

**Israeli Identity in Crisis:
Cinematic Representations of the 1982 Lebanon War**

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse a pour objet la relation entre l'identité nationale, les récits sécuritaires et la politique étrangère. Elle se base sur la Guerre du Liban de 1982 en tant que guerre la plus controversée des guerres israéliennes en raison de sa contradiction avec la norme israélienne de seulement mener des guerres de légitime défense (à savoir lorsqu'il n'y a aucun autre recours que la guerre). À travers un examen des films israéliens qui traitent de la guerre de 1982 – *Ricochets*, *Time for Cherries*, *Cup Final*, *Waltz with Bashir* et *Lebanon* – cette thèse discute de la crise identitaire vécue par les Israéliens à la suite de l'invasion du Liban et s'intéresse aux stratégies d'adaptation qui ont aidé la société israélienne à réconcilier la guerre avec les récits sécuritaires qui font partie de la construction de l'identité collective israélienne.

ABSTRACT

This thesis engages with the relationship between national identity, security-based narratives, and foreign policy. It focuses on the 1982 Lebanon War as the most controversial in Israel's history because it violated the Israeli societal norm of only fighting wars of self-defence (when there is no alternative to war). Through an examination of Israeli films about the 1982 war – *Ricochets*, *Time for Cherries*, *Cup Final*, *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon* – this thesis studies the identity crisis experienced by Israelis after the invasion of Lebanon and the coping mechanisms that helped Israeli society reconcile the war with the security-based narratives that inform collective identity in Israel.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the implications of the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war for Israeli identity¹ and the relationship between Israeli society and state. Israel's actions in Lebanon were highly controversial, particularly because the invasion was not seen as responding to a serious and immediate threat posed to Israel. While the siege of Beirut was also significant, the most blatant event incurring criticism and condemnation was the role played by Israel in the massacre committed by the Lebanese Christian Phalangists, Israel's ally, in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps from the 16th to the 18th of September, 1982; estimates vary concerning the number of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians killed, ranging from 300 to over 2000 (for instance, see Chomsky 1999: 369-370; Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 282). An independent international commission that investigated the Israeli invasion of Lebanon concluded that, with this war, "the Government of Israel has committed acts of aggression contrary to international law" (MacBride 1983: 191) and that "Israeli authorities or forces were involved, directly or indirectly" in the Sabra and Shatila massacres (MacBride 1983: 192). Additionally, Ariel Sharon, the Defence Minister at the time, was found by the Israeli Kahan Commission to hold personal responsibility for the massacre (Kahan *et al.* 1983: 104); despite this, he later served as Prime Minister from 2001 to 2006.

¹ When I speak of "Israeli identity", I refer to the reified identity that is believed or intended to reflect the Jewish majority, which generally excludes the Palestinian minority as being "Other" and not part of the Israeli nation. Israeli society is not, in reality, a cohesive unit and there are many tensions between different religious, ethnic, social, and political groups. Thus, the "identity" being discussed here is the dominant identity that is projected by various institutions of the state, including the government and military, as well as mainstream nationalistic cultural organizations, etc. Accordingly, an assumption of this essay is the constructivist notion that identities are created, are subjective, and are not given or pre-ordained.

This research problematizes the relationship between security narratives² and the construction, or reification, of national identity. More specifically, this thesis engages with the question of the articulation and reification of Israeli collective identity through security-based discourses that have occupied a central position in Israeli narratives since the founding of the state, and asks: What are the ramifications for constructions of identity when foreign policy conflicts with the security narratives that have previously been established?

According to Z. Maoz, who succinctly reviewed Israel's security doctrine and its relationship to Israeli foreign policy, Israel's security policy is based on a few deeply held beliefs or assumptions, primarily that: 1) "The Arab world is fundamentally hostile toward Israel" and "would attempt to destroy the Jewish state given the right chance"; 2) fundamental asymmetries between Israel and the Arab world mean that Israel will always be outnumbered by a more numerous enemy that also has access to greater resources; 3) that the international community cannot be counted upon in times of crisis, so Israel must be prepared to defend itself alone; and 4) that Israel's geography, particularly its territorial narrowness and small size, makes it vulnerable and constrains its ability to fight (2009: 7-9). It is not uncommon, even in the academic world, to find arguments introduced by assumptions such as: "Given the fact that Israel's very existence has been under constant threat since its establishment ..." (Lehman-Wilzig 1986: 129). So deeply ingrained are these

² The concept of "narratives" (alternatively, "master narratives" or "myths"; also called "assumptions" or "beliefs" in this thesis) refers to discourses that "articulate the common and shared worldview of a given society, provide legitimacy to its social order, foster integration between its members, and lead them to action" (Gertz 2000: 1). These "transmit ideological messages that, although not formulated directly, can be discerned in the subtexts" and often operate by constructing "imaginary views of the world" as "[o]ne of the main functions of such narratives is to preserve and prolong the existing social order by embellishing historical facts and specific conditions with an aura of eternal and immutable phenomena" (Gertz 2000: 1).

perceptions that they are taken for granted and regularly affirmed, apparently without a felt need to support such assertions or attempt to analyze the levels of concrete threat Israel has experienced at different times in its history. Furthermore, one does not need to rely on subjective interpretations of discourse analysis to uncover these themes; they are frequently explicitly enunciated by political elites and in Israeli policy documents (see, for example, Medzini 1990).

Reflecting these deeply-rooted assumptions are several security-based narratives which have been essential in informing the reified Israeli identity, projected by state apparatuses and pre-state apparatuses since before Israel's establishment. Among these collective narratives are: 1) Israel only fights wars of "no alternative" (*ein breira*); 2) Israel upholds the principle of "purity of arms" (*tohar haneshek*); and 3) the Israeli people, like the Jewish people throughout their history, are a "people that dwells alone" (while paradoxically affirming that, in some ways, they are a "nation like all others") (Sucharov 2005: 45-49).

The security-based narrative that will be most important in this research is the much-affirmed mantra that Israel only fights wars of "no alternative", portraying its security goals and measures as limited to what is absolutely necessary for self-defence and survival. This, in turn, is related to the principle of "purity of arms" as it implies that violence should be as limited as possible (Sucharov 2005: 45-48). In order to further develop a discussion of the relationship between security-based narratives and national identity, I will discuss the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, "Operation Peace for Galilee", as creating a significant crisis³

³ By "crisis", I refer to Erikson's seminal work on "identity crisis" in which he defines crisis as "a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources

for dominant constructions of Israeli collective identity because it violated the highly-praised value of using force only when it is required for defence. Accordingly, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon was seen as problematic and controversial because it was not perceived by the Israeli public as a necessary war, required for the protection and continued survival of Israel and its people (Sucharov 2005: 46; Bar-On 2004: 26; Shafir and Peled 2002: 237; Aronoff 1999: 38; Linn 1986: 49; etc.). Furthermore, the 1982 war was “the first war in Israeli history to give rise to domestic dissension of any significance” (Cohen 2008: 3). Sucharov affirms that it was the “*psychic tension* that Israelis experienced between their state's aggressive actions and its defensive-warrior role-identity” that caused problems for Israeli society, rather than than the specificity of Israeli foreign policy decisions, such as the decision to go to war in Lebanon (Sucharov 2005: 90; original emphasis). I have consequently chosen to focus on a specific historical event because, according to Furman, “the specific context of a war must be examined in order to uncover the disparity between the message being transmitted ... and the actual historical events as they are documented in the professional literature” (1999: 162).

The questions guiding this study are the following: Did the 1982 Lebanon war⁴

of growth, recovery, and further differentiation” (1968: 16). My own definition of “crisis” of national identity, in the context of this work, is the destabilization of the relationship between mainstream society and state institutions as the result of contradictions of societal norms, thereby casting doubt on the very foundations of the reified national identity.

⁴ While the First Lebanon War did not officially end until Israel pulled out of Lebanon in 2000, different sources frequently refer to the war as having ended in 1985, or sometimes refer to the war as mainly the first weeks or months of intense action (see, for example, Maoz, Z. 2009: 171). For instance, Linn defines the main campaign as having lasted six days, but with sporadic fighting until September 1982, which many call the end of the war, but she defines it as ending in June 1985 (1986: 490). Although the operation was

illustrate a discrepancy between 1) Israeli foreign policy and 2) affirmations concerning Israeli identity, as it had been reified through security-based narratives? If so, can the 1982 war be considered to have provoked a crisis for Israeli identity? What were the consequences of such a crisis? Was this a permanent rupture for Israeli collective identity, or were the established narratives resilient enough to cope with the crisis that emerged?

CONTEXT: LITERATURE REVIEW

In much of the literature on Israel and Israeli identity, there is a significant tendency to hint at the significance of the 1982 war as an important moment of controversy which strained relationships between the Israeli state and military, and the Israeli mainstream. However, perhaps because the reasons appeared obvious for Israeli authors who were well acquainted with the socio-political climate of the time, there seems to be a shortage of texts that discuss this phenomenon at length, especially compared to the much greater amounts of ink that have been spilled over the consequences of the 1948 War of Independence and its more recent controversial reinterpretations (see, for example, Bar-On 2004 and works by Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, and Avi Shlaim); the 1967 Six Day War and subsequent retention of occupied Arab territories; the 1973 Yom Kippur War that caught Israel by surprise; and the

officially called “Peace for Galilee” by the Israeli government and military, it became more popularly known as The Lebanon War and, later The First Lebanon War, after Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon. This work refers to the period of events that took place in 1982: the invasion of Lebanon, the siege of Beirut, and the Sabra and Shatila massacres, all of which took place between June and September 1982. Thus, I will refer to the conflict as the “1982 war”, the “1982 Lebanon War”, or “the Lebanon War”. These terms shall be used interchangeably to refer to Israel's military activity in Lebanon from June to September 1982.

Intifada or Palestinian uprising, which began in 1987, and the ensuing Israeli repression. In fact, the way that the social upheaval incurred by Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon is so often mentioned *only* in passing further implies that the reasons for these social tensions are so obvious and taken for granted that elaboration does not even seem to be warranted, according to these authors. Indeed, Weissbrod explicitly suggests that discussing the *reasons* for the occurrence of the wave of protests in reaction to the Lebanon War "may appear superfluous, because the answer to it is self-evident. After all, some issues and events in the Lebanon War aroused worldwide public condemnation and outrage. Why, then, should the same not apply to Israel?" (1984: 51). Nevertheless, "protest over a war has been uncommon enough in Israel to require some explanation" (Weissbrod 1984: 51).

A major question is left largely unanswered in the existing literature: What was it about the 1982 war that apparently, at least temporarily, shattered the national consensus on Israel's military activities?⁵ As is argued in this research, many texts that only mention in passing the cause of the dissent suggest that it was because of the contradictions posed by the invasion regarding established security narratives.

Chomsky mentions the importance of claims based on "security" needs and actions, justified as "security measures" (1999: 429; quotation marks used by Chomsky); condemnations of Israel's behaviour from various parts of Israeli society and internationally (1999: 222-242; 394-409); growing opposition to the war by both civilians and "soldiers ... appalled by the nature of the war" (1999: 237); and a decline in Israel's credibility (1999:

⁵ The 400,000 strong protest following the massacres at Sabra and Shatila was the largest in Israel's history (Chomsky 1999: 394), and there were unprecedented cases of individuals refusing "to serve in a war of aggression" (Chomsky 1999: 396).

222). These factors indicate that the 1982 war was an important event that had serious effects on both Israeli perceptions of Israel's foreign policy, and social cohesion in Israel, and suggest that dynamics involving identity and security narratives are at play.

Lebel, like Chomsky, points to the 1982 war as a key point of rupture between Israeli society and its military, due to the fact that it was seen as “an avoidable war of choice” (2007: 74) that unnecessarily caused Israeli deaths. Lebel illustrates the divisions within Israeli society that were provoked by the war through his discussion of the breakdown of the special relationship between the military and bereaved parents. Indeed, since the First Lebanon War, parents have been “major actors in the social discourse on war and the military” (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari, 1999: 304) and have organized protest movements including “Parents Against Silence” and “Four Mothers”. While not explicitly addressing questions of security narratives and identity construction, Lebel implies that a rupture in Israeli society vis-à-vis the state was incurred as a result of state violations of security-based norms.

Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder frequently refer to “such divisive issues as the bifurcation of Israel following the Lebanon War” (1999: 16), the actions of conscientious objectors to this war (1999: 9, 19), and the amplification of the “anxious and critical voices of parents” during the Lebanon War and First *Intifada* (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999: 305). However, they only mention these dynamics in passing and do not expand on them. Many other authors make brief references to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon as a deeply significant moment. Lentin, for example, asserts that many anti-Zionist Israelis’ “road to Damascus’ tales often date back to the wake of the 1982 Lebanon war” (2008: 3). Aronoff

makes reference to this event as a “highly controversial war (of choice)” (1999: 38), while Shafir and Peled declare that “[t]he IDF’s [Israel Defense Forces] once exorbitant prestige began shrinking as a consequence of two of its own actions”, one of them being “the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, where it was faulted for engaging not in a defensive but in an offensive action”⁶ (2002: 237). The diversity of authors making such references strongly implies that the 1982 war was important in provoking criticism of the Israeli military and exacerbating social tensions, but that the authors perceive this fact to be so self-evident that they do not bother to explain it further.⁷

Meanwhile, more theoretical works on norms, self-perception, and identity crisis can give us clues as to how an event in which a state that proclaims to use force only in self-defence is perceived as acting aggressively may affect perceptions of national identity and the strength of the relationship between state and society. According to Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein's discussion of norms as “collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity” (1996: 54), we can infer that, according to this perspective, national identity crisis could be provoked by foreign policy and state behaviour that deviates from accepted norms. In a chapter in the same volume, Barnett discusses the “identity crisis” that began in Israel in the late 1980s (Jepperson *et. al.* 1996: 62); however, the dimension privileged by Barnett, like Chomsky, is that of contradictions in the relationship between Israel and the US, which is based on shared values (Barnett 1996: 403). Barnett's reference to the “late 1980s” is representative of another trend of authors making references to

⁶ The other action cited was the IDF's role in suppressing the first Palestinian *Intifada*, which began in 1987 (Shafir and Peled 2002: 237).

⁷ Another example is Shapira's mention that “[s]ince the early 1980s, Israeli identity underwent deep changes, resulting in fragmentation of the 'old' hegemonic identity into subidentities” (2004: viii). Shapira does not go on to explain why or how these changes occurred.

changes in Israeli identity and society in the “1980s” but without ever mentioning the Lebanon War. Even if the discussion focuses on other events, such as the *Intifada*, it does not seem reasonable to assume that Israel's then-ongoing war, or at least continuing military presence, in Lebanon would have played no role in Israeli society and politics. While Barnett does not mention the 1982 war in particular, we can infer that, based on Barnett’s perspective on Israeli identity defined in relation to the international realm, he would consider contradictions raised by Israel’s norm-violating actions in 1982 as problematic behaviour that could damage its international reputation and international relationships, and therefore its projected identity. Similarly, Weissbrod affirms that a society's identity is based on “a core value system specific to it, which is frequently religious, though not necessarily so” (1984: 51). She defines an ideology as “a system of ideas that justifies the ongoing social structure, or one desired in the future, [that] is accepted if it reinterprets these core values so as to adapt them to present circumstances” (Weissbrod 1984: 51-52). As such, crisis will occur if the promoted “ideology” is actually in conflict with the system of core values. Furthermore, when “the [power] center [betrays] the original principles and therefore [forfeits] its right to its position[, i]t is responsible for the *crisis of identity* and must pay the price” (Weissbrod 1984: 53; emphasis added).

Bar-On, meanwhile, discusses changes in the self-perception of Israelis, which he attributes to an “identity crisis” regarding “traditional values, beliefs, and conflicting interpretations of their past” (2004: 5). Similar to Aronoff who refers to 1967 as the “End of a National Consensus” (1999: 38), Bar-On indicates that the eroding consensus on this fact began in the late 1960s and is primarily due to Israel’s policies regarding the retention of

territories occupied in 1967, as it did not seem that Israel was acting in the interests of peace (2004: 25-26). He refers to the war of 1982 not as provoking a rupture so much as a particularly blatant continuation of this trend of doubts “about the wisdom and integrity of the government and about the competence of the military elite,” thus “[hastening] the process” of increasing criticism of Israeli narratives (2005: 26).

However, there is a smaller number of excellent works that do explicitly discuss the relationship between Israeli society and its military, and the relationship between security-based narratives and national identity. For instance, Kimmerling, who has written prolifically on the topic, discusses what he calls the “military-cultural complex” (2001: 3) and the important role of “civilian militarism” (2001: 12) and the “civil religion of security” in Israeli society (2001: 212). While he mentions events that have caused a decline in the prestige of the military (2001: 216), including a debate on the Lebanon War in terms of the breaking of a “social contract” (2001: 217), Kimmerling’s focus is on the continued pervasiveness of militarism in Israeli society. Thus, he sees the negative reaction to the Lebanon War as a hiccup in a society that still remains deeply supportive of, and in fact intimately intertwined with, its military.

In his work on the Israeli geopolitical imagination, Newman discusses the use of existential threat in security discourse as a “means of creating national consensus and in socializing” Israelis to fight and die “for the defence of the homeland” (2000: 309). He refers to Israel’s earlier wars as “commonly seen as legitimate acts of self-defence”, which is not the case of the 1982 war (2000: 311). Thus, it follows that an absence of perceived threat to necessitate military action could indeed incur the erosion of consensus regarding the

military. He affirms that traditional Israeli discourses of facing existential threat and being the “only democracy” in the Middle East are increasingly questioned within and outside Israel (Newman 2000: 304). While Newman only mentions 1982 in passing, we can infer from his reasoning that state behaviour and statements that contradict prevalent discourses are significant, as he mentions that alternative discourses “are difficult for the Israeli populace to accept” (2000: 313).

Z. Maoz asserts that “the Lebanon War was a disaster for Israel, a minor one perhaps, but a disaster nonetheless” and that it was a “war of aggression”; he qualifies the more popular expression “war of choice” as an understatement (2009: 171). Although agreeing with Schiff and Ya’ari (1984: 301) that it was the brainchild of Sharon, he implicates other sectors of the government and military as complicit (2009: 202-204). Maoz affirms that Israeli society was built “on principles of self-defense” (2009: 486) and that this war was a watershed event that “shattered the myth of Israel as a state fighting a defensive battle for its survival” (2009: 230).

Sucharov defines Israel’s “role-identity” as that of a “defensive warrior” whose security ethic involves fighting only wars of “no alternative” (2005: 41). Thus, she argues that the Lebanon War “elicited a cognitive dissonance” (2005: 41) because it was not “essential to self-defense in the ‘no alternative’ sense of the term” (2005: 48) and was “the most concerted break with the Israeli security ethic to date” (2005: 89). The most serious internal conflict was the “psychic tension” triggered by the apparently aggressive nature of Israel’s actions (2005: 90), rather than objections to the behaviour itself.

ARGUMENTS

The literature presented brings to the fore a number of questions and gaps that need to be addressed.

The fact that there is a large body of works which hint at the importance of the 1982 war as posing a contradiction in terms of established security narratives raises the following questions: How was the 1982 war significant? How did it undermine Israel's credibility? What were the domestic socio-political effects of the condemnation of Israel's actions in the war—the most blatant backlash being the reactions to the Sabra and Shatila massacre? Should the negative reaction and criticism be seen only as an objective reaction to the events, which were indeed embarrassing to Israel in the international and domestic sphere? Or should this negative reaction be seen as also incurred by a dissonance between Israeli foreign policy and perceptions of Israeli identity as based on an ethic of purity of arms and of only fighting wars of “no choice”?

The meagre discussion of the assumption that the 1982 war provoked or exacerbated divisions within Israeli society can be interpreted as implying that the rupture caused by the war was so obvious that it eliminates the need for explicit discussion of its causes. Maoz offers an explanation: “There is no question that the Lebanon War was a war of Israeli aggression. ... The consensus about the aggressive nature of the war makes a discussion of the war seemingly superfluous” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 171-172). Works merely referring to the 1982 war as one that was significant for negatively impacting the cohesion of Israeli society implicitly support the idea that this war may have provoked an identity crisis for Israelis. Nevertheless, there is a gap in the existing literature that needs to be filled by a perspective

stressing the implications of the 1982 war as straining the relationship between Israeli identity and security narratives. Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari (1999: 305), for example, mention objections to the 1982 war from various sectors of society; however, they do not explain *why* this war aroused such contestation.

Although Kimmerling prefers to highlight the pervasiveness of Israeli militarism, this work will address the oft-overlooked contestation of this militarism that *did* emerge in 1982, even if it, arguably, did not endure in a significant form. Despite the resistance to the war, and although the Sabra and Shatila massacres led to the largest protest in Israeli history, “phenomena of active resistance to military service ... [has] never been widespread” (Helman 1999: 198). Nevertheless, studying episodes of resistance may provide insights into dynamics of Israeli society and militarism. Because refusal of military service is so rare, it is important to ask: What was it about the 1982 war that prompted the trend of conscientious objection?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND APPROACH

The contribution I would like to make to fill the existing knowledge gap is an investigation of 1) the dissonance between Israeli foreign policy and security-based narratives; 2) the ramifications of this dissonance for Israeli collective identity; and 3) ramifications on the cohesion between Israeli society and state, which can be observed in the form of protests and refusal of military service that occurred in 1982.

Works by Hansen (2006), Campbell (1998), Neocleous (2008), and Copenhagen

School authors Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde (1998) inform a theoretical approach based on security discourses or narratives. The work of the Copenhagen School authors, primarily the theory of securitization, is the basis of an important assumption of this research is: Nothing is a security threat by nature. Rather, the Copenhagen School contends that what makes something a security threat is its articulation as such—an issue is “securitized” when it is cast as an existential threat to a designated referent object, such as the state or society (Buzan *et. al.* 1998: 21). Thus, it is also assumed that the 1982 war would have provoked less contestation had it been better framed as responding to urgent security threats faced by Israel. Hansen presents a poststructuralist model of discourse analysis and emphasizes the links between identity and foreign policy (2006: xvii, 1). While foreign policy is “conventionally understood as the external orientation of preestablished states with secure identities” (Campbell 1998: 68), Hansen contends that “foreign policies rely upon representations of identity, but it is also through the formulation of foreign policy that identities are produced and reproduced” (2006: 1). In studying the 1982 Lebanon War, we are discussing an aspect of foreign policy, namely the military actions of a state beyond its borders. Policy and security narratives are intimately connected, not only to each other, but to constructions of identity, which are, in turn, relational and defined by difference. Furthermore, Neocleous describes the relationship between national identity and discourses on national security as “mutually constitutive” (2008: 107) and discusses a “security-identity-loyalty complex”, mentioning that conditions of “emergency”, that is, of threats to security, involve the testing of loyalty (2008: 141). From this, we can infer that if policy and loyalty are dependent upon representations of threat and security narratives, the questioning

of the existence of such threats, as in the case of the 1982 war, will lead to contestation of policies and eroding loyalty to the state. Indeed, in 1982, “decreased loyalty” to the state and military were expressed by the refusal of reserve soldiers to serve in Lebanon (see Helman 1999; Linn 1986). Additionally, it is expected that a “cognitive dissonance”, to use Sucharov’s language, will occur when state policies and actions are at odds with the identity with which they are related.

It seems appropriate, then, to opt for a poststructuralist theoretical approach inspired by the above authors to fill the gap of knowledge concerning the impact of the 1982 war on Israeli perceptions of national identity and cohesion between state and society. First of all, a poststructuralist perspective emphasizes the relationship between identity and state policies and, by extension, actions taken by the state. Secondly, a critical approach to security and emphasis on security narratives as constitutive of both identity and policy links together the dynamics that will be studied in this research, including the reification of national identity and the conflicts that arise when identity, security narratives, and foreign policy are not consistent.

The first chapter discusses security narratives that inform Israeli identity, how these narratives were challenged by the 1982 war, as well as how opposition to the war manifested itself in various sectors of Israeli society.

The second chapter builds on Sucharov’s work by searching for representations of the “cognitive dissonance” or “psychic tension” incurred by the 1982 war that challenged articulations of Israeli identity by contradicting security narratives. I examine

representations of Israeli reactions to the war in cinema.⁸ As Shohat notes, “[t]he incursion into Lebanon in 1982 ... generated not only political movement but also oppositional artistic practices in the form of poems, plays, photographs, and films thematizing the political situation” (2010: 215). My methodological approach and choice of materials to study are inspired by Lene Hansen’s (2006) outlining of methodological approaches for poststructuralist discourse analysis. While Hansen proposes three research models, the one chosen for this research involves the inclusion of expressions in high and pop culture and seeks to relate them to articulations within official policy discourses (2006: 62).

Cinema was chosen as the privileged site of representation because “[c]inema is not simply an industry or a set of individual texts; it is above all, a social institution” (Zanger 1999: 261) and forms “a vital arena for the representation of history and nation” (Shohat 2010: 251). Additionally, war films in particular can be read as expressions of national identity, because “[i]f there is any place at all where group identity—today usually national—is a necessity, it is the military space, the military experience; [n]ational definitions, their component explanations, boundaries, wondering, fears and anxieties—all converge in war films” (Zanger 1999: 261). Significantly, Zanger even refers to “post-Lebanon [War] Israeli war films ... in the context of a general break of Israeli society with a central cultural code” (1999: 270) and compares Israel’s post-Lebanon films to American post-Vietnam films as belonging to a progressive genre of war film (1999: 267). Similarly to the US War in Vietnam, Israel’s war in Lebanon provoked greater criticism than previous

⁸ While the author is of the opinion that social attitudes are influenced by pop culture as much as pop culture reflects existing trends, this research focuses on cinema as reflections of Israeli reactions to the war rather than engaging with the reception of the films in Israel, as this is not only difficult to gauge, but would require a separate research endeavour.

military ventures due to questioning of the necessity and wisdom of this invasion. Also, like the Vietnam War, the Lebanon War became drawn out and lasted years longer than expected. Both incurred unprecedented levels of domestic social opposition to the war and to military service. Thus, films about both of these wars are often considered more critical and “progressive” than those centred on other conflicts.

A word on the use of second-order representations. Although films cannot be counted as “first-order representations – such as a politician's speech or a newspaper article” (Kangas 2009: 322), this does not mean that they are irrelevant to the study of politics: while “popular culture rarely makes the claim of being a true representation of the real world ... [t]his ... does not reduce its effectiveness. For a majority of people, it is namely these second order representations that come to play a significant role as sources of knowledge of politics and society” (Kangas 2009: 322, referencing Neumann and Nexon). One of the ways in which artifacts of popular culture, such as cinema, can be imbued with “pedagogical and analytical importance” is by conceptualizing it as “a reflective surface, which captures and reflects back some essential or important features of the dynamics of international relations and world politics” (Kangas 2009: 323). Additionally, it can be argued that, in some cases, “political events motivate the production of specific artefacts of popular culture – that is, [in such cases,] popular culture is an effect of political processes” (Kangas 2009: 323). Furthermore, Neumann and Nexon also suggest that popular culture can point to “evidence about the norms, values, ideas, identities and beliefs that are dominant within a particular political community” (Kangas 2009: 323). In sum, “[w]hen popular culture is viewed in its constitutive capacity, the distinction between first and second order representations is

relaxed” (Kangas 2009: 324). This work draws connections between, on the one hand, academic authorities on Israeli society and the work of historians on the events of 1982, and, on the other hand, elements from the cinematic representations of this war in order to further analyze the repercussions of the events of this period for Israeli collective identity.⁹

Thus, informed by a theoretical base highlighting the mutually constitutive relationship between foreign policy, security-based narratives, and national identity, I study Israeli reactions to the war in the Israeli films to date that have dealt with the 1982 invasion of Lebanon¹⁰: *Ricochets* (Cohen 1986), *Cup Final* (Riklis 1992), *Time for Cherries*¹¹ (Bouzaglo 1991), *Lebanon* (Maoz, S. 2009), and *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman 2008). To date, only the above five films have dealt with the events of 1982, and all are considered more or less “anti-war” or critical of Israel’s involvement in Lebanon.¹² However, since the IDF-produced *Ricochets* is more often perceived as merely superficially critical, more attention is given to the other four films. These can be divided into two periods: The first group, released roughly a decade after the invasion: *Time for Cherries* and *Cup Final*; and the second group, released over 25 years after the invasion: *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon*. It is interesting that, after the 1986 release of *Ricochets*, there were long gaps between the

⁹ I would have liked to conduct a more comprehensive examination of first-order representations, such as parliamentary debates and/or media coverage, but that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, I have chosen to provide an analysis of academic sources to complement my review of cinematic second-order representations.

¹⁰ Since the period of events being studied is in 1982, only films about this period will be studied. For instance, while *Beaufort* deals with the First Lebanon War, it is not included here because it is set in 2000, when Israel pulled out of Lebanon.

¹¹ The Hebrew title *Onat Haduvdevanim* has been translated into English in a number of ways, including *Time for Cherries*, *Cherry Season* and *Season of the Cherries*. I have chosen to use the title *Time for Cherries* as it is the English title of the DVD version studied in writing this thesis.

¹² Raz Yosef (2010: 312) also refers to *Fragments (Resisim)*, dir. Yossi Zomer, 1989), but I have found very little information on this film. It is not discussed by Shohat (2010), Zanger (1999), or Gertz (1999), nor is the film easily available for viewing. Due to these limitations, as well as the limited scope of this project, this project is limited to discussion of the five films mentioned above.

production of films about the invasion of Lebanon, but that after each interval two films were produced and released around the same time.

The third chapter addresses the limitations of the contestation of the 1982 war. For instance, most of the conscientious objectors of the Lebanon War completed later periods of service in the IDF (see Helman 1999). Furthermore, protests on the scale of those in reaction to the Sabra and Shatila massacres would not be seen again for nearly thirty years, until the 2001 “Occupy” movement, despite the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories and the repression of the *intifadas*. Additionally, Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister in 2001, despite his personal responsibility (Kahan 1983: 104) for the invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. This chapter argues that, while Israelis did indeed experience cognitive dissonance due to Israeli foreign policy decisions in 1982, the existing security narratives on which Israeli identity is based were strong enough for most Israelis to cope with and move past this temporary crisis, national identity largely intact, albeit having gone through a traumatic experience. The narrative that this war was *exceptional* because of its violations of Israeli norms underscores the belief that Israel's war and policies are *usually* just and defensive.¹³ Furthermore, the practice of confirming the morality of the Israeli military through comparison with its Arab counterparts, painting them as barbaric and violence-loving people, helped Israelis renew their faith in Israel's security-based narratives which, in turn, helped to restore affirmation of a widely shared national identity. Finally, the

¹³ In this research, “exception” is used in the idiomatic sense of “the exception proves the rule” and should not be confused with uses of the “exception” in political theory, such as in the sense of Agamben's “state of exception”.

passage of time, the ardent desire to find closure and overcome this trying experience, as well as primarily blaming one individual for the war, helped Israelis restore their relationship with their political and military institutions.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SECURITY-IDENTITY-FOREIGN POLICY NEXUS

As the relationship between national identity¹⁴ and security-based norms and narratives is central to this thesis, as well as the interplay between both security and identity with foreign policy, in this case Israel's decision to invade Lebanon in 1982, we will begin by discussing the literature on which these assumptions are based.

A significant number of notable authors have discussed the importance of the relationship between identity and security. As Neocleous posits, there is a “mutually constitutive relationship between a particular national identity and the claims of national security” (2008: 107-108). As such, “security and identity are inextricably linked, not in the obvious existential or ontological ways discussed by sociologists and psychoanalysts, but in a far more political way: that the fabrication of national security goes hand in hand with the fabrication of national identity, and vice versa” (Neocleous 2008: 107). Lentin agrees, saying that “security is indeed central to the self-perception of the Israeli state” and that the “Israeli obsession with state security is fed by a deep sense of Jewish victimhood and vulnerability” (2008: 10). Similarly, Furman asserts that “security has become a central theme in Israeli society, exercising a profound influence on the [country's] values and institutions and on the everyday life of its citizens” (1999: 142). Furthermore, “the ideology of national security

¹⁴ According to Shapira, identity is an “ongoing project”, but some of its defining characteristics include common ethnicity, religion, ideals and norms, and language and culture, as well as sharing a common past and aspiring to a common future (2004: vii). She also describes what one can call “Israeli identity” as defined by “the generation that established the state” and images of the desirable “Israeli”; this is the reified identity that has played an important role in Israeli social and political life since Israel's establishment (2004: vii).

[depends] on a system of symbolic representation defining national identity by reference to an ‘Other’” (Neocleous 2008: 108) who is seen as threatening, and, therefore, stimulating the need for “security”. Hansen also argues that construction of identity is relational, saying that “the state’s construction of ‘its’ national identity is only possible through a simultaneous delineation of something which is different or Other” (2006: 19). Gertz explicitly supports this assumption: “the Israeli-Arab dichotomy provides a way to define and confirm [the Israeli] identity” (2000: 35). Accordingly, literature in the period preceding the establishment of Israel tends to focus “on the adversary”, presenting “the Arab” as “a figure with a timeless existence in history and a boundless existence in space, a figure which personifies eternal hatred towards the Jew” (Gertz 2000: 24). Israeli policy relies on such relational concepts, including dwelling on the “otherness” and perceived threatening nature of Arab countries and people. A 1974 study confirmed this dichotomy in perceptions of Jews and Arabs by the Israeli elite: “whereas the Jews were peace-loving, the Arabs were perceived as war-loving” and that “the Arabs had not destroyed Israel not because they had not wanted to or had not tried, but because they were not able to” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 29). A telling illustration of this phenomenon can be found in the following example of an exchange that occurred in an Israeli kindergarten. This anecdote points to the very early age at which such norms and assumptions are absorbed by Israelis:

Teacher: “The state of Israel belongs to the Jews.”

Child: “The Arabs want to take our whole village but we won't let them.”

Teacher: “No, we won't let them, we will defend our village just like the Maccabees did.” (Furman 1999: 157)

Israel’s perception of itself as constantly under threat is inseparable from a conception of its Arab neighbours as hostile, while its feeling of being isolated on the international stage

stems from a perception in which the Jewish people have been historically neglected and even betrayed by the international community when they have been in the greatest need of assistance. Biblical history is very important in Israel as it is the basis for many narratives regarding identity and security (or is at least referred to as such). According to the dominant Israeli world-view, the members of the international community are also “Others” who may not always be perceived as hostile, per se, but who have been historically seen as complicit, sometimes actively and other times passively, in a long history of persecution, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and other crimes committed against the Jewish people. The impact of this impression of other groups as either hostile or at least reluctant to come to the aid of the Jewish people remains significant, and plays no small role in Israeli foreign policy. Such relational conceptions contribute to an Israeli identity based on self-reliance in the face of constant threat, as shall be argued throughout this chapter. Thus, in the Israeli context, the juxtaposition of an Israeli “Self” with a hostile Arab “Other”, along with the presence of a multitude of indifferent, if not hostile, international “Others” is central to both identity and security discourses in a narrative in which conflict is central.

While a key feature of modern poststructuralist thought, the idea of an intimate relationship between conceptions of identity and security is not a recent development in political science, nor is it foreign to more traditional theoretical approaches. In Hobbes's *Leviathan*, representations of fear and danger are central to questions of identity (Campbell 1998: 56): the fear of returning to the dangers of the state of nature reinforces the value attributed to the Leviathan, and this fear is central in “securing the grounds for identity in the state” (Campbell 1998: 61). In a similar vein, Neocleous affirms that “it was Hobbes who first articulated the importance of the relationship between loyalty and security for the

modern state” (2008: 123). He argues that “[t]he crowning achievement of the national security state was to connect these themes [of loyalty and security] to a particular national identity and target a particular political Other” (Neocleous 2008: 123), which is the case of Arab-Israeli conflicts. Neocleous goes on to affirm the relationship between fear, the need for security, and loyalty (2008: 140). The utilization of fear is therefore an important element in security discourse:

[T]he national security state has constantly exhibited one insecurity, fear or anxiety after another, turning the entire social symbolic system surrounding national security into the alter image of a collectively anticipated spectacle of disaster. In peddling the fear of disintegration and crisis, the ideology of security is the paranoid style in politics writ large. (Neocleous 2008: 117)

Constant fear helps to ensure loyalty to the state, as the state presents itself as the only entity able to provide security. After all, according to realist thought, security is so highly praised that individuals are willing to give up much of their freedom in exchange for security. Accordingly, there is an important relationship between security, identity, and loyalty, which is evidenced in a situation of “permanent emergency and the collapse of any distinction between war and peace [which means] that the constant testing of loyalty, reassertion of identity and improvement in security can be carried out by and across the whole social body” (Neocleous 2008: 141). Indeed, the Israeli public has regularly proven itself to be deeply loyal, trusting the state to ensure their security: “the public seems to rally round the flag unfailingly in times of crisis. This is all a leader really needs to know; besides, the public's display of loyalty and cohesion takes place indiscriminately without determining whether the crisis is 'real' or was provoked by the leadership for domestic consumption” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 9). Thus, as argued by the authors of the Copenhagen School, what is considered a “security” threat is determined by its perception and framing as such (Wæver

1995; Buzan *et. al.* 1998). Individuals and collectivities act according to what they believe to be true, and perceived threat stimulates loyalty to the providers of security: the state and its military.

This chapter will show that in the Israeli context, the articulation of identity in security discourses is indeed essential to maintaining the support and loyalty of the general population for government policies, particularly concerning the military, such as policies on conscription or military service in times of war. Accordingly, it was the failure to inscribe the logic of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon within the framework of security and survival that caused this war to be more controversial than any preceding military engagement in Israel's history. The findings of Arian *et. al.* conclude that “issues of security policy are generally characterized by consensus and that issues of foreign policy – in the Israeli case of the 1980s, the territories – divide the population almost evenly” (1988: 11). While it may seem odd to create a distinction between matters of “security policy” and “foreign policy”, since military actions beyond Israel's borders are usually seen as pertaining to both, a look through the conceptual lens of securitization suggests that foreign policy that is seen as responding to an existential threat receives the heightened importance and priority of a “security issue”. Otherwise, a military adventure outside Israel's borders, such as the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, would merely pertain to “foreign policy” and would, therefore, be open to debate. The casting of an issue as one of existential threat allows it to transcend the realm of foreign policy. While foreign policy may be questioned and debated in political and social spheres, matters of security are considered the domain of security professionals. Furthermore, despite the deeply ingrained loyalty to the IDF, Israel's adventures in Lebanon in 1982 provoked the greatest contestation of the military to date: a 400,000 person protest on September 25th,

1982 that demanded an investigation into the military's role in the Sabra and Shatila massacres (Eban 1983: XIII).

Poststructuralist discourse analysis is a useful approach with which to discuss the importance of identity for foreign policy (Hansen 2006: xvii). Just as Neocleous discusses the mutually constitutive relationship between national identity and national security, Hansen extends this relationship to include foreign policy, arguing that national identity and the formulation of foreign policy are mutually constitutive as well (2006: 1). Therefore, identity cannot be considered to be “causally separate from foreign policy” (Hansen 2006: 1). Hansen explains this link:

[P]olicies are dependent upon representations of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address. Foreign policies need to ascribe meaning to the situation and to construct the objects within it, and in doing so they articulate and draw upon specific identities of other states, regions, peoples, and institutions as well as on the identity of a national, regional, or institutional Self. (2006: 5-6)

Thus, identities are by no means static; they are interpretive and continuously re-articulated and reaffirmed, and can be summarized as “discursive, political, relational, and social” (Hansen 2006: 6). Campbell describes foreign policy as “one of the boundary-producing practices central to the production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates” (1998: 68). While a number of different processes are involved in the construction of a state’s identity, such as “exclusionary practices”, “discourses of danger”, “representations of fear”, “the enumeration of threats”, and “claims to shared ethnicity, nationality, political ideals, religious beliefs, or other commonalities”, Campbell emphasizes that “all meaning is constituted through difference” (1998: 70), such as through Self/Other dichotomies. References to security needs are extremely powerful in the realm of foreign policy, as the issue is “presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent

object” – in this case, the state and population of Israel; such a framing implies a situation of emergency, thereby justifying the use of extraordinary measures, including the use of force (Buzan *et. al.* 1998: 21). Indeed, Weizman affirms that “[b]oth Israeli and international law tend to tolerate acts defined according to the logic of security” (2007: 167), but which might otherwise be seen as inappropriate behaviour, especially of a state that defines itself as a Western-style democracy.

While the established literature discusses mainly *foreign policy*, this thesis discusses Israeli reactions to foreign policy decisions pertaining to security and/or the use of its military. Particularly with the salience of the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts in Israeli society, it is difficult to separate the “foreign” from the “domestic”. In Israel’s case, while articulations of foreign policy are indeed important to Israeli identity construction in relation to its neighbours, there are enemies within as well as beyond state borders. Consider, for instance, Weizman’s distinction between the terms “defence” and “security”, in which a “defensive” posture is taken against outside threats, while “security” deals with threats that are already inside (2007: 106). In Israel, the distinction between inside and outside is blurred: Israel has officially annexed certain Arab territories, such as in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and considers them Israeli, although they are not recognized as such internationally; and controls, but has not officially annexed, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which now include hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers, while still treating these territories as distinct from Israel proper (Weizman 2007: 125). Part of the relationship between identity and foreign policy is the use of the former in legitimizing the latter (Hansen 2006: 7). In the case of Israel, we refer not only to the use of identity (and proclaimed threat to same) to justify Israel’s foreign policy, especially military

action beyond Israeli borders, but also for domestic matters, such as policies on conscription and military service. Therefore, while International Relations authors such as Hansen and Campbell focus on foreign policy, this research extends the focus to aspects of military policies that affect the domestic realm, and how foreign policy is received in the domestic sphere.

Considerations of national security do not only look outwards to protect against threats; an important dimension of security discourse is the inward focus of national security, which is also present. While in the following citation Neocleous is discussing the American context, the point made about the inward gaze of security is still very relevant to the Israeli context:

US national security documents ... are interesting for their stress on psychological operations targeted *internally* towards the American people as much as externally towards the enemy and suggesting that the security project is as much an ideological and cultural offensive as it is military or economic; conversely, it also suggests the extent to which culture has been used as one of the disciplinary techniques of liberal power. (2008: 112; original emphasis)

As such, mobilizing domestic support for foreign policy decisions and military actions can be seen as an integral part of acting in the interests of “national security”. Thus, military questions and issues of national security are not strictly limited to extraterritorial matters. Particularly in democratic societies, popular support of the electorate is important for the maintenance and implementation of policy, and expressions of culture that reinforce of discourses of fear and insecurity can be used to support this end. As we shall see in the following section, the use of language referring to national security is important in the establishment of consensus through most of Israeli society on matters pertaining to foreign policy, particularly the military and its role in assuring security and survival.

In sum, while identities are in reality fluid, contingent, and relational, and no static or monolithic identities exist, it is through “attempted securitizations that a reified, monolithic form of identity is declared. It is when identities are *securitized* that their negotiability and flexibility are challenged, denied, or suppressed” (Williams 2003: 519; original emphasis). This reified construction of collective identity both supports and is re-created by discourses of national security, including those referring to fear and Self/Other dichotomies, which reinforce various political and military policies. Furthermore, it is important to note that if the legitimacy of foreign policy can be increased by appeals to identity and security, we can infer that failure to inscribe foreign policy within security narratives can negatively impact domestic support for a state policy or action. This research argues that the 1982 invasion of Lebanon enjoyed less support than previous ventures by the Israeli military because it was not strongly framed within a security narrative; on the contrary, the negative response was due to the war's violations of established security-based norms.

ARTICULATIONS OF ISRAELI IDENTITY IN SECURITY DISCOURSES

Several facets of traditional Israeli identity are strongly tied to questions of security. According to Arian *et. al.*'s 1986 survey of Israeli public opinion on national security policy, there was “an over-arching concept of national security which permeated the system and which structured the beliefs and behavior patterns of Israelis” and that while there are disagreements about how it should be achieved, “Israelis concur about the centrality of security” (1988: 4). We will briefly discuss three prevalent Israeli assumptions about

security that are an essential starting point to understanding Israeli identity: 1) Israel as constantly under threat; 2) Israel as small and vulnerable; and 3) Israel as being alone at the international level, seeing itself as having no trustworthy allies. Finally, we will turn to the security narrative that is central in this research: that *despite* the vulnerable position in which Israel perceives itself to be, Israeli identity, in the collective Israeli imagination is that of a “defensive warrior”. This “defensive warrior” is well-trained and possesses great military capacity, but only resorts to the use of force when it is absolutely necessary for self-defense. This restraint is, in turn, related to a touted ethic of “purity of arms” (Sucharov 2005: 45-48). Thus, based on the previously established mutually constitutive relationship between identity, security-based beliefs, and foreign policy, I argue that foreign policy that violates security norms is capable of provoking identity crisis because it disrupts the security-identity-foreign policy relationship. This chapter argues that, not only did the 1982 Lebanon War violate the assumption that Israel only uses force when necessary for self-defence, but that the widespread social criticism and perception of this war as controversial comes from its violation of the norm that Israel only fights wars of “no alternative”. Because this war challenged a deeply-held belief and narrative, it provoked a crisis of national identity in Israel.

According to Z. Maoz, Israeli foreign policy is “derivative”: it “has always been a servant of Israel’s security policy” (2009: 7). Indeed, Maoz, argues that “policy-making in Israel has always been and continues to be dominated by a centralized, self-serving, and self-perpetuating security community” (2009: 499). Furthermore, although politicians in Israel do not completely disregard the views of the populace, “[p]ublic opinion has played only a minor role in considerations of national security policy research” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 3).

Recalling what Hansen and Campbell have said about the mutually constitutive relationship between identity and foreign policy, we affirm that identity is subject to questions of security. In Maoz's discussion of "the building blocks of Israel's national security policy", he affirms that "Israel's security policy is based on a set of assumptions about Israel's regional and international environment [which] define the basic threat perception that Israel is said to have experienced over the years" (Maoz, Z. 2009: 7). Therefore, if foreign policy is based on these assumptions, then these perceptions of threat are also constitutive of a reified Israeli identity.

i) Israel as Nation Under Siege

One of the perceptions that inform Israeli collective identity is that Israel is under constant threat from its neighbours. As Z. Maoz states, most Israelis assume that "[t]he Arab world is fundamentally hostile toward Israel [and] would attempt to destroy the Jewish state given the right chance" (2009: 7). As Newman highlights, this perception stems from a Self/Other dichotomy which "is at the heart of the security fears thrown up by the political elites, and ... enables the creation of a socially constructed form of national unity which forms the lowest common denominator of the collective identity, namely the fear of the outsider" (2000: 308). Therefore, Israeli identity is characterized by a "siege mentality" (Maoz, Z. 2009: 481), in which Israel constantly faces "existential threat" (Maoz, Z. 2009: 482). This perception dates back to "Ben-Gurion's notion of a small state surrounded by far larger enemies" in the era of the establishment of the State of Israel (Maoz, Z. 2009: 482). Furthermore, Sucharov affirms that "from its birth Israel fostered the myth of heroic struggle against those bent on its

destruction”, as a continuation of the tale of David against Goliath (Sucharov 2005: 57). This perspective has left long-lasting marks on the Israeli collective consciousness and approaches to the formulation of foreign policy: “Israeli military doctrine has largely centered on the assumption that ‘the *central aim of Arab countries is to destroy the state of Israel whenever they feel able to do so*’” (Sucharov 2005: 48; original emphasis).¹⁵

However, the reality of Israel’s immense military superiority contradicts this perception; it has been a long time since there was any chance that one of Israel’s Arab neighbours could pose a serious threat to its existence (Maoz, Z. 2009: 5), and indeed, most “Israelis feel secure ... in the nation's ability to win in war” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 34). Newman affirms that:

The major paradox in this continued sense of security identity is the fact that Israel displays its obvious military strength and superiority while, at the same time, emphasizing the security threat as part of a national discourse aimed at justifying actions and policies which would not normally be supported by the global community. (2000: 311)

Consequently, the perception of weakness provides the opportunity to increase one’s strength, as the perception of threat is required in discourses used to inspire loyalty and support, as illustrated by Neocleous (2008). Israel’s identification as being threatened allows for the creation of “a strong military deterrent with the direct assistance of the majority of the population who identify with the need to collectively combat the perceived threat” (Newman 2000: 311), including the broad social acceptance of mandatory military service in Israel. The findings of Arian, Talmud, and Hermann, in their 1986 survey study of “patterns of public opinion in Israel regarding national security policy”, empirically support the

¹⁵ The findings of Arian *et. al.* (1988: 29, 34) support this assertion that such a belief is indeed held by a majority of the Israeli population.

assertions of Newman and Z. Maoz: “The survey showed that a large portion of the Israeli population felt that the country could withstand major threats. On the other hand, persistent feelings of being threatened were also evident” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 1). In sum, Israel’s representation of itself as being constantly threatened by a hostile Other is an important building block of its identity; this identification promotes popular support for the military in Israeli society. Because the 1982 war was not seen as responding to a threat to Israel’s existence, it had a negative impact on the prestige and perceived trustworthiness of the IDF (Shafir and Peled 2002: 237).

ii) Israel as Vulnerable State

A second, related, building block of foreign policy is that of the “fundamental asymmetries [that] exist between Israel and the Arab world” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 8), or between the referent Self and Other. Not only are Israel’s neighbours hostile, they also dwarf Israel in terms of both territory and population (Maoz, Z. 2009: 8). This vulnerability has traditionally fuelled the “depth of the feelings of threat and persecution in the world-view of Israeli decisionmakers” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 21). This perception is a continuation of a long-held “self-perceived experience of the Jews existing as ‘the few among the many’” (Sucharov 2005: 48). From its founding, Israel’s national myths were readily available to be put in place as they draw on the long history and identity constructions of the Jewish people. The narrative of Israel’s vulnerability is so prevalent that texts discussing the modern settlement of Jews in Palestine before the establishment of Israel evoke “the eternal cosmic drama of the few versus the many ... even in descriptions of struggles in which the Jews were not a

minority” (Gertz 2000: 6). Israel’s small size reinforces the perception that it could be easily overwhelmed (Newman 2000: 312), as does its geographic location, surrounded on all sides by either an Arab country or the Mediterranean Sea, leaving it nowhere to retreat. Therefore, Israel’s geography is also seen as “a major constraint on its ability to fight” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 9). Space is crucial in the Israeli geopolitical imagination (Newman 2000) and formulation of foreign policy, as “losing territory means risking its very survival” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 9). In sum, the view of living in a situation of being constantly threatened and outnumbered is conducive to a logic in which security concerns are ever-present. Nevertheless, Israeli rhetoric also touts the ethics of “purity of arms” and only fighting wars of “no alternative”, emphasizing its difference from its more “barbaric” or “violence-loving” Arab neighbours (see, for instance, Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 105-106).

iii) Israel as a People that Dwells Alone

A third aspect of Israeli identity that informs Israeli policy-making is the belief that Israelis, like the Jewish people throughout their history, are “a people that dwells alone” (Gertz 2000: 1). As Z. Maoz succinctly argues, “[t]he notion of a ‘people that dwells alone’ is an acute expression of the belief that Israel cannot completely rely on anybody in the international system” (2009: 482). Sucharov also refers to the conception of a “people that dwells alone” (2005: 49), and affirms that due to the history of the Jewish people and the atrocities to which they have been subjected, “trust does not come easily to Israel” (Sucharov 2005: 49). According to Arian *et. al.*, “[t]he clear feeling of basic mistrust regarding the international

environment is the basic feature of the foreign and security policy of Israel. There is a fundamental belief that in the final analysis, the world will do nothing to protect Jews, as individuals, as a collectivity, as a state” (1988: 21-22); furthermore, it is perceived that the “Gentile world is hostile and antisemitic, especially if it is critical. Israel must trust in the guardian of Israel – and look out for itself” (1988: 84). According to Sucharov, “Israel’s overall role-identity derives from the citizens’ view of themselves as arising from a beleaguered minority into a people that has taken charge of its own destiny” (2005: 69). Thus, Israel must be prepared to rely on no one but itself, and sees “the imperative of constructing a formidable defensive fighting force and maintaining the military as a central part of day-to-day consciousness at the individual and collective level” (Sucharov 2005: 49-50). As Sucharov succinctly summarizes: “That Israelis experienced themselves as being born out of centuries of Diaspora persecution into the arms of Arab intransigence meant that the State of Israel quickly cultivated a role centered on existential self-defense and the need for requisite military capabilities” (2005: 45). In sum, the first two elements of identity presented here, 1) Israel’s being under constant threat and 2) being small and outnumbered, are further exacerbated by the perception that 3) Israel must rely on no one but itself, as it does not trust any international friends or allies to come to its aid if the need for protection or defence arises. These factors that inform identity contribute to the ongoing development of a national society in which significant emphasis is placed on the importance of the military in assuring the security, and thereby the very life and development of the community. As such, “[c]onsensus on security matters is a sacred ideal in Israeli politics” because Israel is under constant threat but “cannot rely on outside help no matter how dire the straits of the country. Internal strength – through consensus – is the only weapon at the

government's disposal" (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 26).

ISRAEL AS "DEFENSIVE WARRIOR", FIGHTING ONLY WARS OF "NO CHOICE"

(ein breira)

Sucharov takes a psychoanalytical approach to the study of Israeli identity and defines it as that of a "defensive warrior" who is "primarily concerned with protecting its right to national realization (*hagshama*) through the vehicle of state sovereignty" (2005: 41). This identity is twofold; the warrior component refers to the Zionist aim to "regenerate the Jewish people through an activist stance", while the defensive aspect refers to the state's touting "an ethic of fighting only wars of 'no alternative'" (Sucharov 2005: 41). Correspondingly, a founding principle of society has been based on self-defence, and with this concern comes "a social and national posture in which security was the first and most important value" (Maoz, Z. 2009: 486). As such, although national emphasis is placed on assuring security, this identity is based on the perception that security measures are taken in view of self-defence and that wars should only be undertaken as a measure of last resort. This doctrine has been explicitly articulated by Israeli institutions; for example:

Golda Meir [the Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974] had spoken of the doctrine of "ein breira" – war when there is *no choice*; war when you *must*, not when you can; war as the last, reluctant resort when all other possible remedies have been exhausted. This implies a reactive approach whereby war is chosen only when an attack has been launched or is clearly imminent. Under this traditional doctrine Israel has been willing to make war *only* when a refusal to make it would have endangered its territorial integrity, its sovereignty, or the lives of its inhabitants. (Eban 1983: VII; emphasis added)

The findings of Furman's study of the collective narratives of early childhood in Israel

supports Sucharov's and Z. Maoz's theories, as the gist of the message absorbed by children is one of "heroism", the "few against the many", and the "*necessity of war in the absence of any alternative*" (1999: 149; emphasis added). Thus, not only must Israel's security be assured, Israelis also expect that an ethic of only using force where absolutely necessary will be upheld. A survey of public opinion in Israel conducted in 1986 supports Sucharov's theory of Israel's identity as that of a defensive warrior: while most respondents "supported war for defensive purposes, offensive war was generally not supported" (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 1). However, the national narrative of only fighting wars of "no choice" has been the scene of contradictions regarding certain policies and military ventures. The 1982 war against Lebanon was, in particular, an important point of rupture. There was a lack of consensus on the decision to engage in this war because it was seen as a war of *choice*; this contradictory perception revealed a "dissonance between Israel's policy actions and its role-identity" (Sucharov 2005: 42). The Palestinian *Intifada* or uprising that began in 1987 can be considered another event that was a point of rupture as the use of considerable force by the state "began to expose the dissonance between Israel's defensive-warrior role-identity and Israeli policy toward the Palestinians" (Sucharov 2005: 57). This dynamic was problematic for Israelis because it presents a reversal of the David and Goliath myth of the few against the many, which is an important element of Israeli collective identity (Sucharov 2005: 57). Aronoff also points to the occupation of Arab territories in the 1967 war, and the continuation of this policy, as an event that saw "the termination of an important basis of consensus" in Israeli society (1999: 37). While the "conventional wisdom is that wars create national solidarity and unity" (Aronoff 1999: 37), they can also contradict norms and thereby erode otherwise general agreement on certain issues. However, other authors have

argued that, conversely, the Six-Day War of 1967 “brought back the feeling that Israel could rely only on itself – the feeling that had been the major lesson of the Holocaust” and that this helped promote support for devoting considerable human and financial resources to the maintenance of security (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 26).

Already in 1981, some Israelis were preoccupied with the eroding faith in the belief that the Israeli military served a mainly defensive, rather than offensive, purpose: “the loss of faith in the traditional slogan 'there is no choice' (*ein breira*) is the most adverse development that has beset Israel since her 1967 military triumph” (Aronoff 1999: 38, referencing Isaac 1981). If faith in the military's ethic was in question before 1982, Israel's invasion of Lebanon considerably hastened this process, as it overtly violated Israeli norms governing the use of military force.

THE PRIVILEGED POSITION OF THE MILITARY IN ISRAELI SOCIETY

A result of the construction of identity through security discourses is the strong popular support for the very prominent role played by the military in Israeli society. In this section I will discuss the role of the military as an important reference for identity; the particular importance of the military in the Israeli context as intertwined with questions of loyalty; and the attribution of exceptional responsibility and authority to the IDF and the accompanying social power with which it is imbued. Because of the prominent position of the IDF in Israeli society, the perception that the military acted contrary to Israeli norms and beliefs when it invaded Lebanon in 1982 had a strong impact on Israeli society, thereby provoking a

moment of uncertainty, or crisis, concerning national identity.

That the military should be an important point of reference for national identity is not unique to Israel, as “[m]ilitaries are central national symbols, repositories of mythical constructions of the past and embodiments of the nation’s aspirations” (Krebs 2005: 538). Indeed, “[a] host of scholars have proposed that ‘security,’ the ‘army,’ and ‘war’ are central organizing principles in Israeli society” (Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999: 16). The military is not cut off from the rest of society: it is “more than just a war-fighting machine: it is a social and cultural site” (Krebs 2005: 538). Military policies, the result of political processes (Krebs 2005: 530), play an influential role in society because they “shape the processes through which nations are constructed and reconstructed” (Krebs 2005: 531). Similarly to arguments made by Copenhagen School authors such as Buzan and Wæver, Krebs affirms that “[s]ocietal values are forged and reforged in the cauldron of politics. Threats are not objective, but constructed: they are defined and their intensity and immediacy are determined in the political arena” (2005: 538). Due to the incontestable importance of national security, as it deals with existential threat, militaries are able to “claim a rhetorical trump card” (Krebs 2005: 542) in order to respond to political or social pressures, reinforcing their autonomy and ability to decide how they will operate. Because of the unacceptability of any action that could endanger national security, militaries are resistant to change as, in this context, change can be seen as potentially impairing the military’s ability to operate (Krebs 2005: 542). This perception reinforces the prominent role of the military in society, even if the particular importance of the military in “the collectivity’s symbolic life” does vary over time according to changing circumstances (Krebs 2005: 543).

However, while Israeli society is far from the only one to attribute a certain level of

importance to its military, “[t]he centrality of security affairs in Israeli society, politics, and economics is probably unparalleled in the world, certainly in the democratic world” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 17-18). Due to the centrality of conflict and threat in the Israeli imagination because of Israel's small size, in terms of both geography and population, and its sensitive location, being surrounded by Arab countries that have been historically hostile towards Israel, security has an exceptionally heightened importance in the Israeli context. Because of the experiences of the Jewish community before Israel's establishment, particularly the Holocaust and the experiences of the Jewish population in the British Mandate of Palestine, when Israel achieved statehood “[p]ower – and especially military power – became for many of Israel's leaders the only insurance policy available. It stemmed from this evaluation that the army was the 'savior' of the people and that it was entitled to privileged treatment compared to other sectors of the society” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 24). Indeed, Z. Maoz argues that “Israeli policy-making on national security and foreign affairs is characterized by an overwhelming preponderance of the security community. This preponderance is due both to the strength and effectiveness of the IDF and other security-related institutions” (2009: 501). Lebel agrees: “Defense policy in Israel has always been considered *the* most critical domain, providing Israelis with their most vital public product: security. The tool of security is the army, which has become endowed with a religious status” (2007: 71; original emphasis). Consequently, security discourses play an important role in the functioning of the state and in the reification of national identity.

Because security issues are a main consideration, the IDF occupies a “central place within the Israeli imagination” (Sucharov 2005: 69). In the early decades of Israel's existence, “the IDF was central to the formation of Israeli identity” (Weizman 2007: 64), and

continues to play an important role. This prominence of the military is a direct product of Israeli beliefs about security as “[t]he self-perceived mission of the IDF is to underwrite Jewish sovereignty against a sea of hostility” (Sucharov 2005: 73). Due to the centrality of Arab-Israeli conflicts in Israeli security concerns, it is not surprising that the military is consistently perceived as essential in assuring the functioning and very existence of Israeli life. In his discussion on the formation of national identity in Israel, Newman affirms that the “conflict between Israel and the Palestinians remains the single most important issue on the national agenda” and that such political narratives are important in “ensuring that the younger generations of Israelis will retain their loyalty to a state in conflict [and] will continue to serve in its army” (2008: 62). Thus, as discussed earlier in this chapter, security, identity, and loyalty are intimately intertwined (Neocleous 2008: 141), and this loyalty is regularly tested by mandatory military service, including the roughly one month a year reserve duty that most Israeli males serve for decades after their three-year compulsory military service.¹⁶ Newman also discusses the role of conceptions of security and a focus on “existential threat” as “a means of creating *national consensus* [and] *socializing* generations of Israeli youth to be prepared to fight, and even lay down their lives, for the defence of the homeland” (2000: 309; emphasis added). Due to the centrality and social weight of questions of security, the military can be considered the “major institution of consensus” in Israeli society (Newman 2000: 311). Additionally, “[a]rmy service in Israel is a central experience of the society and the individual. In many ways the entire society is influenced by the military and its priorities” (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 56). The broad consensus concerning

¹⁶ Men typically serve in reserve units until the age of 55. Women, meanwhile, serve two years for their mandatory service and may be summoned by the reserve system until they are 34, or until they marry, but, in practice, “the participation of women in the reserve system has been marginal” (Helman 1999: 196).

the military and security concerns in Israel is notable as this issue is largely unique as one on which opinions are similar across the political spectrum (Arian *et. al.* 1988: 24). Maoz elicits surprise at “the uncritical treatment by most Israelis of the foundations of Israel’s national security doctrine. Although Israelis are generally a critical and cynical breed, there is an underlying consensus on many fundamental security and foreign policy issues” (Maoz, Z. 2009: x). Through this we can see that security is a powerful concept that inspires exceptional consensus, unity, and loyalty, even among groups that participate actively in democratic life and are more likely to critically assess other policies.

Another indicative factor of the prominent position of the IDF in Israeli society is its portrayal as an important source of authority, particularly one that is seen as objective and professional. That the military is responsible for an issue as important as national security, arguably the most important need that a state must satisfy, makes its voice particularly authoritative, “[installing] responsibility and [legitimizing] the exercise of power” (Hansen 2006: 35). As Hansen affirms:

Underpinning the concept of ‘national security’ is a particular form of identity construction—one tied to the sovereign state and articulating a radical form of identity—and a distinct rhetorical and discursive force which bestows power as well as responsibility on those speaking within it. (2006: 34)

Thus, part of the privileged position of the Israeli military stems from the responsibility and power that is attributed to it due to its role concerning national security, the assurance of which is the most important of tasks. In practice, important institutions such as the Supreme Court (Maoz, Z. 2009: 526) and the High Court of Justice:

place a good deal of weight on the professional evaluation of the security forces. Military officers appearing before the court presented ‘security’ as a specialized discipline and implied that the court should simply accept its logic as objective and final, rather than trying to question it. (Weizman 2007: 105)

Public image is important, in Israel as in any political regime, and the IDF enjoys a considerable amount of trust and respect in the eyes of the Israeli public and is frequently considered to be a more efficient institution than most (Maoz, Z. 2009: 525). Indeed, Z. Maoz states that “[t]he IDF became a key element in the national identity of Israelis” (2009: 583). Although its “image of efficiency, apolitical nature, and professionalism” has declined over the years, in part due to moments of rupture evoked earlier in the thesis, it is still viewed positively by most Israelis to a rather large extent (Maoz, Z. 2009: 525).

THE 1982 LEBANON WAR: A WAR OF “CHOICE”

While Israel's previous wars were seen as “wars of no choice” that were “imposed on Israel” (Bar-On 2004: 25; see also Newman 2000: 311)¹⁷, the main reason that the 1982 war, officially named “Operation Peace for Galilee”, was more controversial than earlier military activities was because it was not merely to assure Israel's security. Instead, it was “designed to destroy the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] and settle the Palestinian question by force”, thus going beyond what was necessary for survival (Shafir and Peled 2002: 27).¹⁸ According to Maoz, “[t]he war in Lebanon was not about peace to the Galilee. The Galilee was not under threat by the Palestinians or the Syrians” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 182). Shafir and

¹⁷ While the accuracy of this assumption is certainly far from agreed upon, Israel's major wars, in 1948, 1967, and 1973 were seen by most Israelis as imposed on Israel by neighbouring Arab countries, and that in these cases, Israel was forced to defend itself and could not have easily avoided war (see, for example, Bar-On 2004).

¹⁸ While Israel did refer to the immediate pretext of the attempted assassination of Israeli ambassador to Britain, Shlomo Argov, as prompting the invasion, this argument is not given much heed as the would-be assassins were found to be enemies of Arafat and the PLO, and therefore providing little cause to prompt an assault against the PLO in Lebanon (Chomsky 1999: 196-197; Eban 1983: x).

Peled even identify the invasion as part of a “new colonization policy”; after Israel failed “to suppress the PLO in the West Bank, the invasion was undertaken with the aim of destroying its infrastructure in Lebanon and reducing its influence in the [Occupied Territories]” (2002: 194), or in Sharon's words: to “solve the problems of the West Bank and Gaza” (Shafir and Peled 2002: 194, citing the *New York Times*). Chomsky sums up the reason for the 1982 invasion in a similar way, saying that it was part of a larger Israeli effort “to remove the displaced Palestinian refugees from the border areas and to destroy their emerging political and military structures” (1999: 181). Meanwhile, Schiff and Ya'ari, Israeli journalists writing during the Lebanon War, describe this conflict as “a kind of war *unprecedented* in the history of the state of Israel”, as it was “first and foremost a *political* venture” (1984: 9; emphasis added). The war was seen by many Israelis as “frivolous and unnecessary for Israel's security” (Ezrahi 1998: 15). Shimon Peres, who was in the government's opposition at the time, later declared that “[i]t was a war of *breira* (choice); this is something we were always against. If you have a choice, don't make war” (cited in Sucharov 2005: 104). According to Sucharov, this war was “the most concerted break with the Israeli security ethic to date,” as it contradicted Israel's “role-identity”, both in terms of the goals and execution of the war, including, but not limited to, Israel's “indirect responsibility” for the Sabra and Shatila massacre (2005: 89). Sucharov sums up this phenomenon in such a succinct and illuminating way that it deserves to be quoted at length:

In three ways, the Lebanon War broke with Israel's defensive-warrior role-identity. Unlike the wars of Israel's past, at least as understood by the Israeli establishment, the Lebanon War was an offensive operation launched on what many Israelis saw to be a flimsy pretext, and it lacked an existential threat to be countered. ... Second, it had as one of its goals the meddling in the domestic politics of a neighboring state, as Israel backed its pick for Lebanese president. Third, the prosecution of the war represented a breakdown in intra-parliamentary relations, such that Israelis would later accuse

Sharon of twisting the collective arm of the cabinet and the prime minister in order to fulfill his own far-reaching aims for the fate of Israeli-Lebanese-PLO relations. The Sabra and Shatilla massacre was the capping episode in a war that fractured the national consensus, and raised questions about the justness of Israeli warmaking that had never been asked before. (Sucharov 2005: 89-90)

As such, the contradictions posed by the Lebanon War “initiated Israel on a soul-searching course that exposed its unconscious fears of becoming a violent aggressor” (Sucharov 2005: 89). According to Kimmerling, the “intense controversy” (1985: 160) that “deeply divided the country” (1985: 162), was “around two questions: [1] Was the 1982 war strictly necessary to the very existence of the collectivity, and even if not, [2] may a polity based on a 'nation-in-arms' military system, composed mainly of reserve forces, manage a war for considerable political benefits, but which is not strictly necessary for the collectivity's survival?” (1985: 160). Thus, Israelis were forced to question an important building block of their collective national identity.

The disapproval of the Lebanon War as a “war of choice” is made clear by the many references to it in these terms (Gertz 2000: 87; Lebel 2007: 74; Sucharov 2005: 104; Arian *et. al.* 1988: 35; etc.) Gertz succinctly sums up this phenomenon: “Israel's war in Lebanon, the first assessed by the public as one initiated by Israel and not forced upon it, aroused vehement debate within the country. There was a considerable lack of consensus with regard to several of its goals” related to the destruction of the PLO and involvement in Lebanese politics (2000: 90). Furthermore, Gertz notes that while *anti-war groups* opposed the war from the beginning, “during the very first weeks of the war, when neither its real objectives nor the extent of the casualties were known to the general public, the military action was generally regarded as a *defensive* operation and had broad collective support” (Gertz 2000: 90; emphasis added). Thus, there is a positive correlation between military action being seen

as defensive and support for this action, and a negative correlation between popular social support and military engagement that is seen as aggressive or unnecessary.

While the military has long enjoyed high standing in Israeli society, the 1982 Lebanon War, although it “had initially received overwhelming support” (Chomsky 1999: 251), “considerably damaged the image of the state and its military as efficient implementers of 'rationally' formulated policies, and thus served to diminish the state's power and, to an extent, its very legitimacy vis-à-vis other groups” (Kimmerling 2001: 74). Additionally, in this war, even “the military was divided on the goals and the tactics of the war, as was the civilian community; the lack of a national consensus split the army, creating crises of morale and resignations, demonstrations, and petitions” (Arian 2005: 332). Already in 1983, military historian Martin Van Creveld called it “Israel's most unpopular war to date” (cited in Chomsky 1999: 315). Despite the initial “broad national consensus”, in “October 1982, only 45 percent supported the war, and by December, only 34 percent did” (Sucharov 2005: 103). According to Kimmerling, writing in 1985, the 1982 war was the only war that “affected adversely the social cohesion in Israel and did not strengthen it” (1985: 25). The war is generally referred to with negative connotations, including “the morass of Lebanon” (Gertz 2000: 87), “the Lebanese swamp” (Maoz, Z. 2006: 171-230; Sucharov 2010: 232), “the Lebanese fiasco” (Maoz, Z. 2006: 202), and “a disaster for Israel” (Maoz, Z. 2006: 171). While the Sabra and Shatila massacre was the most blatant event incurring domestic and international criticism, the invasion was seen as suspect from the beginning. The “International Commission to enquire into the reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of the Lebanon” was launched August 28, 1982, before the events at Sabra and Shatila (Macbride *et. al.* 1983: viii), as the initiation of a war of aggression is

criminal under international law (Macbride *et. al.* 1983: xiv). Like Shafir and Peled who affirmed that the 1982 Lebanon War, along with the Israeli repression of the Palestinian *Intifada* a few years later, caused the IDF's prestige to shrink (2002: 237), Ben-Ari and Lomsky-Feder make reference to the “decreased legitimacy of such institutions as the army” as a result of “Israel's debacle in Lebanon” (1999: 24). Similarly, Arian *et. al.* surmise that it is likely that “the perception of the public regarding the professional character of the military was lowered by the Lebanese experience” (1988: 42). Linn also affirms that “confidence in the moral values of the IDF gradually diminished as the war prolonged and went beyond the obvious notion of a just war as being primarily a limited war” (1986: 494) and that “[a]s the ambiguity of the war increased over time, the question of its justification, or justice, became the major concern of the soldiers” (1986: 495); as Linn wrote this as early as 1986, we can surmise that the war likely continued to be seen with increasing scepticism the longer the military presence in Lebanon dragged on. However, if Orwell was correct in saying that “it would probably be accurate to say that *by becoming continuous, war has ceased to exist*” (cited in Linn 1986: 506; original emphasis), the very enduring nature of Israel's military involvement in Lebanon, until its retreat in 2000, and then again in 2006, could cause this military engagement to seem increasingly banal. According to Kimmerling, in 1982 “the national consensus that had been cracking in any event, ultimately broke apart completely. Although the majority supported the war, it was the first time that a sizable population stratum, with access to the mass media, objected to the aims of the war at the time it was being committed” (1985: 202). Sucharov notes that:

[T]he 1982 foray into Lebanon led Israelis to question the moral stature of the defense establishment and certainly the ability for a single personality—Defense Minister Ariel Sharon—to engineer a military operation that would leave 654

Israeli soldiers dead and 3,859 wounded, as well as a raw cleavage in the national consensus. (2005: 89)

The IDF's decreased social standing is suggested by a number of factors. For instance, while the previously high rates of volunteering for elite units had already started to decrease after the 1967 war, the traditional source of volunteers for these units dried up even more after the Lebanon War, with youth from kibbutz communities gradually being replaced by more Mizrahi and national-religious youth (Shafir and Peled 2002: 237-238). Additionally, Chomsky affirms that, even during the war, Israeli credibility suffered to the extent that Israeli troops are reported to have listened to Radio Lebanon in English and Arabic in order to get a more credible picture of the war, as trust in the Israeli government had been considerably damaged (1999: 222), and Israeli “military correspondents were bitterly criticized by soldiers at the front for repeating government lies” (1999: 297).

Organization of Protest Groups

Not only did parents and the political left organize protest movements, contestation came even from within the IDF: in early July 1982, “soldiers returned from the front and set up a continuing vigil outside the prime minister's office, under the name 'Soldiers Against Silence'. While they condemned the war and called for Sharon's resignation, the group stopped short of advocating refusal” of military service in Lebanon (Sucharov 2005: 106). Although most of the opposition to the war similarly did not advocate refusal, but limited themselves to directing their complaints to the government administration, there were also protest groups such as *Yesh Gvul*, “There is a Limit”, which “advocated and supported refusal” (Linn 1986: 500; see also Arian 2005: 325). In sum, the war was traumatic for Israelis because it cast doubt on the Israeli military, the most highly regarded institution in

Israeli society.

While public protest had already been common in Israel (Lehman-Wilzig 1986: 128-129), previous protest had not questioned the *justice* of any Israeli war (Weissbrod 1984: 51). One of the important repercussions of the 1982 Lebanon War for Israeli society was the straining of the erstwhile very strong relationship between the parents of bereaved soldiers and the military: “In Israeli society, bereaved parents have always had a special relationship with a unique institution—the army; and their bereavement has always afforded them influence over public policy in a unique area—security” (Lebel 2007: 71). However, after the Lebanon War, there was a shift from “the parents' acceptance of lost loved ones to active confrontation with the political and defense establishments” (Lebel 2007: 67). This trend had begun with the 1973 Yom Kippur War, but was greatly accelerated in 1982 because “bereaved parents defined the conflict as an avoidable war of *choice*” (2007: 74; emphasis added). While parents had been, overall, willing to risk losing their children in wars that were seen as essential to Israel's survival, the situation was very different when the war was seen as one of “choice”, and bereaved parents “accused the government of making 'cynical use of our sons' lives” (Lebel 2007: 74; citing a letter to the editor published in *Ha'aretz*, *Dvar*, and *Al Hamishmar* in April 1983). Shimon Peres later affirmed that the Lebanon War “gravely weakened the discipline and moral cohesion of Israeli society, because our soldiers did not know why they were fighting or what they were dying for” (cited in Sucharov 2005: 104); the same was true for the parents of these soldiers – they did not see why their sons should be dying in *this* war. Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari also discuss that “while anxious and critical voices of parents began to be heard during the 1970s [these] were magnified during the Lebanon War” and later during the Intifada (1999: 305). Furthermore, the 1982 war saw

the organization of such protest movements as “Parents Against Silence” (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1999: 305), and it has been argued that “the women's organization Four Mothers was largely responsible for the Israeli final withdrawal from Lebanon” in 2000 (Maoz, Z. 2009: 226; also affirmed in Halper 2011; Arian 2005: 325). Several other protest groups were formed in 1982; they are significant partly because, “[c]ompared to the protest movements *following* the [1973] Yom Kippur War, which primarily concerned the malfunctioning of the government's handling of the war, the Lebanon protest groups surfaced *during* the war and focused their protest on its *moral/ideological* objectives and *social* implications” (Linn 1986: 501; original emphasis). Kimmerling also notes that “the casting of doubts as to the justice and necessity of the war (primarily after the change in its declared aims) and the formation of protest groups against it while the battle was still raging” was unprecedented in Israel (1985: 25). These protest groups included the left-wing group *The committee against the war in Lebanon*, which was actually formed before the war “to protest against official policy in the territories” but later “changed its name and goals to protest the war in Lebanon”; *Women against silence*, composed of wives of soldiers in Lebanon; *No to the medal*, which “was composed of a group of reserve soldiers who had fought in Lebanon and who urged those who also served there to reject the campaign ribbon issued by the government”; and *Peace Now*, the “biggest and best-organized group” that was not active until three weeks into the war, but which was responsible for the 400,000 person protest following the Sabra and Shatila massacre (Linn 1986: 501).

Refusal of Military Service

The 1982 war also saw the unprecedented phenomenon of reservists refusing to complete their military duty and to serve in Lebanon on the grounds of conscientious objection

(Sucharov 2005: 108), which can be defined as “refusal to participate in a military mission in order to protect one's own moral integrity, and/or effect change in the society; it is very often referred to as civil disobedience” (Linn 1986: 489). “Conscientious objector” is a category that does not exist in Israel – refusal to serve is generally punished with jail time: conscientious objectors to the Lebanon War “were court-marshaled and imprisoned” (Helman 1999: 214) for fourteen to thirty-five days (Linn 1986: 490). Refusal of service during the Lebanon War was notable as, “[i]n spite of the ... frequent and bitter wars [Israel] has experienced since its establishment in 1948, conscientious objection has been very rare” (Linn 1986: 489). During the war, between 1982 and 1985, 143 soldiers were officially recorded as having refused service, though “[i]nsiders estimate that more than 143 soldiers actually refused, since there were likely many cases of would-be refuseniks who were simply reassigned within their unit” (Sucharov 2005: 109; see also Linn 1986: 490). Based on Helman's interviews with “reserve soldiers who conscientiously refused their tour of duty during Israel's war in Lebanon (1982-85)” (1999: 194), she found a coexistence of two seemingly contradictory voices: “the hegemonic discourse of military service” as well as “the critical voice that resignified the main tenets of that discourse” (1999: 195). Sucharov argues that “selective refusal claims were not based on antiwar sentiment” (2005: 108), and, indeed, Helman found that most “refuseniks” later continued to serve their reserve duty (1999: 215). Rather, refusal stemmed “from a belief that this *particular* war clashed with Israel's role-identity” (Sucharov 2005: 108; emphasis added). Linn found that, according to a sample of “refuseniks” who were interviewed, “it must be emphasized that refusals ... are specific to Lebanon, not to the territories” (1986: 500). Additionally, a majority of objectors had already served in military missions prior to the 1982 war without complaint (Linn 1986:

492). These findings reflect the hypothesis that “the motivation of soldiers to participate in the reserve system will endure as long as they perceive their service to be relevant to national security” (Helman 1999: 198). Thus, we can infer that objections were related to this particular war and not lack of willingness to serve in the military; of a sample interviewed, 72 per cent (26 out of 36) refused service after they had already served in Lebanon since the beginning of the war (Linn 1986: 492). In sum, it would seem that the phenomenon of conscientious objection to the 1982 war was because it “seemed to deviate from the conventional definition of a defensive war” (Linn 1986: 493). Because the war was apparently *preventive*, rather than *defensive*, “[t]he traditional 'no choice' secret weapon of the Israeli soldiers in the familiar situation of few against many seems to have been lacking in this war definition” (Linn 1986: 493).

Criticism of the Aims and Conduct of the War

According to the majority of the literature it seems that the most important reason for which the war was controversial was because it was perceived as an aggressive war, rather than as a war of “no choice”. Contrary to the declared ethic of “purity of arms” of the Israeli military, there are many recorded instances of Israeli brutality against civilians in Lebanon (Chomsky 1999: 226-227)¹⁹, with the most iconic indication of a lacking purity of arms being the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Linn highlights that:

The Lebanon war, primarily a war among civilians, sharpened the moral dilemmas faced by individual soldiers who were concerned about innocent victims. ... [they] were faced with situations in this war in which they could not simply function in line with the IDF traditional moral premise, such as “purity of weapon” (careful and just use of military power). (1986: 496)

¹⁹ This study's lack of discussion of Israeli brutality against civilians in the war reflects the absence of this topic in much of the debate on the war – with the exception of Chomsky, most of the authors discussed dwell on the “choice” aspect of the war and criticism of the Israeli government's meddling in Lebanese politics, and say little of the conduct of the war on the ground.

Indeed, “[m]any Israeli soldiers were appalled by the nature of the war, a fact that may be reflected in the 'psychiatric casualties,' particularly among reservists, which were twice as high as the norm ... in comparison to physical casualties” (Chomsky 1999: 237). Such experiences significantly contributed to the criticism of the war. According to Weissbrod, the main reasons for which protest broke out during the war were “the extension of the war target beyond clearance of a security zone, and the victimization of the Lebanese people who were not a party to the conflict” (1984: 54).

The war effort was not accepted by Israeli society and its military, due to a failure not of militarism, but of rhetoric: “Given that the IDF's defensive ethic has been drilled into generations of soldiers, those called to Lebanon were able to contrast the apparent war aims with the state IDF maxim of fighting only wars of 'no alternative'” (Sucharov 2005: 108). In other words, for many soldiers “the Lebanon war was a direct attack on their conception of the Israeli *Defence* army. When forced to fight an optional war ... they gradually and painfully realized, in their words, that they belong to the Israeli *attacking* forces” (Linn 1986: 505; original emphasis). Furthermore, the government's credibility was also hurt by inconsistencies in its public statements about the war and its aims. Although the government had expressed the initial aim to be the creation of a 45-kilometre security zone and said that it would not enter Beirut, when the contrary began to appear likely after June 25:

[A]pprehensions were reinforced by the declaration of the Israeli defense minister, Ariel Sharon, that one of the three aims of the war had been achieved already, namely the clearance of a 45-km security zone. But there were still two others left: all foreign forces had to be removed from Lebanon (meaning the Syrians and the PLO) and a new government had to be set up in Lebanon that would be friendly to Israel. This statement belied the initially declared target of the war and undermined the credibility of the government in general, and of the defense minister in particular. (Weissbrod 1984: 55-56)

However, had the “defensive” security narrative been articulated differently, such as in a way that argued the acceptability of aggressive wars (like a form of messianic imperialism), and/or had touted the acceptability of “collateral damage” in the effort to ensure security, or had the Lebanon war been justified more strongly according to the existing narratives, it is probable that this military venture would have created less controversy within Israeli society.

The Sabra and Shatila Massacre

A particularly traumatic event was Israel's complicity in the Sabra and Shatila massacre, which took place September 16th to 18th, 1982. Although committed by Israel's allies in the war, the Lebanese Christian Phalangists, Israeli troops were stationed just outside the camp during the days over which the massacre was committed, and were therefore criticized for failing to stop the massacre sooner. It was under IDF supervision that the Phalangists were sent in to “conduct a mopping-up operation of the remaining Palestinian militants” (Sucharov 2005: 95-96). While the official Israeli numbers estimate the number of those killed to be between 700 and 800 (Eban 1983: XIII), other estimates are much higher; the Palestinian Red Crescent estimates that over 2,000 were killed, and more than 1,200 death certificates were issued after the massacre (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 282). The Lebanon War was seen by many as a “moral 'disaster” that appalled the Israeli population (Chomsky 1999: 396), and the Sabra and Shatila massacre was the most blatant episode in this disaster for Israel's image. *Haaretz*, an Israeli news publication, lamented that “the stain of Sabra and Shatila has stuck to us, and we shall not be able to erase it” (cited in Chomsky 1999: 384), while Newsweek decried that this tragedy wounded Israel's soul (Chomsky 1999: 385).

The Largest Protest in Israel's History

Although earlier protests had taken place against the war, drawing up to 100,000 protesters (on July 4th, 1982; Sucharov 2005: 104), “a public furor erupted in Israel and abroad in the wake of the reports about the [Sabra and Shatila] massacre” (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 45): 400,000 Israelis, ten percent of Israel's population at the time, went out in the streets of Tel Aviv, demanding that the government investigate this massacre in order to determine what responsibility, if any, Israel bore for the event (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 281; Eban 1983: XIV; Chomsky 1999: 394; Maoz, Z. 2009: 201; Sucharov 2005: 97; Arian *et. al.* 1988: 14). According to Schiff and Ya'ari, “something snapped in Israelis over that holiday weekend as hundreds of thousands of Israelis took the hideous pictures of slain children and piles of bloodstained corpses as confirmation of most of their suppressed fears” (1984: 280). The Sabra and Shatila massacre “elicited widespread revulsion among the Israeli left” (Sucharov 2005: 98) and “shook Israeli public opinion. Demands for the appointment of an independent inquiry commission that would investigate the massacre came from all parts of Israeli society. The government's effort to block these demands was met with utter indignation” (Maoz, Z. 2009: 201). To use Sucharov's language, Israeli reactions to the Sabra and Shatila massacres evidence “cognitive dissonance” as this violent event was contrary to the expectations of Israelis regarding the ethic that should be followed wherever the Israeli military is involved:

Most of the immense eruption of public comment and argument centred on Israel's role. Were the Israeli soldiers in the vicinity merely by chance or were they, inconceivably, in liaison or contact with the Phalangists or even in some posture of command? The question gnawed at the very roots of Israel's conscience, and within a few days it was plain that without some great cathartic release the question would have a stifling effect. Israeli life simply could not go on unless the release was sought. (Eban 1983: XIII)

The sought release was indeed achieved: the Kahan Commission found that the direct responsibility for *committing* the massacre lay exclusively with the Phalangists (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 50). However, Israel did bear “indirect responsibility” for allowing them to enter the camps and for failing to foresee that the massacre would occur, as many had warned that the Phalangists would certainly seek to take revenge for the assassination of their leader and Lebanese president-elect, Bashir Gemayel, on September 14th (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 56-63). Additionally, several Israeli officials were criticized for acting too slowly when they did realize that civilians were being massacred, waiting hours or a day or more to act on the information they had received (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 22-30, 40). Defence Minister Ariel Sharon was deemed to bear personal responsibility for the massacres for both failing to see the risk of sending the Phalangists into the camp and allowing this, as well as “for not ordering appropriate measures for preventing or reducing the danger of massacre as a condition for the Phalangists' entry into the camps” (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 73). Sucharov argues that the Sabra and Shatila massacre “most strongly brought to the fore unconscious fears of adopting the role of the Jewish people's most hated victimizers” because “the Lebanon War contained the first widespread realization—by others as well as by Israelis themselves—that the IDF's arms had been less than pure, at least by implication” (2005: 95).

Part of the political failure of the Lebanon War was due to inconsistent branding, as well as the violation of security-based norms: “despite the highest rate of conscientious objection ever before seen in Israel's history and the largest protest rallies to be launched by the Israeli peace movement, Sharon went so far as to call the Lebanon War a 'war of defense” (Sucharov 2005: 97). However, Prime Minister Begin attempted to defend the war

by actually calling it a 'war of choice'" (Sucharov 2005: 101). As summarized by Ezrahi:

In 1982 Prime Minister Begin unsuccessfully tried to convince the Israeli public that although the military invasion of Lebanon could not be regarded as "a war of necessity" ("*Milhemet ein breira*"), it was a "just war." ... The antiwar protests and demonstrations, reinforced by the spread of distrust and the decline in fighting spirit among select combative units of the IDF, gradually destroyed the leadership of Begin and Sharon. The public criticism of them served notice to all future Israeli governments that the rationales for going to war must be compelling and strictly guided by real, demonstrable security needs. (1998: 201)

In sum, because the 1982 war in Lebanon blatantly violated the Israeli norm and expectation of fighting only wars of "no choice", this event provoked an identity crisis for Israelis, who found themselves questioning the narratives on which their national identity was largely based.

In order to better understand Israeli reactions to the events of the war, Chapter Two will discuss Israeli cinema depicting the 1982 war to seek expressions of the identity crisis that Israelis experienced.

CHAPTER TWO

CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE LEBANON WAR

In this chapter, we turn to Israeli cinema as a site of representation of the reified Israeli identity and the narratives that inform it. As argued in the introduction, we must remember that films are *second-order representations*, unlike newspaper articles or speeches which belong to the first order. Films can, nevertheless provide an insightful look into social and political dynamics. According to Shohat, feature films are “part of a continuum of 'discourses' which includes political speeches, journalistic editorials, song lyrics and cartoons” (2010: 58). For instance, a variety of mediums might reflect and reinforce the perception of “the Arab desire to throw the Jews into the sea” (Shohat 2010: 58). Indeed, Israeli cinema has historically emphasized the security-based narratives such as “the notion of the few under siege by the many ... within the anguished heroism of the 'no-choice' situation” (Shohat 2010: 58). As the films studied in this chapter are produced by Israelis, we seek representations of the dominant discourses on Israeli identity and security concerns as internalized and reproduced by Israelis who are not directly involved in the government or other political institutions. In such a way, we turn to cinema in order to seek expressions of Israeli norms and identity.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I argue that because the 1982 invasion of Lebanon blatantly violated established security narratives which inform Israeli collective identity, notably that Israel only fights defensive wars of “no choice” and that the Israeli

military practices an ethic of “purity of arms”, this produced a crisis²⁰ that prompted the largest protest in Israel's history and saw unprecedented questioning of the military apparatus, such as in refusal to serve (Helman 1999) and tensions between the military and bereaved parents (Lebel 2007). However, this crisis does not seem to have caused a lasting rupture for Israeli identity and cohesion between Israeli society and state: Ariel Sharon went on to become elected as Prime Minister in 2001, despite his personal responsibility for the Sabra and Shatila massacre (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 104) and that, as Defence Minister, the invasion of Lebanon was his own initiative (Maoz, Z. 2009: 202-203). That the crisis was overcome will principally be argued based on evidence from the films reviewed, with support from academic literature. The films will be analyzed according to filming techniques, plot, dialogue, and motifs employed by their creators, and how these may be representative of some Israeli reactions to the events of 1982. The argument is that the 1982 war provoked a moment of crisis and contestation, but not a permanent rupture, as the Israeli government and military still enjoy exceptionally high levels of support (Kimmerling 2001). This argument has also been supported by others, including Jeff Halper who affirms that the 1982 Lebanon War did affect the national consensus, but not too deeply or permanently, as Israeli society has a great capacity for denial (2011). For instance, he posits that Israelis feel

²⁰ In this research, a “crisis” refers to the eliciting of a “cognitive dissonance”, as discussed in psychoanalytic theory, and specifically as operationalized by Sucharov:

Should a state adopt a policy course that contradicts the state's role-identity, we can expect some sort of cognitive dissonance to arise, leading to a radical realignment between actions and identity. ... However, acting in contradiction to one's role-identity does not necessarily result in a behavior shift. The dissonance between role-identity and behavior must be both unbearable and experienced at an emotional level in order for such a shift to result. If the dissonance remained at a cognitive level, it is likely that the subject would employ one of a number of cognitive biases in order to rationalize the discrepancy. (2005: 32-33)

Thus, an experience of cognitive dissonance is considered to provoke a crisis, but such a crisis may or may not actually cause an important shift or rupture at the level of collective identity depending on how the discrepancy or dissonance is rationalized.

no responsibility for the Sabra and Shatila massacre because, despite whatever complicity or blind eye that allowed the event to occur and to continue for as long as it did, it is ultimately the Christian Lebanese Phalangists who committed these actions (Halper 2011). The Israeli conscience was eased by the fact that the Israeli military did not have literal blood on its hands, and the metaphorical blood, or complicity in the event was largely disregarded in favour of exclusively blaming the Phalangists for being the ones who carried out the massacre in the camps. Additionally, Ari Folman, the director of *Waltz with Bashir*, echoes these sentiments:

I've been asked a lot if the massacre is a taboo in Israel, is it something that people don't discuss, don't talk about, and did the film emerge from the kind of demons that were hidden in Israeli society, and I've thought about it a lot and I don't think so. I don't think that Israeli society treats this memory as a dark era in the history because in many ways it was easy to know that the massacre was done by another party, by the Christians, and that the participants, or the fact that they were our allies was the problem of the government and the leaders, and not the problem of the people. So this is why I think that although it made the biggest demonstration ever that took place right after the massacres, still it is not something that is deeply hidden or talked about. (2008; DVD commentary)

However, despite the fact that the anguish of many Israelis over the unnecessary invasion of Lebanon and the Israeli connection to the Sabra and Shatila massacre was short-lived, it is still worthwhile to study the event and the important contestation that *did* take place in order to glean an insight into Israeli identity politics and the roles played by security-based narratives and foreign policy.

As a site of representation, cinema can reveal illuminating “political as well as aesthetic connotations” (Shohat 2010: 3). Furthermore, although the goals of the films studied may vary, as some set out to be more or less political, “Israeli films are necessarily and intensely political, including, and perhaps even especially, those films which claim not

to be” (Shohat 2010: 5). For instance, it can be very telling to ask questions about the social representation of different groups or individuals representing different identities, including “the respect, or lack of it, accorded characters or groups, and ... the potential for audience sympathy, solidarity, and identification” (Shohat 2010: 7). Thus, based primarily on the textual aspect of Shohat's approach, attention will be given to questions of representations of identities, not only *how* characters are presented (such as sympathetically, or in a more positive or negative light), but also their very presence in the films: “Which characters, representing which gender, ethnic groups, or nationalities, are afforded close-ups, and which are relegated to the background? Does a character look and act, or merely appear, to be looked at and acted upon? With what character or group is the audience permitted intimacy?” (Shohat 2010: 7). While I acknowledge that films may be interpreted differently by different audiences, based on a myriad of factors, the films presented here will be analyzed according to my own interpretation and as supported by academic literature on Israeli cinema.

As discussed in the introduction, part of my interest in studying the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and, in particular, the reception of this act by the Israeli public, results from the fact that this war has been relatively under-discussed, especially when compared to the other wars in which Israel has been involved. Much more has been written about Israel's first war in 1948, the Six-Day war of 1967, and the Yom Kippur war of 1973; the First Lebanon War that began in 1982 and did not formally end until 2000 does not occupy nearly as much space in either popular or academic discourse within and about Israel. Similarly, while many Israeli films have dealt with the (pre-state) *Yishuv* period and the 1948 war, and many films have been about and inspired by the 1967 war (Shohat 2010: 95-96), there have

been relatively few about the 1982 Lebanon War, and two of them are very recent (2008 and 2009). It is interesting to note that with the exception of the IDF-produced *Ricochets* (Cohen 1986), the main Israeli films about this war were not produced until approximately a decade after the invasion (*Cup Final*: Riklis 1992; *Time for Cherries*: Buzaglo 1991) and over 25 years after the invasion (*Waltz with Bashir*: Folman 2008; *Lebanon*: Maoz, S. 2009). However, this delayed reaction to war is not uncommon in the history of Israeli cinema: “It took almost a decade for the Israeli cinema to register the after effects of [the 1973] war in terms of both a certain disillusionment within Israeli society and a sharply changed attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict” (Shohat 2010: 196). Israel's conduct in the 1973 war was criticized for its technical, rather than moral, performance; while post-1973 films do question certain aspects of Israeli ideology, they “do not fundamentally question the national consensus” (Shohat 2010: 201). “Until the war in Lebanon, the consensus view was that failure to fulfil one's military duty was tantamount to a kind of primordial taint” (Shohat 2010: 199). Thus, it was not until the 1982 invasion of Lebanon that Israel had its first significant experience with conscientious objection. The 1982 war prompted several cinematic trends; on the one hand, they continued the more critical trend that had been gradually growing since even before 1973, including disenchantment with the military as soldiers began to “appear weary, cynical, and even resentful, but, never, finally, rebellious. No longer enthusiastic participants in a glorious struggle for liberation, they [saw] themselves as performing the drudge work of military duty” (Shohat 2010: 213). On the other hand, some Lebanon war films, such as 2009's *Lebanon*, explicitly depict the questioning of military authority. Indeed, complaints about cases of insolence towards commanders were a main objection raised by IDF spokespeople to Samuel Maoz, the

director of the film (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a war film” DVD extra). Additionally, “it was only with the 1982 invasion of Lebanon that [‘personal cinema’ in Israel] began even to address the perennially explosive issue: the Palestinians” (Shohat 2010: 213). Shohat also notes that while critical films had been produced before 1982, after this war “the reception of political films ... was generally more positive” (Shohat 2010: 217).

In sum, cinema is an important site of representation that can reflect and/or respond to dominant narratives on Israeli identity and security. Similarly, because the films embody certain narratives, they can be seen not only as reflecting, but also informing, Israeli notions of collective identity, especially in areas that touch on security concerns and policies. The 1982 war was a special case as “the national narrative as a whole was undermined” (Gertz 1999: 153). While the effects of this war are present in post-1982 Israeli cinema in a more general way, not only in films explicitly telling stories about this war, the limited scope of this project requires the delimitation of a specific focus. While a more comprehensive survey of Israeli cinema since 1982 would no doubt be more instructive and illuminating of Israeli perceptions of identity as related to security-based narratives, this study will be limited to those films that explicitly depict the events of the summer of 1982, concerning Israel’s presence in Lebanon: *Ricochets*, *Time for Cherries*, *Cup Final*, *Waltz with Bashir*, and *Lebanon*. Emphasis will be placed on the latter four films, as *Ricochets*, filmed on location in Lebanon while the war was still taking place, was produced by the IDF and is arguably the least critical of the five films. It is also distinct from the other films as it was made during the war and without the ten or twenty-five years that the other filmmakers took to process the war. Thus, *Ricochets* will be discussed briefly as based on critical analysis of this film in the academic literature, before it is compared to the four later films. Finally, the

following chapter will provide a synthesis of the analysis of the four films and what these can tell us about the identity crisis Israelis experienced in 1982. We will also discuss how Israelis coped with this crisis, and how this war affected the relationship of most Israelis with the state and military apparatus, as well as perceptions of some of the security-based narratives that inform a projected national Israeli identity.

Ricochets

Eli Cohen's *Ricochets*, “[p]roduced by the Film Unit of the Israeli Defense Forces” (Shohat 2010: 232) and commercially distributed, was popularly seen as “highly critical” (Shohat 2010: 232; citing Thomas L. Friedman) because “the military is not always shown in the best light” (Shohat 2010: 232; citing the filmmaker). It was “well-received by both soldiers and civilians in Israel” (Shohat 2010: 232). Contrary to the other films that will be discussed in this chapter, *Ricochets* reflects many aspects of more traditional Israeli war films which “[tell] the old national narrative—that of the war of the few against the many—in a new version: as an isolated chosen people's confrontation with a large and hostile world” (Gertz 1999: 153). However, despite its features as a “latter-day heir of the Israeli heroic-nationalist” cinema (Shohat 2010: 232), *Ricochets* superficially appears critical as it also reflects “the national humanist attitudes that characterized the political cinema of the 1980s—a model that was considered as subversive cinema: criticizing and denigrating the mainstream Zionist Narrative” (Gertz 1999: 153). While there are indeed apparently critical aspects of the film, such as occurrences that “illuminate the absurdity and pointlessness of the war and, by so doing, reveal the film's antiwar attitudes”, the film also seeks to illustrate not the infallibility, but “the humanness of the Israeli soldiers, who, even in battle, refuse to

harm innocent civilians” (Gertz 1999: 155). Thus, the film reinforces rather than questions dominant narratives, such as of the “purity of arms” of the IDF.

Similarly, Shohat affirms that, like the genre of heroic-nationalist films in general, an important motif of *Ricochets* is “the moral superiority of the Israeli soldier” which, among other things, “displaces central political issues”: *Ricochets* “[implies] a certain legitimization through its framing of the question in terms of the narrowly defined issue of 'the war for Peace in Galilee’” (2010: 233). While focusing on “the human face of the soldiers ... it also demonizes the Arab side and, in the manner of heroic-nationalist films, it adds the 'good Arab,' the Druze” (Shohat 2010: 231-232): it is a common feature of films that depict a racial “other” to include both positive and negative stereotypes of this “other” – not only is any stereotype dehumanizing as it reduces a group to a particular set of characteristics, but the negative stereotype stands out more clearly in contrast with the positive stereotype, which may suggest a more docile and more desirable alternative identity for the “other”. Furthermore, complex social and political dynamics in Lebanon, which was in the middle of a civil war at the time of Israel's invasion, are “explained” in the film in such a way as to confirm that “Israel is the innocent victim of the Arabs' irrational hatred” (Yosef 2010: 312):

The Christians hate the Druze and the Shiites—so do the Sunni and the Palestinians. The Druze hate the Christians, the Shiites and the Syrians ... The Sunni hate whoever their bosses tell them to hate, and not only do the Palestinians hate everyone else, they hate each other as well ... And they've all got one thing in common: they all hate—and you've no idea how much—us Israelis. (as cited in Yosef 2010: 312)

While *Ricochets* can be seen as relatively critical of the war, much like *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon*, it “[masks] the origins of policies by foregrounding only those who carry them out, the soldiers” (Shohat 2010: 232). Not only is the invasion itself never

actually questioned (Shohat 2010: 235), criticism of war does not extend to criticism of soldiers or the military itself: the film emphasizes “the soldiers' humane treatment of women, children, and the elderly; tolerance of the opponent's religion; love of and respect for women; and so on” (Gertz 1999: 156). In fact, a main feature of the film is the contrasting of behaviour of Israeli soldiers and of Arab “enemies” to emphasize the morals of the Israeli soldiers by comparison. *Ricochets* also alludes to and challenges accusations about a lack of “purity of arms” by the Israelis in order to disprove these accusations. This phenomenon is clearly presented in Gertz's reading of some key scenes of the film:

[W]hile on a mission to flush terrorists out of a Lebanese house, Gadi, the main protagonist, encounters an old man lying on a mattress. Gadi moves away without touching him, only to discover that the old man is actually lying on a cache of explosives. (1999: 156)

The Druze soldier in the Israeli unit gives evidence of national tolerance merely by being there. His comrades in the company, who cover him as he heads out to visit his Lebanese fiancée, integrate this national tolerance with respect for the “other,” his love, and his family. It is the Arabs who, by murdering him in a violent and brutal fashion, violate these values of tolerance and love. The Israelis again emerge utterly absolved of guilt of murder and violence when they attempt to persuade the survivors of the dead Druze not to avenge his blood. By so doing, they also provide a subtle response to charges of the Israeli army's involvement [in] the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. (1999: 156)

[In the] climax of the film ... Gadi ... would rather risk his life than harm innocent civilians. Therefore, he risks his life by bursting into the house in which Abu Nabil is hiding instead of firing at it from a safe distance. This humanism, however, is meant to attest to his superiority over his enemies, who sacrifice women and children for their goals, and to refute the charge of uncontrolled killing that has been applied to the Israelis. (1999: 156-157)

In sum, while in some ways *Ricochets* reflects the model of subversive cinema, we cannot consider it to be deeply critical of Israel or its military or as representing an identity crisis per se, as its dominant message is of the morality of the Israeli military and its soldiers, thereby reflecting dominant, state-sanctioned narratives. As Gertz summarizes the cinematic

motif of confrontation between:

[A] tough commander, who personifies the strength-centered military norms of Israeli society, and a sensitive, psychologically delicate soldier who is unable or unwilling to accept these norms. ... [i]n the political cinema ... the confrontation is used to criticize the military national norms; in *Ricochets* it is invoked to consolidate them. (1999: 157)

This film reflects, rather than criticizes, the dominant security-based narratives discussed in Chapter One, such as “that the Israeli is the victim of global animosity, that 'the whole world's against us' ... [and t]he sense of loneliness of people surrounded by enemies” (Gertz 1999: 158). The film “[leads] to the obvious conclusion that the Israelis can rely only on their strength” (Gertz 1999: 158-159). Although “the apologetic presentation of the national messages attest to the effort made to preserve this narrative and bridge the widening contradictions that appear in it” (Gertz 1999: 159), Shohat stresses that the film “should not be perceived simply as propaganda promoting the idea that Israeli policies are not so bad after all; it must be perceived even more as symptomatic of a sincere belief in the ethical and conscientious Israeli fighter” (2010: 235). While *Ricochets* does not provide a particularly negative reading of the war and the Israeli government or military—and one would not expect a film produced by the Israeli military itself to be overly critical, even if it does not portray its actions as above reproach—it illustrates the expression of security-based narratives in Israeli national cinema.

Time for Cherries

Nearly ten years after the invasion of Lebanon, while Israel still maintained troops north of its borders, two films were released in Israel that dealt with the 1982 war: Eran Riklis' *Cup*

Final (1992) and Haim Bouzaglo's *Time for Cherries* (1991).

Time for Cherries, a film that emphasizes the absurdity of war and the absurdity of life itself, revolves around Mickey Gour, an advertising copywriter who is preparing to serve in Lebanon with his reserve unit. His life in Tel Aviv is idyllic; according to Gertz, the first part of the film emulates a television commercial, both according to the manner in which it is filmed and the framing of the shots, and the happy scenes that seem to be promoting products “in the guise of peddling family values with bourgeois tranquillity and happiness. A mother, father, and child embrace, kiss, and smile on a plush, colorful sofa; a man and woman make love on a wide bed with purple and red sheets; [t]wo families frolic at the beach ...” (1999: 163). We also meet Joanna, an American journalist, who is preparing a piece on the war in Lebanon and chooses Mickey, to whom she seems drawn, as the “star” of her piece. The second half of the movie is “patterned after a television war documentary” (Gertz 1999: 162) and sometimes breaks the fourth wall, acknowledging that the film is a performance for an audience, such as in a scene in which a soldier who is in training to go to Lebanon is being embarrassed by his commander; the soldier turns directly to the camera and yells at the camera crew to stop filming him – it is revealed that what we had been seeing was what was being recorded by the film crew within the movie. It is thus not always possible to distinguish between the film, and the film within the film. Similarly, when Mickey asks Joanna why she is not watching a performance being put on by one of his fellow soldiers, Joanna replies “You're an interesting enough performance for me” (Gertz 1999: 164); since Joanna is filming a news story that focuses on Mickey in order to enhance the human element, by letting the audience get to know an individual rather than only seeing a bunch of strangers, it is interesting that she should refer to him as a “performer”. The two

nearly kiss, but are interrupted by their realization that Joanna's cameraman has followed her and had been surreptitiously filming their exchange (Gertz 1999: 164). Again, the illusion of the possibility of privacy is broken – like in any movie, if we are seeing an exchange, it has necessarily been captured on film.

Gertz compares and contrasts the earlier three films about the 1982 war in Lebanon:

*Cherry Season*²¹ neither adopts the national narrative, as *Ricochets* does, nor disputes it in the name of an opposing humanistic narrative, as *Cup Final* does. Instead, it dismantles both of these ideological and cinematic models and, with them, the Zionist narratives that guided them, and replaces them with a cinematic world of pure fantasy—a simulation of reality without reality. (1999: 162)

Unlike *Ricochets* which presents a clear message of the morality and victimhood of the Israeli soldier, this film is more difficult to interpret than the other films, as it employs more symbolism than clear plot or dialogue to convey its message. According to Gertz, such an approach critiques films about the Lebanon War and the narratives expressed therein: “the narratives of the war's proponents and opponents—the Zionist narrative in its general sense” (1999: 163).

A recurring motif of the film is the foreshadowing of Mickey's death while he is preparing to go to war in Lebanon. Gertz affirms that, “[l]acking a plot in which its protagonists can act and decide where their future lives will head, the film seems to build a plot around their preordained death. Thus, with death and life equally devoid of reason, death, like life, becomes a game and a fiction” (Gertz 1999: 166). Early in the film, as they play volleyball on the beach, Mickey's friend Choco tells him, “You've always had a

²¹ As noted in the introduction, there are several translations of the Hebrew title of the film, *Onat Haduvdevanim*. While I prefer to use *Time for Cherries*, Gertz uses the *Cherry Season* translation; the title has not been changed in citations from Gertz's work.

screwed up mind, expecting the worst”²² (Bouzaglo 1991). Later, there is a scene of a military funeral, with a casket draped with an Israeli flag and the singing of scripture; after gazing at his shadow falling over an open grave, Mickey visits with a headstone carver who quips: “My clients are dead quiet. Will you say something?” (Bouzaglo 1991). Mickey would like to know in which cemeteries soldiers from different regions are buried; his query suggests that Mickey assumes that he might die in the war and wonders where his final resting place would be. The headstone carver informs him that the IDF is so efficient that it has been digging graves for soldiers in advance, knowing that the graves will be filled, wryly commenting: “That’s the IDF for you – they won’t be caught off guard” (Bouzaglo 1991). As such, the grave over which Mickey cast his shadow could indeed be his own grave, which is ready for him, awaiting his corpse. This exchange seems to imply, similarly to the aforementioned critiques of the IDF by bereaved parents that the IDF was making callous or cynical use of the lives of its soldiers (Lebel 2007: 74), and it can be interpreted that expecting soldiers to die is tantamount to a willingness for them to die. As aptly expressed by Gertz: “Because the war is purposeless, death becomes its purpose. For this reason, Mickey’s demise, like that of the others, is preordained” (1999: 166). Mickey’s death is further foreshadowed when he “play-acts his death for the journalist as he topples into an open grave as she looks on” (Gertz 1999: 165); Mickey even sprinkles some dirt across his chest and nonchalantly stretches out in the grave. Even Mickey’s car, while hot pink, looks like a hearse – a feature that fits in very well with the rest of the approach in *Time for Cherries*. It implies that death is around the corner, but with a touch of the absurd; in this

²² Unless a written source is indicated, all quotations of dialogue from the film are based on the DVD subtitles for the translation from the spoken Hebrew, or directly from the audio if the dialogue is originally in English.

case, the hot pink colour of the hearse-like car. In other absurd moments of the film, a soldier in Mickey's unit dons, in one instance, or stands in front of, in another, a pair of wings, giving him the appearance of an angel. The references foreshadowing the death of Mickey and the other soldiers become even more explicit, including Mickey's unveiling of a cigarette ad featuring Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, the individual most responsible for Israel's invasion of Lebanon, introduced as "The man who got us here today...the man who will get us all under the ground" (Bouzaglo 1991). Later, when Mickey is handing out free samples of the cigarettes he is promoting, a fellow soldier asks: "Do you want to kill us all?", to which Mickey replies: "What does it matter what you die from?" (Bouzaglo 1991). Another exchange features the response: "Sure, literally," to a soldier's expression that they are "dying to go home" (Bouzaglo 1991). Apparently resigned to his fate, Mickey dances with death: while picking cherries, Mickey sees a closed-off area with a sign announcing "Beware of Landmines", after initially stepping carefully in the field, he begins to dance and leap around the minefield.²³

Another symbolic image of the film is the placing of a grenade into a dove's nest, by an unseen person; the audience sees only a hand. Later, we see IV, one of the soldiers of Mickey's unit, keeping watch over the grenade-bearing nest, implying that it was him who placed it there; Israel is dangerously playing with peace, by putting a grenade among the eggs over which the doves are brooding. The image of the grenade in the dove's nest illustrates the dissonance between Israel's statements that it craves peace, and its aggressive actions, such as launching an unnecessary war.

²³ This scene is similar to the titular sequence of *Waltz with Bashir*, when a soldier waltzes in the street, firing into the air, while bullets rain down.

Another scene of the film suggests the soldiers' frustration that their lives are treated as mere statistics on the news. After Choco narrowly escapes death after walking into a booby trap, a party celebrating his survival features the following toast by one of his comrades: "Choco, who walked in the valley of death but failed to reach the news. To Choco, who defied all known statistics. The immortal Choco, whose name will not be mentioned on the 9 o'clock news tonight. Long may he live!" (Bouzaglo 1991). Unsurprisingly, Choco dies shortly thereafter, sooner than the rest of the soldiers in his unit.

As it gets closer and closer to the end, the film becomes increasingly disjointed and there are several bizarre scenes, including the party in Choco's honour that segues from a dance party into one in which everyone is smashing plates; a vision of a belly dancer, who disappears in the puff of smoke of an explosion as if she had been a mere apparition, or a genie who can appear and disappear at will; and a shepherd who plays a flute in a field of dead sheep. The recurring motifs are death (Gertz 1999: 166) and the absurdity of the war.

A pivotal scene of the film is a speech given by a masked soldier to his shadow on the wall:

Hey you. Step up. I recognize you. Yes. I recognize you clearly. You're responsible for my life! Who gave you the right to bring me here to this shit, to this madhouse? Can you look at me straight in the eye? Can you look my son straight in the eye? Or look into the eyes of Choco's son? You don't recognize me, do you? Do you know why? Because I am everybody. Everybody sitting here. That's me. I've had it! I've fucking well had it up to here! Who am I protecting? The cedar trees? The sheep? Who? I can buy great cherries in the market near my house. I point to you. You won't be able to avoid my eyes. 600 dead. 600 widows. 1200 eyes cry out from beneath the soil. Fuck you! How can you live with this? How am I supposed to go on living after all this shit? (Bouzaglo 1991)

While the soldier is afterwards revealed to be IV, the same goofy soldier who had performed magic shows for children, as well as for his fellow soldiers, and who had donned the angel

wings, the fact that his identity is not revealed until after he has completed his speech allows him to speak for all Israelis: the soldiers who are killed, as well as their loved ones. In a country that has mandatory military service, most families will be affected by war; even those soldiers who are not serving might be called to serve at any moment, and those who go to war risk failing to return. An important feature of the above speech, which is likely addressing Sharon, is that, while critical of the war as unnecessary and absurd, the main victims of the war, according to the perspective of the film, are the Israeli soldiers that have been unnecessarily sucked into it. While one scene does feature the death of Arab civilians in a village, neither the Palestinians nor the Lebanese are really present in the film, and there is little focus on how their lives are affected by the invasion and ongoing war. The audience is not permitted intimacy with any Arab characters and can only identify with the Israeli soldiers or the American news team, through which the audience participates in the war as if it were a spectacle.

Finally, after they have completed their tour of duty and are headed home, and while Joanna, in the distance, films the closing segment of her piece of Mickey and his unit's time in Lebanon, the truck carrying Mickey and his companions is blown up by a roadside bomb. Their deaths are absurd and wasteful, as the soldiers managed to survive their service in the war until the very end. Expecting death at any moment, they manage to survive until they believe that their ordeals are over; they had already been drinking champagne in celebration of their return home. Shortly thereafter, while listening to a news report describing that fourteen were killed and twenty-three injured in the explosion, Joanna and her camera crew stop their car when they see part of Mickey's legacy: he is featured on the billboards he designed for the cigarette company, bearing the slogan "Have a Good Time" (Bouzaglo

1991).

Unlike *Ricochets* which negatively depicts Arab characters as untrustworthy and hateful, and *Cup Final* which portrays most of its Palestinian characters in a positive way, *Time for Cherries* is notable for the absence of Arabs in a war film that takes place in an Arab country:

In the course of *Cherry Season*, a soldier in the Israeli company, interviewed by the American journalist, attempts to explain which enemy he is fighting: 'I haven't seen any Palestinian terrorists,' he asserts. 'All I've seen are Lebanese civilians.' Indeed, the combatants in the film are Israeli soldiers and metal objects; no Arabs are in evidence. (Gertz 1999: 167)

The war is apparently taking place without an enemy. Gertz argues that “*Cherry Season* dismantles the stereotype of Israeli fighting men that appeared in *Ricochets* and *Cup Final*, and it also tears apart the Arab's stereotypes” (1999: 166). According to Gertz, in *Time for Cherries* “the equality of Jews and Arabs becomes part of a show whose theme is death and whose protagonists are actors who lack identity, be they Jewish or Arab” (1999: 167). In a contradictory statement, Gertz affirms that while several moments of the film are shot from the point of view of an Arab, thereby portraying “the enemy as a human being in the most familiar way”, she also affirms that “adopting the Arab's point of view is not meant to portray him as a human subject” (1999: 168). While Gertz claims that the Israelis in the film are as anonymous as the Arab, and that “Israelis and Arabs alike” are depicted as “others” (1999: 169), I disagree: the Israeli (and American) protagonists have names and we learn a bit about their lives and their personalities, while the Arabs remain absent from the film, which can be seen as a limitation of the “critical” nature of the film. However, *Time for Cherries* is a different kind of “critical” film:

[T]he political statement of *Cherry Season* is not found where the political

statements in the other Lebanon films are found. Neither the Jews nor the Arabs are the just in its plot. In fact, *Cherry Season* does not deal seriously with Jewish-Arab relations at all. Instead, it challenges the entire political reality in which Jewish-Arab relations and the War in Lebanon take place. (Gertz 1999: 169)

Furthermore, “just as *Ricochets* portrays the justice of the Israeli cause and *Cup Final* repudiates it, *Cherry Season* portrays Israeli justice as utterly irrelevant and the war as utterly perverse—a game of fiction and death instead of reality” (Gertz 1999: 170). The film's critique is made very clear in a few key moments, such as in IV's speech quoted above, blaming Ariel Sharon for the loss of Israeli life (Gertz 1999: 168), and a soldier's assertion that “It's the state that's sending us to death” (Gertz 1999: 169). As such, *Time for Cherries* indicates an important rupture between the state and society, especially the soldiers who have served in Lebanon, as well as their families. The film expresses a loss of faith in the decision-making of the Israeli government, which can no longer be trusted to only demand the lives of its soldiers in times of absolute need. Thus, the film reflects an identity crisis experienced in the context of this war. By demonstrating the absurdity of the war, the filmmakers suggest that Israelis can no longer trust that the state practices the touted ethic of “purity of arms” and of only fighting wars of “no alternative”.

Cup Final

The plot of *Cup Final* revolves around two Israeli soldiers who are kidnapped by a group of Palestinian combatants in the second week of the war, in June 1982. This “farcical” film (Shohat 2010: 258) reminds us that the war took place during the soccer World Cup Finals in Barcelona, and sees the Israeli protagonist, Cohen, one of the captives, bonding with his captors over their shared preference to be watching the games rather than to be involved in a

war. Gertz argues that *Cup Final's* “overstated, overloaded, and simplified use of the political model” suggests that the Israeli political cinema of the 1980s was “about to expire” (1999: 159).

At the beginning of the film, the main character, Cohen, seems oblivious to the fact that he is at war and that his life is at risk; his main concern is his dismay over having had to cancel his plans to fly to Spain to attend the World Cup. His second concern seems to be his appearance, as he is regularly seen tending to his hair, even after he has been kidnapped. In the opening scenes of the film, he is glib about the occupation and its effect on Lebanese civilians, making plans to try to watch the matches, especially those of his favourite team, Italy, saying “If there's no TV we can also confiscate one from one of the villages!”²⁴ (Riklis 1992) Cohen complains that he has been preparing his trip for two years, only to have his plans ruined: “And that ass hole [likely Defence Minister Ariel Sharon] starts a war and you can kiss the tickets goodbye!” (Riklis 1992). Perhaps reflecting the Israeli capacity for denial, as evoked by Halper (2011), Cohen sees no connection between the responsibility of the Israeli electorate and the actions of the government: in response to Cohen's complaint about “that ass hole” starting the war, a fellow soldier interjects: “I told you not to vote for Likud party!” to which Cohen replies: “What's that got to do with it?” (Riklis 1992). Thus, while the film does suggest criticism of the Israeli government or at least the party that was in charge at the time of the invasion, the fact that our protagonist does not see the connection reflects a perception that Israel's wars are inevitable, or at the very least, that suggesting that the war should or could have been avoided does not come naturally to Israelis. Rather than

²⁴ As much of the film's dialogue is in Hebrew, the passages quoted in this chapter are according to the subtitles on the DVD version, or is according to the audio in cases where the original dialogue is in English.

dwelling on the political causes and handling of the war by the government, Cohen simply wishes that “*they* ... would have consideration for the ticket-buying public,” though he does not specify *who* he means, if anyone in particular (Riklis 1992). In this scene, the filmmakers seem to mock the lack of questioning of the war by the Israeli public and by Israeli soldiers. Meanwhile, the Palestinian characters are also glib about the war; in reaction to a complaint that the only fruit available to eat are lemons, one of them says to the Israeli captives: “Listen brothers, next time pick a better time for war!” (Riklis 1992). Thus, the war is presented as a mundane aspect of the daily lives of Israelis and Palestinians.

According to Gertz, “*Cup Final* fuses three conventional strategies in the subversive cinema: portraying the Arab as superior to the Israeli, reversal of the roles and places of Israelis and Arabs; and depiction of the two peoples as equals” (1999: 160). Gertz points out that:

[The Palestinian characters] are well educated and nationally conscious; they express their goals firmly; they have a past, communicated to us incrementally; and they have first names. In contrast, the Israelis are called by their last names, their national attitudes and the goals of their struggle are not clear, and the portrayal of their lives and past lacks detail. (1999: 160)

Furthermore, Gertz insists that “[b]y presenting the Palestinian point of view, the film mocks the Israelis and their customs on the one hand, and on the other, as in all films on the conflict, fosters identification with the Arabs, the Palestinians' suffering, and the Lebanese distress” (1999: 160). However, Gertz's analysis implies that the Palestinians are uniformly presented as good and sympathetic, but fails to mention that this is not the case for all of the Palestinian characters. While the majority of the Palestinian captors are portrayed as kind and having little desire to hurt their Israeli captives, although they do clearly value their cause over the lives of these soldiers, there are others in the group who are overtly and

excessively hostile towards Cohen and Galili; they gratuitously point guns at the heads of their captives and are unnecessarily violent and rude towards them. In one scene, a malicious captor shoves Cohen's head into the cold water of a toilet and violently holds his face under the water while Cohen is completely naked and thus marked as vulnerable and posing no threat. Thus, although in many ways the most critical of the five films discussed, *Cup Final* does not completely break free from dominant Israeli cinema; although most of the Palestinians are noble, others give in to their desire to abuse Israelis.

While it can be argued that *Cup Final* is representative of subversive cinema, using techniques such as subverting narratives about Arabs as inferior and inherently violent and hateful, it can also be argued that “framing the narrative around Palestinian kidnappers and besieged Israelis” evokes the heroic-nationalist genre by evoking the themes of siege and encirclement (Shohat 2010: 258). Furthermore, the film conforms “to the usual Palestinian aggression/Israeli retaliation sequencing of events, [as] the conflict begins with 'their' (the Arabs) hostile actions, which renders the film's Israeli 'us' innocent, the micro-narrative allegorizing the macro-narrative of the conflict's genealogy” (Shohat 2010: 258). Indeed, the first instance of violence in the film has the Israelis attacked by unseen aggressors, and most of Cohen's unit is killed; five Palestinians then emerge, though it is not clear how this small group, which does not use explosives at any other time in the film, was responsible for such carnage. The Palestinians take Cohen and Galili captive, and plan to keep them alive and bring them to Beirut, as they might be a useful commodity, likely to exchange for Palestinian prisoners. Although keeping the Arabs in the role of first aggressor and menacing captor apparently maintains the overly simplified “Good vs. Bad” dichotomy of traditional war films, characteristic not only of Israeli war films, I disagree that this necessarily reflects a

lesser criticality of the filmmakers. Rather, it may reflect the limitations of having to create a situation in which Israeli soldiers and Palestinian combatants could interact in the context of the 1982 war. Other than these, albeit dramatic, exceptions, most Palestinian characters are not represented in a stereotypical way, and in fact this is the only of the five movies discussed that Arabs, and Palestinians in particular, are among the main characters of the film: while *Ricochets* and *Lebanon* include Arab characters, they do not feature prominently, are less complex, and mostly turn out to be untrustworthy. *Time for Cherries* and *Waltz with Bashir*, for their part, feature no Arab characters.

Cup Final strongly indicates the erosion of dominant narratives, as most of the Palestinians are presented as human and generally better than the Israeli soldiers (Gertz 1999: 160). However, the film also suggests identity *crisis* and struggle, rather than outright rejection of narratives, as the representations of Arab oscillate between the kind and educated and the brutish and violent. Furthermore, unlike traditional war films which seek to avoid moral ambiguity, many sensitive topics are raised and controversial terms are used, such as the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the complicated legal “absentee” status applied by the Israeli government to enable confiscation of land from Palestinians in Israel. The film does not dodge difficult questions that do not fit in to the dominant Israeli narratives. However, it tends to limit itself to raising these questions, rather than attempting to provide an answer for them. *Cup Final* also distinguishes itself from *Ricochets* in that (most) of Cohen's Palestinian captors are not depicted as irrational, violence-loving Arabs who attack the Israelis simply out of hatred: one of the Palestinian captors specifically states that they are fighting for “the Palestinian people ... the Palestinians oppressed under the heavy foot of the Israeli occupying army” (Riklis 1992). Thus, early on, it is evident that this

film has very little in common with the traditional war film; such a genre would avoid mention Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, and would instead portray the Palestinians as simply wanting to attack Israelis and Israel without providing elements of context or motivation. Furthermore, most of the Palestinians are not reduced to a violence-loving stereotype, as the two leaders of the group reminisce about their time in Italy where one studied medicine and the other studied pharmacy, suggesting that they are regular human beings, complex individuals with varied interests and ambitions. After the would-be doctor gives a speech on the struggle of the Palestinian people, he is told "You're wasting your time here, you should be representing us at the UN," clearly indicating a recognition of the international system and a preference for political rather than violent means (Riklis 1992). The film also presents the Israelis as hypocritical: after they are captured, Galili, the more defiant and arrogant of the two Israeli characters angrily tells one of his captors not to mistreat him, yelling "You didn't hear about the Geneva agreements?"; the irony of such a question is made clear as his captor replies "Did you?" (Riklis 1992). Additionally, Cohen, who bonds more easily with his captors and "who, by deliberately minimizing his contribution to the war, personifies the anti-warrior 'new Israeli'" (Gertz 1999: 160) is still alive and returned to the Israeli army at the end of the movie, Galili, perhaps as punishment for his intolerance and arrogance, is killed by Israeli fire in an attempt to escape.

Finally, the film explicitly refers to the "shoot-and-cry" phenomenon widely discussed in academic literature (Shohat 2010: 235; Yosef 2010: 312; Levy 2009; Arian *et. al.* 1983: 83; Linn 1986: 499):

Cohen: “We didn’t want to come here!”

Ziad [leader of the group of Palestinians]: “All the Israeli soldiers say that, but you make war after war after war. First you shoot, then you cry.”

(Riklis 1992)

While films such as *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon* seem to suggest that by “crying”, by depicting the ordinary Israeli soldier as the main victim of the war, and especially by telling and diffusing this story in a medium such as cinema, Israelis can absolve themselves of their guilt, *Cup Final* mocks this notion. By pointing out the continuous nature of the cycle of “shooting and crying”, that Israelis constantly find themselves in situations where they are regrettably “forced” to use violence, doubt is cast on the inevitability of the use of lethal force by the Israeli military. The shoot-and-cry phenomenon is again alluded to at the very end of the film. After all the Palestinian characters but Ziad have been killed by Israelis, and Cohen has been returned to the army, Cohen and Ziad say goodbye before Ziad, who has been wounded, is placed on a stretcher into an Israeli ambulance. The audience is not made aware of how Ziad has ended up in an Israeli ambulance – is he no longer considered an enemy combatant because he has returned Cohen safely and has perhaps promised to lay down arms? Has Cohen lied and said that Ziad is a Phalangist ally in order to save the life of his new friend? Is Ziad actually being taken to prison or to his death, rather than to be treated by Israeli doctors? As the ambulance pulls away, Cohen is offered a cigarette, which he accepts with shaking hands – though earlier in the film he had refused a cigarette, saying that he had quit smoking. He is then seen sitting alone (or, more accurately, with nearby soldiers out of the frame), weeping as the closing credits roll.

Although Cohen would indeed be shaken by his experience and relieved to be safe, the audience cannot know if this is the only reason Cohen cries: Is it related to Ziad's fate, of

which Cohen may or may not even be aware? Is it the trauma of service in the Lebanon war, which is so clearly emphasized in *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon*? Or is Cohen also shaken by the fact that his experiences have shattered the narrative that he had previously never questioned, notably that all Arabs hate Israel and Israelis and would destroy them given the chance? It may well be that Cohen is suffering an identity crisis, but it is impossible to know how he is processing his various experiences, beyond the fact that he has befriended a Palestinian “terrorist” (from the perspective of the Israeli military and its objectives in Lebanon). His connection with Ziad is clearly illustrated in a touching scene in which Cohen gives Ziad his ticket for the last game of the World Cup Final in Barcelona. The two agree that their “side” must win; while they are apparently talking about Team Italia, it is implied that they are also talking about the political situation, and how neither “side” is willing to back down from their struggle. Ziad asks Cohen wryly: “Do you think I'll make it?”, to which Cohen replies with a laugh “Sure. ...Maybe to the second half.” (Riklis 1992) While technically “enemies”, it is clear that under different political circumstances, Ziad and Cohen could be close friends. Unlike *Time for Cherries*, which suggests, in its absurdity, that the conflict is not likely to ever be solved, *Cup Final* subverts the assumption that the conflict is intractable because of irreconcilable differences and hatred between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It dismisses common questions such as “Why can't *they all* just get along?” or “Why do they hate each other?” These over-simplifications reduce the conflict to cultural or national differences, while overlooking the political dimension – which Cohen had done earlier in the film when he failed to see the connection between the election of the government and the invasion of Lebanon.

Lebanon

With the exception of the opening and closing shots of a field of sunflowers, *Lebanon* takes place entirely inside a tank, featuring sights of the outside world as seen from within. The characters of the film include the four young soldiers that make up the tank unit; principal among them is Shmulik, the gunner, who represents the filmmaker, Samuel Maoz, who based the film on his own experiences. Much of what the audience sees is from Shmulik's perspective – the film starts when Shmulik enters the tank; the scenes of outside reflect what Shmulik is seeing through the view-scope of the tank; and the scenes of outside are often interspersed with close-ups of Shmulik's eyes, giving us insight to his experiences, and to his fear. The audience is expected to imagine themselves in Shmulik's place and see what it is like to be a young soldier in a combat situation for the first time. Maoz strives to convey to the audience the experience of the soldiers in the tank unit; as the film is set in the cramped space of a tank, the audience is left with a claustrophobic feeling. Indeed, the spatial layout of a film's setting can reflect “soldiers' feelings of helplessness, entrapment and isolation” (Yosef 2010: 314). Indeed, as Maoz's goal was to convey the story of his personal experiences in *Lebanon*, he went to great lengths to convey the fear and claustrophobia of living in a tank in a war situation. Maoz uses a form of “method” directing: early in the rehearsal schedule, he had his actors closed inside a dark container for hours, and after a time the actor would experience “shooting” from outside the tank (the tank being hit with rods), which the actor did not expect (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra). In interviews, the actors agree that there was very little need for “acting” in the film, as simply entering the set of the tank was enough to make them feel trapped and afraid (Maoz, S.

2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra).

Other characters in the film include the direct superior of the tank unit, who occasionally visits the soldiers to give them instructions, or speaks to them over the walkie-talkie; a Phalangist; and a prisoner who is allegedly a Syrian spy. However, we are never able to confirm the identity of the “Syrian”, due to the language barrier between the prisoner and the Israeli protagonists.

In many ways, the film can be considered very critical of the war and the Israeli army. When director Samuel Maoz met with spokespeople of the IDF who had reviewed the script, they were very displeased with the displays of insubordination towards commanders, having counted eight instances of insolence (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra). Indeed, the soldiers violate direct orders, apparently out of fear, such as when Shmulik hesitates to fire when ordered to do so, or when the unit hacks into the “Pluto” radio channel that is meant to be a means of private communication between their superiors. As such, in several ways *Lebanon* breaks with the more traditional heroic-nationalist cinema, as it shows the soldiers as unsure, afraid, and questioning their commanders. The film also criticizes the blind following of orders, and points to the taboo of asking questions in the military. In one instance, for example, the young tank commander can only explain the rationale of an order by saying: “They told me to wait so we're waiting”.²⁵ (Maoz, S. 2009) The tank unit's superior is also visibly displeased when pressed by members of the unit for explanations regarding the planned duration of the invasion, and reasons behind particular manoeuvres.

Another controversial feature of the film is the clear portrayal of the arms of the IDF

²⁵ Quotations from the film are according to the DVD's English subtitles.

as less than pure. This is reflected in a telling instruction about the use of white phosphorus by the superior of the tank unit: “Remember, according to international law we can't use phosphorus bombs. We respect this law, we won't use the term 'phosphorus'. Any phosphorus artillery will now be called 'Flaming Smoke’”; this statement is followed later by an instruction to use “phosphorus”, after which the commander corrects himself to say “Flaming Smoke”, in a mocking tone (Maoz, S. 2009). IDF spokespeople also objected to this dialogue in the film, maintaining that the IDF has never used phosphorus. The exchange, as recounted by an incredulous Maoz, was as follows:

IDF Spokesman: There isn't and never was any phosphorus in the IDF.

Maoz: How can you say that? I was there, I know...

IDF Spokesman: You don't remember accurately.

(Maoz S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra)

Additionally, the Israelis are seen killing civilians; although it is not their intention, the portrayal of lethal mistakes by the military or willingness to incur civilian casualties to protect soldiers has no place in heroic-nationalist war films. Thus, there is an important divergence between films such as *Ricochets*, in which Israeli soldiers risk their own lives to avoid hurting civilians, and *Lebanon*, in which the gunner receives the instruction: “No one is taking a chance. We shoot to kill.” (Maoz S. 2009)

However, despite these more critical elements, the film is also apologetic in many ways. A closer look suggests that it is not as critical of the conduct of Israelis as it appears. While the film is clearly anti-war in general, it refuses to portray Israeli soldiers as truly guilty of killing civilians. One of the most powerful scenes of the film shows a civilian Arab who had been driving a truck full of crates of chickens with his legs and one of his arms having been blown off, repeatedly screaming “Salaam!” (“Peace!”), surrounded by dead

chickens, startled chickens, and smoking debris. The man looks directly at Shmulik and the audience; Shmulik turns away in shame, unable to meet the man's gaze. The injured man is, of course, actually looking at the outside of the tank, and cannot be sure that anyone is looking back at him. Shmulik watches, in horror, through the view-scope of the gun while soldiers outside shoot the man in the head. Although Shmulik is directly responsible for having killed this apparently innocent man, the extenuating circumstances exculpate him to a large degree: Shortly before, Shmulik had been ordered to fire warning shots at any approaching vehicle, and then to fire a shell if the driver did not stop. When the first car comes, Shmulik, having never shot anything but targets, hesitates, but the car is indeed carrying "enemies", and an Israeli soldier outside the tank is shot and killed. Shmulik (and the audience) watches, in close-up, the failed attempts at reviving the soldier, who appears to be young and handsome. The deceased soldier is placed inside the tank until the body can be transferred to be returned to Israel for burial. Shmulik cannot avoid the representation of his guilt, as the young soldier for whose death he feels responsible shares the cramped space of the tank with him and the three other soldiers who are part of the tank unit. Accordingly, it is partly Shmulik's guilt and fear of being responsible for the death of yet another soldier that he fires a shell at the inoffensive truck when he is ordered to do so. Much like in *Waltz with Bashir*, the fact that the soldiers are young, afraid, and inexperienced reduces their guilt; they must react to unfamiliar and frightening circumstances without having the time or experience to process their options or the force that is actually required to handle the situation. Furthermore, Shohat's criticism of *Cup Final* is also true for *Lebanon*: the film depicts the usual sequence of violence in which Arabs attack, apparently without provocation by unknown, threatening Arabs whose motives and backgrounds are unknown.

Although the film is set on the “first day of the war”, it does not address the fact that the beginning of the war is the invasion of Lebanon by Israel, and thus that the Israeli military is, in fact, the “initial” aggressor and should not be in Lebanon at all.

The depiction of Arab characters is very limited in the film. The Phalangist who visits the tank is shown as two-faced and untrustworthy: while friendly with the Israeli soldiers, after enquiring about their (lack of) proficiency in Arabic, he graphically threatens the “Syrian prisoner”, who has been handcuffed inside the tank for transport to a further location, with detailed descriptions of the torture, rape, and murder he promises to inflict upon him. The Phalangist then turns to the Israeli soldiers, reminding them, with a smile, to treat the Syrian well, as he is a prisoner of war. This exchange establishes early in the film the moral superiority of the Israeli army over the Phalangists: the Israeli soldiers are young, innocent, and well-intentioned, while the Phalangist is barbaric and deceitful. Furthermore, as it is only the audience, and not the Israeli characters, who are aware of the meaning of the exchange that took place between the two Arab men. While the Israeli soldiers do not trust him, they have no idea what horrors he is planning for the prisoner. This dynamic alludes to the massacre at Sabra and Shatila, which would take place three months later, according to the movie's chronology, as if to remind the audience that the Israeli army could never be as immoral as the Phalangists, and to suggest that it is not Israel's fault for failing to prevent what they could not have known would occur. However, like the Kahan Commission that dismisses the idea that no one in the Israeli military could have foreseen the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the members of the tank unit are indeed reluctant to hand over the prisoner to the Phalangist. While they do not *know* what will happen to the prisoner, the Phalangist is clearly untrustworthy. The soldiers say that they are unable to release the prisoner to the

Phalangist because only their superior has the key to the handcuffs; however, the audience does not know for sure if this is true, or if the soldiers in the tank *do* have the key, but feel the need to protect the prisoner from suspected ill-treatment. This scene refers to the guilt of Israeli soldiers over the Sabra and Shatila massacres, which is dealt with extensively in *Waltz with Bashir*. The film attempts to re-write history by creating a scenario in which, on this occasion, the Israeli soldiers protect the Arab(s) under their charge.

As Shohat notes, there is an important distinction between whether a character looks and acts, or whether they are present merely to be looked *at* and acted *upon* (2010: 7). In *Lebanon*, with the exception of the Phalangist who lies to and possibly betrays the Israeli soldiers,²⁶ the Arab characters are looked at and look back, but they are given no voice. The soldiers in the tank are kind to the prisoner, but due to a language barrier, they cannot communicate with him. Furthermore, unlike the audience's access to the words of the Phalangists via subtitles, the prisoner hardly speaks, so even the audience is unable to learn anything about him, such as whether he is truly an enemy spy or combatant or if he was seized merely because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Similarly, while the film daringly shows Arab civilian victims of the war, such as the aforementioned truck driver and the mother of a killed child, they stare at Shmulik and the audience with accusing eyes, but say little. While Shmulik and the audience feel compassion for their tragedy, the Israeli protagonists are not truly guilty. The existence of the real enemies that shot at the Israelis before Shmulik blew up the truck suggests that if it were not for the “terrorists” wanting to fight Israel, Israel would not have to be there in the first place. Similarly, the woman and her

²⁶ Later on, the tank is led by Phalangists into a dangerous situation; it is not known whether this was an accident or intentional on the part of the Phalangists.

child are put in the cross-fire of the war by Arab combatants who break into their home and use them as human shields. Contrasted with the fresh-faced youths in the tank, it is implied that Israelis would never resort to the shameful and cowardly tactic of using civilians as human shields, while the Arab enemies are allowed no voice, no name, and no motivation—we do not even see their faces. The distinction between Israelis and Arabs is also suggested by Samuel Maoz himself in an interview, as he discusses his philosophy on what enables people to kill:

Normal people can't kill. You need to be a psycho. So the trick of war is to take a human being and put him in this...situation. After that, it's a process. It takes 24 hours, maybe 48. It's a metamorphosis. Our most basic instinct, our survival instinct, starts to take control and it's like a drug: you can't resist it. ... You don't think about moral calls and this is the trick of war. You're not fighting for your country or for your family. You're fighting for your life. And this is why, when people around me start talking about war and morals, it's ridiculous to me. ... In Lebanon, every time we found ourselves entering a small town, they told us that on 50% of its balconies there were snipers with missiles and on the other 50% there were families. Now, if you're going to check balcony after balcony, you won't survive beyond three or four. So what are your options? I mean your options to be moral? Am I a pacifist? Am I not? It doesn't work like that. It's like blinking and, yes, these acts afterwards fuck your life. (cited in Cooke 2010)

Thus, the Israeli soldiers are not naturally inclined to kill; they are forced to kill because of fear and the situation in which they find themselves. No story, however, is told from the perspective of the Arabs. Unlike in *Cup Final*, we have no insight into the motivations of the Arabs. We are therefore left to assume that they must simply be “psycho”, in Samuel Maoz's words, to kill as they do. Furthermore, as the Arab is only marginally present in the narrative as a speechless victim, the main victim of the narrative is the Israeli soldier who is damaged by the horrors of war. This idea is articulated quite clearly by the actors who play the Israeli soldiers in the film. According to actor Michael Moshonov: “I feel bad for people who've actually experienced this because...it's very stressful, inconvenient and scary. The moment

you get in there [the tank], you get an anxiety attack, there's no need for acting” (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra). And even more clearly in the words of actor Itai Tiran: “The most profound realization I've had was that...that Shmulik doesn't look like a murderer. No doubt, he's taken someone's life, but if a murder took place, I think it's the murder of his soul. This film conveys this process in a very profound way, the murdering of the souls of people who participate in wars” (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra). Although the makers of the film surely do not intend to make light of the effects of the invasion on civilians in Lebanon, the Arab “casualties” are brushed aside in favour of focus on the Israeli soldier as the primary victim of the war.

Lebanon does, in several ways, suggest that an identity crisis is experienced by the Israeli soldiers in the film. A recurring motif, especially early in the film, is that of Shmulik looking at his own reflection, in mirrors and in puddles. Although it is not always obvious on the screen, several shots of Shmulik are not directly of his face, but of its reflection. He stares silently and intently at his own reflection, as if unable to recognize himself in the unfamiliar setting of war.

Maoz criticizes the reluctance of many Israelis to truly take responsibility for their actions, such as the report after the killing of a young child in a shoot-out with armed enemy combatants: “2 dead terrorists, 1 dead girl. No casualties” (Maoz, S. 2009). Far from denying them, Maoz acknowledges and takes responsibility for his actions, telling his story in a feature film, telling people in Israel and all over the world how, at the tender age of twenty, he “killed a man for the first time” (Cooke 2010). However, as articulated in *Waltz with Bashir*, films are therapeutic – Maoz affirms that a part of him “had died in Lebanon” and that he was “an empty shell” (Cooke 2010), but once he started filming *Lebanon*, he

experienced pain in his leg and overnight expelled some remaining metal shards that he had been carrying since the war (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra). “For Maoz, making his film turned out to be, clichéd though this sounds, healing. As he wrote the script, he realised he was at last able to put some distance between himself and his past” (Cooke 2010). In Maoz's own words, his desire to make the movie, which was triggered by Israel's second war in Lebanon in 2006, reflected “a need to unload, a need to expose the war as I see it without all the heroic stuff, but it was mainly a need to... I don't know if to say 'forgive myself' is the right expression, but maybe to find some understanding, because I feel responsibility” (S. Maoz, cited in Douglas 2010). About the completion of the film, he says: “making this film has got me my life back ... Making Lebanon and finally confronting what happened in that war, has given me my true feelings back and I can cry real tears once more” (cited in Solomon 2009). Thus, Maoz has completed the cycle of “shooting and crying”: While he hopes that his film “might save a life” (S. Maoz, cited in Cooke 2010), he is referring to saving the lives of Israeli soldiers who should not be sent to war in Lebanon, the main purpose of the film seems to be for Maoz and the Israeli audience, to ease their conscience about the First Lebanon War.

In sum, *Lebanon* reflects the main argument of this thesis: the fact that Samuel Maoz felt a need to expose his experience and to “forgive himself” implies that he felt that he had done something unacceptable – and one wonders if he might have felt differently had the 1982 war been a war of “no choice” – reflecting an identity crisis. As expressed by actor Yoav Donat, who plays Shmulik: “There's a *dissonance* between what you've seen in your own eyes and what you're required to do” (Maoz, S. 2009: “Notes on a War Film” DVD extra). However, this crisis appears to be quite surmountable; for those soldiers who do not

simply repress their war experiences (a common theme in *Waltz with Bashir*), salvation and forgiveness of oneself is possible – by the very act of acknowledging our responsibility, we are absolved of it.

Waltz with Bashir

Similarly to *Lebanon*, *Waltz with Bashir* focuses on the perspective of the ordinary Israeli soldier who served in the 1982 Lebanon War. The film, which is an “animated documentary”²⁷, follows writer, director, producer, and protagonist Ari Folman on his journey to recover his “lost” memory of having been in West Beirut during the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Raz Yosef describes the film as “a hallucinatory quest into the depths of the director's consciousness as he tries to reconstruct three days of the war that have been entirely erased from his memory” (2010: 311). *Waltz with Bashir* has received great praise for its spectacular animation, painstakingly drawn by a small team, and for its strong anti-war message (for example, Stewart 2010; Mansfield 2010). Folman's journey begins, both in the film and in real life, when his friend Boaz tells him about a recurring nightmare featuring the twenty-six dogs he was forced to shoot during the war in Lebanon; as a rather green soldier, Boaz did not have the stomach to shoot people, so he was given the job of shooting the dogs in a village so that their barks would not awaken the villagers. Folman wonders why Boaz is speaking to him instead of to a therapist, and the answer sums up the spirit behind the film: “Can't films be therapeutic?” (Folman 2008). Like *Lebanon*, *Waltz with*

²⁷ Although this study limits itself to feature films and excludes documentaries, because of the animated format and the inclusion not only of interviews but also reenactments of memories, dreams, and hallucinations, I have counted *Waltz with Bashir* among works of cinema rather than documentary.

Bashir is a filmmaker's quest to deal with his trauma about having served in the war and, in Folman's case, particularly having been in the vicinity of the Sabra and Shatila massacre. The primary effect of each film, if not consciously intended by its maker, seems to be to absolve the director of his guilt by allowing him to express it.

Similarly to the literature discussed in Chapter One, Yosef agrees that the "First Lebanon War left painful scars on the Israeli national memory and was the longest and most controversial of all Israel's wars" (2010: 311). While this research has focused primarily on the effects of the war on perceptions of Israeli national identity, Yosef's approach of studying memory is very pertinent to our discussion, as identity and memory are intimately related. He agrees that the war was traumatic particularly because it was "a political war", a "war of choice" that would come to be known as "the other war" (Yosef 2010: 312). This underlines the perception that the 1982 war was perceived as fundamentally different from Israel's previous wars and military engagements, since it was not seen as responding to a direct threat to Israel's security and survival. According to Yosef, *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon* "explore repressed traumatic events from the First Lebanon War, events that have been denied entry into the shared national past" (2010: 313). The film's "emphasis on the subjective dimension of memories and experiences of the war distances [it] from the war's historical context which, though present, is represented only partially and sometimes hazily, and leads them to an atemporal zone marked by symbols and hallucinations" (Yosef 2010: 314-315). Thus, "[t]he film does not aspire to reveal the true details of the war. Rather is it concerned with memory and the very process of remembering" (Yosef 2010: 316). Such decontextualization has also been the source of fierce criticism of *Waltz with Bashir* – by focusing exclusively on the suffering of the Israeli soldier, the film constructs Israelis as the

main victims of the war, struggling with the memory of “one of the most traumatic wars in the history of the State of Israel” (Yosef 2010: 315) without addressing the fact that the war was started by the aggressive act of the invasion of one country by another. Like in *Lebanon*, there is significant emphasis on the fear and lack of experience of the young Israeli soldiers in the film, reducing their responsibility for the deaths they caused, especially the accidental killing of civilians, because they were too afraid to know what they were doing: “Out of pure fear and anxiety, we start shooting like lunatics” (Folman 2008). The soldiers and the killed civilians are constructed as victims of fate, since no explanation is really given for the situation. No doubt, these soldiers are very different from those of the heroic-nationalist traditional war films. Folman describes the character of Ronny Dayag, who we meet early in the film, as the “classic anti-hero of every war movie”; Folman stresses that *Waltz* is not a glamorous story, as the anti-war statement of the film is that wars have no glory and no glamour (2008: DVD commentary). He hints at what could have been developed into a serious criticism of the Israeli political and military leaders who launched the war, which caused the deaths of a great many Palestinian, Lebanese, and Israeli individuals: “[wars] are a useless idea by, most of the time, very stupid leaders with big egos that *send* other people to die for the cause of nothing” (Folman 2008: DVD commentary; emphasis added). Despite this, he admits that the film does not attempt to:

deal with the political hierarchy and the leadership. I tried to ignore it because I was not interested [in] wasting four years of my time as a filmmaker dealing with political leaders. There's no news, really, in regards of politics, about what happened during the Lebanon War and I tried to stay focused on a very personal basis. (2008: DVD commentary)

Although *Waltz with Bashir* has been hailed as a critical anti-war film (Stewart 2010, for example), that Folman retains his focus only on those who are *sent* to war, that is, the Israeli

soldiers, and not those living in the territory invaded by the Israeli military, the film does not truly question the dominant, official Israeli discourses. It is not, in fact, a deeply critical film, and therefore does not reflect a significant *ongoing* identity crisis. In his commentary to the film, Folman addresses this criticism, humbly expressing his limitations as a filmmaker:

[It was] essential to keep it on the level of the common soldier and not try to figure out how the others [i.e. Lebanese soldiers, Palestinian refugees] felt...I mean, one day, hopefully, the Palestinians and the Lebanese, they will have the option to tell their own story, their own version, and I'd love to see it. But you can't *be* both sides, you can't tell, you can't be the invader, in this army, then go to the other side and tell that story too. You have to keep focus. I kept focus on my very personal story and my friends' story, and it's big enough. It's pretentious enough to try to cover this story. (2008: DVD commentary)

Indeed, *Waltz* does not feature any Arabs, Palestinian or Lebanese, as characters in the film, and gives them no voice. This is most clearly demonstrated in the closing scene of the film, which Folman has argued is the most important: after the entire movie has been animated, once Folman's character realizes that he was present at the massacre and even shot flares that helped light the camps as the Phalangists were carrying out the massacre, the film shows documentary footage of the massacre. Now that he remembers the war, it is real to him, and is no longer reflected by the fantastical animation style. Featured in the footage is a disconsolate Arab woman, wailing amidst the destruction and piled corpses in the aftermath of the massacre. However, her cries are not subtitled, so the majority of the English and Hebrew speaking audience are not able to understand her.²⁸ Gideon Levy, the editor in chief of Israel's *Haaretz*, argues that:

For the first time in the movie, we not only see real footage, but also the real victims. Not the ones who need a shrink and a drink to get over their experience, but those who remain bereaved for all time, homeless, limbless and crippled. No

²⁸ Thanks go to Frédéric Vairel, who indicated this silencing of the Palestinian victims of Sabra and Shatila at my first viewing of *Waltz with Bashir* in 2010.

drink and no shrink can help them. And that is the first (and last) moment of truth and pain in “Waltz with Bashir”. (2009)

The objective of processing Israeli trauma in Israeli war films such as *Waltz with Bashir* is ultimately self-serving:

The horrifying archival images of slaughtered Palestinian men, women and children at the end of the film are then detached from their historical and political context and provide a kind of catharsis for the protagonist: now he remembers and is released from the trauma that had been haunting him; now he is cured and redeemed from the wounds of the past and can apparently carry on with his life. (Yosef 2010: 324)

Levy is a fierce critic of the film, arguing that, despite its spectacular artistic merits, it is “infuriating, disturbing, outrageous and deceptive” and deserves “a badge of shame for its message” (Levy 2009). Despite Folman's many assertions that *Waltz with Bashir* is an anti-war film that reflects the “absurdity of war in the higher scale” (2008: DVD commentary), Levy refutes this claim: “this is not an antiwar film, nor even a critical work about Israel as militarist and occupier. It is an act of fraud and deceit, intended to allow us [Israelis] to pat ourselves on the back, to tell us and the world how lovely we are” (2009). Indeed, the fact that such a “critical” movie could be made in Israel reinforces the perception of this country as an enlightened democracy that encourages free speech to the point that it supports openly critical films. Folman himself affirms that:

This film really shows Israel as a very tolerant country and I learned in the past 6 months that there is a total misconception in regards of how tolerant and open-minded Israel is. And in many occasions it is much more open-minded than a lot of places that are considered tolerant in Europe, for example, and in Israel you can really say whatever you think and you can say it very loud...because everyone speaks very loud and there is no problem with it. (2008: DVD commentary)

As such, not only is the film apologetic on Israel's behalf by offering proof of the ability to criticize, Levy asserts that the film is “propaganda”, it is “so different from the bloodthirsty

soldiers at the checkpoints, the pilots who bomb residential neighbourhoods, the artillerymen who shell women and children ... Here, instead, is the opposite picture. ... Of enlightened, beautiful Israel, anguished and self-righteous” (Levy 2009). Folman himself does not disagree that the film is propagandistic. When asked if the film was opposed by Israel, Folman argues that he did not face opposition because *Waltz with Bashir* helps to correct the misconception that it was actually Israel that committed the Sabra and Shatila massacres (2008: “Q & A with Ari Folman” DVD extra). However, the film clearly shows that, although Israel can be legitimately criticized for failing to do more to reduce the scale of the massacre, and Sharon in particular is shown receiving reports of the massacre and nonchalantly going back to sleep, it was only the Phalangists who did the actual killing. Folman says himself that: “This kind of propaganda can't be bought” (2008: “Q & A with Ari Folman” DVD extra). Although “critical”, *Waltz with Bashir* ultimately exonerates Israel and its military; and, by extension, its citizens and soldiers. As such, *Waltz* expresses the “cognitive dissonance” and identity crisis provoked by the 1982 war in Lebanon, and especially its most infamous episode, the Sabra and Shatila massacres. However, the film suggests that, due to the strength of its narratives of Israel's need to protect itself and Israel's status as “the only democracy in the Middle East”, Israelis have been able to overcome this dissonance through denial of, or especially expression of, their guilt.

Like the report of the Kahan Commission, *Waltz with Bashir* dwells on the brutality of the Phalangist allies, ultimately making the IDF look better by comparison; while not claiming that the Israeli military is above reproach, and indeed explicitly criticizing some of its actions, it simultaneously rehabilitates Israel's military by emphasizing the greater monstrosity of the Phalangists. Both *Waltz* and the Israeli Kahan Commission affirm only

the “indirect” responsibility of the Israeli military for the massacres, as no Israelis killed Palestinian civilians inside the camps. However, not only did the Israeli military, aware of previous brutality against Palestinians by the Phalangists (for example, Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 17), send in the Phalangists, they remained outside the camps during the three days of the massacre, even lighting the camps at night while the Phalangists operated. Can this be considered merely “indirect” involvement? While criticizing the failure of Israeli government and military figures, especially Ariel Sharon, to act more quickly to stop the massacre, Folman also absolves them, arguing that:

Mass murder, or things that happened in the Sabra and Shatila camps are just not in the system of an ordinary human brain. You can't even imagine that people are doing those kinds of things. Even if you're in war, you're used to certain things, you're used to a lot of loss, loss of people, destruction, but you're not used to facts like massacre in very big scale, that people go in to someplace, and they kill everybody, including kids, women ... and these guys couldn't believe it until they saw it with their own eyes. (2008: DVD Commentary)

The constant focus on the greater role of the Phalangists is an integral part of how Israelis were able to overcome the cognitive dissonance of realizing that the IDF's arms were not pure in the Lebanon war. Similarly to the analysis of the Kahan Commission, in the film, the character of Carmi affirms: “I don't understand why people were so surprised, that the Phalangists carried out the massacre. I knew all along how ruthless they were” (Folman 2008). Carmi goes on to describe the obsession of the Phalangists with their leader, Bashir Gemeyal, saying they seemed to even feel an eroticism for him. Thus, the Phalangists are cast as deviants. He opines that “It was obvious they'd avenge his death in some perverse way. It was as if their wife had been murdered. This was about family honor, which runs deep” (Folman 2008). Like in many other discourses on identity, the Lebanese Phalangists are constructed as fundamentally “other”, and the Israeli identity is re-affirmed by

comparison: the irrational Arabs are motivated by primitive concepts such as “family honour” and revenge, while the rational Israelis are part of a national army that acts according to the needs of security and survival. As summed up by Gideon Levy: “How pleasant to see the cruelty of the other. ... Look at them and look at us: We never do things like that” (Levy 2009). Meanwhile, the Palestinian victims of the massacre are completely absent from the narrative. Although *Waltz with Bashir* constructs itself as a critical, anti-war film, like *Ricochets* it reinforces the perception of Arabs as filled with irrational hatred, thus dehumanizing them, helping the audience to identify with the plight of the Israelis. In the DVD commentary, Folman addresses:

[Criticism] by very left-wing people in Israel that I put so much effort in showing that the Christian regime was responsible for the massacre that in many ways they thought that I was taking, I mean clearing, responsibility (in person) for myself, and my friend soldiers, and in general for the Israeli army. Of course, I totally disagree because this is what the ending of the film deals with, it's about the chronology of massacre, which is a general question, and it asks when do you realize that all the things that you hear or see can be put in one frame that tells you there is mass murder going on just around the hill. And unfortunately, the people who literally were shooting and did the massacre were the Christian regime, so it's in the movie. (2008)

Another criticism of the film is its referral to the Holocaust: “*Waltz with Bashir* equates the victimizer and the victim by linking the massacre at Sabra and Shatila to the Jewish trauma of the Holocaust” (Yosef 2010: 323). Folman maintains the dominant Israeli discourse that treats the Palestinian or Arab victim as fundamentally “other”: “the only way Folman can show any interest in the Palestinian victim is by creating a linkage with the Jewish victim” (Yosef 2010: 323). Partly because victimhood in Israeli politics, like in most politics of memory, is treated as a zero-sum game, “Folman's position as a victim does not allow for the possibility that Israeli Jews are themselves responsible for creating non-Jewish victims”

(Yosef 2010: 323). Folman's psychologist friend explains that his distress over his presence at—and repression of his memories of—Sabra and Shatila, and his guilt about the role he played in lighting flares that helped the Phalangists commit the massacre, suggesting that he feels guilty because he unwittingly and against his will was forced to take on the role of the Nazi. Gideon Levy reflects that the film rests on two ideological foundations:

One is the 'we shot and we cried' syndrome: Oh, how we wept, yet our hands did not spill this blood. Add to this a pinch of Holocaust memories, without which there is no proper Israeli self-preoccupation. And a dash of victimization – another absolutely essential ingredient in public discourse here – and voila! You have the deceptive portrait of Israel 2008, in words and pictures. (2009)

Levy is critical of the therapeutic role of films such as *Lebanon* and *Waltz with Bashir* as self-serving, and addresses the delay of these films: “Folman took part in the Lebanon war of 1982, and two dozen years later remembered to make a movie about it ... to free himself at long last from the nightmare that haunts him. And the nightmare is always ours, ours alone” (Levy 2009). Mainstream Israeli society was able to recover from the crisis provoked by the shame of the Sabra and Shatila massacre once the Kahan Commission confirmed that the hands of Israeli soldiers were not soiled with the blood of these particular victims, though the other victims of the war and the siege of Beirut are not mentioned. Similarly, “Folman's character in the film is constructed as an 'innocent victim' of history who, 'against his will', became a bystander at traumatic events” (Yosef 2010: 323). According to Yosef's analysis, we can see that *Waltz with Bashir* was an (apparently successful) attempt to cope with and overcome the “cognitive dissonance” incurred by the violation of Israeli security-based narratives: By referencing the Holocaust, “through its association with the Second World War the First Lebanon War becomes a defensive and 'just' war rather than a controversial 'war of choice” (2010: 323). In sum, *Waltz with Bashir*, far from criticizing Israeli institutions,

makes excuses for the actions of the military and reflects and reinforces dominant Israeli narratives of victimhood.

CHAPTER 3

THE “EXCEPTIONAL” NATURE OF THE 1982 LEBANON WAR: THE CAUSE OF AND SOLUTION TO A TEMPORARY RUPTURE BETWEEN STATE AND SOCIETY

A common theme of texts discussing the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, whether journalistic, academic, or cinematic, is the stressing of the *exceptional* nature of this war.²⁹ While few authors use the term “exception” or “exceptional”, when they emphasize that it was a war “of choice” or a kind of war “unprecedented” in Israel's history (1984: 9), they imply that this war was a departure from the norm. This war provoked contestation and controversy on a scale never before seen in domestic criticism of an Israeli war. The 1982 war was problematic because it deviated from the established framework according to which military action was seen as acceptable, based on widely held and explicitly articulated security-based norms that are foundational of Israeli collective identity. Rather than a war that was unavoidable, necessary to Israel's survival, it was widely perceived as an aggressive war – a war of “choice”. However, despite the fact that the war was controversial because it did not conform to the accepted justifications of Israeli wars, its exceptional character is what allowed Israelis to recover from the identity crisis that was provoked when Israeli foreign policy contradicted crucial tenets of Israeli identity and security narratives. In other words, the casting of the war as *exceptional*, even exceptionally shameful, essentially

²⁹ As noted in the introduction, “exception” is used in its idiomatic sense and does not refer to Agamben's “state of exception” or other conceptual uses of the “exception”.

reinforced the notion that Israel's wars and military actions are *usually* just. If something can be *made* “exceptional” by Israeli decision-makers and journalists alike, it proves the existence of the rule. Israel's involvement in a war of “choice” is shocking because, “as a rule”, Israel only uses force in self-defence; otherwise, it stands to reason that if Israel normally behaved aggressively, Israelis and the international community should not be so shocked by the invasion of Lebanon. Coping mechanisms such as reinforcing the *relative* purity of Israeli arms by emphasizing the greater and unprovoked barbarity of “others”, particularly the Lebanese Phalangists, Israel's ally in the war, and the Palestinian PLO fighters, Israel's enemy in the war, are evident in a variety of sources. For example, *Waltz with Bashir* portrays the Phalangists as bloodthirsty deviants, and *Lebanon* features Phalangist characters who are two-faced and untrustworthy. *Israel's Lebanon War*, an oft-cited work by Israeli journalists Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, and the Kahan Commission report on the Sabra and Shatila massacre also make frequent reference to the viciousness and deviance of the Phalangists. This chapter deals with how Israeli society was able to recover from the shock of a war that was unacceptable according to Israeli norms and values.

Firstly, despite the weaknesses of official discourse in this period, as well as revelations of deceit by the government, we can witness the continued salience and iterations of security-based norms in official discourse. Although political blunders incited controversy, the security-based rhetoric was at least partly successful because a majority of Israelis were either generally supportive of the war effort, or were, at least, not overtly critical and did not advocate refusal of military service.

Secondly, the collective Israeli conscience was greatly soothed by contemplation of the greater barbarity of others in the war, as exemplified by emphasis on the brutality of the

Palestinians and the Lebanese Phalangists in order to distract from the failings of the Israeli military.

Thirdly, despite that they were forced to question Israel's actual adherence to its proclaimed values, Israelis wanted to overcome the social rupture and identity crisis provoked by the war. Several sources, including Schiff and Ya'ari's *Israel's Lebanon War* (1984), Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), and Samuel Maoz's *Lebanon* (2009), indicate a strong desire for the healing of this trauma. As such, even though these sources are clearly critical of the conduct of the Israeli government and military in the launching and execution of this war, the criticism is also the means to achieve the desired end of reconciliation through the airing of mistakes. Mainstream Israeli society seems to have subscribed to the notion promoted by theories of reconciliation: that the telling of the truth and attribution of responsibility—"shooting and crying"— can enable a society to recover from hurts it has experienced. Knowledge is clearly highly valued in Israel: the 400,000-person protest of September 25th, 1982 was in response to the government's unwillingness to appoint a commission to investigate the Sabra and Shatila massacre. It was the not-knowing that so upset Israelis; the revelation of the findings of the commission, including the attribution of some responsibility for the massacre to high-profile Israelis, did not receive as great a reaction as the concern that the government might block an independent enquiry. Thus, the airing of grievances appears to be an end in and of itself, rather than being suggestive of a lasting rupture between Israeli society and its government and military apparatuses.

A fourth phenomenon is the placing of blame on specific individuals in order to exonerate institutions. Most notably, Schiff and Ya'ari (1984), like *Time for Cherries* (Bouzaglo 1991), lay the blame for the war primarily on Ariel Sharon, maligning the

incompetence of the government that allowed Sharon to manipulate the military, but ultimately chalking up the war to his nefarious scheme.

Finally, a fifth element is how Israeli perceptions of the 1982 Lebanon War have evolved with the passage of time.

All of these factors helped Israeli society recover from the trauma of a war that contradicted important social values and norms that are the building blocks of Israeli identity. While the 1982 war provoked a *crisis* of identity, these varied coping mechanisms ensured that, for the most part, a majority of Israelis would not experience a lasting change in their perceptions of the Israeli government and military.

REITERATION OF ESTABLISHED NARRATIVES IN OFFICIAL DISCOURSE

Although appeals to Israeli assumptions about security certainly helped in securing support for the war from a large segment of Israeli society, Israeli government officials made some important blunders in the official discourse on the war. Despite Sharon's insistence that “[t]he war in Lebanon was clearly a defensive war” (Medzini 1990e), the defensive nature of the war was disputed. For instance, Israeli officials declared openly that the war had been planned for some time, and that the American government had already been made aware of Israel's plans, but that only the timing had not been planned in advance (see, for example, Medzini 1990f). This declaration undermined the notion that the 1982 war was one of self-defence, as the course was clearly chosen and prepared ahead of time. Such statements also made it clear that the attempt on Israeli ambassador Argov's life had very little to do with the

justification for the war—although it served as the spark to initiate the war, if the attempt had not taken place, that the invasion had already been prepared implied that Israel would have still gone to war in Lebanon, only at a later date with reference to some other immediate pretext. Additionally, Israeli officials such as Sharon regularly affirmed that the goal of the war was “to destroy the terrorist infrastructure, to deal them a near-mortal blow” (Medzini 1990d) which, although framed in the context of security—reflecting the need to defend the Israelis of the Galilee region from terrorist attacks—did not constitute a “no alternative” situation requiring immediate war. Furthermore, although part of a larger argument in which he was arguing for the defensive nature of the 1982 war, Begin declared that:

Operation Peace for Galilee is *not a military operation resulting from the lack of an alternative*. The terrorists *did not threaten the existence of the State of Israel*; they "only" threatened the lives of Israel's citizens and members of the Jewish people. There are those who find fault with the second part of that sentence. If there was *no danger to the existence of the state*, why did you go to war? (Medzini 1990a; emphasis added)

He went on to say that not only was the 1982 war not a war of “no alternative”, but that the State of Israel also *chose* the military option in the 1956 Suez canal crisis and in the 1967 Six-Day War. While in the case of the latter, which is more frequently regarded as a necessary war of defence, he argues that “[t]his was a war of self-defence in the noblest sense of the term,” but that “[w]e did not do this for lack of an alternative. We could have gone on waiting. We could have sent the army home. Who knows if there would have been an attack against us? There is no proof of it. There are several arguments to the contrary” (Medzini 1990a). Although Begin was attempting to frame the 1982 war in a “defensive” framework, he explicitly violates the crucial aspect of the security-based norm that “Israel

only fights wars of self-defence”: a defensive war is one of “no alternative”. This crucial failure of rhetoric on the part of the Prime Minister during the war played a role in the rejection of this war by segments of Israeli society as this military venture was seen as violating an important principle and assumption that is foundational for Israeli identity: *ein breira* – that Israel only fights wars of “no choice”. Arguing that Israel *chose* to go to war while other options existed created conflict for Israeli identity by violating an important security-based norm.

There was also contestation on the basis that the war exceeded its initially declared aims through which it had originally secured support from the Israeli cabinet and the Israeli public. Although earlier statements discussed creating a 40-45 km security zone and assured the public that Israeli forces would not go as far as Beirut, the army did reach the outer suburbs of Beirut relatively quickly, and eventually entered the city itself, incurring the criticism of the media and broader segments of the population (see Appendix; Medzini 1990h). Furthermore, although the Israeli government repeatedly denied any interest in meddling in Lebanese political life and that Israeli forces would not be coordinating with the Lebanese Phalangists in the war effort (Medzini 1990h), the Israeli public was suspicious of these statements by the Israeli government. These suspicions were ultimately confirmed by Schiff and Ya'ari who found that manipulating the political order in Lebanon was indeed a goal of both Begin (1984: 25, 30) and Sharon (1984: 43, 230).

Although official Israeli discourse on the war did falter in several important ways, the assumptions about security discussed in Chapter One, such as the perception that Israel is a “nation under siege” by hostile Arab enemies, were at play during the 1982 war and partially succeeded in framing the war as one of defence. For instance, on June 11, 1982,

Defence Minister Sharon made reference to “all the preparations that the terrorist organizations, the P.L.O. Palestinian terrorist organizations, have made with a sole purpose, and that is to destroy Israel, or to cordon or inflict casualties upon us” (Medzini 1990i), thus situating this war in the context of the broader narrative of Israel as a nation under siege by hostile Arab enemies. The following day, Foreign Minister Shamir also reiterated that Israel cannot negotiate peace agreements with “terrorist organizations” because “their declared, their real objective is to destroy Israel” (Medzini 1990f). Sharon also makes regular references to Israel as a “small nation” (Medzini 1990i), thus referencing the deeply-rooted narrative that Israel's vulnerability is related to its small size, both territorially and in terms of population. Similarly, Begin disputes Israel's obvious military strength, arguing that the small size and population of Israel are more important factors, meaning that Israel will always be vulnerable to attacks from its enemies:

... while the tiny state of Israel – what did the journal "Strategic Studies" say? Israel is the fourth [world] power, after the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. There is something to that, since together we reach 1,603,000,000; but we are not the fourth power, we are only 3 million. We know how to defend ourselves, we have the power to repulse any enemy, any combination of enemies. The People of Israel [yet] lives and exists and will live forever as a free people in the Land of Israel. But we are no [world] power, certainly not fourth, not even fifth, not even tenth.

Still in all, we are a small country. (Medzini 1990b)

Thus, despite the significant missteps of Israeli government officials, deeply-held beliefs about Israel's security situation were still very prevalent and aided the assumption that, even if the risk to Israel's survival was not perfectly clear, the war could be seen as more or less justified because Israel's enemies are devoted to Israel's destruction. Even if no plan was currently laid that could threaten Israel's survival, many Israelis assumed that it was only a matter of time until this would be the case; as a result, to many Israelis, a “preventative war

of self-defence” did not seem far-fetched or contradictory. Furthermore, even when they disagree with government policies, most Israelis are still reluctant to criticize the government, which indicates how deeply-rooted the security-based narratives are. Based on their survey of Israeli public opinion on the topic of national security, Arian *et. al.* surmised that:

The Israeli case is impressive because public support for security policy remains firm despite war and the emotions of the country's politics. There were assessments that Israel's problematic excursion into Lebanon in 1982 tore the fabric of support for Israel's policies, and that the consensus that had characterized Israel in the past, and was listed as one of its strategic strengths, had been compromised. Yet the 1986 survey did not lend credence to that interpretation. Lebanon obviously polarized the polity regarding the appropriate government policy but on the level of fundamental system consensus the older patterns of broad agreement seemed to prevail. A very high percent of the sample reported that in their opinion it is vital to support the government in times of security crisis and war. More than a third claimed that it is never justified to criticize the government during war, while more than half the respondents agreed that it is permissible to have reservations about government policy, but they may be expressed only in a quiet and controlled manner. Only 9 percent said that open opposition including street demonstrations and expressions of no-confidence in the government, is permissible during war. (1986: 31-32)

Thus, although the protests and protest movements that occurred during the war are certainly notable, particularly that there had been no precedent for criticism of the government *during* a war, conscientious objection, or organized movements that actually advocated refusal of service, these movements do not reflect the position of the majority of the population. Furthermore, although there was a massive protest following the Sabra and Shatila massacre, this protest did not occur until “long after the campaign had begun and when public support for the war lagged. During the beginning stages of the 1982 Lebanon War, public support for the government was widespread; only a small but vocal segment of the population initially opposed the war” (Arian *et. al.* 1986: 32).

THE SELF VS. OTHER DICHOTOMY: TAKING COMFORT IN RELATIVE “PURITY”

A recurring theme in many Israeli discussions of the 1982 war is the greater morality of the Israeli military, especially when compared to the barbarism of the PLO fighters and the Lebanese Phalangists. For instance, in official statements made by figures such as Prime Minister Begin and Defence Minister Sharon, the Palestinian fighters are regularly referred to as terrorists (for example, see Medzini 1990i). In describing their Palestinian enemies, Sharon said that “we were dealing with *an enemy whose values are utterly different*, an enemy which held members of its own people hostage and executed children in front of their parents ... We are dealing here with a cruel enemy” (Medzini 1990e; emphasis added). Thus, comparison reinforces not only the absolute, but especially the *relative*, morality of the Israeli military. In official statements during the war, Begin and Sharon regularly affirmed that the Israeli military was going to greater lengths to protect civilian lives in Lebanon than any other army in the world. For example, nearly two months into the war, Sharon wrote that:

Israel's troops entering Lebanon were greeted as liberators for driving out the terrorists who had raped and pillaged and plundered. Our soldiers were welcomed despite the inevitable result of fighting against *P.L.O. terrorists who used civilians as human shields* and who deliberately placed their weapons and ammunition in the midst of apartment houses, schools, refugee camps and hospitals. *No army in the history of modern warfare ever took such pains to prevent civilian casualties as did the Israel Defense Forces.* Indeed, most of the losses were suffered – some 350 dead and 2,000 wounded – resulted from the rule we imposed on ourselves to avoid harming noncombatants. In Hebrew, we call this tohar haneshek “the moral conduct of war” [also translated as the principle of “purity of arms”]. We are proud our soldiers followed this Jewish doctrine scrupulously,

despite the heavy costs we incurred in warning civilians we were coming, in attacking only predetermined P.L.O. positions and in bombing and shelling buildings only when they served as P.L.O. strongholds. *This policy stands in vivid contrast to the P.L.O.'s practice of attacking only civilian targets.* (Medzini 1990c; emphasis added; original editorial note)

Thus, in order to deflect criticism of the killing of Lebanese civilians and destruction of Lebanese infrastructure, Israeli officials emphasized the relative morality of their own army over its Arab enemies, even if Israel could not claim that it had succeeded in perfectly practising its ethic of *tohar haneshek*.

Although Schiff and Ya'ari primarily blame Sharon for the war, a common theme of *Israel in Lebanon* (1984) is to place blame on the Phalangists and to emphasize their brutality, clearly refuting Sharon's claim that the Israeli government “did not imagine in our worst dreams that the Phalangists would act in this way when they entered the battle at this stage of the fighting. They appeared to be a regular army in every way” (Medzini 1990j). Tracing back communication and cooperation between the Israeli government and the Phalange as far back as 1976, Schiff and Ya'ari blame the Phalange for the war that would eventually break out: “The envoy from the Phalange claimed he was on a mission of mercy; time would show that he had come to plant the seeds of war” (1984: 11). Through these early contacts, long before the war, Israelis had already witnessed and been appalled by Maronite “savagery” vis-à-vis the Palestinians. According to Schiff and Ya'ari's analysis, the untrustworthy and two-faced characteristics of these Lebanese Maronite Christians were clear in the contrast between the “charmed atmosphere” in meetings with Phalangist leaders and the excessive brutality noted in Phalangist killings of Palestinians (1984: 17). The Israelis continued to support the Gemayel family despite their strong suspicions that the Gemayels were hedging their bets by simultaneously negotiating with both Israelis and

Syrians (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 23) and Bashir's apparent “penchant for double-talk” (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 29). The report of the Kahan Commission also confirms that the Israeli government and military should have anticipated and attempted to prevent the massacre because it was clear that Phalangist ethics were not on par with those of the IDF: “Brigadier-General Yaron ... knew that the Phalangists' norms of conduct are not like those of the I.D.F. and he had had arguments with the Phalangists over this issue in the past” (Kahan *et. al.* 1983: 19). Far from contributing to a break of the national consensus, the report of the Kahan Commission confirms, reiterating the official discourse of the morality and “purity of arms” of the IDF, especially compared to those of Arab fighting units:

In the witnesses' testimony and in various documents, stress is laid on the difference between the usual battle ethics of the I.D.F. and the battle ethics of the bloody clashes and combat actions among the various ethnic groups, militias, and fighting forces in Lebanon. The difference is considerable. In the war the I.D.F. waged in Lebanon, many civilians were injured and much loss of life was caused, despite the effort the I.D.F. and its soldiers made not to harm civilians. On more than one occasion, this effort cause I.D.F. troops additional casualties. (1983: 105)

Although obviously critical of the Israeli government, Schiff and Ya'ari also note that “the Palestinians had no qualms about involving and endangering innocent civilians” (1984: 139); thus, even if Israel's war is not seen as justified, Israeli military conduct is at least implied to be *more just* than that of the Arabs. Such negative perceptions of the Phalangists are so deeply-rooted that, as discussed in Chapter Two, even over twenty-five years later, Phalangists are still depicted as deviant and untrustworthy, notably in *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman 2008) and *Lebanon* (Maoz 2009).

THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE: ADMISSION ABSOLVES GUILT

Shortly after the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the Israeli government initially refused to establish an independent commission of enquiry, arguing that it was a “blood libel” to suggest that Israel and its military had anything whatsoever to do with the massacre, and that requests for such an investigation were merely “add[ing] fuel to the fire, the fire of anti-semitism”, and that those demanding such an enquiry actually wanted “[t]he toppling of the government” (Medzini 1990j). Due to the public outcry in reaction to the refusal of the government to investigate the incident, most notably expressed in the protest of September 25, 1982, which allegedly brought 400,000 protesters out into the streets of Tel Aviv, Israel bowed to public pressure and appointed The Commission of Inquiry into the Events at the Refugee Camps in Beirut, headed by Yitzhak Kahan (Kahan *et. al.* 1983).

However, once the Kahan Commission was able to confirm Sharon's claims that “we were not the ones who entered the Shatilla camps, but rather the Phalangists”, that “[i]t must be remembered that the Phalange are not the I.D.F.”, and that, technically, “[t]he hands of the I.D.F. are clean, purity of arms was preserved there too” (Medzini 1990j), popular resistance to the war never again reached the same heights. Although Israelis were distressed by the fear that their most highly respected institution might have been involved in a massacre of civilians, they were later secure in the knowledge that, despite the “indirect responsibility” attributed by the Kahan Commission to several key Israelis, it was the Phalangists, and only the Phalangists, that had murdered civilians in Sabra and Shatila. As Halper (2011) and Folman (2008: DVD commentary) have said, the massacre is no longer taboo in Israel, because Israelis are easily able to point to others as the true culprits of the

crime. Israelis have shown themselves to be quite eager to experience the therapeutic effects of discussing Israel's shame regarding the 1982 Lebanon War. As Schiff and Ya'ari note: "We were surprised (and heartened) by the degree of cooperation we received from Israelis (in and out of uniform) who believe, as we do, that revealing as much as possible about the real motives and manipulations behind this is a necessary and therapeutic measure for Israel" (1984: 10). Israelis did indeed experience an identity crisis, or cognitive dissonance, as argued by Sucharov (2005) due to the contradictions posed by the 1982 war. However, far from leading to a permanent social rupture, Israelis instead sought to confront and recover from this dissonance. Rather than damaging Israeli notions about the military and its touted ethic of purity of arms, the knowledge that Arabs were the responsible party reinforced the Israeli perception that the IDF is the *more moral* army. Reflecting the shoot-and-cry phenomenon mocked in *Cup Final*, acknowledgement of Israel's shameful proximity to the massacre is effectively therapeutic for many Israelis in coping with this traumatic event – traumatic because it provoked an identity crisis for Israelis by seemingly contradicting the "defensive" nature of the IDF and its "purity of arms". However, by "crying" about the war, identity crisis was averted and the majority of Israelis did not experience a lasting rupture in their sense of national identity. In fact, the introduction to the Kahan Commission Report, which attributed indirect responsibility to several Israelis for the Sabra and Shatila massacre, even concludes that "[i]n the final reckoning Israel has emerged with pride and credit" (Eban 1983: XVI). Furthermore, the investigation into Israel's role in allowing a massacre to take place is spun into something positive because "[v]ery few countries would allow their actions to be scrutinized and criticized with such relentless truth and rigor", and the existence of the commission "filled the media with words of respect and admiration for the

Israeli nation” (Eban 1983: XVI). Israeli collective identity has proven to be very secure: when the Israeli government and military behave well, these positive actions are evidence of Israeli values. However, even when the government or the IDF fails its moral code, the ability to admit, discuss, and express condemnation of and remorse for these mistakes proves Israel's high democratic content. In either situation, there is something of which Israelis can be proud. Despite *Waltz with Bashir's* criticism of Israel's conduct of the war, Folman also feels that:

This film really shows Israel as a very tolerant country and I learned in the past 6 months that there is a total misconception in regards of how tolerant and open-minded Israel is. And in many occasions it is much more open-minded than a lot of places that are considered tolerant in Europe, for example, and in Israel you can really say whatever you think and you can say it very loud...because everyone speaks very loud and there is no problem with it.
(2008: “Q & A” DVD extra)

Waltz with Bashir and *Lebanon* are good examples of the trend of “shooting and crying” – both Folman and Samuel Maoz have produced these films partly for their therapeutic value. Both filmmakers were haunted by their participation in the 1982 war and both relieved their inner tension by expressing their regret for the hurting of civilians, their criticism of the conduct of the war and the feeling that the government had betrayed them, effectively completing the cycle of “shooting and crying”, and emerging healed from the process.

The temporary nature of the identity crisis is reflected in the fact that although the phenomenon of conscientious objection was unprecedented, to this day it has never been widespread (Helman 1999: 198). Even among conscientious objectors to the Lebanon War, most resumed their regular reserve service; they specifically and selectively refused to serve in Lebanon, but did not reject Israeli militarism in general (Helman 1999: 205; Linn 1986: 492). Furthermore, far from primarily reflecting an erosion of social cohesion and a deep

criticism of the Israeli state and military, the phenomenon of conscientious objection in 1982 can be seen as positively reflecting Israeli democracy: Linn “believes that the action of the refusers is a sign of the moral strength of the Israeli democracy” (1986: 508). In sum, Arian *et. al.* assert that “[t]he belief that something fundamental changed after Lebanon 1982 in the way Israelis perceived security matters, seems to be incorrect” (1986: 32). A 1986 survey showed that “88 percent of the sample considered that it was essential 'to support the government during a security crisis, like war, even when one does not agree with what it is doing'” (Arian *et. al.* 1986: 40). Thus, the contestation that emerged in 1982 proved to be *exceptional*, opposite of the norm, rather than reflective of changing trends in Israeli criticism of the government and military on matters pertaining to the realm of “security”.

SHARON: “ONE WILLFUL, RECKLESS MAN”

A recurring theme in Schiff and Ya'ari's in-depth study of the 1982 war is that the invasion was the brainchild of Defence Minister Sharon, who deceived and manipulated the Israeli cabinet, government, military, and public in order to conduct an unwanted war, “a kind of war unprecedented in the history of the state of Israel” (1984: 9). “Sharon herded the Israeli cabinet into and through a war it did not want and had not approved, treating it 'like a kindergarten,' in the words of one of its members” (1984: 58). Although regularly denied by Sharon and Begin, there were many accusations that the Cabinet and sometimes even the Prime Minister were not adequately informed of details of the war and its planning, and that Sharon effectively co-opted the government to run his own war (Medzini 1990e; 1990h;

1990g). The Kahan Commission indeed found that Sharon “had the custom of taking major operational decisions without informing the prime minister” (Eban 1983: VIII). Schiff and Ya'ari note that Cabinet “decisions were often made after the fact”, and while the Cabinet “received regular but carefully censored reports”, the information they received came exclusively from Sharon, who played “on his colleagues' gullibility and ignorance of martial affairs” (1984: 58). The Cabinet members were, nevertheless, passively responsible for the war as “not a single man raised a hand to suggest an alternative course” (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 101). While Schiff and Ya'ari do criticize Begin's weakness, they find that he was ultimately manipulated by Sharon and Bashir Gemayel (1984: 29-30), and that, while misguided, Begin had the noble aspiration to “save the beset Christians of Lebanon from a Holocaust” (1984: 34), as he saw similarities between them and the Jewish people, both being outnumbered by the larger Muslim populations of the Middle East. Schiff and Ya'ari argue that the 1982 war was “built on Sharon's strategic design” and that Sharon “was a cynical, head-strong executor who regarded the IDF as his personal tool for obtaining sweeping achievements—and not necessarily defensive ones—and a minister prepared to stake the national interest on his struggle for power” (1984: 39). These feelings about Sharon's primary responsibility for the war are reflected in *Cup Final*: the only discussion of the cause of the war is Cohen's statement that “...And that ass hole starts a war and you can kiss the tickets goodbye!” and Cohen's fellow soldier suggesting that this was a consequence of electing Begin and his Likud party (Riklis 1992). Similarly, in *Time for Cherries*, Sharon is referred to as “the man who will get us all under the ground” (Bouzaglo 1991), indicating that much of Israeli society blamed Sharon in particular for causing unnecessary deaths of Israeli soldiers.

Like some of the films depicting the 1982 war, the work of Israeli journalists Schiff and Ya'ari, who provide a look into perceptions of the 1982 Lebanon war as it was occurring, illustrates a kind of “psychic tension” or “cognitive dissonance” incurred by the way this war broke with the Israeli security ethic. They oppose the war based on it being a “political venture” (1984: 9) rather than a “genuine war of survival” (1984: 307). Although the authors refer to a “tattered sense of self” (1984: 308) and criticize the false “defensive rationale” that hid the unacceptable motivations for the war, they attribute nearly all responsibility to “one willful, reckless man” (1984: 301), Sharon, who, according to them, deceived even the government and the military. This text reinforces Sucharov’s theory as it appears that the authors are attempting to relieve the cognitive dissonance caused by the blatant contradictions to which Israeli identity was confronted by the war. By placing the primary blame on an individual, Schiff and Ya'ari attempt to exculpate the Israeli government, military, and society.

“TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS”

Time also appears to play a role in the Israeli processing of the events of 1982. While *Ricochets* is less indicative of resistance to the war, having been produced by the Israeli military itself, it nevertheless indicates that in a climate of political opposition and widespread awareness of events like the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the movie's makers could not avoid mentioning the fallibility of government and military decision-makers. Instead, *Ricochets* alludes directly to the accusations, but counters them by reaffirming the dominant narratives and by reminding its audience, like so many affirmations by Prime

Minister Begin and Defence Minister Sharon during the war (see Medzini 1990), that the IDF is still the *most* moral army in the world, even though the messiness and unpredictability of war prevents perfection of military manoeuvres. The underlying message is that the IDF's ethics cannot really be questioned because it had the best intentions possible, which were certainly better than those of the different Arab factions, who are depicted as irrationally hate-filled and violent.

Cup Final and *Time for Cherries*, meanwhile, may also reflect criticism of the Israeli military's excessively violent repression of the Palestinian *Intifada* that began in 1987. These two films depict a society that is not completely settled in its identity as it sees contradictions between its affirmed values and norms, and how these are, in practice, reflected (or not) in the actions of the government and military. *Cup Final* refuses to adhere to the Self-Other dichotomy that presents Arabs as “other”, as less than human, in order to make Israeli actions seem more justified by comparison. Instead, Arabs are presented as equal to Israelis or even, as affirmed by Gertz, as better than Israelis (1999: 160). Rather than depicting Palestinians as the eternal, irrational enemy of the Jews, *Cup Final* shows Israelis and Palestinians as having much in common and that there is great potential for Israeli-Palestinian friendship, but that this is only made impossible by the political situation. Meanwhile, *Time for Cherries* represents the war as absurd, reflecting the dissonance and contradictions in Israeli rhetoric, both during the war and presumably in a more general way, as the film was made in the context of the first *Intifada*. As discussed in Chapter Two, *Time for Cherries* explicitly blames Sharon for the war and for the avoidable deaths of Israeli soldiers and the damage this war has done to Israeli society, and suggests that Israel makes peace impossible by its own actions and is not merely a victim of circumstance. However,

for the most part, the film expresses the absurdity of the war and reflects an identity crisis experienced by Israelis through the jarring juxtaposition of picture-perfect life in Israeli cities such as Tel Aviv against the unnecessary violence of the war in Lebanon. The film suggests that the Israeli government has been deceptive in its portrayal of the war, by the presence of an American news reporter who is looking for the “real” story of the war. Additionally, the film indicates the cognitive dissonance evoked by the contradictions of Israeli rhetoric affirming a desire for peace with its aggressive actions. This paradox is suggested symbolically by the placing of a grenade in a dove's nest by an Israeli soldier. *Cup Final* and *Time for Cherries* reflect the identity crisis experienced by Israelis in the wake of this war: simplistic narratives are questioned and challenged. Unlike *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon*, these films are not specifically seeking the therapeutic potential of film and the curative properties of the truth, they are primarily expressing dissonance between identity-informing narratives and foreign policy.

Waltz with Bashir and *Lebanon* reflect the “cognitive dissonance” and social tensions incurred by the war, but they also suggest the ability to overcome them through the healing power of admission of guilt. Produced in the context of the wake of the Second Lebanon War of 2006, Samuel Maoz, the creator of *Lebanon*, explicitly affirms that it was this second Israeli incursion into Lebanon that was his “trigger” to make the film: it brought back his memories of the war and reaffirmed his anti-war desire to do his part in preventing the deaths of Israeli soldiers in avoidable wars, especially now that the affected generation was that of his children (Douglas 2010). The greater temporal distance of *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon* had an effect on how the directors approached these films. For Maoz, not only did the 2006 Lebanon War prompt him to make the film, in earlier years, when he had thought

about writing a film script about his experiences in 1982, “the first memory that came was the smell of burning flesh.’ He backed away, fearing his trauma would only increase” (Cooke 2010). Thus, Maoz needed both the distance of twenty-four years and the impetus of the Second Lebanon War to undertake the making of *Lebanon*. It was not until many years later that he felt able to write about his experiences. Maoz admits that his desire to create the film was largely spurred by “a need to unload, a need to expose the war as I see it without all the heroic stuff, but it was mainly a need to... I don't know if to say 'forgive myself' is the right expression, but maybe to find some understanding ... because I feel responsibility” (S. Maoz, cited in Douglas 2010). Folman, for his part, was inspired by the sudden memories about his experiences in the war, and notably of his proximity to the Sabra and Shatila massacre, after hearing about a friend's recurring nightmares of reliving actions in the war (2008: DVD commentary). Similarly to *Lebanon*, *Waltz with Bashir* expresses a need to overcome one's stress and inner turmoil over felt responsibility for wartime atrocities, explicitly articulated near the beginning of the film: “Can't films be therapeutic?” (Folman 2008). With this film, Folman expresses guilt for his part in Israel's “indirect responsibility”, in the terms of the Kahan Commission Report, for the massacre. Although others in the film deny that he actually bears any responsibility, attributing his anguish to the similarities Folman must have drawn with Jewish experiences of the Holocaust, Folman, far from denying his guilt, lays bare his (peripheral) participation in the massacre. The second-last scene of the film, followed only by documentary footage of the massacre, is Folman's character, chest heaving with emotion and with pain in his eyes, realizing the massacre and his own failure, like that of the IDF en masse, to have prevented it or stopped it sooner. However, Folman's expression of guilt, and indeed the entire production of the film ultimately has the effect of

being a roundabout way of making himself feel better about his role in the massacre.³⁰ As summed up in Gideon Levy's critique of the film, the goal of *Waltz with Bashir* is "to free [Folman] at long last from the nightmare that haunts him" (2009). *Waltz with Bashir* reflects a broader desire within Israeli society to discuss the 1982 war in order to heal these lingering wounds: Folman recounts that in order to make the film, his call for stories about the Lebanon War elicited hundreds of responses, confirming that people had been waiting a long time for an opportunity to tell their story (2008: "Surreal soldiers" DVD extra). *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon* are thus not only therapeutic for the filmmakers, but for Israeli society in a broader way. While the war was still ongoing, Schiff and Ya'ari wrote:

The Kahan Report notwithstanding, it is difficult to say that Israel has truly and ultimately come to grips with the events and Sabra and Shatilla. In many ways the government is still treating the entire affair as a freak historical accident or a matter of abominable luck; not once has it been acknowledged that dispatching the Phalangists into West Beirut, and particularly the refugee camps, was a cornerstone of the war policy from June 15 onward and that, in discussions at both the General Staff and more restricted forums, Ariel Sharon repeatedly urged his officers and aides to have the Phalangists "clean out" West Beirut. (1984: 284-285)

However, it would appear that now, evidenced by films such as *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon*, Israelis have finally "come to grips" with their trauma over the events of the war. Frank and truthful discussion of Israeli wrongdoing in the 1982 war is not an obstacle to acceptance of this war. In fact, emphasis on the exceptional character of the norm-violating actions of the Israeli government and military are proving to be crucial in the re-affirmation of Israeli narratives, establishing the 1982 war as an exceptionally shameful, but closed, chapter of history that is distinct from the usual practice of Israeli foreign policy, such as

³⁰ Credit goes to Catherine Kiewning for expressing this reading of the film.

only engaging in wars of “no choice”.³¹ Noting that the 1982 war was, exceptionally, an avoidable “war of choice”, or even an aggressive war, implicitly reinforces the idea that Israel's wars are usually more just. As noted by Schiff and Ya'ari, “[t]he Israelis may have gone to war often, but never rashly” (1984: 62). Thus, Israelis can criticize this particular war without calling into question the actions of the Israeli government and military in a more general way: it is not war itself that is being questioned, but merely a particular war that was not seen as warranted or necessary. Similarly, even by criticizing the IDF's failure to stand up to its touted ethic of “purity of arms” in the 1982 war, the framing of this behaviour as a “slip” (Schiff and Ya'ari 1984: 301), or a departure from the norm, implies that under normal circumstances, the IDF's arms are pure, or at least relatively pure, in comparison with those of other armies.

Although Israelis did experience a crisis of identity due to the cognitive dissonance incurred by the 1982 war, this crisis did not translate into a permanent rupture of Israeli identity. It did not fundamentally alter, although it did weaken, the relationship between Israeli society and its government and military. The confirmation of the Kahan Commission that Israelis did not directly lay a hand on the Palestinians massacred in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, the strength of Israel's security-based narratives that Israel is always in danger from an implacable Arab enemy, the passage of time, and artistic therapy have helped Israelis overcome a fleeting identity crisis. As Folman affirms (2008: DVD commentary), the 1982 war and the Sabra and Shatila massacres are no longer particularly

³¹ This reading is partly inspired by Dorrell's discussion of the reduction of residential schools in Canada to a “chapter” of history (2009: 32).

controversial in Israel – the trauma and demons of this period have effectively been overcome.

CONCLUSION

The questions that this thesis sought to answer were as follows: 1) Did the 1982 Lebanon War illustrate a discrepancy between Israeli foreign policy and affirmations concerning Israeli identity, as it had been reified through security-based narratives? 2) Did it, therefore, provoke a crisis for Israeli identity? 3) If so, what were the consequences of such a crisis? 4) Was this a permanent rupture for Israeli collective identity, or were the established narratives resilient enough to cope with this emerging crisis?

Chapter One presented some of the security-based narratives that have been instrumental in the reification of Israeli collective identity: despite the fact that Israelis generally believe that Israel, which is thought to be vulnerable due to its small size and population, is under constant threat by hostile neighbours, Israelis also believe that the use of military force should be limited to what is absolutely necessary for self-defence. As such, the notions that that Israel should only fight wars of self-defence, particularly if there is no alternative (*ein breira*) to war, and that the military must uphold an ethic of “purity of arms” (*tohar haneshek*) are important principles in Israel. However, the 1982 Lebanon War, was not seen as responding to a direct threat to Israel's existence, and was therefore *not* a war of “no alternative”. There was also much criticism of the number of civilian casualties caused by Israel in Lebanon, of the competency of the Israeli government and military in conducting the war, and particularly of Israel's association with the Lebanese Phalangists. The controversy hit its peak with the Sabra and Shatila massacre committed by Phalangists after the IDF had sent them in for a mop-up operation of remaining

Palestinian fighters, while the IDF was stationed outside. Thus, the war illustrated a discrepancy between Israeli foreign policy and Israeli identity, particularly those aspects reified according to security-based narratives. As summed up by Schiff and Ya'ari: “The war in Lebanon unfolded as it did because of a sharp departure from the conventions and norms of government in Israel, a lapse that made it possible for the country to 'slip' into an offensive military operation that a decisive majority of the cabinet had rejected from the outset” (1984: 301). Thus, the war was problematic for Israeli society because it contradicted popular Israeli beliefs about the acceptable conditions for war.

The 1982 war provoked an identity crisis for Israelis due to the dissonance between Israeli norms and values and the execution of the war. This crisis is illustrated in a variety of ways: in the scale of Israeli protest, most notably in the 400,000 person protest that occurred in Tel Aviv in order to pressure the government to establish an independent commission of enquiry into Israel's role in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Also to be considered are the unprecedented cases of conscientious objection to the war, featuring soldiers willing to be jailed in punishment for refusing their compulsory military service; the creation of protest groups which not only opposed the war but actually advocated refusal, which was a new phenomenon in Israel; and the straining of the traditionally strong relationship between bereaved parents and the military, as parents were not willing to lose their children in a war that they deemed frivolous and unnecessary.

Chapter Two turned to Israeli cinema depicting the 1982 war in order to search for further illustrations of identity crisis. While the IDF-produced *Ricochets* (Cohen 1986) unsurprisingly seeks to reinforce the image of the IDF as “the most moral army in the world”, clinging to the established narratives, *Cup Final* (Riklis 1992) and *Time for*

Cherries (Bouzaglo 1991) illustrate the erosion of dominant narratives. *Cup Final* questions the assumption that Arabs have an irrational and irreconcilable hatred of Israel and the Jewish people, while *Time for Cherries* depicts the war as utterly absurd. Both films blame Defence Minister Ariel Sharon for launching an avoidable war that was not strictly necessary for self-defence, and which caused the deaths of many Israelis. *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman 2008) and *Lebanon* (Maoz, S. 2009) depict the emotional turmoil and identity crisis that its filmmakers experienced due to their service in the war, but they also illustrate the therapeutic potential of cinema, in particular, and of uncovering the truth of errors committed, in general, in order to recover from traumatic or shameful experiences. While *Waltz with Bashir* and *Lebanon* are clearly critical of the war, they are also apologetic for the conduct of the Israeli military, depicting soldiers as well-meaning young men who make mistakes and only hurt civilians accidentally, due to overpowering fear. Although *Cup Final*, *Time for Cherries*, *Waltz with Bashir*, and *Lebanon* indicate the erosion of certain Israeli security-based narratives, none of these films reject them entirely, as all conform to at least some of the prevalent narratives, such as maintaining the depiction, in various ways, of Arabs as the initiators of violence.

Chapter Three found that the consequences of the identity crisis experienced by Israelis were not permanent. The “cognitive dissonance” experience by Israelis in 1982 was overcome thanks to the enduring strength of existing security-based narratives. Other coping mechanisms include taking comfort in affirming that the IDF conducts itself in a more moral way than Arab militias and “terrorists”; the ability to relieve most Israeli institutions of responsibility for the war by primarily placing the blame on Defence Minister Sharon; the practice of “shooting and crying”; and the passage of time. While the

1982 war was controversial because it was seen as an *exceptional* war that violated Israeli norms, the perceived exceptional nature of this war reinforced the perception that Israel *normally* only fights wars of “no alternative” and *mostly* upholds an ethic of “purity of arms”. While the war is seen as a shameful chapter in Israeli history, the fact that it is deemed a “chapter” of history allows it to be seen as an isolated, exceptional event that deviated from Israel's normal behaviour.³² Because of their remorse for the war, evidenced by the “shoot-and-cry” phenomenon, and the ability to express this remorse, as well as the knowledge that the greatest crime of this *exceptional* war, the Sabra and Shatila massacre, was committed by Arabs and not Israelis, a majority of Israelis were able to resume their faith in Israeli security-based narratives. The casting of the war as *exceptional*, i.e. as deviating from the norm, reinforced the belief that Israeli behaviour *usually* conforms to security-based norms such as fighting wars of “no choice” and “purity of arms”.

The findings of this research suggest new questions to be explored in future research. Many authors referred to two crises from the 1980s that destabilized Israeli identity and the cohesion between Israeli society and state: the 1982 war and the violent repression of the initially non-violent Palestinian *Intifada* that began in 1987. What were the consequences of this period for Israeli identity? How have Israeli narratives and identity coped with some of the many events, in recent years, that have been controversial in Israel and that have incurred international criticism, including the First *Intifada*; the Second *Intifada*, which began in 2000; the 2006 Lebanon War; the 2009 “Cast Lead” Operation on the Gaza strip; and the 2010 raid on the international aid flotilla destined for

³² Again, for this formulation I am indebted to Dorrell (2009: 32).

Gaza? A study of official discourse responding to these events, as well as a study of media analysis and/or pop culture depicting these events, would provide further illumination on dynamics of Israeli identity, Israeli security-based narratives, and foreign policy.

Additionally, given that one of the Israeli coping mechanisms in dealing with the 1982 war was the attribution of primary blame to then-Defence Minister Ariel Sharon in order to reduce the culpability of the rest of the Israeli government and military, it is curious that Sharon went on to be elected Prime Minister in 2001. How could one so vilified and criticized both within Israel and internationally for his manipulation of the Israeli government, alleged subversion of democracy and his callous abuse of the lives of Israeli soldiers go on to become an elected Prime Minister? A media and pop culture discourse analysis of Sharon's political career would also be of interest for the study of dynamics of Israeli political life.

APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

(Selections from MacBride *et. al.* 1983: 203-212)

- 4.6.82 Israeli Airforce bombs West Beirut and [South Lebanon] in retaliation for attempted assassination of Israeli ambassador in London.
- 5.6.82 PLO-IDF artillery battles in border area. Continued bombardments.
- 6.6.82 'Operation Peace for Galilee' begins. Claimed objective: to push Palestinian forces to a 40km distance from Israeli[-]Lebanese border. IDF pushes on three axes into South Lebanon.
- 7.6.82 IDF enters and captures Tyre, Nabatiyeh, Hasbaiya. 40km line in many places passed. Streetfighting in Sidon. Air-raids on Damour, Naamé, West Beirut.
US special envoy Philip Habib starts mission. Begin 'gives' Chateau Beaufort to Saad Haddad. Israeli spokesman in Washington says war-aim is complete destruction of PLO influence in Lebanon.
- 8.6.82 Sidon captured. IDF occupies Chouf province (Druze stronghold).
US vetoes SC Resolution demanding immediate and unconditional retreat of IDF from Lebanon.
- 9.6.82 Syrian SAM-6 missile sites in Beka'a destroyed by IDF airforce. IDF tanks 10km south of Beirut.
- 12.6.82 IDF-Palestinian + Lebanese allies fighting in the Southern outskirts of Beirut.
- 13.6.82 IDF joins Christian militia in Baabda (location of Lebanese Presidential Palace). First blockade of West Beirut begins. 'Mopping-up' operations in southern Lebanon.
- 14.6.82 IDF line up with Christian Militia in East Beirut. IDF reaches Beirut-Damascus highway.
- 16.6.82 Israeli forces advance near Beirut airport – occupy science faculty.
Sharon says that final agreement on withdrawal will have to include [the withdrawal of] all foreign forces – Syrian, Palestinian and Israeli.
- 18.6.82 IDF moves into Beirut 'Green-Line' area dividing East and West Beirut.

- 22.6.82 Continued heavy shelling of West Beirut. Israel declares 3rd ceasefire. PLO offers to give up areas in West Beirut in return for Israeli withdrawal from southern suburbs of Beirut.
- 23.6.82 Israeli forces advance in the mountains and shell dozens of villages. PLO offer rejected by Israel.
- 26.6.82 IDF drops leaflets on West Beirut urging civilians to flee; ceasefire generally in force. US vetoes Security Council Resolution calling for withdrawal of Israeli and Palestinian armed forces from battle zone in West Beirut.
- 28.6.82 Continued leafletting of West Beirut. Ceasefire holding.
- 3.7.82 Total blockade of West Beirut.
- 9.7.82 Worst shelling of West Beirut since invasion. Shelling of Israeli positions in East Beirut. David Levy, Israeli deputy PM, states for the first time publicly that Beirut is the object of the Israeli invasion.
- 23.7.82 Air-raids and shelling of West Beirut. Mr. Shamir [Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs] declares that the 'Peace for Galilee' operation was arranged with the total approval of Washington.
- 29.7.82 Ceasefire violated. Night shelling of West Beirut. Siege continues – no water or electricity for 5th day.
- 30.7.82 7th ceasefire broken. Air, land and naval bombardment. 8th ceasefire announced.
- 1.8.82 Massive bombardment of all areas of West Beirut by air, land, sea, 185,000 shells fall on West Beirut. IDF takes airport.
- 2.8.82 Official ceasefire. Israeli sporadic shelling of West Beirut. PLO retaliation. IDF tanks move into central Beirut area close to 'Green Line'. IDF prevent UN observers from reaching Beirut.
- 4.8.82 Intense shelling and aerial bombardment of West Beirut including hotel area. Advance into West Beirut on three axes. Israeli advance checked.
- 11.8.82 Air, land and naval shelling. Continuing deployment of Israelis in Phalangist controlled areas.

- 12.8.82 11 hours of air, land and naval shelling. Heaviest shelling since invasion. 11th ceasefire declared by Israel.
- 23.8.82 Bashir Gemayel elected president.
- 14.9.82 Massive bomb blast kills president-elect Bashir Gemayel with 50-60 colleagues in Phalangist headquarters in East Beirut.
- 15.9.82 IDF enters West Beirut. Israel claims entering West Beirut necessary to prevent serious incidents following Bashir Gemayel's assassination.
- 16.9.82 Near total IDF occupation of West Beirut against sporadic resistance of militia. Encirclement of West Beirut Pal. camps. Christian militia enter Sabra and Shatila camps. Massacre continues until 18.9.82.
- 20.9.82 Gradual thinning out of IDF from West Beirut. Lebanese Army takes over some positions.
- 21.9.82 Amin Gemayel [Bashir's older brother] elected President.
- [25.9.82 So-called "400,000 protest" in Tel Aviv against Israeli government's refusal to appoint an independent commission of enquiry into Israel's role in the Sabra and Shatila massacre.]³³
- 26.9.82 IDF pulls out of West Beirut.
- [28.9.82 Israeli government establishes The Commission of Inquiry into the Events at the Refugee Camps in Beirut, or Kahan Commission, headed by President of the Supreme Court Yitzhak Kahan.]³⁴

³³ Not included in Macbride 1983.

³⁴ Not included in Macbride 1983.

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