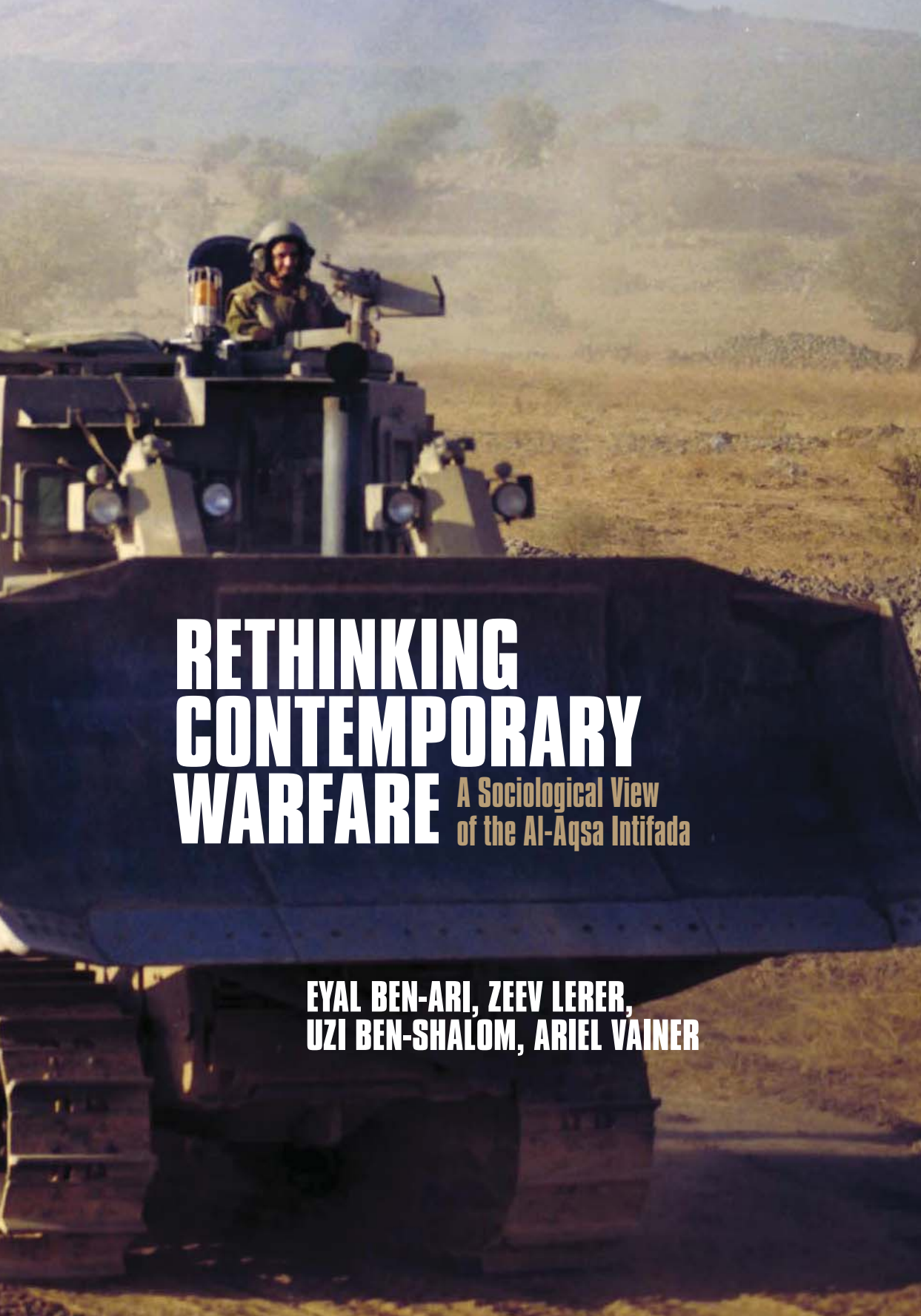

RETHINKING CONTEMPORARY WARFARE

A Sociological View of the Al-Aqsa Intifada

EYAL BEN-ARI, ZEEV LERER,
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Rethinking Contemporary Warfare

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Russell Stone, editor

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1

Introduction

In this volume we examine the combat experience of Israel's ground forces in the Al-Aqsa Intifada that erupted in September 2000. We contend that the case of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in this conflict allows us to explore debates about how the armed forces of industrial democracies wage contemporary war. Our book, however, is not another addition to scholarly works focusing on the broad social and organizational features of these militaries or on the special character of "new wars" (Kaldor 2001). Rather, our analysis is placed at the level of combat, the localized conflict between two or more armed actors. In other words, we explore the constantly changing circumstances of warfare for the actual units and soldiers engaged in current conflicts.

A short description of how our research project commenced may clarify the issues we have set out to study. At the beginning of July 2000 we began a project centered on the Israeli army's combat companies, primarily infantry and armor. The company level in many armed forces is considered the lowest level that is large enough to be powerful but small enough to be intimate (Baum 2005). Our aim was to analyze such issues as the formal and informal social structures of the units, leadership patterns, or relations between experienced soldiers and "newcomers." Concretely, we thought that an interesting entryway into these issues would be those regular but hitherto unstudied transitions between periods of operational deployment and training. Our reasoning was that in these transitions—kinds of "mini-organizational crises"—the underlying social and organizational dynamics of the units would be most evident. This was a period when Israel had withdrawn from southern Lebanon and when, we assumed, the main operational assignments of the IDF would continue to be policing the territories and implementing the Oslo and subsequent accords. Indeed, many of the troops and commanders we interviewed were worried that they would have no more serious work, since the intense deployment in

southern Lebanon was over. In all, we expected a relatively calm period of research.

Three months after we began the project, the Al-Aqsa Intifada erupted, marking the IDF's critical transition into a state of prolonged conflict. We consequently found ourselves in the rather "advantageous" position of being able both to chart this intense transition and to accompany the development of the conflict. We quickly decided to continue our research by observing the front-line units within the renewed clashes and the often chaotic situations they experienced. From the social scientific perspective, the Al-Aqsa Intifada provided us a rare opportunity to witness the way military forces are suddenly mobilized and have to shift quickly from routine activities into sudden, often very violent, action. While the move into combat is, of course, crucial for any armed force, it is rather rare to find it documented and analyzed. Moreover, it is often during such transformations that many of the assumptions that troops have about military work are suddenly exposed.

Yet many of the phenomena we encountered during this initial period and in the subsequent five years of our project did not fit our and other scholars' propositions about combat**.** As we gathered data—interviewed soldiers and officers, observed camps and deployments, or held numerous conversations with commanders—we found ourselves rethinking many of our assumptions and seeking new ways to understand the characteristics and dynamics of contemporary combat. When we tried to make sense of our data, seven sets of issues—paralleling the major parts of this volume—emerged. Each set is related to social scientific discussions about contemporary conflicts and the military.

The first set centers on difficulties many troops had in defining what has come to be called the Al-Aqsa Intifada. When interviewing one company commander about three months into the conflict, he said "I don't know what to call this." We sensed that this kind of difficulty underlay our need to conceptualize the combination of armed revolt, civilian protest, and violent demonstrations that characterized the uprising. Calling the Al-Aqsa Intifada part of the "new wars" or the combat taking place within it as "low-intensity conflict" was akin to offering labels but not conceptualizing what was happening. What was needed, we felt, was a framework that could encompass the variety of violent practices used by the IDF and armed Palestinians, the ebb and flow of aggression, and the feedback between the actions of both sides.

The second set involves a peculiar organizational phenomenon: the constant breakup of cohesive units and the assembly of their constituent elements into temporary, ad-hoc frameworks that provided the

IDF with flexibility and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In our interviews and conversations with commanders and soldiers, we often heard comments that did fit our presuppositions. These fractures and construction of new frameworks were invariably phrased in negative terms and seen as temporary states on the way back to the reconstruction of cohesive units. Yet we began to understand that the new structures that were set up—which we came to call "instant units"—were actually becoming the norm for military activity in the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Here again we found ourselves looking for a suitable analytical framework for explaining their organizational emergence.

The third array of issues concerns the constant local-level innovations made by IDF units in order to adapt to their changing circumstances. We understood that, in miniature form, these innovations were related to the creation of military knowledge or expertise. But we had problems in finding the right kind of theory that could help us tap into the processual, negotiated reality of military units in which soldiers often pushed the limitations placed on them in novel ways. Similarly, the violent clashes involving troops seemed to be organized, but this organization did not imply order, control, internal consistency, homogeneity, or continuity between fighting units. Necessitated here were theoretical interpretations that could account for the creation of local solutions to continuously changing military problems.

The fourth set of issues involves the ubiquitous checkpoints staffed by IDF troops. These sites, through which thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of people move every day, touched upon the ever-present but little theorized interactions between soldiers and civilians. Moreover, they are related to the pervasive presence of human rights groups, humanitarian movements, and representatives of the media in and around locations where military forces operate. As a basis for making sense of these diverse contacts, we found ourselves seeking a way to conceptualize the complex tensions, relations, and images of checkpoints as military sites. Concretely, we needed to analyze the ways in which the IDF controls the movement of Palestinians through them and the complex relations it has instituted with external entities.

The fifth group of issues entails combat in citified, urban environments characterized by intense friction between armed forces and insurgents, and the multifaceted relations with civilian noncombatants. With Israel's incursion into the main West Bank cities about a year and a half into the conflict, we found ourselves trying to grapple with the sociological meaning of urban combat rather than the more general state of urban war, because it is at this level that warfare actually takes place. In other words, we had to go beyond claims that military activities today take place in urban contexts to ask about how this very

context influences combat. We therefore came to distinguish between warfare *in* cities and city warfare—between studying units waging combat in cities without much concern for the urban context and investigating how the physical and social structures of cities impact and challenge military behavior.

The penultimate and sixth cluster comprises relations between gender, advanced military technology, and organizational status. The erection of the separation barrier in the West Bank and the activities of forces along it have been accompanied by significant integration of women into light infantry units or into roles using advanced technologies. These changes, we thought, could create an alternative social and organizational order within the military, either because operating technological means would signal the emergence of new types of soldiering or the proximity of women to combat would allow them to partake of the prestige of warriors. In effect, we found that we needed to explain how and why these forces reproduced the existing social hierarchies of conventional militaries.

The last and seventh set entails an intriguing combination of violent practices and restraining elements characterizing the Israeli armed forces. We found a strong emphasis on precision warfare, new rules of engagement, and use of heavy weaponry (tanks and helicopters, for example) alongside a host of limiting factors, such as the activities of the media and human rights movements, the propagation of an IDF code of ethics, and judicial involvement in tactical decisions. Here we sought to account for the puzzling development of restraining elements alongside new forms of organized violence. While the problem at the center of any armed military action is that of "savage restraint" (Ron 2000), a blend of violence and control, our challenge was to chart the ways this tension played itself out within the specific conditions of the conflict.

"Future Warfare"?

At the beginning of our analysis, we turned to the literature on "future warfare," searching for adequate conceptualizations of what we witnessed and heard. The emphasis in much of this kind of scholarly and (especially) journalistic work has been on "safe, clean wars" (Smith 2000) that are technologically based, precise, distanced, and imagined as near-bloodless (Spiller 2000, 2) (examples are Dunnigan 1993; Friedman and Friedman 1997; Meilinger 2001). Gates (1998) caricatures this perspective on wars as "high tech affairs, dominated by lasers, robot weapons, computerized decision-making, neutron bombs, energy

beams, and fighting space stations." We found that many commentators are actually skeptical of the high-tech scenarios that dominated academic, journalistic, and professional debates at the end of the 1990s. Spiller (2000, 4) notes, for instance, that such missions as the intervention carried out in East Timor defied the "easy, technological solutions that are so blithely promoted in some quarters today." Crock (2000) quotes the director of strategic studies at a Washington, D.C., think tank who says in regard to the Al-Aqsa Intifada: "What is being waged now is a low-tech war in populated areas, where the combatants are hidden among civilians—and are often civilians themselves. It's a strategy that undermines advanced weaponry." And, as Van Riper and Scales (1997) point out, what if the recipient does, embarrassingly, ignore the distant attack with firepower, forcing the attacker to choose between escalation and impotence?

> There is enormous difference between enduring distant attack, which however unpleasant must eventually end, and enduring the physical presence of a conquering army with all of its political and sociological implications.

Thus for all of the polemics—especially rife after the Gulf War of the early 1990s—some scholars have argued that contemporary conflicts actually comprise "messy" local wars in which ground forces continue to be of prime importance (Beckett 2001; Dandeker 1994, 1998b). Thus Burk (1998, 8) observes that "unconventional" struggles have actually been the predominant kind of conflict over the past fifty years, and Beckett (2001, 217) notes that, despite the advent of alleged means to wage "virtual" wars, the world is marked, if anything, by the proliferation of insurgencies. In fact, there is a growing consensus among scholars that in the "future" battlefield many of the classic features of warfare on the ground—leadership, group cohesion, the ability to withstand stress—will continue to be essential (Bolger 2000; Van Riper and Scales 1997). Indeed, the current American imbroglio in Iraq is but another attestation to the continued importance of ground forces.

It is this level—the actual warfare waged by ground forces—that constitutes the focus of our volume. To be sure, excellent journalistic portrayals of military forces in contemporary conflicts have been published over the past few years. As of yet, however, there have been almost no sustained social scientific studies exploring the actual experience of troops within one of the new "messy" conflicts (one exception is Winslow 1997). As Simons (1999) observes, while many scholarly works are being published about the causes and effects of contemporary conflicts, almost nothing is written about their mechanics. Against

this background, we turned to other kinds of scholarly literature seemingly relevant to our analysis: studies of irregular warfare, older and recent studies about the human side of warfare, and debates about the alleged emergence of "postmodern" militaries. We reasoned that these scholarly approaches could provide us with a set of analytical tools or frameworks with which to make sense of our data. Each body of literature, however, while suggestive in many respects, also proved rather limited for our purposes.

"Regular" Warfare, "Regular" Questions?

There is a rather voluminous professional military literature about armed conflicts waged by the ground forces of the industrial democracies. Yet despite the existence of these writings, it is only very recently that military establishments around the world have set out to develop a comprehensive doctrine for combating irregulars (Gates 1998). Dunlap's (1997, 27) observations in regard to the United States are probably true of all of the industrial democracies:

> Many in uniform will insist that they are not laboring under this myth. But when one examines the literature coming out of the U.S. defense establishment, it too often suggests that the United States foresees an adversary who thinks more or less as we do and organizes his forces and employs weapons accordingly. We seem to be preparing for an opponent who will fight us essentially symmetrically, much like Iraq tried to do [during the early 1990s].

In a similar vein, Cohen (1994) observes that low-intensity challenges to security have been accorded low priority on Israel's military agenda, and Beckett (2001, 234) notes that the IDF has not in the past regarded internal security as representing a significant a role as major conventional threats to its borders. Given the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the participation of many militaries in Afghanistan and Iraq, things are slowly changing. But in this respect, much recent work, to put this point by the Israeli example, is still either rooted within studies of military doctrine (Ya'ari and Assa 2005) or is journalistic (Harel and Isascharoff 2005). To reiterate, very little sustained and systematic social scientific research combining empirical data with theoretical formulations has been carried out about so-called irregular warfare. One reason for the dearth of such scholarly work derives, we think, from the kind of imagery of war and combat that many scholars still retain.

What is the model that shapes the social scientific idea of war? In short, it is an image of a conventional interstate conflict between soldiers, fought in accordance with the codified laws of war (Munkler 2005, 12). Indeed, from our perspective, notice how the terms used by various commentators originate in an assumption that the diversity of contemporary conflicts is based on their similarity to, or difference from, conventional wars. Spiller (2000, 1), for instance, talks about "war and lesser forms of conflict," and Smith (2000, 65) speaks of "lesser operations" (presumably contrasted with "greater operations"). Fastbend (1997) mentions "war and military operations other than war," while Gates (1988) talks of "military operations short of war." Eliot Cohen (1987) talks about "small wars" as opposed (we would assume) to "big wars," while Stuart Cohen (1994) uses the term "sub-conventional," and Hehir (1996) talks about "unconventional" in opposition to "conventional" wars. Or, take the idea of "spectrum of conflict," based on the idea of its intensity (high, medium, or low), from which the term LIC (low-intensity conflict) is derived (Fastbend 1997; Gates 1998). In fact, the very term "irregular" warfare implies a normal, "regular" war—and assumptions about "regulars" and "irregulars" as fighting adversaries—offering a benchmark against which all other conflicts may be measured.

But the problem runs deeper than this kind of assumption. In the majority of recent social scientific works on combat—in sociology, psychology, social-psychology, social history, and political science—the focus continues to be on what may be termed "conventional' or "regular" war. Take the latest crop of excellent books about combat: Joanna Bourke's (1999) "An Intimate History of Killing," Dave Grossman's (1995) "On Killing," McManners's (1994) "The Scars of War," or, the book edited by Evans and Ryan (2000), on "The Human Face of Warfare: Killing, Fear and Chaos in Battle." All of these volumes focus on, and assume the continued importance of, the stipulated conventional war. Similarly, a number of recent ethnographies about combat or preparation for combat that have been written about Israel (Ben-Ari 1998) and other industrial democracies (Hawkins 2001; Simons 1997; Winslow 1997) take a similar tack. Whether concentrating on the organization and interpersonal dynamics of combat units or the experiences of individuals serving in them, such analyses tend to examine how such qualities are related to "conventional" combat, the armed struggle of (usually) two opposing forces belonging to regular armies of organized states. In this sense, we argue that corresponding to the relative (albeit changing) disregard of "irregular warfare" by military professionals has been an almost total absence of social scientific studies about the organizational and sociological aspects of such conflicts.

It is as though social scientists have accepted the military's priorities in defining what is "worthy" of study. Many social scientists, in other words, have willy-nilly accepted the very worldview of the military organizations they study.

Long ago, Morris Janowitz (1971b) argued that the militaries of the industrial democracies have been moving toward a constabulary role, toward policing in various forms. This transformation—or, more correctly, an addition of new roles to conventional ones—has led to debates about the tensions between the ethos of warriors and the needs and practicalities of policemen. This dichotomy, however, does not quite get at the complexity of situations that involve peace enforcement (as opposed to peacekeeping) and in which armed forces are called upon to do more than policing. Conflicts in such places as Somalia, Sierra Leone, or large areas of former Yugoslavia are dispersed, blurred, and unpredictably fluid. They are dispersed in place and time in accordance with the principles of guerrilla warfare (Munkler 2005, 12). They are blurred because, as Battistelli, Ammendola, and Galantino (1999) state, many new arenas are characterized by unclear definitions of friend and foe, the existence of many enemies, and the saturation of the "battlefield" with a variety of innocents, unknowns, or neutrals. Arguably, while conventional wars tend to relatively clearly differentiate between the geographical and social positions of military forces and civilians, the new wars tend to confuse such categories. This confusion is related to the "vanishing front," because in present-day conflicts it has often become unclear where front and rear are, who the warriors on the "battlefield" are, and who the supporters are at "home" (Shamir and Ben-Ari 1999a, 1999b). Finally, many contemporary conflicts are fluid, in that within one arena different kinds of struggles may often combine or transform into each other, for example, peaceful demonstrations, violent protests, terror attacks, small-scale fighting, or open combat. In such conflicts fighting is not restricted to relatively isolated sectors but may flare up anywhere and anytime. Moreover, "the new wars have neither an identifiable beginning nor a clearly definable end" (Munkler 2005, 13).

Against this background we were led to questions that centered on just how the dispersal, blurredness, and fluidity of current wars are related to the actions of combat units and their internal social and organizational dynamics. In an effort to answer these questions we turned to the theories and concepts developed in the social sciences in regard to combat in conventional wars. Again, we thought that we could infer from the findings and contentions of this rich scholarly literature answers to the puzzles we had encountered in the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Seeking Answers: Conventional Military Sociology

In a wide-ranging article covering the core issues of military sociology, Siebold (2001) focuses on a variety of issues placed at the macro-sociological level, such as military professionalism (Janowitz 1971b), the similarity between the civilian and military professions (Wood 1988), or civilian control of the armed forces (Feaver and Gelpi 2005). Much more relevant for our case are what he calls the core issues related to the military institution and its fighting potential. He is worth quoting at length:

> [T]he primary orientation of the military as an institution and as a set of organizations is to take the raw "materials" such as recruits, weapons, systems and doctrine and work with them to produce capable combat units (land, sea, and aerospace) ready to engage the enemy on the battlefield (or carry out alternate military missions). For example, the development of leaders and small unit cohesion and performance would be clearly within the scope of that orientation at the individual and small group levels of analysis. . . . Thus the center of military sociology in this area could be a theory that addresses how that orientation to produce combat units dominates the institution and organizations of the military. Military sociology must ask how that orientation permeates the visions used for planning . . . formal and informal values, structures, and processes. (Siebold 2001, 150)

Siebold's characterization of the sociology of the military as it developed over the past five or so decades is quite apt. To put it simply but not incorrectly, much of this sociological literature attempted to deal with the shortcomings of psychological and social-psychological research on attitudes and motivation because it failed to describe the underlying social system of military establishments (Janowitz 1971a, 16). Instead of the single concept of morale, sociologists (and, later, social psychologists) sought to build a theory of organizational and professional behavior that focused on such concepts as authority, communications, hierarchy, sanctions, status, social role, and socialization (Andreski 1956). At the time, this line of analysis, moreover, paralleled the study of other institutions, such as the factory, mental hospital, or school, as social systems. Take the following passage from a classic essay by Janowitz and Little (1974, 103):

> [T]actical leaders must regulate the relations of their unit with higher authority. The commander is required by his

> men to defend them against arbitrary and unwarranted intrusion from above. Yet the officer in the tactical unit is also the final representative of coercive higher authority. For him to overidentify with his men would impair the system of authority.

This kind of analysis could easily have been used in regard to any institution or organization studied by social scientists during that period.

Perhaps the most developed set of concepts at the micro-level of combat units centers on cohesion and primary groups as collective responses to external threats (Shils and Janowitz 1948; Little 1964). Investigators have called attention time and again to the fact that the most "significant persons for the combat soldier are the men who fight by his side and share with him the ordeal of trying to survive" (George 1971, 294). Following Janowitz's lead, many analyses developed the idea of how even the smallest unit contains an "iron framework" of social control whether it be at the level of "buddies," squads, or platoons (George 1971, 296–8). Moskos (1975) took this line of research one step farther to show that primary group ties in the military do not necessarily rely on deep identifications and solidarity with group members but may be the outcome of instrumental and self-serving efforts to minimize personal risk.

While we develop these ideas in chapter 3, at this point suffice it to say that most research carried during the past five or so decades focused almost exclusively on professionally homogeneous, hierarchical groups: that is, on organic military units. No less importantly, underlying many analyses was a model or an ideal of the infantry (and to a much lesser extent, the armored corps) as the epitome of military organization. The assumption at the base of much of this literature seemed to be that the social structures and dynamics of combat units could help the military overcome what Clausewitz termed friction: things that look like they are easy become extremely difficult in warfare because of the magnitude and complexity of armies in conflict. At the individual level, friction entails "mortal danger, privation, physical exertion, fatigue, the uncertainty of vitally required information, random chance, and environmental drags like mud, fog, and the enemy's destruction of supplies" (Shay 2001, 4). It was for this reason that the psychological approach complementing the sociological literature was developed to illuminate the level of the individual soldier in combat. This approach centered on ideas of stressors and anti-stressors and the ways in which personal resources could be "freed" for soldierly activities. While many of these models tended to be dichotomist—more or less cohesion, greater or lesser stress, leading to better or worse cop-

ing—some such studies, as Shalit's (1988) significant but overlooked book, present a dynamic, integrated psychological model of combat based on feedback loops of appraisal, reaction, and motivation.

These individual psychological processes were then encased within social frames entailing group cohesion, status, or leadership. Yet in all these studies, the link is basically between a set of psychological and sociological variables, on the one hand, and military effectiveness, on the other (one example is Tziner and Vardi 1982). Along these lines, Lehrer and Amram (2001) contend that the psychology and sociology of combat comprise bodies of knowledge preoccupied with (and created against the background of) the basic difficulty of controlling military units in situations of extreme face-to-face conflict. Concerns with morale, cohesion, or leadership thus represent attempts to find factors allowing greater control and predictability in the battlefield. Our wider argument is that this extended family of sociological and psychological models has been generally tested and elaborated in rather specific circumstances: hierarchical, unified, and homogeneous infantry units engaged in (or preparing for) conventional combat. Only rarely have these models been systematically applied to other military sites, roles, and activities.

Let us go back to Shalit (1988), since his candor allows us to see the problems of applying conventional models to a conflict bearing some similarity to the Al-Aqsa Intifada. At the end of his book, Shalit tries to make sense of IDF soldiers' behavior in Lebanon during the 1980s after the initial period of intense combat had died down. In a section aptly entitled "New Concepts" he states (Shalit 1988, 180–82):

> The new IDF norms were called "Levantinization." Values became more fluid and adaptable; reactions towards previously unacceptable behavior became less harsh and more forgiving. Soldiers who were in an NCO course were given the task of covering another platoon on patrol. Instead, they engaged in looting. . . . There were cases where soldiers who had been ordered to search houses wantonly destroyed property, just for revenge. The officer in charge described how, on a previous day's search, they had not thoroughly investigated a house because a woman was crying loudly, until an expert assured them that this meant there were arms hidden—and indeed, a big ammunition dump was discovered. "All the time, I thought about this woman," said a soldier. "She was like my mother; how could I behave like this towards her—and then I say the expert was right." Another soldier who was there said that after that they found

> a radio control for exploding mines hidden in a bed, they started shooting at all the furniture in the house.

In explaining these developments, Shalit (1988, 183) suggests that military failure to cope with unexpected forms of battle was related to the problematic situation in Lebanon:

> 1. The purpose of the war was not clear to many. The nature of the enemy and rules of war were very diffuse.
> 2. Moral issues prevented many from identifying with the war; and conflict with home-front perceptions further reduced the potential for commitment.
> 3. Loss of trust in the military skills and abilities to handle the new situation, loss of status of leaders, and the inability to protest all lead to decreased feelings of adequacy and control.

Given these conclusions, it appears that fundamental to Shalit's analysis is an ideal war that is consensual, clear in its goals, pits unmistakably defined enemies one against another, and utilizes military skills and abilities of the conventional kind. Yet it is precisely the difference between this ideal view of combat and the reality of the IDF's actions in Lebanon that needed conceptualizing. In his attempt to do so Shalit (1988, 184) reverts to generalities:

> Any training must assure the adequacy of the perceptual process. Since the actual war scenario can only be predicted in a very diffuse way, training must be focused on the ability to perceive—how to structure, evaluate, and have confidence in one's ability to cope. . . . There is no point is preparing for the stressful emotions before one has structured the possible scenarios. There is no point in teaching skills and tactics before one has dealt with the emotional problems in their application.

These kinds of statements seem to beg rather than answer questions related to the social and organizational dynamics of contemporary conflicts.

While social scientific studies of combat have not been developed to explain these new circumstances, they do contain a number of important theoretical insights. According to Janowitz (1971a, 15), since

the Second World War, limited wars have been less often a struggle between states and more often a violent contest within a nation by some group against an existing regime. These struggles "involve use of nonprofessional forces, and therefore, the study of military organization shades off into the analysis of various forms of armed revolts, police systems, paramilitary formations, and other agencies of internal warfare." Indeed, Janowitz (1971b) developed the often-cited notion of "constabulary force" (Janowitz 1971b) to characterize the move of the military in a policelike direction in which victory over an opponent is no longer its major role but rather one of creating stable conditions for social and political change. Today this additional role has become the norm and another social scientific debate—centering on contentions about the emergence of a fundamentally new kind of military—appears relevant to our analysis.

Postmodern Warfare? Postmodern Military?

The most well-known formulation examining new human and organizational aspects of military forces was developed by Charles Moskos and James Burk in regard to what they term the "postmodern military." According to this perspective, the postmodern military is characterized by five major changes:

> One is the increasing interpenetrability of civilian and military spheres, both structurally and culturally. The second is the diminution of differences within the armed services based on branch of service, rank and combat versus support roles. The third is the change in military purpose from fighting wars to missions that would not be considered military in the traditional sense. The fourth change is that the military forces are used more in international missions authorized (or at least legitimated) by entities beyond the nation state. The final change is the internationalization of military forces themselves. (Moskos et al. 2000, 2)

Focusing on one of these trends, Burk (1998, 11) notes that in the current threat environment, the major NATO powers have increasingly varied rather than fewer missions to perform. While retaining the mission of preparing for and sometimes fighting large-scale wars, they now have added responsibilities to conduct "operations other than war," including strategic and traditional peacekeeping, protection against

terrorist threats, intelligence gathering to curtail the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, control of immigration and refugee flows, and humanitarian and disaster relief.

Booth, Kestenbaum, and Segal (2001), however, caution that the application of the concept "postmodern" to contemporary military forces should not be made too hastily, because many of these trends are actually continuations of previous developments. What they suggest is that it is the environment of the militaries that has become "postmodern" (if that is the correct term)—in the interpenetration of realms (such as the civilian and military), in the declining salience of some lines of difference (such as rank and formal hierarchy), and in the growth of multinationalism (as in coalition forces). The reaction of the military to these trends has been very "modern"—a rational, calculated structural adaptation—within which it never lost sight of its origins as the rational embodiment of the state's claim to the monopoly over force within its territory (Booth et al. 2001, 330). Indeed, despite the move toward smaller, more flexible structures, the military still recruits, trains, deploys, promotes, and operates on a day-to-day basis with as much bureaucratic regularity as any organization one could possibly imagine (Booth et al. 2001, 330).

At the same time, Booth, Kestenbaum, and Segal (2001, 333) are aware that changes in security environments and the manner by which wars are now waged signal important developments. First, they agree that the armed forces' new environments are now "characterized by deterrence, culturally imposed military restraint, instantaneous media transmission, and adversaries with profound disparities in their military capabilities" (Booth et al. 2001, 333). Second, they follow Baudrillard (1995) in stressing the role of the media (and mediated images) in the manner by which warfare is pursued. Thus, for example, they propose that the "actual events that occurred in the Gulf during these months are largely opaque for everyone except those who experienced them directly" (Booth et al. 2001, 334). Yet is precisely this kind of direct experience that forms the focus of our analysis. In this respect, while much of the literature on postmodern militaries is placed at the macro-level of institutions and their environments, it offers a number of questions about the micro-level of combat units. Hence, we may—following Booth, Kestenbaum, and Segal (2001)—ask how the military as a rational and hierarchical organization shifts from its hierarchy and rigidity toward a model that is more suited to the volatile, unpredictable, and fuzzy conditions of current conflicts. Similarly, what kinds of organizational control, regulation, or autonomy are developed in such situations? Calling contemporary modes of warfare the "new Western

way of war," Shaw (2005, 1) contends that they are characterized by risk transfer. Such wars center on

> minimizing life-risks to the military—and hence all-important political and electoral risks to their masters—at the expense not only of "enemies" but also of those whom the West agrees are "innocent."

But how does this kind of warfare express itself at the level of combat waged by ground units? In one fascinating investigation, Haltiner (2000) offers a sophisticated analysis of the different logics of police and military work based on insights about current-day missions of many armed forces. But how do these orientations express themselves when soldiers are routinely tasked with policelike functions? Many contemporary missions seem to call, as Battistelli, Ammendola, and Galantino (1999, 4) insightfully suggest, "for troops who can tolerate ambiguity, take the initiative, and ask questions, even to the point of questioning authority." But, again, this conception begs questions about the sociological frameworks within which such soldiers will be deployed and operate (Gazit 2005). Munkler (2005, 24) suggests that

> dramatic changes in weapons technology and the computerization of the battlefield are characteristic developments, but another characteristic is the return to archaic forms of violence practiced mostly with firearms but often only with knives or machetes.

And in his short preface to the volume edited by Evans and Ryan (2000), the chief of the Australian army notes that "although future warfare in the information age will be waged in a lethal battle space with advanced technology, combat itself will retain its essential and age-old human features." While these assertions contain some truth, we propose the need to theorize precisely the combination of "age-old" properties and characteristics of waging war in the information age—the computerization of battlefields and archaic forms of violence.

In this volume we contend that the Al-Aqsa Intifada provides a good case through which to explore these kinds of questions, since this conflict encapsulates many features of contemporary confrontations, and because the field units of Israel's military provide examples of organizational, institutional, and personal developments within these "New Wars." This book is written as a series of essays that may be read independently of each other. Although we contextualize our work in

the first chapters, we have purposely chosen discrete cases through which to explore different analytical issues. Our wider aim has thus been to use empirical material to think through certain contemporary issues related to current warfare and its scientific study. While written for our various disciplinary colleagues specializing in the social scientific study of the military (in sociology, psychology, social psychology, anthropology, and political science), we suggest that our volume bears import for the wider community of scholars dealing with security, war, and combat.

2

Methodology, Analysis, and Positioning

Our period of research spanned just over five years—from July 2000 to October 2005. During this time we gathered data primarily through interviews and focus groups with over 150 soldiers and officers belonging to the IDF's ground combat units. In addition, we had long discussions with individuals belonging to various branches of the Ground Forces Command and army training camps. In all, we now have data from brigade, battalion, and company commanders and their deputies, platoon leaders and sergeants, tank commanders, and tank crews and infantry troops. In addition, we have significant information derived from meetings with specialists such as snipers, medics, drivers, spotters, or military police officers. The interviews, we should add, were supplemented by what has added up to hundreds of short conversations. Finally, because we aimed at obtaining as broad of a picture of the Al-Aqsa Intifada as possible, we supplemented our findings with some interviews with reserve soldiers and officers who had served in the occupied territories during this time. Almost all of the interviews and focus groups were carried out in the camps and outposts manned by soldiers in and around Gaza and the West Bank. A few focus groups were carried out in the framework of seminars held by the Military Psychology Center of the Ground Forces Command.

From the conflict's inception it was difficult for us to accompany specific units in a sustained manner, because they were continually dispersed and deployed in areas that often were inaccessible to us (Hebron, Ramallah, or Gaza, for example). Accordingly, we developed a method we call "focused journeys." A group numbering ourselves and three or four research assistants went out to spend a full day with units in the West Bank or outside Gaza. In many cases we were met by members of the unit and went in their vehicles (sometimes donning

flak jackets and helmets) or in convoys to their bases. We usually met a battalion or company commander and explained our research, and after interviewing them we split into small groups of interviewers. Our sessions were conducted in an open manner, beginning with questions such as "What is going on here?" or "What are you doing here?" Interviews lasted anywhere from one hour to three hours and were recorded and then transcribed. A few times, serving officers in our group accompanied patrols or were led in armored vehicles to camps inside Gaza to carry out further research. We supplemented these discussions with observations of encampments, positions, and headquarters. Finally, we carried out very extensive reviews of unclassified documents published by the IDF and reports in Israel's main newspapers (*Ha'aretz*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Yediot Aharonot*) and magazine articles, and we read novels and short stories and a few secondary sources written about the conflict. The use of such extensive additional sources was dictated, again, by our wish to make more general arguments about the experience of IDF in the conflict. We chose to use ethnographic or qualitative methods because they could provide us with a rich and dynamic view of what was happening.

The information gathered was analyzed in a variety of work groups comprised of researchers and students from academia and from the Behavioral Sciences Departments of the IDF. Our intention was, first, to gauge the dependability and validity of the sources of data and to try to become aware of an uncritical adoption of our interviewees' opinions, and, second, to slowly build up a conceptual framework for understanding armed conflict in the Al-Aqsa Intifada. This process allowed us to construct our contentions upward from the data (rather than imposing an interpretive frame from above) in a way that did justice to the complexity of what we heard, witnessed, and read. In addition, in order to purposely open our interpretations to external critiques, we held a number of additional meetings. These meetings involved three different groups, each of which was comprised (with a bit of overlap) of about fifteen members, including university lecturers, graduate students, and researchers of the military. In each meeting we presented findings and contentions in order to receive feedback that then allowed us to further develop our conceptual frameworks. At times we added another dimension to our analysis by brainstorming with some organizational consultants (army "psychologists") or presenting our initial findings in academic seminars or conferences. As the years went by, we found ourselves extending our research into new areas. One that appears here is related to the separation barrier, although we have also gathered data about the disengagement from Gaza. As in other meetings, interviews here were based on a "bank" of

questions devised during fieldwork and constantly revised according to what we learned and the specific experience of the interviewees. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed into texts.

Methodologically, one could well ask as to the ways in which our social standing influenced soldiers' responses to our questions. The four of us are middle class: Ben-Ari belongs to the academic world, while Ben-Shalom, Lehrer, and Vainer are IDF officers with advanced degrees and belong to various arms of the IDF's behavioral sciences sections. To be sure, some interviewees did try to give us the "party line" and were sometimes distrustful of our intentions when we began to ask questions. Given the sheer variety of difficulties and qualms they talked about—fears, violence perpetrated against Palestinians, and social pressures within small units—we think that they leveled with us, as is evident in the "voices" we include in this volume. We use the masculine form of denotation for troops throughout the volume, since the overwhelming majority of our interviewees, as IDF soldiers in general serving in the Intifada, are men. As is evident in chapter 9, when we encountered significant numbers of female troops we explicitly state so.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada and its offshoots has been going on for more than ten years, and the end of the bloody conflict at times seems to recede farther into the future. The heavy price of this conflict, in terms of human lives and experiences, continues to grow. Some of the Palestinian casualties have resulted from the actions of troops we studied. As authors who have been studying the military for some years, listening to, and then trying to make sense of, the actual acts of violence perpetrated by and against many of our interviewees, this proved to be a fascinating, if at times an unsettling, experience. We are fully aware that our volume can be used by different groups to be read as either condoning the killing of Palestinians or as an anti-Israeli tract. Rather than leading our analysis in an explicitly political direction, as in other pieces some of us have published (Ben-Ari 1989; Bar and Ben-Ari 2005), we purposely take a distanced view (perhaps the only one possible for us as Israeli social scientists) to understand the intense experience of Israeli troops. For readers interested in more literary portrayals of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a range of excellent renditions have been published over the last few years (among others, see Amiry 2005; Perlman 2003; Shehadeh 2003).

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3

Schoolbook Wars—Textbook Units

Introduction

Before moving on to analyze the experience of the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada, let us explore the image of what we call "textbook units," since the differences between this representation and the actual reality of combat units are at the base of our argument. We argue that the IDF, like many armed forces around the world, still bases much of its training, preparation, and operation on images of conventional military structures operating in wars that have taken place during the second half of the twentieth century. In the Israeli case, this point implies wars that are closest to the model of the 1967 and 1973 wars, with their emphasis on maneuver and firepower. Bacevich (2005, 43) generalizes from the Israeli case to say that the

> Arab-Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973 provided American military officers with a template of how wars are to be fought: warrior pitted against warrior in a contest whose stakes, military as well as political, were straightforward and unambiguous; commanders empowered to command and backed by political leaders who refrained from operational meddling; civilian populations were spared direct involvement as belligerents but had no difficulty in determining whose side they were on. Best of all . . . these conflicts ended within a matter of days and produced unequivocal decision.

Benbow (2004, 137) extends this argument to declare that this was the kind of war fought in places such as Korea, the Falklands, or between India and Pakistan. The kind of opponent involved is a peer or near competitor

> [and t]he defining characteristic of an opponent of this sort of conflict is the possession of conventional forces of

> a significant size, which could apply to a belligerent in an inter-state conflict. The military tasks involved vary but are largely of a "force-on-force" character, where combat with the opposing forces is a crucial element and the immediate objectives sought are largely military. . . . This form of warfare was the focus of attention for the major powers during the Cold War period, due largely to their concentration on the European theatre, and dominated by their research, development, procurement, and conceptual efforts.

Along these lines, the guiding assumptions in much imagery of conventional wars center on clearly defined opponents, the operation of regular (as opposed to irregular) forces, clear lines of territorial domination, quantifiable progression in war, and unambiguous links between military goals and the means to achieve them. As Baum (2005) explains, American military forces were for the most part trained to and equipped to fight against numbered, mechanized regiments in open-maneuver warfare. But what is important in this respect is that these images of conventional war have been accompanied by rather strong suppositions about what military structures "look" and "act" like. Thus these units are based on hierarchy, ordered decision making, internal consistency between organizational levels, and the availability of resources.

From where do these assumptions derive? The governing definition of the military's core competence is that of the legitimate use of organized violence. This definition, in turn, is based on the idea of a rational use of violence, since like other organizations developed during the modern period, so the armed force are said to be intentionally created, goal-directed, boundary-maintaining, activity systems (Aldrich 1979). The historical source of this view is related to the creation of militaries along with modern states and the rational and legal practices characterizing the latter (Morgan 1986). Yet it is the idealization of the twentieth century's open warfare in which these armed forces participated that came to form the basis for what Bacevich (2005, 45) calls "real soldiering." Indeed, so strong is this imagery (and its basic assumptions) that the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs, as Benbow (2004, 97) underscores, bears a heavy bias toward just this kind of conflict: "real" soldiering takes place in medium- to high-intensity conventional warfare.

The Textbook Company: The Organic Thinking Machine

It is the image of "real" soldiering, we propose, that underlies representations of textbook units fighting battles in conventional open warfare. This vision of combat units as squads, platoons, companies,

or battalions—as found in popular imagery, scholarly portrayals, and professional depictions—is based on three key assumptions encapsulated in the idea of the combat unit as an "organic thinking machine": units as machines, units as organisms, and units as brains. The three comprise a "folk" model or "lay" theory used by members of the armed forces to interpret and act upon reality (Ben-Ari 1998). The term *folk* or *lay* refers to the assumptions, images, and interpretive schemes that lie at base of commonsense military knowledge. By "commonsense" we do not mean that this knowledge is simplistic, nor do we imply that it is unimportant. Rather, these terms refer to the unquestioned knowledge that "everyone knows," what Geertz (1983) has called the "of-courseness" of commonsense understandings. These models are of great importance, because they are the basic points of reference for "what we are" and "what we are trying to do" through which military reality is constructed. We contend that these models shape the behavior of military commanders and soldiers, regardless of the formal military education they have received.

Machine

The first image centers on the logic of the military as a "machine" that is hierarchical, has clear goals, is part of a larger unit (with similar characteristics), and contains clear boundaries. Moreover, in training, deployment, structure, and beliefs, it is oriented toward participation in conventional wars. Not surprisingly, the dominant metaphors used to describe ground-level military units are related to machinery and industrial production. This is not surprising, because analyses of the military have long underscored its claim to professional competence in the management of violence (Lang 1972, 29; Shay 1995, 17). This claim alerts us to the fact that all modern armies are characterized by strong mechanistic assumptions and images: units of the armed forces are thought to operate and have the qualities of machines. When we talk of organizations as machines (Morgan 1986, 22), we often have in mind a state of orderly (mechanical) relations between clearly defined parts that operate in a steady and productive manner. Thus, for example, the smoothness and efficiency of a unit's performance, the activation of the unit, and the interchangeability of parts are all like similar qualities that we assume that machines have. Or, to put it another way, in talking about how sleep "recharges" soldiers, enabling them to accomplish their missions, the imagery is of troops as "batteries, parts of an electrical implement that provide basic power for its operation. Finally, machines are emotionless entities, and, indeed, military operations are—or should be—executed in the most extremely rational impassive manner.

Organism

The second component of the textbook unit centers on a cohesive set of soldiers marked by bonds of comradeship and a sense of belonging to something wider (the "organism"). As we showed in the introduction, numerous scholars have noted the importance of social groups for the creation of motivation and through that to effective military performance. Greenbaum (1979), for example, summarizes the scholarly literature on the effects of small groups on combat efficiency by explaining that successful units are characterized by a strong identification of members with each other; members using one another as standards of comparison for competence, value, emotions, and well-being; and members adjusting to group norms and perceptions. At the lower levels of organization, according to this image, a military group should be an equivalent of the primary group marked by face-to-face contact. These ideas imply that the internal strength and solidity of individuals in groups develop from the unifying sense of belonging, of being securely together. In the military, what is important is the link between cohesion and the combat readiness and effectiveness of units: cohesion is said to be a precondition for, even a cause of, soldiers' willingness to continue belonging to the unit, and it is explicitly linked to performance, since by creating a cohesive unit one creates the conditions for the excellent execution of missions (Catignani 2004).

Brain

But things are more complex. Take the assumptions at base of Shay's (2001, 11–12) analysis:

> Members of a cohesive unit are able to take in the environment and focus on the enemy, because they know that others in their unit are covering their back. No cognitive or motivational resources are wasted in worries about the incompetence, selfishness, or lack of commitment of peers. Leaders . . . experience similar freeing up of resources when they know their bosses trust and support them. They can focus on the enemy, rather than focus inward on pleasing the boss, on looking good, or on institutional structures, politics, and procedures. . . . Because solidarity suppresses fear of the enemy, soldiers are able to *think*. (emphasis in original)

The third key metaphor of the ideal military unit, although it is not one always used explicitly by soldiers, is of "unit as brain" or "unit as mind."

By this assertion we refer to the likening of certain military activities to the information processing and reactive capabilities of the human brain or mind (Morgan 1986, 81). In general terms, this metaphor encapsulates the relationship between an organization and its environment, specifically the planning and reactive capacities of military units to uncertain and changing circumstances. The use of this metaphor is related to the limits of the machine image. The mechanistic approach is well suited to conditions characterized by straightforward tasks and a stable environment, that is, circumstances in which machines and standardized bureaucracies work well (Morgan 1986, 34). Conversely, it is restricted in terms of adaptability and potential for "robotic" compliance or strict adherence to rules and regulations. Thus organizations that, like the army, need to be able to scan and sense changes in the environment, and to innovate and react to these changes, are usually characterized by figures of speech related to the "braininess" or "mindfulness" of the organization (Dyer 1985, 135–38). Indeed, this image has been at the base of much research and emphasis on leadership and decision making under conditions of stress.

Conclusion

This image—the organic thinking machine—is the key folk model or lay theory characterizing military life in the Israeli military. Along these lines, imagery of conventional units is used as a template by soldiers and officers to do such things as prescribe proper training, describe and analyze concrete units, or diagnose actions undertaken by individuals. In its clearest form, the practical aspects of this image of military units appear in the IDF's instruction, schooling, and training bases. It is in these sites that textbook units are constructed and most closely resemble the military ideal. In these contexts, soldiers are most often trained in clearly defined units of platoons and squads; there they are given collective punishments; and there they learn about hierarchy, the boundaries of their units, and enemy forces.

The order of training bases that is based on this image is constructed with the chaos of combat in mind. In other words, units are constructed according to this triple ideal in order to be able to withstand the Clausewitzian friction—that blend of uncertainty and chance that characterizes all battles (each side a thinking, reacting entity operating within changing environments dynamics of conflict). It is within the violent contexts of battles, it is thought, that the need for strict discipline encapsulated in the machine metaphor comes out; along similar lines, the horrors of withstanding and effecting extreme violence necessitate a certain kind of close, cohesive social structure;

and, finally, the ability to react at the base of the brain metaphor is needed in order to survive in the constantly changing environments.

In the following chapters we describe and analyze the dynamics and characteristics of the IDF's combat units within the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Our aim, however, is not just to underscore the gap between the ideal of textbook units and some "reality" of combat or conflict. Rather, we show how this very ideal figures in, and is an integral part of, the experience of the IDF's combat troops and units. Moreover, we go on to offer a number of alternative theoretical frameworks that better explain the actions and experiences of these units.

4

War on the Frontier

A Hybrid Conflict?

A term that was often used among (mainly Jewish) Israelis referring to the Al-Aqsa Intifada at its beginnings was "the situation" (*ha-matsav*). The term and its ostensibly dispassionate connotation seemed—perhaps like the phrase "The Troubles" used in Northern Ireland at the end of the 1960s—to indicate the difficulties of classifying the conflict in any conventional textbook manner. Thus, for instance, journalist Dani Rubenstein (2000) hesitated about whether to call the conflict an "Intifada" (uprising) or a "war." In the wake of an attack of two Palestinians into the Jewish settlement of Elei-Sinai in Gaza, the officer commanding (OC) of the Southern Command commented that in the field "there is a continuation of fighting that is dictated by a dual message: on the one hand, cease-fire, and, on the other, a statement that the Intifada is continuing. Our basic assumption is that this situation will continue" (HA October 4, 2001). And Drucker and Shelach (2005, 34) comment that the IDF had never undertaken a war from such an ambiguous state in which it was unclear who was the enemy and who was the friend, who one talks to and who one shoots at.

We found our interviewees facing similar difficulties. One company commander told us that "It is not a war, but . . . ," while another candidly admitted, "I don't know what to call this." A young platoon commander from a Nahal infantry company talked about the *balagan*, a term meaning "confusion" or "mess." When asked by a journalist about the first thing that comes to his mind about the conflict, a member of a tank crew replied:

> The first thing that comes to my mind? The mess (*ha-balagan*), the conflict, the struggle between the two sides. You encounter

> all sorts of different situations with the Arabs, with the Palestinians, and with the Israeli Arabs. There are all sorts of situations of collisions between two bodies that are different and that create a mess and there are fights and it is hard to understand. (Blau 2001, 31)

What is the character of this "mess"? Its defining quality, we suggest, lies in multiple forms and layers of hybridity (derivations from heterogeneous sources, or compositions of different or inconsistent elements). Before going on to answer this question, however, let us provide a short introduction to the conflict's historical, strategic, and political setting.

The Setting of the Al-Aqsa Intifada

The conflict erupted on September 29, 2000, as a response to Ariel Sharon's (then head of the country's parliamentary opposition) provocative visit to the temple mount—the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque—in Jerusalem. The violence that ensued was preceded by the collapse of the Camp David peace talks in July, with both sides blaming each other for the failure. In the IDF, the conflict was code named "The Ebb and Tide Events," attesting, as we saw, to the difficulties of categorizing it in military terms. Among the wider publics on both sides, however, the name that gradually took hold is the Al-Aqsa Intifada. The death toll—including members of the security forces and civilians—over the period 2000–2006 is estimated to be over 4,000 Palestinians, over 1,000 Israelis, and about 60 foreign citizens (http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp).

An attempt in October 2000 to negotiate an end to violence failed while the killing of a twelve-year-old Palestinian in Gaza and the lynching of two Israeli soldiers in the West Bank fueled mutual suspicion and calls for even more violent actions. As the violence continued, further negotiations took place either directly or via American and other mediators in December 2000, January 2001, and March 2002. After repeated suicide attacks by Palestinians, Israel decided to reinvade the towns and cities of the West Bank in what it called "Operation Defensive Shield" (see chapters 8 and 9). Further attempts to negotiate a cease-fire were made in August and September 2002, but they also failed. Beginning in 2002, Israel began its policy of targeted assassinations, and in 2003 it began to construct what it calls the security barrier to cut off the West Bank from Israel proper. The combination of these means led to a drastic decrease in the number of suicide attacks waged against Israelis (Maye 2006). In November 2004, Yasser Arafat

died, and in January 2005, Mahmoud Abbas became the new president of the Palestinian Authority. In March 2005, a lull in the fighting was agreed upon, and while not a full-blown truce, the period did mark a serious decrease in the violence (http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/intifada2.htm). It is also this period that marks the end of our research project.

Throughout the conflict, the humanitarian situation in terms of employment, poverty, and food in the Occupied Territories deteriorated significantly (World Bank Group 2007). In addition, Israel was charged with numerous human rights violations, such as house demolitions (http://www.bootcat.org/docs/BTselem-House-Demolitions.pdf) and infringement on international law (http://www.merip.org/mer/mer217/217_falk.html). One outcome of this situation was an international outcry and critical reactions of numerous human rights groups and large parts of the international media. As we show in chapter 10, the IDF has reacted to these circumstances in various ways that take into account an emphasis on human rights and humanitarian considerations.

Turning to the strategic context, the actions of the IDF during the Al-Aqsa Intifada should be seen against the background of the fact that no Israeli government has ever codified the nation's basic national security as a formal doctrine (Cohen et al. 1998, 48). Nevertheless, what has emerged is a stance that Maoz (2006, 232) calls "cumulative deterrence," or the continuous posture of military preparedness side by side with the development of a society and an economy and democratic political system. Gazit (2003) situates this posture within a general Israeli attitude of always maintaining a position of strength based on a robust defense capability and military infrastructure. In the specific terms of Israel's low-intensity strategy, the idea that emerged over the years was "escalation dominance," or disproportionate responses to provocations, and military initiatives not in response to specific provocations in order to foster deterrence (Cohen et al. 1998, 49). Hence, the actions of the IDF during different periods of the conflict—the first few months, Operation Defensive Shield, or targeted assassinations—all basically emanated from this concept of promoting deterrence. In this sense, the framing of the conflict by Israel's political leaders and senior commanders as a continuation of a threat to the state served to strengthen the widespread consensus about Israel's strategy of using limited force (Maoz 2006, 23).

At the beginning of the conflict, Israel's political and military elites were not surprised by the outbreak of violence that seemed similar to what the IDF had experienced in the first Intifada. Yet this "popular" phase lasted only a few months and was soon replaced by

guerrilla attacks and suicide bombings. Along with the blurring of the division of labor between the Palestinian groups, the clashes became more violent and more intense (Shay and Schweizer 2007). One estimate puts the number of clashes between the two sides in the Al-Aqsa Intifada at five times the number in the first uprising (Maoz 2006, 264). At the beginning, Israel saw the Palestinian regime as being responsible for curbing the violence, but after it smashed the Palestinian National Authority, it attempted to enforce a policy of collective punishment on towns and villages harboring armed militants, and it then added a policy of directly hitting armed aggressors. This was the period when the air force and armored corps were integrated into the fighting and when the policy of targeted assassination was initiated. As in southern Lebanon, the IDF increasingly turned to the standing army (and not the reserves) to deal with the Al-Aqsa Intifada. The reasons for this move are related to the perception that regulars and conscripts were better adapted to the uses of new technologies and probably because involving reservists would have been politically more difficult. Nevertheless, in some instances, such as Operation Defensive Shield, reserve forces were deployed.

While we will return to these issues in chapter 10, it is important to understand that the shift toward precision strikes (including targeted assassinations, commando raids for arresting key operatives, or the use of snipers) is related to two developments that took place over the past two decades. The first is casualty aversion, meaning that in many contemporary democracies there is a decreasing acceptance of casualties on both sides of conflicts (Ben-Ari 2005; Levite and Sherwood-Randall 2002–2003, 86). The second is what Shaw (2005, 75–76) calls "global surveillance," the growing transparency of contemporary armed forces to external agents such as political leaders, the media (local and global), the judiciary, pressure groups, and international nonstate institutions. This development has implied that the IDF has had wider political pressure to move toward more precise operations. This shift does not imply that no innocent civilians have been killed or wounded. It does mean that the move toward precision attacks has by now been integrated into Israeli doctrine.

While seemingly innovative, the building of the separation barrier was actually an extension of Israel's long-term emphasis on "passive" defense that has been used around the country's borders for decades (Maye 2006, 36). This defense system has included fortified outposts, electronic fences, minefields, and different kinds of IDF patrols. The barrier itself represents a unique development in this regard, since it includes some high-tech elements related to surveillance and a variety of on-site security systems. The most significant political innovation, of course, has been that the barrier has not been placed along an

internationally recognized border but between large parts of the West Bank and Israel proper. In chapter 9 we take up some of the issues related to this barrier.

During different periods of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the conflict was seen both as a training ground for "real" or conventional war and a testing ground for new technologies (based mainly in the intelligence corps and air force). With the passing of the years, however, this arena became the primary focus of the IDF's military training, deployment, and doctrine. Thus from the point of view of Israelis, a sad, if an ironic, outcome was that when the IDF ground forces entered the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006, they encountered great difficulties in changing their mind-set from fighting a counter-insurgency to waging a conflict that bore some similarity to conventional war.

An ordered rendition such as we have offered here does not do full justice to the confusion and difficulties that many troops and officers encountered during the first year or two of the conflict. These uncertainties are important to understand, since they framed, to a great extent, the reaction of the ground forces to the conflict, as we show in chapters 6 and 7.

A Hybrid Conflict

Begin with the variously "occupied" or "administered" territories that form a hybrid form of territorial control. These areas are seen as part of the Israel, yet they are also understood to be not part of state. Israel has taken full possession of some places in the territories yet has negotiated and "returned" other places to the Palestinians. What is clear is that the conventional situation in which a state controls its own area does not apply to the "territories," the nonannexed yet occupied areas within Gaza (until 2005) and the West Bank, captured during the 1967 war (Kemp 1995). Israel's actions within these territories continue to be marked by uncertainty and bounded territoriality. The political and legal status of the territories, moreover, has often been defined as an "interim situation" or a "status quo" that will eventually lead either to annexation or territorial compromise. As Ron (2000, 451–52) puts it, in contrast to southern Lebanon, which was seen primarily as a buffer zone, for long periods Israeli governments viewed the West Bank and Gaza as an arena for potential colonization, long-term rule, and eventual incorporation. Israel, consequently, sought a more powerful system of control in Palestine than in Lebanon, turning it into a quasi-internal province. From a military point of view, this situation implied that the West Bank and Gaza were like frontiers, in that the ground rules of territorial control lacked clarity.

Closely related to this point is the image of Jewish settlers in these areas. For many soldiers we interviewed, the settlers are like "us," yet are also unlike "us." They are the clients (in the sense that it is their security that is provided for by the IDF), but sometimes they are also the bosses (in that they give orders). They are not allowed to use force, yet they actually do so (very often illegally) against the Palestinians, the IDF, and (in Hebron) against the TIPH observers (HA November 15, 2000; HA September 9, 2001; Sinai 2001). The deep ambivalence toward Jewish settlers came out in an interview with a paratroopers' commander:

> With the [Jewish] civilians there is a fine line, and we often don't know how to treat them, because, on the one hand, they are like you, exactly like you, but, on the other hand, they create disturbances and hurt the Arabs and offend the values that you hold. Then there is the other side of things, that they are the ones that get hurt at the end of it all. And when they get hurt, then it's your family that gets hurt at home, that's the way we see it. So the soldier has a dilemma, not knowing always what to do with them and how to handle them: whether to disperse their demonstrations or the problems that they create on the roads, because afterwards it involves grappling with the Arabs and the demonstrations that they make.

A former commander of the Hebron Area Brigade previously assigned to the Jordan Valley explains:

> The [Jordan] Valley is another world. There you have a border, an electronic fence, an army. There are also Palestinians there, but what is important is the border with Jordan. The whole concern is more military. In Hebron, on the other hand, everything is maybe . . . everything is in the gray range, or, more precisely, the gray part is relatively larger; there is no clear line, no clear enemy. (Ushpiz 1998, 26)

While many of these features have existed since the time Israel occupied the territories, the Al-Aqsa Intifada presents a further set of complicated characteristics.

Perhaps the most important feature that distinguishes the Al-Aqsa Intifada from the previous one is the new combinations of violence that are effected in both directions. For example, the previous conflict primarily included elements of civil uprising consisting of demonstra-

tions, confrontations by Palestinian youths, the use of stones and petrol bombs, strikes against the Israeli civil administration, and boycotting Israeli goods. In the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the presence of the Palestinian police (or armed forces) has added a crucial dimension of armed aggression from that side. Much of the uprising has been organized and carried out by a variety of Palestinian security forces and militias (the Fatah's Tanzim, some of the security services, and the Hamas and Islamic Jihad). Concretely, the violent actions used by the Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa Intifada include peaceful and violent demonstrations, rock throwing, Molotov cocktails, the firing of handguns and sidearms, sniping and using light and heavy machine guns, the laying of roadside bombs, throwing grenades, the laying of explosive charges and detonating car bombs, drive-by shootings, mortar and rocket missile attacks, the deliberate targeting of civilians (especially Jewish settlers or Jews with business contacts in the territories), and individual and team suicide attacks in Israeli urban centers.

The Israeli side has reacted in no less a varied manner, including the use of gas bombs, rubber-coated steel bullets, sniping, grenades (spray, shock, tear gas), and the escalated utilization of machine guns, patrols, mobile roadblocks, guard posts, airplane and helicopter fired missiles, tank weaponry, anti-tank missiles, kidnapping, the arrest of military activists (HA October 2, 2001), the destruction of Palestinian outposts, police stations, government offices and prisons, concealed explosives operated by remote control (International Herald Tribune November 24–25, 2001), night raids and incursions, and the use of elite forces to assassinate Palestinians. To these add the policy of razing Palestinian buildings, trees, and fields to protect IDF soldiers and Jewish settlers in permanent settlements or on roads. In addition, Israel has sealed off the territories preventing entry of Palestinian laborers, has restricted imports of goods into Gaza and the West Bank, and has prevented the movement between the territories and foreign destinations (Sinai 2001, 16). The complexity of forces on the Israeli side is no less striking, including a plethora of army units (regular and reserve, ordinary or special forces), the General Security Service, the police and border police, anti-terror units, and local civilian guards.

Both sides have not only concurrently used this large variety of violent means, but the Al-Aqsa Intifada has seen frequent shifts between different kinds of clashes. Indeed, what officers in the IDF call a "changing reality" is related to the unpredictability of these concurrent and changeable uses of violence by the Palestinians (and the IDF). A company commander from an armored unit deployed in Gaza remembered the first few weeks of the uprising:

> We were on some kind of regular patrols; everything was as usual with rubber [coated steel] bullets that we were used to, and suddenly as this was going on we entered a situation of combat and the situation became worse and worse. I was ordered to enter combat immediately [using the tanks] so this switch is something that you have to struggle with every day.

And, an infantry commander said:

> The problem with demonstrations is not the demonstration where they throw rocks and burn tires. You can live with that. The problem is that sometimes people with weapons will enter this kind of demonstration and when they shoot, it becomes dangerous.

The fluidity during the first stages of the conflict also involved the geographical movement of units. For example, if we followed a not-untypical unit within the space of a short time, it transferred quickly, at times at very short notice, between tranquil training circumstances, actions against organized Palestinian forces, pursuing small teams of armed cells in the territories, chasing stone-throwing Palestinian children, escorting Jewish settlers' children to school and back, conducting searches in Palestinian houses, preventing Jewish settlers from establishing unauthorized settlements, dealing with combined Jewish-Arab demonstrations, cooperating with police in looking for stolen vehicles, or even providing security for religiously orthodox visitors (living outside of the occupied territories) to Jewish saints' graves. These tasks differed widely in the nature and amount of military expertise they required, the level of stress or risk involved in them, the amount and nature of force necessitated, and the character of the "enemy," or the population to be dealt with.

Here again the Al-Aqsa Intifada presents another dimension of complexity, because much of the violence was effected by people who were, until the beginning of the conflict, either negotiation partners or associates in security cooperation (HA September 30, 2001). An infantry officer observed:

> This is what we came to know over many years, that they are not enemies and that they are people that we have agreements with. And now you need to make the switch, and everyone that has a weapon is [now] an enemy. This is a problem and not very pleasant. These are not simple matters.

A soldier from the armored corps in the Gaza area explicitly linked his unit's activities to divergence from the ideals of textbook military action:

> In Lebanon there were very clear rules. You come, you shoot, and you kill. Here it's different. The whole world knows it. Lebanon is a game with clear rules. A [Hezbollah fighter] shoots at you, you see him, you kill him. What do you have here? There are settlements, cities. You have policemen who hide behind kids. It's like, you say "Well then, what now? Am I going to shoot them? It's not very nice now. Doesn't really suit me."
>
> To be really honest, I think it's political, a political blurring. Lebanon was always depicted as a war movie, and every soldier wanted to participate in that movie. But here they broadcast that it's not a war movie but a tragedy that has to finish already, a conflict between two peoples, and you don't feel like acting within it. You don't feel like it. . . . The Hezbollah was represented as an enemy, an enemy. The Palestinian policemen in your consciousness are half-enemy; an enemy you treat differently. You know the Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. In basic training they educated us that that Hezbollah and its weapons is an enemy. Of course the funerals from the time of Lebanon described things that were heroic. Facing a Palestinian policeman is not heroic.

Lack of clarity about enemies (and categorizing them) is closely related to the fact that many opponents were previously partners to a "peace process." Along these lines, because the conflict in Lebanon resembled in some ways conventional conflict, where lines between friend and foe were clear, it provided a template for heroic actions suiting self-images of military professionals participating in a struggle akin to a textbook war. The Al-Aqsa Intifada, to continue this line of reasoning, could not provide the same kind of situations where heroic military actions could take place.

This kind of interpretation has implications for the way soldiers and officers understood the conflict. Despite declarations of some senior commanders to the contrary, we found no assertions that the Al-Aqsa Intifada would yield "decisive moments," as are found in conventional battles and toward which textbook units are prepared and trained. In fact, a common metaphor used to describe the struggle was that of "attrition" without clear-cut measures for victory. A company

commander from an armored unit stationed in the West Bank related this point to the asymmetry of the struggle:

> There is no total defeat or victory here. It's a matter of who will harm the other. Okay, now it's clear that the forces here are unequal, and that's why every time they hit us it's a victory for them. But if we hit them, then because we're supposed to be the ones in control from the beginning, then I don't know what kind of victory it is for us. It's like prevention. Okay, so prevention can be a measure of victory: if you prevented a terrorist act, you prevented someone [from] throwing a burning tire . . . on a road; then it's a small victory for you. But in general, you are fighting kids here, and the old people who want quiet here. . . . You fight inciters who go into a house and shoot three bullets and then run away. This is quite an absurd war, and you are not fighting Russia or America or Egypt here. . . . It is a wholly different war.

Notice how assumptions about enemies, participating forces, and victory in conventional wars govern the way this officer interprets the IDF's participation in the conflict. The words of Nachum Barnea, a political commentator, echo these sentiments. In the wake of the IDF's occupation of Beit-Jalla, a town facing Jerusalem's southern neighborhoods, he notes,

> In a certain manner, the entry into Beit-Jalla was not a military operation. It was known even before the action began that the operation would not have actual achievements on the ground, outposts and positions will not be improved; the enemy will not be beaten. The operation was born, first of all, out of a political necessity. It is unthinkable that a neighborhood in Jerusalem will be attacked time and again, and the government of Israel will sit idly by. (YE August 31, 2001)

Hence, the use of tanks during many periods of the conflict was not based on their capability, as defined in military textbooks—they were often no more than large static barrels—but on the meanings attached to their placement near or within Palestinian areas. Sinai's (2001, 18) conclusions about the conflict place these points in a wider framework:

> Because the Al-Aqsa Intifada is rooted in a civil uprising, Israel could not employ the types of punitive deterrence measures

> that would prevent a state opponent from attacking an Israeli military target or a city. Thus, unlike conventional warfare between states, where regular armies face each other, and where differences in quantitative power ratios in terms of forces' size or military arsenals determine the outcome, the asymmetric and clandestine nature of warfare between terrorists or guerrilla insurgents against the military of a much more powerful state make[s] it much more difficult for any state to respond militarily, particularly when the objective of terrorist warfare is not to defeat government forces in battle but, rather, to kill civilians in order to generate public fear that would weaken the government's political resolve to continue with the struggle.

From our perspective, however, it is against this background that one can understand why for long periods at the beginning of the struggle so many troops talked about longing for a "real" war. We often heard frustration and anger about a conflict with no clear boundaries, enemies, and targets, and where decisions could affect an unambiguous victory. During the initial stages of the conflict, these soldiers and officers continued to think in terms of the military models of conventional wars, according to the ideals of textbook units and battles.

Conclusion

The Al-Aqsa Intifada was waged in the context of hybrid borders, mixed territorial control, and unclear definitions of "locals" and Israelis/Palestinians. The explanation for this situation has to do, as Barak (2005) explains, with the fact that the struggle between the two sides is a conflict between two communities. As a result, it is not that surprising that many in the IDF were confused during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, both conceptually and in terms of its roles. While this kind of explanation is important at the macro-sociological level, what we examined in this chapter are the military implications of this situation. The concrete, locally based violent acts themselves were often effected simultaneously and very quickly transformed within specific situations. Moreover, the conflict was marked by the participation of a large variety of actors and by no concrete criteria for deciding victory or failure. In this way, the conflict was very different from conventional wars marked by clear (if imagined) boundaries between territories and forces, civilians and soldiers, and front and rear. In the following chapters we describe the experience of the IDF's combat units and how they adapted to the unique circumstances of the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

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5

The IDF Reacts

Loose Coupling, In-between Organizations, and Organizational Adaptation

During the first few months of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel's top generals set a rather self-congratulatory tone in regard to how the conflict was waged. The tone was set, as Oren, a military analyst for *Ha'aretz* newspaper, observes, because the conflict was pursued without many Israeli casualties, without it transforming into a wider war, and without the intrusion of foreign forces into the region (HA October 5, 2001). Indeed, this initial period is considered by senior IDF officers one of the most successful cases in which forces were prepared for their mission. Before the conflict, the military initiated the large-scale fortification of outposts, rewrote a manual for such warfare, and carried out a series of remarkably successful simulations in mock Palestinian villages specially built for this purpose (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 57; Jerusalem Post July 13, 2001; YA August 10, 2001). Yet as Drucker and Shelach (2005, 50) observe, despite the admiring mood set by the army's top commanders, the civil uprising in the occupied territories was always seen as a prologue to the real thing, a full-fledged clash along the country's external borders and especially with Syria. The idea was that the uprising would take only a few days—the simulations took three days—during which it would be important to emerge clearly victorious. Thus training was based on assumptions, never fully stated, that the uprising would be brief, and that the real danger lay in a full-scale conventional war. In doing so, the IDF may have inadvertently contributed to the prolongation of the conflict, since during its first few days it used massive firepower in order to seek victory.

After a few months, however, it dawned upon Israel's top commanders that the IDF was facing a new type of contest, one that would take a long time to resolve (if at all). In fact, the reactions of ground-level troops reflected changed understandings of how the struggle should be waged. Let us begin a few not untypical examples. First, the words of a commander of a Nahal infantry company:

> You place a platoon commander and thirteen soldiers in some assignment in the city. While I try to visit every day, it's very clear to me that my influence on how he will perform when they shoot at him at night . . . no, I don't have any influence. It all depends on his personal ability and how much I prepared him beforehand. We understand that all of the actions will be wrapped up already at the level of the patrol commander or the commander of the ambush. The ones that will arrive later will be the extraction team, and how things will develop afterwards will depend on the specifics of the event. But the direct factor facing the terrorist in the ambush is the commander of the ambush and no one else.

A commander of an armored company in the Gaza area said this:

> When we arrived in Netsarim [in the Gaza Strip], it was an intense day, especially the first day there was a shooting battle that I was called to; and I found that there was a lot to learn . . . but we see a learning curve all of the time. The first time we missed a team of terrorist[s] that we could have killed, and in the end we only made them run away; and then you see, last week we took down [*horadnu*] some three people. The company has gone through such changes that it has no real organizational memory; except for one of the tank commanders, no one has ever carried out a night-vision ambush, no one was ever shot at.

A paratroop officer noted:

> There is no situation in which the platoon is together, meaning that the platoon cohesion, no matter how you try to conserve it, crumbles. The platoon leader who wants to gather everyone together for a talk, something taken for granted in routine times, he can't. He never has all of the soldiers directly under him. . . . He himself goes

> out on assignments and many times it's not with his own soldiers. . . . And the soldiers as well, they need him [the platoon commander], and he works around the clock, and they can't find him, and they want answers, they want solutions [to their problems].

A paratroop sniper related:

> Me? Since the beginning of the action I haven't seen my company. They put me here with two more snipers and a security detail from the moment that we got to [this village]. Since that time I haven't seen anyone. From time to time we had contact with the commanders; like when we needed things to be brought here. When we go home, okay, we stop at the company and get a briefing and then we're out, but I haven't seen my company in ten days. Not one friend from the company. It's just because of the conditions under which we work. . . . They stick you in some point on the map and then you sit there until you have to pack up and leave.

Finally, a deputy company commander in the Nahal brigade said this:

> [There are] more than a hundred men [in the company] and there are not more than thirty in any one place. . . . This means that it's very difficult to control things. And there is [the] problem that commanders are constantly preoccupied with assignments; I run all of the time from one incident to another. . . . And what happens is that I can place a soldier in a certain post, but I have no time to check whether he has shined his shoes or whether he is shaven, or whether he has cleaned his weapon. The only thing that I can do is to ask and make sure that there are clear regulations.

These depictions do not fit the ideal of textbook units or of conventional military work. While there is a clear military hierarchy, the autonomy of local commanders to make decisions is almost maximal. Whereas communication between levels takes place, it is not constant. Although learning from concrete incidents occurs, it may take time to be disseminated among units. Subunits are relied upon, but always with a large degree of uncertainty. Even as preparations take place, there are few set drills. In these short passages are encapsulated many of the characteristics of fighting in the Al-Aqsa Intifada: the autonomy

of local units, lack of direct control, long feedback loops between subunits and larger units, the need for trust and preparation, and leeway left for discretion.

What, then, is the underlying military order of Israeli ground forces during the Al-Aqsa Intifada? In what way is it different from the textbook military organization typified by ideal versions of hierarchy, discipline, uniformity, and clear and open lines of communication? The following two chapters attempt to answer these questions. In this chapter we argue that during the first few months of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the IDF developed both a loosely coupled structure as a main mechanism, allowing it to adapt to the special circumstances of the conflict, and a number of organizational "appendages," allowing it to handle a variety of complex relations with civilians. Weick (1976) suggests that most researchers make the assumption that one can "understand" an organization by examining its formal structures, goals, and activities, yet clearly there is another part of organizations that is informal and chaotic, yet somehow practical, adaptable, and crudely organizing.

The Emergence of Loosely Coupled Systems

In rather abstract terms, loose coupling "conveys the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event has its individual identity and the coupling can vary over time" (Manning 1992, 49). More concretely, the concept suggests that one can break many organizations into largely self-functioning subsystems, and that loose coupling is really the "glue" that holds them together. Thus loosely coupled organizations are slightly chaotic but not completely chaotic; they "somehow" adapt to their environment (Manning 1992, 49). We suggest that this concept may clarify organizational actions in turbulent and hybrid environments such as the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Under what kind of conditions do loosely coupled organizations develop? First, they develop under circumstances in which it is difficult to coordinate subunits, since each faces an environment marked by its own peculiarities. The Al-Aqsa Intifada is a prime example of this situation, as the different units (platoons, companies, or even battalions and territorial brigades) operated within often very different conditions. For instance, units in rural districts or urban areas faced different challenges, and even urban areas—for example, Hebron or Jenin—differ in the density of their populations, topographical features, or historical and political significance. From the perspective of troops, each environment is marked by its own combination of

(often constantly changing) threats, foes, and means of attack. In fact, an ironic indicator of this situation was criticism sounded by higher-ranking field commanders:

> It can't be, complain officers that are grappling in the field, that there is no one senior commander whose role is to focus on all the fighting in the territories and update the combat doctrine. Every commander in every area makes his own private war, with his own system, with units that have not been prepared for guerrilla warfare, and above them all the senior command activates helicopters and planes. (Pedatsur 2001)

What we would argue is that from an organizational point of view, the very images of "private war" and "own system" are not indicative of the inability to create a common military doctrine but rather the outcome of the very different contexts that field-level units found themselves in.

Second, loosely coupled organizations appear in situations in which there are no established regulations or within which they constantly change. A prime example in this regard entails the rules of engagement (*hora'ot pticha be'esh*, literally, orders for opening fire) propagated by the IDF. During the initial long months of the conflict, constant changes in these rules exemplified the many "gray" areas that could not be regulated in the sense of providing clear, concrete prescriptions for action. "Blue Lilac" was the name given to the compilation of rules of engagement that was drafted before but in anticipation of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. The problem was that this compilation, as some observers noted early on in the conflict, was rooted in the "radically different conditions in different areas and even between different companies" (HA July 14, 2001). A tankist told us this about six months after the conflict had begun:

> There is a fear throughout the IDF of shooting. Every time a shot is fired, you have all these commanders coming down to investigate you. Now, because the incidents have escalated recently, they have softened the rules of engagement. This means that till now when someone shot at you, you could shoot at him, but the minute he stopped; you weren't allowed to shoot at him any more, that is, unless your life was endangered. Now it's enough to have someone with a weapon aimed at me so that even if he doesn't shoot, I can shoot to kill. Someone with a Molotov cocktail in his

> hand and has not thrown it yet, I shoot to kill. But if he has thrown it and is running away, I shoot him in the back if I need to. . . . Now in regard to those who throw rocks, you're allowed to shoot at their legs if it's a situation in which they endanger your life. In regard to the agitators among them, and to the dangerous guys, [being allowed to shoot at them] is part of what could be called softer rules of engagement.

While phrased at the level of an individual soldier, this passage well underscores how the IDF's rules of engagement continually changed during the conflict. To reiterate, what from an organizational point of view seems to be lack of doctrinal consistency is actually an expression of constant flux in local environments.

Third, loosely coupled organizations develop in circumstances characterized by causal indeterminacy (Manning 1992, 51), situations in which different means can lead to the same results. We were furnished with a good example of this point by one of the company commanders, who told us, "Sometimes a show of force, or a lack of show of force, can lead to the same outcome—calm among the Palestinians."

This trait is closely related to the fourth condition, which is slow feedback time. Since so many units were dispersed to face different circumstances, it became especially difficult to receive feedback about what was happening. In other words, the spatial dispersal of units operating in small, disconnected frames not easily monitored by more senior commanders implied that there was no one effective way to coordinate and control their tactical activities. Finally, while it is beyond the purview of our analysis, it is important to add that the Palestinian side was also marked by loosely coupled organization: a rather unique and constantly changing combination of young street activists, neighborhood fighters, and freelance and militia leaders, all of whom were not always controlled by the Palestinian Authority's security forces.

The "Adaptive" Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Practices

From the perspective of the organization, there are advantages and disadvantages to loose coupling. The primary benefit is that a unit, like a combat company or an amalgam of infantry and armor, can adapt to the special conditions it faces without its actions necessarily being tied to those of other units. In other words, since the standardization of responses may be too restrictive, units can adapt to their part of

the environment without changing the entire system. Moreover, loose coupling may allow more novel solutions and mutations to occur than tight coupling. A common metaphor capturing this idea is expressed in the words of one officer who stressed the necessity of "sewing a local suit" for each threatened road he was charged with protecting (HA July 9, 2001). For him "sewing" a special suit implied analyzing the threats posed to the road (such as overlooking hills, escape routes, or nearby Palestinian villages) and undertaking the suitable military actions to counter them (for instance, holding foot and motorized patrols or laying ambushes).The wider import of this point is that each unit can develop a unique repertoire of actions that fits the peculiar requirements of their places of deployment.

But how is this done? Units develop what could be called "local knowledge" in regard to the areas where they are positioned: for example, where and when village demonstrations take place, what their dynamic is, and what kind of action best brings about "calm and quiet." Similarly, much of this knowledge is the product of hands-on or "practical" wisdom encapsulated in such localized insights as "If you place a roadblock in this place, then it will serve as a deterrent to the Palestinians." Even more important, perhaps, is that units had great leeway for innovation, given their relative autonomy. Thus, for example, much more than under normal military circumstances, during the first part of the Intifada, company commanders could easily change routines on a certain day or initiate missions in reaction to what was learned about the area of their deployment. In the same way, in order not to have their troops exposed to enemy fire in urban environments, local-level units invented such practices as breaking down walls between houses to move along a city street or using "human shields" in which Palestinians were ordered to accompany units on missions of arrest or detention. To be sure, these practices implicate a variety of legal and moral issues, but the point we are making here is that from a strictly organizational point of view, these were adaptive innovations.

In more dynamic terms, such innovations are part of organizational improvisation, useful when there is uncertainty, few precedents, or few reliable facts and suitable routines; when the evaluation of the relative efficacy of various alternatives is restricted; and when there is pressure to act in a short time or with resources that appear to be insufficient (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch 2000, 326). In Israel,

> the succession of wars, endless terrorism, and perpetual challenge have placed a premium on the ability to respond quickly and ingeniously to ever-changing forms of threat, both when there are no plans and when the plans prove

> inadequate. Israeli heroes are soldiers who improvise successfully, can work without plans, change course in the mid-route, and do not wait for instructions or orders to do what the situation requires. While military planning is in no way denigrated, and great energy and effort are put [into] creating detailed, precise, and flexible plans, improvisation is regarded as an essential supplement. (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch 2000, 322)

Along these lines, Israeli troops marked by this ethos found themselves improvising in the face of the difficulties posed by the Al-Aqsa Intifada. One intriguing instance involves the use that a company commander made of his army-issue laptop computer. He began to methodically type up reports related to the specifics of his unit—operational division of labor, ongoing events, and more mundane letters—and then printed them out to be disseminated among his dispersed troops. He explained:

> There is a file in each tank and [it] is divided into three sections: "love letters," here you can see a love letter that I sent a few days ago to encourage them. I write and disseminate something like this every once in a while. Then there are letters to commanders that are sort of orders of the day so that they learn about what is happening. Then there are debriefings like, for example, a problem that we had with [a] safety or a shooting incident that we learned from and that each commander then reads to his soldiers. . . . I began this after we were in Netsarim and I found I was repeating myself fifty times, and so I started disseminating this material to the whole company. . . . So we invented this sort of filing system with documents.

Likewise, the practice begun in the previous Intifada of taking identity cards from Palestinians and forcing them to clean streets strewn with stones most probably began as a local invention somewhere. Indeed, many practices found in the IDF, from improvements soldiers make to their rifle slings or web gear to food menus, are indicative of this potential for constant improvisation. Pritchard (2005, 163) provides a good example of improvisation from the experience of U.S. forces in Iraq. A tankist in Nasiriyah suddenly understands that he is entering the realm of nondoctrinal warfare, of combat not found in his textbook training. His

> training had been about identifying and shooting targets a kilometer or so away. Now they were shooting at targets only a hundred meters away. He quickly switched his mind-set. This was close-quarter urban fighting. He saw muzzle flashes from windows and from bunkers.

Weick (1976) notes that more loosely coupled organizations offer advantages in complex environments, because more autonomous groups may be more sensitive to environmental change. Moreover, if problems develop in one part of the system, they can be sealed off from the rest of the system, and the resulting total system may be more stable when loosely coupled. Accordingly, we argue that loose coupling and improvisations are crucial for understanding military units in combat. In this sense, the case of the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada allows us to theorize something that many observers have noted in regard to any action in which military forces are involved. To follow Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch (2000, 322) (although their theoretical orientation differs from ours), while planning aims to control a situation by reducing uncertainties, improvisation is usually a reaction to a novel situation and a way of working within uncertainty. While planning is directed at optimal solutions, improvisation aims at managing or dealing with problems.

These distinctions are crucial for understanding the actions of the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Theoretically, we stress that the degree of coupling to other units in an organization is variable (Manning 1992, 49; Thompson and McHugh 1995). Thus in the incursions into Palestinian towns that took place about a year and a half after the beginning of the conflict, IDF units were much more tightly coupled than in more mundane patrols and operation of outposts. Indeed, these mini-invasions were more like conventional military missions and so partook of tightly coupled characteristics with planning and preparation, close coordination of units, clear communications links, and authoritative hierarchy and control. This is an important conclusion: the IDF (like all organizations) may not be the tightly coupled rational machine as depicted in the lore and professional ideals, but neither is it completely loosely coupled. The adaptation of the IDF to the special context of the Al-Aqsa Intifada is based on the fact that it used both loosely and tightly coupled organizational structures.

Yet loose coupling based on innovation, improvisation, and adaptation entails organizational risks. Take the difficulty in disseminating knowledge learned. During the first year of the conflict we heard numerous complaints about the difficulties of cross-fertilization between the units. One commander of a tank company in Gaza con-

trasted the situation of dispersed units with the "normal" situation in which three platoon commanders are camped together and constantly exchange views and experiences. He gave a seemingly trivial example of a safety problem that he encountered in one place and then in another, but one that would have been obviated if the three platoon leaders would have been together and learning from each other. Moreover, given the character of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, in which the violent repertoires of both sides constantly changed, such local knowledge could not be easily formulated into formal military doctrine. Along the same lines, because much of this local knowledge was implicit or considered unimportant because it was so localized, it was difficult to convey to other units. Thus while loosely coupled systems provide more diversity to adapt to diverse situations, they may also be a barrier for the diffusion of ideas. Another company commander from the armored corps said the following:

> The whole idea of cross-fertilization does not really work and is difficult because units are on their own. We did try to do it: got three tank commanders together and talked about what we would do if so and so happened, and they also have a lot of conferring on the phone with the platoon commander and with me. . . . But still it is not enough communication.

Another adverse aspect of the leeway for innovation is uncontrolled behavior that may, again from an organizational point of view, lead to blunders and slipups. A soldier from the Givati infantry brigade told a journalist:

> It can be that one morning you are sitting in your post, and down there there are people walking around a restricted area. You call the officer in charge at that moment, and he will tell you to shout at them, and another officer will come and tell you to shoot at their legs. After all, you can use your discretion. (Blau 2001)

Given the relative autonomy of the units, we found that sometimes soldiers initiated action on their own. Hence, an individual soldier may drum up some excitement by baiting Palestinians, or the men of his squad may create opportunities for friction with the "local" population to overcome their boredom. These initiatives may not be congruent with policies set by senior commanders, but it is the local autonomy of the units that implicates organizational problems. Take the words of a paratrooper, quoted by a journalist (Blau 2001, 32):

> At the beginning when I got to Hebron I didn't agree to shoot at small children. And I was sure that if I would kill someone then I would go so crazy that I would leave the army. But in the end I did shoot at someone, and it didn't matter. In Hebron I took the legs off of two children and I was sure that that is it; I would not sleep at night. And it didn't do that to me. That was two months ago, something like that. And two weeks ago I hit a Palestinian policeman, and this doesn't matter to me either, because you become so indifferent (*apati*) that it doesn't matter to you. Shooting is the meditation of the army's soldiers. It's as if what releases you in the army is to shoot and take out all of your anger. It takes out all of your anger to shoot. In Hebron there is an order that is called "punitive shooting" (*yeri ha'anasha*). You shoot at whatever you feel like. I didn't shoot at the sources of their shooting, but I intentionally shot at places where there was laundry hanging, and I knew that there were people there, and that I would harm them. And now when I look back at it, it was an idiotic thing to do, and I don't understand how I did it. But at that moment, it was simply to shoot, shoot, shoot.

Our point is that many of the actions that are defined by military authorities as "lack of control" are actually lack of the authoritative control. Indeed, it may well be that improvised policing is one of the major problems of the IDF in the occupied territories. In contrast to the British troops in Northern Ireland, such policing in the IDF is not only underdeveloped conceptually and practically but the fact that commanders allow their troops much leeway for innovation may actually be a factor in intensifying the anger of Palestinians.

Flattened Hierarchies, Remote Control, and Normative Internalization

Yet the circumstances of the Al-Aqsa Intifada pose additional difficulties for analysis. As we saw, during the beginning of the conflict not only did troops often have more autonomy than in conventional conflicts but their actions sometimes had wider effects. Indeed, given a situation such as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, in which tactical, operational, and strategic levels are occasionally mixed, the IDF needed to address the question of how to maintain consistency within a loosely coupled organization. While in the American army this question centers on the image of the "strategic sergeant," in the IDF it is sometimes humorously referred

to as the figure of "the strategic corporal": soldiers whose actions may carry strategic and political repercussions and who are visible to the (local, national, and international) media. A commander of an infantry company related:

> The weight of the decision, of the discretion. Sometimes one hit can make a lot of harm; the place of the hit. It could be that there are ten girls around him, so that it's better not to shoot so that no girl will get hit. . . . Because this is a game of scoring points and so that it won't be written in the newspaper that the IDF killed two terrorists and that as a result two girls were killed, it's very important.

Along similar lines, some snipers told us (see Bar and Ben-Ari 2005) that they need to be aware of the rationale permitting them to shoot. Thus, at times, their orders were to wound rather than kill, since a death could lead to more violent demonstrations. Along these lines, one sniper observed the following:

> At the end of a demonstration they didn't give us permission to shoot because they wanted to finish it as soon as possible . . . using force as little as possible; because the IDF is very strong, and it's not always the right idea to use force . . . I don't know if you know, but the work here in the territories has become much more precise. You don't go into a mob and start spraying them with a burst. The opposite is true: you put a sniper there and you let him shoot precisely on an inciter or on someone who has a Molotov cocktail in his hand.

Next, take a case reported in the media:

> IDF soldiers on [a Gaza] road prevented the chief of UNRWA, Peter Hansen, from going through in his car. The IDF soldiers prevented Hansen from going through in a convoy of five cars in the direction of Rafah. The IDF spokesman said that the UN convoy arrived near the IDF force without prior coordination, and the convoy left the area before approval was given. Palestinian sources said that one of the soldiers threatened that he would shoot at the UN officials if they [came] near. Hansen was on his way to the area where the IDF had destroyed houses in the last two days and eventually

> had to reach his destination by driving through the fields. (HA August 31, 2001)

In the IDF, the importance of the strategic sergeant has created new problems. For years, and in contrast to most standing armies, noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were often neglected, and command was usually left to junior officers serving as platoon leaders. In the context of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, however, as one infantry commander noted, there "are many situations in which the sergeants take on great importance." Indeed, this point resonates with wider developments around the world. As Bellamy (1996, 199) suggests, the social structure of the future army will resemble that of the police, where everyone is an "officer," that is, individuals at the bottom of the rank structure are invested with a great deal of authority, and the sense of hierarchy is less dominant.

While the development of a much more active and autonomous corps of NCOs has been crucial for the adaptability of the IDF, such junior commanders need to understand their commanders' intent and be able to apply it to their actions. Some of the ways in which more senior officers worked toward achieving this end were conventional. Thus, for instance, many commanders talked about visiting their dispersed troops as much as possible. One company commander deployed in the Gaza Strip told us that he tried to call on his subordinates at least once a day, though not all of them are under his direct operational command (his company was dispersed over an area of roughly fifteen square kilometers). Others, such as a deputy company commander from the paratroopers, noted the simple if arduous practices related to everyday activities:

> This means that you really get there and continue to visit him twenty times a day in his position and make sure that it is clean and functioning and that the whole place looks like it should. And sometimes you brief him each time he goes on guard duty, and it doesn't matter if he's heard it already twenty times. The briefing doesn't always tell him something new, but it does tell him things about the area, the enemy, his position, about the threats around, and maybe it mentions something new about recent intelligence, something that happened during the last few days. But you check him. You show yourself to him when you come up to the position. And you go up every day, and you make sure that he is alert

> and that it's important to check the vehicles and to protect yourself, because tomorrow you may be surprised.

Yet given the dispersion of the units, we found a great emphasis on another type of mechanism that one of the armored company commanders we interviewed referred to as "remote control." This image encapsulates the idea of nonmediated supervision at a physical distance. Concretely, remote control is carried out through the use of conventional communications nets, regular line telephones, and a variety of cellular phones and walkie-talkies. Our field notes are replete with references to the amount and variety of virtual communications among IDF troops, communications spanning intra-army networks, links between soldiers and their homes, and connections between soldiers of the same unit who are deployed in different geographical locations. From an organizational point of view, these cellular means allow commanders to be virtually present in, if physically absent from, a variety of locations. Much more than in conventional combat or textbook training, face-to-face interaction and leadership were replaced by remote voices in the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

To be sure, we are not arguing about a "revolution" in military communication, although there are very significant technological developments in this respect. Our point is sociological, for given the conditions of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, cellular "solutions" have allowed field commanders to be more physically absent, yet controlling, than they would under other circumstances. From an organizational point of view, direct contact between soldiers and more senior field commanders implies a narrowing of the military hierarchy. In other words, while facilitating communication, one implication of the various cellular "solutions" is a flattening, or contraction, of the military chain of command. Moreover, this development represents an extension of communication patterns characterizing elite units (working under the direct command of, say, a brigade commander) to regular ground forces (HA December 17, 2001). Patterns of distal communication, then, fit well the requirements of "strategic sergeants" in which a great deal of autonomy is given to subordinate levels. Yet within these circumstances, sergeants and corporals have much more power to define their needs, priorities, and demands than they would in the context of conventional conflicts. For example, because snipers must ask senior commanders for permission to fire, the latter are, in turn, dependent on them for a description of the local situation, since they are absent from it. This point fits well with the insight that in dispersed organizations with autonomous subunits the importance of lower-level managers lies in

framing their requests in ways that will be accepted by more senior levels of command.

In another context, Macgregor (1992, 34) stresses that flattened military organizations imply a greater reliance upon subordinates' understanding of higher commanders' operational goals. He thus underscores how alongside mechanisms of structural control military organizations must assure normative control and the internalization by lower-level soldiers of the attitudes and requirements of more senior leaders. Internalization implies that soldiers must be able to monitor themselves without constant direct, face-to-face regulation and communication. This state of affairs thus explains why commanders place responsible soldiers who have most successfully internalized the military's priorities in the most sensitive points and reinforces the importance of the emergence of a new kind of IDF leadership comprised of NCOs. In fact, it is at this level—of tank commanders or platoon sergeants and squad leaders in the infantry and engineers—that NCOs have been awarded much more authority than in the past. A tank company commander summed up many of these issues by contrasting the Al-Aqsa Intifada to textbook maneuvers:

> What I know is that the tank commander here does things that he has actually not been trained to do. It's a situation in which the independence and initiative of each and every tank commander has far-reaching implications. There are tank commanders who simply crash. They simply aren't able to grapple with the hard work. And the element of command is difficult, and it sometimes involves taking a middle-of-the-road commander with three soldiers who are younger and older than him and then to throw them together out somewhere far. And then he is alone with them, eats and sleeps with them, does everything with them, alone.

Human Rights, Humanitarian Issues, and "In-between" Organizations

Yet the Al-Aqsa Intifada bears wider import for understanding how the activities of contemporary combat units around the world differ from the depictions found in textbooks. The IDF, like other contemporary militaries, is influenced by its environment in the ways it uses violence, because the discourse—the set of assumptions and expectations—in wider society defines what is allowed and not allowed. In this respect,

we suggest that in the previous two decades, we have witnessed the emergence of what may be called a global discourse on human rights and the rules and expectations developed within it for the "proper" use of force (Ignatieff 1998; Kurth 2001, 68). As Finnemore (1999, 149–50) explains, the social rules and cultural models that govern the way in which states and soldiers fight and handle civilians have become increasingly globalized through promotion by various international human rights networks (Warren 2000, 228). In our case, these external associations and coalitions "know" local conditions primarily through the media (Israeli, Palestinian, and international), the activities of Israeli and Palestinian human rights movements such as B'Tselem or MachsomWatch, or individual reports transmitted through cellular phones or the Internet.

For many military establishments, the increased focus on human rights is a recent addition to the concept of security (Dandeker 1998a, 35–36). In the past twenty years, armed forces have increasingly participated in humanitarian and environmental projects that involve either missions of "mercy under fire" (Minear and Weiss 1995) or do not directly entail considerations related to national security (Burk 1998, 11). Moreover, the move toward human rights and humanitarian aid has led to the development of new, complex, conflictual, and cooperative relations between militaries and various kinds of movements and NGOs (Winslow 2002). It is in this light that three types of "in-between" organizations that have developed to mediate and manage the IDF's relations with Palestinian civilians and other external groups should be seen.

To begin with, senior commanders and many soldiers consistently declare that the formal aims of the IDF have been to minimize damage to the lives and livelihood of the wider Palestinian population, the need to distinguish between innocents and armed aggressors, and the necessity for a smooth and an efficient "handling" of people moving through various roadblocks and checkpoints. Moreover, with the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the IDF began to change its public rhetoric and to create an explicit humanitarian discourse centered on the occupied territories. This move took place as part of a wider change in the IDF. Two relevant developments in this respect were the promulgation of a military "code of ethics" and a new weight given to human rights. The IDF's code of ethics was formally adopted in the mid-1990s after years of deliberation by internal committees aided by external experts (Kasher 1996). It was then disseminated throughout the armed forces through seminars and deliberations. The emphasis on human rights or, as it is known in the army, the "dignity of man" (*kvod ha'adam*) (Israel

Democracy Institute 2001), is employed in regard to such things as sexual harassment or the rights of soldiers during basic training. No less importantly, it places constraints on the treatment of enemies, decision making during conflicts, illegal orders, and plunder. It is significant because it forms part of the debates through which the IDF is attempting to define itself and its actions in ways akin to other armed forces (Dandeker 1998a, 35–36; Smith 2000).

Change in regard to Palestinians began about a year or two into the Al-Aqsa Intifada, when some Israeli political and military leaders realized that while force was needed to handle the conflict, the IDF had to differentiate between the civilian population and armed aggressors. This policy meant an all-out war against terrorist networks and armed groups, combined with letting the majority of the population live its routine life. In other words, the idea was that a humanitarian treatment of the Palestinian population would contribute to the termination of violent activities. What is more, the human rights and humanitarian rhetoric were often adopted, since IDF commanders felt they had to comply because of the army's public relations, pressure of the media and social movements, international norms, and public debate within Israel. Concretely, these discourses are often understood by local-level commanders as an operational parameter—such as terrain, the weather, or forces to be deployed—to be taken into account when running their units and that could be, under certain circumstances, ignored. We found evidence of these attitudes in many interviews. One reserve commander with much experience in the territories told us that the regulations found in permanent checkpoints explicitly include an emphasis on maintaining, as far as possible, the life of the innocent civilians. In reality, of course, this kind of emphasis continued to stand in a state of tension with security considerations. As another commander told us:

> Sometimes we are "over-large," and you see it in the cases where you find like a boy with an explosives belt inside an ambulance and in other cases. But despite these cases we continue to provide a humane passage [through the checkpoints] because it's important.

Against this backdrop, we now turn to three types of organizations or organizational mechanisms that have been developed to deal with humanitarian issues: the army's Civil Administration, the "humanitarian officers" deployed at the checkpoints, and human rights groups. We examine these three because they reveal another aspect of the IDF that has adapted to a variety of local circumstances.

The Civil Administration

By far the oldest of the three organizations, the Civil Administration was established in 1981 in the wake of the Camp David accords. Set up as part of the Israeli military government, the idea was that it would cease to exist when the Palestinian problem was solved. In the wake of the Oslo accords, this framework was drastically cut down as the Palestinian Authority was created. The present framework is under command of a major-general, who is the Israeli government's coordinator in the territories. In the West Bank, the Civil Administration is under the command of a brigadier-general who is in charge of the District Civil Liaison Offices annexed to the territorial brigades.

The Civil Administration tries to maintain good relations between the army and the Palestinians and international organizations and Israeli government offices. Its primary aim is to help meet Palestinians' needs. Within the conflict, moreover, it was the primary arm of the IDF that endeavored to introduce a humanitarian perspective into military decisions. Thus is it not surprising to learn that the head of the Civil Administration's Palestinian section wrote an article in the IDF journal *Ma'archot* arguing for Palestinians earning a livelihood as being essential for ending the conflict (Levy 2004). In effect, the Civil Administration is a hybrid body: it is a civilian organization whose members wear uniforms; it is a repressive arm of the Israeli state, but it also represents part of the responsibility that the state has toward Palestinians. As such, its members are both in and out of the Israeli military. They form a pressure group, advocating for Palestinians' needs, and an exploitative branch of the state. It is for this reason that Ron (2003, 131) calls the Civil Administration part of a new military-civilian hybrid tying Palestinians to Israel's civilian bureaucracy because the latter has to work through the military.

At the same time, the Civil Administration has consistently had problems in implementing its goals. While it is usually accepted with deep suspicion by Palestinians for whom it is an extension of the occupation, its representatives are often seen by numerous senior IDF commanders as people who do not fully understand security considerations. In fact, we were once told by one of its former members that sometimes the Civil Administration is perceived by Israeli officers as identifying too much with the Palestinians. Another officer told us, under conditions of anonymity, that officers of the Civil Administration have been called "collaborators" by some Jewish settlers in the West Bank. In fact, after the IDF's incursion into the Jenin refugee camp, the local commander of the Civil Administration pressed for minimizing harm done to civilians, letting Red Cross representatives into the

camp or bringing generators to the local hospital; he was seen as a "Palestinian collaborator" by some of the troops (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 259). Similarly, as Drucker and Shelach (2005, 95) relate, during most of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the Civil Administration, which was the arm of the IDF closest to the Palestinians, was distanced from any influence. The commander of the administration, General Mendy Orr, was seen by some members of the General Staff as a "double agent," someone who brought into their deliberations external considerations and dented their resolve.

Given the ongoing conflict, however, many of the Civil Administration's current activities carry a restricted humanitarian emphasis: meeting the dire economic needs of Palestinians by allowing a minimal level of livelihood to the Palestinian population. This development was expressed in the establishment of a "humanitarian forum" in the IDF's central command to offer solutions that could be used at the level of field units. At the checkpoints, this emphasis has meant easing as much as possible the movement of Palestinians from one place to another. Moreover, even with the limited resources of the District Civil Liaison Offices, some effort is made to answer special requests for permits. One example is the twenty-four-hour humanitarian hotline established by the Civil Administration that is staffed by Arabic speakers and to whom problems of Palestinians moving through checkpoints are directed.

"Humanitarian Officers"

"Volunteers on the Seam-Line" (*mitnadvei kav hatefer*) is the official designation for what are popularly called "humanitarian officers." As one of the initiators of this organizational appendage of the IDF told us, the project began because of the blatant disorder that characterized the checkpoints during the first two years of the conflict. The disarray included frequent shooting in the air to gain military control, hitting and abusing Palestinians, and a general lack of shelters and infrastructure. As a consequence, a few reserve officers came up with the idea of trying to change the situation. The IDF agreed to a pilot project, which began in March 2002, when three or four reserve officers (later they included NCOs) volunteered for ten to fourteen days of service and to function as "arbitrators" in regard to who could move through the checkpoints and who could not. A few months after the pilot project, the army decided to adopt it as a regular feature of some checkpoints. As one interviewee explained:

> The whole rationale of the project is to bring older, more mature people who receive a much more thorough preparation

> before moving into the checkpoint. They are usually deployed in groups of three or four volunteers. And the trainers, they commit themselves to coming to the checkpoint once in ten days and to give a long briefing of about three or four hours. [In addition] they always coach the new team for a full day so that they internalize the problematic aspects of this job.

What are the actual achievements of these volunteers? The IDF has allowed them to work at the checkpoints because of the many problems in applying the military classification of Palestinians. One platoon commander from the "Passages Company" at the Kalandia checkpoint told us:

> [T]here are three volunteers that are deployed here at the point where the pedestrians go through. They are all reservists . . . and there you find most of the humanitarian problems. They are given the task of handling them because of their age and their life experience.

The manner by which such reservists talk about their experiences at the checkpoints underscores these observations. One volunteer said:

> I felt a bit like I was babysitting the younger soldiers. Even the commander of the conscripts told us this straightforwardly: they expect us reservists to worry that things will not get out of control, that there will be no violence, and that there will be no "humanitarian cases." By this they mean that they will not find themselves in the news with a Palestinian that has been beaten or a woman that has given birth at the checkpoint. And it's funny, because what the hell do I know? I do my reserve duty once a year, and the regulars and the border policemen are here 365 days a year, and they know that checkpoint and the [Palestinians] better than any reservist.

Another reservist said the following to a journalist:

> Reservists are people with families, and when they see a woman and a baby they understand what it means. On the other hand, a conscript is someone who has no breadth of thinking. . . . It's because of their lack of maturity and not badness. (Tsomet Hasharon June 11, 2004)

In fact, one Palestinian in his mid-thirties told one of us that older reservists "have an ability to use their discretion." Thus it may well be that the volunteers are especially suited, as one perceptive individual told us, to show "the human side of the army." Their very status, as older individuals who are both civilians and soldiers, allows them a more flexible treatment of Palestinian cases.

Human Rights Movements

During the first two years of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a host of representatives of human rights movements monitored and interceded at the checkpoints. Among them were the International Solidarity Movement, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, coordinated by the World Council of Churches (Hopper 2004), and B'Tselem, an Israeli association. Yet the most ubiquitous and active movement has undoubtedly been MachsomWatch (literally, Checkpoint Watch). Established during the first year of the conflict in response to repeated reports about human rights abuses at the checkpoints (http://www.machsomwatch.org), its volunteers are exclusively women who attend checkpoints in small groups of two to four members, observe what is going on, document their observations, and report—in texts and pictures—to external bodies such as media representatives (Manzbach 2004; Maymon and Ben-Ari n.d.; Nirgad 2004). As Ginzburg (2003) observes, the women of the movement are "another pair of eyes in this space. . . . They try to influence the gaze of the soldiers at the checkpoints. They raise questions related to human rights, and in this way they hope to challenge the binary view of friend-enemy and to prevent in their interventions and presence the reduction to a strictly political gaze. Their very presence invariably raises other options for interpreting reality."

At times, MachsomWatch volunteers actively intervene at the checkpoints. Thus, for example, in a visit to one checkpoint, we witnessed how an inquiry from one volunteer led to the opening of an additional inspection position for pedestrians. Other times, they enter "negotiations" between members of the security forces and Palestinians. During one instance, we saw two volunteers intercede in a discussion held between three Palestinian taxi drivers and a policewoman at a checkpoint in North Jerusalem. The police officer had taken the keys of the three taxis and was giving them traffic tickets. The volunteers interrupted and tried to phone one of the IDF hotlines. Although it turned out that the hotline could not help in cases of traffic violations, the volunteer nevertheless joined the Palestinian men in their

interchange with the police officer. In all, as one woman told us, MachsomWatch represents significant, if limited, success:

> We saw that in the field things were very unclear. The instructions to the soldiers were unclear; that is, we couldn't understand how the soldiers operate and why they let someone pass and why they don't, and what they are allowed and what they are not allowed, and then we started writing letters of complaint. . . . We simply looked for the commanders to make things clear. And then there was an opportunity when they invited us and said "Let's talk and see how we can work together." And the first Brigade Commander in charge of the Kalandia checkpoint . . . he invited the people from the Civil Administration, the company and battalion commanders [deployed there] and wanted us to tell them what our problems were and they would tell us what they expected of us.

This initial cooperation and willingness to hear on the part of the military led to further meetings and then some personal links between activists and aides and spokespersons of commanders. Hence, an independent line of communication was opened to the brigade level and became part of the movement's "tool box." What seems to have happened is that the army and the movement struck a sort of unwritten contract. One activist told us:

> I called the army to report that the soldiers were shooting at children, and they told me that they were not shooting at children. I said to him they are shooting now, and they told me that I don't understand. I called the humanitarian hotlines of the army and through them to the commanders. In the evening we talked to the brigade commander and told him, after my friend, who is a doctor in Ramalla, said that a boy arrived there who was brain dead after having been shot with live ammunition. He told me that there was no use of live fire there, and he said that he had carried out an investigation . . . I said that you cannot have the full picture if you talk only to the soldiers. . . . The next morning he phoned and said that it was terrible what had happened. And from then on, when I phone, they answer me immediately.

Ginzburg (2003) provides another example of what a volunteer told her:

> Within a few minutes about ten soldiers advanced towards the children and started shooting at them. Shocked by what we are seeing—armed soldiers, with helmets and flak jackets, shooting at a small group of schoolchildren—we immediately phoned the assistant to the brigade commander of Binyamin, who told us that the order is to shoot rubber bullets into the air. I told him that I am seeing with my very eyes that the shooting is not in the air but it [is] aimed at the children, and that [it] is well known [that] rubber bullets can kill.

Along these lines, one reason the movement is relatively successful is that its members circumvent military bureaucratic lines: they directly phone territorial brigade commanders or representatives of the Civil Administration. In addition, they may circumvent these lines through journalists covering military affairs. No less important is that they provide senior commanders with a kind of feedback mechanism in terms of what is going on and how units function. The military thus has a certain interest in their work.

Occasionally, volunteers of MachsomWatch have come into conflict with "Women in Blue and White," who belong to, or identify with, the population of the Jewish settlers. The latter see them as hindering the role of the soldiers and police officers, encouraging the Palestinians to complain about the Israeli side, and as endangering the security of the soldiers and citizens of Israel (http://www.womeningreen.org.il/msdn). In a few cases, they have filed complaints against members of MachsomWatch for obstructing soldiers at checkpoints (http://www.fresh.co.il/dcforum/Scoops/108956.html).

We should be clear, however, that the success of the movement is limited. First are disappointments on the Palestinian side. One interviewee (a rare case) told us that one time she talked to three members of the movement and then tried to circumvent the checkpoint. When that did not work out, she returned to seek their help, but they were gone, "And I thought to myself, here they didn't have the patience to be real participants in our suffering and to wait with us until we passed." Second, the very presence of the movement's volunteers sometimes contributes to the tensions between soldiers and the Palestinians (Stannard 2005). As one Palestinian explained:

> It fires up the soldiers and lets them delay people on purpose. And they sometimes understood this, and they distanced themselves. They went over to where the taxis are and only wrote down [their reports].

Thus soldiers tend to see MachsomWatchers either as a hindrance, another obstacle to carrying out their role, or a mechanism for calming

a highly emotional, aggressive situation. In this latter sense, members of the movement act as third parties that observe and sometimes intervene in what is going on (Manzbach 2004). As the then commander of the Civil Administration in the West Bank commented, "I am sure that when these women stand at the checkpoints, the behavior of the soldiers towards the Palestinians improves" (YA January 23, 2004).

To conclude this section, MachsomWatch—along with other movements—does seem to influence army action. From the perspective of the movement, it may diminish the irregularities and ameliorate some of the negative implications of the checkpoints. But the stress on amelioration stands in tension to its stated aim, which is to act against the very existence of the checkpoints (Manzbach 2004). Another volunteer reminded us:

> With the officers we can agree about many things, but there is a very clear wall between us. . . . In principle, we oppose the checkpoints, and the army is the one that manages them.

In effect, then, the movement has transformed from one oriented primarily to human rights violations to a humanitarian one.

The Dynamics of "In-between Organizations"

What can explain the existence of these three organizational mechanisms: the Civil Administration, "humanitarian officers," and MachsomWatch volunteers? An answer to this question requires us to apply insights developed in organizational theory to civil-military relations. Put somewhat abstractedly, facing uncertainty or crisis organizations may create structures of attention, interpretation, and decision making that influence their ability to control the external environments and internal operations. In our case, in order to counter the uncertainty and ambiguity of dealing with civilian Palestinians, the Israeli military uses two sets of mechanisms. The first set eases decision making by routinizing (as much as possible) the procedures and transactions that go on. As Morgan (1986, 82), reminds us, in the face of uncertainty "policies, programs, plans, rules, and standard operating procedures . . . help to simplify organizational reality." Ideally, like a bureaucratic mechanism that can be activated at any moment when needed, the IDF has in place an organizational system—complete with a predetermined division of labor, fixed procedures, and categorizations of Palestinians—that is put into operation at the checkpoints.

But the problem is that bureaucratic directives cannot cover all possible contingencies emerging at such places as the checkpoints,

since troops often encounter difficulties in applying classifications supplied by the army. Indeed, organizationally speaking, the greater the uncertainty and ambiguity, "the more difficult it is to program and routinize activity by preplanning a response" (Morgan 1986, 82). The IDF needs to apply general principles developed to the diversity of actual situations, because there are always issues left open for negotiation that evolve out of the "peculiarities" of each case. In response, the army has either developed or allied itself with three different kinds of hybrid—"in-between"—organizations: the Civil Administration, which is comprised of (in a sense) civilians in uniform (situated between the army and the Palestinians), the "humanitarian officers," who (as reservists) are both civilians and army personnel, and members of MachsomWatch, who (being Jewish women) can act as mediators between the parties. Organizationally, the strength of these three hybrids lies in their ability to perceive the needs and views of Palestinians and "translate" them into concrete suggestions that commanders and troops can take into consideration. While we are not arguing that these organizations are unqualified success stories, their unique characteristics make them better able to help the IDF adapt to contingencies and uncertainties.

Along these lines, links between the IDF's combat troops and members of the current Civil Administration, "humanitarian officers," and MachsomWatch are part of the new relations between the IDF and various social entities centered on humanitarian issues (and to a very limited extent on human rights). We do not suggest that IDF soldiers have all internalized the expectations of global human rights and humanitarian discourses. Rather, the three cases show how the Israeli military does not leave uncontrolled areas in and around relations with Palestinians but develops a mixed kind of control that is part civilian and part military. In this sense, for instance, the military has developed or adopted unique representatives or coalition partners in a way that buffers its presence in sites where there is interaction with civilian Palestinians (see Vinitzky-Seroussi and Ben-Ari 2000). Through the construction of this zone, the army concurrently displays its "humane," "caring" aspects, reacts to some of the Palestinians' demands, maintains overall control of the situation, prevents potential disruptions, and demonstrates its efficiency in accomplishing the "mission" of such sites as checkpoints. In effect, following Winslow (2002, 51), what emerges is a situational consensus between combat troops and members of these three entities:

> [O]rganizations that share a common goal and depend on each other to reach that goal can develop a cooperative relationship and yet retain distinct organizational memberships

> and cultures. In short, you don't have to be best friends in order to be able to work well together.

Yet our analysis carries wider theoretical significance for the understanding of military forces. Historically, much of the sociology of the military has tended to focus on the macro-level of institutional interpenetration between the civilian and military sectors (Janowitz 1971b). This focus has led to the analysis of such issues as political control, militarization, or the economic interests of the military. Yet a focus on more local-level interactions may add another dimension to our understanding of civil-military relations. Accordingly, the three hybrid organizations analyzed here can be seen not only as a means to control the checkpoints but also as measures the military uses to manage its relations with groups in the civilian environment whose values and identities may contradict its own. Such organizations also act as buffers between the military and the wider Israeli society. In this sense, not only are members of the Civil Administration, humanitarian officers, and volunteers of MachsomWatch "between and betwixt" the IDF and its environment, but they are also part of practices that are not fully military nor fully civilian. The special communications links between MachsomWatch and senior commanders, the humanitarian forums in which representatives of the Civil Administration participate, and the special roles that the humanitarian officers fulfill are indicative of new organizational arrangements that similarly buffer the IDF from its environment (Vainer 2006).

Moreover, over time, all three types of entities have become similar to pressure groups. Hence, MachsomWatch and (to an extent) the humanitarian officers may be likened to other organizations, such as the Widows and Orphans' Association, the Association of Parents of Fallen Soldiers, or the War Invalids' Association. All of these groups operate to connect the IDF to its environment, yet they are relatively "free" (to differing extents) from the hierarchy, discipline, and considerations of the "regular" military and thus can act as partially external groups demanding changes in policy and the allocation of resources. This point is especially evident in the case of the humanitarian officers, older individuals carrying out roles usually filled by young soldiers, who can negotiate and parley with local commanders in ways that "ordinary" soldiers cannot.

To be sure, some scholars may interpret the workings of such organizations as indicators of the militarization of Israeli society. This interpretation centers on the fact that through these three organizations the IDF controls interactions between its members and civilians and ultimately controls its environment. At the same time, the actual

operation of the three organizations analyzed here alerts us to the processes by which the military is civilianized (Lissak and Horowitz 1989; Kimmerling 1985) because, by their very actions, they inadvertently introduce civilian values into the military. While their presence may be interpreted as part of a process of co-optation, the very existence and operation of such organizations will change some ground rules in regard to interaction with Palestinian civilians. In chapter 10 we will turn to the question of whether one can discern deeper effects of the global human rights and humanitarian discourses on the combat-oriented parts of the military.

Conclusion: Organizational Adaptation

The case of the IDF during the first stages of the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the three instances of "in-between" organizations express a wider trend in which contemporary militaries are now organized in a manner that differs from their organizing for conventional warfare. They depend to a great extent on the flexible division of labor, decentralized decision making, low reliance on formal hierarchy, and greater use of nonmediated communication between the ranks (Shamir and Ben-Ari 1999a). Following Weick (1976), we suggested that a central explanation for the IDF's adaptation to the circumstances of the Al-Aqsa Intifada lies in their patterns of inter-unit coupling. While loose coupling offers advantages in complex, often turbulent, environments marked by dissimilar local circumstances and nonroutine tasks, as we saw, organizational coupling is variable, and the adaptive advantage of the IDF lies in the ways it tailored loose and tight coupling to the missions it undertook. We further showed, how, in contrast to textbook ideals, loosely coupled systems involve difficulties of centralized, authoritative control, the need for distal communication, and the greater necessity for soldiers to internalize the intent of their superiors.

The wider significance of our analysis lies in theorizing the ways in which contemporary ground forces cope with fluid operations in which multiple threats and opportunities present themselves. Indeed, this situation is no doubt a result of the constant modification and change that the armed groups it faces undergo. A case in point is that of improvisation. To be sure, local-level inventiveness has always been important within combat units, as any reading of biographical or journalistic accounts reveals. Our contention is that rather unique conditions of the Al-Aqsa Intifada have perhaps forced units to improvise more than in the past. These circumstances have thus, in turn, obliged us to theorize the structural conditions leading to improvisation and

to explicitly conceptualize its potential advantages and disadvantages for the military organization. In this sense, this chapter should be seen as part of our broader goal of suggesting new ways of looking at the unofficial, messy, yet somehow crudely organized dimensions of combat units. In this sense, our analysis should be seen as more than going beyond textbook imagery. We propose that our conceptualization may illuminate hitherto nontheorized aspects of military units in conventional wars as well. Thus loose coupling, the creation of local knowledge, improvisation, and "in-between" organizations have always been part of the ways in which military forces wage combat. What has been missing (and we return to this point in this volume's conclusion), however, is their social scientific theorization.

6

Swift Trust, Speedy Organizing

Cohesion and Modularity in Military Operations

In popular imagery, scholarly portrayals, and professional depictions, "unit cohesion"—the organic imagery of military forces—is seen as a prime precondition for effective military action (Kellet 1987). Thus, for example, synthesizing and integrating previous writings, Smith (1983) states that of all motivating factors—group cohesion, unit allegiance and pride, ideology and patriotism, lack of alternatives, self-preservation and leadership—only small-unit cohesion does not deteriorate after prolonged exposure to combat. He goes on to say:

> This cohesion is the single most important sustaining and motivating force for combat soldiers. Simply put, soldiers fight because of the other members of their small unit. . . . Although cases of strong company-level cohesion exist, research has shown that in combat, as soldiers draw closer to the squad, they identify with the company less. (Smith 1983, 6)

Moreover, research has shown that small-unit cohesion provides shelter from battlefield horrors and enables soldiers to persevere in combat, providing them with security, the belief that the threat can be overcome, a coping mechanism to deal with the trauma of death and killing, and a sense that their contribution has meaning (Boer 2001, 33). As Boer (2001, 36) summarizes:

> In small army units, horizontal (between peers) and vertical (between leaders and the led) cohesion that developed

> sequentially over time are of prime importance. In cohesive units there is trust, mutual respect, confidence, and understanding among the members of the unit. These affective bonds enable personnel to persevere in the face of physical discomfort, danger and fear. Members of cohesive units can depend on each other's competence, count on their comrades to take care of them, and trust their leaders not to abandon them. It is cohesion that enables a unit to become effective in combat. Supportive leaders who are competent, considerate, and accessible play crucial roles by demonstrating that they trust their subordinates and are worthy of trust.

Noonan and Hillen (2002), for their part, argue that history is replete with battles such as Rourke's Drift, Goose Green, Entebbe, and Mogadishu, which have shown that skilled and cohesive units are eminently capable of overcoming numerically superior but qualitatively inferior forces. Yet when examined more closely, it seems that engagements fought in places such as Entebbe or Mogadishu were actually waged not by cohesive units but rather by amalgamations of forces tailored to fit specific and limited missions.

Indeed, the experience of the Israel Defense Forces during the first stages of the Al-Aqsa Intifada seems to question contentions about the centrality of cohesion for military undertakings. During the first year of the conflict, many of the regular frameworks of the military were dissolved and new ones established. Indeed, tightly knit, "organic" units marked by strong cohesion were splintered or dispersed, and their troops were attached to others in a modular form to create "instant units." Indeed, one of the strongest sentiments that came out in interviews we held during the first two years of the Intifada was centered on complaints that regular frameworks of the force were dissolved and new ones established. An ex-battalion commander from the Golani infantry brigade talked about a situation in which there were "fragments" (*resisim*) of units deployed over a large area, a deputy commander from the paratroopers talked about the "splintering" of his company, and a company commander from the Nahal brigade talked about "this crazy dispersal."

The image of the "splintering" or "dispersal" of units refers to how members of regular units are socially cut off from each other. Thus some squads, platoons, or even individual soldiers were cut off from social contact with other members of the combat company for weeks and even months. In one armored unit, deployed near the center of Gaza, interviewees repeatedly told that us they did not yet

have the chance to meet the new soldiers who had rotated into their unit over the past months. Yet troops who staff the "splinters" of the original organic units are not placed in an alienated vacuum. Rather, they find themselves as members of what we call "instant units." We encountered numerous examples of such frameworks: joining one tank and its crew to an infantry platoon or a squad of border policemen to create a new element, or, say, some members of a company assemble in a team with the General Security Service and an interpreter from the Intelligence Corps to go out to arrest someone at night. Implementing the policy of "exposure"—the destruction of Palestinian houses, outposts, and fields near roads and IDF positions—usually involved at least three types of units—infantry, armor, and combat engineers, sometimes with civilian drivers of large tractors and bulldozers. An armor company commander in Gaza told us that some of "his" tank teams are under the command of other (infantry) company commanders, while he himself now commands part of his "organic" company and a small platoon of Golani infantry soldiers. He went on to describe the situation in his area:

> The tanks in this sector are under a very complicated designation, one that's not that clear. Those that are here just on the green line—the tanks and APCs—are directly under my command, which means that for everything, operational activities and administration, I am responsible for them. The tanks inside Gaza, the operational and logistical responsibility is on the infantry forces. But for all sorts of things like professional matters [related to the use of armor] or problems with armaments, or if he is missing some part of the tank, like a breech, he comes to us. And if he has any problems with personnel, then I am here. . . . Sometimes I intervene with the infantry commanders in regard to the drills with the tanks; I go to talk to them. For example, the infantry platoon that was here didn't know the drills related to a certain kind of ambush. So, I train them in the drills, in briefings, in the debriefings.

Such ad-hoc frameworks—that seemed to work very effectively—contradict the image of "textbook units" marked by clear boundaries, continuity of membership over time, and strong internal cohesion. The actual frameworks that waged the fighting were rarely the units depicted in training manuals. Rather, these "instant units" were often comprised of constantly changing constituent elements that came together for a mission and then dispersed upon its completion. Indeed, common to

many such formations is the creation of impermanent frameworks that are very fluid in their makeup and life cycle. But just how do these coalitions, joint forces, or, indeed, "instant units" work?

It is this question that this chapter addresses. As we have seen, cohesion is commonly considered by military leaders and social scientists to be a crucial factor in contributing to the effectiveness of individuals and groups in battle (Kinzer-Stewart 1991) and to the post-combat survival of veterans. Shils and Janowitz first theorized the contribution of "primary group cohesion" to resilience in combat in their work on the *Wehrmacht* (Shils and Janowitz 1948). Yet the concept of cohesion is currently so widely accepted that cohesion often appears to be a synonym for a successful military organization. Indeed, as Dinter (1985, 71) contends:

> If the group is the right size and has sufficient time to grow together under relevant external pressure, cohesion will be achieved and in its wake will grow a group ethic which no member will dare to violate. The group then becomes the focal point in their lives, so much so, in fact, that it hardly matters any more where it is deployed, be it at home or abroad, or what it is fighting for.

In this chapter we first briefly review the major criticisms of the concept of cohesion in order to elaborate on the operational realities and properties of contemporary battlefields and armed action. Second, we argue that in many present-day situations, militaries have developed new forms of cooperation and collaboration that do not center on cohesion, as previously conceptualized by military leaders and social scientists. Our argument explicitly focuses on the variety of ad-hoc task forces and temporary frameworks that are established to carry out missions. These various combinations of forces are comprised of components drawn from a variety of units, each with its own doctrines, traditions, self-images, and modes of operation. Instead of talking about the disintegration or dissolution of units that "send" their constituent components to join the new temporary frameworks, we suggest a number of insights about the characteristics and dynamics of these new amalgamations.

Cohesion and Its Critiques

Cohesion has been conceptualized in the scholarly literature in a variety of ways (Siebold 1999). In the military context, cohesion is most

often described as the quality of ties between soldiers in a military unit that will influence the achievement of unit goals and members' performance. Probably the most important definition in this context has been that of "primary group cohesion," as suggested by Shils and Janowitz (1948), who view cohesion as a characteristic of small groups of combat soldiers—usually not larger than a company—created in combat. These small groups are meaningful not only as providers of social support and sources of motivation but also as the institution that mediates between them and the army and the state. Other conceptualizations center on the internal solidarity of a group and the distinction between it and other groups (Manning 1991), or on the role of cohesion in providing emotional support or a source of social control for achieving individual and group aims.

Significant, however, are the common characteristics of the different definitions: they all center on relatively small and stable groups with clear boundaries, and they argue that the threat experienced in dangerous situations creates a particular closeness between the troops and between them and their commanders (Little 1964). Cohesion is thus based on the shared experiences of group members that do not necessarily depend on membership in larger social categories, such as gender, race, or social class, but are linked to external threats and dangers. Because cohesion is seen as a crucial prerequisite for combat performance and effectiveness, social scientists in a variety of armed forces tend to see it in very positive terms (Bartone et al. 2002).

During the late 1970s, critiques of the concept of cohesion and its application began to appear in the scholarly literature. Some scholars argued that, for technical reasons, it was difficult to examine how cohesion contributes to military performance and effectiveness (Siebold 1999). Other studies stressed the gap between cohesion under conditions of routine garrison duty or maneuvers and the cohesion that develops under conditions of combat (Manning 1991, 456–59). Yet all of these studies still assumed that cohesion is crucial for effective combat performance. An additional perspective focused on cohesion's "negative" implications in hindering combat performance and accomplishing organizational goals when these stand in contrast to the goals of the organization (Moskos 1975; Gabriel and Savage 1978; Kawano 1996; Winslow 2000).

Other scholars contended that there are factors contributing to soldierly motivation other than cohesion. Based on the case of the *Wehrmacht* in the Eastern Front, Bartov suggested that attrition levels and turnover of personnel stood in the way of acquaintance between warriors, and thus ideology became the most important factor for the motivation of combat soldiers (Bartov 1991, 38–66). Rush similarly

argued that when parts of units left over from previous battles were placed in new frames, there is no previous social contact between soldiers, and thus punishment and threat were of central importance (Rush 1999). While not denying the importance of cohesion, Moskos cautioned that there are other factors, such as the degree to which soldiers perceive the war in which they are participating to be legitimate, that influence soldiers' attitudes (Moskos 1975, 25). This critique was strengthened by other scholars as well (Kellet 1987). Finally, summing up the large literature on cohesion, Segal and Kestenbaum (2002, 453) contend that

> the key assumption on which arguments concerning social cohesion have been based—that people necessarily prefer to associate in small groups with those like themselves—is simply unsupportable in the face of research performed on social integration in the armed forces since World War II.

As they (2002, 445) point out, a "romantic mythology" has grown up around the studies published after World War II, leading people to suspend critical judgment regarding their methods, incorrectly recall their findings, and overlook subsequent research that suggested limits on their generalizability. In fact, we may go farther to suggest that in cases of victory on the battlefield, commanders (and, by extension, scholars) become blind to instant formations, because it is easily identified organic units (taken-for-granted parts of the organization) that are glorified.

In what follows, we take the argument in a complementary direction to show that during contemporary conflicts military organizations systematically and consciously take apart and then combine units in order to achieve the goals of war. From this perspective, the importance granted to cohesion is a fact that necessitates explanation.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada and the Creation of "Instant Units"

From the perspective of this chapter, the most important finding in our research was the complexity of forces used with the onset of a conflict that was sudden, intense, and violent. For example, once a position or site was considered of value, a task force, temporarily formed, was called upon to hold it. While these "instant" units were frequently formed around an infantry unit, various different roles and specialties were temporarily joined to it according to the task at hand, for instance, sniper squads, dog handlers, demolition crews and bomb

disposal elements, representatives of the IDF spokesperson, or intelligence operatives. The complexity of such temporary formations is remarkable. In the larger posts, this situation was very striking:

> The dining hall of the post is a long hall that is full of tables and benches. It is very lively when we enter. On the right side are two tank crews with red eyes and unshaven, after having spent the whole night in observation. Opposite them and much more rowdy are about fifteen infantry soldiers from the infantry company. Crews of anti-aircraft units sit at a different table, as do a group of female soldiers who are in charge of some surveillance instruments. There are also a few older soldiers from the permanent force who are in charge of technical matters. . . . It seems that everyone is aware of who is sitting in the dining hall but the social communication takes place primarily within the groups.

As a result of this situation, cohesion, in the conventional sense of the word, characterizing a unit with clear boundaries and a stable social structure, was no longer possible, because the "organic" unit had been split into components deployed in diverse areas and under the command of different commanders. The following is from our field journal regarding a visit to the Gaza strip:

> The post is a small space no bigger than half a volley-ball court that is surrounded by no more than heaps of earth placed there by a bulldozer. . . . The narrow place is under the command of an infantry company commander, who is actually located much deeper inside Gaza. The infantry soldiers and their armored personnel carriers were placed on one side of the post, while the tank is placed on the other side. The soldiers had been located in this small post for a number of weeks. "Do you know who the infantry soldiers are?" one of us asked the tank commander and members of the armored technical unit who were there with them. "I have no idea. We just know how to call them on the signals' net," came the answer.

During routine times, the IDF's units are constructed along single corps lines (thus infantry and armored soldiers are not mixed) and in stable—"organic"—units that are most often organized in brigades. Such units guard their social and organizational boundaries very strongly and emphasize their unique identity in contrast to other brigades from

the same corps. In the Al-Aqsa Intifada, however, the units were split time and time again—battalions into companies and companies into platoons and sometimes squads. As one infantry company commander told us:

> There is no situation in which the whole company is together. A company commander who wants to gather all of his men together for a talk, something that is quite taken for granted in routine times, cannot do so. He himself is constantly assigned to carry out different missions, and many times he is not with his own soldiers.

The companies were often deployed at great distances and in very different missions: one would hold checkpoints at the entrance to Palestinian cities, while another would be in charge of nighttime arrests under the command of officers from a different corps. Similarly, a battalion commander could be in charge of a number of companies that were not part of his brigade, while some of his companies were deployed elsewhere under the command of a battalion commander from a different brigade. One example is the situation we found in the Gaza Strip, where a deputy company commander of an infantry anti-tank company told us, "We are two teams here. I have one team in the north near Kiriyat Shemona [on the Lebanese border] and another in Pesagot [near Ramallah]." An infantry company commander explained:

> The battalion was very dispersed at the beginning of things. One company was here in this sector, two companies there . . . really a very strong split. And at some stage, I have to give . . . eight soldiers to the commander of the artillery battalion. They were under his command, slept there, worked there and ate there. He sat with them in meetings and everything. . . . This was the most un-organic situation possible.

Moreover, in the framework of our interviews, we found that the commanders of the "organic" units were very preoccupied with the sectors that they were put in charge of, and that very often they could not physically get to the components not under their direct "organic" command for a long while. "I have not seen my battalion commander for months" was a message we heard from a number of company commanders.

On top of the constant splits and combination of forces, many frames were characterized by high personnel turnover based on rota-

tions or rosters of furloughs. Thus when a crew was changed, it did not necessarily return to the same post or position it had previously occupied. As result, again, the ability to maintain and create cohesion in the sense of belonging was severely hampered due to the high personnel turnover. To this complex situation one must add the very rapid transformation of circumstances and assignments. Thus we often heard about how a rather calm period was suddenly changed with the eruption of violence and the rapid implementation of various tasks during a long period of instability. What is significant in this regard was that each new assignment necessitated the creation of new frameworks comprised of different components. To reiterate, under such circumstances primary group cohesion could not be sustained, since the original units were under a constant process of splits and reintegration.

How did soldiers and officers react to this situation? The uncertainty engendered by the situation was a major theme that came up in our interviews and was especially apparent in regard to the next mission the soldiers would be sent to. A deputy company commander from the armored corps related:

> We simply move from one place to another. In every place to which we move we would settle down. They would throw us down somewhere in the field, on a piece of earth, and tell us "Here you have to build an outpost." We built tents, generators, and everything here. And it is a battle each time [with the troops, because] . . . "Okay, guys, take your things and we are going somewhere else."

Consequently, a constant theme that came up in our interviews was the desire to return to familiar organizational circumstances. This was expressed in the wish for the conflict to "end already" so that units could go back to their familiar routines. Not surprisingly, some officers experienced the splitting of the units as a negative situation of lack of control. An infantry company commander told us the following:

> The main problem of the company is that it is split in a crazy way. A company of more than a hundred men and there are no more than thirty men in one place. Apart from that we now have two officers who are rotating out and three other roles in the company that are changing.

In many of our interviews, commanders complained about how the dispersal of their units was harming their internal cohesion, and the governing sentiment among all of the commanders with whom

we spoke was that this was but a temporary situation that would be rectified so that the normal (and good) state of affairs of organic units would be restored. We can interpret these grievances as centering on the loss of control over soldiers under the commanders' command, as real worries about the close links between cohesion and the ability of units to carry out their assignments, and perhaps as complaints about their self-concept as charismatic leaders of groups. These complaints can also be seen as expressions of a real longing for the mythological cohesion of units and for their personal experiences of closeness. At the same time, however, these expressions by our interviewees did not include sentiments of anxiety or helplessness. In their place we did find a great deal of effort expended in order to fulfill orders and assignments and a real sense of potency. This kind of attitude seemed key to the explanation for the effectiveness of the instant units.

Thus the uncertainty felt by soldiers and officers was neither accompanied by a breakdown of troop morale or unit discipline, nor by feelings of helplessness on the part of our interviewees. Rather, many soldiers and officers felt that despite their internal heterogeneity the new "instant units" had great advantages for organizational flexibility. This flexibility, it was emphasized, was reinforced by a very strong "can-do!" spirit, to finding and acting upon solutions for technical, tactical, and organizational problems. Indeed, cohesion in these situations often took the form of several elements sharing technical relations, while emotional ties remained between members of the organic units deployed elsewhere. Yet while the notions of flexibility and a "can-do!" spirit can explain some of the successes of the instant units, they cannot explain the actual cooperation that we found. It is with this point in mind that we began to search for systematic explanations for the dynamics of the instant units we have been describing.

Explaining Instant Units: Three Propositions

Three seemingly relevant explanations have recently been put forward in the scholarly literature. The first, by Rush (1999), is the suggestion that in times of defeat or severe setbacks, the military is forced to create a mode of operation that is very different from the one used at the beginning of combat. During such setbacks, one finds the amalgamation of elements of units that were previously damaged into new formations but in a manner that generates serious impediments to the creation of cohesion. Based on the experience of the *Wehrmacht*, Rush's hypothesis is that under such circumstances, cooperation is not the result of cohesion but of fear resulting from a policy of punitive

measures. Theoretically, then, his explanation centers on unintended disintegration and cooperation based on fear (Rush 1999, 501).

What our case suggests is that such amalgamations need not necessarily be the outcome of defeat or the unintended disintegration of military units. Rather, the creation of instant units may actually be the outcome of intentional and planned operational modes of action. In addition, such instantaneous frames do not inevitably imply lack of any cooperation and solidity among members. Thus our findings center on a move from the cohesive units of routine times to the ad-hoc coalitions of emergencies and combat. Furthermore, we found no evidence of any kind of irregular punitive measure instituted in order to foster cooperation. Finally, Rush's explanation leaves unexamined the actual dynamics by which the elements making up the new formations cooperate. The black box of the ad-hoc units is left unopened.

A second kind of explanation centers on the concept of task cohesion, or instrumental cohesion (Caron 1982), "the shared commitment among members to achieving a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group" (MacCoun, cited in Segal and Kestenbaum 2002, 450). It may be argued that during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, task cohesion emerged in heterogeneous groups or frameworks of the IDF. Mullen and Cooper (1994; see also Segal and Kestenbaum 2002, 452) suggest that "when the members of a group recognize and value the ability of other members to contribute to group missions, task cohesion emerges . . . [and, t]he major influence on task cohesion seems to be successful task performance." Along these lines, it may be argued that in our case cohesion was not created out of a commonality between members of groups. Rather, in such frames, soldiers maintained close technical ties that were the result of a common goal, and these ties lacked any kind of emotional load or sentiment of belonging.

There are two problems with an explanation centered on task cohesion. The first is that it is unclear what allows successful task performance in the first place. Segal and Kestenbaum (2002) suggest that the underlying factor is that sense of commitment to the group's goals that resonates very strongly with the ethos of a professional force. Yet this explanation is not an interactional one, because it focuses on a precondition for collaboration and thus effaces an explication of the actual processes by which cooperation is achieved. A second problem is the assumption that while group membership is heterogeneous, it is nevertheless relatively stable. To restate a point that we made earlier, our case underscores very fluid and provisional frames and formations.

A third, and fascinating, explanation is offered by Segal and Kestenbaum (2002, 454):

> Tolerance and appreciation of difference, furthermore, form a useful foundation for the creation of another kind of social cohesion in the military, often and inappropriately overlooked in discussion of the armed forces. . . . [N]ot all social cohesion is necessarily limited to small groups. Nor does social cohesion necessarily inhere in bonds of particular other persons. . . . In the words of Benedict Anderson, this is the cohesion characteristic of an imagined community. . . . This sense of imagined community is precisely what may seem to distinguish the armed forces from the rest of society and simultaneously to bind members together.

Within this perspective, small group cohesion is seen as limited as a motivating factor while it is tied to larger frameworks that are of prime importance. Thus, for example, in the British and Canadian military, loyalty is based on membership in a regional unit that is rather large (usually the size of a battalion or even larger) (Kellet 1987). The concept of imagined community clearly brings us back to a distinction first offered a few decades ago between cohesion and *esprit de corps*, that is, between the cohesion the arises in a face-to-face group and sentiments of belonging to larger groups. The following passage sums up this distinction:

> Comradeship is the spirit of fellow feelings which grow between a small group of men who live and work and fight together. Regimental spirit is the soldier's pride in the traditions of his regiment and his determination to be worthy of them himself. (Field Marshal B. L. Montegomery)

To be sure, small group cohesion and esprit de corps can coexist within one frame (Kirke 2000). Yet what Segal and Kestenbaum (2002) seem to suggest is that in the absence of the first, it is esprit de corps that motivates soldiers, aids them in times of stress and fear, and propels them to action.

Yet the concepts of imagined community or esprit de corps are still too broad. To begin with, it is difficult to know the extent and boundaries of the imagined community: A battalion? A brigade? The whole army? Furthermore, while such sentiments of belonging may be a precondition for action, given the hazards and stakes involved in combat, do they propel people to act within the unique circumstances of combat? And, finally, like the previous explanation, an account centered on the creation of an imagined community is still too broad to

encompass the actual dynamics of cooperation and mutual support that arise in the instant units that are the focus of our study.

More generally, explanations centering on task cohesion or an imagined community are based on strong assumptions about time and stability. This point is underscored by Kinzer-Stewart (1991, 204), who states that time "is an important factor for the development of cohesion. Military tradition grows out of years and years, if not centuries, of military heritage, lore and myth" (Kinzer-Stewart 1991, 204). Notice that she stresses the element of time both for small group cohesion and military tradition (an imagined community). Similarly, Bartone and Adler (1999) report on a study of an army medical task force deployed to Croatia to provide support for UN forces that found that the newly formed unit (formed from disparate components) cohered over a period of six months. The time periods during which the instant units were formed by the IDF in the Al-Aqsa were much shorter and lasted weeks, days, and sometimes hours.

Swift Trust and Temporary Combat Teams

In every case, the *process* by which the temporary framework is created and maintained seems to be of importance. From our data it appears that the first meeting or assembly seems to be very important, even critical, for it establishes the minimal conditions for collaboration. These include the mutual exchange of names, unit affiliation, experience with weaponry, and previous experience in different areas. In other cases, when meeting times are extremely short, the minimal conditions consist of a private discussion about the basic details of the mission (Who am I? What is the first task? What is the way in which I work? Where am I situated in the movement? Who operates me in concrete cases?).

But, of course, things are more complex. The words of one infantry commander suggest the basic problem at hand. He told us, "When you don't know, it worries you. You don't know what his capabilities are, what he knows." What seemed to lie at the base of his concerns was the issue of trust and risk. While trust always involves an element of risk because of the inability to monitor others' behavior or to have complete knowledge about other people's motivations or because of the very contingency of social life (Barnett and Adler 1998, 414), in the special contexts of combat, with its attendant dangers and perils, trust appears to be an even more significant issue. Indeed, much of what has been argued in regard to cohesion in battle seems to revolve around trust. One infantry company commander explained:

> [Trust] is created over time, but the problem in such places is that there is not a lot of time; you have no choice, you have to trust one another. I was seconded to a tank commander, and I had three or four tanks, and you have to trust him that he will know what to do. I am not from the Armored Corps and I can't tell him [what to do] . . . I am not better than him regarding tanks; I have to trust him, and if I don't trust him, then our situation will be really bad.

Yet, at the same time, despite the heightened problems related to risk, what emerges from our data is the speed by which actions of temporary combat teams were executed. This led us to the idea of "swift trust." Meyerson et al. (1996) have developed this concept for explaining the dynamics of temporary teams whose existence is formed around a finite span of time and for a common task. Such teams consist of members with diverse skills, a limited common history of working together, and little prospect of working together in the future. Temporary or ad-hoc teams include a large variety of groupings, such as study missions, concert and music performers for one-off performances, film crews, theater groups, presidential commissions, fact-finding tours, juries, construction gangs, cockpit crews, and medical teams in operating theaters.

In ordinary circumstances, trust is created through minute processes of exchange: actors learn the relative value of things, establish new bonds, and convey the centrality of reciprocity. Indeed, exchanges are a constitutive factor in all social relationships and provide the foundation for trust. Essentially, what happens in the regular formations of the military is that trust is built over a span of time, and what is often formed is a cohesive group or unit. In our case, however, the tight deadlines under which the teams have to work together leave little occasion for building relationships, and very little socialization, courtship, and other types of communication. Moreover, these harsh schedules are intensified by the deadly circumstances of combat.

Within these circumstances, because time pressure hinders the ability of team members to develop expectations of others based on firsthand information, members import expectations of trust from other settings with which they are familiar. In other words, individuals in temporary groups make initial use of category-driven information processing to form stereotypical impression of others. In other words, one finds that troops in the IDF (as in any large-scale organization) are aware of the reputations—some may say stereotypes—of different units. These professional reputations, in turn, provide the initial knowledge of how to proceed with the collaboration necessary for

temporary combat formations. In the words of a former commander of a paratroop company:

> It was very good. The engineers work in small crews of two people, and sometimes it was a bit more difficult for them to link up, but we thought that they were very nice, like. The tankists are a bit harder. . . . The engineers were either youngsters or regulars who were much older. In the end it's related to your education in the army. . . . Everyone has a different education, and you come with different ways of behaving. . . . You can call it tradition, and the engineers are much more open to a variety of things. . . . They are much more relaxed, while the tankists are always pressured, what we call "hard heads" (*rosh kashe*). If I say something to the engineers, and if it is a situation where I don't have any alternative, they will say "Amen," but with the tankists, if it is not something that they learned, well. . . . Especially with the younger commanders, they do everything by the book. The company commanders are better.

Yet once they have met the importation of reputations it is not enough. At this stage a process of mutual testing—that often accompanies the whole mission—begins. At the beginning, various understandings and fledgling arrangements are like a "canary in a coal mine," as they are intended to detect the possibility of extending cooperation to more sensitive areas without suffering the consequences associated with plunging into untrammeled terrain (Barnett and Adler 1998, 418). Even small matters, such as placing tanks in the parking area or questioning previous experiences, may serve as tests. Indeed, social psychologists have shown that a significant element here may involve spillover effects in terms of trust: the trust that developed from cooperation in, for instance, logistics would cascade into operational matters. After the team has begun to interact, trust is maintained by a "highly active, proactive, enthusiastic, generative style of action," according to Meyerson et al. (1996, 180). Action strengthens trust in a self-fulfilling fashion: action will maintain members' confidence that the team is able to manage the uncertainty, risk, and points of vulnerability. It is here that what the Americans call the "can-do!" spirit of many military units, or the IDF's equally strong emphasis on "carrying out the mission," is important, in that this mind-set provides the underlying motivation for a proactive style of action.

Four more interrelated factors contribute to the success of instant units. The first is an envelopment or adoption by the "host" unit of

"guest" elements in both logistical and professional terms. By logistical terms it is meant that any need is met promptly, so that the "guest" unit is able to carry out its task (providing kitchen services, a place to sleep, or specific types of ammunition). Professionally, the process centers on the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and a willingness to learn through impromptu lessons, briefings, and explanations. Such sharing, even in miniscule ways, involves a process of "community building" through material exchanges (logistics) or joint learning, where "doing things together" becomes an important component of "knowing together." We were given numerous examples of these processes. An officer from the paratroopers recalls how a platoon of tanks joined his unit and "I had to take care of everything, for food for sleeping. . . . Even more than for our guys, because they are guests . . . treated them like guests" From a sociological point of view, of course, the sharing of basic physiological needs—drinking, eating, and sleeping—is a basis for the creation of a sense of community and familiarity, even between strangers. It is in this light that negative examples we encountered should be seen. A deputy company commander in the armored corps said:

> For instance, our deployment, now in Bethlehem, where I have to work a lot with the paratroopers, terrible. They don't care about anything; they don't even look in our direction. . . . We had like ten days in one position without food. They don't care about anything. That's the way the paratroopers are today. . . . But Givati [infantry brigade], he comes to me and says, "What does your crew need?" He makes use of you. It all depends on the person.

But another tank officer recounted:

> The navy commandos once slept in our outpost in the clubhouse, and we had a little bit of a chance to talk to them. The communication was not bad at all. There was [a] nice connection between the soldiers, which was nice to see. . . . The Nahal battalion that we worked with, they were very nice. They came and sat with us, and it was great to talk; especially the company commander, who was a straight kind of guy that you can sit with and ask for help and he will help you. . . . It even goes down to the level of food, that we would take a bit of what was allocated to us and gave it to them so that everyone could eat well. So they came and helped us in the kitchen. It expresses itself in small ways.

A dog handler added that when he joins a temporary framework, a critical moment of acknowledgment involves the commanding officer remembering to call him by his name.

Second, our interviewees mentioned that the most successful cases were those in which small forces worked within larger ones (say, an armored company commander under an infantry battalion commander, or a breaching squad within a company). Yet in all of these cases, the governing factor involved the ability of the smaller units to fully and freely express their professional knowledge and authority *without* direct relation to their rank in the military hierarchy. For example, an infantry battalion commander gives an armored company commander a mission, and it is the latter who recommends where to place the tanks so that their firepower can be used optimally. As one infantry officer explained about joint operations with tankists, "Because our work is so different, in order to utilize [his capabilities] it's better to ask his advice, and in that way they also feel much more a part of things." What seems to be at work here is the principle of "corps expertise," within which the professional authority of the commander is almost always recognized without reference to official rank. Within instant units, commanders from a corps different from the host unit are repositories of "authoritative knowledge," whatever their actual rank. Again, this point comes up most clearly through negative examples. The deputy armored corps company commander, cited earlier, explained:

> In practical terms [the Givati officer] is not a tankist, so he asks for your assistance, asks your opinion about where to position, what has to be done, what hours, and then you sit down sometimes and conclude everything. The paratrooper, on the other hand, says, "I need a tank!," just a tank in the middle of the street. . . . So it turns out that the tank obstructs the whole street, and it can't move left or right, only backwards and forwards. Why? Because he is a paratrooper . . . stuck up! Sometimes it's frustrating since he doesn't understand anything. . . . Then once I got mad and I got out of the tank and told him that he is an idiot, and he told me "Okay, I am a company commander and you are a platoon commander, and that is what will be."

In most of the cases we encountered, however, the experience was positive. A company commander from the armored corps recounts:

> We were with a company from the Golani Infantry Brigade, and they were happy to help. They had a company

> commander who is famous. . . . He has done a lot, and he knows how tankists think about things and has worked a lot with tanks. . . . He knows what we need and what kind of security to provide for us.

A closely related, third, factor centers on "distributive justice": the allocation of assignments in a way that discriminates against or deprives some of the constituent units of quality missions in comparison to the "host" unit. Fourth, and this point goes back to the contentions made in the previous chapter, many temporary frameworks create an innovative combination of doctrinal and "local" practices. By doctrinal practices, we mean the accepted tools that military units use and include, for example, standard operating procedures, conventional drills, and guided maneuvers. Local practices entail a tool box of routines, language, understandings, codes, and drills developed in specific settings. Our data are replete with examples of such locally produced linguistic distinctions (about different kinds of wanted persons) or drills (about entry into different kinds of buildings) developed in peculiar places and times. It is these measures that also create a commonality among forces that have no common past. In other words, such combinations of practices often create a common base that allows one to overcome the problems of strangeness between the forces.

To return to the issues dealt with in the previous chapter, such highly dynamic and flexible temporary frameworks should be seen as part of the adaptive advantage of the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Indeed, the temporary nature of such instant forces might paradoxically also form a distinct organizational advantage. Troops may be more tolerant toward others and invest greater efforts in mutual understanding for two sets of reasons. On the one hand, they may show such forbearance because they know that such efforts are required from them for only a limited period of time. On the other hand, they may be more tolerant toward others in temporary frameworks because it may be easier for them to maintain distance and interact with "roles" rather than concrete personalities and real differences (Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer 1996). Thus in contrast to long-lasting relationships that may have their ups and downs, a temporary system may have an advantage in that the emotional "baggage" for the good and for the bad of the cohesive unit is lacking.

Multiple Social Structures and Ability to Cohere

One insight into studies of the military is that social structures characterize differently peacetime (the "barracks" marked by formal author-

ity, discipline, and hierarchy) and combat (the fighting units typified by informal authority, battle discipline, and relative equality) (Kawano 1996). Yet this perception still centers on the dissimilar states of organic, textbook units. We take this kind of analysis one step farther to underscore both the multiple social structures characterizing combat formations and the kinds of individual experiences they involve. Concretely, we take off from Kirke's (2000) astute analysis of four analytically separate social structures that exist in all forward combat units in the British army (as in all armies). These structures include the formal, hierarchical command structure, the informal structure of friendships and associations, the loyalty/identity structure defining soldiers' identity as members of particular units (as expressed, for example, by badges and caps), unaltered by the move between military contexts, and the functional structure expressed in groups formed to carry out specific tasks (much like our instant units). These task-oriented functional groups may reflect the formal command structure or may be independent of it. While not offering an explanation for this point, Kirke goes on to hypothesize that as the context changes, so does the group or structure troops operating within. To put this point by way of example from the IDF, an infantry soldier may be on patrol with some of the men from his unit and on guard duty with others, then on a maneuver with tank crews in another context, and then staffing a checkpoint with officers of the border police, all within a relatively short period of time (even a week or two). Kirke (2000, 234) conjectures that the existence of these multiple social structures provides the overall system with flexibility and suppleness that will, under normal circumstances, prevent insurmountable personal or structural barriers from growing within a unit.

Yet what kind of personal and interpersonal dynamics underlie this flexibility? George (1971, 301) observed long ago that "it is expected that most soldiers have the capacity, derived from earlier experiences in civilian society, to develop comradely ties within their units that will reinforce the workings of formal authority." His essential insight is the capacity that individuals have to carry over certain modes of interacting from one social context to another. Applied to our case, the question becomes one of how soldiers learn to move between operational groups as part of their "normal" course of service. Following Bateson (1972), we suggest that learning to be a member of a group—to easily cohere—is not so much a matter of learning to be a member of a specific group but, rather, learning the more general ability "to group," to join (potentially) any group. Our argument is that most combat soldiers acquire through their military (and previous) socialization a learned capacity to move between and relate to a succession of groups or units throughout their military service

This learned capacity is related to the complex processes of socialization (direct, anticipatory, and vicarious), and to an individual's procession—from basic training onward—through a whole range of formal and informal groups. In rather abstract terms, troops and commanders acquire—through a process Bateson (1972, 167) calls deutero- or meta-learning—a capacity to move from one frame to another. They learn, then, to relate to groups on a meta-level. That is, they learn to relate to a constant "idea" or "construct" of a unit, although they may move successively or concurrently through many concrete or actual groups.

For example, even soldiers assigned to one of the IDF's organic companies for their initial period of training constantly experience movement between multiple military frameworks: going to specialist courses, NCO school, other advanced programs (such as learning to drive an APC), being seconded for guard duty to other units, or training with members of other corps. By learning how to participate in many frames, they gradually gain the capacity to integrate into instant units. This capacity is gained because, once internalized, orientation to a new context becomes self-validating. Faced with a new situation, soldiers proceed under the assumption that the proper way to act is to cooperate, take others into consideration, and be identified and committed to the new social framework. Such a conceptualization lets us understand that being members of units involves more than an inculcated attitude toward membership in fixed social entities; it involves as well the ability to cooperate in, coordinate one's actions with, and feel comfortable in the framework of a variety of collective situations.

To be sure, troops may feel most comfortable with one specific unit, their "home" or "organic" unit. But conceptualizing the process as one in which the troops gain a capacity to cohere and join instant units allows us to understand the generative aspect of this ability. Once mastered, this ability can be applied—not automatically, but creatively—to new situations throughout the soldiers' careers and, in our context, to connect and become part of ad-hoc modular teams. The idea here is that this acquired ability enlarges or widens the repertoire of potential organizational practices that soldiers can put into place. Yet because we as social scientists have tended to study cohesion in organic frameworks, it may be that we have been blinded to this aspect of combat units. What we are suggesting, then, is that rather than only studying how organic units are created, social scientists could ask about individual and organizational abilities to devolve from such permanent frames.

Let us be clear. There are places and times where and when units do transform back into textbook frames. These occasions include formal events such as ceremonies, seminars held in military schools, or vacations in special retreats. During these phases, units revert to

the "ideal" structure of battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. Yet it is most importantly during training that the textbook structures appear, since most of the "serious" training is still carried out on the premise that IDF units will be deployed as organic frameworks. Training is thus "the" site where the soldiers and commanders act out the ideal of the military. Indeed, the power of the image of an organic unit should not be underestimated, since it may lie deep in universal psychological needs for dependency in times of stress or in historically developed models of sociality. We do not dismiss the emphasis on cohesion as mere cliché or ideology. But a long-term view reveals that the times and places when and where units cohere along the lines of textbook frames are but phases within much larger patterns of cohesion and fragmentation. From an analytical point of view, our formulation provides a more complex picture of the dynamics of combat units.

Conclusion

Based on the experience of the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada, we suggested that many combat situations necessitate activating units in temporary arrangements marked by some quite peculiar characteristics. Instead of cohesion based on face-to-face ties and long-term, stable relations, the Israeli military created rather loose, ad-hoc coalitions for specific tasks. Specifically, we contended that in these "instant units" one finds an intensification of time through the constraints of the assigned missions and the threatening environment of combat. The dynamic is one of amplification: relations and trust must be created much more quickly and swiftly than under normal circumstances, hence missions become the stimulus, setting the dynamics of instant units and cohering team members. Analytically, what are created are military frames that have their own qualities: temporariness, swift trust, constant negotiations and testing, and the rapid creation and dissolution of ties. As Meyerson, Weick and Kramer (1996, 167) suggest, such temporary groups constitute an organizational equivalent of a "one-night stand": "They have a finite life span, form around a shared and relatively clear goal or purpose, and their success depends on a tight and coordinated coupling of activity." In such frames, troops do not necessarily know each other, but the variety of capabilities, equipment, and perspectives they bring to missions allows much flexibility and the use of the lethal potential of the military to its fullest potential.

Our analysis of instant, temporary combat frameworks is related to contemporary theorizing about military organizations. As recent experience has taught us, in the modern battlefield, it is the ability

to split and recombine units that gives commanders the power to utilize to the fullest the military resources at their disposal. Many of the armed forces of the advanced industrial countries are moving in this direction. Indeed, Macgregor's (1992, 4–5; see also Mangelsdorff 1999, 1) analysis is a good example of a sustained argument about the need for armed forces to organize themselves in combat groups composed of highly mobile, self-contained, independent, and adaptable "all arms" forces. Synthesizing recent thinking, Levite and Sherwood-Randall thus (2002–2003, 94) conclude:

> The most likely scenarios for future military engagements also require revisiting the cherished military principle of organic armed formations, in which military units, especially army field units, possess their own core components that provide them with all essential capabilities. . . . Future conflicts will require innovation and elasticity in the capacity to assemble joint capabilities quickly and efficiently around a core command-and-control framework. These must be tailored to the particular circumstances of the situation at hand.

And as Kover (2001, 256) observes, the traditional boundaries between weapons systems, corps, and arms are becoming increasingly blurred in a consistent manner, and the emphasis is on integration. Indeed, the integration that once characterized the strategic and operational levels of warfare now is entering the tactical level. In this sense, what we are witness to within the armed forces is but part of a much wider development in organizations around the world in which "the boundaries that formerly circumscribed the organization are breaking down as individual entities merge and blur in 'chains,' 'clusters,' 'networks,' and 'strategic alliances,' questioning the relevance of an 'organizational' focus. . . . The newly found fluidity in the external appearance of organizations rests on the assumption that the interorganizational relations into which an organization enters may be a more important source of capacity and capability than internal features such as 'size' or 'technology' " (Clegg and Hardy 1997, 9).

Along these lines, many military frames created by the industrial democracies—Iraq and Afghanistan being contemporary examples—are amalgamations of units, temporary systems. Moreover, an increasing number of military operations are now performed within multinational frameworks, as in the Gulf Wars of the 1990s and 2000s, the NATO forces, or various UN missions. Moreover, unlike the past, when peacekeeping operations were generally treaty verification missions, more recently some missions have taken place in the absence of

peace treaties or even cease-fires. This trend implies a more active and dangerous involvement of coalition forces in which smooth and accurate functioning is essential. Along the lines suggested in this chapter, if we look at coalitions not as temporary (although any specific coalition will probably be so) but as a permanent feature of militaries, then we can ask about their dynamics on the level of local combat units. Similarly, while there is much talk on the macro-level of shared risk as the glue that holds a military alliance together (such as the United States using its ground troops in the Gulf War), we know relatively little about how these understandings are "translated" into the local level. The conceptualization offered here may fruitfully uncover this dynamic and thus complement more conventional ideas about cohesion and hierarchy used by sociologists and psychologists of the military.

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7

"Tactical Bubbles," "Civilian Seductions," and "Three-Block Warfare"

The Military, the City, and Urban Combat

This chapter is an analysis of the social and organizational dynamics of military units and individual experiences in urban warfare. Its focus is thus on combat taking place in citified, urban environments characterized both by intense friction between armed forces and highly complex relations with civilian noncombatants. While our focus is on cities, urban environments are diverse and also include suburbs, large villages or towns, industrial parks, rail yards, harbors, airports, and warehouses. We agree, following Leonhard (2000, 20), that to categorize an environment as merely "urban" is a gross simplification. One can hardly compare the confusing, poorly marked alleys of Mogadishu with the streets of Miami or Kiev. Similarly, while Gaza City sits on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, it is flat, very crowded, and has skyscrapers most cities in the West Bank are located on hills, surrounded by mountains. However, as we will show, some common features of such environments merit the analysis of the peculiarities of warfare taking place in cities.

We center our analysis on urban combat—the localized violent encounter of two or more organizations—rather than on the more general state of urban war, because it is at this hitherto understudied level that warfare actually takes place. In other words, we go beyond claims that many current military activities (including humanitarian missions,

counter-terrorism operations, peace-enforcement assignments, or prolonged occupation) take place in urban contexts to ask about how this very context influences and is influenced by combat. We therefore distinguish between warfare *in* cities and city warfare: between studying units and soldiers who wage combat *in* a particular city, but without much, if any, concern for the urban *context* and the study of the *physical and social structure of city life* and its impact on military behavior.

Our analysis is important, because wars and armed conflicts are increasingly waged in various kinds of conurbations: the twentieth century was littered with city battles, and it is highly likely that the sprawling cities of the developing world will become one of the key battlegrounds of the twenty-first century (Hirst 2005, 122; Spiller 2004, 87). In addition, as Hills (2001, 9) explains, not only do political elites live in cities, but cities increasingly cover the most desirable land and are links in the global production chains and foreign investment. Indeed, even the world's greatest military, the American one, has created a new acronym for fighting in cities: MOUT, or military operations in urban terrain (Coughlin, Kuhlman, and Davis 2005). But the justification for studying urban warfare is not only empirical. Theoretically, an analysis of urban warfare takes many of the issues raised in previous chapters a step farther: it may uncover the biases at the base of much contemporary social scientific study of the military and may suggest a new set of conceptual frames and ideas in their stead. We shall deal with these theoretical issues in the next chapter.

As the aim of this chapter is expository and exploratory, we use a much more eclectic mix of material than in other sections. Thus data from our research into the IDF are closely interwoven with a variety of historical, biographical, journalistic, and literary materials. This chapter is divided into two main parts: in the first we focus on the broad methods by which armed forces cope with cities; in the second we center on the actual experiences and dynamics of urban combat. While this chapter can stand on its own, it also forms the basis for the next one.

Urban Warfare: Exemplary Cases

Let us begin with three not untypical descriptions of urban combat. They are taken from a description of the battle for Berlin, from an American account of the contemporary Israeli experience and from our own data. Our goal in providing these passages is to give readers the flavor of urban combat. Beevor (2003, 317–18) depicts the battle for Berlin:

> The assault groups, as in Stalingrad days, were to be armed with "grenades, sub-machine guns, daggers, and sharpened spades to be used as axes in hand-to-hand fighting." The reinforcement groups need to be "heavily armed," with machine guns and anti-tank weapons. They had to have sappers equipped with explosives and pick axes ready to blast through walls from house to house. The danger was that as soon as they opened a hole in the wall, a German soldier [on] the other side would throw a grenade through first. But most Red Army men soon found that the *panzerfausts* [anti-tank weapons] abandoned by the *Volkssturm* [German militias] offered the best means of "flank progress." The blast was enough to flatten anyone in the room beyond. While some assault groups made their way from house to house on the ground, others progressed along the rooftops, and others made their way from cellar to cellar to take the *panzerfaust* ambushers in the side. Flame throwers were used to terrible effect. . . . The presence of civilians made no difference. The Red Army troops simply forced them out of the cellars at gunpoint and into the street, whatever the crossfire or shelling. Many Soviet officers, frustrated by the confusion, wanted to evacuate all German civilians by force, which was just what the Germans' Sixth Army had attempted when fighting in Stalingrad. "We didn't have time to distinguish who was who," said one. "Sometimes we just threw grenades into the cellars and passed on." This was usually justified on the grounds that German officers were putting on civilian clothes and hiding with women and children . . . [yet] there were very few cases of German troops hiding among civilians to strike the Red Army in the rear.

> Chukov urged a ruthless panache when house clearing. "Throw your grenade and then follow up. You need speed, a sense of direction, great initiative, and stamina, because the unexpected will certainly happen. You will find yourself in a labyrinth of rooms and corridors full of danger. Too bad. . . . Go forward. Fire burst of machine—gunfire at any piece of ceiling which still remains. And when you get to the next room chuck in another grenade. Then clean it up with your sub-machine gun. Never waste a moment."

Next note the description of Israeli methods in the Al-Aqsa Intifada (Elkhamri et al. 2004, 53–54):

The Israeli army uses various tactics and methods in every urban mission, depending on the circumstances and the commander. Large-scale operations involve air support and armor. The Merkava tank provides the best protection for ground troops. An infantry squad usually rides inside the Merkava tank up to their dismount point. Commanders sometimes position a Merkava tank at the point of entry to the house that will be cleared of terrorists. The tank's main gun will blast a hole in the wall to serve as the entry point into the house. The tank will cover the troops and serve as a wall or barrier. The tank can also back up into the hole it just blasted and let the infantry squad dismount directly form the tank into the building. The Merkava is an excellent machine, but the Palestinians have learnt to attack the Merkava with large explosive land mines or IEDs [improvised explosive devices] buried at critical points. Urban actions . . . [typically begin] at night in order to avoid civilian casualties, to take advantage of the Israeli army's night vision capabilities, and to catch the terrorists while they are asleep. The town is surrounded, and all entries and exits are sealed. Security teams will surround the objective houses and provide a 360-degree security perimeter. Additional teams will control each house's escape routes. Some type of diversion will precede the actual entry into the house. Soldiers will enter and rapidly clear the house. Normally two soldiers will clear and search each room. Two soldiers will secure the stairs, if there are any. If it is a multilevel house, the bottom floor will be cleared first or at the same time as the second. Movement and clearing techniques within the houses are situation dependent. If it is clear that there is a terrorist in the room and that he will fight to the end, the soldiers will first throw a grenade into the room. After the explosion, the soldiers will rush into the room together. One soldier will clear the room all the way from the right side of the door to the middle, and the other soldier will take the left side all the way to the middle. If the soldiers are uncertain who is in the room and if there might be a civilian present, the first soldier will take a very quick peek from the corner and tell the other soldier when it is clear to pass to the other side of door. . . . Withdrawal will be coordinated with the other soldiers outside. Soldiers will exit the same way they came in. Then the commander will direct the movement to the next house.

A deputy company commander in the paratroopers told us about his experience in the West Bank cities:

> It was the first time I was a platoon commander when a tank led us, a whole battalion convoy, into Hebron. And then it got stuck, went into an electricity pole, which fell on it. He got all tangled with the electricity wires, and there was a danger of electrocution. So we stopped the whole convoy. And in the meanwhile they started shooting at us, which for the tanks is okay, but for the APCs it's dangerous, because the bullets can penetrate them. We stood there for about an hour and a half and tried to get him out, and it was chaos. Until in the end I understood that they stopped all of the electricity in Hebron so that we could go on, and then we got to the house that we were supposed to seize.
>
> We were the first to do such a thing, to get there with APCs, to seize houses and to control things among the family. . . . I felt that it was all very dangerous and later in Shechem [Nablus] this was even a stronger feeling. I think it was a miracle that it turned out okay since the danger of friendly fire was greater than that of the enemy. Despite the fact that there were many enemies there, it was crazy the amount of forces that they poured into the place. And the concentration of forces and the power used, it was crazy. . . . Okay, so our pilots are good, but they can miss or they could be directed by mistake to the house we are in. It was the *casba*, a very crowded place, and you can easily make a mistake, and it is a fact that sometimes they did make mistakes: it happened many times that we shot at our own forces.
>
> And I remember that it was before Jenin that we talked about it that they shouldn't let the reserve forces go in without teaching them. . . . All the little things make a difference there, what equipment to bring and what to leave behind. We had experience with this. . . . Nowadays it is more organized and there is training and even a book about what you need and what you don't need.

As all three passages make clear, fighting in cities is militarily very difficult. Consider Hirst's (2005, 119–20) historical evocation of these difficulties:

> Dense-built environments offered a form of defense in themselves. Streets became killing grounds when troops were

> stopped by barricades and cut down by enfilading fire from surrounding buildings. Extensive areas of ruined buildings became labyrinths in which the defenders could take cover in cellars. The larger the city, the bigger the obstacle it became when it was ruined, and the less effective mechanized vehicles would be within it. Bombing and shelling a city in order to take it merely increases the chaos, gives the defenders plenty of shelter, and provides plenty of cover from which to use simple weapons like Molotov cocktails. . . . Ruins are great equalizers, and the more sophisticated the army, the harder it would be to maintain the advantage in street fighting in a larger city.

Thus it is not surprising that Spiller (2004, 88; see also Baum 2005; Dupuy Institute 2002) notes that in their campaigning, military forces have habitually been averse to entering cities:

> For orthodox armies wedded to their professional traditions, cities are not important in purely military terms. Cities may indeed be politically, psychologically, or otherwise symbolically important, but they never seem to offer sufficient return on the military power that is expended in taking them, and therefore it is best to do without them altogether, best to send one's [armies] where they will achieve decisive results.
>
> If one steps back from history for a moment, one can see that there was never any chance that orthodox armies would be able to quarantine war to the countryside where all of their doctrines, organization, equipment, training—and indeed their professional traditions—predisposed them to operate. Yet against global trends of modernization and consequent urbanization, orthodox military thought has persisted in defining the urban environment as the most complicated and least promising and least productive of all environments where one may go soldiering.

The Israeli case exemplifies similar wariness of urban warfare: in 1973, Chief of Staff Elazar allowed one of the division commanders, Bren, to enter Suez City only if he could guarantee that there would be no second Stalingrad there; before the IDF went into Beirut there were many conflicts and discussions among senior officers; and in Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, there was much caution before the IDF reentered Palestinian towns and cities. As Buchris (2003, 32; see also

Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 225; Sofer 1989), a battalion commander during this operation, states, the "experience of the IDF during past wars in built-up areas was traumatic. The conquering of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War, the conquering of Suez City in the Yom Kippur War, and the fighting in the Lebanese cities, and especially in Western Beirut, are very strongly etched in the memory of senior commanders." In one of our interviews, a battalion commander from the armored corps recalled that during Operation Defensive Shield he talked to his troops and "the guys were really frightened, very frightened." Similarly, the commander of the paratrooper brigade said that before entering Nablus for the first time, the city was like "the dark forest that you don't enter" (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 227).

Indeed, even in today's so-called advanced wars, with all of their precision weapons and sophisticated tracking equipment, the armed forces of the advanced industrial countries prefer their enemies to be concentrated in open areas where long-range, standoff weapons may be used against them. Moreover, what Hills (2001, 6) suggests for British forces is relevant for the armed forces of all the industrial democracies: current constraints of international law, cultural norms, presence of the media, and political imperatives shaping discretionary interventions make for less effective fighting in cities. Contemporary constraints make urban war fighting more controlled and constrained than in the past.

In fact, because of these constraints, foes opposing organized militaries make use of the characteristics of the urban environment to their advantage through concealment and ambushes. And it is for this reason that in many insurgencies, guerrillas prefer to withdraw into cities where organized militaries have to invest huge forces to tackle them. What is more, insurgents often use images of individuals facing tanks on urban streets as icons of resistance and the courage of defenders. The image of tanks and civilians in Tiananmen Square is just one example of this dimension of conflict.

Yet what is evident from existing depictions of urban combat is that on the ground things have not changed that much: the contemporary reality of combat in crowded urban areas is uncannily like the one encountered throughout the twentieth century. As Steed (2003, 206) explains, in urban warfare the

> nature of warfare at the tactical level changes very little. The experiences of the infantrymen in Mogadishu in 1993 were not much different from those of the Marines in the city of Hue in 1968, twenty-five years earlier. These experiences were

> again not considerably different from those experienced by infantrymen in Stalingrad in 1943, fifty years previously. The most significant difference was the airborne command post and imaging that the forces in Mogadishu utilized. The high-technology equipment was of little practical use, because the convoys got lost, people were still confused, and the enemy was everywhere. It is the nature of war at the lowest level to be a brutal, confusing, infantry struggle.

And, as Baum (2005, 7; see also Hills 2001, 6) states, "The battle of Fallujah, but for the presence of precision close air support, was fought not all that differently that the siege of Stalingrad or Antwerp." Indeed the U.S. Marines, in developing their urban warfare doctrines, still base themselves less on technology than on maneuver warfare adapted to the urban environment (Ackerman 2001). And as Leonhard (2000, 20) observes, "The systematic clearing of rooms and buildings as the centerpiece of tactical operations [in urban environments] . . . is but a very small part of effective urban warfare . . . and even when required, it is better handled by troops with mobile, protected firepower—the very definitions of tank and mechanized infantry forces." Along these lines, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have constructed mock cities for training and have begun studying the effects of soldiers who may be "cornered, targeted from all sides, or unable to distinguish friend from foe from noncombatant. Marines have also traveled to places such as Chicago to get a better feel for what battle could be like in a real city" (Scientific American 1998). Similarly, the Israeli Army has constructed three different model Arab towns (each corresponding to different geographic locations in the territories) for training its troops before being deployed (Elkhamri et al. 2004, 56).

In this respect, the technological means recently developed for urban warfare are mainly adaptations of existing means. The emphasis, for example, on precision warfare (tomahawks taking out bunkers, bunker buster bombs, precision weaponry against overwhelming numbers of tanks) and information warfare and technology began during the Cold War. There has been no real revolution in military affairs in urban warfare: soldiers wear the same heavy battle dress with flak jackets, and some vehicles continue to be unarmored. Some developments have taken place in regard to the use of special forces in urban contexts, but these are usually restricted to single-site, single-time operations—such as freeing hostages from a solitary building—and not extended urban warfare or campaigns. This lack of technological development exemplifies, again, the continued military aversion to fighting in cities.

Military Attempts to Deal with Cities

What are the main characteristics of urban environments? And what are their military implications? A number of features appear relevant. The first is the complexity of the urban terrain, including a vast variety of functions—markets, schools, zones for production, distribution, and consumption, or institutions related to safety and health. Second, the density of urban populations necessitates peculiar orienting mechanisms for channeling movement. Third, the scale and size of urban centers create unique problems of control and management of resources and human beings. Fourth, urban landscapes are built in complicated ways that include a multiplicity of levels (street, story, and subterranean spaces). Fifth, cities can be likened to complex, active ecosystems that constantly change. Indeed, constant alterations in cities pertain both to the building and renovation taking place at a fast pace (in contrast to relatively unchanging topographical features) and around-the-clock activities.

It is the interaction between these characteristics that creates problems for military organizations. From a military point of view, the power of cities lies in their capacity to dislodge, dislocate, and disorder plans, operations, and authority. Organizationally, urban warfare is frightening because of the loss of control associated with it, and because it still often resonates with popular understandings of cities as being full of chaos and danger. For example, while the garrisons of the Middle Ages comprised planned urban structures affording many points for shooting, mutual cover, and large fortifications, today's cities offer many such "advantages" without their being explicitly planned for military purposes. Similarly, the density and restrictiveness of the built environment create problems for armed forces in terms of maneuver and fire lines. Finally, the social complexity of civilian populations creates significant problems in terms of identifying hostile forces.

As a consequence, military forces have devised a number of ways to neutralize the power of cities to disorder and dislocate. These include two analytically distinct dimensions that may, and often do, intermingle in reality: combat against armed enemies and the policing of populations. Thus one should not simply assume that once combat is over, policing functions take over, because it is the simultaneous combination of the two that characterizes much military experience within contemporary cities.

The first method involves the destruction of the city or parts of it very much like the actions of the biblical Joshua in Jericho or of the Germans in Stalingrad during the Second World War. A contemporary instance is the Russian attack on Grozny. Meier (2005, 42)

describes entering the Chechnian city where "block after block had been bombed and burnt out. Of the few buildings that still stood, many were sliced open. Walls and roofs had fallen, revealing the abandoned remains of homes inside: sinks, burned cabinets, old stoves." Indeed, during the first Chechnya war (1994–1996), fought during President Yeltsin's time, the city

> had become known among the troops as a meat grinder. The rebels had mastered the art of urban guerrilla warfare, using underground passages and fortified buildings to entrap Russian tank columns and destroy them. . . . [In the second war, fought between 1999 and 2000], the idea was to shell using jets, attack helicopters, and artillery on the city and send in the troops only once everything had been leveled. The onslaught was calculated to lose as few Russian soldiers as possible, while killing as many Chechens, armed or not, as possible. (Meier 2005, 48)

The problem with such a mode of operation is that it both creates ruins that may impede military mobility and, in present-day circumstances, it can often turn into a media disaster. Such was the case when the IDF destroyed dozens of houses in the Jenin refugees camp in 2002. While this action brought the fighting to an end, it also created an international media wave of rumors and accusations about an alleged massacre.

This is why armed forces carry out obliteration on a smaller scale through the partial destruction of cities. The aim of this process is to open avenues of movement or to create unobstructed views of parts of the city or the entire city. This seems to be the case of the Israeli military in the Palestinian territories, where a policy of "exposure" (*khisoof*) was initiated as soon as the hostilities began. According to a report by Human Rights Watch (HA October 19, 2004), between 2000 and 2004, the IDF destroyed 2,500 houses in Gaza, with about two thirds of them in Rafah. In these actions, in which thousands of people lost their homes, bulldozers destroyed rows of houses in order to widen intervening areas whose width sometimes reached 300 meters. In Rafah, the idea was to destroy homes and trees next to the Philadelphy route (running along the southern part of the strip along the Egyptian border) to safeguard Israeli troops who could then fire upon anyone nearing the road and to enable the demolishment of tunnels dug underneath it (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 294, 343). Yet these examples underscore the political price that Israel has paid for destroying houses and trees. National and international human rights

movements, the media, and political actors all used images of this destruction to put pressure on Israeli decision makers. It is for these reasons that senior commanders often prefer other modes of dealing with cities.

The second mode of dealing with cities, the siege, has ancient roots but has been revived as an idea for contemporary warfare (Luttwak 1995). At its simplest, the idea of siege is to completely surround and disconnect a city from its surroundings and then wait for its capitulation. Along these lines, the IDF tried numerous times to effect attenuated sieges through its policy of cordoning off towns, villages, or cities in the West Bank. But Steed's (2003, 207) observations may well hold true for any contemporary democratic regime: "Americans do not have the stomach for siege warfare. . . . Can American political will outlast the scenes of thousands starving to death?" Take the case of measures undertaken by the IDF in isolating Palestinian cities from which armed attackers emerged during the conflict. As a consequence of its actions, civilian Palestinians paid a heavy price, and the Israeli military found itself taking over humanitarian functions, such as allowing in some basic goods. Siege as a method for subduing cities is limited in present-day circumstances because, as we shall see in other chapters, of human rights concerns.

The third mode entails militarizing cities through the entry of military forces to wage combat. Indeed, even before such an entrance, aerial photographs and the coded designation of places and spaces form the basis for "knowing" cities in order to control them. Consider military code maps of cities, which are unlike those used for other terrain: these maps, which are usually recent aerial photographs, with numbered houses, facilitate military action. The photographs are linked to the formal and informal military language of routes, targets, or designations in ways that militarize cities. Moreover, because such terrains change quite quickly, troops need to rapidly develop cognitive maps of urban environments. For example, when the Russians entered Berlin, they often asked local Germans for directions. Today, a prime means is the use of aerial drones or helicopters for orienting ground troops. On a more concrete level, once inside built structures, military forces also militarize them: a window becomes a firing position; an apartment turns into a local headquarters; a doorway is converted into a checkpoint; a view from the roof implies opening lines of fire and the creation of killing areas. This process of militarizing houses also entails control of civilians within houses by shutting them up in rooms.

Forces can try to "flood" cities, with water seeping into every pore of the urban landscape, but doing so necessitates an inordinate number of soldiers and units. Hills (2001, 10) uses the image of urban

operations soaking up manpower like a "sponge." One tank battalion commander explained how senior commanders felt that they needed increasing numbers of tanks for urban actions: "And even if they have twenty or thirty tanks [parked] by their side, they will say that they need them, 'bring them up.' And they will find work for them. It's like some kind of monster that constantly eats more and more forces." Costliness in terms of personnel is compounded by the presence of noncombatants. From a military point of view, civilians are like POWs in that military forces have to divert human resources and attention away from combat in order to control them.

This problem becomes much more salient once combat dies down (permanently or temporarily) and an occupation ensues**.** Military forces must then enforce law and order through policelike methods. From the military's point of view, this situation implies the need to quickly reimpose order to overcome the anomie and chaos brought about by urban war. In becoming a police force—historically, an urban concept—such military formations use a variety of means, including forcing people to move out of specific areas, limiting their movements through curfews, patrols, or roadblocks, or, indeed, paralyzing a city's population through fear. Closely related means include shifting individuals and groups from private to public spaces, where they can be regimented and controlled much more easily. Many such measures are still linked to the military logics of action, since they are aimed at freeing urban space so that military activities can take place without the obstacle of "just" civilians. Often, however, such means as curfews are interpreted differently by local civilians. As Anderson (2002, 41) explains, blanket curfews allowed IDF soldiers to search for subjects in a way that minimized civilian casualties, but Palestinians saw them as collective punishment or tactics of humiliation.

Much of urban counter-insurgency resembles police work and consequently is alien and anathema to military professionals. Yet the use of police intelligence techniques, the cultivation of relationships with civilian bureaucracies, and the maintenance of law and order are central to successful urban actions (Elkhamri et al. 2004, 1). For example, during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, in order to counter the many Palestinian armed groups that worked independently or semi-independently, Israeli intelligence gathered data from informers blending in with the population, electronic interceptions of phones or two-way radios, and unmanned drones conducting aerial intelligence surveillance (Elkhamri et al. 2004, 53). Indeed, militaries employ various means for "knowing" the local population in order to control it, such as registration cards, fingerprinting, school and student registration, hospital and medical center registration, block control through block wardens,

social welfare registration, postal and telephone records, business permits, and banking and credit transactions.

Urban Environments: Implications

Against this background we turn to the relation between the phenomenology of urban combat—the experience of soldiers in terms of what they see, hear, smell, feel, and think—and the social and organizational forms that urban fighting necessitates. At the risk of stating the obvious, we emphasize that the focal environment at the level of field units is combat and not war in general. What interests soldiers most of all is combat: the localized, violent encounter of two or more armed forces (Boene 1990, 29). Depictions of combat center on scenes marked by chaos and confusion. In these situations, soldiers confront not only the danger of loss of life and limb, but they also witness wounds and deaths suffered by others. In addition, there is a constant and gnawing sense of uncertainty about the unfolding "action" on the battlefield (what is often called the "fog" of battle). In such situations, an overwhelming totality of sounds, smells, and sights comes together in a shape that individuals find very hard to analyze in any meaningful way (Shalit 1988, 147). Closely related to this experience are more "routine" stresses: the weight of the pack and the equipment, the lack of food and water, sleep deprivation, and difficult weather conditions (Dinter 1985; Holmes 1985, 125).

Because of the impairment of vision, intensification of sounds, and potential for surprise associated with close city quarters, urban combat is often perceived by soldiers to be more threatening than battles fought "out in the open." Descriptions of the Israeli experience in the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the American experience in Iraq exemplify these points. The first problems encountered by soldiers in urban environments include lowered visibility, disorientation and difficulties in navigating, and feelings of isolation. Anderson (2002, 40) describes a ride in an armored personnel carrier (APC) in a Palestinian city: "It feels like several miles; given the zigzagging course the driver follows, it is impossible from within the windowless vehicle to tell how much ground we are actually covering."

> In the dim, dusty light inside the APC, the men simply stare mutely into whatever portion of the steel frame is directly in front of their eyes; the high clanking sound of the [APC] makes conversation a major effort, and the suffocatingly cramped condition[s]—eight men wedged onto two narrow

> metal benches—reduce all movement to a minimum. (Anderson 2002, 66)

Other times, as our interviewees also told us, soldiers may feel claustrophobic, hidden and isolated in boxes. These sentiments are echoed by the contemporary American experience of fighting in urban environments: Williams (2004) talks about the "vibrating darkness of the hull" of the armored vehicle he rode into Iraq. And a description of another kind of military vehicle, a half-amphibious, half-armored personnel carrier, echoes these feelings: "There were no windows, just tiny slits of reinforced glass that passed as spy holes. With no sense of space, Robinson was tossed from side to side, at the mercy of the [vehicle's] rubber and metal tracks meeting hard-packed rocks, dirt, and pitted Iraqi earth" (Pritchard 2005, 3). And, "The main thoroughfare, like lots of Iraqi towns, has a claustrophobic feel since it's hemmed in on both sides by either high stucco walls or buildings" (Wright 2004, 133). The sense of isolation is heightened once a firefight has been initiated. Those inside the vehicle, as Pritchard (2005, 35) explains for the clash in Nasariyah, "could hear nothing but the screaming motor and the odd sound of gunfire." Furthermore, one of the passages at the beginning of this chapter included a description of how IDF soldiers move within containers (tanks or heavily armored APCs) and then progress into and then within buildings (often moving through walls). Such movement represents a double sense of isolation, first within the vehicle and then within houses. Interestingly, while such social and emotional isolation was also characteristic of the trench warfare of World War I, in that context, isolation was centered on being passively rooted to one place.

One soldier told us that moving at night in an urban center was like moving inside catacombs. In fact, even during daylight, cities often pose problems. Parts of the Gaza Strip (such as the Palestinian refugee camps) are very similar in structure to Mogadishu, in which American forces fought during the 1990s: buildings constructed of cement blocks and mud bricks, some with high-walled courtyards that combine with very narrow and poorly maintained roads to create a sort of urban maze that is highly disorienting to troops. As is evident from journalistic descriptions of combat in urban environments, disorientation is intensified when the smoke of burning buildings, cars, and other facilities adds to the confusion of the urban terrain. A Marine sergeant nearing Nasiriyah said, "The city looked like a mass of gray, low-rise buildings, haphazardly laid out in a way that seemed to bear no resemblance to the straight, well-defined lines on his map. A dusty haze covered the whole city, making it even harder to distinguish between its various features" (Pritchard 2005, 74).

Moreover, in urban contexts, soldiers often depict intense moments when they do not know from where they are being shot at. Soldiers hear the noise of weaponry and may see the effects of bullets, but identification is often more difficult than in open terrain. Organizationally, the problem is one of identifying enemies, yet the phenomenology is one of intense vulnerability brought about by the difficulties in spotting foes. There are no enemies there until they shoot, and even then one does not know for sure where they are. It is for this reason that Swafford (2003, 232) talks about urban environments being characterized by countless windows. One of our interviewees, an IDF platoon commander in Gaza, said this:

> There were shootings from one of the buildings in front us. The soldier in the observation post tried to indicate [to] us from which window the shootings are coming from, so we could return fire . . . it was like a dance of shooting fire, until I understood that we're shooting in response to our own ricochets and not on the enemy.

In cities, a potential ambush can be laid anywhere. Consider the following two passages from a depiction of the U.S. Marines' clash in Nasiriyah: "There was no tactical formation on Iraqi soldiers, just faceless figures dressed in black, shooting at them from behind buildings and irrigation ditches" (Pritchard 2005, 54). And within the city itself: "Figures in black scurried on the roofs overhead. Muzzle flashes exploded from windows. Fire rained down on them from all sides. Welch's team pressed themselves into doorways and gaps in the wall and returned fire. It was like the training they did" (Pritchard 2005, 81).

An account of the U.S. Marines' experience in urban Iraq (Wright 2004, 32; see also Coughlin et al. 2005, 123) underscores another point related to the mix of combatants and noncombatants:

> The ROE (rules of engagement) lay out all the conditions regarding when a Marine may or may not fire on Iraqis. The problem is, some Iraqi soldiers will presumably change out of their uniforms and fight in civilian clothes. Others will remain in uniform but surrender. They might be some in uniform surrendering and others in uniform fighting. On top of this, large segments of the civilian population are expected to be armed with AK-47s, so that armed but not hostile civilians will be mixed up with enemy fighters dressed in civilian clothes. Therefore, the usual battlefield rules—shoot guys wearing enemy uniforms, shoot guys with weapons—don't apply.

And a few pages later:

> The problem is Iraqis dressed in civilian clothes who are not armed with guns but with cell phones, walkie-talkies, and binoculars. These men, it is believed by the Marines, are serving as forward observers for mortars being dropped into their positions. (Wright 2004, 102)

We heard similar accounts from Israeli soldiers. An infantry company commander in the Hebron area related that "the problem is not so much with the demonstrations. You can live with the fact that they stand there and throw stones and burn tires. The problem is that people with guns enter these circumstances, and this could be dangerous. The truth is that this hasn't happened that many times, maybe ten times, men with weapons enter[ing] demonstrations." Fear of hurting innocent civilians and the strict rules of engagement sometimes led to frustration and aggravation, as one of our interviewees, a platoon commander, explained:

> We were under a flood of stones, Molotov bottles and homemade explosives. The general instruction was not to open fire until we would be subject to a close and certain danger to our lives; but we had also been ordered not to open fire at all, because there were civilians among the Palestinian terrorists. It was very hard for the soldiers to swallow this. Everybody kept their fingers on the trigger and shouted "Let's kick their asses!" We waited for the first bullet to hit our post, and we opened fire only then.

And a soldier told interviewers from the human rights organization B'Tselem (2002) the following story:

> A lot of forces moved into the town, and we were left as the last one in (ko'ach me'asef). The town was under curfew. The force in charge of [force] protection saw a man move at the distance of about a hundred meters from them. It was about 19:30, and it was dark. Afterwards they reported that they were seeing a man sitting on the ground. APCs and tanks began to move along the road, and he escaped to the right and disappeared behind a house. Another soldier reported that he was also seeing a man moving in the same place and after the convoy went through the man returned crawling. The force reported that he was holding something

> big in his hand, and one of the soldiers claimed it was a weapon. From that distance at night it's hard to know with any certainty what he held. Even with our night vision equipment . . . his behavior was suspicious, and the soldiers were sure that he was going to shoot at them.
>
> The man crawled towards the soldiers. He was alone. In principle, the minute you identify a weapon, you are allowed to shoot. But they didn't shoot immediately. They waited a long time, tens of seconds. Then the commanders gave permission to shoot, and they shot eight shots at him. Another soldier who was standing on higher ground identified another man approaching him and then escaping to the right. We went out to the place where the shooting took place. We were sure that there was another man who had taken the weapon from the first one. One of the soldiers identified the first man lying in place. We were sure that he was dead.
>
> We went down to the place and then understood that what we'd thought was ground level was actually a roof of a house with two and a half stories. We went up to the roof and saw him lying with a pipe wrench in his hand.

It turned out that the man was on the roof trying to fill the house's water tanks.

Second, as is evident from the passage devoted to Berlin, a major characteristic of urban combat for ground forces is the experience of fighting, and being exposed, on a number of levels or layers—rooftops, roads, inside buildings, and cellars or tunnels. Take Wright's (2004, 116) evocation of the U.S. Marines' experience in entering Nasiriyah:

> We are surrounded by shattered gray buildings, set back about fifty meters on either side of the road. The things to look at are thousands of gaps everywhere—windows, alleys, doorways, parapets on the roofs—to see if there are any muzzle flashes. You seldom see the guys doing the shooting. They hide behind walls, sticking the gun barrels over the edge to fire. All you see is a little flame spouting from the shadows.

In the battle in the Jenin refugee camp, where thirteen Israeli soldiers were killed, part of an infantry company was pinned down in a narrow alley, where Palestinian fighters shot at them from three different vantage points. As other forces tried to evacuate the casualties, they too

were pinned down by armed Palestinians shooting at them from various places (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 256). Another example entails tunnels dug between Egypt and Gaza that were conduits for smuggling weapons (Harel and Isascharoff 2004, 293) but actually added a new dimension to the combat techniques that the IDF had to develop. Engineering units began to experiment with a variety of means—digging long trenches, sinking piers, and setting off explosives in them, or entering houses to look for the telltale signs of tunneling. From the point of view of soldiers and small units, searching such tunnels represents another kind of isolation involved in urban combat.

The third point is the coincidence of multiple types of spaces and places within one environment: each door opens up another area, with its own dangers, threats, and characteristics. As one Israeli officer told us about the Palestinian city of Tul Karem, one moves through empty streets and suddenly encounters a basement full of people. Each space, each territorial "cell," within which combat takes place, is separated from the others (some of which may be as nearby as next door). As another Israeli officer related, in one cell you find yourself in a complete catastrophe, and when you move beyond one wall, you are in a calm aquarium: "You don't hear and don't see and are not heard and seen." In moving between cells, troops experience heightened danger but once inside them often feel protected: inside a building or a room, one's psychological sense is of security.

The term "three block warfare" was coined by a former commander of the U.S. Marines (Krulak 2000) to characterize circumstances where troops are engaged in a spectrum of operations, from humanitarian missions and policing-type operations to peacekeeping and peace enforcement-type actions to full-blown combat, possibly within the space of three city blocks (Burgress 2003). What is important here, however, is that there may be sudden shifts from one mode (say, attacking armed foes) to another (such as dealing with civilians without getting into gunfights) (for a U.S. example from Iraq, see Wright 2004, 325). Indeed, the simultaneity of missions that militaries are tasked with in urban areas has become very much a permanent feature of contemporary conflicts.

Fourth, entry of the military into the heart of the city also turns civilian spaces into military ones. As explained earlier, entry into a house often implies it being turned into a military outpost, a place and space that troops can understand and use. Yet such a house becomes something in between a formal military space (a garrison or headquarters, for example) and the private space of civilian families. Thus soldiers find themselves operating in hybrid civilian-military environments that lead to such media images as military formations along shopping streets, soldiers sleeping in four-post beds, or tanks on urban

streets. A commander of a tank battalion had this to say about movement into Ramallah:

> In the streets of Ramallah, you see columns of tanks. It's a crazy sight, I would have thought two years ago. It's terrible but it's something that's remarkable in its power. Without being crazy about war, this is a powerful thing. I didn't understand it until after five days after entering the city we were totally fatigued, and I went upstairs to rest . . . and then I heard the tanks rolling in a city street, and I understood what is happening psychologically to the people sitting in their homes. Tanks in a city are a powerful thing.

Fifth, urban environments present peculiar contexts in terms of armed forces' exposure to the media, because images of urban combat often appear especially cruel and brutal. Consider the following passage in an otherwise relatively sympathetic report:

> [W]hen America's well-drilled and well-fed fighters attempt subtler tasks than killing people, problems arise. Even the best of them seem ignorant of people whose land they are occupying—unsurprisingly, perhaps, when practically no American fighters speak Arabic. . . . American marines and GIs frequently display contempt for Iraqis, civilian or official. . . . [T]he marines in Ramadi, who, on a search for insurgents, kicked in the doors of houses at random, in order to scream, in English, at trembling middle-aged women within: "Where's your black mask?" and "Bitch, where's the guns?" In one of these houses was a small plastic Christmas tree, decorated with silver tinsel. "That tells us the people there are okay," said Corporal Robert Joyce. According to army literature, American soldiers should deliver the following message before searching a house: "We are sorry for the inconvenience, but we must search your house to make sure that you are safe from anti-Iraqi forces [AIF]." In fact, many Iraqis are probably more scared of American troops than of insurgents. (*Economist*, January 1, 2005)

This is one reason many military activities in urban areas are carried out at night, limiting as far as possible the eye-catching nature of urban warfare.

Israel's record is far from perfect, but the IDF has realized the importance of such issues. One change is in the attitude to the Red Cross, which was long perceived by the IDF, like the United Nations, as

another international body critical of Israel's policy. Now its representatives are invited to give presentations to soldiers in the checkpoints commanders' course or in programs at the interservice staff college (Schiff 2004). These new relations emerged out of the IDF's recognition that many wars now take place in the heart of civilian populations, as in the former Yugoslavia or the Middle East (Schiff 2004). Another change is exemplified by one of the invasions of the refugee camp of Tul Karem by the Golani and Nahal Infantry brigades in 2002 (Harel and Isascharoff 2004, 228). Previously, military forces had avoided entering the camp and, as a consequence, many armed Palestinians concentrated there. During this episode, three battalions were moved into the dense camp, and hundreds of armed Palestinians were gradually driven to its center. IDF negotiation teams began discussions with the Palestinians and, subsequently, the latter decided to yield. Television crews documented them giving up after they had been instructed to take their shirts off and hold their guns high above their heads.

Sixth, for all of this, cities constantly "fight back"; they attempt to "conquer" the military. Cities are full of seductions, each of which invites different kinds of potential violence wreaked by soldiers: looting property, raping women, or the powerful feelings accompanying the humiliation of civilians. Indeed, the pillage and rape that characterized the battles for Stalingrad and Berlin are well documented. And, as Munkler (2005, 44) suggests:

> Wars that are not intended to secure a swift military resolution nearly always end in the loss of discipline. The men under arms increasingly go over to using war as a means to personal enrichment and guns as an instrument for the acting out of fantasies of omnipotence and sadism.

In the Israeli case, as Harel and Isascharoff (2004, 338) report, and some of our data corroborate, entry into houses either to arrest individuals or to create emplacements offered soldiers opportunities for looting. Looting was found among a variety of units where soldiers took video recorders, television sets, cameras, cellular phones, and money, and it took time before commanders started dealing with this phenomenon (Harel and Isascharoff 2004, 258). Our interviewees agreed that such things took place and offered the following observations: "I saw cases of needless humiliation of arrestees, and needless destruction of Palestinian property"; "Work with the [civilian] population is very difficult, and the chance of vandalism or . . . looting, even if only in minuscule amounts, [is] very hurtful." A soldier quoted in the report of B'Tselem (2002) said this:

> Before entering Ramallah, they talked to us about stealing, attitudes towards civilians, and so on. And they warned us not to do anything that is improper, and that those that did would get heavy punishment. At the beginning, when we went into houses to search, we would work according to regulations. But with time there was a decline both in regard to people and to property. The school where we quartered was completely destroyed. There were broken chairs, smashed windows. . . . From one of the places where we stayed two video cameras disappeared. The officers really got mad, and as far as I know the military police did not open an investigation. One of the cameras was returned by one of the soldiers. The APCs would return from patrols with all sorts of equipment taken from houses.

Indeed, in some companies, soldiers' bags were searched and disciplinary measures taken against those found with loot.

Thus cities have the potential for demilitarizing military forces, and there is a greater need for military discipline within them. In more theoretical terms, the problem for militaries is to remove the "urban" character of cities and turn them into military spaces. The military must eradicate the liveliness of urban areas, as there is a basic contradiction between military asceticism and the Dionysian character of cities. Yet this is a never-ending process. When militaries enter civilian areas, they can never completely take them over. They constantly try to define clear organizational rules for ordering actions within civilian sites, but this is an ongoing "battle." Indeed, because of this situation military forces very often try to disengage themselves, to distance themselves from civilian parts of cities, for instance, through erecting walls, placing checkpoints, requiring entry permits, formulating regulations, and positioning guards. But here again things are dynamic: military forces impose a curfew but then have to end it; they close streets but then must open them. So there is no permanent, once-and-for-all victory in cities: apart from wholesale destruction, they can never be fully tamed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us emphasize that urban warfare is not to be confused with low-intensity conflict: cities may be venues for the full spectrum of military missions, from humanitarian assistance to the highest intensities of outright conflict (Spiller 2004, 83). For example, the

cities of Falluja in Iraq, Mogadishu in Somalia, and Jenin in the West Bank were sites of both high-intensity combat and periods of relatively low-intensity conflict. To be sure, much of the military activity that takes place in cities today is low-intensity conflict (LIC), or asymmetrical warfare, in which superior forces, such as those fielded by the United States or Israel, withstand suicide attacks, organized raids, and ambushes waged to cause attrition to their forces. In many contemporary conflicts, adversaries of organized military forces seek no large engagements but numerous minor ones where they can pit their underequipped force against a squad, platoon, or logistics element (Steed 2003, 207). Nevertheless, what we do want to convey is that both high-intensity conflict (HIC) and LIC are carried out within and related to the character of cities as particular forms of physical and human environments.

8

The Sociology and Psychology of Contemporary Urban Warfare

To briefly recapitulate the wider argument of this book, the social scientific study of the military has, on the whole, adopted the traditional doctrinal view of modern, conventional war and warfare and consequently has developed concepts suited to what we call textbook units. This view, to put it somewhat simply but not inaccurately, centered on large formations of infantry and armor engaged in combat over open territories marked by the relative absence of civilians. Much of the psychological and sociological study of the military came of age after the Second World War, and thus it is not surprising that many central concepts—cohesion, leadership, interpersonal communication, small group behavior—have been derived from such contexts. In this chapter, we suggest a new look at these concepts by focusing on the empirical reality of urban warfare. We do so both in order to ascertain the degree to which existing concepts fit this reality and to suggest a number of new conceptual frameworks for analysis.

What kind of interpretation would current social scientific analyses of the military offer in regard to urban combat? Our suggestion is that such analyses would treat the social and organizational dynamics of urban combat primarily in terms of a "loss" of existing mechanisms for the effective functioning of soldiers and units, primarily because of the added strains and difficulties of urban warfare. Thus urban fighting would be characterized as leading to a deficit of control, a lack of cohesion, unwieldy communication, and problematic leadership. This kind of "negative" interpretation is the outcrop of this kind of analysis, based on the idea of combat taking place between regular armies in open terrains. From this perspective, urban environments simply present added pressures, additional friction. Given that armies are built to withstand and to be able to function in highly uncertain environments

full of danger and violence, in urban contexts, according to this logic, existing social and organizational dynamics are under more strain.

Steed's (2003, 312, n. 4) not untypical conclusion provides a good indicator of this kind of thinking. According to him, urban warfare demands a great deal more of fighting soldiers and officers: higher levels of mental agility and psychological resilience, and the experience of more physical and emotional stress, as soldiers fight in a degree of isolation far more psychologically demanding than in past wars. Griffith (2000, 116) predicts that future wars will be marked by "escalating stress" based on the model, found in much of the psychological literature on combat, of stressors and counter-stressors. It is not surprising that he cites street fighting as the one thing that deters or worries contemporary Western planners as the Americans (Griffith 2000, 119). His solution to the increasing strains involves intangibles such as unit cohesion, leadership, and fighting spirit. Thus, for example, he thoughtfully suggests that in the future the lowest organizational level in frontline detachments—the irreducible unit of combat (Griffith 2000, 114)—will not be the one-man bionic warrior but the small team of two, three, or four buddies.

Yet his analysis raises further sociological questions. While we do not, of course, deny the crucial importance of such matters at the tactical level, we do, however, ask if there are other concepts that may better capture the peculiar social and organizational dynamics that emerge in urban combat. In general, we argue that present-day urban combat necessitates developing two modes of organizational structures and action. The first involves elements similar to those found among special forces: autonomy and independent actions of small groups, leadership that has devolved to the squad and fire-team levels, and the ability to flexibly move from one mission to another. To use a rather unwieldy term, we cautiously propose that in urban contexts military units undergo a process of "special forcification." The second mode centers on unique abilities to handle the complexity of combat in civilian surroundings. We contend that civilian dimensions of actions in cities should not be seen as somehow ancillary, supplemental to military work, but as part and parcel of the ways in which the armed forces act in contemporary conflicts.

Dispersion, Communication, and Cohesion

Our starting point is that deployment within cities implies the constant dispersion of forces: sociologically, cities individualize and compartmentalize military forces. To put this point picturesquely, in the movie *Blackhawk Down*, when disembarking from vehicles to move away from

their main party, soldiers felt utterly isolated within very small groups of men. The urban structure of buildings, streets, and avenues (and the constant need to take cover) leads to the distribution and diffusion of forces: in effect, organized military forces are compelled to divide into many small groups that work independently (and, for a time, relatively inaccessibly) within buildings in different territorial cells. Under these circumstances a different structure and social dynamic from the one that exists in a conventional war is created, since the units are often hidden from visual contact not only from the enemy but from their commanders and other units. Thus, for example, in the Israeli deployment in Gaza, many forces operated under situations of dispersal (Vinocker-Hai and Amitai 2003, 33). To borrow freely from a U.S. Marine officer interviewed by Ackerman (2001), the question becomes: What is it like to fight in sociological "bubbles"?

Sociologically, as we showed earlier, cohesion emerging within relatively isolated and independent forces—within these sociological "bubbles"—does not imply a disintegration of forces. First, take communication. In urban contexts, troops clearing a building room by room require a denser signals system than is found in open-terrain combat and one that may reach down to cooperation between fire teams. One effect is a heightened emphasis on go-betweens, soldiers who maintain eye contact between compartmentalized units and relay commands. Yet because of limited visibility, there is a heightened dependency on communications nets to understand what is going on and the overall progress of the mission. These experiences are thus different from the infantry's imagined battlefield of open spaces, where control and coordination are often achieved through sight, hand signals, and shouting. However, if it includes the level of fire teams or even individual soldiers, the signals net may actually create problems of transmission and interpretation overloads (Griffith 2000, 114). Citing American evidence, Ackerman (2001) was told that over the course of training, U.S. Marines begin to economize their communication: they learn to listen to communications traffic among squad and fire-team leaders to acquire situational awareness. Whether this is true of the context of combat as well, one implication is that individual soldiers become much more aware and dependent on the disembodied interaction on the airwaves.

Second, in these circumstances, much more control and leeway for decision making (than in open warfare) must be relinquished by commanders to lower-level leaders. This point is borne out by the Israeli experience, as a senior IDF commander in Gaza notes:

> Today the field is in practice the territory of the platoon commanders; they are the first to react to events, and in

> practice during the first moments of the event they must provide the solution, and on the whole, when we the [more senior] commanders, arrive, the whole thing is already over. (Vinocker-Hai and Amitai 2003, 31)

However, when a larger-scale mission is initiated, or when an emergency occurs, the autonomy of lower-level commanders may be suddenly and radically restricted. The problem in urban quarters, then, is constantly shifting modes of autonomy at local levels. This situation is complicated further, because within the cramped circumstances of many urban environments, NCOs and platoon commanders are constantly under the gaze and surveillance of their underlings.

Third, these processes have been accompanied by new organizational forms. As we saw in previous chapters, instant units—ad-hoc aggregations—are often the preferred structures for urban combat. Thus, for example, during the current conflict, even the Israeli Air Force began showing greater involvement in urban warfare through tighter coordination with ground forces (HA October 19, 2004). This process began with an operation held in Rafah in May 2004, when combat helicopters became involved both in attack and defense. In the attack mode, they accompanied the infantry and armored forces that went into refugee camps and towns. The mode of operation involved ground forces working under an air "envelope" that helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and other intelligence means provided them. The helicopters aided them in attacking certain targets in the Palestinian settlements and in tracking and hitting parties of armed Palestinians threatening soldiers. According to Israeli reports (HA October 19, 2004), this is one reason the attacking IDF force did not have even one casualty. In addition, helicopters aided the ground forces in tracking and firing upon teams that went into open areas in order to shoot Kassam rockets. Thus, as we saw in previous chapters, today's urban soldiers must be able to quickly link to other forces: they must have a modular ability.

Fourth, there may be a blurring between different aspects of missions: between "the" mission—an offensive move, arrests, or clearing of houses—and a preoccupation with defensive postures while on the attack. Technically, this situation implies that units must devote resources (time, attention, personnel, weaponry) to force protection. In the urban context of operation within "bubbles," this point entails constant attention to what may be called spherical force protection. Instead of the linear security, common in conventional land operations, urban fighters have to practice spherical security, since forces

moving in urban environments no longer have the luxury of a rear area (Ackerman 2001). This idea is the base of the U.S. Marines' "tactical bubble," within which all friendly forces are part of security. This configuration can maneuver abruptly when confronted by a new and different threat and maintain the bubble as it moves into another area of operation. Resupply units bring their own security bubble as they move into the area as well (Ackerman 2001).

Fifth, increased autonomy, combined with the uncertainty of combat in general and urban warfare in particular, very often necessitates inventiveness on the part of lower-level units. As we showed in chapter 5, this situation implies that forces do not always work according to doctrinal directives but must constantly innovate. As Baum (2005) explains, field artillerymen, tankers, and engineers have found themselves serving as infantrymen in Iraq, while infantrymen were building sewer systems and running town councils. According to him, platoon and company commanders were exercising their initiative in an impressive manner, despite a lack of guidance from higher quarters.

In the Israeli case, fighting in urban Palestinian areas has meant the development of such practices as breaking walls in order to advance between dwellings. Thus in the Balata refugee camp, the paratroopers brigade started using sledgehammers or concrete saws for moving between houses so that they would not be shot by armed Palestinians (although this practice carried a price in terms of media reports about the destruction of houses) (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 227). In Jenin, in order to lower risks to soldiers, one battalion developed a practice in which a bulldozer took out the corner of a house and then an APC would off-load soldiers straight into the gap created so that they would be relatively protected (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 255). Or, take the now-outlawed use of "human shields," where soldiers ordered noncombatants to act as screens when moving between houses, or when they sent a Palestinian ahead before arresting a wanted person (Harel and Isascharoff 2004, 337). Other examples of lower-level innovations that we heard of were tank commanders who, against doctrinal directives, shot into the narrow alleys of refugee camps, or impromptu commanders' meetings carried out on the communications net within tanks. Ingenuity, of course, is not limited to Israelis; in "Ramadi, the marines have rewritten their training manual for urban warfare. Having been taught to seize towns methodically, block by block—a mode more appropriate to Stalingrad than Baghdad—they have learned to patrol at high speed and on foot, sending snipers on the rooftops ahead, along streets littered with bomb debris and daubed with hostile slogans" (*Economist*, January 1, 2005).

Precision, Civilians, and Restraint

In today's conflicts, military missions are characterized by an emphasis on precision warfare. From a military point of view, the notion at the base of the use of precision weaponry is to curtail noncombatant casualties and minimize the number of bombs necessary to hit vital targets (Mandel 2004, 172). These considerations are especially acute in cities where civilian populations are heavily concentrated. An Israeli armored battalion commander recalled Operation Defensive Shield:

> I remember a talk that was held with about 225 men; there was an infantry company with us. This was the night before entering and I was going over the forces and unit numbers and I wanted to see all of them and I said that we were going to enter [the city]. . . . And I said "We are not going to fight the [Palestinian] Authority—we are going to fight terror and make a strict differentiation." [And then afterward] it strengthened the battalion. Everyone talked about the city.

An infantry company commander told us this:

> Of course it's frustrating, but then we don't have any alternative, because even if we would have conquered all of Hebron and been inside it, they could still have peeked from some window and shot us and then simply gone. This is really a frustrating situation. There are times when they shoot at you and you know which house it is and you ask for permission to shoot and take the whole house down and you are not permitted to because there's a family there.

As Ackerman (2001) states, the U.S. Marines'

> urban warfare teams eschew elements such as air support or long-range artillery in favor of a direct fire combined arms fight. The infantry squad leader has some control over more powerful direct fire weapons systems, such as tanks or LAVs, to support his assault or suppress an enemy. Instead of leveling a city with long-range artillery bombardments—as the Russians did with Grozny in Chechenya—the U.S. Marine forces would apply specific fire to local targets.

Leonhard (2000, 20) explains that by placing themselves in close proximity to noncombatants, enemies attempt to use political leverage against military advantages. The military response, in turn, is aimed at isolating enemy targets from noncombatants, and technology has a part to play in this effort. Thus, over the course of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, fewer civilian Palestinians were killed alongside armed operatives because of the use of new air-to-ground missiles whose scatter was limited to the vehicle targeted (HA October 19, 2004).

The need for control and precision is heightened in urban contexts. As we saw, the lack of clarity regarding enemies characterizing many current conflicts is intensified in urban areas because of the density of the population and multiplicity of hiding places. **"**In Fallujah, 40 miles (64 km) east of Ramadi, the [American] marines who survived the fierce assault on the town in November have a sardonic acronym for the skills it taught them: FISH, or Fighting in Someone's House. FISH involves throwing a hand grenade into each room before checking it for unfriendlies, or "Muj," short for *mujahideen*, as the Marines call them" (*Economist*, January 1, 2005). Yet fighting in someone else's house involves acute problems of identification of foes. An armored company commander in the West Bank in 2003 told us the following:

> Look, until now, all the regulations were adapted from Lebanon, where the activities we undertook with tanks were different. . . . Now some of the same things are done in Judea and Samaria. But there are differences, for example, in the whole idea of what is a threat or the proximity [of our forces to a] threat. In Lebanon, whenever a group [of armed fighters] approached an emplacement in the middle of the night, then it's taken for granted that you shoot them. No questions asked. But here it may be someone who returned home from work late, or something.

The difficulties in terms of decision making are echoed by the words of a U.S. field commander in Iraq:

> When the enemy purposely position themselves within civilians, it makes the complexity of my decision making or that of my Marines ten times more difficult. They hope to draw more casualties on our side because of the restraint we show. It's a deadly situation, and we have to make twenty or thirty life-or-death decisions every hour, and often we do this without sleep, (Wright 2004, 174)

No less importantly, as Mandel (2004, 177), following Liddell Hart, reminds us: today's enemy is tomorrow's customer, and even ally. In other words, the proper treatment of civilians, and minimizing their casualties, can make tactical and strategic sense. Consider a number of examples from our study. The IDF does not treat all armed Palestinian groups in the same manner, because its commanders reason that some could potentially turn into security forces for the Palestinian Authority. In addition, the Israeli army tries to avoid civilian casualties, since their deaths exacerbate hate and resistance to it: indeed, using rubber bullets, snipers to "take out" armed activists, and civilians as human shields and improving weapons used by the air force are all cases in point. In addition, in the wake of the IDF's incursion into Jenin, senior commanders realized that destroying civilian facilities and amenities implied heightened international criticism and necessitated accompanying military operations with significant humanitarian resources (Harel and Isascharoff 2004).

The presence of civilians in cities leads to the development of what has been called in Israel the "strategic corporal" and the "dual soldier." The strategic corporal is someone whose tactical decisions—wrong or right—may have a significant impact on political moves. The dual soldier needs to be professional, courteous, calm, and clearly in control but also knows when there is a need to suddenly shift aggressively to handle a threat. From a military point of view, friendliness is fine, but not to the point where it can be mistaken for vulnerability. But this balance is a problem, since troops should not appear too threatening, because they are also there to provide security and keep the local population under control and peaceful (Elkhamri et al. 2004, 65). For these reasons the urban context is where we received the greatest number of reports about sensitization to civilians. While we heard diverse voices, the following from a paratrooper is quite typical: "It's hard to see a family of thirty, forty people sitting on the floor in a crowded room. We insert ourselves inside their house and take everything. They see an orderly house and then suddenly everything is destroyed. . . . That's the government's decision, so that is what one does." Thus commanders need to constantly explain and justify the actions of armed forces vis-à-vis civilians.

Command, Control, and Success?

The next point returns us to chapter 5 and centers on how troops control and are controlled when considerable autonomy is granted to lower-level units. One alternative is the "conventional" placement of

lower-level commanders in each post, position, or patrol to effect control and discipline. A company commander who served in the Hebron area explained:

> You have to understand the situation in which you just can't shoot all these children. It's not to our credit, we lose here. You have the kids who throw stones and sometimes large stones that can threaten your life. You fight very hard to maintain a high moral level (*ramat musar*), and in the places where we are in direct contact with the [civilian] population, the commanders are at the front and keep guard; [they] make sure that the soldiers behave in a proper way.

Another solution to problems of control is to ensure that troops constantly report back to more senior-level commanders in order to receive permission for actions undertaken.

Yet perhaps much more importantly, the military needs soldiers to internalize the kinds of considerations and priorities developed by more senior commanders: to be able to monitor themselves without direct, face-to-face control. As we saw in chapter 5, internalization is related not only to embracing a professional military ethos but is also contextualized by the specific conditions—tactical, political, legal, or diplomatic—of, say, the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Sociologically, this situation implies indirect control as one of the battalion commanders in Gaza explained:

> In the crazy run of things my role is first of all to prepare the forces, to teach, to explain and mentor them, but in the moment of truth, when an event is happening, the probability that I will be there is low, and the one who has to provide the immediate solution in the field is the highest-ranking commander, who is really the NCO or platoon commander. (Vinocker-Hai and Amitai 2003, 31)

A company commander in the West Bank commented, "One of the things that we learned very quickly during this conflict is that you have to talk to the soldiers all of the time." Another commander said, "Regular infantry soldiers don't know how to grapple with civilians, so we have to tell them how to behave, because we learn from mistakes." These circumstances imply more power and responsibility for lower-level commanders, while more senior ones may be "stuck" with tasks related to preparation and tutoring. This situation raises questions about the support soldiers receive from peers or commanders and how this support is

given in the cells and relative isolation of urban contexts. One universal soldierly manner of giving support is through black humor (Sion and Ben-Ari 2005). As Wright (2004, 219) says, "Even guys broken up by the shootings circulate the joke 'What's the first thing you feel when you shoot a civilian? The recoil of your rifle.' "

Finally, we need to ask about the criteria—formal and informal—by which officers and soldiers are appraised in urban contexts. One could conjecture that many of the "classic" criteria for gauging "good" or quality missions are found in urban contexts: Does action involve movement and initiative? What is the perceived potential for engaging with the enemy in an armed fight? Does the mission represent a shift away from static missions to challenging environments, where the senses are heightened and where extreme challenges must be met? We were provided with a negative example of such criteria when a paratrooper criticized the heightened caution of the IDF in urban areas that led to a slow, methodical way in which the missions were carried out without any element of surprise:

> Until we got there, everyone escaped. We made too much noise. . . . The mission was necessary, but the whole idea just dissolved, because everyone ran away. . . . We felt like idiots.

The problem, as we see it, lies precisely in the combination of control and initiative and of aggression and toleration that is important in urban combat. Indeed, urban warfare may actually combine elements of traditional military heroism with very different kinds of ideals of soldierly behavior. For example, the problem becomes one of how to acknowledge soldiers who "stomach" the daily negotiations and friction with civilians. Does one get a medal for not shooting, for withholding fire?

Conclusion

In this chapter we focused on how soldierly experiences in urban combat bear implications for the social scientific study of the military. To be sure, in developing our analysis, we are not proposing that urban warfare is somehow wholly different from other kinds of combat. Indeed, urban combat bears many similarities to any fighting situation marked by extreme stress, friction, and uncertainty. At the same time, as we showed, urban combat is marked both by an intensification of such features and by some rather unique peculiarities. Our contentions can be formulated through a series of contrasts underscoring the manner

by which the sociology and psychology of combat may better be able to conceptualize the distinctiveness of urban warfare. On a general level, the shift we propose centers on the move from "textbook" missions, which are relatively clear and where enemies are unambiguous and legitimate targets of violence, to situations of high complexity and a blurring between combatants and noncombatants (involving severe restrictions on the use of violence). Urban warfare has been characterized as "three-block" warfare, where units may simultaneously carry out and quickly switch between varieties of missions. These missions may, moreover, include law enforcement responsibilities and the all-too-understudied assignments marked by routine and boredom (one example is Swafford 2003, 137).

In place of unit cohesion at the center of organizational structure, we would posit the importance of modular units and task cohesion. To a great extent, this kind of emphasis is an outcrop of the analysis found in chapter 6. This conceptualization should be coupled with a move from imagining units as concerted formations that are usually concentrated territorially toward an idea of a much more dispersed set of "bubbles" operating in separate (if adjacent) territorial cells. In other words, we suggest the shift of sociological analysis from linear warfare to one that is much more networked and dispersed. Furthermore, to the image of the ideal soldier as one marked by valor and boldness, we add representations of the "strategic corporal" or dual soldier typified by much more control, understanding of the wider implications of their actions, and an ability to switch between (often radically) different kinds of military missions.

Instead of command being based on formal, constant, and direct relations marked by hierarchical authority, we suggest a much more dynamic, temporary command that constantly shifts, that may be distal and mediated through communications networks, and that is much more local and informal at the level of small units. The move is also toward analyzing a much more indirect kind of leadership based on normative and professional control. These modes of control and authority are closely related to actual operations. Here we propose a move from asking how doctrine and training are enacted, or how the gaps that appear between such principles and the reality of combat are expressed, to a much stronger emphasis on innovation, the creation of "local knowledge" (not always translated back into doctrinal knowledge), and improvisation.

To return to a point we made at the beginning of this chapter, we propose that in urban contexts numerous "regular" units take on many of the *organizational* characteristics defining special forces: autonomy and independent actions of small groups, leadership that has devolved

to the squad and fire-team levels, and the ability to quickly and flexibly move from one mission to another. The problem, of course, is that special forces have not been at the center, if at all, of the social scientific study of the military. To be clear, we do not propose that all of the combat units of the armed forces have suddenly all become special forces. The process of "special forcification," by which regular units turn into components *resembling* special forces, underscores the need to develop new social scientific concepts to explain their modes of operation. Finally, to reiterate, the civilian dimensions of actions in cities should not be seen as somehow subsidiary to military work but as inherent to the ways in which armed forces operate in contemporary conflicts. Thus the social sciences have to develop ways of comprehending how policing, civilian control, and the militarization of urban spaces have become part and parcel of military missions.

There is yet another layer to our analysis. We argue that the encounter between militaries and cities creates a simultaneous and mutual process of hybridization. The city urbanizes or civilianizes the military, while the military militarizes the city. There is a constant, violent, and dialectic encounter between these two ideal types. On the one hand, the urban character of cities is a force that disperses and disorders the armed forces. It does so through forcing militaries to disperse forces, posing numerous problems of control, and offering abundant temptations that pose risks to the discipline and asceticism of troops. On the other hand, militaries combat urbanism and urban lifestyles through a combination of methods such as obliteration, suppression, and "barracksization." At the empirical level, this dialectical encounter of forces creates a new space full of hybrids that may be called "urbano-military": tanks rolling down avenues, armed outposts in civilian buildings, soldiers directing traffic, or municipal officials who are military officers. But more than that, militaries constantly attempt to "purify," to "order" the hybrids created through this dialectical process. Thus, for example, the IDF developed, in turn, tank doctrines for cities or strict regulations governing behavior toward families whose houses were taken over for military purposes. Along these lines, we are not contending that what has emerged is some kind of postmodern combat but rather something that is peculiarly modern: the encounter between modern cities with their potential for citizenship, freedom, and fluidity, and the modern bureaucratic military, with its emphasis on order, hierarchy, and discipline. Constant efforts to regulate hybrids by placing them within wider dichotomies are a very modern phenomenon.

9

Technology, Gender, and New Combat Roles

Forces along the Separation Barrier

Introduction

The "separation barrier" constructed along the northern part of the West Bank has been at the center of much attention during the past few years. The common IDF term for the barrier is "the seam zone" (*merkhav hatefer*), a somewhat optimistic label referring to a combination of security measures, crossing points, and transportation arteries linking its two sides. The barrier itself, however, comprises ditches, patrol roads, delaying hedges, electronic fences, intrusion tracks (revealing footprints), and an array of technological means for monitoring people nearing or going through the crossing points (Folman 2004, 118–20; see http://www.securityfence.mod.gov.il). As a military source has it (HA August 29, 2003), while the territory around the barrier appears to be empty, this is an illusion, because "we base our activities on very advanced technology." This is a "smart" fence that automatically signals where and when it has been touched. Among the technological means used are cameras and sensors providing pictures of the area and communications links between control rooms and combat forces that can be activated within minutes (YA September 9, 2005).

Organizationally, the barrier comprises both specialized forces for its defense and capture of people illegally crossing into Israel proper and soldiers staffing its technological apparatuses. In this chapter we examine the four main forces deployed and the ways in which they interact to form one organizational entity: a spotters' or

an observers' unit charged with technological surveillance, military police units deployed in crossing points, combat units comprising patrols and mobile reserves, and male and female drivers of vehicles used by combat troops. We do not claim that this bundle of forces is somehow unique to the security fence, since similar amalgams have been part of Israeli military deployment for decades and can now be found, for instance, along Israel's boundary with Lebanon. We do, however, contend that no social scientific work has been carried out to examine the organizational and sociological implications of this military framework.

The separation zone—the area comprising the fence, the forces deployed around it, and the technologies and infrastructure involved—is indicative of developments typifying many armed forces of the industrial democracies. Moskos, Williams, and Segal (2000) maintain that in most parts of the world intrastate (rather than interstate) conflicts have become the norm, and that within these contexts, militaries are charged with missions that existed before but are now central to their deployment. The IDF bears some similarity to this general typification. First, as we saw in previous chapters, the move in many armed forces is toward innovative modular forms deriving from requirements to create versatile systems capable of adapting to changing circumstances and the missions they necessitate (Shamir and Ben-Ari 2000). In this way, the diverse forces around the barrier are integrated into frames to deal with security challenges as armed attacks, individual or group incursions, or demonstrations. Second, the integration of women into the fighting forces of the democratic world is part of a global pattern in which demands for social equality for minority groups are being answered (Dandeker 1994). In the separation barrier, women can be found either in or working with all of the forces assigned to combat missions. In addition, this process has been accompanied by the inclusion of men with low medical profiles in some of the forces. As Bacevich (2005, 170) explains in regard to gender, combat through the ages had placed a premium on qualities associated with young males. Yet, today,

> interpreting or manipulating data was becoming at least as important as the ability to tote a rucksack or willingness to charge a hill. . . . Now women too could be warriors. This development suited those who viewed distinctions based on gender as inherently invidious and who wished to advance towards a society that treated men and women as interchangeable. At the same time, it made available as potential recruits

> that half of the population traditionally seen as possessing limited military utility.

Third, ground forces are now involved in the promotion of technological roles and deployment in technologically advanced environments. This "digitization" of warfare (Van Creveld 1991a) entails the use of computer networks, surveillance apparatuses, and information systems and, in turn, it requires new military capacities in operating technologies and processing large amounts of data. As Shaw (2005, 37) observes, the decline of the "mass armies" of Western militaries has been accompanied by the development of more capital-intensive forces with sophisticated technologies incorporated into weapons and platforms and requiring fewer but more skilled personnel. From a sociological point of view, adopting the technological means to raise military effectiveness and reduce personnel has allowed militaries to answer demands to provide equal opportunities for special populations.

In this chapter we examine how these macro-trends are expressed in the micro-dynamics of the separation barrier, with two aims: first, to give voice to soldiers who are rarely studied by social scientists and, second, to explore the implications of these new organizational amalgams. Specifically, our aim is to explore whether the introduction of technological means, the integration of women, and the proximity to danger work to create a new social and organizational order in and around the fence.

Forces and Missions

The Spotters Unit

The role of this unit is to gather intelligence through television monitors transmitting pictures from cameras dispersed in a particular sector. One spotter described her role:

> The cameras sit in vital places in the area and are directed towards the fence, settlements, and various transport routes. We're at our posts twenty-four hours a day and try to detect any penetration. There's a systematic scanning in which we go over the routes, the fence, and, according to alerts, try to catch any penetration. This work involves cooperation

> with the [combat] forces, and we guide them through the signals' net.

Another spotter gave us more detail:

> You work in a 4–8 fashion [four hours of work and eight hours off]. We guide the forces when there is a need. . . . In our case these are forces of an infantry battalion, and there are also border police. We work directly with their operations centers or with the patrols themselves.

The role of the female spotters is not limited to simple surveillance. As one individual told us:

> We secure [the combat forces]; we make sure that no one reaches them, like if there's suddenly someone with a weapon among the people arrested for illegal entry [into Israel]. You see the force and a large part of the area around it, and you can see if someone is coming from far away. Then you can warn them.

A number of capabilities are required of observers. First, spotting necessitates long periods of monitoring displays, and spotters are strictly governed by regulations stipulating that during shifts they are not to take their eyes off the screens. Second, observers must be adept in discerning specific details (such as whether a man is carrying a weapon) in very short periods and activating combat forces to inspect them. Third, they need to be able to work with forces in the field to use their language and concepts and at times guide them around the fence. Despite the fact that this is only a peripheral part of their duty, in effect, observers see these links as a major standard for appraising how successfully they carry out their roles. This self-understanding is heightened by the observer's military schooling, which is relatively long by IDF standards (seven months), the physical training and practical maneuvers involved, and the special pin received as recognition of the observer's efforts (*Bamahane*, April 15, 2005).

Commanding each observation post is a female sergeant who is a veteran spotter. One commander explained:

> The sergeant, she is responsible for all that goes on in the ops room. . . . If there is an incident (*eiru'a*), this means that another pair of eyes is immediately also looking at the screen. . . . I'm supposed to know all positions very well and assess what portions to scan, what to do, and wrap up

> any issues with the general ops room here or with the ops room of the battalion. All this in principle belongs to the operational side. Apart from that, I have to take care of the girls, their breaks and rests, be the "kindergarten teacher," make sure that they are looking at the screens, not talking on the phone. Anything else, they come to me, and I pass it on if there is a need to do so. Make them go through drills . . . I'm in charge of everything.

The Passages Companies: Military Police

Partly as a solution to the problems encountered, these units were established in 2003 to staff large checkpoints located along the separation barrier. These companies include both women and men (many of whom have a low medical profile). According to one soldier, the routine is rather simple and the load not too heavy:

> I'll start with the fact that we get up in the morning, but before that let me mention that we rotate with one week of professional training and one week of work. During training a lot of time is devoted to briefings about all sorts of things that have happened and how to correct or improve them. During the work week we get up and have shifts of six hours. In principle, we each do our six-hour shift and after that we don't have anything to do.

Security checks are a distinct military profession for the soldiers and commanders of the passages unit, and upon recruitment they undergo a specialized course within the military police. The security check itself involves the following parts, as a female soldier told us:

> [The Palestinians moving through] put their belongings and bags down on the table. [If there are any] coins and anything, that can sound the alarm, they must go back. They take belts off, things like that. . . . They open plastic bags to see what's inside, show their ID cards, the magnetic cards, and usually everyone has a certificate allowing them to move through. I check that the particulars match the ID and the certificate. You have to check if they are forged, if you are suspicious of someone.

In some of the passages, a special area, informally called "back-to-back," involves merchandise moving from Israeli to Palestinian trucks. The same soldier relates:

> At the entrance is a gate called the external gate and which is manned by an NCO and a soldier. The NCO is also the commander of our checkpoint. The soldier is the one checking the IDs . . . and what they're off-loading and on-loading. . . . Before entering the internal area, where the merchandise is exchanged, there is another gate, the internal gate, and that's where [the drivers] leave their IDs. People in this area are porters, and they have special working permits for staying there.

Combat Forces

Combat units—battalions and companies—are also deployed along the fence. A squad leader explained their role:

> There are two patrols on the fence. Each platoon is in charge of a patrol . . . and that's about it; they patrol for about eight hours, back and forth along the area. In fact, for a good part of the patrol, you are static. You stop at certain points, go through drills, and things like that.

The patrols are there to work with the spotters to ensure that nothing untoward happens. A platoon commander said:

> When there is an indication that someone or something has touched the fence, the nearest patrol is immediately alerted. Its job is to observe the area and especially those bits that the [female] spotters cannot see from their position. You make a quick run along the fence and then a slow one. Then you go by foot immediately after that. . . . Your role in the patrol is to show presence, so you turn on the flashing light on top of the vehicle in order to be seen.

A sergeant provided more details:

> What do you do? The first thing is the drills. This means that we have a number of drills that we go through in case we have a genuine situation which . . . may include a [traffic] safety problem or an operational one. When there's a safety incident we practice what we do in case a vehicle has turned over. And then we have drills for operational incidents: the first kind is an engagement on the fence, and the second kind is a drill where the spotters direct us. We've done this so many times that by now we know it by heart.

These missions are characterized by two key features. First, the work is monotonous and routine. Patrols around the fence take the same form for hours on end and then for days, lengthening into weeks and months. Second, operational activities often involve interaction—friction (*khikookh*) is the word military people use—with Palestinian civilians.

Male and Female Drivers

Combat forces around the fence—like many IDF units—are driven around by drivers specially trained by the military who join them for the duration of their deployment. Thus at the end of each deployment, drivers continue to work with new units coming into the sector. One male driver told us this:

> I'm a patrol driver on the roads; [I] go into the villages if there is a need to. . . . On the patrol itself, there's me, the commander, and two combat soldiers. You patrol for eight hours so that the Palestinians don't go near a settlement, don't get near the road, and don't hurt [Jewish] civilians. . . . You also make roadblocks on roads and check IDs.

Most of the driving around the fence is done by female drivers of Hummer vehicles. One driver described her role:

> The aim of the patrol is to guard so that people who are not supposed to move through the sector don't do it. You try to make sure that they don't go near the fence, and in the villages you check the IDs of those that want to move from one side to the other. There is also a patrol in the [Jewish] settlements, especially when there are intelligence alerts: especially along the weaker points of a settlement. . . . During the patrol we get our rest, a quarter of an hour each hour—there are regulations for this. In any case, if you tell the commander that you are tired, he lets you stop.

Nonclassic Military Structures and Activities

A central characteristic of the separation barrier is that forces deployed around it do not function within the textbook military structures of battalions or companies. In effect, they may operate as individuals within operational frameworks (drivers), as small teams working with combat forces (spotters), or as parts of more complex frames (troops of passages companies). In addition, unlike "regular" battalions, where

subunits operate under the watchful eye of a commanding officer and his staff, members of the spotters unit and the passages companies do not attach significant meaning to membership in larger units: the West Bank's spotters' battalion or the military police unit in charge of all the passages. In fact, there is little influence and sometimes little interaction between these larger frames and soldiers. As a sergeant in one passages company explained:

> Also from our own [military police] unit we don't get what we need, like if it's logistics, or concern. "Far from the eye, far from the heart," as they say. Let's say that even if our unit sits right by us, next door, they only come around once in a long while.

An officer in charge of a number of observation posts explained his relationship with "his" units:

> A logistical element comes in on Sundays [a working day in Israel] to the company, and if I can make it there we have a meeting with the company commander; but even that does not always work out. Sometimes you don't have time for a fixed meeting, because I am not always there. The deputy company commander, the senior company NCO or his deputy, well I get to see them if they come on over to my observation points. They come in the evenings once a week to bring equipment to the positions, like . . .

In effect, then, formally designated administrative units do not carry much meaning, because soldiers of the passages companies, and especially the observers and drivers, do not function within the framework of the usual military structure.

Integration of Women

Not only are women a majority in many units, but the novelty of their deployment lies in the fact that they may potentially be engaged with armed Palestinians. This point is especially true of female drivers and troops in the passages companies, some of whom have already had to grapple with armed Palestinians. Thus, for instance, in February 2005, female soldiers in the passages company in Nablus caught a number of Palestinians trying to smuggle weapons into Israeli territory (HA February 4, 2005). In this respect, the integration of women into combat-related central roles is a source of much pride, as an observer told us:

> Navigation, marches, that was nice. We studied the equipment, did drills. It was a great course, they made us work hard. We did things that other girls usually don't do, like a week in the field for training and team and squad drills.

And as if to reinforce this image, a female sergeant in a passages company said, "The boys here are worse than the girls, because the girls are somehow poisoned, and the boys are like females."

Integration of Noncombat Soldiers

Troops assigned to the passages and observers units are not combat soldiers and have not undergone the training that warriors undergo. For example, one female commander in a passages company told us that before being assigned to this unit, "I was in the military police, a platoon commander in a [military] prison, an instructor in [an] officers' course, and in a [military] schooling role." The medical background of many of the troops in these units is such that they are defined as not being suitable for combat roles. As one soldier from a passages company elucidated, "Squad leaders' course? The battalion commander explained that this is a problem, since most people here don't have the minimal medical profile, so they can't go." Another soldier talked about the difficulties of someone who has not had combat training:

> A company of military police don't have to be in such a place. It's too hard. The military police are supposed to [be] a sort of barrier, but in the opinion of infantry soldiers, this is a difficult checkpoint. They put you here intentionally, despite our having a low medical profile. You have to suffer . . .

The deployment of such soldiers is surprising, given that the mission is combat oriented, and especially given its dangerous potential.

A Technologically Advanced Environment

The deployment of all these forces is part of a wider organizational effort on the part of the IDF to improve its effectiveness through specialization. To be sure, the actual roles are not in themselves new. Security inspection continues to be an accepted role for combat troops today, as are functions involving driving and observation. The difference is that roles that were long carried out by combat troops are now the province of troops marked by increased specialization. This point is especially evident in regard to functions involving technology and its integration into operational activities. While we do not go into

the particulars of these technologies, they can be broadly divided into two kinds: technology aiding soldiers to discover and expose weapons and explosives (for example, equipment used to examine baggage, technology for "smelling" explosives, appliances for exposing metals, and closed-circuit television systems); and technology such as cameras, sensors, and special illumination that identify people going near the fence and monitor their behavior.

High Motivation

In general, our impression is that a majority of troops in the passage companies, spotters' units, and drivers' crews express strong enthusiasm for their roles; there were few soldiers and officers who did not explicitly remark about their motivation for serving in these capacities at the beginning of their deployment. For many interviewees, their enthusiasm derived from what they saw as an opportunity to be in the world of combat, or near it. A female driver recalled:

> I wanted to be a combat soldier. I got to this role as something near it. I originally wanted to go to the light infantry or the border police [who first integrated women into fighting roles]. They gave me the option of being a Hummer operator. They said that this was a new role, and that we will be the first girls in the territories.

Another female driver remarked:

> The patrol was great. I have no intention of leaving this [military] profession. I didn't want to go anywhere else, and when I heard there was this opening for a Hummer driver, I wanted very much to go . . . I wanted something related to combat (*keravi*), to feel that I'm really in the army.

A female soldier from the military police said this:

> I wanted to go into the border police; I'm a person that likes looking for action: to go out, to fight, I like that. And the truth is that I heard that the border police would really suit me. . . . Then I had these military tests, and they said that I would be recruited either to the military police or into a senior secretary's job, and I said that I would never become a senior secretary. There's no action in it. . . . And then I

> liked the passages, and I said to myself that it's something like the border police, and there's action in it.

Proximity to combat soldiers was cited time and again as a factor "creating" motivation among our interviewees. One driver told us:

> I'm four months in the army. I wanted to be a combat driver, wanted to be a combat soldier, and if not then [at least] a driver that works with the combat soldiers. I am satisfied with my job. There's a lot of attraction and adventure. I enjoy the driving, the guys are great . . . [I am] quite satisfied.

A female soldier from a passages company made similar remarks:

> I did some policing and checkpoints in Khawarra. At the beginning, I was afraid, but after two, three, weeks I really wanted it. It's enjoyable, and I feel good here. I have become poisoned for the checkpoint. To be with the combat engineers, they give you a sense of security. You feel much more secure when the Arabs are around. I personally like the whole checking of vehicles: to feel that you are trusted, and that you are checking things thoroughly.

Enthusiasm is drawn from the prestige attributed to missions in dangerous areas. A female soldier from a passages company related:

> For example, if you go out for a vacation and they ask you where do you serve and I say, "Tul-Karem in a checkpoint," then people say, "It's dangerous! Why do you serve there?" So I like it that it sounds good; doesn't sound like a senior secretary. Not that there's anything wrong with that. I am just very happy with my job and don't intend to leave.

Still, not only women expressed an eagerness to be part of the combat world. Male soldiers in passages companies perceive their service as interesting and satisfactory and emphasized their desire to continue to perform their role. In a related manner, many soldiers felt that the proximity of their role to the core of military work—the operational side—contributed to them personally. An officer in one of the passages companies explained why she wanted to get to this unit so much: "I lacked the field. . . . To be in the field, to feel that you are doing something meaningful, not like in a headquarters." And a male patrol

driver added, "I like the framework, it's not bad that you have to contribute to the state. . . . I like going out on missions—there's action." A female Hummer driver recalled the following when an armed Palestinian penetrated one of the Jewish settlements in the area where she was serving: "I really wanted to get up. I heard shots, and we were all worried about the soldiers in our company. It was difficult but, in fact, the girls are poisoned, wanted to go in and drive over the terrorist." Another female driver talking about the same incident added, "I was really disappointed that I was not on patrol at the moment. It sounds a bit strange, but it's quite an experience. Not everyone has the chance to hear about their company on the radio."

In fact, the military police woman who discovered an explosives-filled bag at a checkpoint was specially commended and received a certificate from the IDF's chief military officer (HA March 16, 2004). She later said, "I feel that I need some more action before I end my period of service." Another female soldier told a newspaper reporter:

> Just last week there was a guy who came here with two explosive charges [*mit'anei tsinor*]. We all directed our weapons towards him, so in the end he raised his hands. My sergeant could have killed him, and nobody would have done anything to him. If someone would come at me with a knife, I would kill him in self-defense. But I think that he was in shock, and that's why he didn't do anything . . . I wasn't afraid. Don't remember. I directed my weapon at him like everyone and shouted, "Go back, throw the bag over here." And he threw the bag over towards me. (HA May 6, 2005)

Along similar lines, a female commander of a spotter's unit proudly related the following after detecting Palestinians trying to cross the fence and detailing a patrol to check them (HA May 6, 2005):

> There is no limit to the satisfaction. I can't describe in words the right to be here. Awesome, challenging. It's adrenalin all the time. The things that happen here are only ours.

One spotter under her command echoed her by relating the immense sense of fulfillment that comes when the "boys" from the field units come up to their base to thank them (HA May 6, 2005):

> I didn't believe it, but until one giant, one from the special reconnaissance unit, came, I don't remember exactly, but

> he made such a fuss. "You were really good; You were our eyes." There's nothing like it when a force from the field says thank you. It's the ultimate [*ze hachi*].

The Reality of Service along the Barrier

Nevertheless, alongside their high motivation, in talking about the actual circumstances of their missions many soldiers were much more negative in their appraisals. Except for combat units rotating into sectors along the barrier, members of the other units, as we mentioned, are deployed in a fixed area for the duration of their term of service (excluding initial training, short vacations, and brief exercises during deployment). A senior NCO in a passages company explained the difficulties of being "tenured" in one sector:

> One [female] person from my cohort told me, "I open the same baggage every day; I already know what he has. I open it because I have to, and I know exactly what I'll find there. I don't feel like opening it, but I do it simply because I have to." So the next stage will be when she says [to the Palestinian], "You don't have to [open the bags]." . . . In another two months, she won't even have the will to open it.

And a female soldier at a checkpoint told a news reporter (HA May 6, 2005):

> I've had it. Believe me, it's wearing me down, really wearing me down. I'm here ten months now. At the beginning it was nice, but now everything has become routine. You have to argue with them. You have to be polite to them, and it's hard. In practice, we're like [female] clerks [*pekidot*], only with more danger. [I] don't know . . . it's changed me. I've become more stressed . . .

Thus while there are professional advantages to "tenure" in terms of expertise, overall, the troops' experiences are negative. These negative experiences are heightened, in turn, by a contrast they draw between themselves and combat units usually deployed to a sector for only a few months. In fact, a closer look at tasks around the separation barrier reveals an unattractive mission: lackluster, extremely monotonous,

and therefore very boring. This theme came up time and again in our interviews, even among combat forces. A squad leader from an infantry company said this:

> The work on the fence is probably the worst in the army. From an operational point of view, it's one big weakness. You're sent there, and then all your actions are predictable, and there are no sheltering covers, and so it's very easy to surprise you and to attack you; there is no way that you can return fire and attack them. And the work is also very boring, very routine, very cyclical, recurring.

If this is the manner by which a combat soldier views his mission, then one can surely understand the sentiments voiced by other troops. One spotter noted, "The work's hard. Four hours in front of a screen, and you are not allowed to move your head. You're not allowed anything, headaches, eye [aches] and so on; but it's important." A female commander in a passages unit told us what her troops undergo: "For half a year they simply go down every day to the same checkpoint; see the same people every day; grappling with the same situations every morning and back again."

Another soldier confirmed her words:

> It's to stand in front of a [civilian] population, arguments, grinding you down. Simply, grinding you down, and it's all the time, every morning to get up and be in the same position.

Difficulties are related not only to that fact that only simple actions are required of many troops, but that "nothing happens." As a female commander of a spotters unit said, "The problem is that most of the girls here are dissatisfied, are not enthusiastic, and it grinds you down, because incidents [alerts and skirmishes] don't happen every day." Thus for all the hype about technologically advanced environments, much of the work involving monitoring and processing data is simply boring. As if to echo this sentiment, a combat soldier deployed in the area added:

> The most interesting patrol is in the villages. You go in between the streets and look to see if anyone is suspicious. On the fence it's not so interesting, because it's the same fence, and there is nothing new there.

A female soldier from the passages company observed:

> Plainly, after three times at the checkpoint, you begin to understand it. It's hard to define: it's something that recurs all the time, and it's a headache. And some people like it when there's action. and I sometimes say to myself, "Let it happen, something. Let there be action." I'm sick of this checkpoint routine.

An infantry soldier remarked:

> People feel very strongly that they're deteriorating. It's like that for me too: I'm simply becoming an idiot. You don't think; no one stimulates you to think. . . . But it's the job. There's nothing to do.

In fact, the disappointments and frustrations of many soldiers' voices are most probably the ironic outcome of the fact that they are so highly motivated.

As a consequence, despite the fact that they may be attacked by armed Palestinians, many soldiers gradually come to understand their mission as not being combat oriented. This idea was especially evident among members of the passages and combat units, since so much of their time is devoted to dealing with civilian Palestinians. A soldier from a passages company observed, "Personally, I find it difficult, and there are other people that find it emotionally difficult to stand and pick through people's bags; to pick through people's things." "Picking through people's things" is, of course, not a conventional combat mission. This was a point voiced by combat troops as well.

A squad leader in an infantry company said:

> The whole involvement with the [Palestinian] population is something that I don't think should belong to combat troops (*ma'arach lochem*), because I think that there should be a separation between combat troops and the [Palestinian] population, because it's hard to educate someone. . . . It's hard to educate a soldier both to see Arabs as people and as enemies and then not to create problems for them at the [agricultural] gates. And there are people who find this separation hard to make.

As we saw, missions related to civilians—whether checking belongings, observing, or opening agricultural gates—are often confusing

and blurred. Unlike regular military missions marked by ostensibly clear enemies, at the separation barrier troops have to sift through thousands and tens of thousands of innocent people to find armed aggressors. A female soldier from a passages company remarked:

> Say I have my concerns about people who look suspicious, so I immediately start thinking, " 'What do they have underneath?" Or, someone who has a device that is sticking out of the pocket; there is the [constant] worry. . . . There is a fear, but you live with it. It's not that tragic.

Uncertainties about enemies and their identification were expressed by a commander from another passages company:

> Now they've taken out the carousels [used to cut down the speed at which Palestinians move through the checkpoints], so that it will be easier for older people and children who go to school and other parts of the population such as invalids. But actually I know that women can also blow themselves up, and there are many people who pose as invalids and stuff like that. . . . It's simply no good that we let women go through much quicker when I don't have an idea what they have underneath the veil.

Accordingly, despite the fact that the separation barrier is labeled a "combat area" (*eizor lechima*), the actual missions carried out are very different from those epitomized in textbook ideals.

While the troops are very concerned with their individual missions, it is the common framework that actually involves many tensions and resentment. As we mentioned, except for combat forces, members of other units are deployed for the duration of their service. Yet it is the combat units that are formally charged with command over the area and the units arrayed within it. From a sociological point of view, the "guests" to the area control and make decisions about key activities that go on within it. According to our interviewees, this characteristic strongly influences the dynamics of their interlinkages. For example, one spotter explained how the constant rotation of combat units creates instability regarding common ground rules:

> In [one sector] there was a problem. Each time a new battalion came in the CO would start to intimidate [us]. "No music; you can't talk to each other." This was really depressing for us: to sit in front of a screen for four straight hours and

> suddenly the small things that were very important in order to stay alert were no longer allowed. He said that our ops room, he was responsible for it. With time, this improves, and the people in the battalion's ops room get used to us. And then a new battalion comes in, and it begins all over.

Among drivers, uncertainty related to rotation found other expressions. A female driver related:

> I got to this company, and it's good for me here with the soldiers and the company headquarters. I am really okay with [the company commander], and he's someone I can turn to, even with small things, and this makes up for a lot of stuff. And in two months [the company] is off for a training period, and I have no idea what will happen here, who will be my commander.

The organizational structure in place implies that the commanding unit (a combat force) is also charged with the welfare and needs of soldiers from the other units. Yet things do not always work in this manner. A soldier from a passages company said the following:

> We don't need some combat engineering battalion here that's just creating problems for us; that for all intents isn't connected to us. We only eat there, or we go there for updates about operational matters. We're under their command, but they don't really help us. It's always been like this. We deployed with an armored battalion, with another engineering battalion, and it's always like this, because we're subordinate to them. We're always connected to the unit in terms of logistics, food, transportation, equipment, even toilet paper, which is such a minimal thing. Our company NCO has to fight with the whole world in order to get something.

Many soldiers noted that they encountered an apathetic attitude on the part of incoming combat units, and that this approach sometimes expressed itself in operational matters. One female commander of a spotter unit noted:

> For example, when there was an electronic alert that someone had crossed the fence, [the battalion ops room] let the patrol know before us, and this is just not sensible, since we know how to identify and how to guide the forces to

> go there. That battalion had arrived and had a day-and-a-half of some briefings, and the outgoing unit told them about our ops room and the observation posts. They didn't really understand what we wanted and what we explained: they didn't know anything. We got mad at each other until one time I sat with someone from their ops room and he understood and passed it on to the others.

Another spotter noted the intentional or unintentional lack of attention from the combat unit with whom he worked:

> The battalion ops room sometimes takes the easy way and doesn't report things like alerts or intelligence data. The just don't think that it may be relevant. But we overhear. It's not out of being bad, sometimes they simply forget.

Lack of familiarity with the spotters' abilities, as well as potential contributions to missions, leads at times to difficult relations. One spotter told us:

> This battalion is a downer. They blame us for everything. . . . For example, if there is an unsuccessful battalion drill, somehow it comes out during the briefing that the observation position fucked it up. You see it in the attitude of the ops rooms. One time at the end, the deputy company commander came and said, "You made me crazy," said that we gave him an imprecise picture of the situation. It turns out that [his] ops room gave him inaccurate reports, and it had nothing to do with us. In the end, it turned out that we were okay, so it's not really clear why the observation post was defective.

The fact that professional links are problematic forces spotters to take the initiative if they want to participate in the military mission and contribute to its success. One commander of an observation post said this:

> When they were building the base, only we sat here with no one around. No one updated us, no one told us anything. We constantly badgered [them] and asked what assignments were on for each night, what kind of alarms there were. Now that we are next to [their] ops room, then we see and hear what is happening.

Yet, as one spotter explained, as time goes by, cooperation tends to improve:

> With the [combat] forces, it depends. . . . You usually get along if they come and work on cooperating. . . . If you start communicating with them in an orderly manner, there are almost no problems. Sometimes the reserve soldiers create problems, since they don't want to go to places where there are indications that the fence has been touched. . . . They're just like plain soldiers with no real desire to work. But usually there are no problems. Sometimes in drills they are too lazy to go to the places they're guided to, but it works out in the end.

In fact, the need to undertake joint drills is an effective way to create good operational cooperation. A platoon commander in one of the combat battalions explained:

> They're a very good thing [the observation posts]. They help you. We have to carry out a drill involving the observation post guiding us [to different points along the fence]. . . . It really helps the commander in the field in getting some experience by doing it each time at another point. Because they know the field really well, and this is their job; they can guide us by using a common language throughout the whole sector.

In conclusion, cooperative relations are a significant challenge for all of the forces in the area.

Struggling for Recognition

As a result of these circumstances, tenured forces along the barrier find themselves constantly struggling for acknowledgment of their identity, prestige, and contribution to missions. For members of these units, concerns about status are very often related to formal standing in the army. While they carry out an operational mission in a zone with dangerous potential, situated between large concentrations of Palestinian and Israeli populations, they are nevertheless formally designated support troops (*tomchei lechima*). Yet for them such a designation is absurd, as one female soldier argued:

> This is something that I wanted to talk about. I see myself as a [female] warrior (*lochemet*). Take the troops of the combat battalion [one of whose companies is stationed with us]: they work with us at the checkpoints. We even carry out more tasks than them, because they only secure us. They stand next to us but it's we who have to talk to the Arabs; we take care of the problems, and only when there is a life-threatening situation do they intervene.

While one could make the case that it is precisely intervention in life-threatening situations that awards soldiers their formal designation as combat troops and high informal status, for our interviewees, this situation does not justify their peripheral position. A female Hummer driver on patrol with combat soldiers observed:

> Are we in the army? [Are we] combat soldiers? Yes or no? Boys can be warriors and we who are with them can't? I do dangerous things just like any warrior. . . . This is a role for [female] warriors and that's why it's based on volunteering.

A female soldier in a passages company confirmed this view:

> On the one hand, we're not warriors, and, on the other hand, we serve under the same conditions as the warriors. So either recognize us as warriors, or give us better conditions. . . . We fall in between the chairs. On the one hand, the chief military officer comes here all the time and says, "We really appreciate what you are doing," and so on; and, on the other hand he gives all the vacation retreats to [other military police units].

A deputy passages company commander further elaborated:

> I'd like to improve their breaks, so that only one weekend in three they will be on base. Little things like that: maybe bring in a number of improvements like certificates for warriors, which is something we have been trying for years to arrange. I think it's important to say that we sit here with the [combat] battalion; we fight; stones are thrown at us; if there is shooting, then they shoot at us as well. We have weapons at the ready; we're with helmets, with ceramic web gear. Don't we deserve the same salary as the combat soldiers?

> Give us the same level of pay as them. Maybe we don't go into [Palestinian] houses, so give us just a bit less.

In effect, despite serving around the barrier and being potentially threatened like combat soldiers, the IDF has not formally acknowledged these troops as warriors. In fact, the use of helmets and weapons, the uniforms worn, the ceramic vests donned, and the geographical area of deployment all point to uncertainties. As a male soldier from a passages company commented:

> Why do we go out to the rifle range every month? Why do we do carry out the weapons drills? It's the most humiliating. We do almost the same job, but if the shooting starts, we look for cover, and they protect us.

Against this background, we suggest that analytically it appears as though the IDF "disguises" these soldiers as combat troops. It provides them with weapons and weapons training but does not expect them to shoot in a real engagement. Through allocating them certain clothes and equipment and providing them with battle instruction, it signals their resemblance to combat soldiers but in practice relegates them to the role of secondary actors. One commander of a passages company stated:

> The general attitude of this combat battalion [under which his unit serves] is nothing to write home about. . . . They see us with blue berets [denoting military police], so it's a blue beret no matter what role we take on. They contravene our orders at the checkpoints and play all sorts of children's games with us.

A female soldier said similar things:

> Deployment to this unit simply doesn't suit me. You go out with the [military police] beret, and you're called "Idiot"—very depressing. People don't know what we do here. They see the beret . . . and think "This is an idiot."

In other words, the deployment of specialized "fence forces" is shaped by definitions derived from the conventional military hierarchy of importance and prestige. It is unimportant what you do, what threats you serve under, or your motivation, but the place of your unit is the pecking order of IDF units. Not surprisingly, combat troops often

one-sidedly decide about involvement in tasks allocated to specialized units. A female soldier in a passages company explained:

> Personally, I am okay with the situation, but sometimes I don't know who they think they are. If they're more combat oriented, does it gives them a right to tell us what to do? There are those [among us] that give in, but not everyone. Sometimes they don't understand that their job is to provide security and not to do the security checks.

Along these lines, the informal status hierarchy, reinforced by formal designation of command, is recreated through the division of labor around the fence. To be fair, such interactions result from the fact that at many checkpoints the combat soldiers still carry out security checks and thus may feel that they also hold a degree of expertise in such tasks. Nevertheless, for troops of passages companies, the struggle for acknowledgment is centered on an effort to maintain their military profession as a distinct and specialized one. A deputy commander of one such unit elucidated:

> Every general that comes here [we] ask him why we don't receive a warrior's certificate, and they always give the same answer. . . . Among other things they say "If you get a warrior's certificate, then the women here become warriors." But, hey, you brought military police officers here because you understood that such officers are something else. . . . They are a bit more intelligent, a bit higher in their [personal] level, not like an infantry soldier [for whom] everything is black/white; that's an Arab, and that's why he is an enemy. It's not like that; there is a lot of gray here.

Like spotters and professional drivers, the troops in these units assert the special personal and professional capacities needed to carry out their jobs.

We mentioned that one characteristic of units deployed around the barrier involves the entry of women into combat missions. On the face of it, such integration is a "progressive" move the IDF has taken in face of growing social pressure in Israeli society (as in many societies around the world) for equal opportunity for some groups. Yet the incorporation of women into such missions has resulted in various reactions on the part of male combat soldiers. In one interview, a male officer from a spotters' unit spoke with candor about women scheduled for deployment in new observation posts:

> The main problem is the [male] soldiers of the spotters' battalion. It's become a big unit and not a small, family-like one like it used to be. You don't feel at home in the battalion, and [the male soldiers] are even trying to deny the fact that there are female warriors. . . . It's hard to accept the girls; they're not warriors. The male ego: everyone wants to be a warrior. They were under mortar attacks [on the border with Lebanon] and suddenly you talk to other soldiers and they say "What? You are a spotter in the sector?" It's hard to declare that there are girls in your company. It influences all sorts of things: there's lowered motivation for some men to go to officers' course. . . . They're afraid of the unknown and don't want to command girls or be in sectors where there's no action.

At least for some for some males, the entry of women transforms the unit into something with less status.

Moreover, in numerous informal conversations, commanders talked about the difficulties of directing women in operational formations. In some cases, this attitude is an outcome of seeing women as a group with special needs, creating difficulties in checking personal equipment and cleanliness, women's quarters, or disciplining women when their hairstyle does not conform to army regulations. A commander of a combat company saw the integration of female drivers thus:

> To tell the truth, I don't know how to work with the girls. It's not so nice to make them go into formation, to check their rooms. It's embarrassing. Not part of the whole thing.

Yet in an ironic manner, the interaction between men and women sometimes reproduces the customary gender hierarchy from the direction of the women themselves. A female spotter said:

> You have to be really professional, not to talk to the boys. But you are also their friend, and one of the hard things is the fear that something will happen to them under your eyes and you won't be able to do anything. (HA May 6, 2005)

Thus women sometimes relegate themselves to the "traditional" role of worrying in the "rear," while the men are deployed at the "front."

In many cases, we cautiously suggest, commanders are aware of the pressure placed on the IDF to integrate women into frontline combat roles. And while they may, at the rhetorical level, support this

move, in practical terms they find it hard to see women as full-fledged partners within missions.

Conclusion: The "Social Geography" of the Separation Barrier

At the beginning of this chapter, we argued that, from an organizational perspective, the barrier zone is a site whose peculiarity lies in the IDF's integration of women and special populations into combat missions, the massive introduction of technology, and a combination of different units into one operating framework. As a consequence of these factors, we expected to see the creation of a new (or an alternative) social order among the forces deployed there. Following Levy (2003, 2006), who has charted out the changing social makeup of the IDF, we expected these dedicated forces to have a higher status than they would under "regular" circumstances and to enjoy a comparable status with combat soldiers, since they shoulder similar responsibilities, operate and live under similar conditions, and provide specialized roles with a real contribution to the missions' success.

Indeed, at first glance it looked as though status was no longer related to gender but allocated according to whether a unit contributed to a combat mission or according to proximity to danger. The first criterion, that of contribution, involves less of an emphasis on the sufferings of the body and its exposure to danger and instead awards prestige to troops such as spotters, that is, to individuals who sit in air-conditioned rooms in front of screens without sweating and running but whose involvement is often crucial in preventing the entry of armed Palestinian aggressors into Israel. In fact, this role grants members of these units a certain standing in their own eyes, in the eyes of their social surroundings (family, friends, and relatives), and in the eyes of some of their military significant others (for example, for soldiers in passages units it is other military police officers, while for Hummer drivers it is logistics drivers). Serving in this zone in which there are relatively few troops therefore awards them a significant reputational resource that can be used in other contexts.

Yet, as we saw, service in the zone does not award these soldiers—despite the dangers they may find themselves in—true equality with combat troops. The boredom characterizing their missions, subordination to combat units (despite being "tenured" in their sectors), and constant preoccupation with social standing all indicate how they remain relatively peripheral—if closer to—combat soldiers. The so-called "attractive" missions have many unattractive aspects: the

monotony of spotting and observing (that can go on for hours, days, weeks, and months), the tiring and grinding interaction with Palestinians necessitated by security checks, and the boredom of driving an armored vehicle along the same route for a long period of time. In effect, while drawing close to combat troops, they nevertheless encounter social and organizational obstacles to full integration. Accordingly, service along the separation barrier recreates the stratified hierarchy characterizing the everyday context of the military. The barrier zone thus becomes just another military site for designating and regularizing existing social statuses and not a new site within which social relations are defined anew. Indeed, as we stated before, the negative experiences of many soldiers and commanders may be a poignant outcome of their high motivation for entering these roles.

Our conclusions are very similar to what Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz (2007) found in regard to the integration of men and women into a common officers' course. To use their terminology, the integrated officers' course is a site within which two simultaneous developments occur: degenderization and regenderization (a process by which traditional power relationships between men and women are produced anew). So it is in our case: the (apparent) neutralization of the social hierarchy between combat and noncombat soldiers is subverted through the building anew of the traditional hierarchy. To be sure, there is not an exact replication of the conventional military hierarchy, since the forces we examined do have higher status than other rear-echelon soldiers, but at the separation barrier they are placed in a marginal position.

Against this background, it seems that intentionally or unintentionally, the IDF uses the barrier zone as a locality for organizational and social experiments. Through these experiments in the deployment of women and "lower-grade" troops, the IDF dialogues with civilian parts of Israeli society, adapts to their demands, and influences them. Concretely, through its actions in the barrier zone, the IDF can meet demands from internal and external bodies to undertake military action while taking into account human rights and minimizing casualties and deaths. Hence, for instance, security checks by specialized personnel imply less aggressive stances toward Palestinians and more regard for human rights (albeit, as we saw, understood in rather limited terms). In a related manner, the introduction of professional male and female drivers can be seen as an answer to the demand to lower the number of traffic accidents in which soldiers are often involved.

From the perspective of this chapter, however, most important is that through activities in the separation barrier, the IDF can answer strong calls to integrate hitherto excluded populations—the most

important being women—into core military roles. Perhaps we are witnessing a transformative period at the end of which a more socially integrated military will emerge. Yet one cannot shake off the feeling that reproducing conventional hierarchies around the barrier serves to ensure the continued motivation of male combat soldiers through providing exclusive arenas within which they serve. Moreover, when placed in a wider perspective, as Folman (2004, 101) explains, despite the erection of the barrier and especially since Operation Defensive Shield, when Israel reinvaded major Palestinian urban centers, the offensive mode has once again come to be considered the preferred way to counter terror attacks. Thus the destruction of Palestinian armed infrastructure, the assassination of leaders of Palestinian armed groups, or the aggressive pursuit of Palestinian operatives have all come to be seen as preferable to the establishment of barriers or obstacles along the separation line. In other words, the conventional use of all-male combat units has once again reasserted itself as the preferred mode of operation within the IDF.

10

"Human Rights," "Precision Warfare," and Violence

Minimizing Casualties and the Al-Aqsa Intifada

Introduction

The organizational structures and practices through which the IDF pursued the Al-Aqsa Intifada are different from the ones used in the previous intifada. The major part of the previous intifada (the Palestinian uprising) saw the use of mass beatings, the arrests of large numbers of people for lengthy periods, and the rather limited use of elite forces. In this conflict, we find first a host of new structures and practices related to what may be called "precision warfare." These include the frequent use of snipers, the utilization of assassination squads, precision air strikes, and an emphasis on the systematic, methodical use of conventional forces to minimize casualties. A plethora of innovative measures accompanied these violent practices; these measures included a new code of ethics, legal experts and representatives of the IDF spokesperson placed at the level of field units, and seminars and briefings to ground-level commanders about human rights and human dignity. To be clear, we are not maintaining that all of these measures are somehow totally new, but, like Harel and Isacharoff (2004, 194), we maintain that their fully sophisticated use came about during the second intifada.

These developments manifested themselves in the IDF's self-imposed limit (not always followed) not to harm innocents, whether out of consideration for external and internal legitimacy (Drucker and Shelach 2005, 162) or the self-perception of soldiers and officers.

One company commander used the Hebrew rendering of situation—*situatsia*—in order to characterize the circumstances within which the company operates. The use of the English may be related to the fact that all of the commanders and many of the soldiers are well aware of the fact that their actions against the Palestinians may carry global political implications. The image is one in which "every bullet" may have very wide-ranging implications (in contrast to conventional war) and in which soldiers actions are monitored not only by the military hierarchy but also by the local and world media.

When parents of IDF soldiers who had been killed in the attack on the Jenin refugee camp met with the Israeli chief of staff they asked something that a number of field commanders had pushed for (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 257)—why a decision had not been made to simply bomb the camp with F-16 bombs. His answer was, "We have our limits." And the battalion commander of the infantry reserve unit, whose twelve soldiers had been killed in Jenin, stated, "It would have been the easiest way, to enter each house with a grenade. We had enough ammunition, and in that way no one [from our force] would have been hit. We didn't do it because we were afraid of hurting civilians. And then they say that we massacred" (MA April 14, 2002). In addition, while Israel was ferocious in the cities and refugee camps of Lebanon during the 1980s, when it used artillery and bombs downed by airplanes, media reports "suggested that some Israeli officers had opposed the indiscriminate bombardments, but that their opposition gave way due to their fear of Israeli infantry casualties" (Ron 2003, 178). Yet, interestingly, the IDF did not use the same methods in the cities and refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza. Rather, it resorted to other violent means, such as the "exposure" of streets, agricultural areas, or buildings in order to keep casualties to a minimum.

Hence, when placed in a comparative perspective—to African conflicts in such places as Somalia, Uganda, or Rwanda, or with the Russian wars in Chechnya—the IDF seems relatively restrained in its actions during the Al-Aqsa Intifada. But how are we to understand such restraints? How are we to understand this combination of organizational frameworks and actions (some of which are rather novel in the context of the IDF) that have been instituted over the past few years? This chapter attempts to answer these questions.

One of the most significant developments in regard to contemporary armed forces has been their growing transparency to external agents such as political leaders, the media, the judiciary, pressure groups, or international nonstate institutions such as the Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, or Amnesty International (Burk 1998; Dandeker 1998a, 34; Eiland 2001; Finnemore 1999). As a succession of schol-

ars has noted, this transparency is closely related to worldwide trends toward the valuing of human rights and new public attitudes toward the perpetration of violence. In today's industrial democracies, there is much less tolerance of casualties both on "our" side and civilians on "their" side as a consequence of military operations (Luttwak 1995; Smith 2000, 55–56). Cultural transformations in these societies have led to an erosion of martial values, to an emphasis on keeping casualties to a minimum, and to a questioning of the morality of using military power (Bellamy 1996, 30; Burk 1998, 12; Dandeker 1998a, 35–36; Faris 1995; Moskos, Williams, and Segal 2000, 5–6). All of these developments have been accompanied, in turn, through the expansion of international law governing military activity. In many countries public insistence on minimum casualties has been closely related to the development of high-tech weaponry that supposedly both protects friendly military personnel and delivers force "effectively" to accomplish missions (Burk 1998, 12). Indeed, Shaw (2005, 1) calls this new Western way of war a risk-transfer war "because it centers on minimizing life risks to the military—and hence all-important political and electoral risks to their masters—at the expense not only of 'enemies' but also of those whom the West agrees are 'innocent.' "

As a result of these developments, military leaders are faced with new problems. More often than in the past they must handle moral misgivings among soldiers to create internal credibility for their actions. At the same time, they must regularly react to politically charged environments in order to establish external legitimacy. Indeed, the greater sensitivity of military leaders to the political repercussions of their actions demonstrates the importance of new criteria for assessing military exploits (Boene 2000, 75). Recently, a number of scholars (Ben-Ari 2005; Smith 2000; Record 2002; Van der Meulen and Soeters 2005) have begun to explore these issues in terms of the relations between military and political leaders and the broad strategic choices now facing the armed forces of the industrial societies. Nevertheless, relatively little work has been done to show how these new developments related to the minimization of casualties are related to the actual waging of armed conflict, to the concrete contexts within which violence is used by military forces.

In this chapter, we attempt to explore just these issues. We argue that in understanding these actions, it is not enough to take into account how the IDF handles Palestinian violence with its own violence. The IDF's units operate within an environment marked by a new combination of discourses that both constrains and enables them to operate: that of "human rights" and that of the "rationality" of precision warfare. We show how the actions of the IDF are predicated on

the development of a set of concrete policies, structures, and practices that will address these discourses and the various groups that propagate them.

"Savage Restraint"

Our starting point is Ron's (2000) excellent analysis of the action of the IDF in the previous intifada. His concern centers on what he calls the "savage restraint" shown by the IDF in that conflict, or what Weizman (2006, 71) calls "controlled destruction" in regard to the Al-Aqsa Intifada: "Israeli methods were simultaneously restrained, in that they did not seek to eradicate Palestinians altogether, but were also savage, in that tens of thousands were beaten, imprisoned and humiliated" (Ron 2000, 446). Indeed, it is this incongruous policy that underlay the use of varied violent means as rubber bullets, gas and shock grenades, and "wounding and not killing" Palestinians (Ezrahi 1997). The reasons for the emergence of a savage restraint, Ron argues, have to do with "profound ambiguities" within the Israeli coercive apparatus. At the same time the Israeli military made a determined effort to preserve an image of due process and legality during its repressive actions, its troops devised an array of "hidden" methods to induce Palestinian suffering without triggering excessive criticism (Ron 2000, 447). According to Ron (2000, 454), these methods included

> four clandestine operating codes: distorted incarceration procedures, extra-judicial beatings, torture, and the "shortened procedure" for apprehending suspects. . . . [T]hese did not occur in *spite* of military regulations, but were instead developed *because* of them. Restraints on lethality functioned as double-edged swords, imposing limits beyond which violence could not go, while generating incentives for nonlethal methods of repression. The military's rules, in other words, were both constraining and enabling. (Ron 2000, 454, emphases in original)

This combination of legal appearance and clandestine practices led to a policy of savage restraint.

Theoretically, Ron's formulation centers on the idea of "organizational decoupling," in which organizations maintain standardized, legitimatized, formal structures, while activities vary in response to practical considerations (Meyer and Rowan 1991). As the institutionalist perspective in sociology would have it, decoupled organizations promote

auras of rule conformity for public consumption but are practically engage in rule deviation to get the work done (Ron 2000, 452–53). The public consumption to which Ron refers entails the national and international environments in which the IDF operated. "In the case of Israel, incentives for anti-Palestinian repression were offset by civil society oversight, international human rights norms, and the army's own sense of "proper" West Bank/Gaza procedure" (Ron 2000, 448). Concretely, he contends that there was a threefold pressure on the IDF to be restrained and to project an image of restraint: groups in Israeli civil society sought moderation as a form of self-defense against the state, international human rights activists wielded global influence that was brought to bear on representatives of the Israeli government, and state functionaries—especially military commanders—were convinced by their own rhetoric of the suitable legal frameworks for operating in the territories.

In the context of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, some of the same dynamics appear to have taken hold. While the thousands of deaths and other casualties caused by the IDF represent the effects of the significant use of means of destruction, they are nevertheless part of the "self-imposed" limits on the use of violence by the IDF. Somewhat different from the previous intifada, however, may be the kinds of restrictions within which the IDF operates and the kinds of organizational structures and activities that have been developed since that time. Moreover, how do we explain the degeneracy into more warlike actions in the second intifada? Perhaps this can be explained through an interactional understanding that is missing from Ron's analysis: the actions of the Palestinian armed groups.

Human Rights and the International System of Military Knowledge

The first limiting element is what may be called the global discourse on human rights and the rules and expectations developed within it for the "proper" use of force (Ignatieff 1998; Kurth 2001, 68). As Finnemore (1999, 149–50) explains, the social rules and cultural models that govern the way in which states and soldiers fight—and that distinguish soldiers from criminals and killing from murder—have become increasingly globalized and transnationalized. This global discourse has been promoted by various international solidarity networks and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Doctors without Frontiers, or Human Rights Watch (Warren 2000, 228). In our case, these external associations and coalitions "know"

the local conditions primarily through the media—Israeli, Palestinian, and international—the independent activities of various Israeli and Palestinian human rights movements such as B'Tselem, Physicians for Human Rights, Ta'ayush, or individual reports transmitted through cellular phones or the Internet. While such rules and models governing military behavior originate outside of a particular military organization or country, the new kinds of organizations that have no governmental standing can nevertheless dictate and shape the rules of war (Finnemore 1999, 163).

While the rules existed no doubt at the time of the last intifada, the IDF appears to have internalized many of the dictates and prescriptions found in this discourse on human rights and reacted in concrete organizational measures to put them into effect. The conduits for introducing this discourse into the IDF include the media, organizational consultants, military social scientists and legal experts, and the close links between some commanders and academics. Moreover, attention has been given to these issues during the Al-Aqsa Intifada because of the weapons used and fierceness of the fighting, and because the Yugoslav wars especially shocked Western and UN conscience and led to the extension of interest regarding human rights abuses to other conflicts (Shaw 2005, 18).

As we saw previously, within the IDF, two of the most prevalent developments in this respect have been the promulgation of a "code of ethics" and the emphasis placed by Shaul Mofaz, when he was chief of staff, on human rights. The IDF's code of ethics was formally adopted by the army in the mid-1990s after years of deliberation by internal committees aided by external experts (Kasher 1996). It was promulgated formally in 1994 and disseminated throughout the armed forces through seminars, documents, and various deliberations. It was revised again in 2000. The emphasis on human rights or, as it is known in the army, the "dignity of man" (Israel Democracy Institute 2001), is employed in regard to such things as sexual harassment or the rights of soldiers during basic training. No less importantly, it is seen as placing limits on attitudes toward enemies, decision making during war, rules of engagement, illegal orders, and plunder (Cohen 2006, 3). Indeed, one concrete development related to this process has been the establishment and expansion of the role of the soldiers' rights commissioner, to whom soldiers can appeal regarding their rights (http://www.idf.il/english). What is significant about this discourse is that it is part of the ongoing debates through which the IDF is attempting to define itself and the actions it undertakes. Take the following two examples. First, Major-General Amos Yadlin, who then commanded the military colleges, and Asa Kasher, a philosopher from Tel Aviv University, pub-

lished the article "Combating Terror Morally," in which they justified the policy of targeted killings (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 198). Their article dealt with such situations as soldiers guarding checkpoints or targeted assassinations from the air in the midst of civilian populations (MA March 5, 2004). Second, in regard to the custom of some infantry soldiers taking pictures of themselves next to the Palestinians whom they have killed, the IDF spokesperson commented:

> The IDF sees any case of violating the dignity of humans (*kevod ha'adam*) very seriously. In the IDF the phenomenon is not known apart from a few cases that are the individual initiative of soldiers. The IDF is rigorous in its education of its soldiers and commanders according to the spirit of the IDF and protecting the dignity of human beings. Indeed, during this particular time when fighting is going on, the chief of staff has emphasized a number of times the importance of respecting human rights. (KH October 5, 2001)

Historically speaking, the inculcation of human rights considerations within the IDF reverberates with the self-image of many soldiers and officers that they are acting on the basis of ideas of a "purity of arms" (*tohar haneshek*), a term denoting a morally upright military force (Yahav 2002). Comparatively speaking, as Ron (2003, xiii, 6) argues, the influence of international human rights norms is likely to be stronger among those states such as Israel that are dependent on international flows of aid, trade, and legitimacy and view themselves as belonging to "civilized" international society. Accordingly, during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel has found itself within a situation where global journalism, instant communications, and transnational human rights networks have increasingly come to scrutinize internal wars and where treaties, norms, and conventions surrounding the notion of human rights increasingly play an important role in global affairs (Ron 2003, 21).

The second source of self-imposed limits is related to the experience of other military establishments—especially the American one—in such places as Bosnia, Kosovo, or Somalia. Other forces have provided concrete models for military action in "messy" situations that the IDF has incorporated into its own organizational structures and practices. Theoretically, our argument is that the emulation and mimicking of one military establishment by another are part of the processes that take place within what may be called a world system of professional military knowledge. Within this system, professional knowledge is produced and disseminated from world centers through various institutions and arrangements, such as the curricula and seminars of military

universities and colleges, military attachés, joint maneuvers, experience in multinational forces, journals and books, or personal networks. One example is the publication, since 2002, of the new *Journal of Military Ethics* at the Norwegian Military Academy in Oslo. It is based on the idea that the moral climate surrounding the use of force is changing due to the asymmetry that now defines the modern battlefield and the consequent emergence of new moral dilemmas among troops. But here, of course, it is the American military establishment that has been the center for the production of such knowledge. Thus, for example, Israel's military attaché to Washington, D.C., said, "The whole world wants to learn from the IDF. But one of the few places where we can learn—and learn a lot—is from the Americans" (*Jerusalem Post*, July 13, 2001).

The point we are making is that military organizations do not only conform to their national and international environments but come to resemble each other in a process called institutional isomorphism (Meyer and Rowan 1991). What has happened is that many of the armed forces of the industrial democracies have begun to construct their practices on the basis of the discourse of human rights, and these practices, in turn, have been disseminated between them. In this manner, the ideas and practices related to "minimal collateral damage" or new urban warfare found in the IDF (or any other military force), for instance, can be seen as the military equivalent of the "best practice" in a certain sector or organizational field. These best practices begin, after a while, to be sort of universalistic standards to which military organizations want to adhere in order to gain legitimacy, support, and resources.

Consider the following four examples of how human rights and professional military discourses have manifested themselves in new organizational structures. First, the IDF learned its lesson from the previous intifada and began to follow American practices by developing new organizational appendages, such as representatives of the IDF spokesperson located in territorial brigade headquarters, where they act as media consultants for commanders. In addition, the IDF's operations briefings now regularly include media appendixes dealing with a mission's likely reflection in the media and how it should be presented to the public. Finally, the Israeli military has instituted courses instructing commanders how to stand in front of a camera, how to handle difficult questions, and how to understand the interests motivating journalists. It is now very common to see rather polished performances by brigade and battalion commanders on television, or to see in magazines and newspapers full-spread articles on their experiences. The point in regard to military functionaries mediating the

army and the media is their unique sensitivity to the themes found in international and national news reports. It is thus not surprising to hear IDF commanders explaining how operational plans were explicitly formulated with the aim of minimizing civilian casualties. In fact, some battalion and brigade commanders have already turned the media into a resource: they walk around deployment areas with camera crews and journalists accompanying them, invite the crews into APCs, and allow the interviewing of lower-level soldiers.

The second structural appendage now in place is close legal counseling offered to commanders (as it is in armed forces around the world). General Finkelstein (2000, 181), then the IDF's judge advocate, observed that the practice of legal counsel was already institutionalized in the IDF toward the end of the 1990s, and that while there were arguments and contentions between combat officers and the JAG or his representatives, there were also constant meetings and close supervision of rules of engagement. In addition, special briefings were given to territorial and unit commanders before and during deployment, which focused on legal rules and issues (HA March 1, 2001). Finally, senior commanders of the IDF receive regular advice regarding international legal matters so that they will not be brought to trial before the Hague tribunal for crimes against humanity: The advice includes such matters as rules of engagement, the destruction of houses next to outposts and roads, and temporary incursions into areas under Palestinian sovereignty (KH May 4, 2001).

The third structural innovation initiated by the IDF has been the establishment of negotiating teams assigned to carry out local-level dialogues with Palestinians. Such teams are tasked with negotiating with Palestinian forces to open up options of nonviolent solutions in specific points of conflict (such as the case of the standoff at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, or the IDF's first incursion into the Jenin refugee camp).

The final, and fourth, example has been the regular dropping off of explanatory leaflets in Gaza (and during the summer of 2006), urging the local population to leave the areas where the IDF will attack.

Organizational Decoupling

Against this background, we may ask how messages regarding the limits of permissible action are conveyed to rank-and-file soldiers. Ron's (2000) answer in regard to the previous intifada is instructive. He suggests the existence of three circles: the outermost was populated by legal norms and regulations, legal affairs officers, senior commanders,

and public relations representatives who were responsible with presenting sanitized images of legality to external observers. The innermost circle was comprised of the actual soldiers, NCOs, and lower-level commanders who were charged with effecting violence. Between the two were intermediary rings staffed by mid-ranking officers, low-ranking military police investigators, and military prosecutors. These mid-range circles functioned as transmission belts, conveying the concerns, norms, and regulations of the broader regulatory environment to the street-level soldiers. "It was this middle circle that effectively disciplined the soldiers' behavior, imposing broad limits within which troopers had discretion" (Ron 2000, 461).

In the present conflict, primarily the battalion and company commanders related formal directives to the local conditions of the field-level units and the places where they were deployed. They most often dealt with contradictory directives, with what was allowed or not allowed (and the gray areas in between). Yet the dispersal of the units, their relative autonomy, and their transparency to external agents created a situation in which there were frequent strategic implications to specific actions. Therefore, it was also "ordinary" soldiers who had to be able to take into account considerations related to the wider political implications of their exploits. As we showed before, this idea is encapsulated in the image of the "strategic sergeant." A typical passage follows from a commander of a Nahal infantry company:

> The weight of the decision, of the discretion. Sometimes one hit can make a lot of harm, the place of the hit: it could be that there are ten girls around him, so that it is better not to shoot so that no girl will get hit. Because this is a game of scoring points, and so that it won't be written in the newspaper that the IDF killed two terrorists and that as a result two girls were killed, it is very important.

As is evident from this passage, what we found is that soldiers' actions are monitored not only by the military hierarchy but also by the local and world media. Indeed, we were intrigued by the amount of times that our interviewees referred to media reports about their actions. Another Nahal commander said that he "didn't want to be written about in the newspaper," and, later, that certain situations "do not look good on television." In other interviews with infantry soldiers, we were told that these conditions of visibility and accountability provide to their military work added elements of tension and pressure.

The transparency of the military to the media carries another ironic, if distressing, implication. In the previous intifada, the beat-

ing policy remained clandestine, in that top officials never put their orders down on paper. Instead, they issued vague instructions speaking of the need to "come into contact with the enemy" and to "use force" against "rioters." These exhortations provided "lower-ranking officers and soldiers with the incentive to interpret policy as they saw fit" (Ron 2000, 457). Similarly, in the present circumstances, some soldiers and commanders seem to understand the spirit of the senior commanders from messages transmitted outside of the military channels, such as from performances in the media and from headlines in newspapers (HA July 14, 2001). Consider the report headlined "We Did Not Deviate, Said the Battalion Commander, We Killed according to Mofaz's Order; Officers Claim: A Palestinian Was Killed in the Wake of the Chief of Staff's Briefing" (HA June 13, 2001): We learn that in a briefing to the field level of the IDF in the territories (including ten battalion commanders), the then chief of staff, Shaul Mofaz, called on troops to initiate contact with the enemy. According to the officers present at the briefing, they understood from Mofaz that the enemy included any "armed people." The report continues by stating that a

> very senior commander did not believe what he heard. No authorized figure has reached a decision that is so far reaching: to see in any weapons carrier as an enemy that one is allowed to kill. If every one of the battalion commanders will accept these words at face value, he quickly warned, there may be 70 corpses lying around the territories at one time. Already the next day, an action that deviated from the rules of engagement of the Central Command brought about the killing of a Palestinian policeman. The incident happened in the Western entrance to Samo'a, south of Hebron, when a reserve battalion from the Etzion Brigade was deployed by mistake in the Yehuda Brigade (Hebron) and did not know the routine activities. In the incident an officer from the [Palestinian] "National Security" was killed . . . and another policeman was seriously wounded. In the brigade investigation into the incident, the battalion commander relied on the words of the chief of staff. (HA June 13,2001)

But because the words of the chief of staff were never put into writing and disseminated through formal channels, the IDF could maintain that a policy of shooting at any armed person has never been officially decided upon (Harel and Isacharoff 2004, 121). Thus the IDF spokesman can talk about "*the* IDF" and its policies and actions, while

in reality a wide variety of violent responses has been undertaken by ground forces. Organizationally, the advantages of decoupling are clear: the assumption that formal structures are really working is buffered from the inconsistencies and anomalies involved in technical activities. Decoupling "enables organizations to maintain standardized, legitimating, formal structures, while their activities vary in response to practical considerations" (Meyer and Rowan 1991, 58).

Along these lines, Cohen (2006, 3) noted something that we found as well—that one should sometimes cast doubt about the extent to which the admonitions found in the military's code of ethics were in fact observed. It is not easy to dismiss the

> occasional resort to random acts of vindictiveness by some troops, especially in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack. At times, these resulted in the deaths of noncombatants (including women and children); more often, they took the form of patently callous behavior at checkpoints. Even more disturbing is the tolerant attitude towards such behavior adopted by the military judicial system and many senior commanders.

Let us be clear, we do not think that some kind of conspiracy is going on. The vast majority of IDF commanders seem to really believe in the legality and humanness of the occupation. Thus, for example, Finkelstein (2000, 181), the-then IDF judge advocate general, offered the opinion that "the IDF is an army which abides by the law." Our model is not based on an argument about the consistently cynical use of rules and regulations by officers and soldiers. Rather, it centers on how many soldiers and most officers act in ways that they perceive to be proper and professional in safeguarding human rights. Consider the following comments during a seminar held for IDF commanders:

> Last Wednesday the IDF officers posted in the [West] Bank participated in a day-long seminar on human rights (*kevod ha'adam*). More specifically, it was about the behavior of soldiers manning roadblocks and blockades. In the lectures and discussion, the initiators of the seminar emphasized that these roadblocks are a security necessity and a preventative operational mission whose importance cannot be doubted. But at the same time, they said that they are fully convinced that steps should be taken to root out the phenomena of molesting and humiliation that go on there. According to

> their appraisal, a different kind of behavior on the part of the soldiers will diminish the feelings of anger, frustration, and bitterness among the Palestinians. (Amira Hess, in HA September 11, 2001)

In this passage, the emphasis on human rights is related to the effectiveness of IDF actions and the reactions of Palestinians. The emphasis on due regard for Palestinians has led to the oxymoron of "humane occupation." A family whose apartment has been taken over by Israeli soldiers in Hebron was asked about how the Israeli soldiers behaved:

> The truth should be told. They were very nice. They rang the bell, delicately knocked on the door, and asked that we get out. It's only that on the way out they asked us to put our hands above our heads. . . . The third story of the family [home] was sealed with sandbags and covered with large green nets. [Civilian] buildings that have turned into army bases have become part of the scenery in Hebron. The IDF now dominates the tallest buildings, and the soldiers can now look out and shoot at all of the areas in the city. (Kashua 2001)

Another case of decoupling related to limits of "collateral damage" is what may be called "representational" or "performative violence." It involves transmitting messages to the IDF's Israeli environment that it is "providing security," the prime service provided by any military establishment. One company commander confided in us that sometimes he orders his troops to shoot into empty fields in order to placate the Jewish settlers in the area. It is a similar dynamic that lies at the base of putting up guard posts where terror attacks have taken place, regardless of the tactical need for maintaining security. As Drucker and Shelach (2005, 32) note in regard to the Hebron area, "The heavy weapons were concentrated on rooftops, and the clear order was to react with heavy fire to any incident in the sector, from the sound of an explosion to a flare. Heavy machine guns, grenade throwers, MAG machine guns, and personal weapons were immediately to begin to fire so that 'everyone will see that no one fools around with us.' The soldiers, who did not have any real targets to shoot at, fired at water containers and windows, at houses where no one knew of anyone there." To be sure, violence is performative in any conflict situation, but in most cases it is carried out with the aim of intimidating. In the aforementioned cases, it was used both to frighten the Palestinians and to reassure the Jewish

settlers and the Israeli population at home. An armored corps soldier stationed near Jerusalem used rather cynical terms:

> Today there are all kinds of bullshit that go on. They have tanks here only so that they will see that there are tanks here. You don't feel any danger to your life here and certainly not to anyone in the tank like the gunner or driver who doesn't have to put their head out. The biggest danger in the tanks is us. If we go into some ditch or if some grenade falls inside. . . . You're more afraid to hitch a ride home than being here.

News reports corroborate these points. In one case, when news bulletins said that the IDF had destroyed three positions of the Palestinian Force 17, it turned out that it had used tanks to shell a few bags of sand and some tin shelters (HA August 1, 2001). When the IDF first reacted to a Palestinian shooting in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo by the firing of a tank shell, the "shell was shot at an open area, did not cause any harm or human harm, and it looks as though it was aimed primarily as a means of deterrence" (HA October 22, 2000). Yet contradicting these kinds of confessions and reports about "performative violence," a senior commander told us, "The IDF only shoots lethal and accurate fire . . . we don't shoot simply for the noise." In this case of decoupling, the IDF satisfies the demands of actors in its environment by presenting acts of violence without necessarily taking any lives. Because troops cannot always identify from where Palestinians shoot at them, and because the IDF cannot control each and every square meter in the territories, the army resorts to actions that comply with public expectations of providing security.

Let us reiterate that the wider emphasis on human rights does not translate directly into local-level practices. The soldiers do not directly "translate" the discourse of human rights into their behavior. Rather, this discourse becomes part of a set of military considerations that poses certain "limits" on their behavior. The soldiers and officers that we interviewed are not somehow transformed into representatives of Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch but, rather, they internalize these messages through the military hierarchy. They continue to act and think like soldiers and officers. An officer interviewed by Chacham (2003, 41) remarked:

> When stricter regulations get handed down, the commanders grumble that they're being held back by external considerations that impair their ability to carry out operations and

> protect their soldiers. Commanders hate constraints, and firing regulations are a constraint.

Thus, for example, just a before a commander leads his troops in an incursion into the occupied territories, he must take into account the terrain, the climate, the forces and weapons at his disposal, and the array of foes awaiting them, so he considers the presence and actions of the media, the rules of engagement, and the humane treatment of civilians and captured Palestinians. Human rights are thus translated into "just" another kind of limit on a specific operation.

The Discourse of Rationality and "Precision Warfare"

At the same time, however, the discourse on human rights is not the only one that affects the structures and practices of the IDF and that is related to risk aversion and the lowering of casualties. An acceptance of human rights as a limit on military action is closely connected to a wide range of technological developments *and* to a set of organizational myths about modern rationality (Meyer and Rowan 1991). Consider this not-untypical passage reporting the words of Israel's Air Force chief:

> Exploitation of the air dimension in combination with the information revolution had allowed us to develop new and extremely effective uses for air power. . . . Through command and control in real time, we can plan, understand, and deliver air power to the right place at the right time. . . . Regrettably, we still haven't found a way to completely eliminate the unintentional killing of innocents. But we're constantly adding more and more precision in our weaponry to avoid collateral damage. (*Defense News*, March 28, 2005)

To be sure, developments in military technology have allowed a greater degree of precision in contemporary warfare. Such developments include new intelligence-gathering means, air and ground fired missiles, and advanced communication techniques. But a sociological perspective complicates things, for it forces us to ask about the manner by which these developments are understood, justified, and acted upon. As Bacevich (2005, 170) observes:

> In reserving for itself the prerogatives of global leadership . . . the United States wished to see itself as a benign,

> liberal, and progressive hegemon. Americans in the 1990s did not entertain dreams of dominating through brute force, as had the fascists of the 1930s, but they did wish to perpetuate their nation's status as [the] world's sole superpower. . . . In this regard . . . the promise of techniques for using force in ways that avoided massive physical destruction and spared the lives of innocents was exquisitely well suited both to America's post-Cold War purpose and its self-image.

Here we contend that myths of rationality—essentially narratives linking technology, precision, and organizational effectiveness—are closely related to structures, processes, and practices found in the IDF and centered on the achievement of military aims.

Indeed, nowhere is the myth of the rational supply of security more evident than in the discourse and practices related to "precision warfare." A key metaphor in talk about such combat is that of the "surgical" strike (*pe'ula khirurgit*), centering on ideas of exactness, concentration, and clarity. Terms used in regard to many of the actions of the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada are replete with such imagery: "focused prevention" (*menia memukedet*), "focused assassination" (*hitnakshut memukedet*), "focused preclusion" (*sikul memukad*) (HA August 6, 2001), and "pin-point assassinations" (*hintakshut nekudatit*) (HA December 17, 2001). In addition, our interviews are filled with such linguistic usages as "preventive shooting" (*yeri mone'a*), "regulated gunfire" (*shikhroor mevukar*), and "orchestration" of shooting (*tizmoor*). Finally, the IDF uses a variety of "wanted lists" with the implication of the military bureaucracy being able to clearly identify and order classes of enemies (HA December 14, 2001).

Along these lines, in a very typical manner, a top security persona (*makor bitchoni*) linked assassinations to the modernist justification found in any organization by arguing that they are an "efficient and important means to act against terror organizations" (HA December 14, 2001). And, a similar logic underlies the explanation for five Palestinian children who were killed by the accidental explosion of an Israeli remote-control bomb. A senior officer tells a journalist: "There has to be an assessment about whether the lessons of the past have been learned. . . . [The IDF has a duty] to perfect (*leshachlel*) and focus (*lemaked*) its schemes so that harming innocent civilians is prevented" (MA November 25, 2001). In these examples, the rationality of precision warfare and the idea that the IDF is a learning organization are used in order to further the dictates of "protecting" human life. Similarly, Weizman (2006, 71) cites an Israeli engineering officer who presented a paper at an international conference in which he proposed that the engineering corps had developed a new "emphasis on

the 'surgical' removal of building elements [a floor in a building, a building within a row of houses], essentially the engineer's response to the logic of 'smart weapons.' "

As in other military establishments, in the IDF "precise" warfare is linked to the idea of "minimal collateral damage." This term, initially developed within discussions about nuclear bombing, means minimizing casualties to "our" forces and to civilians in and around scenes of conflict (Shafritz et al. 1989). Closely allied terms include "smart bombs," "surgical strikes," "pin-point accuracy," distant punishment," and "distant firepower" (see Van Riper and Scales 1997). In the IDF, one of the new organizational practices through which the strictures implied by this term are implemented is the close cooperation between ground and air forces in and around the use of precision-guided missiles (from combat planes and helicopters). The metaphor "precision war" has been bandied about in various military establishments, especially since the Gulf War. What is interesting, from our perspective, is that this imagery is now used not only in regard to the context of high-tech weaponry but also to the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Accordingly, Bacevich (2005, 159) describes how American defense intellectuals began to develop ideas about applying the technology of discriminate weapons belonging to the realm of nuclear war to the contexts of non-nuclear warfare.

In Israel, while in the previous intifada the IDF reacted with a mixture of measures including collective punitive measures, mass arrests, and the use of often indiscriminate violence (Cohen 1994, 9), the emphasis on precision warfare seems to represent a new addition. Our point is that metaphors of precision serve as guides for formulating policies in regard to other kinds of military work, such as the use of snipers (or assassination squads) (Bar and Ben-Ari 2005). Snipers seem to be important because they are the ground forces' equivalent of the long-range uses of helicopters, jet-fired missiles, and remote-control bombs. As one soldier from the paratroopers explained:

> All of the snipers and sharpshooters here are very necessary; all of those who can work in a precise manner are the guys that you need most in a mission. They are the tool that is most needed, so that during incidents you will always see them in action.

And an infantry sniper linked precision to the strategic implications of his company's actions:

> At the end of a demonstration they did not give us permission to shoot because they wanted to finish it as soon as

> possible. . . . We use force as little as possible because the IDF is very strong, and it is not always the right idea to use force. . . . I don't know if you know, but the work here in the territories has become much more precise. You don't go into a mob and start spraying them with a burst. The opposite is true: you put a sniper there and you let him shoot precisely on an inciter or on someone who has a Molotov cocktail in his hand. . . . You won't spray, and you won't use a grenade gun, nothing that scatters bullets.

But what happens when innocents are killed or wounded? After killing two women standing near a car in which a senior Palestinian commander was assassinated, the commander of the Central Command said: "We would rather operate in the desert and meet [him] in a deserted place. But unfortunately we operate in places that are inhabited. The strike on the vehicle was very accurate" (YA November 10, 2001). Thus deviations from accurate fire are often treated as "unfortunate accidents" or "classification errors." To be sure, within the context of contemporary Israel, marked as it is by a widespread consensus about the threat that armed Palestinians pose, the fatalities and casualties of Palestinians are understood as justified. It is the manner by which they are wounded or killed—the "how" rather than the "why"—that the discourse on precision warfare addresses.

The Rationality of Causal Schemes

Myths of rationality are to be found in other examples by which troops construct explanations linking cause and effect in what appears to be a rational manner. An army officer proclaims, "Our forces have entered Beit Jalla tonight to clean it up, to stop the fire. They will stay there as long as is needed to get security back" (Associated Press, August 29, 2001). A few hours after the withdrawal, the Palestinians again opened fire on Israeli positions from this town. A large number of our interviewees reiterated that the aim of military actions undertaken by their combat units was to make the Palestinians "understand." But the message about making the Palestinians understand is always left unclear: Who is it that should understand? The demonstrators? Their local leaders? The PLO leaders? And, what is it exactly that the Palestinians (whomever they are) are supposed to understand?

In fact, despite there often being no clear-cut link between action and results, soldiers and officers, like organizational members around the world, tend to "overrationalize" their behavior and attribute greater

coherence and integrity to remotely connected organizational events that they, in fact, deserve. As Aldrich (1979, 86) explains a great deal of communication within organizations consists of attempts to retrospectively reconstruct rationalizations of recent activities, giving them "meaning" in terms of avowed organizational goals (Aldrich 1979, 86). Consider the following kinds of statements that we heard from two paratroop officers: "If you place a roadblock in this place, then it will serve as a deterrent to the Palestinians"; "If the soldiers appear neat and tidy, then this carries a message of order and methodicalness." No systematic testing of these causal statements was carried out by troops, but they nevertheless operated in sensible ways when interpreting and acting upon the world. No less importantly, they were consistent with the image the IDF wants to project to its own members and to external observers about its rationality, efficiency, and preciseness.

In another instance, a company commander told us, "Sometimes a show of force, or a lack of show of force, can lead to the same outcome—calm among the Palestinians." This example is related to the totally contradictory interpretations of what IDF troops call "demonstrating presence." Often our interviewees talked about the need for the IDF to demonstrate its presence so that calm would be maintained. Yet at other times, for instance, regarding villages that are considered sources of problems, a senior reserve officer said, "We try to make as little contact as possible . . . and thus, of course, we don't have an unnecessary presence in the villages" (HA August 31, 2001). His idea was that the less the army shows its presence, the less the chance of friction, since patrolling by units leads to reactions by Palestinians, to a re-reaction on the part of the IDF, and so on. Given such conditions, evaluation and inspection systems are subverted or rendered vague. In this manner a typical definition of a mission given to a unit of paratroopers in the Bethlehem area, we were told, was "to secure the roads and to allow the inhabitants to maintain a normal (*takin*) life. "The discourse of rationality and the causal schemes derived from it are thus perpetuated despite the fact that there are no clear measures by which the stipulated effectiveness of the military can be gauged. Consequently, as we have seen, it is very difficult to measure whether "calm" (*sheket*) is the outcome of the military's action. And, as Ron (2003, 150) comments in regard to the earlier Intifada, "Quiet . . . was defined as the absence of Palestinian road blockages."

Meyer and Rowan (1991) argue that organizations without a clear task base—like the IDF in the Al-Aqsa Intifada—will maintain a distance or avoid clear evaluation from the environment by myths and ideologies. In fact, in lieu of concrete measures to gauge their actions, the number and kinds of activities in of themselves became

indicators of success, often regardless of their effect. Occasionally, we consequently found that commanders talked about the number of patrols and ambushes carried out as indicators of activity. In this manner, the "extent of activities" (*heikef pe'iloot*), rather than their effects, becomes a measure of effectiveness. Along these lines, when accused of being hesitant, Major-General Eitan, then commander of the Central Command, began to "demand more and more actions. Eitan wanted to know how many actions each unit undertakes in its sector, almost without taking into account its real effect" (Drucker and Shelach 2005, 196). This reasoning is related to the process of decoupling, by which an organization is freed from inspection and loss of legitimacy and support:

> Goals are made ambiguous or vacuous, and categorical ends are substituted for technical ends. Hospitals treat, not cure, patients. Schools produce students, not learning. In fact, data on technical performance are eliminated or rendered invisible. (Meyer and Rowan 1991, 57)

Similarly, completing a stint of deployment somewhere with no casualties to "our" side itself became a measure of success.

Our argument is that such practices as performing representational violence, invoking causal schemes centered on rationality, and substituting categorical ends for technical ones transmit certain messages to members of the IDF and to its environment. These messages help establish the military organization as appropriate, rational, and modern. We emphasize that these messages are transmitted not only verbally but also through the very practices of the organization. These emphases, however, should not be seen in isolation. The practices found within the Al-Aqsa Intifada are part of a gamut of activities centered on the IDF transmitting messages about its rationality and modernness. Thus, since the beginning of the 1990s, a variety of organizational techniques, such as total quality management (TQM) and officers attending business schools as part of their training, began to characterize the IDF (Drucker and Shelach 2005, 79). An initiative take by the IDF's then chief educational officer is instructive in this respect. Under the title "Chief Education Officer Wants to Standardize Respect for Human Rights," his idea was to verify the possibility of using the methodology of ISO standards—for quality of products and services of the International Organization for Standardization—to establish standards of quality for the dignity of human beings (HA June 18, 2001). This officer made it clear that he

> does not intend to create a standard that is obligatory—one invoking sanctions against those who breach it—but to reach a situation in which the soldiers of the IDF's different units would desire to win the ISO standard for human dignity just like corporations and organizations around the world want to win it. (HA June 18, 2001)

What better example of the link between human rights and the myths of modern organizational rationality? To return to our analysis, the emphasis on human rights and the discourse on rational, precise warfare are examples of how organizational structures and practices are altered and created in order to address external myths: that of supplying security with full respect to human life.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined the ways in which new discourses limiting violence are expressed at the tactical level of the IDF's actions in the Al-Aqsa Intifada. In contrast to other scholarly work tracing out the new environment within which today's armed forces operate, we asked about how this environment is "translated" into the actions of local-level units. What we found was that the emerging emphasis on human rights, which is carried out and propagated by a host of actors, is combined with an emphasis on precision warfare to regulate, to an extent, the kinds of violent practices used by the Israeli military. Thus we have shown how moral considerations are now part and parcel of military actions and not simply opposed to them. While previous scholars and journalists have rightly emphasized a connection between human rights and rules of engagement, we have shown that this link is wider and related to the whole organizational spectrum of practices utilized by militaries.

From a sociological point of view, our contention is that choices open to the military in affecting violence conform to culturally valued "myths" about rationality and human rights. While the emphasis on the rationality of the military is an outgrowth of the development of the modern state, the emphasis on human rights is relatively recent. Nevertheless, these myths are decisive if contemporary armed forces are to pass critical scrutiny from external bodies and agencies such as the media, the judiciary, political leaders, families of soldiers, and international human rights groups. Our point is that the environments of contemporary military organizations are replete with rules

and requirements centered on human rights and rationality to which they must conform if they are to receive continued support. In this manner, various "high-tech" techniques, policies centered on "minimal collateral damage," and "precise" programs function as powerful myths that many military establishments adopt. Thus the structures of many organizations reflect the myths of their institutionalization and not only the demands of their work activities.

Moreover, because the IDF is now contested in Israel, conformity to these myths and discourses is important. The country is now characterized by less deferential attitudes toward the military and a decline in the IDF's "quasi-totemic status" (Gal and Cohen 2000, 232). Indeed, new voices contesting the centrality of the IDF and the priority of security considerations over others emerged in Israel following the war of 1973 and have grown increasingly vociferous following Israel's incursion into Lebanon and the first Palestinian intifada. These changes have also resulted in the rise of various "watchdogs" overseeing the IDF, including the state comptroller, parliament, the judiciary, and perhaps most importantly, the media (Peri 2000). Within this context, the IDF survives and conforms to certain forms not because of any intrinsic instrumental efficiency per se (but it can be efficient), but because it is rewarded for doing so, in terms of acquiring greater legitimacy, and thereby resources and survival capacities than might otherwise be the case.

These changed circumstances imply that effecting military violence now takes place within new types of organizational understandings, structures, and processes. Our argument is that such concepts as "risk aversion," "human rights," and "minimal collateral damage," *and* the concrete organizational structures related to them, should be seen as both limiting and permitting different kinds of violence. In this manner, our argument goes beyond contentions about euphemistic devices that military establishments use to explain away their actions. Gates (1998), for example, suggests that in calling the Korean War a "policing action," its actual deadly implications for the population of the peninsula and the fighting troops were fudged. In talking about the Gulf War, Jabri (1996, 110) contends that the role of a discourse of precision was to sanitize "the effects of war by reference to 'surgical strikes' or 'classification errors,' where an assumed 'precision bombing' was not so precise in its effects." Or, as Weizman (2006, 72) proposes:

> The military's seductive use of theoretical and technological discourse seeks to portray war as remote, sterile, easy, quick, intellectual, exciting, and even economic (from their own

point of view). Violence can thus be projected as tolerable, and the public encouraged to support it.

We argue that the emphasis on such rhetoric does not represent a simple and cynical viewpoint put forward by the military. Rather, it has concrete structural manifestations: the actual organizational structures and practices of the IDF have changed in the context of the new conflict. Seminars on "human dignity," legal counsel to brigade commanders, "inspections to improve effective action," the use of snipers and long-range missiles, and certain clandestine actions (such as targeted assassinations) should be seen alongside the rhetoric of precision warfare and the practices of rational and causal reasoning.

All of these practices and "myths" must fit the professional "self-concept" of commanders and soldiers as valuing human life and as perpetrating violence in a restrained manner that fits wider public attitudes and expectations. Thus our model is not simply a political one in which organizations tailor their rhetoric, structures, and actions for external consumption. As Ron (2003, 23–24) explains, "Institutional settings do matter." As we have tried to show, these various myths must also fit the self-image of soldiers and officers. Indeed, it is in and around these kinds of self-images that motivation for recruitment, deployment, and action is located.

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11

Conclusion

Social Science, Textbook Units, and the Realities of Contemporary Combat

In the introduction to this volume we argued that to the analytical frameworks developed to study "conventional" wars and "textbook"' units, social scientists need to add new concepts based on the way conflicts are actually waged in contemporary circumstances. To reiterate a point made earlier, social scientists need to go beyond concepts developed to examine combat units in World War II and Korea, or the Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. In this respect, we must follow current professional military thinking that is moving toward an increasing understanding of the peculiarity of irregular warfare. Accordingly, we suggest that, analytically speaking, disconnecting "irregular" from "regular" warfare leads to new insights, because we are led away from somewhat simple typologies emphasizing nearness to (or distance from) combat in an ideal of conventional war.

Our aim, however, has not been to add another polemic note to ongoing debates but to utilize a sustained and systematic empirical analysis of one conflict—the Al-Aqsa Intifada—in order to formulate new ideas and frames. To be clear, we do not suggest some kind of unchanging "essence" of battle and the social and organizational dynamics within it. Rather, trying to conceptualize military operations in contemporary conflicts such as the Al-Aqsa Intifada has forced us to seek a new kind of understanding. In this manner, we rather immodestly suggest that our volume signals a wider conceptual shift in the social scientific study of combat. In other words, our aim has been to begin and develop a new conceptual language aiding us in understand-

ing combat and the actions of ground forces. We use the "new wars" to rethink the sociology and social psychology of combat.

As rather extended concluding sections have been presented in each chapter, in this concluding chapter we draw out two sets of wider themes interwoven throughout the volume: the wider conceptual significance of our analysis, and the social and political implications of our investigation.

"New Wars" and New Social Scientific Concepts

Perhaps the most important contribution of our volume is to suggest that sociological, psychological, and organizational approaches to contemporary militaries should attempt to capture, at the same time, the chaotic nature of conflicts and their underlying order, the emergence of new organizational structures and processes alongside the continued persistence of older, more conventional patterns. In other words, in analyzing the experience of troops and units in the IDF, as in other militaries, we need to understand how combat is organized, but that this organization does not, and need not, imply order, control, internal consistency, coherence, homogeneity, and continuity between units. Nor do we imply that the disorder of combat is a simple process by which these elements are destroyed by friction so that battlefields can be (simplistically) characterized as more or less regulated, controlled, or coherent. Rather, what is needed is a set of analytical frameworks explaining the fluidity of missions and soldierly practices, the creation of local solutions to military problems, the blurring of boundaries between civilians and military personnel, the weakening of boundaries between units, the importance of the media and external groups regarding the way combat is waged, and the occasional confluence of the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

Concretely, we introduced diverse concepts developed in recent social and organizational theory in order to further our analysis: the work that Weick and his colleagues (Meyerson et al. 1996; Weick 1984, 2001) have done on loosely coupled systems, studies about the breakdown of boundaries within organizations and between organizations and their environment (Clegg and Hardy 1997, 10–11), the "new institutionalism" in sociology dealing with relations between organizations and their cultural environments (Ron 2000, 2003), and hybrid forms of organization created in the operation of military forces (Gazit 2005). At the same time, however, we emphasized that importing theories developed in regard to organizations and institutions outside of the military must be done with caution and due consideration, because

the core expertise of the armed forces is the legitimate use of organized violence. More specifically, since it is at the level of field units that our analyses were pitched, we sought to link these theories both to combat—the localized, violent encounter of armed forces (Boene 1990)—and to the peculiar forms of military operations involving civilians and nonmilitary entities. At the same time, it is important to emphasize the diversity of violent contexts characterizing much of contemporary conflicts. Thus one model or representation of combat, for example, conventional conflict, does not do justice to the variety of phenomena we need to study in order to understand the ground units of present-day militaries. Along these lines, our book has offered a series of "cases" or arenas in which the image of textbook units meets and is played out within the actual conditions of different localized (and often very) violent encounters.

Conventional sociology and psychology of the military basically offer recipes for creating individuals and units that can perform military tasks within the stressful conditions of conventional combat. Thus, for instance, these formulas include prescriptions for "creating cohesion," "putting into place leadership," and "encouraging confidence in one's weapons." In other words, this literature can be read as offering guidelines for countering group and individual disintegration brought about by "typical" combat. The analyses of this scholarly literature were based on strong functionalist assumptions (common to more general strands in psychology and sociology) about the utility of certain behaviors. These assumptions centered on the idea that military commanders can prepare units for combat by enabling them to withstand terribly stressful conditions for a certain period. It is this preparation, it is thought, that permits these units to complete their missions before breaking up.

Furthermore, a close reading of historical work, biographies, and literary renditions (but very rarely social scientific treatises) in which the experience of battle or another operation is described reveals an awareness of other dimensions to military operations, such as creativity and innovation or boredom and confusion. But there has been relatively little theorizing on the basis of these insights, and it is these dimensions to which we now turn. Our wider contention is thus that under the uncertain conditions of battle and other operations, ideas and practices centered on textbook units encounter assorted contexts within which various kinds of local orders (or organizations) emerge. From a theoretical point of view, then, we are not only talking about how the modern military, with its inherent emphasis on order, dichotomous classification, internal hierarchy, methodicalness, and linear thinking, is broken down by the friction of violent encounters, But we go on

to theorize about what observers call the "art" of warfare, the often unpredictable and innovative reactions of troops and commanders to the emergent order of actions and activities in specific situations.

Along these lines, in each of the main chapters of the book we showed how textbook units—embodied in primers, learning manuals, doctrinal documents, or training schemes—encounter urban warfare, the dispersal and reassembly of units into new frameworks, continued friction with civilians, and the unanticipated circumstances of diverse local conditions. It is important to note that textbook units continue to "exist" and to influence the localized violent encounters. They do not become totally irrelevant but, rather, contribute to the ways in which troops and commanders understand the reality within which they find themselves. For example, the desire for organizational control and the negative impact of the splintering of units have their roots in expectations based on textbook ideas about unmediated control between a commanding officer and his organic unit. While this wish could not be met because of the operational demands of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the yearning for such a situation remains an emotionally and a cognitively resonant one.

Textbook ideas are also very much a part of how commanders and soldiers find (often innovative) solutions to the problems they meet and create new kinds of structures, practices, and models of meaning. In Latour's terms (Stadler 2000), the imaginary textbook units form subprograms that potentiate certain kinds of expectations and actions. Thus, for instance, in the creation of instant units, there seems to be a certain minimal organizational grouping—an infantry squad, a sniper team, or two tanks—derived from textbook notions about the smallest divisible element of units needed for proper professional operation. In addition, the encounter between imagined textbook units and the reality of different arenas continues to bear on motivation and prestige based on the distance from or nearness to struggles resembling conventional war. Hence, because service at the checkpoints is considered boring and distanced from the ideal of combat, it continues to have lower prestige. Similarly, the female drivers of combat vehicles around the fence measure and appraise themselves according to the same ideal and are annoyed at not being accorded the requisite social standing dictated by it.

At the same time, we have developed an alternative set of theoretical propositions to describe and analyze the emergent order of the IDF's ground forces in the Al-Aqsa Intifada's varied contexts. It is for this reason that throughout the chapters we have offered such notions as tight and loose coupling, hybrids and in-between organizations, the development of local knowledge and organizational improvisations, the

strategic corporal and remote control, and the militarization of civilian urban environments. This set of concepts underscores the processual and emergent character of the social and organizational forms that we found. The idea of human shields (*nohal shachen*, lit. neighbor procedure) developed by the ground forces of the IDF is illustrative of our argument. As explained earlier, in this practice a military force orders a Palestinian to accompany it—in essence as a human screen—when carrying out arrests, moving across an exposed street, or picking up unidentified packages. Analytically, this practice encapsulates much of what we have been talking about: a local improvised solution to the complexity and risks of urban warfare, the temporary and forced "recruitment" of Palestinian civilians for a military task (thereby blurring the military-civilian divide), its frequent use within a "precise" action focused on individuals targeted for arrest, and the minimization of casualties to "our" side (often necessitated because of political considerations).

At the same time, let us be clear that we are not talking about the need to develop what Burk (1998) calls an "adaptive" military (armed forces that constantly transform to meet changing circumstances). This kind of emphasis has long been at the core of much professional and academic literature written about the armed forces. The governing idea as the basis of this line of thinking is often prescriptive in its orientation and rests on the assumption that conventional military forces are somehow inherently conservative and conformist. Our claim is much stronger: not only is adaptation part and parcel of the actual ways in which forces wage combat, but the challenge from a theoretical point of view is to conceptualize just those understandings and practices that military forces bring to localized violent encounters. Thus we need to learn to appreciate how knowledge and practices emerge from the capacities and understandings that troops bring to bear on local contexts.

Our conceptual move, then, is from an appreciation of how the military is a machine for creating order and perfect adaptation to changing circumstances to how it is a machine for creating hybrids, mixes, and fusions that evince elements of order and disorder. Thus, for example, in a number of chapters we portrayed the ways in which organizational and civil-military hybrids have been created (intentionally or unintentionally), and how these fusions deal with the complex and fluid contexts of current combat and operations. Thus the organizational learning, the innovation, and the flexible, ad-hoc units we analyzed in chapters 5 and 6 are examples of local-level fusions of knowledge, practices, and understandings. The problem in many of these hybrids, as we demonstrated, is how units and organizations may collaborate (even participate in a relatively coherent amalgam) but also retain their separate identity. More widely, our aim is not only to add

"another" dimension to existing analyses but to argue that instead of cohesion in organic units, swift trust is created in ad-hoc frameworks, or to claim that different kinds of leadership are needed in present-day military engagements. We have attempted to add a different way of looking at skirmishes, engagements, limited operations, and even large-scale battles and the social scientific study of the military.

Against this background, we propose that the concepts and frames developed in regard to the Al-Aqsa Intifada help us understand phenomena related to other historical and contemporary cases. They may do so not in the simple sense of corroborating our contentions but in shedding light on events and dynamics that have in the past received relatively little scholarly attention. Accordingly, it may well be that contemporary armed forces are becoming much more modular and elastic in their organization, but a careful reading of historical cases reveals the extent to which flexibility characterized many forces in the past. Indeed, in chapter 6 we showed how "instant units" have been created within military organizations in the earlier periods. Likewise, various forms of policing have been carried out by military forces in a variety of historical circumstances, such as World War II by the Allied Forces in Japan and Germany, by the Israelis since the end of the 1960s in the occupied territories, and by U.S. forces in Iraq for the past years. Our analysis thus not only explores the local expression of Janowitz's (1971b) constabulary model but what we showed was the militarization of such regulated sites and the advent of militarized policing. Moreover, such an analysis is significant in understanding the emergence of hybrids linking the military to civilians. Here our kind of conceptualization may go a long way toward a sociological theorizing of the operation of such organizational appendages as civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) units or liaison officers in coalitions.

Similarly, in chapters 7 and 8 we showed how a sociological analysis of urban warfare can be applied to a variety of cases harking back at least to World War II. Here again the lack of scholarly frames for such analyses has less to do with the fact that such battles have not occurred than with the imagined battles of linear forces in open country and how this imagery has influenced the way social scientists conceive of combat. To restate an earlier contention, civilian dimensions of actions in cities should not be seen as somehow ancillary, supplemental to military work, but as part and parcel of the ways in which the armed forces operate in contemporary conflicts. Thus the social sciences have to develop ways of comprehending the manner by which policing, civilian control, and militarizing urban spaces have become integral to many military missions.

All of our understandings, in turn, combine an appreciation for continuities in the social and organizational features of combat units with the ways they take on new characteristics in specific historical contexts. The most important example is the propagation of a global discourse on human rights, which is surely a characteristic of contemporary conflicts. But this discourse can also be understood as a present-day manifestation, even as an intensification, of the cultural definitions governing the justification for killing and the perpetration of legitimately perceived organized violence against other human beings found in any military clash. Similarly, we are not arguing about the demise of small organic combat units—they will most probably remain the elementary components of any military organization—but, rather, that today many "regular" forces have taken on characteristics previously attributed to special forces. The label of special forces, we think, captures many of the organizational developments that we analyzed, such as the modularity of the units, their autonomy, their isolation in urban contexts, and their unmediated links to civilians.

The Political Control of Ground-Level Violence

The final set of issues that have been interwoven throughout our analysis centers on the social and political control of the military. Shaw (2005, 37) suggests that

> strategists tend to see society as non-essential background, but wars are always profoundly important social events, and social relations are not just context. They enter in many ways into the organization, fighting, and consequences of war.

Throughout the volume, we have focused on two (analytically distinct) environments within which contemporary ground forces participate: the localized environment of battle or militarized policing to which they must constantly adapt and the wider "normative" milieu comprising the social and cultural rules governing the use of violence to which they must adjust. This distinction allows us to comprehend how an organization reacts to its environments not only to assure its survival or further its interests but how these ends are constructed through a response to certain cultural expectations. As we showed in chapter 10, only by understanding the complex relations between these two environments can we grasp the ways in which such armed forces as the IDF operate today. In this section, we move on to explore

some of the wider implications of these relationships. Specifically, we ask how judicial and media surveillance and the emphasis on human rights and humanitarian considerations and on precision weaponry or minimizing casualties can influence the ways in which ground forces use organized violence.

First, however, the conflict should be placed in its historical context. Within the Al-Aqsa Intifada, combat, policing, and interactions with Palestinian civilians have changed their form over the past years. To put this point by way of certain key moments, the move was from an attempt to combat quasi-military targets during the first months of the conflict to the reinvasion and reoccupation of major urban areas in 2002, the anti-insurgency campaign of 2003 and 2004, the disengagement of 2005 and on to more limited incursions, and the use of standoff military technologies. In fact, the normative environment within which the IDF's ground forces operated also changed during these periods. Initially emanating from the internal IDF emphasis on human dignity (itself influenced by global processes), the discourses on human rights and humanitarian considerations took time to filter out and influence the behavior of troops in relation to Palestinians, the concrete organizational practices instituted in the military, and the ways in which soldiers' and officers' behaviors were portrayed in the media.

Indeed, the global discourses on human rights and humanitarian interventions are something that themselves change and wane. Thus after the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, both discourses were weakened, and practices previously seen as unacceptable began to be perceived as legitimate and tolerable. To be sure, while there are differences between militaries—such as the United States and European ones—in this respect, as Shaw (2005, 24) contends, the "global war on terror" is not so much a war as a political and an ideological framework that legitimates any specific war upon which U.S. political leaders wish to embark or support. As a result, all states fighting secessionist wars against enemies that could be labeled "terrorist" saw an immediate advantage to this framework, from India to Israel and the Philippines to Russia. However, the general trend toward accounting for human rights and humanitarian interventions is still very much in evidence among the armed forces of the industrial democracies. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we discern a dual—even contradictory—movement due to the propagation of these discourses: a process of politicization of military practices due to greater openness of the armed forces to external watchdogs, coupled with a process of depoliticization resulting from the development of advanced military technology and "precise" operations and missions.

To begin with, the process of politicization of military action is related to the interaction between global patterns and certain social developments within Israel. First, the refusal of soldiers to serve in the occupied territories between 2002 and 2004 became a worrisome development for senior commanders and politicians. Second, MachsomWatch and a number of other movements continued to be active throughout the conflict, disseminating regular reports about the checkpoints to wider publics. Third, and a little later, the movement *Shovrim Shtika* (lit. "Breaking the Silence") (Grassiani 2006), comprised of soldiers who had served in the Palestinian city of Hebron, set up a Web site and an exhibition that led to widespread public discussions about the occupation of the occupied territories and the actions of soldiers within it. Fourth, movements such as *Yesh Gevul* (lit. "There is a Limit/Boundary") gathered evidence of alleged Israeli war crimes and through transnational contacts led to the opening of investigations into IDF actions. Fifth, since 2003, the activity of the Hague Tribunal began to preoccupy many senior officers in terms of their actions and ability to travel abroad. Sixth, such mundane technology as cellular phones has allowed soldiers to be in touch with their family and friends and to communicate about the circumstances of their service. Seventh, all of these developments were intensified by the very permeable boundaries between the IDF and Israeli society and especially by the activity of local and international media representatives.

One implication of these patterns has been the creation of civilian entities transferring and mediating information and knowledge between the ground forces and more senior levels of command and decision making. In other words, these nonmilitary bodies have become alternative avenues for higher-ranking officers to learn about the actions of troops. The second, and perhaps more important, implication of forces' exposure to the media and the activities of such movements as MachsomWatch has been the creation of alternative models of control that have significantly shaped the behavior of soldiers and officers. For example, while the activities of such movements as MachsomWatch may have had a limited (albeit an important) influence on the checkpoints themselves, they certainly worked to bring the issue to the awareness of wider groups in Israeli society and the constant perception among our interviewees that their actions were liable to be recorded and documented.

But alongside the politicization of the actions of the IDF forces there has been a process of depoliticization. First, we suggest that MachsomWatch's limited adoption by the military and the creation of the humanitarian officers may be interpreted as attempts at dealing with the guilt of the occupation felt by many soldiers and officers. That is,

the creation of new organizational appendages and practices may be seen as a way to assuage the deeper critique of the occupation itself and the hardships endured by Palestinians. Second, consider the political implications for responsibility entailed by loose coupling that, from a strictly organizational point of view, provide adaptive advantages to local circumstances. But such a dynamic structuring of Israel's ground forces also allows the assignation of blame for any "irregularities" to the intentions and actions of certain, specific units (categorized as "bad apples"). In other words, "mistakes" can be personalized or attributed to a "rogue" unit rather than to organizational contradictions, the impossibility of carrying out certain missions, or the lack of clarity of orders. Attention is thus directed toward persons or units rather than reflection about the organization or the actions of a broader agent, the Israeli state.

Third, the political implications of the situation are related to a yet deeper level, to what military professionals still see as their "real" mission: the waging of a conventional war against a threat from the regular armies of organized states. This viewpoint continues to fit with the self-image of soldiers ("We are not 'mere' policemen") as propagated in the myriad arenas of textbook military socialization (professional training courses), military journals and books, and imagery in popular (military and civilian) culture. Hence, from the perspective of the soldiers and officers comprising the IDF's ground forces, treating policing as ancillary to real soldiering further contributes to the depoliticization of their actions. Indeed, this view continues to skew the structure of incentives for performance in the direction of a rather certain mode. Thus Drucker and Shelach (2005, 3) explain that while much autonomy was given to local-level commanders, the criterion used to appraise them entailed prevention of terror attacks originating from their area of responsibility rather than other considerations such as easing the lives of Palestinians. And an added criterion centers on force protection rather than consideration for the Palestinian population. Thus local-level commanders were, and are, appraised according to the overall aim of preventing terror attacks and protecting the lives of their troops and not as a result of the overall policy, say, of easing the Palestinians' plight.

This background can, perhaps, account for the relative lack of sustained scholarly attention to the sociology and psychology of combat in such conflicts. The military's aversion to the lack of clarity of objectives, and the politically contested nature of many "operations other than (conventional) war," has for a long time dictated its professional preoccupation. But while the military has begun to change and much professional attention is now granted such conflicts, the social scientific

study of combat unit has not kept up. Indeed, such ubiquitous actions as policing, patrolling, and manning roadblocks have not been dealt with in the scholarly literature. It is in this light that our volume should be seen as an extension of the sociology and psychology of combat and the actions of contemporary ground forces. To reiterate a point made earlier, the conceptual move from an appreciation of how the military is a machine for creating order to how it is a machine for creating hybrids, mixes, and fusions entails a new social scientific understanding of the armed forces.

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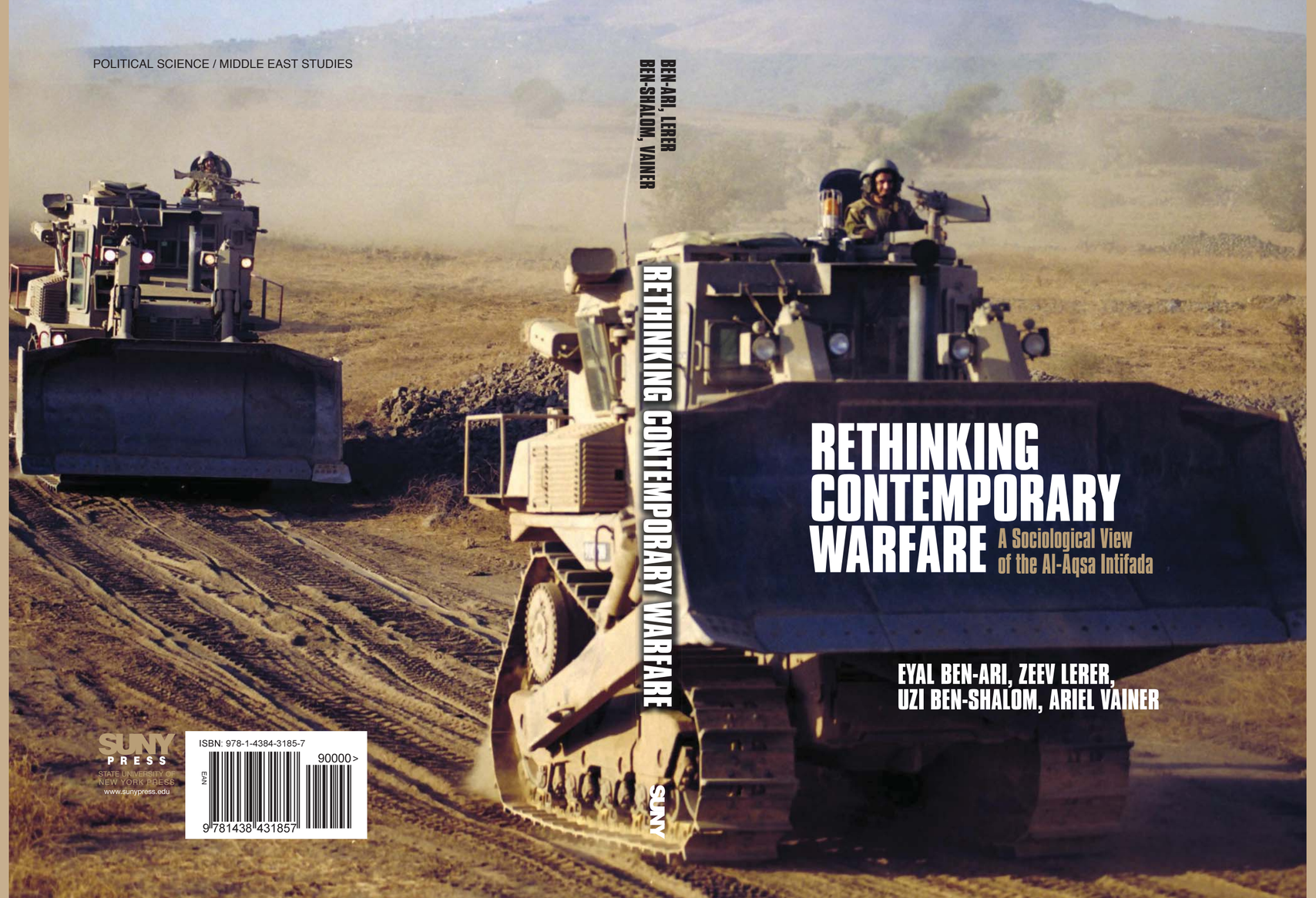

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RETHINKING CONTEMPORARY WARFARE

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RETHINKING CONTEMPORARY WARFARE

A Sociological View of the Al-Aqsa Intifada

EYAL BEN-ARI, ZEEV LERER,
UZI BEN-SHALOM, ARIEL VAINER

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The combat experience of Israel's ground forces in the second Palestinian uprising, the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000–2006), is given full critical attention in this engaging study. Based on extensive interviews and observations, *Rethinking Contemporary Warfare* explores the ongoing debate about how the armed forces of industrial democracies wage contemporary military operations. Irregular warfare presents challenges, as routine activities can suddenly turn into violent action, forcing military forces to quickly adapt under the changing circumstances of the conflict. Such "new wars" are a messy reality consisting of high and low intensity conflict, the involvement of media and human rights movements, and the martial administration of civilian populations. Exploring the broad social and organizational features of these militaries, this volume sets forth new analytical tools to understand the peculiarities of irregular warfare in the post-Cold War era. These critical concepts include loose coupling between units, organizations that mediate between ground forces and civilian environments, and the militarization of civilian environments in urban warfare.