Becoming a Normal Democracy: Israeli Public Opinion, Civil-Military Relations, and the Second Lebanon War

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Abstract
During the Second Lebanon War of 2006, Israel’s government applied a capital- and firepower-intensive military doctrine poorly suited for its ambitious, and publicly declared, goals. The paper explains this apparently non-strategic behavior with a theory of democratic militarism, arguing that a capitalized military doctrine results in a condition of moral hazard by shifting the costs away from the median voter, leading to support of a capital-intensive doctrine in conflicts where its effectiveness is low because the decreased likelihood of winning is outweighed by the lower costs of fighting. I claim the theory better explains the case than its principal competitors—elite capture of the state and military myopia--by examining Israeli public opinion before the war, and reviewing civil-military deliberation over the war’s conduct during its prosecution.
What are the consequences for Israel’s security of the many changes occurring in its society, its threat spectrum, and its military doctrine? How did these changes contribute to the flawed reconciliation of Israel’s ends and means in its fight against Hezbollah during the Second Lebanon War of 2006? What can we learn about the democratic way of war from Israel’s recent experience?

Although most observers agree that Israel and its military have changed considerably over the past two decades, less agreement exists on their implications. In this paper I argue that much of these changes amount to Israel evolving into a relatively more normal democracy—that is, one that IR theorists would recognize as meeting the criteria for the democratic peace and its related findings—due to reductions in threat levels, increases in liberalism and economic inequality among its citizens, and an increasingly professionalized military. This paper uses the Israel case to disagree with conventional wisdom in International Relations on the foreign policy capability of democracies, a consensus that makes optimistic claims for the security implications of these changes’ effects on Israeli security. The paper focuses on the preferences of the average voter (more specifically the voter with median income) to explain many of these changes and the consequences thereof. The paper presents a theory of military cost distribution suggesting that to reduce the costs of conflict for this relatively less wealthy voter, democratic leaders shift the burden of providing for the nation’s defense onto the rich by employing capital as a substitute for military labor. Because the costs of fighting unconventional conflicts with firepower are relatively low for the median voter compared to a more effective but labor-intensive approach, she will favor its use despite diminished prospects of victory. This condition of moral hazard makes supporting a capital-intensive military doctrine and ambitious wars of choice rational
policies for the median voter. Cost distribution theory contrasts with two other explanations for faulty grand strategy found in the literature on Israel in particular and democracies in general: capture of the government by elites and an intrinsic, myopic bias inherent to the military. In fact, electoral accountability and civilian supremacy are prerequisites for the type of democratic militarism described in this paper.

This paper will use the case of contemporary Israel to test this theory in two steps. After first stipulating that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are sufficiently capital-intensive to allow for arming and war to have elements of cost redistribution, the first empirical section explores the role that socio-economic status (SES, a proxy for individual income) plays in shaping attitudes towards the use of force, defense spending and territorial concessions. If redistributive potential exists in IDF military doctrine, the less well off in Israeli society will be more prone to view military force as a viable option. In turn this increased willingness to use force should result in more ambitious strategic goals. This analysis will not only test cost distribution theory but will assess the competing claims of an elite-centered, top-down argument of threat inflation.

The second empirical section identifies the Second Lebanon War as a clear example of flawed grand strategy, and uses the conflict as an illustrative case of the effects of this cost distribution process. The paper finds that civilian leaders, more sensitive to public opinion than the IDF, set ambitious war aims and yet were unwilling to employ the military in the labor-intensive manner likely to make attaining them feasible. What is more, the civilians did so with a sound understanding of the tradeoffs involved. This section also undermines explanations for poor grand strategy that rest on military myopia and an overly-influential IDF.
1 Democratic Exceptionalism and Flawed Grand Strategy

Grand strategies are political-military, means-ends chains by which a state seeks to provide security for itself.\(^1\) A poor performance in war by a democracy challenges the liberal IR consensus that democracies tend to pursue exceptionally moderate and successful grand strategies, that is choosing appropriate ends to increase their security and appropriate ends to achieve them.\(^2\) Many of this research program’s findings rest on the assumption that in democracies the costs of war are internalized; all costs and benefits of a decision are accounted for by the actor responsible for setting policy. Fred Chernoff describes the difference between democracies and other regimes in this regard, “Citizens and subjects—rather than presidents and monarchs—fight in wars, die in wars, and pay taxes to finance wars. In most cases, it is not in the citizen’s self-interest for the state to go to war.”\(^3\) Conversely, shielding the decision maker from

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the costs of war can lead to aggressive behavior. The most comprehensive statement of this cost internalization mechanism suggests that democratic leaders respond to the voters’ cost-benefit calculation by providing public goods, including security and military victory, both efficiently and in abundance.\(^4\)

### 1.1 Explanations for Flawed Grand Strategy in Democracies

When explaining aggressive or foolish behavior by democracies, liberal IR theory focuses on democratic deficits, the capturing of the state by interest groups who disproportionately gain benefits from a policy while distributing the costs throughout society.\(^5\) Many self-identified realists agree. For example Jack Snyder claims that while democracies tend to experience fewer of these problems due to their governments’ reflection of a broader social interest, they can still pursue overexpansion due to a poorly informed electorate or logrolling by narrow special interest groups, rather than the will of a majority of rational voters.\(^6\) This approach updates the classical liberal tenet that the poor have little value for arming and war, which only serve the interests of the rich. Militarism and imperialism are, in John Hobson's words, “Irrational from the standpoint of the whole nation” but “rational enough from the

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 standpoint of certain classes,” and thus would be absent in “an intelligent laissez-faire democracy which gave duly proportionate weight in its policy to all economic interests alike.”"7

Of all the elites that can capture foreign policy, the military is often identified as a principal culprit. Organizational and cultural theories suggest that without sufficient pressure from political leaders, elements of the national security structure, particularly the military, will pursue their own ends with little regard for grand strategy.8 These approaches agree with the claim of Robert Komer, Johnson’s principal counterinsurgency adviser, that allowing the military to “do its thing” during wartime is a mistake.9 Focusing on military culture is prominent in work addressing U.S. conduct of small wars; Eliot Cohen for example states that “the most substantial constraints on America’s ability to conduct small wars result from the resistance of the American defense establishment to the very notion of engaging in such conflicts, and from the unsuitability of that establishment for fighting such wars.”10

2 A Theory of Redistribution and Grand Strategy

Like democratic exceptionalists and political economists, I assume that the government’s provision of security, its grand strategy, is as much a public good as unemployment insurance or

a health care system. However, I relax the claim that costs are always internalized within democracies, arguing that they may be much lower for the median voter than the state’s per capita costs. When the median voter has little skin in the game, the incentives for aggression that exceptionalism associates with autocracies exist in democracies.

Even in democracies, wealth is not distributed equally within any given state; the person with median income is less well off than someone with the mean. Political economists have argued that if the median voter can set a tax rate and spend the revenue on a service available to all citizens, she will take advantage of the potential for redistribution, a result known as the “Meltzer-Richard hypothesis.” Even with a flat tax on income, the wealthy will pay a larger portion of the costs for a public good enjoyed by all. This lowering of the median voter’s costs relative to the benefits of a public good, leads to increased demand. Using similar logic, the median voter will prefer a heavier tax on capital, rather than labor, since labor income is distributed more equally than capital income. In general the financial burden of government rarely rests on the person of median income, as Figure 2 illustrates for Israel. I simply apply the Meltzer-Richard logic to a classic public good provided by states: defense. Given a non-trivial

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14 Ibid., 117-122.

level of inequality, the more military coercion becomes an exercise in fiscal rather than social mobilization, the more prone a democracy will be towards funding an aggressive foreign policy.

While inequality is an essential prerequisite for security to contain a redistributive element, it is not necessarily the portion of the theory with the most explanatory power. Since every state has a skewed distribution of wealth, how taxes are spent plays a most important role.

2.1.1 Capitalization

Military doctrine, the means by which military power is developed and exercised, can be stylized as a production function consisting of the two factors of capital (tanks, planes, ammunition, even training) and labor (soldiers, sailors, etc.). One factor of production can serve as a substitute for the other, but capital and labor are imperfect replacements and show diminishing returns. Given a hundred tanks and ten soldiers, adding another tank will not produce as much capability as another soldier.

Tax revenue can pay for both the capital and labor inputs. Personnel can also be supplied from an alternate type of tax: conscription, a tax on labor rather than capital. Assuming the possibility of a draft, even if the odds of being conscripted are equally distributed, suggests that the median voter will demand that a larger amount of the military budget go towards the purchase of capital to reduce the risk of conscription. Casulties are also a public bad; no one wants to see their fellow citizens to die. The less wealthy are more likely to be drafted and to

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16 In cases where existing threats do not currently justify resorting to conscription, military capitalization will still to a large degree determine a draft’s future likelihood. The median voter normally will be happy with an expensive, all-volunteer military; but once the level of threat creates a demand for labor that reaches into the middle class, the voter will support a military staffed through a fair draft whose conscripts are protected by large amounts of capital. Joseph Paul Vasquez, III, "Shouldering the Soldiering: Democracy, Conscription, and Military Casualties," Journal Of Conflict Resolution 49, no. 6 (2005).
join an all-volunteer force, may gain jobs from domestic weapons manufacturing, and often regard military service as a means of acquiring human capital. I therefore argue that the median voter will accept a higher tax, what the British socialist Sidney Webb called “the conscription of riches,” to build highly capitalized militaries in both peace and in war, since such militaries redistribute money and skills through jobs and training as well as reduce the risk of conscription and casualties. In short a capitalized military not only results in the median voter doing less of the fighting herself, but also will allow someone else's resources to fund the costs of war.

2.1.2 Substitutability through Doctrine and War Type

The ability to replace military labor with capital is constrained by substitutability, which is determined partially by the available technology. The right tools and techniques can increase the output of military power with the same amount of inputs, or increase the effectiveness of one's favored factor of production. However, while a bulldozer makes one person much more effective at moving earth, for the purposes of archaeology it is a disastrous substitute for several individuals wielding small chisels and brushes.17

War type, the interaction of the weak state's strategy and the strong state's military doctrine, is of equal if not greater influence on substitutability as technology.18 A capitalized military will be much more effective against a conventional opponent than an unconventional one. Such a force dispatched the Iraqi conventional forces with ruthless efficiency in both 1991

17 Because improved labor productivity in one industry raises the wages for the entire economy, industries where the labor share remains constant (such as counterinsurgency) are likely to exhibit soaring costs, a phenomenon known as “Baumol's cost disease.” This is one reason counterinsurgency is likely to be fiscally draining. William J Baumol and William G. Bowen, Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma; a Study of Problems Common to Theater, Opera, Music, and Dance (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1966).

18 Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win."
and 2003, but is poorly suited for conducting counterinsurgency. Improved doctrine, while crucial, only goes so far when faced with labor constraints. Indeed the ratio of personnel per population in order to conduct “nation-building” has stayed roughly stable at twenty per thousand since the end of World War II. Little can be accomplished without boots on the ground. The paper explains why a strong, democratic power would pursue a conventional, capital-intensive military strategy against an unconventional opponent anyway.

2.2 Moral Hazard

Because of its redistributive nature, a capitalized military doctrine can lead to moral hazard, a perverse incentive for risky behavior. Often associated with insurance provision, moral hazard encourages the insured “to change their behavior in a way that increases claims against the insurance company.” Drivers with auto theft coverage will more likely park on the street than pay for secure parking. Many domestic government programs merge the Meltzer-Richard effect with moral hazard. Deposit insurance uses backing by federal funds to insure any bank deposits up to a certain limit, a redistributive public good. Because the insurance applies regardless of the bank, an individual has little motivation to consider the bank's solvency. Indeed, she is likely to choose the higher interest provided by a bank making risky investments. I extend these concepts to building and employing a military.

No matter how redistributive the military, voters will not support conflicts with a vanishing chance of victory. Since conflict remains costly for the median voter who still pays

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some taxes and may be conscripted (a deductible of sorts). Rather, moral hazard increases the likelihood of entering conflicts whose expected value in increased security is outweighed by the likely total costs for the state, which are borne inordinately by the wealthy. The median voter's risky behavior is in effect being subsidized.

This moral hazard leads the median voter to favor two flawed combination of ends and means; she will choose wars using an efficient strategy against a conventional foe for low gains that a cost internalized actor would eschew. The strong state's success may be assured, but the stakes are trivial. More importantly and visibly, the lack of cost internalization creates an incentive for her to use the capital-intensive military in conflicts where substitutability is low because the decreased likelihood of winning is outweighed by the lower costs of fighting in such a manner. Democracies will pursue a doctrine making success less likely even in relatively important conflicts. Indeed, the median voter will continue to support building the “wrong” type of capitalized military in anticipation of fighting small wars.

3 Why Study Israel?

In the study of democratic grand strategy and civil-military relations, Israel is often treated as an exceptional case. Israel has a “large compulsory draft, a large reserve military with great involvement in wars and the preparation for them, a war industry and a war economy, and a national culture that sanctifies the military solution to political problems and that places the military and the soldiers at society’s center.”21 Israel is, however, undergoing profound and related shifts in its society, politics and military, shifts that appear to draw it closer in line with

other, Western democracies.\textsuperscript{22} It therefore provides a useful opportunity for cost distribution theory to assess what these changes’ grand strategic effects might be.

Moreover, Israel’s perceived security problems have changed, even as those of many other democracies such as the United States have come to more closely resemble Israel’s. Israel currently faces ballistic missile threats from several neighboring actors (both states and non-state actors alike) as well as a potentially nuclear Iran in the future. It has suffered from sporadic terrorism, rocket fire and insurgency in the occupied Palestinian territories. The combination of conventional and unconventional elements in the 2006 fight against Hezbollah in Lebanon appears to epitomize the sort of “hybrid war,” that many observers believe will typify international conflict in the coming years.

This section briefly explores the evolution of post-Cold War Israeli grand strategy and civil military relations in response to developments both within Israeli society and the Israel Defense Force (IDF) itself. These changes are largely interrelated and teasing out the causes of them all is beyond the scope of this paper. For example, the shift towards the capital-intensive revolution in military affairs is over-determined in Israel due to regional demographics, the structure of the Israeli economy, and Israel’s status as an American client. The principal goal is to show the relevance of the paper’s theory in understanding these changes’ implications.

\subsection*{3.1 Changes in Threat and Doctrine}

Since the Cold War’s end, the conventional threat from Israel’s Arab neighbors has been mitigated by these states’ loss of their main conventional weapons supplier, the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} For one overview, see Uri Bar-Joseph, \textit{Israel's National Security Towards the 21st Century} (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001).
This, coupled with the obvious supremacy of American (and thus Israeli) weapons and tactics in conventional maneuver warfare demonstrated in the Gulf War, led former IDF Chief of the General Staff (CGS) and then Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to observe in 1994, “The traditional doctrine, based on territory, is proven inefficient when it is facing the knife and the missile.”

More recently Israel has focused on threats from its “second circle” (Iran, Libya and Iraq) rather than the first (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, etc). Even in terms of terrorism, insurgents and other low level threats have receded considerably since the Second Intifada’s peak in 2001.

In addition to a large drop in military spending following the Cold War’s end and the Oslo Accords, these changes have led to a dramatic retooling of the IDF and its doctrine, a process of becoming, in the words of Ehud Barak, CGS and future prime minister, “slimmer and smarter.” The means of fighting any enemy, conventional or otherwise, have also evolved into one that avoids taking territory in favor of standoff fire, airpower and “effects-based operations.” This firepower targets not only enemy command and control systems, but the very “will” of opposing fighters, leadership, and population. The IDF has become one of the world’s foremost adopters of the doctrine, equipment and personnel policy of the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs.

Figure 2 shows that since the end of the Cold War, the percentage of the defense budget going to non-labor costs has risen steadily.

The resulting capital-intensive military also entails a much more professional orientation. The IDF’s air force and intelligence branches, the backbone of an RMA military, largely consists

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24 Shimon Peres, interview on Israeli television April 14, 1994. quoted in ibid.


of long-service professionals. In terms of conscription and national service, many middle class youths no longer participate. A 12.1% non-enlistment rate among eligible males in 1980 had climbed to 25% in 2007, largely due to the IDF’s decision on these conscripts’ superfluousness.\footnote{Stuart A. Cohen, "Changing Civil-Military Relations in Israel: Towards an over-Subordinate Idf?,"\textit{Israel Affairs} 12, no. 4 (2006).135.} Moreover, up through 2006 reservists were increasingly excluded from conventional warfare planning.\footnote{To the point of not being trained sufficiently, as the Second Lebanon War demonstrated.}

Again, this paper agrees that there are many reasons why Israel should pursue a capital-intensive way of war. Nonetheless, the incentives this presents to the median voter should still be present regardless of the sources of change. Furthermore, the IDF has evolved, at least in part, due to changes in its understanding of what is acceptable to the public. As Dan Halutz, CGS at the time of the Second Lebanon War, testified to a post-war investigative committee, “the military system is deeply influenced by long term processes,” including “interrelated socio-cultural, budgetary and doctrinaire processes.”\footnote{Gil Merom, "The Second Lebanon War: Democratic Lessons Imperfectly Applied,"\textit{Democracy and Security} 4, no. 1 (2008). 2}

### 3.2 Changes in Israeli Society

Like much of the world, Israel has profited from and has been changed by the process of globalization in its most broad sense. In particular, reduced trade barriers, transportation costs, and communication delays have allowed (required?) Israel to shift from a more autarkic country in which the state influenced and even ran large swaths of the economy to a more neoliberal, capitalistic, and high technology society. A rise in self-professed individualism has also emerged. In a 2006 survey, only 27% of Israeli respondents thought that the interests of the
country were more important than the individual’s personal ones, compared to 69% in 1981. Relatedly, the burden of taxation has shifted to the wealthiest segment of Israeli society (Figure 1) even as economic inequality had risen steadily over time (Figure 2).

These factors have enhanced class cleavages amongst Israeli Jews, particularly that between the elite, “European” Ashkenazi Jews and the relatively poorer and less powerful “Oriental” or Mizrahi Jews. This divide has now been coupled to a rise in influence of two important sections of Israeli society, the Haredim, ultra-orthodox (making up about 10% of the Israeli electorate) whose full-time devotion to study is largely subsidized by the Israeli government, and the massive (a 12% increase in Israel’s population) influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who tend to be well-educated but poor, secular yet quite hawkish in their approach to foreign policy. Together, these forces have contributed to a striking increase in economic inequality in Israel and, this paper argues, a hawkish shift in its foreign policy.32

3.3 Who Shapes Israeli Grand Strategy?

These changes have preoccupied a large part of Israeli social science. While almost all observers believe that civil-military relations are changing along with many other elements of Israeli society, there is little agreement about the direction. However, much of this research examining the formation of grand strategy falls along the military myopia and elite capture arguments laid out above. Rarely do observers claim that Israeli grand strategy takes its form because of voter preferences.

While the formal supremacy of the civilian government has never been questioned, many authors argue that the IDF has myriad ways to “call the shots behind the scenes.”33 The IDF has historically been largely autonomous in strategic matters and indeed exercises tremendous influence on Israeli politics and society in general. Its massive advantage in planning staff relative to civilian counterparts as well as its monopoly on intelligence gives the IDF tremendous bureaucratic and epistemic power relative to any other Israeli institution.34 This is further enhanced by the high prestige of the IDF within Israel that, while not at the exalted heights of previous decades, remains far higher than any that of any other Israeli entity.35

While the CGS has always played a politically visible role, often running for office upon retiring, many observers have identified the increased prominence of high-ranking military officers, retired and active in political life.36 Even while serving as CGS from 1998-2002, Shaul Mofaz was often described as a “politician in uniform” and almost immediately entered the Cabinet upon his retirement. The CGS has at times appealed to the public when disagreeing with civilian leaders, leading one observer to note that, “It seemed as if they [the IDF] claimed the right to conduct direct discourse with the public, as if it were their duty to report to society at large and not to the political echelon.”37 Moshe Ya’alon, Mofaz’s successor, quite infamously described himself as “the CGS of the people of Israel, and not just of the political echelon.” That

33 Ben-Meir, Civil-Military Relations in Israel. xii
35 Levy, Israel's Materialist Militarism.
36 Peri, Generals in the Cabinet Room.
37 Ibid.111
Ya’alon was later removed by prime minister Ariel Sharon and replaced with a strong political ally of Sharon shows that civilians retain ultimate control, however.38

One branch of analysis takes a military myopia approach to these developments. Letting the generals have their way has generally been perceived as resulting in a more aggressive grand strategy.39 Built on the perception of Israel’s historic vulnerability and past IDF successes. This “military myopia” has its analogues in other democracies as well.40 Zeev Maoz describes an almost “Pavlovian” tendency by the IDF to use force when the opportunity arises.41 The shift towards a firepower intensive military is used as evidence for this tendency.

Not all scholars regard the IDF as continuing to ascend in power and influence; others point out the emergence of “civil society,” as a counterweight to IDF supremacy.42 The increasing influx of generals into the cabinet no doubt influences their potential successors still in uniform to not rock the boat.43 Knesset committees appear more willing to scrutinize budget requests.44 The Supreme Court has recently exercised considerable influence over the nation’s security policy on such matters as the “security fence” designed to seal off Israel from

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38Ibid. 139. Peri attributes this growing military involvement in politics largely to the IDF’s increasing attention to counterinsurgency and other low intensity conflicts, where the attitude of the polity is essential to success against the adversary Yoram Peri argues that the IDF has grown in influence mostly because civilian leadership is fragmented, weak and unwilling to make decisions. 139 Yoram Peri, "The Political-Military Complex: The Idfs Influence over Policy Towards the Palestinians since 1987," Israel Affairs 11 (2005). Peri, Generals in the Cabinet Room.127. See also Ben Elizer. “Is a Military Coup Possible in Israel “Theory and Society” Michael, "The Idf as an Epistemic Authority."

39 Not always. Peri, Generals in the Cabinet Room.


41 Cited in Cohen, "Towards an over-Subordinate Idf?." 56

42 Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, Being Israeli : The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship, Cambridge Middle East Studies ; (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

43 Cohen, "Towards an over-Subordinate Idf?." One problem with this debate is that much of the evidence is used by both camps to support their claims.

44 Ibid.
Palestinian attacks. The “Four Mothers” movement centered on bereaved parents during the occupation of Southern Lebanon is often viewed as a watershed event in civilian preferences trumping military.\textsuperscript{45} The media has developed an increasingly skeptical view of IDF operations.\textsuperscript{46} Stuart Cohen argues that these activist groups to identify “a process of increasing civilian intrusion into the military domain.”\textsuperscript{47} Where Peri sees low intensity conflict resulting in increased military influence in society, Efraim Inbar and Cohen argue that just the opposite effect occurs, due to the politically sensitive nature of the operations.\textsuperscript{48}

Regardless of who has the upper hand in civil-military relations, this debate over the role of new actors—the media, the courts system and bereaved, well-connected Ashkenazi parents—focus on Israel elites.\textsuperscript{49} Perhaps there is little difference between these groups and the military they seek to influence.\textsuperscript{50} Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer simply label the entire system of elites as a potent “Security Network,” made up of actors who have “worked against the systemic differentiation and professionalism of the IDF and the other security agencies and the efficiency of the state’s relevant civilian spheres.” This network directly impedes the emergence of “an effective democracy in Israel.”\textsuperscript{51} Empowered by a continuous existential threat, this network prevents the emergence of truly democratic governance in Israel.


\textsuperscript{47} Cohen, "Towards an over-Subordinate Idf?."771

\textsuperscript{48} Efraim Inbar CITE CHECK

\textsuperscript{49} Lebel, “Civilian Society vs. Military Sovereignty”

\textsuperscript{50} Ben-Eliezer, \textit{The Making of Israeli Militarism}.

Yagil Levy develops a theory to explain the fluctuating relationship between the military and society and its effects on grand strategy.\textsuperscript{52} Levy argues that the citizenship rewards and security gains stemming from serving in the IDF and fighting in war had declined for much of the middle class and elites due to globalization, market liberalism, reduction in threat, and advances in military technology. The resulting “democratization of war” was only temporary, and the IDF responded by attempting to reestablish its autonomy from society. The current revised arrangement allows the lower classes in Israel to willingly offer a “blood sacrifice” by serving in the military in exchange for social advancement, hawkish policies or ideological satisfaction; and the upper classes are happy to make a “gold sacrifice” to pay for a high tech military that reflects Israel’s new economy and minimizes the demand for military labor. This “post-materialist militarism” result is an aggressive military seeking to improve its status by fighting fast, violent conflicts in pursuit of overly ambitious war aims.\textsuperscript{53} For Levy, the flawed warfighting of the Second Lebanon War resulted from a “gap of legitimacies,” where the use of force is seen as legitimate and desirable but the need for sacrifice by powerful members of society is not seen as necessary or justifiable.

This paper agrees with Levy that large military budgets and civilian control need not be mutually exclusive, “The more the militarization of Israeli society and politics gradually increased, the more politicians were successful in institutionalizing effective control over the


\textsuperscript{53} Levy, Israel's Materialist Militarism. 25-26 Levy, "The Linkage between Israel's Military Policies and the Military's Social Composition the Case of the Al-Aqsa Intifada."
Levy concludes however that the IDF ultimately reestablished its autonomy through building a heavily capitalized military. This paper reverses Levy’s causal arrow by arguing that increased civilian control of the IDF has led to a more militarized politics (rather than vice versa), and the use of force is a becoming a more readily available option. And while like Levy this paper concurs that the costs of service, arming, and war are important, the paper also argues that the cost of going to war in terms of blood and gold is often not high for the median voter. Those who identify a growing imbalance in military influence over society point to the appeal to public opinion by military leaders in the face of a recalcitrant cabinet. This paper suggests that if both the government elites and IDF look to the people as the final arbiter is a sign that public preferences must be taken into consideration, something rarely done in Israeli social science.

Cost distribution theory suggests three stages connecting Israel’s median voter to grand strategy. First, voters should exhibit the theorized preferences. Second, civilian leaders should acknowledge and take these preferences into consideration when developing grand strategy. Third, civilians should instruct the IDF to perform accordingly. This paper will focus on testing two of the three, by examining public opinion data and the civil-military deliberation during the Second Lebanon War. While the case study presents some evidence that public preferences play a role in civilian decision-making this is unlikely to be authoritative.

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54 Levy Israel’s Materialist Militarism, 58


4 Public opinion on defense budget, use of force, and grand strategy

This paper first focuses on public opinion for several reasons. First, it determines if individuals respond to incentives in the way predicted by the theory, thus showing the argument to be based on strong microfoundations. Equally important, it helps referee between alternate explanations for the link between inequality and military spending. Showing that one’s attitude on these matters varies with one’s relative, self-reported socio-economic status (SES, a proxy for one’s median income) is a prediction that cannot be explained by either military myopia or elite capture approaches. To show that SES does not affect one’s perception of threat undermines an explanation based on elite threat-inflation for the less sophisticated. Finally, public opinion data allows the testing of two links of the theory’s causal chain: relative wealth shapes perceptions of the utility of force, which in turn affects the willingness to make concessions for peace. Figure 3 illustrates the direct and indirect causal pathways to be tested.

This section tests the following hypotheses:

\( H_0: \) Relative SES has no effect on one’s assessment of threats

Failing to reject this null hypothesis removes consideration of threat inflation as a possible causal mechanism. The remaining hypotheses provide positive tests of cost distribution theory’s predictions:

\( H_1: \) Respondents with a lower SES are more disposed to support the use of military force over diplomacy

\( H_2: \) Respondents with a lower SES are more disposed to support an increase in the defense budget.

\( H_{2a}: \) Respondents’ attitude towards the use of military force mediates the effect of SES on one’s attitude towards defense spending.
$H_3$: Respondents with a lower SES are less disposed to give territorial concessions to opponents to maintain peace

$H_{3a}$: Respondents’ attitude towards the use of military force mediates the effect of SES on one’s attitude towards territorial concessions.

### 4.1 Description of the data

All data is taken from the 2006 Israeli Election Study, which consists of a pre-election survey conducted between February 28 and March 23, 2006, prior to the Israel’s March 28 Knesset elections. The telephone interviews of eligible Israeli voters were carried out in Hebrew, Russian, and Arabic. These polls, taken before the Second Lebanon War, give a sense of public opinion prior to the kidnappings that sparked the conflict. This paper analyzed only respondents who identified themselves as Jews (poorer Arabs are likely to have a far different attitude towards the fairness of military force, and certainly deserves a study of its own).

#### 4.1.1 Dependent Variables

The theory’s dependent variables are operationalized by a series of responses to questions on military policy and its relative effectiveness. The first dependent variable is inclination towards military force. The theory predicts that as the cost of a capital-intensive campaign drops, one becomes more likely to employ it as a tool of grand strategy. The paper therefore uses responses to the question, “What should Israel stress in order to avoid war with an Arab state?” Respondents could choose “peace talks,” “military might,” or the combination “peace

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talks and military might.” A higher value for this variable, *might*, indicates a more hawkish approach. While this does not precisely capture a respondent’s predilection to use force in all cases of foreign policy, no other question comes closer.

This operationalization is far from ideal. No survey question assesses Israeli attitudes towards firepower or military capital. Nor does the preference for military might in order to “avoid war” perfectly capture the respondent’s predilection for the use of force, particularly for offensive (rather than deterrent) operations. Nonetheless, encouraging the respondent to choose between two tools, only one of which is likely to have redistributive implications does allow testing of changes to the marginal rate of substitution of diplomacy and military might if the cost of the latter declines.

An obvious means of analyzing defense’s redistributive nature is through examining individuals’ assessment of the need to spend more on security (*security spending*). The second dependent variable is the response to the question, “Should the country spend more money, less money or the same as it does today on security?” Again, higher values indicate more hawkish preferences.

Finally I look to see what this effect has on beliefs regarding questions of grand strategy and the willingness to make concessions. If the cost of an aggressive, militarized grand strategy is lower compared to a diplomatic compromise, then a respondent will favor a less conciliatory approach on providing territorial concessions in exchange for peace. I therefore include two dependent variables that posit the exchange of land for peace in two strategically and culturally important areas, the Golan Heights (claimed by Syria) and the Occupied Territories (claimed by Palestinians). The former question reads “Should Israel return to Syria territories in the Golan in return for a peace treaty and security arrangements acceptable to the IDF?” and the latter “In a
peace agreement with the Palestinians, should Israel agree or disagree to a territorial compromise and to the evacuation of settlements in Judea and Samaria?” Higher values of Golan and Palestine indicate a more conciliatory approach.

While the tables of regression results capture variation across all possible values of these variables, in order to make the results amenable to graphical interpretation, I transformed these categorical dependent variables into binary measurements. Table 1 shows the questions, responses, and the binary transformations of the various dependent variables.

4.1.2 Explanatory and Mediating Variables

For robustness, I use two measures of SES as proxies for one’s relative income. First I look at the respondent’s assessment of his or her family’s monthly expenditure relative to the average for Israel as a whole (9,300 shekels). The responses are in descending order, from high expenditure to low. The second explanatory variable asks a more vague question—“What is your social class?”—to which respondents answered on an ordered scale from “high,” “medium-high,” “medium,” and “low.” A larger value for both expenditure and class indicates a lower SES.

As explained above, one’s willingness to use force will affect how one approaches grand strategy. As well as a dependent variable, might is therefore an explanatory variable. The causal chain linking, SES, inclination towards force (might), and grand strategy preferences is illustrated in Figure 3. Because SES shifts one’s preference for force over diplomacy, including both variables in a regression will reduce the effects of the former. That is, might mediates the role of SES, but this does not imply that SES has no causal role in grand strategy even if it is no longer significant. Rather, SES could have both a direct and indirect effect on the ultimate dependent variable. This can be illustrated in the following three equations.
\[ Might = a_1 + a \text{SES} + e_1, \quad (1) \]

\[ \text{Grand Strategy} = a_2 + c \text{SES} + e_2, \quad (2) \]

\[ \text{Grand Strategy} = a_3 + d \text{SES} + b \text{Might} + e_3, \quad (3) \]

Mediation is a thorny empirical problem, and no clear means of identifying, testing, and measuring it exists, even when one has the ability to experimentally manipulate the mediator. The most common procedure for identifying and measuring mediation effects, advocated by Baron and Kenny, is to analyze all three equations above; the combined effect of the treatment (SES) would then be: \( d + ab \). Because of might's mediating effect, the level and significance of \( d \) will likely drop in Equation 3.\(^{58}\) Such a procedure almost certainly leads to biased results; if preference for military force (might) covaries with an unobserved variable that affects grand strategic preferences (i.e. \( \text{cov}(e_1, e_3) \neq 0 \)), standard estimators of \( b \) and \( d \) will not produce accurate estimates. The potential for bias is sufficiently grave to provoke the claim that “increasing use of the Baron-Kenny method is not a good thing.”\(^{59}\)

Acknowledging these limitations, this paper is content to accomplish the following tasks:

- Measure the effects of SES on attitudes towards military might (coefficient \( a \) in Equation 1)


• Measure the *direct effects* of SES on attitudes towards defense spending and territorial concessions (coefficient \(c\) in Equation 2)

• Measure the *direct effects* of attitudes towards force on attitudes towards defense spending and territorial concessions (coefficient \(b\) in Equation 3)

• Observe the changes to SES coefficients on defense spending and territorial concessions upon including attitudes towards force (coefficient \(d\) in Equation 3)

Put another way, while identifying with certainty the magnitude and significance of the total effects is not possible, this paper can still show that a statistically interesting direct effect exists after identifying and controlling for a mediating variable, thereby putting a lower bound on the influence of SES. All other tests included in the paper should be taken as suggestive.

### 4.1.3 Control Variables

The statistical models also identify and include potential confounding variables, that is ones that competing explanations (i.e. elite capture and military myopia) suggest can cause a predilection for force or an aggressive grand strategy. Respondent’s assessment of threat (independent of one’s response to that threat) may not only mediate the effect of SES but can be attributed to elite myth-making. I therefore incorporate a measure of the threat-based demand for military power, the expectation on of conflict (if there was no expectation of conflict, there should be little demand for defense regardless of how cheap it is). *War likelihood* is the respondent’s assessment of the probability of a war with an Arab state in the next three years. Failing to reject the null that SES has no effect on *war likelihood* (i.e. \(H_0\)) undermines threat inflation as a competing explanation for my findings.
Not surprisingly, respondent *education* and *news consumption* tend to correlate with income and may also exert an independent influence on one’s assessment of international politics and the need for defense spending. Again, since income and education correlate highly, including education in the analysis reduces the effect of SES. One’s self-placement on a *political spectrum* (from right to left) likely correlates with SES and the dependent variables. Many argue that the army increasingly reflects the hawkish beliefs of religious Jews (who tend to be lower income, especially the *haredim*); I therefore include dummy variables for religious status (secular, *traditional*, *orthodox*, and *haredim*). Because gender and age may well shape one’s approach to security and correlate to SES, respondent *age* as well as a *male* categorical variable are included.\(^{60}\)

### 4.2 Results

All analyses were done initially using ordered logistic regression, and provide strong support for cost distribution theory. The theory argues that inequality influences one’s willingness to use military force, but not one’s assessment of the need for it. In other words, my theory suggests that the perceived benefits of force are constant (or distributed randomly) across the population, but the perceived costs of its use declines with lower SES. This section tests this assumption about benefits by examining the role of the explanatory variable SES and accompanying control variables play on assessing the probability of war with an Arab state. Whereas Models 1 and 2 in Table 2 show that one’s SES plays no significant role in influencing one’s assessment of the likelihood of a war, the lower a respondent’s status the more likely he ro

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\(^{60}\) Other regressions will incorporate a dummy variable if the respondent was born in the former Soviet Union. Given the high education, low wealth status of this group, not surprisingly these respondents supported more hawkish policies and their inclusion reduces the effects of my explanatory variables. The results were still significantly significant however.
she will look to military might as the means of maintaining peace with Arab states (Models 3 and 4). We cannot reject $H_0$, and thus the first leg of the triangle in Figure 3 finds support.

Table 2 also shows that while SES plays no significant role in assessments war’s likelihood of a security threat, it does influence one’s preferred tool for addressing this threat. The preference for the latter cannot be caused by a wealth-induced biased perception of the former. In other words, poorer respondents do not inherently regard the world as a more dangerous place, yet still prefer military might, suggesting a redistributive component. Figure 4 shows a more intuitive graphical depiction of the effects of SES on one’s preference for using military force.61

Similarly, one’s location along the political spectrum, like SES, does not affect one’s perception of war likelihood, but more right-leaning respondents are more inclined to look to military might as the guarantor of peace. Education has little effect, but those who identify themselves as haredim are more likely to think the chances of war are high and prefer military force to peace talks. Men tend to think war is less likely but still seem to prefer military force.

Table 3 depicts the influences on government security spending. Models 7 and 8 use family expenditure as its explanatory variable, while 9 and 10 use social class. All the coefficients for SES are positive, although they vary in significance. In 7 and 9 the relationship between SES and government spending is positive and significant. This effect is reduced when predilection for force is included in models 8 and 10; the coefficient is positive, and drops in significance (the social class coefficient is no longer significant at p<0.1). Not surprisingly, one is more likely to support security spending if one prefers military force over peace talks. The results support the remaining two legs of the causal triangle in Figure 3; because Models 7-10

show a positive and significant effect of predilection for force on government spending, the series of regressions shows that SES does have a significant and substantive causal relationship with government spending, mediated by predilection for force.

Unsurprisingly, if one believes war is more likely, one favors more military spending. In terms of control variables, the more one identifies with the political right, the more likely one will favor defense spending. On the other hand, years of schooling again had no significant effect. Men were more likely to favor less spending on the military, whereas older respondents were more hawkish.

Looking at respondent opinions on exchanging land for peace with Syria and the Palestinians (Table 4), we see that family income and social class again appear to have the effect on grand strategic aims suggested by the theory, although the effect of social class no longer obtain significant at the p<0.1 level. Positive coefficients indicate a greater willingness to trade land for peace. In Models 13 and 15, which exclude predilection towards force, the effect of SES is negative. As expected, once one controls for predilection towards force, the results remain negative but drop in significance and magnitude. However, inclination towards military might is strongly associated with an unwillingness to give up territory. Family expenditure remains significant in the predicted direction, but social class fails to achieve significance, although its coefficient is negative as predicted.

Given the support for all the hypotheses, we have strong reason to suspect that SES affects grand strategy both directly and through its influence on the preference for military might. Analyzing the dichotomous dependent variables (see Table 1) allows for amroe intuitive, graphical depiction of the explanatory variables’ effects.62 Figures 6-8 give a sense of the

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62 With apologies to readers, these will be inserted at a future date. Categorical variables are more difficult to analyze, so I went with dichotomous values.
effect’s magnitude but at the cost of depicting only the direct effect of SES. That is, even if there no mediation effect exists, and might acts merely as a control variable, SES has considerable impact on grand strategy. Each figure plots two lines, to look at predicted probabilities for respondents that favor military force versus those that favor at least some measure of diplomacy (recall that lower SES respondents are more likely to be in the former category).

On balance, this statistical section shows that one’s SES colors one’s willingness to use the military (but does not affect one’s assessment of the likelihood of conflict). Less wealthy people appear more willing to use the military instrument to ensure Israel’s security. Moreover, SES affects respondents’ attitudes towards defense spending. This is done both directly and indirectly through a heightened willingness to use force. This same relationship exists for foreign policy goals; people who regard themselves as relatively less well off are less inclined to exchange territory for peace in Palestine and the Golan Heights. Notably, the effect of SES is more pronounced for the Golan heights, perhaps because the question explicitly addresses the amount of territory to be conceded, and because the Golan Heights have been considered an essential source of military security for the entire country. The evidence is consistent with the theory’s claim that the public good of defense and grand strategy has a redistributive component.

5 Whose “Fault” is the Second Lebanon War?

Are these public preferences translated into government security policy? This section attempts to show that Israeli grand strategy conforms to cost distribution theory’s expectations. That is, the theory predicts that a government of a state with a capital-intensive military will engage in small wars in pursuit of ambitious goals while employing a strategy that makes
obtaining these goals less likely. To do this, this paper looks at civilian-military interactions during the Second Lebanon War.

This paper takes no position on whether Israel “lost” the war, only that it war represents a clear case of disintegrated grand strategy, in which the military means and the political ends were not well connected. Israel pursued a campaign plan that failed to accomplish most of its stated goals. Indeed the war was fought in such a manner that made achieving these goals less likely.

This failure occurred in spite of a massive, capital-intensive effort--flying 15,500 air sorties against 7,000 targets, and expending over 100,000 tank and artillery rounds, more ordnance than employed in the conventional 1973 war. By the very end (and only at the very end) about 15,000 Israeli soldiers were operating in Lebanon. Supplemental costs of the conflict are estimated to be about 6.5 billion U.S. dollars (the IDF’s entire 2006 budget was $8 billion). Hezbollah was well-prepared for the capital-intensive onslaught; disabling 45 Merkava 4 main battle tanks (10% of the armor deployed), knocking the Israeli Navy’s most advanced destroyer out of service, causing 119 IDF deaths (some through friendly fire), and launching a seemingly endless series of Katyusha rockets against civilian targets in northern Israel.\\

Despite the Israel Defense Force’s (IDF) revamped military doctrine limiting ground operations, favoring stand-off fire over maneuver, and giving a central role to air warfare, civilians in the cabinet rejected the uniformed leadership’s initial campaign plan. Objecting to “exposing 40,000 troops to the Lebanese reality,” the cabinet ordered an extended air operation. By the fourth day of fighting the IDF Deputy Chief of Staff recommended stopping, “We have exhausted the [aerial] effort; we have reached the peak; from now on we can only descend.”

\[63\] Freilich, “Back Again.”

Civilians again disagreed and fighting continued. Yet Israel had activated a single reserve division in the conflict’s first eleven days, and did not employ significant ground forces until a month after hostilities started (just hours before the signing of the August 11 cease-fire).

Despite the decision to avoid a ground war, the Israeli government publicly declared ambitious goals far beyond the release of hostages and the deterrence of further rocket attacks. A subsequent government commission on the conduct of the war describes the strategic conundrum: “declared goals were too ambitious, and it was publicly stated that fighting will continue till they are achieved. But the authorized military operations did not enable their achievement.” The report acknowledges the government’s bind, no “other effective military response to such missile attacks than an extensive and prolonged ground operation” existed, but this “would have a high ‘cost’ and did not enjoy broad support.”

Space precludes a thorough process-tracing effort, much less a dissection of the many potential causes of poor war-fighting in the 2006 conflict. While cost distribution theory helps explain many of these shortcomings, this paper instead concentrates on what many consider the primary cause of failure: a breakdown in civil-military leadership at the highest levels and the unwillingness to connect preferred means to preferred ends. Many observers assign much of

66 Kober, "Why the Poor Performance?" 24
68 For a thorough overview in English, with an emphasis on a ground force ill-prepared for small unit operations due to a preoccupation with counterinsurgency in the Occupied Territories, see Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, "The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy," (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, 2008);
69 “If we had to name one reason for Israel's failure during the war, we will have to say: leadership. It was Israel's decision making (by the PM, Defence Minister and also the IDF's chief of staff, Dan Halutz) which led to these disappointing results.”
the blame for this disconnect on a myopic military, given the IDF’s bureaucratic or epistemic advantages. In this explanation, Prime minister Ehud Olmert and defense minister Amir Peretz, neither with much military or defense background, were no match for the IDF’s predispositions. As one observer assesses, “the political level’s lack of self-confidence and its inability to define the war’s aims were revealed in an early stages of the fighting, and the senior military command had the final say in running the war, while the political level claimed that it authorized the army to carry out whatever it asked for.”

This section disagrees with this finding. Contrary to the theory of military myopia I find the sources of this disconnect within the Israeli cabinet, and the prime minister in particular, who “escalated beyond the air campaign in ways that could not have a decisive strategic effect and dithered for weeks in a land battle that seems to have been designed largely to minimize casualties and avoid creating a lasting IDF presence in Lebanon. In the process, the IDF had to fight and refight for the same villages and largely meaningless military objectives, giving the Hezbollah’s [sic] ample time to reorganize and prepare.” Yagil Levy argues that the civilian government “gave the IDF unprecedented freedom of operation,” but civilian control of the military had never been higher than on the eve of the war. Throughout the war, the prime minister clearly was in charge. All major decisions—“avoiding a ceasefire after the first 48 hours of Israeli retaliation, and again after 96 hours (we feel the actual military response was necessary), sticking to air attacks in the next 3 and a half weeks, although it was already clear by then that this will not stop the Katyusha rockets; the delay in calling and training the reserve

70 Freilich, “Back Again”
71 Bar-Or and Haltiner, "Democratic Control of the Armed Forces in Israel and Switzerland in Times of Security Threats." 169
72 Cordesman 54
73 Levy. "The Second Lebanon War"
units; and - perhaps most of all: on August 11, 2006, the futile attempt to start a wide ground
operation, when it was plain to see that it's much too late.”—were made by the prime minister in
cabinet. 74

5.1 Civilians Leaders Set the Ends and the Means

Throughout the deliberations over the conduct of the war, the military consistently
briefed civilians on what goals could and could not be accomplished. While no official,
uniformed or otherwise, relished sending ground forces into Lebanon, the military consistently
acknowledged and stated the limitations of a campaign without ground forces. Furthermore, the
military recommended ground forces earlier in the conflict than civilians were willing to
consider, and advocated larger numbers of ground forces than the civilians desired or authorized.

At the opening of hostilities, prompted by the kidnapping of two IDF soldiers by
Hezbollah, CGS Halutz advocated a strong response that included ground operations and
bulldozers on the border, and air strikes against civilian infrastructure to visit costs upon the
Beirut government. Halutz did not think the return of the kidnapped soldiers was a realistic
objective, nor did he think that the short range Katyushas could be mopped up by anything other
than a massive ground campaign. 75 Halutz briefed the entire cabinet accordingly, “Don’t expect
victory or knockouts. I think that what we should do is react harshly enough to cause the
international community to intervene by putting pressures [on the Lebanese government].” 76

74 http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/roenserGuest.jhtml?itemNo=984608
75 Amos Harel and Avi Isacharoff, 34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon, 1st ed. (New
York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 78, 81.
In one large meeting, Halutz, accompanied by the other IDF chiefs and intelligence agency heads, presented three options to the Defense Minister: A large aerial campaign against Hezbollah and civilian infrastructures, but not on the rocket sites due to the inability to find short and medium range rockets and the likelihood of barrages against northern Israel as a response; an attack focusing only on the rockets; or a major ground operation. While Halutz recommended the first option, the head of the Mossad recommended the second. The Ministry of Defense’s Director of Policy and Political-Military Affairs (a retired general), while not recommending option 3, emphasized that a major ground operation would be required to take on the shorter range rockets. At the same meeting, the IDF operations chief made it clear to Olmert that no military operation would likely bring about the return of hostages or the decisive defeat of Hezbollah.

The air campaign against Hezbollah’s long range Fajr missiles in the first hours of the attack was quite successful, and Halutz again demonstrated awareness of the proper goals given the means available when he informed Olmert on July 12, “all the long-range rockets have been destroyed. We’ve won the war.” On July 15 the research unit of Israel's military intelligence branch presented a report to senior Israeli officials that questioned the war plan's ability to achieve the government's goals. The analysis, according to senior Foreign Ministry officials who read it, concluded that the heavy bombing campaign and small ground offensive then underway would show "diminishing returns" within days. It stated that the plan would neither win the release of the two Israeli soldiers in Hezbollah's hands nor reduce the militia's rocket attacks on Israel to fewer than 100 a day.

77 Freilich, “Back Again” 8.
78 Ibid., 10
Despite these briefs, Olmert delivered a “Churchillian” speech on July 17 to the Knesset that advanced ambitious goals in addition to return of the hostages, “A complete cease fire; Deployment of the Lebanese army in all of Southern Lebanon; Expulsion of Hezbollah from the area; and fulfillment of United Nations Resolution 1559.”

Olmert actually added a Palestinian dimension to the speech, “On the Palestinian front, we will conduct a tireless battle until terror ceases, Gilad Shalit [an IDF soldier kidnapped in Gaza] is returned home safely and the shooting of Qassam missiles stops.”

5.2 Late Ground Operations

When explaining the absence of ground operations to disgruntled uniformed colleagues, Halutz noted that “it is not in our interest in the context of the Israeli public.” Despite this hesitation, the continued push to use ground forces came from the IDF and met with resistance from civilians. The dangers of a limited ground operation were also made clear; according to one investigation, “when the IDF became committed to ground action, a number of senior offices warned that a campaign limited to the Hezbollah positions near the Israeli-Lebanese broader [sic] would be fought on terms relatively advantageous to Hezbollah, would tie IDF forces down in warfare in built-up areas and close-range fighting, and could not be decisive in sealing off Hezbollah forces and defeating them.”

The cabinet committee approved mobilizing and training reserve forces for the first time only on July 27, but did not give Halutz any authorization to use them. Halutz would push for

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79 Olmert, Kober
80 http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/olmertspeech2006_eng.htm
81 Winograd Report quoted in Levy, "The Second Lebanon War"
82 Cordesman 8
the ground operation with increasing vigor up through August 5; Olmert and Peretz remained “opposed but had an increasingly difficult time withstanding IDF pressure.”

The ground operation was finally approved a week later, if only “in principle.” Olmert delayed the operation for another two days. When asked in cabinet if a shorter operation was possible, Halutz insisted “no such animal existed. If the objectives set by the cabinet were to be achieved, it was the full operation or nothing.”

Olmert ended up deliberating between two versions of the ground campaign (similar to the attack to the Litani of the original plan), the principal difference being the number of soldiers to be employed. The plan from Halutz and the IDF asked for four divisions, while the one favored by transport minister and former CGS Shaul Mofaz used two divisions and two brigades and a much shorter timeline. Olmert ultimately decided on the larger operation. The reason appears to be a reluctance to disagree with the military’s recommendation in case it leaked to the media. Mofaz later testified “according to the public’s point of view, you can’t vote against the security establishment in the middle of a war.”

But while the pre-war IDF plan was slated to take 2-4 weeks (with most fighting in the first five days), the cabinet approved only three days of ground operations, and in practice it was only fought for one.

In summary, while both the civilian leadership and the IDF advocated a firepower-intensive strategy that used few soldiers, the civilian leadership was especially reluctant to send troops into combat. However, simple casualty aversion is not a sufficient explanation for the Israeli shortcomings of the Second Lebanon War. Despite copious advice from senior military

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83 Freilich, “Back Again” 12
84 Ibid., 24
85 Harel and Isacharoff, 34 Days. 198
86 Freilich, “Back Again” 13
leaders on the limited goals that could be accomplished with the prevailing strategy, Olmert publicly set highly ambitious goals for the operation, and continued the air campaign long after his uniformed advisors thought that anything of value would result.

6 Conclusion

This paper has sought to show that during the Second Lebanon War, Israel embarked on a firepower-, air-, and capital-intensive campaign in pursuit of overly-ambitious goals in an unconventional conflict, a singularly counterproductive combination. Civilians embarked on this course of action—publicly announcing goals, advocating air strikes, and delaying mobilization and ground combat—despite having been briefed by military officers that the tactics would not achieve the goals. The paper also shows that among Israeli citizens, one’s socio-economic status affects one’s approach to grand strategy; relatively less well off individuals are more likely to favor military force over negotiations. Less well off respondents are also more likely to favor increased defense spending as well as a lower willingness to make territorial concessions in pursuit of peace.

I explain this behavior with a theory starting with four major assumptions: security is a public good; voters weigh security benefits against their personal costs in taxes, conscription and casualties; the median voter gets her way in a democracy; and that economic inequality exists. From these assumptions I derive a voter preference for a capitalized military doctrine limited by substitutability due to war type and technology. When substitutability is low, as it is against unconventional opponents, a high degree of capitalization can result in the prosecution of wars using ill-suited doctrine in pursuit of (apparently) poorly chosen goals. While this paper cannot conclusively prove every link in this theory’s chain, cost distribution theory nonetheless explains
more aspects of Israeli security policy than competing explanations resting on elite capture or military myopia.

In the end, the finding may not be so surprising; Israel could be considered an easy case for this theory. Indeed, this paper helps reconcile the case of Israel with current political economic findings regarding redistribution. Research has shown that a multiparty, proportional representation electoral system (like that of Israel) tends to produce center-left coalitions. Such coalitions should redistribute more than the center-right governments of majoritarian systems.87 Yet Israel has generally been described as trending rightwards in the makeup of its governments even as it grows more democratic in its politics and unequal in its economy. This anomaly is solved when one considers that “left” and “right” in Israel politics are generally associated with dovish versus hawkish approaches to the provision of security. Security is the overwhelming public good that the government provides in Israel and it has a redistributive element to it.

More work, on Israel and elsewhere, remains to be done. While this paper’s theory assigns a pivotal role to the median voter’s analysis of the costs of grand strategy, it does not address how grand strategy’s benefits are assessed. If security is not seen as a pressing need, the urge to advocate for more will be dampened even if defense does have a redistributive element. This paper’s theory only suggests that, all other things equal, economic inequality and capitalized militaries will make increased arming and even conflict more attractive to the median voter. Thus there remains room for research examining how the country as a whole construes threats, and thus work on the role of Israel’s “security network” remains useful. The paper’s theory also has less to say on the relative attractiveness of offensive and defensive uses of military might. At least in Israel’s case, the cost of both have declined for the median voter;

Israel engaged in offensive wars in 2006 and 2008 even as it envisions spending 2.8 billion dollars on anti-terrorism barriers separating Israelis from Palestinians and at least 1.4 billion dollars on the Iron Dome missile defense system.88

Since 2006, the Israeli academic and strategic communities have listed the lessons of the Second Lebanon War, such as the need to focus on improving the IDF’s conventional ground capabilities. This paper concludes that these lessons are unlikely to be truly learned because the median voter tends to support an aggressive grand strategy vis-à-vis small wars and a military doctrine that fights them ineffectively. In keeping with the assumptions and findings of the democratic exceptionalist research program, this paper finds evidence that the Israel public weighs the political benefits of limited war against the costs. However, exceptionalism's cost internalization mechanism makes overly optimistic predictions regarding democracies' discretion in choosing war. Cost-benefit calculations are likely to be distorted given the type of military preferred by voters. Because of the heavily capitalized nature of its armed forces, Israel, and other countries like it, is likely to fight small wars badly, but will continue to fight them all the same. For a democracy's average voter, building a military to fight these wars of choice inefficiently but often is not a bug; it is a feature.

Figure 1. Israeli Tax Revenue by Income Decile

Source (Israeli Ministry of Finance)
Figure 2. Israeli Income Inequality and Non-Labor Defense Spending, 1979-2007

(Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics)
Figure 3. Direct and Mediated Causal Path Linking Economic Status to Grand Strategy
Table 1. Summary Table of Dependent Variables from the 2006 Israeli National Election Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chances of war in next 3 years</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To avoid war with an Arab state</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Binary Coding</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peace talks</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Any peace talks</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talk and Might</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Only Military Might</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen military might</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country spending on Security</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Binary Coding</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Same or less</td>
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<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same as today</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>More</td>
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<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>380</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Returning Golan territory</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Binary Coding</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small part</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>286</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant part</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
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### Table 2. Effect of Socio-Economic Status on Threat Assessment and Utility of Military Might

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Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Figure 4. Predicted Probabilities of a Preference for Military Force as a Function of Family Income
Table 3. Effect of Socio-Economic Status on Preferences for Increased Security Spending

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Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 4. Effect of Socio-Economic Status on Preferences for Territorial Concessions

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<th>Occupied Territories to Palestinians to Bring Peace</th>
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Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

48
Figure 5. Predicted Probabilities for Support of Increased Defense Spending as a Direct Effect of Family Income, Given Preferences for Military Strength

Probability of Supporting Increased Defense Spending

0.0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1.0

much more little more average little less much less

Monthly Family Expenditure Relative to Israeli Average
Figure 6. Predicted Probabilities for Support of Golan Concessions as a Direct Effect of Family Income, Given Preferences for Military Strength
Figure 7. Predicted Probabilities for Support of Golan Concessions as a Direct Effect of Family Income, Given Preferences for Military Strength


