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FROM THE EDITOR

It has been my tremendous pleasure over the past few months to be involved in the creation of the inaugural volume of *Report*. I envision this journal serving a number of purposes, and perhaps foremost among them is the ability for cadets to have their ideas reach a wider audience. Hopefully this process will not only allow us to spark meaningful debate among scholars who read these articles, but it will also allow the authors to have their work scrutinized and their own arguments sharpened. In a larger sense though, I see *Report* furthering West Point's mission of creating creative and thoughtful leaders who will be able to adapt to the challenges that face our Army and nation. As Army Chief of Staff General Martin Dempsey said in the foreword to Colonel Matthew Moten's *Between War and Peace* earlier this year, history "has the power to develop the professional imagination." I hope that *Report* inspires all who read it, both military and civilian, to develop this important skill.

The articles which we have chosen for the first issue of *Report* reflect these desires. Brigid Calhoun and Julia Schemel's articles provide important insight into American foreign policy, and Andrew Scholle's research into British foreign policy helps us gain a greater understanding of how other nations view the world. In addition to these foreign policy focused articles, Bradley Cohn's engrossing examination of the influence that biblical myths had on the tactics and identity of the Israeli Defense Forces provides us with a greater understanding of the cultural and ideological forces that shape a state's military.

I would also like to commend the invaluable role played by the entire West Point History Department in making this vision a reality. When I approached Major Brian Dunn about the initial idea for starting a journal last fall, he immediately moved to secure funding for printing and put me in contact with Professors Greta Bucher and William Leeman and Major Gregory Tomlin. These advisors have provided the staff and me with a degree of knowledge and expertise that has made the creation of this journal possible. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Department Head, Colonel Lance Betros, for his support in making this journal a reality and his leadership of a department that provides cadets with the opportunities and resources to pursue their intellectual passions.

Karl K. Schoch
Editor-in-Chief
West Point, NY

A MAN OF VISION: THEODORE ROOSEVELT, THE AFRICAN PROVERB, AND WORLD WAR I

BY
BRIGID K. CALHOUN

Brigid K. Calhoun is a senior studying American History at the United States Military Academy. She wrote this paper in partial fulfillment of course requirements for a seminar on American Foreign Relations. Her initial interest in President Theodore Roosevelt arose after reading Edmund Morris's biographies on the 26th president.

As World War I erupted in Europe, Theodore Roosevelt sat down in his family home at Sagamore Hill with pen and paper and composed what would become one of his last historical works. In *America and the World War*, Roosevelt offered his opinions on the causes of the war and how American foreign policy should adapt to the volatile international environment. In assessing the global crisis, he noted “that it is necessary to be respectful toward all people and . . . refrain from wronging them, while at the same time keeping ourselves in condition to prevent wrong being done to us.”¹ Earlier in his political career Roosevelt had adopted the African proverb, “speak softly and carry a big stick,” as his mantra.² This mantra shaped both his view of the world and his foreign policy. He spoke softly in developing close personal relationships with foreign leaders to perpetuate peace while at the same time strengthening the U.S. Navy to reinforce that peace. Through this lens Roosevelt saw the decay of the European balance of power system and recognized the significance the Western Hemisphere and Asia would play in the near future. In response, he built up the U.S. Navy, established America as the hegemon of the Western Hemisphere, brokered a peace in Asia, and cemented ties with Great Britain. During his presidency, Roosevelt anticipated the collapse of the existing world order that ultimately led to World War I and simultaneously prepared the nation and its Allies for victory.

Roosevelt first recognized the importance of wielding the “big stick” of the U.S. Navy at the age of twenty-four. In 1882 he wrote *The Naval War of 1812*, concluding that history's strong empires survived because of their naval forces. In its preface he wrote that Americans were “beginning to realize that it is folly for the great English-speaking Republic to rely for defense upon a navy composed

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt: America and the World War; Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 28.

² Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Modern Library Paperbacks, 2002), 185.

partly of antiquated hulks, and partly of new vessels rather more worthless than the old.”³ He further argued that the need for “an efficient navy” trumped the “cause for our keeping up a large army.”⁴ This work, which predates Alfred Thayer Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* by eight years, served as the foundation of Roosevelt’s perceived relationship between naval power and the new world order developing around him.⁵

While the majority of the content in *The Naval War of 1812* is quite technical, Roosevelt’s insights on the importance of naval power explain his world view and foreign policy. He attributed the tenure of the British Empire to its navy: “on every sea her navies rode, not only triumphant, but with none to dispute their sway.”⁶ However, cognizant of the shifting European balance of power system, he saw the decline of the British Empire relative to the growth of American power, noting that “since 1812 our strength has increased so prodigiously, both absolutely and relatively, while England’s military power has remained almost stationary.”⁷ In response to the developing naval arms race between Britain and Germany, Roosevelt, then as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, strengthened the U.S. Navy in case war erupted.⁸ While serving in this position at the end of the 19th century, he added modern cruisers, fighting vessels, and battleships to the American fleet.⁹ But Roosevelt’s beliefs of naval build-up were challenged by those eager to maintain peace at any price. Roosevelt, as both assistant secretary and president, had to contend with politicians, bureaucrats, and an American public “unwilling to prepare for war, because so many honest but misguided men believed that the preparation itself tended to bring on war.”¹⁰ Thus Roosevelt sharpened the “big stick” that he would use to reinforce his foreign policy as president and that America would later use in the Great War.

Roosevelt recognized the globalization of world affairs and pinpointed the strategic locations he would need to secure as well as the leaders with whom he needed to form both working and personal relationships. In a letter to his son Kermit the night before his nomination for a second term as President, he wrote that “[f]rom Panama down I have been able to accomplish certain things which

³ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 3rd ed. (St. Clair Shores, Mich.: Scholarly Press, 1970), v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, x.

⁵ Kenneth Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet: American Sea Power Comes of Age* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, 1998), 45.

⁶ Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, x.

⁸ Wimmel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet*, xv.

⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), 226.

¹⁰ Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, 233.

will be of lasting importance in our history.”¹¹ Thus he understood the long term effects of his policies and how they would allow the United States to maintain its powerful identity in a rapidly changing world. Never one to focus solely on the short run, Roosevelt knew that America was approaching a crossroads at which it would have to decide how aggressive a role to play in world affairs to protect national interests.

Roosevelt’s cultured upbringing and social skills enhanced his ability to develop strong and lasting relationships with foreign heads of state and dignitaries. Because of his diverse experiences, he could find common ground with nearly everyone he met. Having grown up in an aristocratic family he was comfortable entertaining the elite, while his excursions in South Dakota and in the Spanish-American War as commander of the infamous Rough Riders Regiment made him feel at home with the average American. As a child his family embarked on two separate year long voyages across Europe, and young Roosevelt even lived with a German family long enough to learn the language and understand the culture, which later aided him in his dealing with Kaiser Wilhelm.¹² In his youth he suffered violent asthma attacks, and as a result crafted a rigorous physical fitness program to strengthen his body.¹³ For the rest of his life Roosevelt participated in a wide variety of physical challenges, frequently including his Cabinet members and foreign leaders.¹⁴ He often used these athletic events to relax with his American and foreign work partners and to draw on common interests which created a unique type of diplomatic bonds. As the ultimate embodiment of “the man’s man,” Roosevelt used masculine sportsmanship as a diplomatic tool. While most diplomacy at this time took place within the confines of executive mansions and palaces, Roosevelt departed from such conventional norms. He preferred to draw on his cultural knowledge and sing Dutch lullabies with the Minister of the Netherlands, discuss Voltaire with the French ambassador, and teach his newest jiu-jitsu moves to the Swiss Minister.¹⁵

Roosevelt pinpointed Great Britain for its diplomatic and strategic importance early on in his political career, and used his social and political savvy to create an alliance. Throughout his entire public life Roosevelt strove to cement ties with this nation, recognizing that it and the United States were destined to become allies in the new world order. As a young adult he befriended Cecil Spring Rice, a well respected British diplomat who would later become ambassador to the

¹¹ Joseph Bucklin Bishop, ed., *Theodore Roosevelt’s Letters to His Children* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1919), 104.

¹² Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), 1.

¹³ Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1979), 60.

¹⁴ Morris, *Theodore Rex*, 46.

¹⁵ Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America*, 10-11.

United States.¹⁶ Rice also served as Roosevelt's best man at his wedding.¹⁷ These two men shared the same outlook on the international system: they "pondered together the ambitions of Germany, the destiny of Russia, and the uncertainties in the Orient, and in what best ways Great Britain and the United States, or the two nations working as one, must act to protect themselves."¹⁸ Another friend of his was George Otto Trevelyan, a British historian. As scholars of history, they understood the trend of world events and used their knowledge of the past to make sense of the present state of affairs. Their studies in history provided them with an understanding that the historical relationship between the two nations would solidify an alliance against world aggressors.¹⁹ In a June 1905 letter to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who shared the friendship of many British statesmen, Roosevelt wrote that "we intend to have the United States and England work together just as we are now working together in the Far East."²⁰ Roosevelt therefore befriended British diplomats who shared his vision of the world and solidified an alliance between the two English speaking nations, knowing that they would need each other in the event of global conflict.

However, Roosevelt also recognized that any alliance would be worthless if he did not bring America to a position of strength in its own region. Always an ardent patriot and nationalist, he embraced the Manifest Destiny ideology. The earliest proof of this lies in his multi-volume work, *The Winning of the West*. This series is filled with passionate language that echoes the Manifest Destiny ideology, the Monroe Doctrine, and a patriotic and nationalistic fervor which argued that America had the right and duty to expand its influence and dominance, at least in the Western hemisphere. This style of thinking became characteristic of Roosevelt and served as an additional foundation for his understanding of the world. In an address to the First Session of the 57th Congress in 1902, he stated that "[t]he Monroe Doctrine should be the cardinal feature of foreign policy" and that it was "the one sure means of securing the peace of the Western Hemisphere."²¹ As Roosevelt watched order give way to instability across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, he ensured that the United States maintained its dominance in the Western Hemisphere, immune from any European or Asian conflict that could seep into the region.

¹⁶ Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 371.

¹⁷ Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, 36.

¹⁸ David H. Burton, "Theodore Roosevelt and His English Correspondents: A Special Relationship of Friends," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 63, no. 2 (1973): 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰ *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge 1884-1918* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 138.

²¹ *Addresses and Presidential Messages of Theodore Roosevelt 1902-1904* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 321, 324.

In order to protect U.S. autonomy in the Western hemisphere, Roosevelt proactively worked to establish naval bases in Cuba and the Philippines as well as a cable to Hawaii that would augment communications with China.²² Before rising to the presidency he had supported the use of military force in Cuba and the Philippines, and argued for the annexation of Hawaii.²³ Now that these islands were under U.S. control, Roosevelt sought to make use of them in defending the hemisphere's perimeter from European and Asian powers. Once in office he expedited the process of obtaining a canal in Panama that would allow for passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.²⁴ Additionally, he arbitrated a crisis in Venezuela over unpaid debt to Britain and Germany, narrowly avoiding war with the Kaiser.²⁵ This event did much to solidify Anglo-America relations, as Britain acquiesced to American dominance in the Western Hemisphere.²⁶

Roosevelt also turned his eyes towards affairs beyond the Western Hemisphere. His settlement of the Russo-Japanese War serves as one of the best manifestations of his diplomatic savvy and his intuitions that projected an imminent global conflict like World War I. On February 8, 1905, Japan attacked Russia's naval fleet at Port Arthur in response to Russian aggression in Manchuria and Korea.²⁷ Within days Japan had annihilated most of the Russian fleet but Russia displayed no signs of surrender; the latter was determined to expand.²⁸ The world watched as the war dragged on and took its toll on both sides. Roosevelt, aware of the rising power of these two Far East nations, decided to intervene. On May 31, he extended an invitation to the belligerents to join in peace negotiations directed by the United States.²⁹ As he dealt with Russian and Japanese leaders, he also consulted the dignitaries of France, Great Britain, and Germany, each of which had an alliance with one of the belligerents.³⁰ In doing so he maintained his broad and all encompassing view of world affairs, fully understanding that events in Asia created ripple effects in Europe as a result of these entangling alliances. The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth on September 5.³¹ After months of deliberation neither side was too pleased with the results, but both belligerents acknowledged his fairness during the negotiations.³² Had he not

²² *Ibid.*, 140-141, 319-320, 413.

²³ Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 456, 526, 718.

²⁴ Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 575.

²⁵ Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America*, 145.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁷ Morris, *Theodore Rex*, 311.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 312.

²⁹ *Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge*, 139.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

³¹ Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior*, 618.

³² *Ibid.*

thought that Japan and Russia's military might and expansionist desires would shape future world events, Roosevelt would not have had the same sense of urgency to intervene.

During his presidency Roosevelt could not predict exactly when and where a world war would erupt, but he detected warning signs and calculated how to best protect America from foreign threats. While many Americans clamored for isolationism and peace at any cost, Roosevelt remained realistic and rational. In his autobiography he wrote, “[j]ustice among the nations of mankind . . . can be brought about only by those strong and daring men who with wisdom love peace, but who love righteousness more than peace.”³³ This mindset guided him in his more aggressive actions like building up the navy and advocating intervention in Cuba and the Philippines; he knew that these actions, as the “big stick,” would successfully ensure peace for the nation. But Roosevelt also developed “softer” approaches to diplomacy by cultivating personal relationships with foreign statesmen. With this carrot and stick approach he distanced the dangerous volatility of the international system from the Western Hemisphere and arbitrated disputes. Roosevelt's vision, intuition, and adherence to the African proverb guided him in shaping and implementing policies that anticipated large-scale world conflict and prepared America and its allies for victory in that fight.

³³ Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, v.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE UNITED STATES' SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM

BY
ANDREW SCHOLLE

Andrew Scholle is a senior and a Military History major at the United States Military Academy. He wrote this paper in partial fulfillment of course requirements for a course on War since 1945. He is interested in how states develop their national security strategy.

The United Kingdom emerged victorious from the Second World War, but it no longer dominated the world order. Post-war geopolitics revolved around the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. The United Kingdom was no more than a junior partner to the Americans in that struggle. Nevertheless, the post-war U.K. defense budget did not reflect its reduced status. This level of spending proved untenable and forced the British to choose between social programs and defense expenditures.¹ The U.S. nuclear guarantee allowed the United Kingdom to find savings through defense cuts at a time when frugality was at premium because of a series of crises and recessions in the British economy. In the long run, these defense cuts significantly reduced the United Kingdom's ability to use military force on distant objectives, as proved by the near-defeat in the Falkland Islands War of 1982.

The post-war United Kingdom initially demonstrated a much higher tolerance for defense commitments than the rest of Europe. Britain spent a higher percentage of its Gross National Product on defense than the European average every year from 1954 through 1969.² Nevertheless, this percentage steadily fell through the 1960s and 1970s as a number of factors converged to reduce British defense spending and consequently weaken British conventional arms. The British government's official Statements on Defense Estimates echoed with a common theme of economic strain. Savings had to be found somewhere. British strategic planners redefined national interests and altered perceptions of the characteristics of future war in order to justify cuts in the British military. Meanwhile, the

¹ Michael Chichester and John Wilkinson, *British Defence: A Blueprint for Reform* (Trowbridge: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987), 3-4.

² G. C. Peden, *Arms, Economics and British Strategy: From Dreadnoughts to Hydrogen Bombs* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 306.

confidence in the security guarantee provided by the Americans through NATO soothed those who feared that deep cuts would have serious consequences.

With the continual budget problems becoming the new norm, a new consensus arose in the British government. Members of government started to view defense spending as fundamentally opposed to British social welfare programs and economic health. A “weapons versus welfare” battle developed inside of the United Kingdom.”³ The 1966 Statement on the Defence Estimates presented two equal governmental objectives: to relax the nation’s economic strain and shape the new defense program for the future.⁴ The report argued that military strength could not come at the cost of economic vitality.⁵ To protect the economy, the government set a ceiling of £2,000 million for defense expenditures. By 1968, in the wake of the devaluation of the British pound, the government stated its position even more bluntly: “There is no military strength, whether for Britain or our alliances, except on the basis of economic strength.”⁶ In 1974, the Labour Party platform set a goal of reducing British defense spending to the same level as the rest of Western Europe.⁷ Throughout the time period, continuing economic troubles absorbed the focus of British politicians. Instead of increasing taxes or cutting non-essential spending, defense spending became the government’s piggy bank to be broken into whenever social programs required money. The argument that economic and military powers were simply two sides of the same coin rationalized the cuts.

The defense cuts had a definite impact on British military forces. Immediately after the Second World War, British servicemen could be found across the globe. But by 1976, all the remaining British warships could be found in the Eastern Atlantic.⁸ This drastic change in deployments was the result of a redefinition of British interests as budget cuts slashed capabilities. Leaders in the United Kingdom now perceived overseas territories and bases as encumbrances, not assets. Therefore, the 1966 Defence Review recommended reducing commitments because deployments were expensive and overstretched British forces.⁹ The review quite optimistically asserted that minor island territories would be easy to protect from major forward bases.¹⁰ The 1966 strategy document also

³ Chichester and Wilkinson, *British Defence*, 3.

⁴ Healy, "Defence Review: The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1966, Part 1," 11 February 1966, CP and C, 1(66)-50(66): 221, Records of the Cabinet Office, British National Archives, London.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Public Expenditure: Post-Devaluation Measures. Draft Parliamentary Statement, 15 January 1968, CM and CC, 1(68)-37(68): 236, Records of the Cabinet Office, British National Archives, London.

⁷ Chichester and Wilkinson, *British Defence*, 12.

⁸ Roy Mason, "Defence Review: The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1975," 25 February 1975, CP and C, 1-25: I-2, Records of the Cabinet Office, British National Archives, London.

⁹ Healey, "Defence Review," 11 February 1966: 224-232.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

recommended ending further aircraft carrier production, citing an analysis that carriers were only necessary to support amphibious operations outside the range of friendly land-based aircraft. The review predicted that such operations were unlikely due to the United Kingdom's powerful allies.¹¹ In the wake of more serious financial problems in 1968, the British withdrew from almost all overseas bases.¹² The Defence Review of that year stated that British defense efforts would focus on Europe and the North Atlantic.¹³ By 1975, the Royal Navy was withdrawing even from the Mediterranean and the Army was endeavoring to maintain its fighting ability in Europe alone.¹⁴ As the financial crises mounted, it became impossible for the United Kingdom to maintain the military might necessary to station forces around the globe. Cuts to the Royal Navy implied that the government believed the United Kingdom would not take violent action far from home. Gradually, the sphere of British influence was redrawn closer and closer to London as the British military abandoned first some, then practically all, overseas bases. Eventually, the re-deployments restricted major British defense operations to the vicinity of Europe.

As the United Kingdom's combat power shrank, the American security guarantee was a constant reassurance for British strategic thinkers. British leaders felt confident in the United States' nuclear deterrent because the American commitment to use thermonuclear weapons in defense of the United Kingdom was now enshrined in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policy.¹⁵ The 1966 Defence Review even suggested cutting British strategic bombers to use the funds elsewhere because the Americans would be able to deliver all the nuclear weapons necessary.¹⁶ The review approvingly noted that the British nuclear forces "will enable us to share fully in maintaining the political solidarity of NATO."¹⁷ British planners knew that their meager nuclear weapons stock was negligible compared to the vast American arsenal. They also knew that the Americans would protect the United Kingdom. British defense commitments were now more political than practical, which gave the United Kingdom the ability to cut defense spending whenever it seemed to make economic sense.

British strategists did not only change the theaters in which they expected British forces would fight. They also began planning to fight different kinds of wars. The 1966 Defence Review predicted that any war in Western Europe would

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹² "Public Expenditure," 15 January 1968: 237.

¹³ Denis Healey, "Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1968," 29 January 1968, CP and C, 1(68)-37(68): 286, Records of the Cabinet Office, British National Archives, London.

¹⁴ Mason, "Defence Review," 25 February 1975: I-23, I-26.

¹⁵ Peden, *Arms, Economics and British Strategy*, 316, 318.

¹⁶ Healey, "Defence Review," 11 February 1966: 229.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 242.

soon involve unlimited use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, it argued, it was unnecessary to stockpile supplies for a war of several months duration, since all “organized land warfare” would be impossible.¹⁸ Rather, the British military needed only be prepared for the “day to day task of keeping the peace.”¹⁹ The review also gave consideration to working with the United Nations (UN) on future operations.²⁰ The United Kingdom was on its way to reorienting its forces to a new and different kind of limited warfare.

The numerous British Defence Reviews of the 1960s and 1970s changed the force structure of the British military, its likely area of deployment, and its mission. Obviously, these changes had significant effects on the capabilities of the British armed services. The most far-reaching consequences were that the British military became something of a “hollow force” and that its ability to project power at a distance declined. In this usage, a hollow force is one that maintains an outward appearance of great combat power by retaining combat units at the cost of cutting service support capabilities. Such a force is formidable until it confronts logistically difficult campaigns. British politicians seemed to be doing their best to inflict this status on their armed forces during this time period. Support facilities were the first target of budget cuts in early 1968.²¹ Royal Air Force (RAF) transport aircraft were quickly added to the list.²² In 1975, proportionally greater cuts were still occurring in the support services.²³ By 1982, these reductions had taken their toll, and the hollow force that was the British military made itself known to the world in the Falklands.

The United Kingdom also substantially reduced its ability to use military force to influence states and protect its interests across the globe. The 1966 decision to cut the carrier fleet rendered the United Kingdom dependent on the goodwill of local countries for air support.²⁴ In 1966, the United Kingdom canceled its new TSR-2 strike aircraft,²⁵ and in 1968 it canceled the 50 F-111s ordered from the United States to replace the TSR-2.²⁶ With earlier recommendations to cut strategic bombers, the cancellation of all aircraft designed for the interdiction and strike mission meant that the RAF’s ability to hit long-range targets was steadily decreasing. In 1975, the government cut the new amphibious assault ships and the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

²⁰ Healey, “Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1968,” 29 January 1968, 287.

²¹ “Public Expenditure,” 15 January 1968: 242.

²² Healey, “Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1968,” 29 January 1968, 286.

²³ Mason, “Defence Review,” 25 February 1975: I-23.

²⁴ Healey, “Defence Review,” 11 February 1966: 236.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

²⁶ Healey, “Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1968,” 29 January 1968, 286.

United Kingdom's future ability to seize distant territory was in grave doubt.²⁷ Cumulatively, the British military was losing its traditional global reach.

The decay of the British military's capability to project power at a distance is evident in the 1982 Falkland Islands War. The United Kingdom, a first-world nation and historically a great sea power, should have been able to crush the Argentinean military with ease. But the defense cuts had taken their toll. According to Admiral Sir John Woodward, commander of the British task force sent to recapture the Falklands, the war was "a lot closer run" than usually believed.²⁸ Of the many factors that jeopardized the success of the British effort, several in particular can be traced directly to the defense spending cuts and strategy changes in the two decades preceding the conflict. In particular, a lack of carriers and amphibious warfare vessels, a lack of transport vessels, and a lack of helicopters and aircraft nearly precluded the British victory. Admiral Woodward stated that he had decided before the first combat action that major damage to either of the British aircraft carriers would have meant the end of the entire operation.²⁹ Even though the carriers were unharmed, the British were unable to muster more than thirty Sea Harrier fighters to protect the fleet and provide air support for the landings.³⁰ Cuts in amphibious assault ships, especially crucial in a mission to land on hostile territory, had their effect as well. The British boasted only two purpose-built assault ships available, one of which had to be quickly repossessed immediately prior to its scheduled decommissioning, while the other was promoted from its normal role as the midshipmen's training vessel.³¹ Clearly, defense cuts had eroded the Royal Navy's power projection ability. Because they possessed so few of the key types of ships, the British had no choice but to risk the success of the entire war as long as the fleet was in range of Argentinean air attack.

Reductions in funding of support services also made themselves apparent throughout the operation. Even two of the shipyards quickly fitting out Royal Navy ships for war were slated to be closed.³² Due to a lack of military transport vessels, the British government used many commercial transport vessels to carry soldiers and equipment south.³³ Of course, such ships were not designed to survive combat, and the loss of one in particular, the *Atlantic Conveyor*, severely hampered the British war effort. The loss of nine helicopters forced 3 Commando Brigade to

²⁷ Mason, "Defence Review," 25 February 1975: I-23.

²⁸ Alex Bellos and Jeevan Vasagar, "Falklands Victory a 'Close Run Thing,'" *The Guardian*, 2 April 2002, accessed 21 September 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/apr/03/falklands.world>.

²⁹ Sandy Woodward and Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 270.

³¹ David Brown, *The Royal Navy and the Falklands War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987), 65.

³² *Ibid.*, 64, 75.

³³ Brown, *The Royal Navy*, 68-69.

foot-march across the island instead of ride. With fewer helicopters, the infantry received less ammunition, food, and other supplies, which slowed the campaign. As a result, they suffered more casualties and were forced to fight on into a severe winter.³⁴ If the government had taken the opportunity to fund more transport vessels, the critical helicopters would have been much safer during their journey to the South Atlantic.

The American nuclear security guarantee through NATO proved more effective than intended. Instead of promoting common military resistance to the USSR, it allowed the United Kingdom to remove security concerns from the list of its top priorities. Buffeted by economic problems, the British no longer sought to build the military they needed. Rather, they set funding limits and were content with the military they could easily afford. Defense spending became a political tool to show commitment to the NATO alliance as well as a treasure trove for funds for other governmental programs. The British military, weakened by budget cuts, surrendered its global reach, focused on Europe, and began planning for limited warfare. Consequently, the United Kingdom's ability to project military power suffered as the savings measures reduced both combat and support units. A sudden war in the remote Falkland Islands severely tested the British military. Due to the inadequate equipment of the British, certain losses had inordinately large negative effects on the conduct of the campaign. Because of a reliance on the American deterrent and too many defense cuts, the United Kingdom suffered through a prolonged campaign in the Falklands with heavier casualties and very narrowly avoided defeat. As Admiral Woodward wrote in his diary on the day before the liberation of the Falklands, "We are now on the cliff edge of our capability. Frankly, if the Argies could only breathe on us, we would fall over!"³⁵

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

³⁵ Bellos and Vasagar, "Falklands Victory."

RONALD REAGAN AND THE AWACS SALE: A NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

BY
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For decades, American foreign policy and domestic policies have often been focused on and entangled in the Middle East, resulting in much tension and controversy. The reason for such political debate is the passionate interests of a select group of American citizens: the pro-Israel lobby. These interests lie deeply in the extensive history of warfare and tensions with the Arab nations, as Bradley Cohn discusses in this volume. Political scientists Michal Shamir and Jacob Shamir stated that “the Arab-Israeli conflict, the more than 100 years of conflict between Jews and Arabs . . . is one of the most intractable conflicts in the world today, at the center of international politics and media attention.”¹ Regardless of political affiliation, a diverse group of transnational advocates who support the interests of Israel will generally band together. Such has been the case since the founding of Israel and is very likely to continue well into the future. With the influence of such a powerful lobbying community, almost every American policy made with regard to the Middle East will thus often be tied to Israel.²

On October 1, 1981, when President Ronald Reagan formally announced his administration’s endorsement of the sale of the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia, interest groups from the pro-Israel lobby linked together in outrage and caused a huge political uproar in the nation’s capital.³ The AWACS technology is a type of aircraft that is capable of detecting the presence of other low-flying aircraft through radar detection systems to be used in the Persian Gulf.⁴ In what was perhaps the most intense and massive lobbying campaign ever to take place in the nation’s capital, Reagan eventually succeeded in obtaining Congressional approval for the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia. Reagan and his administration used ample political resources in order to get this policy

¹ Michal Shamir and Jacob Shamir, “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Israeli Elections,” *International Political Science Review* 28, no. 4 (September 2007): 469.

² Nicholas Laham, *Selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia: The Reagan Administration and the Balancing of America’s Competing Interests in the Middle East* (London: Praeger, 2002), x-xi.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xi.

approved despite much controversy. He placed high priority in maintaining a balance of power in the Middle East while holding back Soviet influence, as well as securing the United States' vital national interests and economic stability. The vast majority of the opposition Reagan faced rested in domestic politics and the pro-Israel lobby, which he met head on and ultimately, through much lobbying by his administration, succeeded.

In August 1979, Reagan wrote that "stripped of rhetoric, the paramount American interest in the Middle East is to prevent the region from falling under the domination of the Soviet Union."⁵ Prior to his election the following year, president-elect Ronald Reagan was already a firm believer in focusing upon the Soviet Union as the highest priority. Following the foreign policy failures of the Carter administration, Reagan and his closest advisors set out to implement a policy that contained a strong anti-Soviet posture, as well as to have a rhetoric that included antiterrorist and antiradical measures. Committed to the restoration of United States' power and prestige worldwide, Reagan and his administration wished to once again regain the confidence of the nation's allies. This was to be achieved through clear, consistent, and realistic foreign policy goals.⁶

As a result of the actions taken by the Soviet Union just before Reagan took office, his administration put precedence on security issues, both regionally and globally. In 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and a war broke out the following year between Iraq and Iran. Therefore, upon entering the White House, Reagan and his administration publicly announced that "their first priority would be to restore the West's strategic position against the Soviets in the Middle East." By essentially blocking Soviet influence in the Middle East, the United States would effectively be able to maintain and monitor the balance of power in this unstable region of the world. One of Reagan's first policy decisions was the announcement of his endorsement of selling five AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia, which he believed would strengthen the Arab nation.⁷ By equipping the Saudis with this new aircraft technology, they would have a greater stronghold in the Middle East, and thus could stand on their own against any potential Soviet aggression.

Americans have typically viewed Saudi Arabia as a more moderate, friendly nation in which the United States was able to form a more stable relationship. These ties were strained when the Soviet threat to this region appeared to be growing, given the aggressive actions taken in 1979.⁸ Although the entire Middle

⁵ Bernard Reich, *The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 91.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁷ Robert E. Looney, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations: Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 412.

⁸ William B. Quandt, "Riyadh between the Superpowers," *Foreign Policy* 44 (Autumn 1981): 37.

East was always a topic of concern, there seemed to be an ever-increasing focus on the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, particularly Saudi Arabia.⁹ In an interview early into his first term, Reagan discussed the importance of having a ground military presence of the United States in this region. Having this presence would ensure that these nations would be able to more effectively respond to a potential Soviet threat.¹⁰ A general belief was that the Soviet Union's aggressive policies thrived on exploiting weaker nations that had much instability and would encourage further disturbances through subversion. Given the common knowledge of the widespread instability throughout the Middle East, the Reagan administration felt it necessary to increase American presence and mobilize these nations.¹¹

Selling AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia fit the mold of Reagan's intended policies towards this region filled with turmoil. Should the Soviets successfully sell military equipment to the Saudis before the United States, they would have in a sense become dependent upon the Communist regime. Reagan and the American population did not want this to occur. Therefore, Reagan instead opted to sell goods to Saudi Arabia in order to keep the nation as an Arab ally in the Middle East. A member of Reagan's staff, White House Chief of Staff James Baker, III, once stated in reference to Reagan's policies that "events would prove that he had a better understanding of the realities of the Cold War than many of his critics."¹²

For Reagan, U.S. vital interests also served as a motive for gaining congressional approval for this sale. Being pragmatic, Reagan also placed the nation's security and national interests as a high priority in his presidency. Maintaining adequate measures to ensure the nation's security went hand-in-hand with the issues he faced with the Soviet threats and the Middle Eastern instabilities. By keeping a constant United States military presence in the Middle East, the Reagan administration believed that the nation would have the ability to respond immediately should a crisis occur. Reagan considered this to be a likely event considering the recent actions of the Soviet Union in the region.¹³ His plan for selling the AWACS planes to the Saudis provided a way in which the United States could maintain a presence in the Middle East despite nationalist sentiments that prohibited Arab governments from allowing foreign bases to be constructed.¹⁴ Furthermore, he believed that the United States would ultimately benefit from the shared intelligence as a result of selling the AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia and

⁹ Reich, *The United States and Israel*, 91.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹² James A. Baker III, "*Work Hard, Study . . . and Keep Out of Politics!*": *Adventures and Lessons from an Unexpected Public Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2006), 287.

¹³ Rex B. Wingerter, "AWACS and US Strategy," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1982), 190.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

the continued presence these planes would have in the area.¹⁵ In facing harsh opposition to this sale, Secretary of State Alexander Haig refuted the criticisms by stating that given concessions by the Saudis, all information derived from the planes would be shared with the United States and would not be shared “with any other parties without U.S. consent.”¹⁶ He further claimed that “only carefully-screened Saudi and U.S. nationals will be permitted to be involved with these aircraft.”¹⁷ However, in the event that the United States was unable to obtain Saudi Arabia’s cooperation in this matter, or was unable to get the sale past Congress, it would not be taken seriously as a credible economic, diplomatic, or military power.¹⁸ Losing credibility among nations, particularly those of the Middle Eastern region, would be a huge detriment to the national interests of the United States, as well as its security. Therefore, Reagan saw the sale of such technology to Saudi Arabia as imperative in his foreign policy goals.

Obtaining greater stability in the Middle East was also a concern of the Reagan administration. When Reagan took office in 1980, the Persian Gulf was in a severe state of chaos that was characterized by a series of unfortunate destabilizing events, such as the overthrow of the Iranian Shah and the hostage crisis in 1979, as well as the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran War in 1980. Naturally, upon entering into his first term, it became his mission to restore security to this area. In his effort to get the sale of AWACS approved, Reagan made it clear that this foreign policy was the cornerstone in his goal to further establish the United States’ power in the Persian Gulf, thus contributing to obtaining its stability.¹⁹ In an interview with *Time* magazine, Reagan stated: “the Saudis have made it very plain that they want to be cooperative. They want stability in the Middle East, and have shown that with their willingness to participate in bringing about the Lebanon cease-fire.”²⁰

Facing voices of opposition in Congressional meetings, Secretary of State Haig refuted the disputes by explaining that Saudi Arabia’s need for the AWACS was proven when an Iranian plane flew over the Persian Gulf and bombed an oil facility in Kuwait and the Saudi oil fields on the east coast of the peninsula. He referred to the raid as “a dramatic, and, I think, God-given warning” of the Saudi needs for obtaining AWACS.²¹ Reagan’s administration then argued to Congress that the AWACS would provide the Saudis with 24-hour radar coverage to threats,

¹⁵ Reich, *The United States and Israel*, 105.

¹⁶ Senate, *Congressional Quarterly*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Laham, *Selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia*, xv.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.

²⁰ George J. Church, “AWACS: He Does It Again,” *Time*, 9 November 1981, 15.

²¹ Senate, *Congressional Quarterly*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, 133.

and would give them ample time to prepare and intercept any threats, thus adding a greater sense of stability and security.²²

Along with the goal of providing stability in the Persian Gulf, there were also economic motives for selling these aircraft. There was an intrinsic desire of the United States to remain allies with Saudi Arabia and to develop even closer ties, since it was the largest supplier of imported oil.²³ Losing friendly ties with such a large oil supplier would likely result in very detrimental effects to both the nation's economy, as well as the economy of all other nations in the world. Selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia would essentially place the nation under the protective military umbrella of the United States. This sale would then guarantee to prevent Saudi Arabia and other oil producing nations from using an oil embargo. Since the Saudis controlled the vast majority of oil reserves in the Middle East, no other nation would be able to use an embargo on their own.²⁴ Furthermore, those in Congress in favor of the sale argued that the combination of AWACS and previously purchased American military goods would be a huge leap forward in defending oil fields in Saudi Arabia.²⁵

Removing Saudi Arabia as a possible hostile force through the sale of the AWACS gave Reagan additional time to work on his domestic policies with the pro-Israel lobby that was so intently opposed to the idea.²⁶ He was well aware of the great deal of political influence this lobby had in America, and thus did not want to lose such a group of people's support for his administration. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, was a large and well financed part of the pro-Israel lobby with the reputation of being an effective and influential advocacy group in Washington. Naturally, Reagan faced fierce opposition from AIPAC in regard to the AWACS debate.²⁷ In order to get his policy through Congress while maintaining friendly ties with this group and the rest of the pro-Israel lobby, Reagan had to be cognizant of their opposing arguments and be able to effectively reassure them. The most common argument among the pro-Israel community was that the AWACS planes would only serve to undermine Israeli security by increasing threats to the nation and by aggravating regional tensions. The basis of their argument was that they believed that the sale of weapons to the Saudis would force the Israelis to buy more arms as well. These weapons would then increase the regional tensions, thereby causing instabilities and threats to their national security. Opponents of the sale were also convinced that the Saudis would

²² *Ibid.*, 133.

²³ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁴ Nicholas Laham, *Crossing the Rubicon: Ronald Reagan and US Policy in the Middle East* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 2.

²⁵ Senate, *Congressional Quarterly*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, 140.

²⁶ Laham, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 2-3.

²⁷ David Verbeeten, "How Important is the Israel Lobby?" *Middle East Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 37-44.

not come through with their promise to keep gathered intelligence a secret from certain nations.²⁸

American advocates were not the only ones adamantly against the proposed sale to Saudi Arabia. Israel, led by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, was also highly concerned about Reagan's policy for the same reasons. Israelis also believed that this sale would ultimately undermine their security. Prime Minister Begin publicly tried to assert his influence upon American foreign relations, which in turn clearly upset the president, who declared that "it is not the business of other nations to make American foreign policy."²⁹ Reagan so strongly believed that this sale endorsement would ensure a balance of power, support vital national interests, and ensure economic benefits to the United States that he was willing to expend whatever political resource was necessary to convince Congress.³⁰

Reflecting upon Ronald Reagan as a president, James Baker stated in his memoirs that Reagan "had enough confidence in his own leadership to know that no one could hijack his own presidency . . . Reagan's open-mindedness reflected more than self-confidence. Contrary to public perception, he was much more a pragmatist than an ideologue."³¹ The AWACS debate proved to be a great example of this description of the president, which further revealed his stamina and determination in accomplishing domestic and foreign policy goals he believed were vital to the nation's security interests.³² His management techniques, which evidently worked to his benefit, have been applauded by his vice president, George H. W. Bush, who wrote that "the Reagan style of 'collegial' management encouraged outspokenness at Cabinet meetings, with the president listening to a spectrum of opinion, then bringing the discussion back to fundamental principles."³³ Reagan clearly had a strong focus upon the most important matters at hand, and was rarely swayed from his goals throughout his presidency.

Pro-Israel groups worked incredibly hard to prevent the Congressional approval of this sale. It then came down to the Reagan administration to fight back against their appeals through executive lobbying via briefings, testimonies, and public appearances. Secretary of State Haig was known to have made several testimonies before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to defend the AWACS sale where he emphasized the importance of maintaining friendly relations with Saudi Arabia, and countering the arguments of the opponents.³⁴ Reagan's administration worked diligently to ease the concerns of the pro-Israel lobby by

²⁸ Senate, *Congressional Quarterly*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, 130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

³⁰ Laham, *Selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia*, xv.

³¹ Baker, "Work Hard, Study . . . and Keep Out of Politics!" 124-125.

³² Laham, *Selling AWACS to Saudi Arabia*, xv.

³³ George Bush and Victor Gold, *Looking Forward: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 231.

³⁴ Senate, *Congressional Quarterly*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, 132.

stating that the aircraft would not actually disrupt Middle Eastern stability or put Israel in immediate danger. He also assured it that the AWACS planes would, in fact, not be misused or compromised by the Saudis.³⁵ In an interview, the president commented: “We will do our best to reassure them . . . when I discussed this whole arrangement with Prime Minister Menachem Begin when he was here, we had a very full discussion about the relationship between our two countries . . . he seemed very pleased with our understanding of what our mutual relationship was.”³⁶

After much debating and toiling over this matter, the Senate finally approved the sale of the AWACS technology to Saudi Arabia on the evening of October 28, 1981.³⁷ Although Reagan made just a subtle mark in the Middle Eastern world, he did have a large influence upon American foreign policy in this region. Despite the difficulties in negotiating with Israel and the transnational pro-Israel community, as a result of the AWACS sale, the United States remained a strong supporter of the Jewish state. This was accomplished through the protective military umbrella around the Persian Gulf, which successfully prevented Arab oil embargos.³⁸ The Saudis also came out of this sale positively, and considered the sale to be a great victory and an example of the success of the U.S.-Saudi relationship.³⁹ Additionally, Gallup poll records reveal an upward trend in the approval ratings of Reagan during his first administration into his second. A five percent increase from his first to his second term, giving him a 55.3% approval rating, signified that the public came to realize, in part, the success that Reagan had in his policies in the Middle East.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁶ Church, “AWACS: He Does It Again,” 15.

³⁷ Senate, *Congressional Quarterly*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, 138.

³⁸ Laham, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 144.

³⁹ Looney, *Handbook of US-Middle East Relations*, 412.

⁴⁰ “Presidential Approval Ratings -- Gallup Historical Statistics and Trends,” January 1989.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx> (accessed December 5, 2010).

DAVID'S WARRIORS: THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLICAL MYTHOLOGY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES, 1948-1973

BY
BRADLEY COHN

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On May 14, 1948, thirty seven members of the Jewish People's Council met in Tel Aviv and signed the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. These Jewish leaders, led by David Ben-Gurion, boldly established the first independent Jewish state in more than two millennia. Fundamentally, the document declared, Israel "would be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles." It appealed to "the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally around the Jews of Eretz-Israel . . . in the great struggle for the . . . redemption of Israel."¹ However, the collection of so many Jews from so many different backgrounds created a unique set of problems. Israel's need to establish a common and collective identity that united the people of the Diaspora together under a new identity quickly became apparent.

Adopting a common language topped Israel's priorities. For centuries, European and Slavic Jews spoke Yiddish almost exclusively, and many new Israelis expected the new state to adopt Yiddish as its official language. However, many Jews, including Ben-Gurion, identified Yiddish with centuries of anti-Jewish oppression, and ultimately the Diaspora itself. Ben-Gurion believed that the State of Israel needed to overcome two thousand years of anti-Semitic oppression and Jewish victimization and develop into a nation of people proud of their heritage and religion.² In order to accomplish this, Ben-Gurion turned to the pinnacle of Jewish strength and power: biblical and ancient Israel, from the time of Moses to the beginning of the Diaspora in 136 C.E. Israel's adoption of the newly-revived Hebrew language, the language of Moses, Joshua, and David, severed ties

¹ Israeli Knesset, *Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*, Tel Aviv, Israel, 14 May 1948.

² Heidi J. Gleit, "Israel's Yiddish Romance," *Eretz: The Magazine of Israel* (1 March 2007): 106.

to the recent, oppressive Jewish history and evoked, instead, a powerful image of Jewish sovereignty and might.³

Adopting the Hebrew language was one method that the state of Israel used to construct its own culture and identity. These factors proved monumentally important because they allowed Israelis a rebirth—a chance to see themselves in a different and positive light. The ingathering of Jews from all over the world, with different individual languages, customs, cultures, and appearances, and their transformation into Israelis through their common culture and identity, was a vital step in developing Israeli institutions, particularly the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

The IDF, from its founding, served as a catalyst for socialization and education in Israeli society as a whole.⁴ Because of its prominent place in Israeli society, it had a similar requirement to develop its own identity and culture, compatible with the broader Israeli identity. Furthermore, the IDF needed to address several critical areas in order to mature into a competent and proficient military organization. As a military, the IDF required a common strategic purpose, operational style, and set of tactical responses to contend with complicated military situations.

For efficiency and competence, all militaries require direction in these three areas to help them understand how and why they fight. A strategic mission is vital to an army because it provides a common direction, objective, and sense of self-worth.⁵ An operational style dictates how an army fights. For many western armies this need is satisfied by a codified operational doctrine. An ingrained tactical response directs soldiers and commanders to react consistently and quickly to problems as they arise. In order to develop these characteristics, an army must develop a common unifying culture and organizational identity.

Generally speaking, armies are a representation of the social makeup of their societies.⁶ This statement is especially true of the IDF because, with a few exceptions, the state of Israel requires mandatory military service.⁷ This point is particularly salient in the context of 1948, when the IDF took Jews from many countries and drastically different military backgrounds and created a unified and

³ The Hebrew Revival began in the late nineteenth century and was chiefly sponsored by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Ben-Yehuda believed that the adoption of a powerful Hebrew language was equally as important to Zionism as the creation of a Jewish state. Moshe Nahir, "Micro Language Planning and the Revival of Hebrew: A Schematic Framework," *Language in Society* 27, no. 3 (1996): 336.

⁴ Nacham Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 147.

⁵ Peter H. Wilson, "Defining Military Culture," *The Journal of Military History* 72 (January 2008): 18.

⁶ Wilson, "Defining Military Culture," 17-18.

⁷ The exemptions to mandatory military service extend to Orthodox Jews in religious study institutions, Arab Israeli citizens and other minority groups, and married women or women with children. See Mahal IDF Volunteers, "IDF Background Information," <http://www.mahal-idf-volunteers.org/information/background/content.htm> (accessed 25 April 2010).

effective army. In fact, in order for the IDF to successfully fulfill its purpose—to protect the state of Israel and prevent the extermination of its people—the organization's leadership needed to be completely unified.

The IDF's success between 1948 and 1973 demonstrates without question that the organization was able to unify and establish itself as a premier army. Scholars posit several possible explanations for the development of the IDF's unit identity and culture. One explanation is that the terrain and geographic features of Israel dictated and developed the fighting culture of the IDF. Israel is a geographically small nation with terrain ranging from rolling heights to expansive deserts. The small geographic area renders a defense-in-depth strategy impractical, while the diverse terrain necessitates a flexible and versatile army.⁸ Others point to Israel's security situation to explain the IDF's culture. Traditional International Relations theorists would classify Israel's international situation as a classic security dilemma.⁹ Israel is surrounded by hostile neighbors, whose anti-Semitic rhetoric is backed by armies emplaced upon Israel's borders. This precarious and decades-old security situation and the constant threat facing Israel certainly affected the development IDF's culture. The identity and nature of the Arab enemies Israel faced during this time period is another plausible explanation. According to this line of argument, the IDF identified a threat and developed in order to best meet that threat.¹⁰

While all of these factors did help unify the army by providing potential definitions of strategic purpose, operational style, and tactical responses, none of them fully account for the IDF's response to these key factors. Explaining the IDF's development of a unique organizational culture, therefore, must include a wider variety of explanations than International Relations theories might suggest. Formal military doctrine is the first natural place to look. A cohesive doctrine would unify an army and provide guidance and direction in key developmental areas; however, the IDF actually prides itself on its lack of a formal doctrine. A second explanation might rely on culture, which plays an integral role in the development of armies. Culture—as defined by John Lynn in *Battle*—is, generally speaking, the “values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, [and] preconceptions”

⁸ For examples of the effects that terrain had on the IDF see Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Random House, 1978); David Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert: The Story of the Israeli Armoured Corps* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1989).

⁹ John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167.

¹⁰ See Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2002). See also Donald Neff, *Warriors Against Israel* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Amana Books, 1988).

specific to a particular entity.¹¹ For military institutions, adding “conceptions of war and combat . . . [and] civic values” to the definition is also reasonable.¹²

Identifying a common cultural and unit identity is essential to understanding the IDF—the paramount cultural institution within the state of Israel. Armies function best when they have a common unifying force, because it allows soldiers to easily identify with one another. Culture allows an army to act as a single entity and contributes to group unity by creating a common understanding of both mission intent and actions.¹³ Like other modern armies, the IDF needed a usable past or common history, a need intensified by Israel’s precarious strategic setting surrounded by a numerically superior enemy whose stated goal was Israel’s extermination.

Perhaps the most obvious useable past or collective identity could be based on all Israelis sharing a common Jewish history; however, this was not the case. Jewish history following the formation of the Diaspora in 136 C.E. was complicated and fragmented. Following the Roman Expulsion of the Jews from the biblical land of Israel, two distinct types of Jews emerged during the Diaspora. The Sephardic Jews lived primarily in the Mediterranean region. The Sephardic Jews were primarily trade-based people who lived in communities of close physical proximity because of their dietary and religious rules; however, their occupations and role in the greater society brought them out of their insular communities and allowed them to communicate with the general population.¹⁴ Their communities, sometimes referred to as “ghettos,” were primarily utilized for sleeping and religious activities, and these Jews spent the majority of their time interacting with the local populace. Sephardic Jews generally held overlapping identities: they were Jewish, but they were also citizens of the nation where they lived.¹⁵ These overlapping, multiple identities were rarely in conflict and allowed them to participate and contribute as productive members of society.¹⁶

The Ashkenazi Jew, who lived primarily in Eastern Europe, usually had a completely different experience than their Sephardic counterparts. The Ashkenazi were primarily agrarian farmers, and their lack of a marketable trade, along with the fact that they lived in rural areas, meant that they had limited contact with their broader society.¹⁷ Because they did not assimilate, the Ashkenazi maintained

¹¹ John Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003), xx.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Wilson, “Defining Military Culture,” 14.

¹⁴ See S.D. Goitein, *The Individual: Portrait of a Mediterranean Personality of the High Middle Ages as reflected in the Cairo Geniza*, vol. 5 of *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xx.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 501-02.

¹⁷ Rita Steinhardt Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust: From Ideology to Annihilation* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 30-34.

distinctive clothing and grooming habits. Hitler used photographs and other depictions of these *Ostjuden*, the stereotype of an ethnic Jew, to emphasize the “alien” nature of Jews to an assimilated German society.

Western European Jews were a mix of Sephardic and Ashkenazi.¹⁸ The Ashkenazi Jews who came to Western Europe assimilated geographically through proximity to society, just as Sephardic Jews had. A fuller assimilation of Jews in Western Europe occurred during the Enlightenment.¹⁹ The *Haskalah*, or the Jewish Enlightenment, coincided with the European Enlightenment, and marked the advent of cultural Jews—Jews who had more in common with their gentile neighbors than their religious counterparts.²⁰ The *Haskalah* promoted merit and a contributable place in society for all Jews. However, the Enlightenment did not lead to stability in European society for Jews. Nationalism, race-based anti-Semitism, and the depiction of Jews as traitors to the state were all perversions of Enlightenment ideals.²¹

The IDF had several potential past histories that it could invoke in the creation of a shared identity. The first, and rather obvious shared past, was the Holocaust. Nearly all early Israelis were affected by the devastating extermination of six million Jews. Centering Israeli culture around the Holocaust did have some potential advantages. The biggest advantage was the defiant response, “Never Again,” which prompted Israelis to take an aggressively-defensive culture. However, the Holocaust was not an identity that the Israelis, particularly the IDF, wished to embrace, because while the lesson “Never Again” informed Israeli society as a whole, the Holocaust represented the ultimate oppression and extermination of the Jewish people.²² While Jewish resistance included several ghetto uprisings, including the famous rebellion in Warsaw, Jewish assimilation into modern European society meant that the structure was not present for persistent Jewish military resistance to the Holocaust.²³ The memory of near-

¹⁸ Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1779-1879* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 2-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57-65.

²⁰ This period also marks the emergence of Hasidic Jews, who responded against the *Haskalah* and assimilation. See Botwinick, *A History of the Holocaust*, 36. Overall, this raises the question of whether the Enlightenment was an acknowledgment of or an accelerant of Jewish assimilation.

²¹ Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 1-29.

²² See Steven T. Katz and Shlomo Biderman, eds., *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Part II of the book, “Israeli Responses during and after the War,” depicts the wide-range of responses within Israel to the Holocaust and how this was an obstacle to creating a single identity.

²³ For accounts of Jewish resistance and uprising during World War II, see Yitzhak Arad, ed., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, 8th ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

annihilation was not one that a proud, aggressive, and combat effective military would be built upon.

During the formation of the state of Israel, the new Israelis asked themselves whether assimilation had made them complacent or vulnerable. Yet, they realized that in the end the answer was of little consequence. What did matter was that they had to reconstruct their Jewish identities. Because most of the Israelis had very little in common, Israel could not simply rely upon “Jewishness” to unite them. Instead leaders and soldiers turned to biblical and ancient times, to discover and cultivate myths about biblical Jewish military heroes and the existence of a strong Jewish state.

The military culture of the IDF was likewise constructed from the myths of biblical Judaism. The biblical and ancient culture, myths, and religion of the Jewish reflected a time of great strength and power. These pasts were constructed, passed down through generations, and altered to reflect the spirit and the ideals of what IDF leaders believed that an Israeli soldier ought to be. The correspondence of this constructed past to what actually happened is not nearly as important to the development of an IDF culture as what the meaning and spirit of the myth actually suggested about Israeli strategic purpose, operational style, and tactical responses.

The IDF consciously called upon and successfully utilized biblical myths and ancient Israelite military traditions as the foundation for a usable past common to the majority of Israelis in order to answer several key questions about the development and direction of the IDF’s military culture between 1948 and 1973. These myths played an integral role in binding together a disparate people and in inculcating a common strategic purpose, operational style, and tactical response in the face of difficult political, strategic, and military circumstances. However, as these myths were tested in real-world situations, the limits of the myths’ utility became evident, and by the end of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, these powerful myths began to crumble, thus forcing the IDF to rethink and even reconstruct its identity.

The Third Temple: The Myth of the Jewish Homeland

Every organized and professional army requires a purpose, a clear mission that establishes why it exists and what it needs to accomplish. The fundamental purpose of all armies is simple: to protect the physical boundaries of their nation and keep their country free of foreign invaders. The IDF is no different—it exists to protect and defend Israel; however, Israel is unique because many Jews around the world recognize an additional understanding of Israel. They see the state of Israel not just as a modern state, but also as the physical embodiment of the long-

held idea of a Jewish homeland. Popular belief in this idea complicates how Israelis themselves define the purpose of the IDF.

The recognition of the land of Israel as the Jewish homeland lies at the foundation of the Jewish religion. The book of Exodus, the second book of the Hebrew Bible, describes in great detail the promise and existence of the Jewish homeland. According to Jewish oral and written tradition, God spoke to Moses and charged him with leading the Jewish slaves out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and into the wilderness of the Sinai on their way to the “Promised Land.”²⁴ The “Promised Land” God set aside for the Jewish people came to be Israel. For more than three thousand years Jews believed that Israel was their homeland, even when they did not physically reside there. The land of Israel represented freedom and promise, and this intense need for, and attachment to, a homeland runs parallel to the story of the Jewish people—it is impossible to tell one without the other.²⁵

The course of Jewish history is dominated by the identification of Israel as the Jewish homeland. The expulsion of the Jewish people from Israel, and their continuous efforts to return and reestablish the Jewish homeland, runs throughout the narrative of Jewish history. Jewish history is divided into periods of time beginning with the Israelites’ arrival or return to the land of Israel, and those same periods then end with their expulsion.

The first of such periods began with Joshua’s conquest of the biblical land of Israel and its unification as a kingdom under Saul in the late eleventh century BCE.²⁶ Solomon, the fourth king of Israel, constructed a great temple in his capital city of Jerusalem, signifying that the Jewish people viewed the land of Israel as their homeland as Solomon’s temple became integral to the very practice of

²⁴ Exodus 3:2-40:38.

²⁵ Religious education materials and web sites such as www.jewfaq.org strongly reinforce the notion that Jews, particularly Israelis, view Israel as the Jewish Homeland. [Jewfaq.org](http://www.jewfaq.org) details the history of the Jewish people in Israel, and states that “Most . . . Jews support the state of Israel as a homeland.” Tracey R. Rich, “The Land of Israel,” *Judaism* 101, <http://www.jewfaq.org/israel.htm> (accessed April 20, 2010). While not a scholarly source, this website is an accurate representation of the way many Jews see themselves. The purpose of the website is to educate non-Jews about the fundamental beliefs in Judaism. See also the popular Jewish history blog, <http://www.blogs.targetx.com/wildriverreview/longroad/> “The Long Road to the Promised Land” for a better understanding on how Jews, particularly Israelis, view Israel as the Jewish homeland. Gunter David, “The Long Road to the Promised Land,” *Wild River Review*, <http://www.blogs.targetx.com/wildriverreview/longroad/> (accessed April 20, 2010).

The Israeli government furthers this belief that the state is Israel is a homeland for Jews around the world by setting policy that supports this belief. The involvement of political parties that deny that Israel is the Jewish homeland is limited in the Knesset, and the Knesset will not hear motions or legislation questioning or appealing Israel’s “Jewish Character.” The state of Israel also declared a right of return, encouraging the immigration of Jews around the world. Sammy Smooha, “The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State,” *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 489.

²⁶ The biblical land of Israel is referred to in Genesis as, “the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” Genesis 15:18-19.

Judaism.²⁷ This period, referred to as the First Temple Period, was a prosperous time for the Israelites. This prosperity lasted until the sixth century B.C.E., when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon invaded Israel and Judea and began to deport a large number of Jews to Babylon.²⁸ The Exile of the Jews to Babylon, and the subsequent destruction of the First Temple, represented pivotal moments in Jewish history. For the first time since they were slaves in Egypt, the Jewish people found themselves both without a homeland and apart from their Temple.

After their exile in Babylon, the Israelites returned to their homeland and immediately began construction of a Second Temple. The Second Temple period, lasting from about 516 B.C.E to 70 C.E. was again a time of overall prosperity and religious growth.²⁹ Judaism again centered on the priests and the Temple, while Torah law became the law of the land of Israel. The affluence ended with the eruption of the Jewish Great Revolt against the Roman Empire in 66 C.E. Despite four years of strong resistance, Roman Legions under Emperor Titus and General Silva stormed Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Although left without a Temple, Israel, then known as Judea, remained the Jewish homeland for a large number of Jews until 136 C.E. In that year, Simon Bar Kochba led a rebellion against the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who rebuilt Jerusalem as a Roman city, and rededicated the Temple as a Roman pagan temple.³⁰ After the failure of Bar Kochba's revolt, the Romans attempted to erase any evidence of Judea by expelling the majority of its Jewish citizens and changing the name of the region to Palestine.³¹

Hadrian's attempt to destroy Judaism marked the beginning of the Diaspora. Deprived of their homeland, the Jewish people spread throughout the world, settling in Europe, Byzantium, Arabia, and even as far as Africa and China.³² These Jewish settlers brought a new form of Judaism with them, all around the world, one with less emphasis on the temple. Not surprisingly, the Diaspora

²⁷ The Temple was the heart of Jewish society, the center of both political and spiritual power in Israel, as it represented the physical home of God on earth. The ancient Jewish religion mandated that sacrifices be made at the Temple. Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 212; Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, An Introduction* (London: Penguin Group, 2002), 57.

²⁸ Smart, *The World's Religions*, 213.

²⁹ Smart, *World Religions*, 213. There were phases during the Second Temple Period where the Jewish religion fell under threat. The Greek Seleucids, for example, attempted to force their pagan religion on the Jewish people, but were defeated by the Maccabees, who cleansed the Temple and restored Judaism. Moshe Pearlman, *The Maccabees* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

³⁰ Bar Kochba's revolt came close to success. He inflicted tremendous casualties against the Romans before they were eventually overwhelmed and defeated. Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt Against Rome* (Jerusalem: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 22.

³¹ Shmuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1973), 96.

³² Isolated Jewish communities have been discovered in Ethiopia, Mali, and parts of north Western China. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 249.

affected different Jewish communities in different ways, depending mostly on their geographic location and relationship with the general society. Differences in geography, economy, culture, and language, as well as Jew's assimilation into European societies set the stage for targeted anti-Jewish and later anti-Semitic, attacks. This behavior was largely a perversion of the ideals of the Enlightenment, and ultimately led to the Holocaust.

After suffering through the horrors of the Holocaust, many surviving Jews thought the only way to regain their identity and strength as a people was to come together, both literally and figuratively, in the land promised to them by God. This belief evolved into one of the driving forces behind the Zionist movement. The movement began in the late nineteenth century and developed from the necessity to unify the Jewish people in their "Promised Land."³³ Theodore Herzl, founder of the World Zionist Organization, and often mistakenly credited with founded the Zionist movement, propagated Zionism as a secular response to anti-Semitism and European success at assimilation. However several other influential organizations and people argue that the secular nature of Zionism is unimportant. Rather, they argue that Zionism was a natural response to the absence of a Jewish homeland and the Exile of the Jewish people.³⁴ Max Nordau, a Jewish physician and novelist active in Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century, went as far as to link Zionism directly to the Jewish "desire of going back to a glorious past."³⁵ Nordau yearned to "once again [create] a Jewry of muscles," similar to the Israelites of old, and he wanted to establish this new Jewish order on the ancestral Jewish homeland of Israel.³⁶

For many Jews, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 represented the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem and the reassertion of the Jewish homeland, promised to them by God.³⁷ Each previous period of Jewish prominence in the

³³ Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew In the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 418.

³⁴ The BILU, which was an acronym stemming from Isaiah 2:5—*Beit Ya'akov Lekhu Venelkah*—"The house of Jacob, let us go [up]," were a group of Russian Jews who declare their intent to establish "A Home in our country. It was given to us by the mercy of God, it is ours as registered in the archives of history." BILU *Manifesto*. In addition, Ahad Ha-Am, also known as Asher Hirsch Ginsberg, and leader of Hibbat Zion, opposed political and secular reasons for resettling in Palestine. Ahad Ha-Am, *Address to the First Zionist Congress, 1897*, in Mendes-Flohr, *The Jew In the Modern World*, 421.

³⁵ Max Nordau, "Muskeljudentum," *Juedische Turnzeitung* (June 1903). Republished in *Zionistische Schriften* (Cologne and Leipzig: Juedischer Verlag, 1909), 389. In Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, ed., J. Hessing, trans., *The Jew In the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 435

³⁶ Nordau, "Muskeljudentum," 435.

³⁷ To be clear, this refers to a Third Temple in the metaphorical sense, not the physical rebuilding of the Third Temple. This assertion is not groundless. Professor Louis Rene Beres of Purdue University described the State of Israel as the "Third Temple Commonwealth," and the Israeli newspaper *Arutz Sheva* describes the "Thrid Temple of the Third Jewish Commonwealth." Louis Rene Beres, Address to the Department of War Studies, King's College, London, October 16, 1996; Tom Mountain, "The Third Temple," *The Temple Institute*, reprinted from *Arutz Sheva*, August 3, 2008.

homeland coincided with the existence of a temple, and the state of Israel functioned in the mid-twentieth century just as the First and Second Temples had for the ancient Israelites. The State of Israel would serve as both the political and religious center of gravity for Jews around the world. The Israeli Knesset represents the position of Jews on global issues, and Israel is home to the leading Jewish theological seminaries and rabbinical schools in the world.³⁸ Although Jews may live in other places, all Jews around the world are permitted, even encouraged, to join the community of the new temple.³⁹

Eager to quickly create an army capable of successfully defending the young state, the leaders of the IDF used this myth as propaganda. They needed to unite the IDF and give the soldiers a clear mission and purpose. The purpose that the IDF created was more than just to defend the borders. In 1948, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, one of the propagators of the homeland myth, outlined the IDF's purpose when he addressed a group of soldiers and told them that they fought for the fate of their country and for "all Jewry's [fate]."⁴⁰ The employment of the powerful idea that Israel represented the Jewish homeland was certainly intentional, employed to remind the Israeli Jews what was at stake. In a speech commemorating the opening of the road to Jerusalem in 1948, the prime minister referred to the Babylonian exile and the effect that exile had on the Jewish people. He described how "the King of Babylon 'stood . . . to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images . . . at his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter.'"⁴¹ Ben-Gurion frequently reminded the nation that the enemies of Israel had expelled the Jews from Israel before. By reminding the population that non-Jewish armies fought and defeated the ancient Israelites on the same ground that the Israelis fought on, Ben-Gurion integrated modern Israel's security struggle into the narrative of a three-thousand-year-old religious struggle rather than a separate war for independence. Ben-Gurion proclaimed that the Jewish soldier would be

Some Israelis, as well as some Christian groups, actively call for the physical reconstruction of the Third Temple. For further information see organizations like the Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael Faithful Movement, <http://www.templemountfaithful.org>.

³⁸ See Smooha, "The Model of Ethnic Democracy," 489.

³⁹ Israel encourages Jews from all over the world to end the Diaspora by making *Aliyah*. *Aliyah* is the right that any Jew has to immigrate to Israel and become a full Israeli citizen.

⁴⁰ Ben-Gurion also quotes the book of Isaiah in the same speech. David Ben-Gurion, "Peace and War, 1948," *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, Mordechai Nurock, ed. and trans. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 250.

⁴¹ Ben-Gurion focuses on the divination and paganism of the Babylonians to make a parallel to the Arab armies facing Israel. David Ben Gurion, "Formal Opening of 'Courage Road' Linking Coast with Jerusalem." Mission of the United States, Tel-Aviv, Israel, December 9, 1948. In Charles F. Knox, Counselor of Mission, "Formal Opening of 'Courage Road' Linking Coast with Jerusalem," Box no. 1, Tel Aviv Embassy, General Records, Record Group 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Modern Military Records, National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, Md.

unstoppable because “he knows he is fighting for the full deliverance of his people, its perfect redemption.”⁴²

Propagating the myth that Israel represented the idea of the Jewish homeland rather than simply the physical borders of a state was extremely influential in the development and definition of the purpose of the IDF and its emergence as a unified and victorious army in 1948. However, as the Jewish homeland myth developed, its deployment had unforeseen consequences that eventually complicated and clouded the purpose and role of the IDF. Over the next two decades, Israel existed in a nearly-continuous state of war, culminating in the expansion of its borders after the 1967 Six Day War.⁴³ However the addition of the entire West Bank, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights raised new questions as to the definition of Israel and the idea of the Jewish homeland. What exactly constituted the Jewish homeland? Was the homeland anywhere an ancient Israelite happened to live? The Israelites spent forty years wandering in the “wilderness” of the Sinai—did that mean the inviolable Jewish homeland must extend to the Sinai as well?

The inability to define the geographic limits of the Jewish homeland manifested a larger problem after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. During the early phases of the war, the armies of Egypt and Syria took significant portions of Israeli territory before ultimately being repulsed by the IDF. However, the limitations of the myth were exposed in the peace process that followed. In the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979, Israel conceded large portions of the Sinai to Egypt. The IDF became trapped by its own myth. If the IDF's purpose was to defend Israel, including the idea that Israel was the Jewish homeland, then how could they consent to returning the Sinai to the Egyptian government? However, Israel did return the Sinai, reflecting a more real-politik truth. The myth of the homeland was no match for rational, security-based decisions, and could no longer form the primary basis for the IDF's strategic vision. To add further insult to the injury, the IDF supervised the withdrawal from the Sinai and watched as the myth of their role as protectors of biblical Israel crumbled around them.

The myth of the Jewish homeland gave the IDF a united and common purpose. Yet, as the myth expanded and the physical borders of the Jewish homeland changed, the IDF's mission and purpose became clouded. The course and outcome of the Yom Kippur War, the realization that the IDF was not invincible, and the decision to make concessions to some of its Arab neighbors, marked a decline of the homeland myth's effectiveness in influencing the IDF's strategic purpose.

⁴² Ben-Gurion, “Meeting the future: July 23, 1948,” *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, 267.

⁴³ At the end of the Six Day War, Israel's territory was very similar to description of Greater Israel in Genesis 15: 18-19.

Outnumbered and In the Dark: The Operation Style of the IDF

If the purpose of the IDF between 1948 and 1973 was to protect and defend Israel—understood as both the literal state and the figurative homeland- IDF leaders had to define the IDF’s operational style. How would the army go about accomplishing its mission? The first and most obvious answer would be a reliance on doctrine. However, the IDF lacked this sort of written, coherent doctrine, common to most armies, which defines how an army acts operationally.⁴⁴ Without a cohesive and binding doctrine, and lacking a historical national military tradition, the IDF turned to a constellation of biblical and historical myths in order to develop a unique operational style of warfare.

Perhaps the most important factor in the IDF’s development of an operational fighting style was that the IDF insisted that it was always at a disadvantage, whether reality bore that out or not. Israel was and surrounded by hostile Arab nations, each with a superior numerical military advantage, and combined threaten Israel with at least four different armies along four different sections of the Israeli border. The important factor is that the Israeli soldiers saw themselves as the perpetual underdog, and that image greatly affected how they fought.

In a speech to the Provisional State Council in July 1948, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion invoked Jewish military history in order to describe Israel’s military situation. He stated that the War of Independence “resemble[s] the Bible Story. Chapters from Joshua and Judges might have been written today.”⁴⁵ Ben-Gurion described how a host of foreign invaders threatened Joshua and the land of Israel, and how “Joshua and the children of Israel smote” the invaders at every turn.⁴⁶ The only difference that Ben-Gurion highlighted was that the ancient Israelites fought the invaders one at a time, while the contemporary IDF faced for the first time in 3,500 years, the Middle East united against Israel.⁴⁷ Not only were modern challenges equal to those that faced the ancient Israelites, they were even more extreme and dire. Ben-Gurion also noted how Israel’s disadvantage in arms and

⁴⁴ The IDF has no formative, written doctrine. Many Israelis talk about doctrine, but not in the same sense that American military terms dictate. General Israel Tal discusses at length what he calls the “doctrine of national security” in his book *National Security: The Israeli Experience*; however, what he actually describes is much closer to the American definition of strategy, based loosely off of the definition of strategy. See Yisrael Tal, *National Security: The Israeli Experience*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), 6.

However, other Israeli officers use a definition of doctrine that is more along the lines of what American military thinkers would recognize as tactics, techniques, and procedures, or TTPs. Lieutenant Colonel Brian Steed, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, interview by Bradley Cohn and Alexander Saul, Tel Aviv, Israel, July 20, 2009. Notes in author’s possession.

⁴⁵ Ben-Gurion, “Prepared to Meet the Future: July 22, 1948,” *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, 261.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 261.

equipment equated directly to Saul and Jonathan's wars against "the crafty Philistines."⁴⁸

Ben-Gurion's conclusion that Israel's security situation looked extremely similar to that of biblical Israel allowed him to call upon that myth in order to inspire and motivate Israeli citizens. In ancient times, Israel fell between the strong Egyptian empire to the west and a multitude of powerful empires to the east, including the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Seleucid, all of which were eventually replaced by Rome. These empires all possessed strong and powerful armies that outnumbered the Israelite armies. Fighting with inferior manpower became a common theme in ancient Jewish warfare. A perpetual disadvantage in numbers meant that the ancient Israelites needed to become particularly adept at fighting outnumbered.⁴⁹ By invoking this biblical example, Ben-Gurion hoped to make Israelis understand the importance of military service and coming together as a nation in the face of what he considered tantamount danger. He commanded the Israelis' attention by claiming that their current predicament was even worse than anything their ancient Jewish ancestors faced, but then sought to inspire them by reminding the nation that the biblical Israelites defeated their enemies, and that modern Israel would do the same.

The IDF was further influenced by charismatic individuals such as British Army officer Orde Wingate. Wingate, an extremely devout Christian, traveled to Palestine and helped structure the Haganah and the Palmach in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Wingate individually instructed top Israeli officers, including Yigal Allon and Moshe Dayan.⁵⁰ Wingate viewed his role in the development of the defense as similar to the biblical figure Gideon.⁵¹ According to the book of Judges, Gideon was an ordinary Israelite chosen by God to lead the people of Israel away from idol worship and back to God. However, on the eve of battle, with his army assembled, God told Gideon that he had too many soldiers. God told Gideon to release nearly half of his army in order to prove that the victory was God's rather than that of a numerically superior force.⁵² Wingate understood the importance of morale and took it upon himself to structure the emerging IDF in the image of Gideon's army. Though Wingate was neither Jewish nor an Israeli, his belief in the same biblical myths and his dedication to the spirit of the ancient Israelite warrior demonstrated the extent that the biblical stories resonated in the foundations of the IDF.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Ben-Gurion decried Israel's precarious geographic position. Ben-Gurion, "Prepared to Meet the Future," *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, 262; Ben-Gurion, "Review of the Military and Political Situation: May 19, 1948," *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, 240.

⁵⁰ Yigal Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1970), 9.

⁵¹ Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army*, 12.

⁵² Judges 7:4-7.

The importance of strong faith-based morale was not lost on Wingate's pupils. Former Israeli general, turned archaeological hero, Yigael Yadin identified another cornerstone of the IDF's method of fighting in his essay titled, "In the Paths of Military Thinking." Yadin attributed a large degree of the IDF's success to the morale of the Israeli soldiers, a morale created by "faith and military culture."⁵³ In developing his maxim on morale, it seems plausible, perhaps even likely, that Yadin was influenced by the historic and biblical myths of ancient Israel.⁵⁴

One story in particular exemplified Yadin's description of the importance of faith and morale in the IDF, that of Judah the Maccabee.⁵⁵ Judah was the brilliant military leader of the Maccabees, a group of Israeli warriors who opposed the religious oppression of the Seleucid Empire and started a revolt in 167 B.C.E.⁵⁶ On three different occasions, Judah defeated three powerful Seleucid armies, all while at an overwhelming numerical disadvantage.⁵⁷ Judah was a particularly adept commander, and knew that faith and morale were just as important to his numerically inferior army as his battle plans. On the eve of the battle of Beth Horon, Judah told his soldiers: "It is easy for many to be hemmed in by few, for in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. It is not the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven."⁵⁸ Reassuring his soldiers that God was with them allowed Judah the freedom to formulate a battle plan based upon his intimate knowledge of the terrain and defeat the larger Seleucid army. This example, and others like it, helped to reassure future generations of Israeli soldiers, giving them the courage and confidence to repeatedly face and defeat armies larger than their own. General Moshe Dayan demonstrated his confidence as he discussed Egypt's numerical superiority on the eve of the Six Day War. Dayan asserted that he was confident of an Israeli victory in spite of this numerical disadvantage.⁵⁹

⁵³ Yigael Yadin, "Learning from Experience," in "In the Paths of Military Thinking" (Tel Aviv: Ma'archot Publishing House, 1950), reprinted in Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army*, 223.

⁵⁴ Yadin was a famous historian and archaeologist in Israel. He led the excavation of Masada and several other important excavations in Jerusalem and all around Israel. He was well versed in Israeli and Jewish history, and he would have been very much aware of the ancient Israelite military myths and traditions.

⁵⁵ Nearly all Israelis know the story of Judah and the Maccabees, thanks in large part to the holiday of Hanukkah. Although not a High Holiday, Hanukkah is an extremely popular and meaningful holiday to both religious and secular Jews. The story of Hanukkah tells how the Maccabees, after defeated the Seleucids and reclaiming the Second Temple, found that there was only enough oil to light the eternal flame for one day. The oil lasted eight days until new oil arrived, and the Maccabees proclaimed a miracle.

⁵⁶ Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Random House, 1978), 190.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁵⁸ 1 Maccabees 3:18-19.

⁵⁹ Moshe Dayan, "General Dayan Meets the Press" May 30 – June 5, 1967, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.

Menachem Begin, the charismatic commander of the Irgun, a Jewish paramilitary organization that operated in Israel in the 1940's, also referred to the Maccabees when he discussed the 1948 Independence War. He compared the war to the struggle of the Maccabees, calling the war the "first Hebrew revolt since the Hasmonean insurrection that has ended in victory."⁶⁰ Begin saw a parallel between the struggle for Israeli independence and the actions of the biblical heroes.⁶¹

General Yigal Allon, former Palmach and IDF commander, identified several attributes that he believed created an IDF military tradition in his book, *The Making of Israel's Army*. Allon stated that the IDF's "unconventional approach to war, their adaptability, their strictly functional attitude, their conscious discipline and calculated courage . . . understanding of the principles of war and . . . being able to fight by night as well as by day" were all important elements to describe how the IDF conducts war.⁶² For Allon, the combination of these factors was at least partly responsible for the IDF's success between 1948 and 1973. Many of these factors, save a "strictly functional attitude" and an "understanding of the principles of war," which are vital to most armies, incorporate important aspects of the biblical mythology of ancient Israel.

Allon and his contemporaries in the IDF may not have directly credited the development of the IDF to the unifying power of a Jewish cultural identity, formed primarily by biblical myths; however, this is expected since culture is deeply embedded, existing in the subconscious, and informs thoughts and actions subtly. An individual may not even be aware of how this myth-based culture affects their decisions. Therefore, Allon's assertion that the Palmach was special because it represented the first autonomous Jewish military force in Israel since Bar Kochba's revolt in 132 C.E., and his mention that the first Jewish military parade since the fall of the Second Temple took place in 1948, present clear evidence of a connection between contemporary Israeli military thought and the broad understanding of Jewish warriors of ancient Israel.⁶³ These connections demonstrated that many Israelis viewed the IDF as the continuation of the Jewish

⁶⁰ The Hasmonean insurrection is another name for the wars of the Maccabees, and the dynasty that they created in Judea. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (New York: Nash Publishing, 1977). Quoted in Eric Cline, *Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 268.

⁶¹ Eric Cline, *Jerusalem Besieged*, 268.

⁶² General Allon was an integral part of the development of the early IDF as the former commander of the Palmach and an influential general in the early years of the IDF. Although General Allon contributes the majority of the development of the IDF to the practices and development of the Haganah and the Palmach, organizations that he played a large role in, his book does lend some weight to the argument in favor of the importance of Jewish and Israelite culture set forth by this paper. Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army*, 59. To be clear, the Haganah, Hebrew for "the defense" was the main Jewish paramilitary organization responsible for the protection of the Jewish settlements of Palestine from the 1920s until 1948. The Palmach was the military elite branch of the Haganah.

⁶³ Allon, *The Making of Israel's Army*, 21, 38.

military narrative that began with Aaron and Joshua and ended abruptly with the defeat of Bar Kochba's revolt.

Many of Allon's IDF traditions could be found in the myths and stories surrounding the Maccabees and other biblical Jewish military organizations. Judah the Maccabee provided countless examples of adaptability and unorthodox military decisions made by Israelite leaders in order to mitigate an overwhelming numerical disadvantage. He defeated large Seleucid armies by conducting a series of raids, most often at night, in order to frustrate the enemy forces and make them overeager for a battle on unfamiliar terrain.⁶⁴ Then Judah, relying on his knowledge of the terrain and his soldiers' confidence and faith in God, ordered a bold charge or envelopment, and defeated the numerically superior army.⁶⁵

Invocations of biblical myths and military heroes also occurred in military orders. On the morning of the air attack that began the Six Day War in 1967, Air Force Commander Mordecai "Motti" Hod addressed his pilots: "The Spirit of Israel's heroes accompany us to battle . . . From Joshua Bin-Nun, King David, the Maccabees and the fighters of 1948 and 1956, we shall draw the strength and courage to strike the Egyptians who threaten our safety, our independence, and our future. Fly, soar at the enemy, destroy him and scatter him throughout the desert so that Israel may live, secure in its land, for generations."⁶⁶ This speech was clearly meant to motivate and inspire the pilots of the Israeli Air Force to live up to the reputation of the biblical myths and heroes so common to them.

When these myths describing the ancient Israelite military traditions were absorbed and incorporated into the thinking of the IDF, a unique type of operational warfare began to emerge. One place where the biblical Israelite military myths manifested themselves in the practices of the IDF was through the naming of military operations. All armies approach the naming of their operations differently. American officer Lieutenant Colonel Gregory C. Sieminski describes the importance of naming military operations. Beyond simple and obvious security reasons, naming operations can send a powerful message about the nature of the operation. For example, Operation JUST CAUSE implied that the US mission in Panama would be for positive, beneficial reasons far more than the original codename, BLUE SPOON, would have indicated. Sieminski concludes naming operations is important because "the perception of an operation can be as important to success as the execution of that operation."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 195.

⁶⁵ For a more in-depth profile of Judah as a commander and of his campaigns against the Seleucid's, see Herzog and Gichon's *Battles of the Bible*.

⁶⁶ Mordecai "Motti" Hod in Oren, *Six Days of War*, 170.

⁶⁷ Charles W. McClain, Jr., and Garry D. Levin, "Public Affairs in America's 21st Century," *Military Review* 74 (November 1994): 11. Another example of an operation renamed because of its connotation was Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, which was changed from Operation IRAQI LIBERATION, or OIL.

The IDF understood the importance of operation naming conventions, and applied this principle frequently. The IDF often named their operations after famous Biblical references, intentionally framing the operation in order to connect the intent of the operation to Jewish history. A prime example of this is Operation Kadesh, the Israeli armored attack into the Sinai Peninsula in 1956. In his war diary, General Moshe Dayan reflected on the meaning of the operation name. He described that Kadesh was the site where Moses rested on his way out of Egypt.⁶⁸ Dayan claimed that during the rest at Kadesh, Moses prepared to take military action against the enemies of the Jews.⁶⁹ Naming that operation Kadesh explicitly connected the Sinai Campaign to the great military victories of Moses and the ancient Israelites.

Operation Nachshon was another example of a conscious effort to connect contemporary military operations to biblical events. Nachshon was one of Moses' lieutenants and, according to Jewish scripture, was the first Israelite to cross the Red Sea during the flight from Egypt.⁷⁰ The Haganah generals deliberately selected Operation Nachshon to be the codename for the operation that would break through the Arab road blocks and open a road into Jerusalem. By naming the operation after the Israelite who first crossed the parted Red Sea, the Haganah portrayed the image that they were going to part the Arab defenses just as Moses and Nachshon had many years ago.⁷¹

The influence of the myths of Israelite victories even extended to the way the IDF conceived of operational plans and maneuvers against an enemy. A common theme in the military myths of ancient Israel was the commander's propensity for rash, bold, and daring attacks against numerically superior armies. One of the most famous examples of such a battle plan was conducted by Judah the Maccabee at his famous victory at the battle of Beth Horon. Judah's 1,000 Jewish soldiers were drastically outnumbered by the 4,000-man Seleucid army under General Seron.⁷² Judah forced the Seleucid army to occupy a narrow pass and maneuvered a small force behind the Seleucids, sealing their exit route. The Jewish army then launched a daring double envelopment while Judah led a charge up aimed at the center of the larger army. The charge killed Seron, and the Seleucid soldiers still alive dispersed and fled the battlefield.⁷³

⁶⁸ Kadesh was also the site of an ancient Egyptian victory of the Hittites.

⁶⁹ Moshe Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign, 1956* (Tel Aviv: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 42.

⁷⁰ Exodus vi, 23.

⁷¹ The operation took place from 5-20 April, 1948 according to the *Jewish Virtual Library*. Several other operations whose names derived from the Bible are Operation Gideon, the Haganah offensive to capture Beisan from 10-15 May 1948, named after the ancient warrior Gideon, as well as *Bi'ur Hametz*, or "Passover Cleansing," the operation that drove the Arabs out of Haifa in April 1948. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 344.

⁷² Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 200.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 202.

The aggressive, and often risky, style of attack exhibited by Judah was quickly adopted by the IDF. Like Judah's forces, the IDF consistently saw itself as the underdog. The IDF also believed, just as the Maccabees did, that God was on their side, therefore, the risky maneuvers did not seem so dangerous. One of the most famous of the IDF's daring and aggressive operations was General Ariel Sharon's attack at Abu-Ageilah on June 6-7, 1967. Abu-Ageilah was an important road junction in the Sinai that was heavily defended by Egyptian fortifications, artillery, and infantry.⁷⁴ Sharon, acting as aggressively and rashly as Judah the Maccabee had in 167 B.C.E, led the 38th Israeli Armored Division in an attack of the defensive positions at Abu-Ageilah. Sharon led the majority of his forces in a frontal assault on the Egyptian position, while Colonel Natke Nir led one battalion on an envelopment of the Egyptian position.⁷⁵ Nir's battalion struck the rear of the Egyptian defense, crippling them, and the operation succeeded with minimal Israeli casualties.⁷⁶ However, the operation was extremely risky. The defending Egyptians held the tactical advantage, but clearly did not expect the IDF to attack in such a manner. The stunning victory at Abu-Ageilah helped to convince the IDF that their commanders' practice of bold attacks and maneuvers against superior forces was well grounded.

However, by the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the myths based upon the understanding that Israel was the outnumbered underdog in the Middle East reached their limits. While Israel never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, few countries in the world were foolish enough to believe that by 1973 Israel lacked the technological capabilities and resources.⁷⁷ Further, even in the darkest days of the Syrian and Egyptian offensive in 1973, the IDF was able to respond and regain all the ground it lost and cross the Suez Canal in less than a week.⁷⁸ Describing the well-armed, conventional IDF at the end of the Yom Kippur War as a scrappy underdog became entirely preposterous. The IDF also recognized that its reckless style of operational maneuver, in which armored units attempted to rush

⁷⁴ Michael Oren, *Six Days of War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 212.

⁷⁵ Dov Tamari, "Operational Case Study: The Operation at Um-Katef/Abu-Ageilah, June 6-7, 1967," in possession of author. In a move even more bold than Sharon's operation, Col. Natke Nir turned his radio off while executing the enveloping maneuver. In an interview at his home in Tel Aviv, he stated that there was nothing that Sharon could have done to control him after he left, and that he did not want to be bothered by Sharon's constant radio communications. Natke Nir, interview by Bradley Cohn and Alexander Saul, Tel Aviv, Israel, August 4, 2009.

⁷⁶ Oren, *Six Days of War*, 212.

⁷⁷ The Israelis had a functioning nuclear reactor, supported by the French government, as early as 1956. It is foolish to believe that they did not have nuclear weapons in 1973. Oren, *Six Days of War*, 13.

⁷⁸ Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East*, 8th ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 261.

Egyptian positions alone and unsupported, was not protected by God, and was too costly to continue.⁷⁹

Masada: The Mantra of No Surrender

Part of developing a military culture is addressing how individual units and soldiers should behave in certain situations. Without a strong guiding doctrine, the IDF turned again to common myths in order to construct expected behavioral guidelines for its soldiers. The IDF wanted to instill the principle that Israeli soldiers should not surrender. Rather than order soldiers to never surrender, the IDF inculcated that value into the consciousness of its soldiers by utilizing the powerful myth of Masada.

The IDF's integration of Masada into its culture and the effect that it had on the young nation of Israel should be of little surprise. Masada represented strength, unity, courage, and sacrifice in the face of oppression and certain danger, all qualities that the IDF needed manifested in its soldiers. The IDF's version of the narrative was one of heroism and sacrifice, one that would appeal to the individual Israeli far more than the version of the story that is likely true, creating an identity formed on a cultural and religious truth as opposed to a historical truth.⁸⁰

Likewise, the necessity to avoid surrender is understandable—Israel's precarious security situation suggests that surrender of any kind would likely lead to the destruction of the state. In order to instill this principle in its soldiers, the IDF used the zealots of Masada, warriors who chose death over capitulation, as models for their soldiers. Masada also served as a reminder of the cost of losing. Jewish power and government in the land of Israel died with the defenders of Masada in 73 C.E., and would not reemerge for nearly two thousand years.⁸¹

Virtually every Israeli citizen is familiar with the myth of Masada and the 960 Jews who perished during the Roman siege in the year 73 C.E.⁸² In fact, the legend of Masada has been a cornerstone of both Jewish and Israeli identity for generations.⁸³ The conventional myth begins with the story of the Great Jewish

⁷⁹ The IDF lost over 400 tanks during the course of the war. Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), 496.

⁸⁰ Rabbi William Dreskin, interview with Bradley Cohn, White Plains, N.Y., 23 January, 2010. Notes with author.

⁸¹ Surrounded by Egyptian forces on the Bar Lev Line, Israeli soldiers made direct comparisons to Masada. Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), 350.

⁸² The use of the word "myth" is deliberate in this particular circumstance. I chose the word myth because, as Israeli sociologist and Masada critic Nacham Ben-Yehuda notes, the word myth delineates a series of attributes that distinguish myths from general history. These attributes include "an attitude of sacredness . . . a dimension of morality . . . and a demand for action. . . ." See Nacham Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 282-83.

⁸³ Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth*, 5.

Revolt in 67 C.E. in which the prominent Jewish citizens of Judea rose against the Roman occupation. In 70 C.E. a Roman army under the command of Titus besieged and captured Jerusalem, desecrated and destroyed the Second Temple, and killed the majority of the Jewish population of the city. However, a small group of Jewish zealots escaped and fled to the southeast and took shelter in the formidable fortress of Masada, high on a hilltop overlooking the Dead Sea. Roused by an inspiring speech delivered by their leader, Elazar Ben-Yair, the zealots bravely defended the fortress against Roman attacks and, on the eve of the Roman breakthrough, elected to take their own lives rather than live as slaves of the Romans.⁸⁴

From early in the Zionist movement to the development of the IDF's culture by the 1960s, the myth's growth and maturation paralleled the growth of the IDF itself. The 1920s was an important decade for the Zionist movement in Palestine. Although a relatively peaceful decade, considering the tumultuous history of the region, Zionists made up only a minority of the population. Surrounded by Arabs, the Zionists needed a symbol to rally behind one that would bolster support for the movement in Palestine and around the world. In 1927, Yitzhak Lamdan, a Ukrainian born Jew living in Palestine, wrote a poem entitled, "Masada." Lamdan used the recently rediscovered fortress as an allegory, reflecting the present Zionist situation in Palestine.⁸⁵ Virtually overnight, Masada became the symbol of the Zionist movement. The poem's stirring language, including the line "Never again

⁸⁴ The historical accuracy of this narrative is disputed. The only contemporary account of the events on Masada is found in the writings of Jewish general turned Roman historian, Flavius Josephus. His work, *The Jewish War*, raises several questions doubting the accuracy of the traditional Israeli legend. While Josephus uses the term "zealot" to describe the defenders of Masada, his account of their actions prior to the siege depict extreme behaviors that questions the authenticity of their religious nature. The Jewish defenders of Masada were known as the Sicarii Jews, and Josephus described them as "desirous of tyrannizing over others and ... of offering violence to others, and of plundering such as were richer than themselves." See Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, The Learned and Authentic Jewish Historian, and Celebrated Warrior: The Jewish War*, Book VII, Chapter VIII, translated by William Whiston (Philadelphia: J. Grigg, 1833), 459. According to Josephus, the Sicarii were aggressive and violent towards other Jews, particularly those who accepted Roman rule. However, this notion that the Sicarii Jews were essentially unconventional freedom fighters pales in comparison to what some historians have written about them.

In his 1995 book *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*, Nachman Ben-Yehuda identifies the defenders of Masada as a "group of detested assassins." See page 5. In fact, the word *Sicarii* is Latin for "assassins" or "murderers" who carry a dagger. See Solomon Zeitlin, "The Sicarii and Masada," in *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 57, no. 4 (April 1967): 17. One reading of Josephus suggests that the Sicarii fled Jerusalem and sought refuge in Masada not because they were chased by the Romans, but because they were expelled by their fellow Jews. However, as Zeitlin points out, using Josephus' text, only a small number of Jews escaped the Roman siege on Jerusalem and fled to Masada. The majority of the 967 Sicarii on Masada arrived there in 65 C.E., a full five years before the fall of Jerusalem. See Josephus, VII, VIII Zeitlin, "Sicarii and Masada," 19. In fact, the main reason that Flavius Silva, the Roman commander, marched on Masada was to pacify the region and stop the Sicarii from using Masada as a base from which they conducted raids and destroyed Jewish villages, the most notorious of which was the destruction of the village of En Gedi. See Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth*, 39.

⁸⁵ Barry Schwartz, *et al.*, "The Recovery of Masada: A study in Collective Memory," *The Sociological Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 153.

shall Masada fall!” convinced many oppressed Jews to leave Europe and join Jews from all over the world in rallying behind the Israelites of old who stood strong in the face of depression.⁸⁶

Speeches and guided tours of Masada by the youth leader Shmaria Guttman in the 1930s and 1940s advocated for a “mental connection with the chain of Hebraic heroism in the past.”⁸⁷ Guttman called upon young Jews, the same young people that made up the majority of the Haganah, Palmach, and early IDF, to “Imagine Masada fortress of Israel that stood in the battle for the freedom of the people and the land against the legions of Rome.”⁸⁸ Speaking directly to the young warriors, Guttman told them to rely on the “heroes of its people, the fighters of Masada.”⁸⁹

Supporters of the Masada myth argue that the archeological evidence unearthed at Masada, particularly by famous archeologist Yigael Yadin, validates their version of the story. There is some truth to this claim. The remains of the Roman wall and siege fortifications and the architectural findings validate some of the myth.⁹⁰ However, there are too many portions of the myth left unsubstantiated by archeological evidence, most notably the lack of evidence of a mass suicide, that all ultimately indicate that there are serious flaws with the historical accuracy of the popular myth.⁹¹

Despite the evidence, or lack thereof, a large number of archeologists and scholars maintain that the archeological evidence supports the popular myth of Masada. Ben-Yehuda offers a likely explanation. He argues that by the time of the most extensive excavations of Masada in the 1960s, the government-fabricated and socially-constructed myth of a heroic mass suicide was already so ingrained in Israeli culture that otherwise logical and critically-thinking individuals could not accept any other truth.⁹² Rather than examining the evidence and drawing

⁸⁶ Masada also represents one of the first times that the concept of Zionism and the Jewish homeland were directly related to specific events from Israel's past. Yitzhak Lamdan, “Masada,” 1927; Schwartz, “The Recovery of Masada: A study in Collective Memory,” 155.

⁸⁷ Guttman quoted in Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 74.

⁸⁸ Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 74.

⁸⁹ Guttman proudly admits to using images of Masada to rally the young generation of Jews, giving them a model to follow and implying the necessity of sacrifice. *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Specifically that Masada was inhabited during this time frame and that the Romans laid siege to the fortress. Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada* (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 33.

⁹¹ The only evidence that suggests a mass suicide at Masada are shards of pottery with names written in Hebrew. Supporters of the myth claim that these shards are the remainder of the lottery used to determine which defenders could be killed by their peers and which had to take their own life. However, this is a reach at best. There is also no archeological evidence of the skeletons or other remains of 960 people on Masada or in the surrounding area. *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 83.

conclusions, scholars forced the evidence to fit their already constructed perception of reality.⁹³

IDF Armored Corps soldiers began to make regular pilgrimages to the desert fortress in the early 1950s, and before long this practice spread throughout the entire army.⁹⁴ Within the decade, all incoming soldiers and officers swore their oath of service on the same ground that their Jewish ancestors sacrificed themselves.⁹⁵ The newly-instated soldiers and commissioned officers, in their first words as members of the IDF, shouted in chorus Lamdan's now famous line, "Masada Shall Not Fall Again!"

However, the importance of Masada in IDF culture extended far beyond weekend retreats and oath swearing ceremonies. At the same time, the Masada myth, taken to its logical extreme, was a fundamentally destructive one. Further, it is one that works against both Jewish prohibitions against suicide and a human tendency toward self-preservation. Nevertheless, several examples are instructive to illustrate how deeply and profoundly the myth influenced actions of Israeli soldiers as well as illuminating the limits of the myth in practice.

One of the earliest and most profound examples of the Masada myth influencing the actions of Israeli soldiers took place immediately before the creation of the State of Israel. In April 1948, the Arab Legion and members of local Arab militias prepared to encircle the *'Etzion Bloc*, a collection of four *kibbutzim* located south of Bethlehem.⁹⁶ On May 12, after several weeks of desultory skirmishing, the Arab Legion shelled Kfar 'Etzion, the largest settlement, and launched an attack by armored cars and infantry. The Arab Legion occupied the small air field, completing its encirclement of the bloc and cutting it off from reinforcements. About 109 lightly armed and ill supplied Haganah and kibbutz members prepared for the Arab assault.⁹⁷ The Arab armored cars tore through the Jewish defenders; however, rather than accept the defenders' surrender, the Arab

⁹³ An example of forcing evidence to fit the existing model is Yadin's explanation of the remains of burned food and provisions. Josephus states that the Sicarii burned all of their provisions, except for their food, in order to show the Romans that they chose death as a statement rather than a physical necessity. However, archeological evidence uncovered clear remains of burned food supplies. Rather than reexamine the myth, Yadin claimed that the Sicarii did not leave "all of their stores of food... it was enough for them to leave one or two rooms with untouched victuals." *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 148.

⁹⁵ The ceremony not only took place on Masada, but involved readings from Elazar's speech and a salute to the defenders of Masada. *Ibid.*, 153.

⁹⁶ Also known as *Gush 'Etzion*, the bloc consisted of Kfar 'Etzion, the main kibbutz, as well as *Massu'ot Yitzhak*, *'Ein Tzurim*, and *Revadim*. See Morris, 1948, 167, as well as Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 130. The *kibbutzim* overlooked the main southern approach to Jerusalem; a powerful position which the Haganah effectively used to harass Arab military traffic.

⁹⁷ Morris, 1948, 169.

militiamen corralled their captives into an open area and opened fire, executing 106 of the Jews.⁹⁸

The events leading up to the battle were similar to those experienced by the zealots on Masada. In both situations a heavily outnumbered group of Jewish defenders was completely surrounded and denied access to reinforcements and resupply. In both situations leaders made passionate declarations to fight to the last defender.⁹⁹ The declaration made by the leaders of the *Yishuv*, the defacto pre-Israel government, bore notable resemblance to Eleazar's speech on Masada: "No Jewish point or settlement should be evacuated and they [must] be held until the last man."¹⁰⁰ Although this was not an order to the Jewish defenders, it reminded them of the sacrifice on Masada.¹⁰¹

Yet one discrepancy is obvious: unlike the zealots on Masada, most of the defenders of Kfar 'Eztion attempted to surrender. If these modern warriors had literally and fully embraced the Masada myth and its principle of never surrendering, they would have chosen to die rather than attempt to surrender to the Arabs.

Ultimately, however, Israeli interpretations of Arab actions transformed the slaughter at Kfar 'Eztion from an embarrassing Haganah defeat early in the war to a Masada-like symbol of Jewish unity and defiance against overwhelming odds.¹⁰² David Ben-Gurion wrote, "I do not know of a more glorious, tragic, and heroic episode . . . [than] Gush Etzion... Their sacrifice saved Jerusalem . . . and all those who took part in that glorious episode are assured of a part in the world-to-come."¹⁰³

The Arab massacre of the Jewish defenders negated the fact that the Jews surrendered. The death toll allowed Jewish leaders to conclusively link Masada and 'Eztion, glossing over the surrender and focusing instead on the slaughter of the Jewish defenders. Ultimately, the fate of the defenders of Kfar 'Eztion helped to further construct and propagate the Masada myth by creating a sequel. The

⁹⁸ While the number of Jewish dead varies, all sources agree that only three defenders of Kfar 'Eztion survived the execution. Morris claims that the dead numbered 106, while David Ohana reports that 123 Jews defenders perished. Morris, *1948*, 170; David Ohana, "Kfar Etzion: The Community of Memory and the Myth of Return," in *Israel Studies* 7 no. 2 (2002): 148. Also, not all of the defenders attempted to surrender. Several fought to the death, either because they were unaware of the surrender or simply neglected the order. Morris, *1948*, 170.

⁹⁹ Josephus describes Eleazar's speech to the zealots on Masada convincing them to forfeit their life before surrendering to the Romans.

¹⁰⁰ Elhannan Orren, "The Contribution of the Settlements in the War of Independence," quoted in Morris, *1948*, 168.

¹⁰¹ The Hagannah members would almost certainly have made the connection between their situation and Masada. Starting in 1942, every member of the Hagannah participated in a two week Jewish identity excursion. One of the main events of this trip was climbing to the top of Masada. Ben-Yehudah, *The Masada Myth*, 128.

¹⁰² The importance of the incident increased because it corresponded so closely with Israel's independence. Because of this, the Masada myth tightened its hold on the Israeli people.

¹⁰³ David Ben-Gurion, "Gathering of Released Prisoners, 'Habima'," Tel Aviv, March 29, 1949.

myth was so powerful that the *Palmach Harel* issued a statement directly comparing Kfar 'Etzion to Masada: "for forty-seven days the bullets around the Gush [Etzion] did not abate . . . The number of killed and wounded was high, and the 'Masada question' stood before the battle-ready, remaining, fighters."¹⁰⁴

The early days of the 1973 Yom Kippur War displayed more evidence of the IDF's internalization of the spirit of Masada. The Israeli defensive positions on the Suez Canal consisted of a string of forts, outposts, and bunkers known as the Bar-Lev line. During the initial Egyptian attack on October 6, Egyptian armor and infantry forces overran the majority of these defensive positions. However, some of the Israeli positions held out and quickly found themselves surrounded by superior Egyptian forces. The actions and behavior of the soldiers trapped in the surrounded outposts demonstrated how deeply IDF soldiers and the IDF leadership had internalized the spirit of Masada.

One of these surrounded outposts on the Bar Lev Line was a small bunker directly across the Suez Canal from the Egyptian town of Ismailia. The outpost, commanded by an officer known as "Meyerke," held out for over sixty hours after being surrounded by the Egyptians.¹⁰⁵ In a radio communication with General Ariel Sharon, Meyerke detailed the increasingly deteriorating situation. Sharon told him to hold as long as he could while a relief force attempted to reach the stranded outpost, but the Egyptian artillery made rescue impossible.¹⁰⁶ Meyerke decided that the soldiers would attempt an escape, rather than surrender the position to the Egyptians. Sharon eventually gave Meyerke permission to attempt an escape, and the soldiers left their bunker after sixty hours, and fought their way back to Israeli lines.¹⁰⁷

Masada's influence on this small group of soldiers is obvious. The soldiers were surrounded without hope of rescue, and they bravely held their positions and fought for over sixty hours.¹⁰⁸ The fact that the soldiers chose to escape rather than hold their position to the last man exemplifies the depth of, but also the flexibility of the Masada myth. While this did not stop headquarters from attempting to persuade the soldiers to remain in their positions, both Meyerke and Sharon

¹⁰⁴ *Palmach Harel*, March 29, 1949, 3:11, quoted in Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 130.

¹⁰⁵ The details of those sixty hours exist because of the efforts of a communications officer named Avi Yaffe. Yaffe gathered together recording equipment and recorded nearly all of the dialogue in the bunker during the sixty hour siege. His recordings include radio communications between the bunker and head quarters, including transmissions made by General Ariel Sharon. Partial transcripts of the recordings are found in The Insight Team of the London *Sunday Times*, *The Yom Kippur War* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, 172.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁰⁸ The outpost was used as a forward observation post for Israeli artillery. However, they were not very effective due in part to the constant Egyptian bombardment, as well as the general inability of the Israeli Artillery to hit where they are directed. *Ibid.*, 173.

understood that escape was a moral victory in keeping with the message and principles of Masada.

At the extreme south of the Bar Lev Line, Fort Mezakh's defenders held out four days longer than the bunker by Ismailia.¹⁰⁹ The position was completely encircled by Egyptian forces and sustained nearly a week of heavy bombardment and assaults by both Egyptian armor and infantry.¹¹⁰ After a failed attempt at amphibious rescue, the IDF Southern Command debated if they should order the garrison to surrender or hold to the last man.¹¹¹ General Moshe Dayan was unable to make a decision. He adamantly refused to order the garrison to surrender, but did not want to order the needless death of forty-two of his soldiers.¹¹² Therefore, Dayan gave Lieutenant Shlomo Ardineš, the officer in command of Fort Mezakh, "permission" to elect to surrender the fort. Dayan's refusal to order his soldiers to surrender when the alternative was certain death demonstrates the degree to which Masada affected the thinking and decisions of even the IDF's top general. The defenders of Fort Mezakh performed well above the proverbial call of duty, but the stigma that surrounded surrender remained strong.¹¹³

Ardineš eventually elected to surrender Fort Mezakh and spare the lives of the brave soldiers under his command. In his final radio report to headquarters, Ardineš received official approval to surrender. He responded, "Otherwise, it would have been another Masada."¹¹⁴ This statement underscores the depth of the defenders' connection to Masada. Further, it shows the limits of the Masada myth, and how the IDF, particularly the generals, found themselves trapped in the myth of their own creation. Despite what the IDF originally intended, the Masada myth tried to persuade Israeli soldiers to choose willful self-destruction over surrender. Perhaps the generals never anticipated the need for this self-annihilation because they convinced themselves that Israeli soldiers would never have to surrender, their failure to rationally view their soldiers' capabilities allowed their own myth to trap them.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹¹⁰ By this time the garrison suffered five soldiers killed and sixteen wounded. Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 349.

¹¹¹ Unlike the bunker outside of Ismailia, escape was not a plausible option. Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 350.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 350.

¹¹³ Fort Mezakh held out longer than all the Israeli outposts except for "Outpost Budapest," which was the only Israeli position on the Bar-Lev line to withstand the Egyptian assault. The fort was located at the top of the line, and was on the Mediterranean Sea rather than the Suez Canal. It was the largest Israeli position, and was able to receive some resupply by the Israeli Air Force. *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁴ Lt. Shlomo Ardineš in *Ibid.*, 351.

Forging a Shared Identity

The biblical myths that the IDF utilized provided the organization with a shared military history and tradition upon which they built a modern army. Military tradition is crucial in the identity of armies, and by reaching back through history and memory and invoking the pride and power of biblical Israelite military forces over two thousand years ago, the IDF gave itself more credibility. With a carefully constructed, useable past, the Israeli army was not the new, inexperienced force in the region. Rather, it was the continuation of a proud military tradition that extended further into history than any other nation in the region.

The constructed nature of these myths, however, does not demonstrate that the IDF's leaders were simply insidious, Machiavellian, or evil, or that the soldiers were duped into accepting a cultural identity inconsistent with their own values. Rather, it shows how, in the IDF's formative years, leaders understood the necessity of forming a unified and capable military institution, and they carefully considered how to accomplish this goal in light of the myths they chose and how their broader society would respond to them. Evidence of the inculcation of both high-ranking officials and common soldiers also shows just how powerful the myths were. Everyone bought into the vision and the story that these myths described, a primary reason that the myths were able to work as well as they did.

However, these myths had limitations, and when put to the test in real-world situations they often did not often survive rational or practical decision making. In 1973, the Yom Kippur War exposed the limits of each of these powerful myths, often showing how they rebounded and trapped the very people that created them. The cataclysmic events of 1973 showed the IDF that it was not invincible, and that in order to maintain Israel as a Jewish homeland, Israel would have to make certain land concessions to its Arab neighbors. In order to preserve the Jewish homeland, Israel was forced to surrender portions of it. The IDF also learned that the aggressive, bold, and sometimes reckless operations are not always successful, and are in some instances extremely costly. Yet, even the IDF's success in the later stages of the Yom Kippur War permanently crushed the notion that the IDF was the underdog army in the Middle East. Even as IDF leaders constantly reinforced the no surrender message inspired by Masada, it is difficult to imagine that they actually considered what would happen if a large garrison of soldiers were forced to either surrender or die. The actions of leaders like Moshe Dayan show that the IDF places an extremely high value on the life of each individual soldier, and that they did not want to needlessly order their soldiers to die. However, when forced to make a decision as to whether or not to order the surrender of Israeli units, Dayan found himself trapped within the very myth he helped to create.

Ironic outcomes when the myths rebounded upon the leaders who originally propagated them forced those leaders to acknowledge their shortcomings. The IDF realized that these myths had run their course, and needed to look for some other factor in order to reconstruct its organizational identity. The IDF ultimately stopped using Masada as the location for the swearing-in of new recruits. While there are several explanations for this action, it is clear that using the historic site of Masada to inculcate its message into the next batch of IDF soldiers was no longer as important as it once was.¹¹⁵ The IDF's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 displayed a level of planning and calculation previously unseen in IDF operational plans.¹¹⁶ Even the Jewish homeland myth began to fall apart with the withdrawal of Israeli settlements in Arab areas. However, the frameworks of these myths are still in place, and it is plausible that, if something changes the relatively secure and stable strategic situation that Israel has experienced since the end of the Yom Kippur War, the IDF could resurrect these myths to inspire a new generation of Israelis.

¹¹⁵ Ben-Yehuda offers several explanations. The IDF Armor Cops was the first to stop holding their ceremony at Masada because they wanted to set themselves apart from the rest of the IDF by finding a new site that focused on memorializing the heroes of the Armored Corps. They chose Latrun. Also, after the Six Day War placed Jerusalem under Israeli control, a multitude of new historic sites were at the IDF's disposal. The Western Wall became a favorite place for the ceremony. Ben-Yehuda also provides evidence from General (ret.) Yossii Ben-Hanan, who stated that the decision to abandon Masada was strictly economical. Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth*, 159-60.

¹¹⁶ Chaim Herzog and Shlomo Gazit, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 354.

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