ethnic affiliation. Many scholars have emphasized the Zionist imprint on the army as the crucial qualifying factor (see e.g. Ben-Ari 1998; Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999). All the same, although the Zionist heritage may play important role in explaining the soldiers' notion of their role, it is difficult to limit the IDF's meaning system to the confines of Zionism. The Zionist movement is initially secular, emphasizing domains such as e.g. building the nation, maintaining security, possess and cultivate state lands, maintain governance and so forth. Yet, it does not provide a cultural heritage, a set of practices, symbolic expressions and a history, all issues that the soldiers emphasized and reiterated as being of uttermost importance to them when explaining their loyalty to the IDF, their role as a soldiers as well as the significance of the institution they de facto are part of.²¹⁴

As a cultural agent the military is "serving to protect a society while maintaining a separate set of norms and values than its host culture" (Rohall et al. 2006: 50-60). It represents a contextual meaning system wherein their socio-cultural environment is made sensible to the members (Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999). Membership in the military community does *ideally* presuppose a degree of conformity with the fundamental meaning system that the military rests upon. It is thus an institution that necessitates – and strives to foster - cohesion and motivation amongst its members (Griffith 2007; MacCoun et al. 2006;

²¹⁴ To exemplify, an emphasis on Zionism alone would not allow for non-Zionists to express Uzi's loyalty to the IDF: "I stopped being Zionist after the army, I guess. It is weird here. It is like you are Zionist by default. "What else could I be in Israel" says Israelis. But – you are not born with an ideology. The IDF is for all of us. So how can it be so damned Zionist? I don't look at it like that. I am Jewish. And I am an IDF soldier. It is an obvious connection. I could not imagine a Jewish, Israeli life here in Israel without having served in the IDF. I don't know what I would – or could – do. With the IDF, I feel much more Israeli than before. I am Jewish, and now I know what we've gone through. It is not really just an intellectual thing. It is now also a physical thing, in a way. I have seen, I have lived, I have also suffered and I have tried to prevent our suffering from happening again" "Uzi". 24/06/09. "Combat Soldier, Gdud 50, IDF." Pp. Interview. Jerusalem..

Yagil 1995). Yet, the IDF's ability *not* to break with the value system of civil society, but rather stress and utilize its potential for cohesion amongst its recruits, indicates that the IDF has succeeded in creating a meaning system that fosters and bolsters the individual recruits' motivation to fight in the IDF. Religious meaning systems may lend narratives to institutions that help provide a particularly strong rationale for action and a foundation for collective identities and group solidarity (Hunt et al. 1994; Sherkat and Ellison 1999: 370; Smith 1996). To this, the IDF proves a confirming example.

Consequently, we are left with the question of what it is that soldiers come to understand is the thing for which they are prepared to fight, kill, and die. In the IDF's meaning system we can identify two overlapping levels: At the most immediate level, it is the State of Israel as a Jewish state. At the broadest level, it is the totality of Jewish history and tradition. The first is a political entity, albeit one that has certain religious resonances built into it. The second is a religious entity that finds its political instantiation in the first. Presumably, even a soldier who was most determined to fight only for his country will inevitably be drawn into some set of associations that construed the state in less-than-secular fashion, and all soldiers would be led to invest their service with more-than-secular significance, with varying levels of intensity that reflect their different prior levels of religious commitment. The military thus fosters a certain diversity, but it is a diversity on the scale of religiosity, not one of different religions or one that admits of no religiosity at all.

The IDF's meaning system has a built-in ambiguity, mediating between being inclusive to all and still meaningful and coherent. Although applying a series of Jewish symbols, narratives and values, there is little doubt that these do not mean the same to all Jews. Judaism is a wide religion with a number of "sub-traditions" – some even challenge the claim that Judaism constitutes one religious canopy – and Jewish-Israeli recruits in the IDF thus represent highly diverging cultural groups. By implementing idiosyncratic symbols, the IDF constructs a community of meaning based largely on shared profound meaning that pervades and uphold the other forms of cohesions and functional tasks. As an example, the fact that the IDF is "Jewish" is a very wide label and obviously means something quite different to orthodox Jews in a West Bank settlement than to a secular "Tel-Aviv'ian" Jew. Nonetheless, it unites the members of the IDF into a community that separates them from other ethnic and religious groups. Thus, these symbols are wide only for a certain "in-group". The IDF is thus performing a balancing act, representing a taxonomic meaning system based on a wide definition of Judaism wherein only the widest and most inclusive aspects are

integrated into the daily life of the institution. Accordingly, religion highlights the unity between the military institution of the IDF with the State of Israel, the Jewish People and therein also Judaism.

Conclusion

I started this article with a general pondering about how the interrelationship between religion and soldiering in the context of contemporary conscript armies, posing the question: How do recruits come to terms with soldiering? On the basis of a series of interviews, I have explored the role of religion in the IDF through a focus on how individuals recruited into the military make sense of the institution they are set to represent and the role their role within it. As we have seen, Judaism – both in terms of theological postulates and cultural traditions – is fused into all sectors of the IDF, creating an intimate bond between the army and one specific religion. Accordingly, religion locates the individual within an overall system of meaning and provides the IDF with a cultural repertoire that is decisive to the formation of the soldiers.

However, the fact that the IDF is a case wherein these issues are highly explicit does not make it irrelevant. The IDF is faced with challenges that all armies inevitably have to deal with. Thus, the “extremity” of the IDF also makes it a revealing instance of tendencies that are often present, but which operate in lower-level, more diffuse and less visible fashion within the militaries of other nations whose religious identity is neither so homogenous, nor so salient as is true in Israel. This is to say that the Israeli case differs from others in quantitative, more than in qualitative fashion, or, to put it differently, it differs in degree - and of course in its specific details- more than it does in nature.

Religion is neglected at large by military studies. However, attempting to make a first step in filling the wide gap in the literature, the analysis above has shown that Religious Studies may provide a highly useful and needed “tool kit” that may help us to further understand the understandable; namely that wars occur with continued strength and appears to be an inevitable consequence of human existence.

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**Article IV - Religion and Territorial Ownership: Notions of
Land amongst Combat Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces
(IDF)**

This manuscript was submitted to *Journal of Contemporary Religion* in June 2010. It is currently in peer-review process. The journal is an international, peer-reviewed journal. Its purpose is to “both document and evaluate the anthropological, sociological, psychological, and philosophical aspects of emerging manifestations of religiosity in any part of the world—whether within innovative movements or mainstream institutions”. The editors-in-chief are Elisabeth Arweck at the University of Warwick and Professor Peter B. Clarke at the University of Oxford.

The purpose of the article is to conduct a “discipline of religion analysis” – if one can make such a claim – of the role of religion in IDF soldiers’ notion of territory.

Religion and Territorial Ownership: Notions of Land amongst Combat Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

Abstract

How do recruits make sense of the territories they fight in and fight for? Founded in the discipline of religion, the following article provides an explorative analysis of how soldiers in the 50th Battalion in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) interpret and taxonomize three different territories that they related to in their military service: Southern Lebanon, The Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The symbolic significance of the territories that are intimately knit to the IDF's mission indicates an interrelationship between the cultural landscape and the security environs. Based on 34 in-depth interviews with a group of religiously non-practicing soldiers, I will show how this group embodies a complex notion of land: Rooted in Judaism, their notion of land is a crucial component in their identity and idea of their roles as soldiers. Their standard of evaluation is based on "Israel" versus "The Arab World", which primarily overlaps with the distinction symbolic versus non-symbolic significance attached to land. Their notion of land unites the topographical/physical level with the religious/ideological level. Crucial to the formation of this notion of map is their interaction with the Jewish settler population.

Introduction

How do recruits make sense of the territories they fight in and fight for? Rooted in the discipline of religion, the following article provides an explorative analysis of how soldiers in the 50th Battalion in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) interpret and taxonomize the territories that they related to during their military service. In the case of these combat soldiers, their military engagement has above all been tied to three different territories: Southern Lebanon, The Gaza Strip and the West Bank.²¹⁵ They have consequently fought in territories with

²¹⁵ Jerusalem – be it East or West – or Syria are excluded from the analysis as the interviewees did not serve in there as part of their military service. Hence they have no military experiences to draw upon. Although the question of the border relations with Syria and the final status of Jerusalem are important to the IDF, interviews with the Gdud 50 do not provide empirical evidence that allows for a qualified analysis.

highly diverging legal and symbolic status. A spatial dimension is inevitably inherent to the role of the soldier in conscript armies, as their mission and very *raison d'être* are inexorably linked to the territorial integrity of their respective states. At the same time, it is a well-established fact that our spatial notions are not merely results of borders and topography; we are not placed, we “bring place into being” (Smith 1987: 26). The notions of the places we surround us with are therefore to be understood as cultural categories, and have a “determining influence on the way people behave, the way they think, the rhythm of their lives and their relationships” (Sheldrake 2001: 4). Thus, as soldiers in an army with strong bonds to Judaism, how does religion in general and Judaism in particular affect IDF soldiers’ notion of the territories they operate within?

In an interview with “Meir”, a 22-year old soldier in one of the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) combat battalions, he was asked how he experienced serving in the West Bank as part of his compulsory military service. His answer emphasizes the significance of a sense of attachment to a particular place, which indicates a motivation to serve that is only tenuously related to questions of security:

We’ve served everywhere. But that – it is a very layered place, though. Like, you have all these things there that mean something so special to us. It is, well, you know the story... And you can *feel it* when you’re there – that this is not just any kind of place. So we must take care of it. If we don’t, the Arabs certainly won’t. I mean, why would they take care of a Jewish site? (“Meir” 05/04/09).

His statement is not what we immediately would associate with military conscription and the role of the soldier. How can we, then, understand his line of argumentation and the implications it has for his role as a soldier? One could argue that it should not come as a surprise that an IDF soldier accentuates his connection to this particular area: The Land of Israel – *Eretz Israel* – is a crucial constituent in Judaism, and the particular relationship between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel undeniably has critical impact also on the relationship between the state of Israel and its neighbouring countries (see Friedland and Hecht 1991). In addition, there is an increasing awareness against what many argue is the mounting influence of the Military Rabbinate within the ranks of the IDF.²¹⁶ However, our

²¹⁶ These discussions intensified following the Operation Cast Lead in Gaza 27/12/08-18/01/09, when it was made known that IDF Rabbis used scriptures to boost soldiers’ morale (selected articles reflecting the discussion

aforementioned soldier is a secular, religiously non-practicing young native-born Israeli from Tel Aviv. Even though he represents a group that constitutes the *majority* of IDF's soldiers²¹⁷, scholars have primarily focused their endeavors on expanding our knowledge about the religiously observant segments of the Jewish-Israeli population, which first and foremost regards the settlers. Thus, today, it is well-documented that this group argues for their presence in the West Bank concerns issues of national heritage and cultural belonging, mixed with messianic postulates that presuppose the spiritual as well as physical unity between a Land and a People (Aran 1991; Cohen 1993; Cohen Spring 2007; Cohen 1997a; Kellermann 1996; Kimmerling 1983b; Ravitzky 1996 (1993); Rosman-Stollman 2005b; Rosman-Stollman 2009; Røislien 2007; Sprinzak 1991).²¹⁸ However, the question regarding how the secular or religiously non-practicing IDF soldiers relate to their territorial surroundings is still left unanswered. This article feeds into this gap in the literature.

Based on oral data gathered through in-depth interviewing over a period of four years with a group of non-practicing, non-observant and self-declared non-religious soldiers, I will explore their complex notion of land: The basic taxonomizers in their overall standard of evaluation are "Israel" versus "The Arab World"²¹⁹. This dichotomy is described through binary oppositions, such as belonging versus alienation, us versus them. As representatives of Israel, these soldiers are symbols of a cosmic order. At the same time, as they work to maintain and protect Israel's territorial integrity they consequently operate on the boundary *between* chaos and cosmos – and at times even *within* the sphere of chaos during incursions

are e.g. Freedman, Seth. 06/07/09. "Religious dogma has no place in the IDF." in *The Guardian*. London; Harel, Amos. 17/11/2008. "Chief IDF Rabbi: Army rabbinate needs to inculcate Jewish values." in *Ha'aretz*. Tel Aviv/Jerusalem; Kidon, Amir. 12/08/08. "Rabbis and Officers." in *Today in the IDF*. Jerusalem: Israel Defense Forces; Nahschoni, Kobi. 06/11/08. "Conversion survey: IDF over Religion." in *Yediot Aharonot*. Tel Aviv; Wagner, Matthew. 08/01/09. "IDF Rabbinate uses scriptures to boost soldiers' morale." in *Jerusalem Post: Online Edition*. Jerusalem; Ze'evi, Dror. 30/10/09. "Keep religion out of IDF." in *Yediot Aharonot*. Tel Aviv.)

²¹⁷ There are no official statistics published by the IDF on the demographic composition of the IDF. However, the IDF practices exemption from military service for ultra-orthodox groups Hoffnung, Menachem. 1995. "Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in Applying Israel's Conscriptio Law." *Law & Polity* 17,3 July: 311-340; Røislien, Hanne Eggen. forthcoming. "Religion and Military Conscriptio: Exploring Conscriptio Practices in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)." *Armed Forces & Society*. In addition, Yigal Levy has an interesting study collected casualty data with reference to ethnicity, social class and religious adherence. His analysis reveals that although the casualty ratio amongst secular upper-class Ashkenazis is declining, there are still a majority of seculars serving in the IDF. See: Levy, Yagil. 2007. *Israel's Materialist Militarism*. Lanham: Lexington Books. See in particular Chapter 4.

²¹⁸ According to Israel Democracy Index 2007, only 32% of Israel's Jewish population observes tradition, 7% report that they observe tradition meticulously, whereas 25% report that they observe tradition to a large extent. See: Arian, Asher, Nir Atmor, and Yael Hadar. 2007. "Auditing Israeli Democracy - 2007: Cohesion in a Divided Society." in *The Israeli Democracy Index*, edited by The Israel Democracy Institute. Jerusalem The Israel Democracy Institute & The Guttman Center.

²¹⁹ Noteworthy, "the" is included inside of the inverted commas on purpose: The interviewees do not speak of an Arab world, but rather point to what they understand as a specific, coherent and undifferentiated Arab entity.

into Arab territories. Their notion of land thus unites the topographical/physical level with the religious/ideological level in a military service that takes place in a liminal sphere (cf. Turner 1974). A crucial point is how this notion of land is highly influenced by the Judaism of the Jewish settler population.

To develop my line of argumentation, the article is structured in order to illustrate the soldiers' complex grading of territory, starting with the territories that the soldiers most easily can categorize, moving towards those places where the differentiation is increasingly compound as religious, cultural and symbolic factors come into play. I will base the article in examples related to Lebanon and Gaza, moving on to examples from the West Bank, with an emphasis on Hebron. I will expand on the role of the settlers in the cultural boundary creation amongst the non-observant soldiers. The line of argumentation is visualized through the development of models of the interrelationship between military motivation and notions of Jewish cultural symbolism. The article is brought to a close with an extended analysis on the implications that these notions of land contain for the role of the soldier in the IDF.

The Problem of Territory in the Case of the IDF

The IDF is the military of the State of Israel and has been imposed a twofold mission wherein territorial concerns are decisive. The mission is: "To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel. To protect the inhabitants of Israel and combat all forms of terrorism which threaten the daily life" (IDF 2001b). The mission thus has two main foci: A specific territory and the people who live there. Yet, these two are not equally determining: The latter is relative to the former as defending a population of a specific territory implies that it is the scope of the place that determines the boundaries of military engagement. "We" is thus comprised by those who belong "Here". Whereas this indicates how notions of place and notions of "the other" are intertwined, it also signals that it is a particular topography that composes the core constituent in the Israeli-Jewish community.

In the Israeli case, the state's territorial integrity is a complex and disputed issue, as the state does not have internationally recognized borders on all fronts, but rather operates with demarcation lines: Towards Egypt, Israel maintains a relatively stable border-relation as a result of Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt of 1979 ("Interim Agreement between

Israel and Egypt September 4, 1975" 04/09/1975; Peace Treaty Between Israel and Egypt" 26/03/1979; Shlaim 2001 [2000]: 371-383). The so-called "Blue Line" marks the border demarcation between Israel and Lebanon published by the United Nations on 7 June 2000 for the purposes of determining whether Israel had fully withdrawn from Lebanon. It is based on the deployment of the IDF prior to March 14, 1978 (UN 1978; UN 2005). The Jordan River marks the de facto border between Israel and Jordan as a result of a peace accord signed in 1994 between the two countries (Shlaim 2001 [2000]: 537-545).

The cases of the West Bank and Gaza are radically different: The State of Israel occupied both in 1967 as a result of the Six Day War, but unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in line with the Israeli "Disengagement Plan" (Israel 18/04/2004).²²⁰ In the West Bank, however, Israel maintains a firm presence: The state is separated from the West Bank by the "Green Line" used to refer to the 1949 Armistice lines (Rouhana 1990; Shlaim 2001 [2000]: 41-47). In practice, however, the West Bank constitutes a patch work of Israeli and Palestinian areas. Following the "Declaration of Principles" signed on the White House lawn on 28 September 1995, the West Bank is split into three zones; Palestinian Controlled Area A, Israeli Controlled Area C, and Shared Control Area B. The area that Israel unilaterally controls now constitutes 60% of the West Bank (OCHA November 2009: 3).²²¹

Israeli soldiers are thus forced to operate in a turmoil of territorial disputes, and defending the "territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel" is a task wherein judicial directives not necessarily provide the soldiers with sufficient guidelines. It is in light of this lack of judicial guidance, that the fundamental role notions of the Land of Israel play in Judaism acquires its importance to the role of the soldier. The promise of land has proven to be decisive for the Jewish People, and is a defining element in the constitution of the nation

²²⁰ The state of Israel officially and unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in August 2005 during the so-called Disengagement Plan wherein the Israeli-Jewish settlers were evicted from their homes. The IDF once again re-entered Gaza three years later, during the last week of 2008 and the first weeks of 2009. At this period in time, the IDF was engaged in a conventional war against targets and groups in Gaza. *Mivtza Oferet Yetzuka* - known as Operation Cast Lead in English - started with Israeli airstrikes on Gaza on 27 December, lasted until January 18, where after Israel completed its withdrawal on January 21. However, both parties disagree on the reasons for why the war started. The IDF employed the Israeli Air Force (IAF), Special Forces and the Golani and Givati Infantry Battalions. The Gdud 50, which belongs to the Nachal, was therefore not directly engaged in the military incursions deep into the densely population centers deep inside of Gaza's territory. However, the Gdud 50 nevertheless served in Gaza, both prior to the war and during it.

²²¹ In addition, there were at end of October 2009 "a total of 578 closure obstacles inside the West Bank territory (i.e. excluding Green Line crossings), including 69 permanently staffed checkpoints, 21 "partial checkpoints", and 488 unstaffed obstacles (roadblocks, earth mounds, earth walls, road barriers, road gates and trenches)" OCHA, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in occupied Palestinian territory. November 2009. "West Bank Movement and Access Update." Pp. 1-7, edited by OCHA. Jerusalem: UN.

that separates them from other nations (see Numeri 23:9).²²² The promise has been restated and reconstructed through generations in such a way that it has become a living and driving force in the life of the people (Davies 1995 [1989]). Returning to Israel is understood within the context of a purpose of history (see Lancaster 1998 [1993]: 13-14). Relating to the land – be it as an idea or a reality - in the area defined in the scriptures has become an eternal task, and living there an equally eternal promise. Accordingly, scholars have pointed out that there is a tendency in Jewish mythology, then, to view history as a vehicle of God’s presence in the world (Lancaster 1998 [1993]).

However, the multi-referentiality and inherent ambiguities of the term turn it into a rather unwieldy entity, and different religious Jewish groups interpret the concept differently: Whereas some groups assert that the Land of Israel was given to the Israelites by God,²²³ others and more religious Zionist settler groups juxtapose the borders of Israeli state land as signifying the borders of the divine kingdom on earth – which need to be expanded (e.g. Aran 1987; Aran 1990; Aran 1991; Ravitzky 1996 (1993); Sprinzak 1981; Sprinzak 1991; Sprinzak 1999). Still, it is arguable that “The basic need for a territory and the cultural-religious attachment to the Land of Israel” (Kellerman 1993: 38) has found resonance amongst the vast majority of the Israeli Jewish population, although the line of argumentation varies substantially. Thus, the majority of the Jewish-Israeli population expresses a particular affinity to land. The Land – in its widest and undefined notion – feeds into the process of emblemization of religious tokens within affinity group and underscores the role of religion in the reconstruction of memory in modernity: In the interrelationship between what is ethnic and what is religious, there is a particular attraction at work that springs from the fact that the one and the other establish a social bond on the basis of an assumed genealogy: “on the one hand, a naturalized genealogy (because related to soil and to blood), and a symbolized genealogy (because constituted through belief in and reference to myth and a source), on the other” (Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]: 157). Judaism is an example of such an “ethnic religion”, stressing its interrelationship to place: “They belong to the very cultural framework of a society and of the identity of its individual members. For them, sacred places are also fundamental aspects of the people and their lives” (Davies 1998 [1994]: 1). In other words,

²²² The religious Zionist movement blends the covenants and the promise of the Land with Isaiah 49:6: “I will also make you a light of nations”. In other words, the promise contains a redemptive responsibility; it is the responsibility of the Jewish People of Israel, now the Jewish People, to lead the world to salvation.

²²³ E.g. Gen 12:7, Gen 13:14-17; Gen 22:15-18.

the collective's association with a particular place is determining for the formation of the ethnicity.

This contributes to increasing the significance of the interconnectivity between cultural collective identity and boundary creation. In consequence, when IDF soldiers are set to fight to protect certain territories, they do not merely fight for a topographical or physical object – they also fight for a set of values that are crucial constituents in the Israeli-Jewish collective identity. The IDF is thus a military wherein two parallel concerns merge: One is the cultural and religiously rooted narratives regarding a particular land that contributes to provide a shared canopy amongst the institutions' members; a second is military function as providers of the state's security, protecting 'us' from 'them'.

Data

This article rests on the voices of a group of soldiers in the IDF's 50th Battalion – the Gdud 50 - gathered through 34 in-depth interviews. These soldiers were interviewed over a period of four years (2006 – 2009), through semi-structured and open-ended interviews, both one-to-one and through Focus Groups. I have conducted the interviews in Hebrew or English after the soldiers' own choice. Unanswered or supplementing questions have been discussed with the various interviewees either in follow-up face-to-face interviews or online, through social media. The selection of informants was primarily strategic and theoretical (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983]), aimed at minimizing differences between the interviewees in order to enable the accentuation of typical traits to increase coherence in the interview data (Morse et al. 2002: 16, fn.14).

I employed two particularly important criteria in the interviewee selection: Firstly, that they had served in the military during 2005-2009, and secondly, that the interviewees belong to the 50th Battalion – the Gdud 50. This battalion is in the IDF known for being overall comprised by non-practicing and non-observant recruits, which was a crucial point: As a non-practicing group, they could in my analysis of the role of religion in the military help exploring how religion works not merely amongst religiously observant recruits, but also on the remaining conscripts. This also provides a basis for explorations of the interrelationship between religious and non-religious segments of the Israeli-Jewish population. This is particularly significant in the meeting between secular soldiers and the Jewish settlers, which

is a critical factor throughout their military service. Although the selection of group and time period was made back in 2005, it had the crucial but yet unforeseen consequence that Israel would be at war twice during the military service of these men. Thus, in addition to the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians in the West Bank, these men have served in military operations in the Second Lebanon War (2006) and in Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2008-09. Accordingly, the issue of place has thus been a particularly crucial concern in the military service of these men.

“Ours” and “Theirs”: Finding Basic Parameters

The crucial impact of territorial boundaries on the military service of the Gdud 50 soldiers is undeniable as e.g. settlement protection, border patrols, checkpoint service and ambushes, in addition to different forms of patrols (such as *siurim*, i.e. jeep patrols, and *patrol raglit*, i.e. foot patrols) are integral to their service. Yet, it has been a noticeable trait in the interviews that the soldiers nuanced the different territories they served in on the basis of symbolic rather than legal criteria. Haim’s statement is representative:

We’ve been everywhere in the West Bank and in Judea and Samaria.²²⁴ I’ve been in Hebron, I’ve been one full year in Jenin with them – one full year! – I’ve been up north in Lebanon, I’ve been in Bethlehem, I’ve been in Gush Etzion... and in places that don’t mean anything. I’ve been everywhere, seriously. Both in their places and in ours ("Haim" 07/04/09).

When Haim lists the places where he has served, he indicates a perception of the West Bank being both Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian as he labels the territory both by the international and the Jewish terminology, i.e. the West Bank and Judea and Samaria. He also indicates the internal differentiation within the West Bank by the different places he mentions – for example, whereas Jenin is a Palestinian city in the Northern West Bank, Gush Etzion is a

²²⁴ A common term for the Occupied Territories in Hebrew is “Shtachim”; lit. “the territories”. Noteworthy, the soldiers used all types of terms for these territories in Hebrew; *hagada hama’aravit* and *Yosh* (abbr. Yehuda ve-Shomron). My argument is thus not made on the basis of meanings lost in translation.

large Jewish settlement south of Jerusalem. His statement thus plays on the implications of the State of Israel's explicit - and fundamental - Jewish character²²⁵: It is located in a place that connects the present with the ancient world rooted in the narrative found in the Jewish Holy Scriptures, and is thus a not merely a legal entity, but comprises a territory that is constitutive for the cultural unity of Jewish population.

The soldiers' fundamental reference points are Israel as a Jewish state, as opposed to its non-Jewish neighbors, i.e. the surrounding Arab World. It is therefore not surprising to observe that the two basic parameters that are applied in the construction of the soldiers' notion of the territory around them are "Israel" and "The Arab World". On the most basic level, the interviewees described these two entities in terms of what is here and home, as in contrast to what is there and therefore theirs. The boundary between these two entities is thus related both to a physical separation ("ours" versus "theirs") and to an abstractions of "Arabs" ("us" versus "them").

Let us look further at the interviewees' statements by an exploration of how they narrate their experiences in Lebanon and Gaza respectively. Although these two cases in many ways are dissimilar, they both highlight the differences between Israel and The Arab World.

Two examples: Lebanon & Gaza

Indicative of the interviewees' unequivocal understanding of the interrelationship between territories and population – that is, between "Israeli" and "Ours" versus "The Arab World" and "Theirs" - is found in their perceptions related to crossing a border. While cultural boundaries are in flux, territorial borders are perceived as more static due to their physical presence. The "Blue Line" between Israel and Lebanon is the most distinct and unambiguous demarcation of these entities that is confirmed through experience amongst the 50th

²²⁵ Examples are many, symbolized visually through e.g. the state's flag (which is based on the design of the Jewish prayer shawl (the *tallit*) with a blue Shield of David (the *Magen David*)); its official emblem (which is a *menorah*); or its Declaration of Independence wherein it is e.g. stated that "the Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped" See: Ben-Gurion, David. 14/05/1948. "Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel." Jerusalem: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Israel(MFA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 01/04/2008. "Facts about Israel: The State Symbols." Jerusalem: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Battalion's soldiers: Despite Israeli military incursions into Lebanon or the temporary creation of the security zone in Southern Lebanon from 1983 to 2000, there is a clear notion in the Israeli hegemonic discourse of the existence of an unambiguous separation between Lebanon and Israel. Accordingly, the "Second Lebanon War" between Israel and Hezbollah (12/07-14/08/06) thus implied crossing from one country into another, also signaling how the soldiers' sense of "us" intensified in the meeting with "them". Shlomi, a Machine Grenade Officer and Sergeant in the Gdud 50, explains his Lebanon experience by accentuating how the widely theorized issue of how meaning and contrastation go hand in hand:

The whole Lebanon adventure was so bizarre, I think primarily because during everything, I could just turn my head and see the flat of my friend up by the border, and I could think – oh, I wonder if he's home – and I'd look for lights in the windows. So, basically, we could wave at each other. And, he could have a cup of coffee and see us at war... so he could just sit here at home²²⁶ and look at us, while we were there ("Shlomi" 24/06/07).

It is consequently not distance but *nearness* coupled with difference and alienation that marks Shlomi's experience. The fundamental notion of affinity versus estrangement is crucial, as groups and individuals note similarities and dissimilarities of whatever sort between themselves and others in the construction and maintenance of their society (Lincoln 1989: 9-10). Furthermore, a distinct, elaborate and symbolically loaded sense of "home" seems to be vital for the coherence of human identity (Sheldrake 2001: 10). Accordingly, the intensity of this experience is underscored by the fact that many recruits have not traveled abroad to any Arab country prior to their military service, as they are called up for military service the year after they have finished school, thus at the age of 18-19 (Constitution 5746-1986; Hoffnung 1995). For my interviewees, invading Lebanon was not only their first major military operation: It was their first experience outside of "home".²²⁷ Yoram, a sniper in the Gdud 50

²²⁶ Our interview took place in Jerusalem. Thus when referring to "here", Shlomi refers to Israel.

²²⁷ I did not discuss issues concerning the actual war in Lebanon with my interviewees, primarily out of ethical concerns: It was outside of my direct research interest and the soldiers clearly had gone through experiences that should not be dealt with by untrained people. My conversation with Tzvi clearly highlights the sensitivity of the issue. I asked him whether he was in Lebanon. He answered: "Sure. It was like this: I was enrolled in the IDF in November 2005 – and will be there for another few weeks. So, I had just finished my basic training and we were stationed at the Northern border. Then, shortly after we had arrived, the kidnapping happened. You know – THE

who served in the Second Lebanon War, represents one of these men who had not left Israel before he found himself in Lebanon during the war. His explication of the experience of crossing over from “home” to “over there” by crossing the border is indicative:

It was the first time I was abroad, so, yeah, it was bizarre. But, there were many of us who had that first-time experience. We were like “wow, we just invaded another country – what do we do now?!” and we looked at each other... It felt really weird. Some of us all joked about it, too, like “Hey, do I get my passport stamped” and stuff, because the whole situation was just so far off everything we had experienced before. It was just... It was just... Well, we crossed the border, and invaded the country – it’s not exactly something you do every day, you know. And then it just became so real... I had never been in an Arab country before (“Yoram” 13/06/07).

Similar intense experiences of alienation are also in play in the soldiers’ narration of Gaza. Two incidents are crucial to my interviewees’ perception of the status of Gaza: The Disengagement Plan in August 2005 and Operation Cast Lead during the early weeks of 2009. The fact that Gaza is a territory that is intimately knit to the whole Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has been a place for Jewish settlement activity up until 2005, separates it both legally and symbolically from the case of Lebanon. Yaron, a 21-year old machine grenade officer, explains how the case of Gaza still accentuates the distinction between “them” and “us” through the soldiers’ intense experience of alienation:

Gaza is a tough experience. It is so bizarre. Like, you think you do important things, but then you are hated by everyone. For example, I went into this house and saw this 12-year-old girl eye-to-eye. And she hates me. She hates me! You know that she really despises you. It is so... it is so... It is not good.... [long pause] I literally haven’t slept since then. I mean, I got all these nightmares, everything just feels so... I don’t know. It is so intense, so raw. Everything you’ve gone through in your life suddenly strikes

kidnapping. From clear blue sky, BAM, we were in war. For us, it was totally unexpected. I mean, I know I am Israeli and everything, but I hadn’t expected that I – ME! – would be in a war. So, instead of having a quiet summer, we were sent into Lebanon. I’d rather not talk about, it... I... ... I’d rather not talk about” “Tzvi”. 04/10/08. “Sniper, Gdud 50.” Pp. Interview. Tel Aviv.

you when you're there and you ask all kinds of questions. We shouldn't be there, it really is theirs now.

But what about the settlers that were evicted from their homes a few years back?

Yes, there were Jews there. But we left Gaza in 2005 and gave it back to them. There really is nothing Jewish there ("Yaron" 05/04/09).

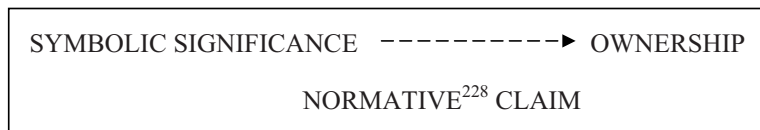
The argumentation regarding Gaza's status thus largely follows the same lines as was the case of Lebanon, underscoring the notion of merely "visiting" a place that belongs to someone else, and the alienation towards "them". The *lack* of a sense of belonging is thus a decisive factor in the creation of the argument that Gaza is "theirs". The reason for stressing the issue of belonging with reference both to the place ('ours') and the people ('us') is its implications for the soldiers' notion of ownership and possession. Identity is strongly placed and relationally framed (Sheldrake 2001: 11). Accordingly, the distinct, explicit and unequivocal understanding of Lebanon and Gaza as being Arab reinforces the soldiers' notion of being "there" in "their" place when crossing the borders.

Symbolism and Ownership: Towards a Preliminary Model

The examples of Gaza and Lebanon highlight the crucial implications nearness has for the dichotomic distinction between "here" and "there" and between "us" and "them". This allows us to conclude that the basic parameters for territorial organization, i.e. "Israeli" and "Arab", are constructed as mutually exclusive categories, but that converge on the same boundaries. A developed and narrated sense of belonging and the consequent reiteration of the "corresponding feelings of distance, separation, otherness, and alienation" (Lincoln 1989: 10), is as we shall also see further crucial for whether they argue for – or against – Israeli possession over particular places. Their fundamentally different connotations and contents are thus visualized through their conjunction: Whereas Israeli refers to both a place and a people, therein also what is known, ours, home and a place of belonging, "Arab" refers to everything that can be contrasted with the familiar: "Arab" is thus there, it is theirs, them, unfamiliar and unknown, thus a place of alienation. Inherent in the basic binary opposition Israeli versus

Arab, are thus also a handful of other connotations that give meaning to these two categories. “Israeli” versus “Arab” includes dichotomies of meaning.

In the case Lebanon, there is a clearer indication of lack of possession. In case of Gaza, the argumentation may take on a somewhat different wording, due to the recent history of Israel in Gaza. Thus, instead of “it is not ours”, as used about Lebanon, the lack of possession in Gaza is rather described in terms of “we don’t want it”. However, both forms of phrasing underscore a similar point, namely that claims of possession is relative the notion of belonging. In other words, the soldiers express a point of view that juxtaposes a sense of belonging with a normative claim of ownership: If a place has particular symbolic significance to Jews, it should also be under Jewish authority. Both Gaza and Lebanon are portrayed as places to which the soldiers feel no emotional, cultural or religious affiliation. Instead, these places indicate feelings of alienation. Accordingly, both places stress the impact symbolism has for ownership. This enables us to point out the crucial taxonomic pattern for territorial differentiation:



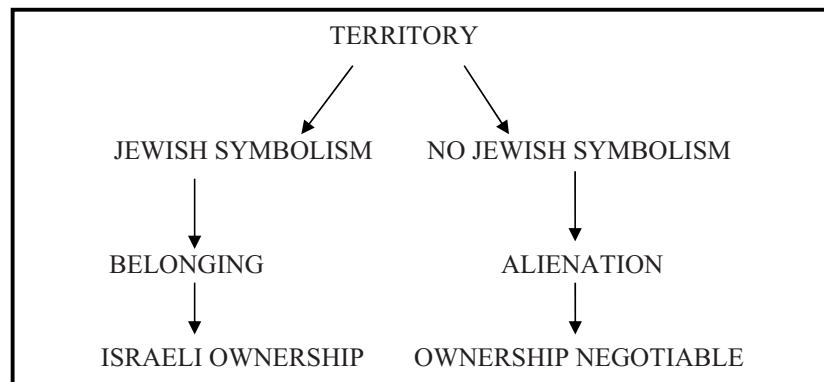
Model I: Basic Taxonomy

The model shows the fundamental differentiation between having the ownership of a place, and the symbolic significance it has. Note the one-way direction of the arrow from symbolic significance to concrete ownership: This is intended to visualize the strive towards acquiring ownership, control or authority over places that contain a particular symbolic standing in the Jewish culture, history or religion. Theorizing sacred place, Philip Sheldrake emphasizes the significance of commitment to a place in order to be somewhere: “Really *being* somewhere means to be committed to a place rather than simply an observer” (Sheldrake 2001: 12). As maintained by scholars, religion is potentially a particularly strong force in engendering and maintaining commitment (Gorsuch 1994; McGuire 2002: 72-78; Stark and Bainbridge 1980).

²²⁸ I apply the term “normative” in the sense of “how things should or ought to be”. By “normative claim” I do not refer to a philosophical position, but mean to indicate that symbolic significance lead to a notion of ownership, typically based on argumentations such as “it should be in Jewish hands”.

Different religions thus create different maps, as their navigation points diverge. Each map contains places of highly different symbolic significance, as emphasis is not distributed evenly throughout the territory. Territories are thus places that are intimately connected to our cultural identities (Harvey 1993).

The extent to which notions of space and place are results of experience, wherein we attach meaning to and organize our surroundings on the basis of cultural postulates and processes, are well-researched (Crouch and Ward 1994; de Certeau 1984; Harvey 1993; Soja 1989; Tuan 1977). When exploring the map, we also need to identify the constituents of community “as groups and individuals note similarities and dissimilarities of whatever sort between themselves and others, they can employ these as instruments with which to evoke the specific sentiments out of which social borders are constructed” (Lincoln 1989: 9). Thus, if we combine the IDF soldiers’ taxonomy of ownership with their basic parameters for the notion of territory, we reach the following model:



Model II: Combining basic parameters and taxonomy

The model visualises how possession over territories is relative to its degree of symbolism: The more symbolic important to the Israeli-Jewish population, the more significant it becomes also to possess it. Conversely, if the areas are not important to them, possession is also not necessary. With this indication, we can move on to the West Bank where an even more complex picture appears.

The West Bank: Ours, Theirs and Symbolic Boundaries

Several of the terms of interpretation and organization in the previous cases, are also present in the case of the West Bank. The alienation between the IDF soldiers and the Palestinians is striking, accentuating the cultural separation between the “we” that the soldiers identify themselves with, in contrast to “them”. Of course, boundaries are not merely borders, but are expressed both symbolically as well as physically, through cultural differences, i.e. the set of distinctive characteristics that define certain preferences such as language, food or clothing, as well the more physical separations distinguishing “where we live” from “where you live”.²²⁹ Identities reside in relations with others, and the social construction and organization of ethnic and religious boundaries are framed in opposite “traits” that are logically consistent with a relational language (Eidheim 1996 [1969]: 39; Tilly 2005: 8). An explicit version of such boundary relations are thus cultural traits, such as differences in clothing or practices (Bowie 2006 [2000]: ch. 3), and in the case of Jewish Israel versus its dominantly Muslim Palestinian neighbors, such traits are many and overt. The separation lines are thus more pressing in the case of the West Bank. Uri explains:

I loved serving in their places. It was meaningful... We got to see how Arabs [Palestinians] live, we got to walk around. We kind of, eh, we, hum, we were in their places, their soil, their houses.

How did you see how the Palestinians lived? Did they invite you in?

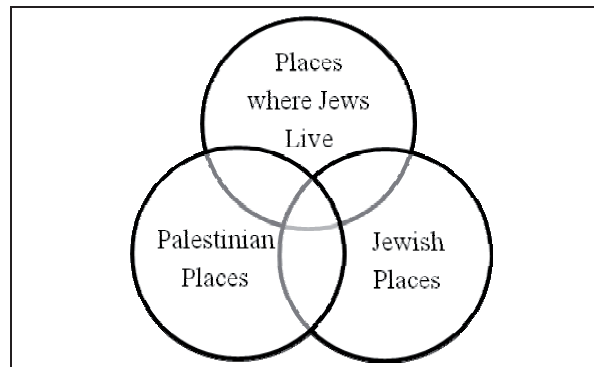
Eh... not exactly.... But, they weren't exactly social calls... but I liked it. It made us feel like real soldiers, as if we were doing something. In Gaza, you're just stuck in the base. It is so much more dangerous, and less to do for us, so you just sit there. In Samaria, we entered houses, patrolled – we were soldiers! I loved it. And I could be in an Arab house. I had never been in their houses before. Or after ("Uri" 20/06/07).

²²⁹ For elaboration of social boundaries, see e.g. Barth, Fredrik. 2000. "Boundaries and connections." Pp. 15-36 in *Signifying Identities: Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values*, edited by Anthony P. Cohen. London & New York: Routledge Publ. ; Tilly, Charles. 2005. *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Uri does not differentiate between Palestinians and other Arab population groups. His statement also underscores the artificial terms of interaction between themselves and the Palestinians. There is thus little doubt that the relationship between the IDF soldiers and the Palestinians is characterized by a fundamental sense of alienation, both in terms of the Palestinian population itself as well as the Palestinian population centers. It is thus noteworthy how cultural comprehensions shape boundary relations, which in turn also reduce cross-boundary knowledge, potentially leading to an image of “the exaggerated other” (Tilly 2005). In line with this assertion, the alienated and poorly founded statements about “The Arabs” by the interviewees support this theoretical postulate, for example “We went there – you won’t believe how Arabs live, they are so filthy!” (“Shay” 27/06/07), or “We also saw there that Arabs live in poverty. But not as bad as I thought, though, they are always exaggerating” (“Uri” 20/06/07). The Arabs thus appear as constructing and representing chaos; an undifferentiated, negative and disorganized other, which stands in sharp contrast to what is nuanced, moderated, symbolically significant and Jewish. Chaos consequently appears as a contrast to cosmos.

However, besides being intrinsically linked to the apparently abiding conflict the state of Israel has with the Palestinians, two other factors contribute to complicating the soldiers’ notion of the territory comprising the West Bank, making it deviate radically from the two previous examples, Lebanon and Gaza respectively: One is the symbolism attached to various parts of the territory, the other is the Jewish settlers who live there.

Summarizing to the interviewees portrayal of the West Bank is found in Yonatan’s statement. He said: “You know, Jews have always been here – it’s not like we’ve just come to take a place we’ve never been to” (“Yonatan” 14/06/07). In short, he reflects an already established notion of a unity between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel. To indicate the soldiers’ complex concept of the map they orient themselves towards in the West Bank, we can portray the soldiers’ notion of how people and places are united with the following model:



Model III: Concrete expressions of notion of territory

The model visualises how population groups and territorial identities overlap in the case of the West Bank. The soldiers' notion of Jewish places can be separated from Palestinian places, based on a combination of symbolism and possession. In part, these also overlap, as Palestinians are understood as also living in places with a weighty Jewish symbolism, which indicates the normative ambition of Jewish possession. Yet, the issue of the settlers and their settlements complicate the picture further, as the settlers have settled in what the soldiers perceive as both on Jewish sites *and* in Palestinian sites.

As already established, the spatial dimension is crucial in the context of Judaism. Yet, in the case of the West Bank, the symbolic and mythological narrative also impacts on the topographical map: A cardinal motif in the *Tanakh*²³⁰ is how God makes a territorial covenant with a representative of the chosen tribe. In the Torah one can read about covenants with Noah, Abraham²³¹, Moses, and other “representatives” of the Israelites. There is no doubt that land, with its conducting rights and privileges, is – and has been – an actor of great historical, ideological and theological significance for the life and faith of the People of Israel (Blum

²³⁰ The canon of the Hebrew Bible; a Hebrew acronym formed from the initial Hebrew letters of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: The Torah (“Teaching”, also known as the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im (“Prophets”) and Ketuvim (“Writings”).

²³¹ God again reveals himself to Abraham (Gen 12:7). God appoints Abraham as the Father of a nation and affirms a covenant with the divine promise of a homeland for the nation: Gen 12:7, and e.g. Gen 13:14-17, 15:7, 17:8, 22:15-18. See also Davies, W.D. 1982. *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. With the covenant made, it rests upon the descendants of Abraham and is a conductive element reaffirmed repetitively with e.g. both Isaac before the exodus to Egypt where God appears to Isaac telling him to reside in the Land of Israel in order to fulfill the covenant of God made with Abraham (Gen 26:3), and with Jacob when he is at Beth-El (Gen 28:3-3, 28:12-15, 35:11-12).

1987). However, it is inescapable that the locus of this formative mythological narrative today is understood as being placed in what we now know as the West Bank. As a result, the West Bank is dotted with places of symbolic significance founded in a Biblical narrative. To illustrate; the Tomb of the Patriarchs, seen as the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as their wives, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah, is located in Hebron; Rachel's Tomb, the burial site of the second wife of Jacob, is located in Bethlehem; Joseph's Tomb, which according to Judaism is the final resting place of the Biblical patriarch Joseph and his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, are buried in Nablus (Breger et al. 2010; Gafni 1997; Gafni and van der Heyden 1980).

In addition to these physical expressions of the Jewish People's association with a particular area that highlights the internal territorial differentiation based on symbolic significance, there are also a number of the commandments – *mitzvot*²³² - that contain an explicitly spatial dimension, and Judaism has expressed itself spatially in manifold and varied spheres (Katz 1991: 3). The spatial dimension of Judaism and the intense bond between Judaism and Eretz Israel has also led several Jewish groups in contemporary times, such as e.g. the religious Zionist settlers, to emphasize that “that the most important *mitzvah* at this time is the settlement of the Land of Israel” (Sharot 1990: 69). As a consequence there are as of 2010, there are some 290 400 Jewish residents living in 121 settlements²³³ spread out in the West Bank (Central Bureau of Statistics 2010; PeaceNow 2009)²³⁴. In contrast, there are approximately 2,5 million Palestinians in the same area.

As a result, the Gdud 50 soldiers spent a significant part of their military service deployed to protect inhabitants of Jewish settlements throughout all of the West Bank. Among these settlements, the case of Hebron is particularly complex and thus also particularly revealing.

²³² Mitzvah (pl. Mitzvot): The 613 Jewish commandments.

²³³ These settlements are recognized as “communities” by the Ministry of the Interior, Israel. Accordingly, Israel has applied its civilian law over the Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories. It should however be pointed out that not all of these settlers belong to the Zionist religious movement. See: Gazit, Nir. 2009. "Social Agency, Spatial Practices, and Power: The Micro-foundations of Fragmented Sovereignty in the Occupied Territories." *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 2283-103; Kretzmer, D. 2002. *The Occupation of Justice: The Supreme Court of Israel and the Occupied Territories*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

²³⁴ According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, the settler population (excluding East Jerusalem) grew in 2009 at a much faster rate than the general population in Israel: 4.7 percent compared to 1.6 percent respectively. Based on growth statistics for the entire population of Jerusalem, the settler population in East Jerusalem at the end of 2008 is estimated at 193,700 B'Tselem. 2010. "Land Expropriation & Settlements: Statistics." Jerusalem: B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel. 2009b. "TABLE 1.- POPULATION(1), BY DISTRICT AND SUB-DISTRICT." Jerusalem.

Settlement Protection: The Problematic Case of Hebron

Thus far, we have established that the West Bank entails greater symbolic significance than Lebanon and Gaza due to the mythical narrative of the relationship between the Jewish People and a mythologically appointed area. There is not room here to elaborate on the entire maze of symbolic places in the West Bank neither within Jewish mythology or in the interviews. Still, of all the places in the West Bank, Hebron provides a particularly telling example and was repeatedly portrayed as place with particular symbolism rooted in a peculiar experience amongst the soldiers. The Southern West Bank city of Hebron epitomizes many of the dilemmas and controversies that potentially face all IDF soldiers who are deployed in the West Bank as part of their military service, and is also described differently from other cities or places. Hebron deviates from other forms of military service, as it is intertwined with the notion of a population's cultural and religious attachment to a particular place. It thus appeals not only to the role of the soldier, but also to the cultural tradition that unites the individuals that comprise the IDF. As Yaron sums up: "Hebron is a very unique place. It gets to you. It really does. Not necessarily in a good way, though. And the settlers... oh, the settlers... Still, it gets to you" ("Yaron" 05/04/09).

Both Jewish and Muslim traditions uphold Hebron as the "City of Patriarchs", and both religions assert that the founding fathers of both Jewish and Muslim nations are buried in the Cave of the Patriarchs in the city. These two colliding and overlapping religious beliefs form the basis for Jewish-Muslim rivalry in Hebron. However, the friction is far from merely a theological abstraction; it is a highly concrete and intense battle over territory between the some 500 members of the Jewish Community of Hebron and the remaining 150 000 Palestinian residents. The settlers live in three neighborhoods — Avraham Avinu, Beit Romano and Tel-Rumeida in the center of the Old City, in addition to the Kiryat-Arba settlement, east of the city. The Palestinian population in Hebron is approximately 150,000. Jewish re-settlement in the city dates back to 1969, when the first group of government-authorized Jewish settlers began to reside in the city, as the city had been under Jordanian rule since the war in 1948. Since the Six Day War, the state of Israel has officially stated its right to these areas, asserting that settlements are an outcome of a Jewish right to establish homes there. This claim requires the Israeli authorities to safeguard Israeli citizens residing in these territories until their final status is determined.²³⁵ Consequently there is a heavy presence of

²³⁵ See e.g. www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0dgi0 (accessed August 19, 2007).

IDF soldiers present in Hebron's Old City 24 hours a day. Following the settlement initiative, Hebron has thus gradually become increasingly militarized, both in terms of military manpower as well as on the ideological "level" as a result of the radicalization of the settlers' worldview (Feige 2001; Røislien 2006; Røislien 2007).

Thus, whereas military service in other places in the West Bank may be of a more technical nature, Hebron appeals to the soldiers' emotions. Oren explained how he felt about serving in Hebron:

Well, yeah. Hebron is a hard place to serve in. it is a hard city. It is rough... but, then again, it is very meaningful. Hebron is very special. So it doesn't really matter that it is tough, if you see what I mean – it is so meaningful that everything else becomes secondary. It is very educational, too. You learn a lot about who you are, where you come from...Hebron is a really big deal for us. One thing is militarily – there are so many forces there. I mean, coming from one of the other bases down to Hebron is bizarre... suddenly there are so many of us! But it is also a big thing just because there is so much history there. It is so packed with – I don't know how to put it.... There is just so much of everything there.... it gets to you emotionally. The other places we just do other jobs, it is much more technical, in a way. Say, the Lebanon border is seriously piece of cake after you've been to Hebron ... ("Oren" 05/04/09).

In a noteworthy study, Nir Gazit has shown how attachment to Hebron's territory is encouraged in the soldiers during their training, both by "learning the territory" as well as "generating cognitive sovereignty over the territory" by appealing to an emotional unity between the soldiers and the symbolic aspects of Hebron (Gazit 2009: 91). In other words, one may argue that the soldiers go through a process wherein the territory is "re-placed" from one category to the other. By getting to know the area, the city is turned familiar, thus withdrawn from the categorizations such as "alienation" or tentatively "theirs". Although boundaries may not be fixed forever, "the process by which their fixing, maintenance, and alteration occur - by which they are transcended or transgressed - are continuous facts of [...] political power. [The disputes over boundary fixing] indicate that political and military power is able to redraw boundaries in the face of opposition or defend those boundaries effectively.

All such disputes presuppose the process of boundary fixing” (Asad 2000: 6-7). To this we may the role of religion in boundary creation.

Religious life contains a spatial dimension, and the significance and dynamics of place has been explored in-depth in the study of religion. Scholars stress that whereas it is crucial to how we understand our surroundings that different places have different significance to us, these different notions of place are in turn a result of our own activity. Accordingly, theories of space and place tend to emphasize the ritualistic aspect that in consequence creates our surroundings, as they are based on the fundamental assumption that place is a socio-cultural construct (Knott 2005a; Knott 2005b; Lincoln 1989; Smith 1987; Vincent and Warf 2002).²³⁶ The question is, then, on what taxonomic basis this re-orientation is done: Who defines the map? To this question, the *internal* relation between the non-practicing soldiers in the Gdud 50 and the practicing settler population is decisive: Attachment to a given place is crucial. But, whereas the categorisation of the majority of the places in which these soldiers operate overlap with the “Us – Them” distinction, the presence of the settlements in Hebron blur this otherwise fundamental dichotomy. Whereas the Palestinians belong to a diffuse and undifferentiated “them”, the settlers appear much more difficult to categorize. Accordingly, the interviewees expose ambivalent sentiments towards the settlers. I asked Yitzhak how the settlers received them, when they were deployed to protect them as part of their service:

[silence]. Well.... not really so good, you know. You do your job and then... They are so... Even though it is Jew against Jew... But, settlers are the most paranoid people. Like, they can be the nicest, really. And then BOM, they freak out, run into the *kazba* [old city market] without reason and smash things, make a bloody mess. But there are some nice people there. Really. They come with blankets and hot tea at night, give you

²³⁶ With reference to the interrelationship between rituals and the creation of place, it is noteworthy that in the context of the military, rituals are applied extensively, from marking each moment of transition in position and rank, to regulating the calendar or reinforce the significance of a particular event or location, thus promoting and maintaining cohesion amongst members of the group in question Etzoni, Amitai. 2000. "Toward a Theory of Public Ritual." *Sociological Theory* 18 44-59; Machalek, Richard, Andrew D. Katayama, James E. Patrey, and Dana H. Born. 2006. "Suspending Routine Day: The Sociological Significance of Military Holidays and Ceremonies." *Armed Forces & Society* 32,3 April: 389-404. Accordingly, the IDF has imported a series of rituals of both religious, secular and national origin, as the IDF follows the Jewish orthodox calendar such as *Sukkot* or Pesach, thus in line with the State of Israel; it marks all Israeli national days such as *Yom Ha-zikaron* (litt. “Remembrance Day”) and *Yom Ha-atsma'ut*, Israel’s Independence Day; as well as exclusively military rituals that mark transition within the military, such as e.g. inauguration or promotion. However, within the IDF framework these rituals have been added a religious dimension, which connects the Jewish People to a common cultural and religious history, as well as to a particular Scripture and a mythical framework.

something comfortable to sit on, invite you in for Shabbat and all. Which is nice. You appreciate it sooo much when you're there, it is unbelievable. But. Well. I started peeing in bed when I was there. Yes, it's true! Couldn't sleep, had to get up every 30 minutes or otherwise I'd wet myself. Seriously ("Yitzhak" 07/04/09).

Several of the interviewees tell about incidents where they have tried to approach the settlers and spend time with them, though with mixed results: "I went to pray with them on Shabbat once. I wanted, you know, to be with them. But they just wanted me to leave. It felt awkward" ("Yoram" 13/06/07). The distinction in Israeli civil-society between settler groups and the secular segments of the population is crucial.²³⁷ Consequently, many interviewees expressed how they in the army for the first time met settlers face-to-face. The experience of distance between the settlers and the soldiers is more intense and problematic than the distinction Israeli-Jew and Arab. The social order – both *like* that of the army, but perhaps even particularly *in* the army – depends on the preservation of certain hierarchic and classificatory distinctions (Lincoln 1989: 43). Whereas Arabs live “there” and constitute an unequivocal other, the settlers are part of the same “we” as the soldiers and live within the same territorial boundaries. Identity is constructed in opposition; there is no inherent meaning in the term “us” but it appears through processes of contrastation. Being criticized by both parties in the city – both Palestinians *and* the Jewish residents of the communities there – the soldiers’ taxonomization is jeopardized as it questions otherwise clearer distinctions of here and there, of us versus them, but also of who constitutes the “we”. Accordingly, in the case of the settlers the soldiers are faced with an “us versus us”-friction. An initial consequence is thus that the settlers contribute to blurring the distinctions that are constitutive for the boundaries and consequently the classificatory systems that these soldiers are set to serve according to.

Yet, the end-result is radically different, and has significant impact on the notion of the territories that they fight in and fight for: The time the non-practicing or non-observant soldiers spend with observant settlers in the army – be it as fellow soldiers or as those they are

²³⁷ The secular-religious cleavage is intense and runs through the entire Jewish-Israeli society (e.g. seculars are largely left-wing, whereas religious are right-wing), and it is argued that the many and critical consequences of this divide contributes to jeopardizing Israeli democracy. See: Arian, Asher, Nir Atmor, and Yael Hadar. 2007. "Auditing Israeli Democracy - 2007: Cohesion in a Divided Society." in *The Israeli Democracy Index*, edited by The Israel Democracy Institute. Jerusalem The Israel Democracy Institute & The Guttman Center; Zisser, Baruch, and Asher Cohen. 1999. "From a Consensual Democracy to a Crisis Democracy: The Struggle for Israel's Collective Identity [Hebrew]." *Politika* 39-30.

set to protect - have critical implications. The two following quotes are indicative. Listen first to Elad, when he describes the meetings with the settlers:

I had a period in the army with religion. A period when I was contemplating a lot, thinking, wondering, asking...It was quite early in the army, really. I met this religious guy in my *plugah* [unit] and I watched what he did. I realised there was so much about Judaism I didn't know. Then, you know, in the army you have the time to talk and contemplate. And I did.... We sat around the bonfire at 3am and talked and talked engaged in quite serious and heavy discussions. I loved it! You know – what's the meaning with all this and that kind of questions. [Long pause] I got quite attracted to religion, you know. I really was attracted to a lot of it. But, no. In the end, I don't find it seriously appealing for me. I mean, *they* can do it. But I won't. There is so much stuff that comes with it ("Elad" 05/04/09).

If we complement Elad's statement with another representative statement, this time offered by Amos, the contours of the end-results for the reorientation of the notion of territory become apparent:

I'll tell you what – the settler became like a rabbi for us. We had to do all kinds of religious stuff, and we had no idea how to do it. Like, how do you keep a real Shabbat, for example. And how do you do any mitzvot? What *are* the mitzvot – I didn't even know that ("Amos" 06/02/08).

Thus, to be precise: Through the many repeated meetings in the military context between the settlers and the soldiers, the notion of land as conveyed by the soldiers expose a re-socialization of the secular image of the map. In this “new” map, the soldiers have internalized the settlers' notions of their territorial surroundings, and the “us-versus-us” friction is solved through a reorientation of tasks: The interviewees consequently re-draw the boundaries between “us” versus “them” by maintaining a generalized and exaggerated image

of the Arabs, but by simultaneously moderating the notion of “us” to also incorporate the settlers. The re-orientation of “us” is made on the basis of a notion of religion as a unifying, constitutive “chain of memory” that serves crucial functions for collective cohesion (see Hervieu-Léger 2000 [1993]). Tradition - and the preservation of it - has maintained a steady standing within the Jewish public (Arian et al. 2008: 74). In line with this, the remarks on the soldier-settler relation by a group of soldiers during a Focus Group in Southern Israel are summarizing:

We are not religious, really. But we have great respect for religion and for the religious people who serve in the army. They have had a tremendous role in preserving our culture up through a tough history. They have made us not forget, to be Jews, not like everyone else ("FocusGroup" 05/04/09).

Reflections

Attempting to “map out” the notions of territory indicates an analytical attempt to identify crucial reference points, how they are connected as well as what separates them. It implies the identification of the primary “taxonomizers” and the relationship between them. Place is undoubtedly political as the way it is constructed means that it is occupied by some people’s stories but not by others (Sheldrake 2001: 20). Turning a recruit into a soldier inevitably puts the individual through a learning experience, which resembles that of a liminal period. The lack of status of soldiery, like that “statuslessness” of a liminal group, can seem to be both painful loss of identity and a positive liberation from those social distinctions which customarily prevent the formation of close personal bonds across lines, seen for example in the relation between the secular soldiers and the settlers. When recruits enter the military, they are stripped of their visible marks of status – clothes, address, property, insignia of social rank – that defined their place in society. The symbols of the “social structure” and the kind of knowledge that characterizes liminality thus resemble the experience of the military (see Leed 1981 [1979]). In any case it is a learning process.

In this learning process, then, the role of the soldier necessitates the formation of boundaries as their performance is tied to the perceived existence of boundaries. A trait that is

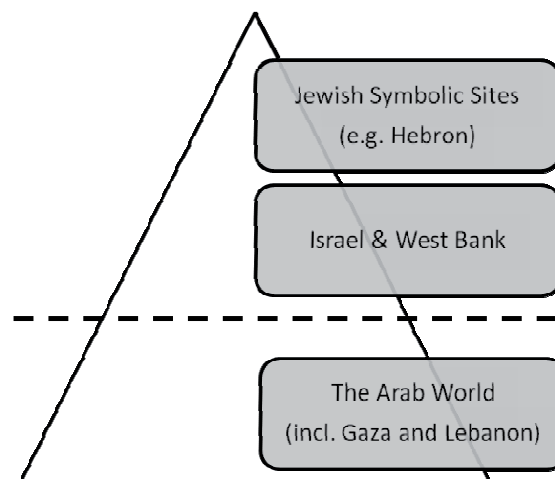
peculiar to the role of the soldier in the IDF, relates to boundary creation and liminality: On the one hand, the soldiers are situated within the same sphere as all Israeli *sabras*, i.e. native born Jewish Israelis. On the other hand, the soldiers are set apart from society as they are the protectors of the Jewish-Israeli – both in terms of territory and people. The mission of the IDF explicitly states that it is the assignment of the army to protect, safeguard and maintain the state's territorial scope. Accordingly, the soldiers represent through their mission the external boundaries of the state.

The interrelationship between a community and a territory also contains an element of both similarity and difference, expressing a relational idea marking the boundary where a community both begins and ends (Cohen 2003 [1989]: 11-15). The boundary of the community thus encapsulates the identity of the community and at the same time accentuates what it is not (Barth 2000; Cohen 2003 [1989]). It is consequently interesting to notice how the soldiers argue for a symbolic significance of the territory much in the same vein as the national-religious settlers argue for their presence. The soldiers – as do the settlers – thus argue in terms of heritage, belonging and access coupled with a sincere distrust in “The Arabs” and their ability to take care of the particular symbolism attached to places that are appointed in the narrative of the scriptures, such as Hebron.

As markers of Israel's boundaries, these soldiers thus incarnate the extent of *Eretz Israel*, as representatives of cosmos, protecting Israel from chaos. However, during the military service of the Gdud 50, these soldiers have not merely been protecting the borders; they have also crossed borders. In consequence, the role of the soldier in the IDF is both operating on the boundaries of Israel, while at the same time exceeding them. This marks a resemblance with the outlook of the Religious Zionists, who motivated their settlement project by juxtaposing the borders of the state of Israel with the progress of the redemptive process. Consequently, the settlers also view the IDF soldiers – be it practicing or non-practicing – as religious actors, as it is the IDF that ensures or expands the territorial scope of the state of Israel. In other words, as the IDF has contributed to encapsulating parts of the West Bank under Israeli control, the IDF is – willingly or unwillingly – interpreted by Zionist religious settlers as fulfilling a divine task (Aran 1987; Aran 1991; Ravitzky 1990; Røislien 2007; Sprinzak 1981; Sprinzak 1991).

Jewish mythological cosmology is hierarchically and relationally constructed: This is to say that symbolic significance is constructed as increasing degrees of symbolic

significance, where Israel and the West Bank are perceived as being of greater symbolic significance than everywhere else, and where different places internally in this territory are hierarchically more symbolically loaded. Thus, in line with Jewish hierarchical cosmology, the soldiers' notion of the territory they serve in can be summarized in the following model:



Model IV: Horizontal map visualizing symbolic topography.²³⁸

The model visualizes a simplified version of the symbolic notion of the territory within which the IDF soldiers operates. It shows the different degrees of significance placed on different segments of the territory.²³⁹ The major distinction is made between Israel and the West Bank versus the Arab world: Representing chaos, the Arab world figures at the bottom of the hierarchy, as opposed to the places associated with cosmos (above the dotted line). Internally, various Jewish symbolic sites contribute to grading and differentiation within Israel and the West Bank. Noteworthy, this model largely coincides with the hierarchical model of Judaism's spatial dimension develop by Seth Kunin in his analysis of "biblical, rabbinic and

²³⁸ The model builds on Seth Kunin's model of the hierarchical territorial cosmology found in the Mishnah Kelim: Kunin, Seth. 1998. *God's Place in the World: Sacred Space and Sacred Place in Judaism*. London & New York: Cassell Religious Studies; —. 1998 [1994]-b. "Judaism." Pp. 115-148 in *Sacred Place: Themes in Religious Studies*, edited by Jean Holm and John Bowker. London: Pinter Publ.

²³⁹ The model is not exhaustive, but illustrates the hierarchical, graded notion of the topography.

modern understanding and use of sacred place in Judaism” (Kunin 1998 [1994]-a: 115)²⁴⁰. Kunin asserts that understandings of Jewish notions of place implies an examination on two interrelated levels; the ideological and the functional, respectively (Kunin 1998 [1994]-a). Whereas the former “is based on an abstract understanding of the structure of reality”, the latter “is found in the structure of the synagogue and in the place of the home as the replacement of the Temple” (Kunin 1998 [1994]-a). Still, of greater significance for our context is his outline of the structural organisation of ideological space: Analogous to a segmentary opposition model, ideological space is organised in concentric circle, wherein each circle is defined in relation – and contrast – to the other. At the same time, each level is increasingly hierarchical (Kunin 1998 [1994]-a: 116-122).

When internalized into the performance of the soldiers’ role as defenders of Israel’s borders, this model acquires quite radical implications. To the soldiers, this interpretation and “sense-making” of the territories they operate in implies that the topographical/physical level is merged with the religious/ideological level. Hebron provides one of these symbolic markers that contribute to grading the territories. The many places in the West Bank that are perceived as representing particularly Jewish symbolism, do on the one hand contribute to enhancing the unity between the soldiers and a particular place, while on the other hand, the absence of such symbolic markers in Lebanon and Gaza underscores their sense of lack of ownership.

The complexities of boundaries are intriguing. As Fredrik Barth precisely points out, boundaries do not merely point to the demarcation lines that separate one thing or place from another; rather, the concept of ‘boundary’ “embraces three levels of abstraction: 1. Literally, boundaries divide territories ‘on the ground’; 2. More abstractly, they set limits that mark social groups off from each other; 3. And finally, they provide a template for that which separates distinct categories of the mind” (Barth 2000: 17). In the case of the Gdud 50 soldiers’ notion of Israel’s territorial integrity, the state land and its boundaries “operate” on all three levels: The lack of clearly identifiable – and recognized – borders contribute to creating boundaries that combine both “regular” borders, i.e. a physical distinction in the territory, as well as imaginary boundaries, based on factors such as sense of belonging, religious and cultural heritage, and notions of “the other” or “away” as in contrast to “home”. The interview data thus has revealed that the interviewees’ differentiation of places

²⁴⁰ Seth Kunin employs concentric circles to visualize this hierarchic differentiation. I do not find these visualization fulfilling, however, as it fails to include the distinct hierarchy in organization and taxonomization. I have hence used a triangle.

contributes to creating and maintaining boundaries that exceeds beyond Israel's internationally recognised borders.

Conclusion

This article departed from the question: How do recruits make sense of the territories they fight in and fight for? The discussion that followed was based on interviews with 34 non-practicing, non-observant and self-declared non-religious soldiers in the 50th Battalion in the IDF interpreted and taxonomized the territories that they related to during their military service. In the case of these combat soldiers, this was primarily Southern Lebanon, The Gaza Strip and the West Bank. They have consequently fought in territories with highly diverging legal and symbolic status. As non-observant soldiers in an army with strong bonds to Judaism, how does religion in general and Judaism in particular affect IDF soldiers' notion of the territories they operate within?

The analysis revealed that the Gdud 50 soldiers' differentiation of place and the demarcation of boundaries are related to a combination of a cultural notion of Judaism and impressions of the other, reflecting a notion of the map that is influenced by their interaction with the settler population during their military service: We see that the Gdud 50 differentiates between "ours" and "theirs" founded on the basic taxonomizers "Israel" versus "The Arab World". This is described through dichotomies such as belonging versus alienation, us versus them. This is not a legal separation, but is rather included into a cultural and religiously rooted interpretative framework. The cultural structuration of the territories around us logically implies that territories are intimately knit to communities' notion of themselves. Territories contribute to underscoring the community's unity and coherence, while at the same time marking its difference, separating it from other communities. As representatives of Israel, these soldiers work to maintain and protect Israel's territorial integrity they consequently operate on the boundary *between* chaos and cosmos – and at times even *within* the sphere of chaos during incursions into Arab territories. Their notion of land thus unites the topographical/physical level with the religious/ideological level. Lacking legal boundaries, then, religion acquires a structuring and taxonomizing role as it defines, shapes and maintains physical and ideological boundaries according to which the soldiers can

navigate: In the absence of state borders, religious factors contribute to drawing a map wherein legal criteria for boundary construction are jeopardized.

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**Article V – The Logic of Palestinian Terrorist Target Choice?
Examining the Israel Defense Forces’ Official Statistics on
Palestinian Terrorist Attacks 2000-2004**

The article is published in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. It is an internationally peer-reviewed, which aims to “aims to cast new light on the origins and implications of conflict in the 21st Century and to illuminate new approaches and solutions to countering the growth and escalation of contemporary sub-state violence. The journal thus seeks to publish the best theoretical and empirical studies that contribute to a better understanding of the causes of these conflicts and the measures required to achieve their resolution.” Its editor-in-chief is Bruce Hoffman.

The Logic of Palestinian Terrorist Target Choice? Examining the Israel Defense Forces' Official Statistics on Palestinian Terrorist Attacks 2000–2004

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This article is the first to explore the Israel Defense Forces's official statistical data on Palestinian terrorism toward Israeli targets during the al-Aqsa intifada 2000–2004. Focusing the analysis on the logic of terrorist target choice, the article identifies two separate results: First, an unambiguous difference in the form of the attacks contingent on whether they are carried out in the state of Israel or in the Occupied Territories. Second, based on the same distinction, the analysis points out how the attacks are targeted toward distinctively different categories of the Israeli populace. Causes of the results are discussed.

Introduction

Terrorist violence is neither “indiscriminate” nor random. Being not “a goal in itself, but rather a means to an end,”¹ terrorism is by definition not accidental. Despite the perception of arbitrariness most victims of terrorism experience, research on the question of the logic of terrorist target choice has established the knowledge that terrorism follows a lucid—although contextual—logic.² This logic, as suggested by Pape, entails a strategic, social, as well as an individual level.³ To this one may add the indispensability of ideology, “not only because it provides the initial dynamic for the terrorists' actions, but because it sets out the moral framework within which they operate.”⁴ Consistent with this view is hence the assumption that terrorist activity is targeted against carefully selected places.

Academia thus claims that terrorism is *rational* and has a clear *singleness of purpose*. This rather unanimous assertion about terrorism per se implies that one may expect to find a similar tendency also when applied to empirical data. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is

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a case in point. Ever since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have strived toward attaining full sovereignty in an independent state, using both political as well as violent means. Hamas first made use of suicide bombing in the Israeli city of Afula in 1994. Since then, Palestinian independence movements have increasingly made use of various forms of terrorism, particularly during the first period of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000. Is it possible to identify an underlying logic in the choice of targets in Palestinian terrorism, as is suggested in the general literature?

The repeated occurrence of Palestinian terrorism against Israeli targets is crucial to the Israeli argument of why the conflict is trapped in a status quo.⁵ Official sources state that Palestinian terrorism has led the Israeli leadership to take drastic measures, such as erecting the widely debated “Security Fence,” or instigating military actions against groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas during “Operation Cast Led” in Gaza in the winter of 2008–2009.⁶

Nonetheless: The statistical data on Palestinian terrorism that maintains this line of argument is rarely put under scrutiny. In fact, the data provided by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)—the single most influential Israeli institution in the conflict—remains unexamined. From the first day of the al-Aqsa Intifada up until February 2004, the IDF made a systematized overview of 134 registrations, later published on the IDF website under the headline “Major Palestinian Terror Attacks since September 2000.”⁷ It is the mission of the IDF to “. . .to combat all forms of terrorism which threaten the daily life.”⁸ Yet, the possible patterns in Palestinian terrorism’s choice of targets *as portrayed in this data set* are so far unknown. It is the purpose of this article to explore the IDF’s data on Palestinian terrorism and thereby provide the first analysis of this list of data.

The list in question has a literary format, with a number of words, concepts, and references that are meaningful only in their cultural context. This implies that a proper analysis cannot be fully accessed without knowledge of the cultural locus of this volatile conflict. Thus, this article offers a twofold solution in order to enable this step: First, all research questions were eliminated that would include normative, partisan interpretations. Second, statistical analysis was merged with qualitative content analysis by establishing the classification on culturally sensitive categories that prove valid to both conflicting parties.

The analysis reveals that Palestinian terrorism is neither arbitrary nor random. Rather, the IDF’s data portrays a relatively distinct logic of Palestinian terrorism’s target choice that, corresponds to two questions; namely, *where* do Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets occur, and *what kind* of attacks are they? To develop a line of argument, the article draws on two sets of literature that both are multidisciplinary in nature; first, one from the international academic polemic debate that explores the “logic of terrorism,” and second, one from the Israeli scene that explores empirical consequences and aspects of Palestinian terrorism, as seen through an Israeli lens.

Understanding Palestinian Terrorist Target Choice

Regardless of how one narrowly defines terrorism, there is little doubt that *strategy* is a crucial dimension. This in turn clearly signals the calculative nature of terrorism, leading researchers to contend with it as fundamentally *rational*.⁹ Being “in essence an attempt to bargain for a desired goal,” terrorism is a violent act that is used as a strategic tool that aims at changing the status quo in the direction of the goals set by the perpetrators.¹⁰

Within this largely “rational choice” interpretative framework, there is little doubt that the selection of targets is part of an overall strategy. As C. M. J. Drake explains, the political aim of a terrorist group is sought achieved “by co-ordinating the group’s resources, patterns

of attacks and any other actions . . . into an effective strategy. The strategy adopted has a fundamental effect upon the *selection of targets* in that—given a choice of targets—terrorists acting rationally will choose to attack those which confer the greatest benefit upon their case.”¹¹ Yet, rationality is contextually contingent, and terrorist target selection is affected by a number of factors relevant to the time and space within which the various terrorist groups operate.

There are two elements that are of particular significance for understanding the terrorist target selection: One is related to *where* the terrorist attack is carried out, that is, the concrete location of the attack. The other is related to *who* is attacked, that is, whether the attack strikes random bystanders or whether it is targeted toward specific population groups. For some groups, such as the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) or the Irish Republican Army (IRA), there has been a tendency toward emphasizing the significance of “where,” but to warn potential victims as to avoid an extensive “who.”¹² Other groups, such as Al Qaeda, have on their side emphasized the combination of both the symbolism of a place and a high level of casualties, as seen, for example, in the 9/11 attacks.

Palestinian violence is an issue of great concern to most spheres of Israeli society.¹³ According to the president of the Israel Supreme Court, terrorism poses especially challenging questions for democratic countries, as “not every effective means [to fight terrorism] is a legal means.”¹⁴ Thus, Israeli policymakers have for decades engaged in polemic battles concerning the appropriate responses to Palestinian terrorism.¹⁵ Accordingly, Israeli research tends to focus on the appropriate *responses* to Palestinian terrorism¹⁶ or the *consequences* of it within Israel.¹⁷ Moreover, Palestinian groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad have been the center of a series of research projects.¹⁸ Noteworthy, the article by Anat Berko and Edna Erez analyzing suicide bombers as both *victimizers* and *victims* offers an alternative perspective in the literature.¹⁹

In the analysis of the strategic logic of the selection of targets in the Palestinian attacks against Israeli locations, quantitative data can best equip one to explore overall tendencies in target selection. Yet, limited attention has been given to the quantitative data publicly available. In addition to the IDF’s data, there are two significant databases on Palestinian terrorism; the data collected continuously by the Israeli–Palestinian human rights group *B’Tselem* and posted on their website,²⁰ and the database prepared by the Israeli Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.²¹

Among the more substantial works that do explore these two databases is the study by Jaeger and Paserman whereby they establish their thesis of “the Cycle of Violence”.²² In their analysis, they *combine* the lists of both *B’Tselem* and the ICT in their analysis in order to explore whether there is a direct relationship between Israeli military activities against Palestinian targets, and violence committed by Palestinian factions.

Other examples on quantitative analysis include Don Radlauer at the ICT, and Mark Harrison.²³ Radlauer attempts to paint a fuller picture of the Palestinian uprising based on the “Al-Aqsa Casualties Database Project” launched by the ICT,²⁴ whereas Harrison’s statistical analysis of the ICT database shows how bystanders’ intervention reduces the casualties.

The rest of the article focuses solely on the data published by the IDF as these have not yet been explored. The level of violence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict took a detrimental turn with the al-Aqsa Intifada, starting on 29 September 2000. From that day up until February 2004, the IDF made a systematized overview of Palestinian terror attacks on Israel. The resulting overview was made accessible on the IDF website, under the headline “Major Palestinian Terror Attacks since September 2000,”²⁵ listing 134 Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets.

Using this data base, this article addresses the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There are patterns in the Palestinian terrorist attacks.

On the basis of previous studies, one may assume that also Palestinian terrorism is pre-planned, thus revealing a pattern in the choice of targets.

Hypothesis 2: Attacks inside of the state of Israel are different from those that occur inside the Occupied Territories.²⁶

The territories occupied in 1967 have a fundamentally different status both legally as well as symbolically in the Palestinian striving toward an independent state. One may therefore assume that there are differences in both the choice of strategy as well as targets.

Hypothesis 3: Attacks inside of the Occupied Territories are aimed toward IDF soldiers and Israeli settlers.

As opposed to the situation inside the state of Israel, Israeli citizens in the Occupied Territories live in separate enclaves. One may therefore assume that this may affect the choice of target as well as the form of the attack.

The article will assess these three hypotheses by exploring the IDF's data.

Data Material

The data serving as the basis for the analysis is the list entitled "Major Palestinian Terror Attacks Since 2000," published by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on its official website (www1.idf.il). The version that the authors have based this analysis on was posted on the IDF's website on 25 February 2004. As this article goes to print, the list is no longer accessible.

The Database

The IDF operates both an English and a Hebrew website. The list in question was, however, only to be found on the IDF's English website, under the link "General Info and Statistics."²⁷ There was no equivalent on the Hebrew website.

The registration starts on 29 September 2000, with the incident that is commonly seen as opening the al-Aqsa Intifada, whereas the last registration is 22 February 2004. The list contains in all 134 registrations listed chronologically by date over a period of three years and five months. Table 1 displays an extract from this list.

The headline "Major Palestinian Terror Attacks Since 2000" provides the general ramifications. First, the list is a collection of what the IDF sees as major attacks. It is not, however, mentioned whether the list contains *all* major attacks in the period of registration. Also, there are no clarifications on either the IDF webpage or in the table header to what the criteria for defining an incident as "major" are. On the other hand, minor attacks are apparently excluded from the list in principle.

Second, the list is a collection of attacks carried out by Palestinians. Consequently, attacks carried out by others (e.g., Hezbollah), are not, or should not be, included.

Third, the list is a collection of attacks that the IDF categorizes as "terror." However, there is no clarification on the website as to what is meant by "terror."

Fourth, the list is a collection of attacks registered from 2000. Previous attacks by Palestinians against Israel are not included. The registration appears open-ended in the headline of the list, and no explanation is given for why registration ends on 22 February 2004.

Table 1

Excerpt from the IDF's list "Major Palestinian Terror Attacks since 2000." Included are the five first registrations and the last registration

29 September 2000	Palestinians riot on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, hurling rocks at Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall and Israeli policemen. Fire bombs are also thrown.
12 October 2000	Two IDF reservists are brutally lynched by a Ramallah mob after taking a wrong turn on the way to their base. The body of one of the soldiers was tied to a car and dragged through the streets.
19 October 2000	Shooting of Israeli civilians on an outing on Mt. Eival, near Nablus. Rescue efforts continued for several hours under heavy Palestinian gunfire. The civilians could only be evacuated under the cover of darkness. One Israeli was killed and four were wounded.
2 November 2000	Terror attack near the Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem. A car loaded with ten kilograms of explosives blows up on a side street near the market, killing 2 Israelis and injuring 11 others. The terrorists managed to escape.
20 November 2000	An explosive charge and a missile were fired at a bus carrying children on their way to school in the Gaza Strip. Two Israelis were killed and nine were injured, among them small children whose legs were blown off. Following the attack, Israeli naval ships and IAF helicopters struck installations of the Palestinian Authority and its security apparatus.
February 22 2004 Eight people were killed and over 60 wounded, 11 of them school pupils, in a suicide bombing on a No. 14A Jerusalem bus near the Liberty Bell Park. The Fatah Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack.

Categorization and Classification

The list was approached with the aspiration of extracting its latent information, thus applying what is often referred to as *exploratory data analysis*. The authors therefore asked *where* do the attacks occur; *when* do they occur; *how* do they occur; *by whom* are they carried out; and *against whom* are they targeted? Moreover, as no causal factors prior to the events are mentioned in the list, the questions of "when" and "why" were also omitted; undoubtedly, both the questions of when and why are intertwined with the context. Accordingly, the analysis was focused on "what," "where," and "how many." Such quantitative information was extracted into a new table (Table 2) based on a few principles.

The various types of incidents were systematized and categorized according to type (cf. "what"). Two types of actions were repeated markedly more often than anything else: "Shooting" and "Suicide bombing." Whenever those actions were mentioned, a note was made of that in the new table. Due to inconsistencies in terminology in the list, "Shooting" was categorized as all incidents of gunfire, for example, snipers, exchanges of gunfire, and so on. Except for one single attack, on 11 June 2003, there was no simultaneous registration of both suicide bombing and shooting. These two types of actions, with 44 (33 percent)

Table 2

The IDF data of Table 1 organized for statistical analysis. City and Region is categorized into six and four categories, respectively

Date	Suicide bomber	Shooting	Total dead	Total wounded	City	Region
9/29/2000	No	No	0	0	East Jerusalem	State of Israel
10/12/2000	No	No	2	0	Palestinian city	Palestine
10/19/2000	No	Yes	1	4	Settlement	Israeli settlement/ army base
11/2/2000	No	No	2	11	West Jerusalem	State of Israel
11/20/2000	No	No	2	9	Gaza	Israeli settlement/ army base
...	...					
2/22/2004	yes	no	8	60	West Jerusalem	State of Israel

and 54 (41 percent) of the totally 134 registrations, respectively, are as such more or less mutually exclusive. Thirty-five (26 percent) registrations were neither suicide bombings nor shootings, of which 5 (4 percent) are missing (e.g., the database contained no information on the form of the attack).

As for both “where” and “how many,” these numbers were mainly straightforwardly represented (cf. the registration 18 May 2001: “A suicide bomber kills 5 Israeli citizens and wounds 110 near the Netanya Mall”). Nonetheless, in relation to these two variables the most inconsistencies were found, primarily due to the literary form of the list.

To start with the question of “how many,” the inconsistencies in the registrations had significant implications for how the numbers could be extracted into the new table as the numbers of casualties were not stated in several of the cases. Rather, the registrations contained descriptions such as “scores” (e.g., 9 August 2001) or “dozens” (e.g., 17 and 21 January 2002). In these cases, the number was set to be 30. This number was chosen for two reasons: First, the authors have noted that injuries or deaths up to 30 are registered with the specific amount in the IDF’s list. Second, the authors have consulted the data in the IDF’s list with data published by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Israeli media to find supplying information on the estimated number of dead in the attack.²⁸

In order to perform classical statistical analysis, all geographical information were gathered into a few main categories. Following UN Resolutions 242 and 338,²⁹ Israel versus the Occupied Territories was used as a primary differentiation. However, due to the significant strategic and symbolic divergences within these territories, further differentiations were made, ending up with the following six main regional geographical tags: (1) the State of Israel (incl. Golan Heights, excl. Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem), (2) East Jerusalem, (3) West Jerusalem, (4) Palestinian Territories (excl. Israeli settlements and Israeli army bases), (5) in Israeli settlements or army bases, and (6) Gaza. See Table 3 for the number of registrations within each category.

West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem were singled out as separate geographical categories due to the city’s particular status; it has an unparalleled symbolic and judicial position. After 1967, the largely Palestinian-populated East Jerusalem has been governed by Israeli authorities although this is an issue of intense controversy. Yet, in the present analysis, the refinement separating Jerusalem into two categories proved to be of little

Table 3
Numbers of shootings and suicide bombings with respect to cities

	Total registrations	Shooting	Suicide bomber	Other
State of Israel, excluding Jerusalem	52	10 (19%)	32 (62%)	10 (19%)
West Jerusalem	18	4 (22%)	14 (78%)	0
East Jerusalem	8	2 (25%)	3 (38%)	3 (37%)
Israeli settlements/army bases	36	21 (58%)	3 (8%)	12 (34%)
Gaza	10	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)
Palestinian Cities	7	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	4 (57%)
All regions	134	44 (33%)	55 (41%)	35 (26%)

importance in the statistical analysis due to the limited number of registrations in these areas (Table 3).

In the West Bank the authors also singled out settlement/army bases (cf. above). The combination of settlements and Israeli army bases is made due to the fact that numerous³⁰ IDF soldiers are stationed in the West Bank to provide the settlers with security. Consequently, IDF soldiers are stationed in—or in immediate vicinity of—the settlements, and one often finds army bases adjacent to settlements.³¹

Additionally, the authors singled out Area A—as defined in the DoP³²—in the West Bank and Gaza (excluding the settlements). In the West Bank this is done for two reasons: First, Area A are areas in which Palestinians are to have full security control, as opposed to Israel having the security control. Consequently, Palestinians crossing from, for example, Area B to Area A, need to pass through IDF (i.e., military staffed) checkpoints. Second, in the list, the IDF once (18 October 2001) states that the army crosses into Area A, emphasizing the sovereignty of these areas, signaling a conscious act of border crossing.

In Gaza, the borders between settlements are clearly defined. Gaza was up until the disengagement in August 2005 split into an Israeli/settlement section and a Palestinian section.

Statistical Analysis

Table data were analyzed using Fisher's exact tests for categorical data. For comparison of difference in the relationship between dead and wounded for the settlements versus the state of Israel, bootstrapping of robust linear regression was used; the latter in order to reduce the effect of outliers on the regression coefficients; the first to account for non-normality in the data. The bootstrapped regression coefficients were then compared using Student's *t*-test. A standard confidence level of .05 was chosen, implying that *p*-values below .05 are considered statistically significant. The analysis was implemented in the open source software R version 2.7.0.³³

Results of the Statistical Analysis

The number of dead versus wounded with respect to territory is shown in Figure 1. The displays indicate what appears to be a difference in the nature of the dead/wounded relationship between the settlements and the state of Israel. Within the state of Israel the registrations

of dead and wounded is spread upward to the right in the graph; the more dead, the more wounded. In the settlements, however, more dead does to a much lesser extent imply more wounded; the registrations tend to be lying vertically to the left in the graph. Straight lines were fitted using robust linear regression to these two regions separately. The mean slope coefficients from 1,000 bootstraps were 0.166 and 0.116 for the settlements and the state of Israel, respectively (95 percent CI for the difference; 0.043–0.057, $p < .001$). The regression analyses indicated a bi-modality in the slope coefficients, in particular for the settlements (data not shown).

The subdivision of incidents on type shows, for all regions, how the shooting incidents lie all the way to the left in the graph (Figure 1), implying few wounded, but more dead. For the suicide bombing incidents one can see how more wounded to a larger extent follows the number of dead. This is as expected, given the nature of the attacks.

The total number of shootings and suicide bombings in the six geographical categories are shown in Table 3. There appears to be an overrepresentation of suicide bombings in the state of Israel, as well as an overrepresentation of shootings in the settlements. Both are statistically significant ($p < .001$).

In sum, by extracting numbers from IDF's own literary list on terror attacks, the results give a striking distinction.

The data show that there is a clear divergence in the form of attacks contingent on the place of the attack: Whereas attacks in the territories occupied in 1967 tend to take form as executions of a limited number of people performed by apparently individual perpetrators

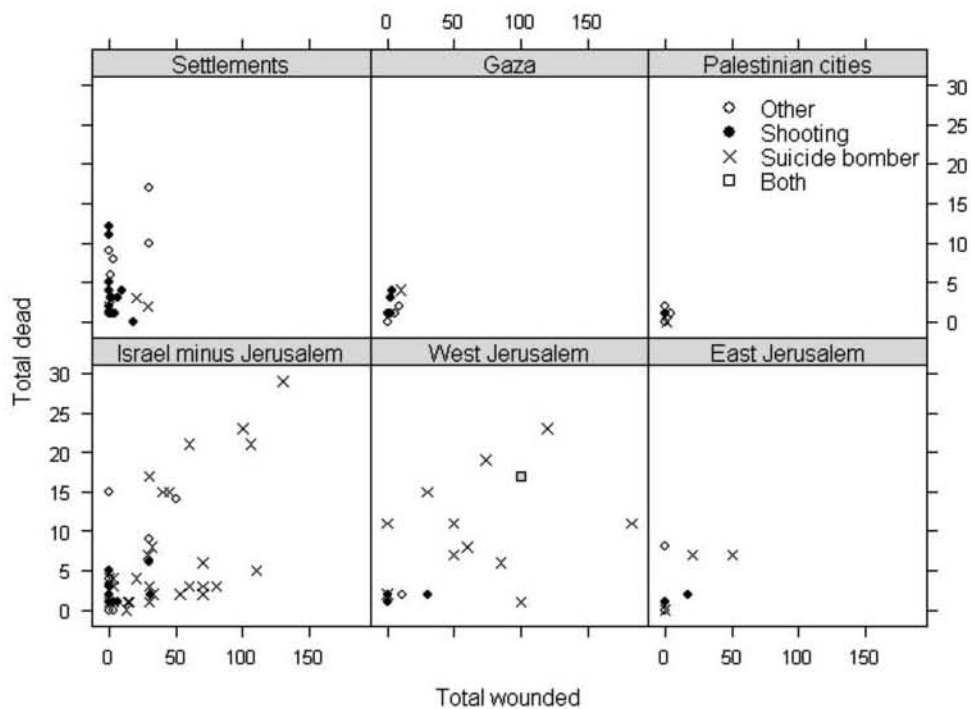


Figure 1. Number of dead versus number of wounded for each of the six geographical areas, as well as further subdivision on type of incident.

armed with a gun, attacks within the officially recognized state of Israel tend to result in a large number of injured, and tend to include various explosive devices.

The territory in which the attack takes place is thus a strong indicator of both the form and the number of casualties in the attack.

Context Analysis

The aforementioned results are derived after having extracted quantifiable information hidden in the IDF list. This implies applying quantitative content analysis, aiming at producing a systematic and comprehensive summary of the data.³⁴ Yet, the list is quite literary in form (Table 1). That is, although the list contains quantitative information, it does not have a quantitative format. Accordingly, the list could not be accessed without knowledge of and sensitivity to the local cultural context of which the conflict is part. The authors have therefore supplied the *statistical content analysis* with *qualitative cultural analysis* by establishing the classification on culturally sensitive categories that prove valid to both conflicting parties.

In so doing, one finds one other conspicuous trend in the data: By classifying the data with reference to territorial differentiations beyond the mere major six geographical categories, one finds additional patterns in where the attacks occur. On the basis of further geographical classification, one is able to identify clusters of places where the vast majority of the attacks occur. In other words: Neither in the state of Israel, nor in the Occupied Territories, do the attacks happen “everywhere,” signaling that the locations of the attacks appear to be carefully selected.

Attacks carried out within Israel proper tend to occur in significant public places, such as a bus (e.g., in Haifa on 2 December 2001, killing 15); a mall (e.g., in Netanya Mall on 19 May 2001, killing 5, wounding 19); or a disco (e.g., in the *Dolphinarium* in Tel Aviv on 1 June 2001, killing 21, injuring 106).

Attacks in the Occupied Territories do not strike all settlements. Rather, the settlements that are targeted are settlements such as Itamar (28 May 2002), Ofra (4 March and 28 May 2002, 11 May and 20 June 2003), Adora (27 April and 20 June 2002), and Hebron (26 March 2001, 12 December 2002, and 18 January, 17 May, 8 June, and 26 Sept 2003). These settlements all have largely Jewish national-religious overtones.

On the “esthetic level,” the authors note how the list lacks uniformity in expression, leaving the impression that the list is written without distinct guidelines for how to plot the registrations, possibly by several authors. The wide ramifications of the table header do, in addition to its literary format, also have impact on the conditions for the analysis and raise themselves a series of significant questions.

The lack of clarification of neither “major” nor “terrorist attack” only provide an indication of what *overall types* of incidents are included, but does not explain a series of apparent inconsistent registrations, as the list contains registrations on attacks including merely one victim (12 April 2002),³⁵ a specified large number (e.g., 7 May 2002 when 15 are killed and 40 wounded), “dozens” (5 June 2002, 19 May 2002) “scores” (9 August 2001), as well as a long series of politically disputed incidents, all reflecting the lack of definition (e.g., Registration on 13 June 2003 and 27 June 2003)?³⁶

More notably is nonetheless the qualms that the inconsistent registrations lead to concerning the application of international law: One example is the registration on 4 March 2002: “Seven soldiers and three civilians are shot and killed by a sniper at a roadblock near Ofra in Samaria.” Here, there is no reference to the differences in the legal status of the location of the attack, or to the “fundamental principle of distinction between

combatants and non-combatants.”³⁷ Ofra is a settlement in the West Bank. According to the *International Court of Justice*, the West Bank and East Jerusalem “remain occupied territories.”³⁸

In the Israeli case, there have been conceptual divergences in “the debate over the benefits of maintaining settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip . . . military/pragmatic concerns [have] lost their supreme standing and became, at least in part, subject to political and ideological influence.”³⁹ In short, a city within the borders of a sovereign state and a settlement in a disputed or occupied territory do not have the same status, neither in international law nor in local culture.

Discussion

Consistent with prior research, the results of this statistical analysis maintain the argument that there is “a logical thought process guiding terrorist choice of targets,”⁴⁰ also when the argument is applied to empirical evidence in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. By extracting numbers from a literary list on Palestinian terrorist attacks published by the IDF, the statistical results gave a striking distinction: The territory in which the attack takes place is a strong indicator of both the *form* of the attacks as well as the *amount of casualties* in the attack. This distinction does in turn respond to the questions of *where* and *who*, respectively. Hence, the attacks carried out in the occupied territories and those within Israel proper, are on the whole fundamentally different.

In terms of the *form* of the attacks, the statistical analyses show that the vast majority of suicide bombings are carried out within the internationally recognized borders of the state of Israel. In other words, attacks in Israel tend to include various explosive devices, and tend to result in a large number of injured: In view of that, there is a tendency toward a proportional relationship between numbers of wounded and killed; if there are more people killed, there tends to be more wounded (Figure 1).

In the Occupied Territories, however, the picture is quite different: Contrary to what is found inside the state of Israel, there are only four suicide bombings in the Occupied Territories (17 February 2002 in Karnei Shomron; 27 October 2002 in Ariel; 17 May 2003 in Hebron; and 3 November 2003 in Azun) of which one was pre-detonated due to military inspection by the IDF as the attacker was *en route* to Israel. Suicide attacks in these territories are thus an exception. Rather, the majority of the attacks in these territories do to a large extent appear as *assassinations*: They primarily take the form of being targeted shooting attacks, in the form of being mere executions of a limited number of people performed by apparently individual perpetrators armed with a gun. Casualty rates are low; out of 21 cases it is only in *one* rare case that the victims are not killed in the attack (8 March 2002: “Eighteen Israelis were wounded, 5 seriously, in a gun battle with a terrorist cell that infiltrated into Atzmona”).

In other words, neither within the state of Israel nor in the Occupied Territories do the attacks strike randomly. Attacks carried out within Israel proper tend to occur in significant public places, thereby feeding into the explanatory model presented by such as Pape as he claims that terrorist attacks occur to disrupt the normality of life in democracies, or Bloom in which she argues that terrorism is used to instill public fear and attract international news coverage.⁴¹

However, in the Israeli case, these theories do not prove fully applicable due to primarily two reasons: First, the issue of terrorism’s impact on society; and second, the question of the legal and symbolic status of the place of the attack.

With reference to the first point it is worthwhile paying attention to an analysis by Morag of data by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, whereby it is shown how the Israeli society has a tendency to strive toward returning back to “normal” as soon as possible following an attack.⁴² Morag interestingly concludes that “the impact of terrorism on Israel during the period . . . was *far less* significant than conventional wisdom might suggest,”⁴³ thus feeding into the general public sentiment in Israel, that Israelis have a way of quickly recovering and standing united in times of attacks.

To move on to the second point, one can see that despite the fear terrorist attacks instill at large in the general population, there is clear tendency that a handful of places are more likely to be the target of terrorist activity, *and* that different targets are chosen relative to the territories.

Attacks in the Occupied Territories strike a different sector of the Israeli populace than what is the case inside the state of Israel. Again, one can identify in the Occupied Territories a picture that deviates fundamentally from that within the state of Israel. Here, one can see how Palestinian terrorism is targeted against a limited selection of specific settlements, thus apparently not against settlements *as such*: It is conspicuous how the large, easily accessible, non-ideological, “dormitory town” settlements are *absent* from the list; neither Modi’in nor Pisgat Zeev, Psagot, or Gilo appear on the list. Instead, one can find settlements such as Itamar, Ofra, Adora, and Hebron. These settlements all have Jewish national-religious overtones, combined with an explicit skepticism toward the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, the different status of the territories may have an impact on both the form of the attack and who the attacks strike. The model developed by Berman and Laitin contributes with an interesting explanation to why one may find that divergences in the form of the attack may correlate with whether they are carried out within the state of Israel or within the West Bank: Berman and Laitin single out the significance of so-called hard targets; targets that “cannot be attacked without a high probability of apprehension,” implying favoring suicide attacks as means.⁴⁵ In line with this argument, Berman and Laitin argue that the state of Israel offers numerous hard targets, whereas “in the West Bank and Gaza [Palestinian insurgents] have a large choice of soft targets locally.”⁴⁶ They write:

Settlers and soldiers use roads that pass through heavily populated areas or through terrain that is easily attacked. . . . The result is that an attacker can fire a weapon or detonate a bomb remotely in such a way that makes escape relatively easy afterwards. . . . In contrast, targets on the Israeli side of the ‘green’ line are much ‘harder’, posing much greater risks for the attacker.⁴⁷

In other words: *Target accessibility* is crucial for the method applied when carrying through a terrorist attack. Consequently, one may draw the analysis one step further, by also making a general differentiation among the Israeli victims: Israeli residents in the Occupied Territories are so-called settlers, thus belonging to a group of Israelis who live there in violation with international law and bring with them both an uneven distribution in water and other natural resources. Moving to the Occupied Territories is also a highly political act in itself. The victims within the state of Israel, on the other hand, are first and foremost inhabitants of an internationally recognized and sovereign state, not necessarily politically or ideologically engaged in the conflict.

One may object to this finding that the result is almost true by definition: Jewish-Israelis who are not settlers are generally absent from the West Bank and Gaza, as well as East Jerusalem. It is thus an obvious implication that fatalities are disproportionately military

personnel and settlers. Yet, this objection neglects one striking dimension in the findings, namely that Palestinian violence toward Israeli targets inside of the Occupied Territories does not strike settlements or settlers *in general*. The victims in these attacks belong to two groups: First and foremost, it is an unambiguous finding that they strike exclusively settlers that are either *in* radical settlements, *on the road to* such settlements, or *associated with* such settlements. Second, these attacks tend to strike Israeli soldiers on duty.

This last point is worthwhile, dwelling on: It is conspicuous how many registrations include both civilians *and* combatants as victims. Yet, there is little doubt that soldiers on active duty (i.e., combatants) *do not fall within the same jurisdiction* in International Law as civilians (i.e., non-combatants). As Chris Mayer writes, “The Concept of noncombatant immunity prohibits the intentional targeting of noncombatants.”⁴⁸ However, “it is not always easy to define what active participation in hostilities denotes,”⁴⁹ and in the Israeli case the definition of combatants versus non-combatants is put into question, drawing attention to the problem of categorization of so-called lawful combatants in humanitarian law. This reflects the position argued for by the Israeli philosophers Asa Kasher and Amos Yaalin, who in the article “Military Ethics of Fighting Terror: An Israeli Perspective” argued consistently that the distinction is too crude *due to the method* used in terrorism and not the victims caused by it.⁵⁰ This claim is, however, disputed.⁵¹

A final note should be made regarding the reliability and scope of the data: Exploring the data about one part in an ongoing conflict as presented by its opposing part, implies that it may be both politicized and sided. As an active military force in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, one cannot exclude the possibility that the IDF’s data does not provide the full picture. Other sources, such as, for example, the data by B’Tselem, may have given a different result. Nonetheless, as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict goes on with continued strength, analyzing the data that a central actor in the conflict presents should be of interest to all parties in the conflict, in and of itself.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this article was to explore the IDF’s data on Palestinian terror with the aim of identifying an underlying logic in the choice of targets. The analysis has unambiguously supported the authors’ assumption: Palestinian terrorism has a clear tendency to be targeted toward carefully selected places and population groups. By combining statistical content analysis with a culture analysis that is sensitive to the local context, the article has been able to identify that attacks carried out in the Occupied Territories and those within the state of Israel, are on the whole fundamentally different.

With respect to form, this analysis has identified how suicide bombings are far more likely to occur within the state of Israel, whereas shooting incidents are more likely to occur within the Occupied Territories. This distinction does in turn respond to the questions of where and who, respectively: Attacks in Israel tend to strike in public places that gather large crowds of Israeli civilians, whereas attacks within the Occupied Territories are targeted toward settlers and IDF soldiers who are within—or close to—ideological settlements.

Approaching the unanalyzed data presented by such a dominating party in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as the IDF is challenging. In this conflict one can easily drown in politicized and opinionated information. Nonetheless, this attempt to leave normative questions of right and wrong aside and instead turn toward the IDF and look at what information on terrorism these armed forces actually provide to the public has proven to be rewarding.

Notes

1. Lisa McCartan, Andrea Masselli, Michael Rey, and Danielle Rusnak, "The Logic of Terrorist Target Choice: An Examination of Chechen Rebel Bombings from 1997–2003," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31(1) (2008), pp. 60–79.
2. See, for example, Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: University Presses of California, Columbia and Princeton, 2005); Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13(4) (July 1981), pp. 379–399; Martha Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century," *Political Psychology* 21(2) (June 2000), pp. 405–420; C. J. M. Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10(2) (Summer 1998), pp. 53–85; Jeff Goodwin, "A Theory of Categorical Terrorism," *Social Forces* 84(4) (June 2006), pp. 2027–2046; Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The Atlantic Monthly* (June 2003); Bruce Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al-Qaida policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27(5) (2004), pp. 355–375; Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97(3) (August 2003), pp. 343–361.
3. Pape, 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism."
4. Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection," p. 53.
5. Cf. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Israel, the Conflict and Peace: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, November 2007." Available at www.mfa.gov.il (accessed 17 November 2008).
6. See for example, "Due to the danger that Hamas poses to Israel's citizens, and to the threat they pose to the peace process. . . . Israel set the campaign against Hamas as its primary objective. For this reason, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) wage a stubborn campaign against the Hamas terror organization. . . ." Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 July 2008. "Behind the Headlines: Israeli measures against Hamas in the West Bank." Available at [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism±Obstacle±to±Peace/Terror±Groups/Israeli%20measures%20against%20Hamas%20in%20the%20West%20Bank%2010-Jul-2008](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-%20Obstacle-to-Peace/Terror-Groups/Israeli%20measures%20against%20Hamas%20in%20the%20West%20Bank%2010-Jul-2008) (accessed 20 October 2008). See also Israeli Ministry of Defence, n.d. "Israel's Security Fence: Purpose." Available at www.securityfence.mod.gov.il/ (accessed 20 October 2008).
7. Cf. <http://dover.idf.il/IDF>
8. Available at <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/about/doctrine/default.htm>
9. For further discussion, see, for example, Eli Berman and David D. Laitin, "Hard Targets: Theory and Evidence on Suicide Attacks" *NBER Working Paper no. W11740*. Available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=842475>.
10. McCartan et al., "The Logic of Terrorist Target Choice."
11. Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection," p. 54. Emphasis added.
12. Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "The Production of Terrorist Violence: Analyzing Target Selection within the IRA and ETA," *Estudio/Working Paper 2006/230*, December 2006.
13. Cf. the polemic contributions by Dayan, Moshe. "Why Israel Strikes Back," in Donald Robinson (ed.). *Under Fire: Israel's Twenty Year Struggle for Survival* (New York: Norton, 1968), pp. 122–129; Netanyahu, Benjamin. *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986); Netanyahu, Benjamin. *Fighting Terrorism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993). Noteworthy, Israeli defense policy was for decades based on the principle of *ein birah* (no choice), that is, Israel has had no choice but to have a strong army (cf. Heller, Mark. *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy*, Adelphi Papers no. 335 [Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies]). Note also the various moral defenses of Israeli responses, such as, for example, Dershowitz, Alan. *Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Challenge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), Lozowitz, Yaacov. *Right to Exist: A Moral Defense of Israel's Wars* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

14. Aharon Barak, "The Supreme Court and the Problem of Terrorism," Israeli Supreme Court, *Judgements of the Israel Supreme Court: Fighting Terrorism within the Law*, Volume I (2008), p. 9.

15. Cf. Dayan, Moshe. "Why Israel Strikes Back," in Donald Robinson (ed.), *Under Fire: Israel's Twenty Year Struggle for Survival* (New York: Norton, 1968), pp. 122–129; Netanyahu, Benjamin. *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986); Netanyahu, Benjamin. *Fighting Terrorism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993).

16. For example: Gal-Or, Noemi. "Countering Terrorism in Israel," in David A. Charters (ed.), *The Deadly Sin of Terrorism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 137–172; Ganor, Boaz (ed.). *Countering Suicide Terrorism: An International Conference, February 20–23, 2000, Herzliya, Israel* (Herzliya, Israel: International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2001).

17. For example: Morag, Nadav. "The Economic and Social Effects of Intensive Terrorism: Israel 2000–2004" in *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10(3) (September 2006), pp. 120–141.

18. See Alexander, Yoriah. *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Human and Islamic Jihad* (Ard- sley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2002), Hroub, Khaled. *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2002); Klein, Meriachem. "Hamas in Power" in *Middle East Journal* 61(3) (Summer 2007), pp. 442–459; Mishal, Shaul & Arraham, Sela. *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006 [2000]); Satloff, Robert (ed.). "Hamas Triumphant: Implications for Security, Politics, Economy, and Strategy" Policy Focus no. 53 (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006); Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007).

19. Berko, Anat & Edna Ercz. "'Ordinary People' and 'Death Work': Palestinian Suicide Bombers as Victimizers and Victims" in *Violence and Victims* 20(6) (December 2005), pp. 603–623.

20. Available at www.btselem.org

21. Available at www.ict.org.il

22. David A. Jaeger and M. Daniele Paserman, *The Cycle of Violence? An Empirical Analysis of Fatalities in the Palestinian–Israeli Conflict* (October 2005). IZA Discussion Paper No. 1808. Available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=840644>

23. Harrison, Mark. "Research Note: Bombers and Bystanders in Suicide Attacks in Israel, 2002 to 2003" in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29(2006), pp. 187–206; Radlauer, Don "An Engineered Tragedy: Statistical Analysis of Casualties in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, September 2000–September 2002" International Institute for Counter Terrorism, Herzliya (ICT). Available at <http://www.ict.org.il>.

24. However, due to claims that, for example, the presentation of the conflict up that point "oversimplifies and distorts our view of the conflict, and obscures much of the significance of its history" (Radlauer, 2002, p. 2, emphasis added), his article suffers from subjective, political analysis.

25. Cf. <http://dover.idf.il/IDF>

26. "Occupied Territories" refer to the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, unless other specifications are added.

27. In August 2007 the office of the IDF's spokesperson was subject to several alterations; Colonel Avi Benayahu was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General and appointed as the new Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson, the IDF's website was subject to substantive alterations, both in outlook and content, and the list "Major Palestinian Terror Attacks since September 2000" was removed. See IDF website for details: dover.idf.il/IDF/English/Announcements/2007/08/0702.htm (accessed 12 October 2007).

28. For example, the authors have consulted the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website "Outbreak of Violence and Terrorism" "Victims of Palestinian Violence and Terrorism since September 2000," Available at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle-+to-+Peace/Palestinian-+terror-+since-+2000/Victims-+of-+Palestinian-+Violence-+and-+Terrorism-+sinc.htm>.

29. UN Resolution 242 emphasizes the inadmissibility of the annexation of territory by force and the need to work for a just and lasting peace, and states that Israeli armed forces must withdraw from occupied territories. UN Resolution 338 called on the parties involved in the Yom Kippur war in October 1973 to cease fire and implement UN Resolution 242. Israel and its neighboring

states do not, however, agree on the interpretation of UN Resolution 242 (cf. UN website: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/IMG/NR024094.pdf?OpenElement> and Israel MFA website <http://www.mfa.gov.il/>)

30. The IDF does not make the numbers of soldiers on active duty available for the public.

31. Cf. Hanne Eggen Røislien, 2007. "Living with Contradiction: Examining the Worldview of the Jewish Settlers," *International Journal of Conflict & Violence* 1(2) (2007), pp. 169–184.

32. DoP is the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles or "Oslo 1," known as the original Oslo Accords that were signed on the lawn outside of the White House in Washington, D.C. on 13 September 2003.

33. R Development Core Team. R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing, R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria, ISBN 3-900051-07-0 (2008).

34. Sue Wilkinson, "Focus Group Research," in David Silverman, ed., *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p. 182.

35. The registration on whether or not the perpetrator was killed or injured in the attack is discordant.

36. Among them are these two incidents that problematize what "major" implies: According to the registration on 18 March 2001, "For the first time since 1967, mortar bombs fired from the Gaza Strip fell inside the pre-1967 borders of the State of Israel." This registration contains no casualties, neither wounded nor dead, and thus stands in relatively sharp contrast to the registration on 19 August 2003, when "twenty-three people were killed and over 130 wounded when a Palestinian suicide bomber detonated himself on a no. 2. Egged bus in Jerusalem's Shmuel Hanavi neighborhood."

37. Dinstein, Yoram. *The Conduct of Hostilities under the Law of International Armed Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

38. See International Court of Justice, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004. Available at <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf>, p. 35.

39. Sergio Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008).

40. McCartan et al., "The Logic of Terrorist Target Choice."

41. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*; Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism."

42. Morag, Nadav. "The Economic and Social Effects of Intensive Terrorism: Israel 2000–2004" in *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10(3) (September 2006), pp. 120–141.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 120 (emphasis added).

44. See Table "For the Social Make Up in the Settlements," available at <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=57>. See also http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2057983.stm; Lein, Yehezkel. *Foreseen but not Prevented: The Israeli Law Enforcement Authorities' Handling of Settler Attacks on Olive Harvesters*, B'Tselem Case Study Report (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories). Available at http://www.btselem.org/Download/200211_Olive_Harvest_Eng.pdf.

45. Berman and Laitin, "Hard Targets," p. 3.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Chris Mayer, "Nonlethal Weapons and Noncombatant Immunity: Is it Permissible to Target Noncombatants?" *Journal of Military Ethics* 6(3) (2007), pp. 221–231, at p. 221.

49. Dinstein, *The Conduct of Hostilities* (2004), p. 27.

50. Asa Kasher and Amos Yadlin, "Military Ethics of Fighting Terror: An Israeli Perspective," *Journal of Military Ethics* 4(1) (2005), pp. 3–32, at p. 5.

51. See, for example, David L. Perry, "Ambiguities in the 'War on Terror,'" *Journal of Military Ethics* 4(1) (2005), pp. 44–51.

