

INTRODUCTION

In July 2006, Israel launched a full-scale war against Lebanon in response to the abduction of two soldiers by Hezbollah militiamen on the border between Israel and Lebanon. Initially, the government ruled out a ground operation, and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deployed the Air Force. However, when aerial assaults failed to stop the rockets that Hezbollah began launching at Israel's northern towns, the army was gradually dragged into a ground operation. Ultimately, this resulted in more than one hundred casualties but the operation was conducted so indecisively that it failed to achieve any of the war's goals—getting the abducted soldiers back, disarming Hezbollah, or even stopping the rocket shelling.

A similar scenario repeated itself two years later. In June 2008, the Israeli government decided not to launch a widespread military operation in Gaza, despite escalation by Hamas in the firing of Qassam rockets that targeted the Israeli civilian population. As an alternative, it chose to accept an Egyptian-mediated truce between Israel and the Hamas government that controlled Gaza. Considerations of international legitimacy informed this decision, as

well as doubts that a military operation would be productive. Not less important was the concern about casualties among soldiers. Politicians believed that a ground incursion into Gaza, with its crowded towns and its Hamas-trained militias, might result in two hundred to three hundred casualties, including reserve soldiers. Israel finally launched its offensive in Gaza in winter 2009 (Operation Cast Lead), only when it could claim legitimacy for using excessive force, thereby reducing the risk to soldiers at the expense of larger numbers of casualties among Gazan civilians.

Favoring soldiers' lives over the lives of citizens contributed to hesitation about launching a ground operation inside Lebanon to take control of areas from which rocket-fire on Israeli communities in the Galilee had injured civilians. Indecisiveness over ordering a military operation in Gaza derived from that same inverted hierarchy. In this case, the implication was that the soldiers were more valuable than were the residents of the border town of Sderot and the communities around Gaza.

These moments inspired this book. They reflect the profound change that Israeli society has undergone since the 1970s, central to which is the declining tolerance for sacrifice among the secular middle class, once the backbone of the military, leading to casualty-averse policies and other limitations that narrow the military's space of autonomy. Yet, the case of Israel is not exceptional; it increasingly mirrors similar patterns in other liberal democracies regarding the declining legitimacy of sacrifice in war.

The case raises a fundamental issue— how the state manages its citizens' lives and deaths by encouraging them to be willing to sacrifice their lives for their country. Nonetheless, it is difficult to draw a comprehensive explanation for the Israeli pattern from the existing literature, not necessarily because of empirical discrepancies but mainly because of conceptual gaps.

The Theoretical Gap

Since the end of the Cold War, military death has gradually been stripped of its meaning. The rise of individualism has come at the expense of dedication to serving one's country and has actually contradicted the very values of military service, such as sacrifice and discipline (see H. Smith 2005). The legitimacy to sacrifice has declined significantly relative to its importance in the cultural heritage of World War I, when family mourning was mixed with feelings of pride for having taken part in and sacrificed for a noble cause. After World War II, the view of death in war gradually changed (Mosse

1990). In practice, sensitivity to military losses has increased in democratic societies since the 1960s, playing a key role in limiting the state's freedom of operation in deploying the armed forces for military missions. Sensitivity can be expressed in activities such as antiwar protests, best exemplified by the resistance to the war in Vietnam (Everts 2002).

Nevertheless, while casualties reduce support for the use of force, other factors can compensate for such effects, at least temporarily. In their comprehensive analysis, Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler (2009) argue that tolerance for casualties is determined by the public's cost-benefit approach: what matters most in determining supporting an ongoing military mission is the public's expectation about whether that mission will be successful. This argument raises several problems. First, while the authors extensively map and explain shifts in public opinion, they say almost nothing about the social changes that generated the new sensitivity. Sociologists relate to these changes; however, the main contribution of scholars of international relations and political science (IR/PS) like Gelpi and his associates is their analysis of how different military missions are differentially accepted in terms of casualty tolerance and how the state can mitigate previously instilled sensitivity. This suggests a lack of communication between sociological and IR/PS studies, because of which the linkage between the social sources that have reduced casualty tolerance and the political variables that affect public opinion is not explicitly articulated.

Second, success and failure are not objective constructs. They are subject to political-cultural interpretations, with variations across ethnic-class lines. At the least, the case of Israel will show how similar missions with similar results have been depicted as successes or failures in different periods, with the log of casualties (as argued by Mueller 2005) not necessarily functioning as the main cause of fluctuations in public support.

Third, while the interplay between casualty sensitivity and politics has been discussed in the IR/PS literature in general and by Gelpi and his associates in particular, the role of collective action has not been adequately analyzed. After all, changes in military policies related to risk avoidance and mission aversion that entail recurring force redeployment often occur when antiwar movements garner mass support (as demonstrated by the Vietnam War and by Israel's First Lebanon War, in 1982). Wars that are perceived as failures or whose costs increase (and here casualty sensitivity is relevant) create a political opportunity that changes coalitions and causes shifts in the political environment. These changes may be read by savvy activist entrepreneurs as an invitation to mobilize (Marullo and

Meyer 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). As the American experience shows, at least in the area of military policies, only the combination of shifting public opinion and the joint effect of protest activities and their collaboration with institutional allies in the public space can increase the government's level of responsiveness (Giugni 2004).

In a pioneering effort, Joseph Vasquez (2005) integrated theories of collective action with those dealing with casualty shyness. He argued that democracies that depend on conscription are more likely to generate anticascualty collective action than are democracies that rely largely on volunteer forces, because conscription touches more powerful actors more directly than does voluntary service. Thus, citizens and groups with political power should be much more politically engaged under conscription because of their members' vulnerability to compulsory service.

Nonetheless, in Israel, sensitivity has varied regardless of stability in the recruitment model, that is, conscription. Furthermore, though Vasquez (2005) identified the linkage between recruitment and collective action, his argument needs further development. Most important, he explained the linkage but did not analyze how the mode of recruitment is specifically translated into collective action. His theory relates to the political impact of military manpower systems but says little about the dynamics of collective action. Therefore, it is necessary to define more specifically the conditions under which the mode of recruitment affects antiwar collective action.

In another study, Vasquez (2009) analyzed the impact of variables such as sense of threat, mission success, number of casualties, and elite consensus. However, he did not integrate them into his analysis to test how these variables affect antiwar protest in their interaction with the mode of recruitment. For example, even though conscription generates more casualty sensitivity, as Vasquez predicted, we must still analyze the extent to which the level of sensitivity varies with the level of threat.

In their analysis of the casualty gap, Kriner and Shen (2010) provided indirect support for Vasquez's argument. They did not factor in collective action and, like Gelpi et al. (2009), focused on public opinion; unlike them, however, Kriner and Shen mapped the distribution of American wartime casualties across sociodemographic variables. They found that Americans respond to casualties by lowering their support for military operations and for the military leaders waging them, but they do not do so uniformly. Criticism is most intense among citizens who have experienced the costs of war most intimately in their local communities. However, with the introduction of the all-volunteer forces (AVF), these costs are disproportionately concentrated

in disadvantaged communities, where the residents possess fewer of the resources needed to engage in politics. Hence, this decreases the pressures brought to bear on policymakers to change policies. So, like Vasquez, Kriner and Shen link social power to the capacity to act politically but ignore the mediating link of collective action between public opinion and policy outcomes.

Another problem arising from the literature is the issue of civilian control. Policies of casualty aversion affect the balance of power between generals and policymakers and, as such, affect civilian control over the armed forces. In the end, the willingness to pay the costs of war is one of the central mechanisms by which public opinion and collective action affect foreign policy choices. This willingness has an impact on the elites' desire to undertake overseas military missions while at the same time minimizing losses (Mandel 2004). Casualty sensitivity is thus germane to the study of civilian control.

Nevertheless, the impact of casualty sensitivity on civilian control is not central to the literature on civilian-military relations. For example, Feaver and Kohn (2001), who studied the casualty-aversion syndrome, point out that this issue is part of the civil-military gap in American politics. While they note how this gap generally affects civilian control, they refrain from analyzing how the cultural construct of casualty sensitivity is, specifically and operatively, reflected in civilian control. In a specific reference (p. 467), they recognize that the casualty-aversion approach is not merely an expression of the military's self-preservation but may well be grounded in the military's lack of confidence in the political leadership, leading to self-restraint. Yet, Feaver and Kohn do not develop this argument.

In sum, the literature lacks an integrative approach that links casualty sensitivity to its social origins and that acknowledges its reflection in bereavement discourse and bereavement-motivated collective antiwar protests, as well as the influence of these discourses and actions on actual policies of casualty aversion, which in turn may have an impact on civil-military relations.

This gap directs us to look at the broader picture—the unresolved problem of how the state manages its citizens' lives and deaths by encouraging individuals to be willing to sacrifice their lives for their country. This problem has always troubled social scientists. The updated literature on casualty sensitivity makes a limited contribution to this issue as it focuses on the existing profile of willingness to sacrifice but does not trace its origins.

According to Max Weber's (1958) seminal definition, the modern state is an entity with a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. That monopoly

also means that the state manages its citizens' lives and deaths. It has the authority to determine who will be sacrificed as soldiers protecting civilians, who will be sacrificed as civilians because the price of protecting them is too high, and, of course, who will be killed as an enemy while the state defends its civilians. But what prompts individuals to be willing to sacrifice?

Hobbes (1962) [1651] developed the idea that the state is created through a social contract in which citizens concede some of their freedoms, which also extends to youngsters' readiness to sacrifice their lives, in exchange for which the state takes on the obligation to provide them with security as part of the provision of political order. This order should offset the loss of freedom entailed in consenting to the state's authority. Here security and citizenship are mutually affected: the citizens' right to protection is materialized by the citizens' readiness to protect others' lives. However, as Margaret Levi argued and similar to Hegel (1821 [2001], 258), Hobbes's argument embodies a tension: "It is to protect one's life that an individual agrees to submit to the regulations of states. Thus, the demand by government that a young man potentially give up his life for his country puts a tension at the heart of political life, a tension Hobbes recognizes but does not satisfactorily resolve" (1997, 5). Furthermore, state-supplied protection is a public good, access to which is not contingent upon one's contribution. It is part of the "free-rider syndrome."

Levi (1997) offered a partial solution to these tensions by suggesting the model of "contingent consent": a citizen's decision to comply or volunteer in response to a demand from the government only if he/she perceives the government as trustworthy and is satisfied that other citizens are also engaging in ethical reciprocity. Levi's model is an effective tool for understanding the motivation for sacrifice. It assumes that sacrifice should be legitimized rather than authoritatively imposed even in conscripted militaries, as the option of dissent has always been available. Furthermore, it is the role of political institutions to enforce this obligation at low cost.

However, Levi's analysis raises several problems: First, this argument establishes the link between the performance of political institutions and consent but says nothing about how consent is transformed into sacrifice. It is one thing to comply with the demand that one enlist and another entirely different to unquestionably sacrifice one's own life; these are two different levels of burden. Second, as Tilly (2004, 7) contended, while Levi argued that citizens consent to onerous obligations when they see their relations to governmental agents and to other citizens as both reliable and fair, she did not specify what mechanisms produce these effects. Tilly's point is particularly relevant because the burden has never been equally imposed; even in the

golden age of the draft, it may have been fair but not necessarily equal. Third, Levi argued that ideological and historical changes have altered the standard of what constitutes a fair and just policy of recruitment but did not specify the conditions that lay the groundwork for such changes. Fourth, she argued that democratization had a positive impact on the population's willingness to comply with universal conscription (1997, 81). Nonetheless, this argument falls short of explaining the legitimation crisis of the draft system in most Western societies since the 1970s when democratization reached its peak.

What ensues from all this is that we may consider the option that an unequal burden that also guarantees rewards to those who bear the burden is less likely to give rise to disobedience, resistance, or avoidance of military service than is a situation in which the bearers of an equally imposed burden lose their trust in the state's capacity to reward them appropriately (see Tilly 2004). Rewards breed a sense of fairness as much as encourage the transformation of compliance into sacrifice. Thus, we should also focus on the differential return for sacrifice, rather than only on the equal distribution of that sacrifice, and thereby examine the mechanisms that create a sense of fairness. The asymmetry between burden and rewards may alter the standard of what constitutes a fair and just policy despite, or perhaps owing to, democratization. Looking at the state of balance between sacrifice and rewards may thus serve as a key to explaining the dynamics between willingness to sacrifice and the surfacing of resistance to sacrifice. This book aims to deal with this challenge by relying on the Israeli experience.

In terms of theory, the book develops the theme of the interplay between two sets of rights—the right to protect and the right to protection. A high level of social readiness for military sacrifice is attained when the right to protect is meaningful and provides an avenue to other rights, adjusted to the level of burden that the state demands from the bearers of this right, as military sacrifice is not necessarily equally imposed. A fulfilled right to protect advances the right to protection, by motivating the bearers of the right to protect to protect others. Imbalanced rights may risk the state's capacity to provide protection because devaluation of the right to protect discourages sacrifice and encourages patterns of resistance. Hence, an imbalance motivates the state to rebalance the rights by employing *balancing strategies*, matching the values of the two sets of rights. This can be done mainly by accruing rights to the protectors or by diminishing the protectors' level of sacrifice, thus modulating the level of protection or the level of sacrifice. This theme suggests an exchange between unequal military burden and unequal access to the right to protect, through which the right to protection is facilitated. Thus, a possible solution to the unsolved problematic embedded in the

Hobbesian contract is offered through the concept of rights and the exchange on which it is built.

By analyzing how the state manages its citizens' lives or deaths, I will offer a broader answer to explain the moments that opened this book. I will show how the devaluation of the right to protect engenders multiple forms of reluctance to sacrifice and how the state reacts by modifying policies. On the basis of this concept, I will argue that Israel has formulated a "death hierarchy." Under the circumstances of the historical republican era, Israel risked the lives of soldiers drawn mostly from secular middle-class groups—definitely more than soldiers drawn from the lower classes—to protect its citizens; however, this unequal burden was translated into and thus compensated for by the privileged social position accorded those who sacrificed the most. Nonetheless, an imbalance between the rights developed after the 1980s, caused by the devaluation of the right to protect. This devaluation originated in the decline of external threat, the ascendancy of a market society that devalued military sacrifice, and the decoupling of soldiering from citizenship as groups whose military contribution was small or nonexistent attained rights irrespective of that military contribution. A drop in the motivation to sacrifice among the privileged groups was the result, and it had a negative impact on the facilitation of others' right to protection.

Under these conditions, the state offered a combined response. At first, it reduced the military burden by moderating military policies, thereby reformulating the death hierarchy, and favoring the lives of its soldiers over those of its citizens. In other words, the state undermined the right to protection, as attested to in the situations described earlier, beginning with the first unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in 1985. In tandem, the state modified the military burden by increasing the reliance on technology and by realigning the social composition of the military by encouraging the integration of lower-class groups in combat units in exchange for (really or potentially) allocating rights to the sacrificing groups. Israel thus once again reformulated the death hierarchy by favoring the lives of soldiers drawn from privileged groups over the lives of those drawn from the lower classes. But, when Israel could no longer risk the lives of its citizens or of peripheral soldiers alone and thus had to risk privileged soldiers again, it turned to the use of excessive force. This reduced the risk to which soldiers were exposed, this time at the expense of enemy civilians, as the Gaza offensive of 2009 best exemplifies. Apparently, the rights were again rebalanced. That is how Israel coped with the casualty-sensitivity syndrome, a way that invites a broader theoretical outlook.

Outline of the Book

Chapter 1 provides the theoretical background to this book as sketched earlier.

Chapter 2 presents the dynamics of matching the rights to protect and to protection in Israel. It shows how, until the 1980s, rights were balanced for the secular middle class; in exchange for upholding its right to protect, which was convertible into political and social rights, the secular middle class advanced the community's right to protection. However, the legitimacy to sacrifice declined after the 1970s and especially during the 1980s, following the drop in the motivation of the secular middle class occasioned by the First Lebanon War (1982). As with their Western counterparts, for Israeli secular middle-class groups, the right to protect lost much of its role as a way to gain access to other rights when their gains in the military during the 1970s and 1980s were socially devalued relative to the subjective level of sacrifice. Devaluated gains originated in a drop in the military's prestige, in changing allocation of social benefits in a market society, and in a perceived decrease in the value of protecting a country facing a declining level of external threats. As a dominant group that had exhausted its ability to reap additional significant benefits from military service, it was natural that this group would focus on the other side of the equation—on reducing the military burden. Thus, the devalued right to protect impacted the group's readiness to promote others' right to protection. Declining motivation and an increase in casualty sensitivity were evident when this group initiated a series of collective actions, including personal exemption patterns and evasion of combat service, and shaped bereavement discourse as subversive discourse, all of which created pressure to limit the autonomy of the army to sacrifice lives.

Reductions in the military burden and a readiness to risk the level of protection provided by the state constituted the balancing strategy at work in the short term. It took the shape of military restraint, with the 1985 withdrawal from Lebanon and the signing of the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians (1993–1995). Gradually, however, and in an effort to restore part of its autonomy, the state employed another balancing strategy: redistribution of the burden from the secular middle class to less privileged groups. This involved greater reliance on the part of the combat units (under the limitations of the draft system to which the IDF adhered) on socially and culturally peripheral groups, such as religious Jews, Jewish settlers from the occupied territories, Mizrahi recruits from the periphery, Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, and others, at the expense of the less motivated secular middle class. Yet, this strategy dovetailed with another balancing strategy: rights

allocation to these groups or at least the expectation of such. For lower-class groups, the right to protect offered other benefits, such as social mobility and political influence. Therefore, these groups viewed their newfound access to the ranks as a social asset and refrained from challenging military sacrifice. In tandem, the army increased its reliance on technology, which reduced soldiers' risk, thereby placing privileged groups at less risk. This was the Israeli version of casualty aversion. Thanks to this balancing strategy, the rights were balanced again, thereby expanding the state's space of operation, mainly on the Palestinian scene. Yet, this balancing strategy matured slowly, and the state still faced limitations.

To better understand the limitations that the state faced despite the installation of the balancing strategy that redistributed the military burden, Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the link between two phenomena: the social composition of the IDF as reflected in the social map of the casualties when the social alteration of the combat units took place, and bereavement-incited collective action. Changes in attitudes toward sacrifice created the *bereavement hierarchy* through which various groups interpreted the loss of their children's lives or the potential risk posed by their military service: the lower the position of the group in the social hierarchy, the greater its tolerance for military death. So, while secular upper-middle-class groups showed a high level of sensitivity to losses and translated that sensitivity into subversive bereavement discourse, religious and peripheral groups with a hawkish agenda were more tolerant of their losses. They gradually but imperfectly shifted the tone back from subversive to submissive discourse; however, sensitivity to casualties remained a central cornerstone of bereavement discourse and imposed limitations on military deployment.

The conclusion that emerges from the case studies and that guides their analysis is that the mode of recruitment largely determines collective actors' ability to leverage the politics of war (such as military success, number of casualties, level of threat, and the rightness of the war), to challenge dominant discourse and influence war policy. The more recruitment draws on secular middle-class groups, the stronger the collective actors' ability. This conclusion is validated by a comparison of the success of the mothers-based Four Mothers movement in Israel to induce the government to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000 and the failure of Gold Star Families for Peace in the United States to convince the George W. Bush administration to pull its troops out of Iraq between 2005 and 2007.

Chapter 5 deals with the *death hierarchy*, which is the policy outcome of the bereavement hierarchy. Having faced limitations, the state reshaped the

hierarchy of risk, that is, the death hierarchy, through which the state positions its citizens and soldiers. This hierarchy results from the encounter between two variables and as such reflects and affects the underlying rights: the degree of choice, informed by motivation, that is available to those whom the state designates for potential death and the political cost that results from their choice, especially when the state fails to justify their death beyond question. The higher the group's ranking in the death hierarchy, the more protected it is; that is, the less it is exposed to risk. Thus, the structure of the death hierarchy largely reflects the hierarchy of bereavement. Hence, for secular upper-middle-class groups, which show a high level of sensitivity to losses that is translatable into subversive bereavement discourse, the state values the lives of soldiers over those of civilians. For example, reservists are the most protected group as long as middle-class members are represented in the reserves in greater proportion than in the compulsory army, while citizens in peripheral areas are at the bottom of the hierarchy but still rank higher than enemy civilians, who are placed on the lowest rung of the hierarchy.

Chapter 6 presents the situation that may arise when the state fails to mitigate the tensions inherent between its duties toward groups on the highest rungs of the death hierarchy—such as middle-class reserve soldiers versus middle-class citizens. Under these conditions, it cannot place civilians under a prolonged threat and is constrained to use force, unless more peaceful solutions are at its disposal. At the same time, the state is limited in its ability to put soldiers at risk. Therefore, the state will reduce soldiers' exposure to risk by using excessive lethality that claims more civilian casualties from its enemy, the group located at the bottom of the death hierarchy (reliance on technology represents a way to redistribute the military burden, forming one of the balancing strategies). This argument is demonstrated by comparing Operation Cast Lead of 2009 in Gaza with hostilities that took place in this arena since the first Intifada of 1987 (the first round of a significant Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip).

Like other democracies fighting "small wars," Israel created a *force-casualty tradeoff* by becoming more sensitive to its own military losses at the expense of the enemy's noncombatant losses, reflected in an increasing use of lethality. This tradeoff is evident in the ratio of fatalities between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian citizens, which increased from one Israeli soldier for six civilians killed in the first Intifada (1987–1993) to one Israeli soldier for eighty-four Palestinian civilians killed in the 2009 offensive in the Gaza Strip. With this tradeoff, the state apparently rebalanced the rights by

fulfilling citizen's right to protection at a level that matched the shortfalls in converting the right to protect into other valuable political and social rights, shortfalls that limited the sacrificing of middle-class groups.

Casualty sensitivity also affects the balance of power between civilians and the military, as chapter 7 demonstrates. High levels of casualty sensitivity among influential military and political actors have a dual effect on the balance of power between civilians and the military. Initially, this sensitivity restrains military action, thus empowering civilians (at least, dovish civilians) vis-à-vis the military. However, military and political leaders' efforts to compensate for these restraints—the work of the balancing strategies—ultimately give the military even more latitude. Four effects are recognized: (1) military doctrines that allow rapid decision making; (2) contingency plans that weaken effective civilian authority over the armed forces and enhance the latter's influence on decision making; (3) the military's professional control of the discussions about the cost of military missions; and (4) the setting of ambitious war goals as a means to mobilize a skeptical society to war, which entails creating impediments to exiting from war that the military can leverage to gain more influence on decision making. Thus, not only may casualty sensitivity act as a restraint on the military and increase civilian control, as one would expect, but the opposite may occur as well. Again, the Second Lebanon War and the Gaza offensive of 2009 best exemplify these assertions.

All in all, four balancing strategies were at work, sometimes more than one at a time. By effectively implementing them and frequently implementing the most favorable strategy (increasing the demand for protection), the Israeli state was able to retain its capacity to wage a protracted war against the surrounding Arab world.

As the concluding chapter argues, the case of Israel presents a unique opportunity not only to test scholarly propositions but also to expand them. Central to the assertions presented in this book are the relations between two principal rights—the right to protect and the right to protection—and the encounters between them. The extent to which the two rights are promoted and balanced demarcates the space of state action in the military realm. In brief, this concept has some advantages, the most important of which are (1) recognizing the exchange between unequal military burdens and unequal access to the rewards and rights derived from the right to protect and the implications of this exchange for citizens' right to protection. This assertion helps deal with the gaps recognized in Margaret Levi's (1997) "contingent consent," in itself an effort to tackle the tensions implicit in the Hobbesian argument; (2) tracing the social structure that increases or decreases

readiness for military sacrifice and its articulation, inter alia, through collective action, rather than focusing exclusively on the military mission and its political environment; (3) adding the dynamic dimension by analyzing the strategies the state enacts to rebalance citizens' rights and thereby modify its course of action.