**Early IDF as a Typical Postcolonial Army**

**Elad Ne'emani**

**Open University**

**neemanie@gmail.com**

***Abstract***

This article tries to evaluate and see if it is possible to define the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] as a typical post-colonial army. The paper strives to make an important contribution in the contextualization of the evolution of the Israeli military with the post-colonial era. This approach is important in the evolution of militaries and the context of civil-military relations. Most recent studies consider the IDF as a developing western military affected by the post-war challenges of the War of Independence. By comparing and analyzing main characteristics and problems that were typical to post-colonial armies, I will try to show that early the IDF was indeed a typical post-colonial military, challenged by many of the same issues that affected other post-colonial militaries at their inception. These issues stemmed primarily from the withdrawal of colonial rule, which left a stable military infrastructure behind and prompted comprehensive organizational issues.

***Key words***: Civil–Military Relations, Military Education, Recruitment and Retention, Israel, Military Leadership.

***Introduction***

The 21st century has witnessed the formation of dozens of new militaries, the byproduct of new states established following the withdrawal of colonial rule. In such states, militaries are often formed hastily, at times during or in preparation for war. Therefore, these 'postcolonial militaries' have mostly been established in countries lacking previous, sufficient military infrastructure. In the current article, I seek to address the following question: Can the early IDF be defined as a typical postcolonial military, or is it rather a western military that simply endured certain challenges at its inception, as some studies contend. To this end, I will focus on several challenges characteristic of postcolonial militaries, based on numerous studies on the subject, while conducting an examination and comparison to discern whether these challenges typified the nascent IDF as well.

For these purposes, I will refer to several recently published studies on postcolonial militaries (Barany, 2014; Ejiogu, 2007). I will also refer to additional studies that discuss militaries in postcolonial states without defining them as such. For instance, there is broad scholarly discourse regarding the militaries of developing countries, which are mostly postcolonial countries (Vajpeyi, 2014). Studies on this subject describe militaries established following the withdrawal of colonial rule that endured similar challenges. This article will discuss four main challenges that typify most postcolonial militaries, which will enable us to define the IDF as one such military: lack of command personnel, lack of various professional human resources, difficulty enforcing political authority over the military, and the problematic ethnic composition of military forces. Thus far, scholars who have investigated the establishment of the IDF have tended to view it as a nascent military affected by post-war challenges following the War of Independence, or by the immigration waves that transformed Israel into a multi-ethnic country overnight (Levy, 1993, 2003). While these conclusions are fundamentally correct, it seems they do not present the full picture.

The definition of 'post-colonialism' in this article differs from that of pervasive critical discourse (Fanon, 1963, 1967), which uses the term in two central ways: to delineate the chronological period in which countries were freed from colonial rule, and to highlight common challenges and difficulties characterizing postcolonial countries as they established their militaries. Defining these countries and the challenges they endured in this domain as 'postcolonial' enables a comparison between the Israeli case and its specifics and other cases, as well as the examination of a large number of countries that are dissimilar in many other ways, including in level of development and forms of political rule. Using this term allows us to include many diverse countries under the theoretical umbrella of post-colonialism, such as republics and monarchies, democratic and autocratic governments, developing and undeveloped countries, Asian, African, and South American countries, and more. It includes countries with very low levels of development such as Ghana or Sierra Leone in Africa, those with higher levels of development such as Indonesia (Halder, 2014; Lee, 2000), India, and other Asian countries, and highly developed countries such as Israel and Singapore. Some of these countries, such as Ethiopia (Abate, 1984, p. 382), developed a single-ruler authoritarian government, while others developed single-party authoritarian governments, such as Cameroon and Ivory Coast, as well as Ghana (Plave Bennett, 1973; Hutchful, 1997) in the later stages of Kwame Nkrumah's rule (Babou, 2010), until he was overthrown by military coup in 1966 (Adekson, 1976; Hettne, 1980). Among the countries that established stable democracies following the withdrawal of colonial rule are India (Chari, 1977; Barua, 1992), Malaysia, and Israel. In the current article, I will discuss representative examples of challenges that affected nascent militaries in different postcolonial countries. I will not focus on one country in particular, as these challenges characterized most postcolonial militaries and are clearly demonstrated by various cases, including the Israeli case.

***The challenge of instating political authority over military leadership in postcolonial militaries***

One of the central questions in the context of society-military relations is whether postcolonial political rule, be it democratic or dictatorial, can gain control of military forces and prevent them from rebelling against the government. This issue was of utmost importance in postcolonial countries, as most were newly established states struggling for stability in this domain among many others. The new militaries were a problematic source of power for civil authorities, who feared a military coup. They effectively tested the state's ability to control the body of organized violence it had itself established, and to prevent the military from overthrowing the government. This was a complex challenge in postcolonial states, and one that many did not overcome. The new states were in need of Britain's traditional separation between military and politics, achieved through recruiting and promoting officers loyal to the government, but for many, this was not how things developed on the ground. In a large part of the new states, certain challenges led to military coups, and the number of countries in which the political echelon successfully established its authority over the military is quite small.

In order to reinforce their control over the military, leaders and governments implemented several different methods meant to decrease the military's involvement in politics and lower the chances of a military coup. One of the main methods was the cultivation of training processes for the military elite that would guarantee its loyalty, or practices and regulations toward this goal. A main strategy in this vein was to appoint officers and commanders perceived as loyal to political rule or at least unlikely to initiate or join a coup. For instance, in Ethiopia, under the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, only soldiers perceived as loyal to the ruler were promoted to the rank of officers, and officers were only promoted upon proving their loyalty as well (Abate, 1984. p. 382). In many cases, perceptible loyalty was the central and most important consideration when it came to military appointments, even at the expense of professional ability. State leaders sought to staff their militaries with manpower that was as devoid of political aspirations as possible, and to thereby limit the military's involvement in political life.

Leaders were justifiably concerned about the development of a disloyal military elite, and therefore attempted to shape a loyal echelon of military leadership. Extensive efforts were invested in this goal. Officers that expressed loyalty were promoted or maintained their roles while those suspected of disloyalty were excluded and expelled from the military system, or at the very least, barred from promotion. Examples of this phenomenon abound. Ahmed Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, worked to appoint and promote officers and security personnel who were seen as loyal to his objectives and rule (Halder, 2014). As is well known, this did not prevent his ousting by Chief of Staff Suharto. In 1935, King of Yemen Imam Yahya sent a group of cadets to study at a military academy in Baghdad for the first time. He chose the young men himself, ensuring that none belonged to the Yazidi-Shiite group, the strongest in the Kingdom (to which he himself belonged!), or to a strong tribe or family of high class or pedigree. Most were lower-class orphans, and boys from the cities were preferable to those from the villages (Fattah, 2010). Yahya was killed in 1948 during a failed coup orchestrated by a competing tribe rather than his own military. However, his grandson Muhammad al-Badr was overthrown in 1962 during a military coup led by republican officers, adherents of Nasserist Pan-Arabism, only a week after inheriting the throne from Yahya's son and becoming imam and king.

The decision to send excelling officers and soldiers to study in western military academies, particularly the British Sandhurst Academy, can be seen in this light as well. These academies, aside from their declared goal of training command personnel, are able to foster acceptance of the political rank's authority in the cadets, an acceptance that characterizes western militaries and one that is lacking in postcolonial militaries. A good example of this are the new India Pakistan militaries established after the withdrawal of British rule. These naturally emerged as the direct continuation of the British Indian military, and absorbed thousands of soldiers and officers from the colonial military that served the British during the two world wars. In several cases, entire units from the previous military were absorbed into the Indian or Pakistani militaries. This continuity was also reflected by the training of military elites in British institutions or local institutions established by the British, such as the Indian military academy in Dehradun (Vajpeyi, 2014). These institutions had an overt influence on the political involvement of these militaries, by training officers for military professionalism and limiting their engagement in politics.

Another factor that influenced the ability of the political echelon to assert its authority on military forces was the existence of a strong political rule that stood at the head of an organized bureaucratic system. The British established many systems of bureaucratic rule in their colonies, including legal systems and political institutions. These served as a stabilizing force in the independence era (Barany, 2014, p. 601). The strength of the ruling parties played an important role within this system. The more support they had from different ethnic groups and population sectors, the more economic resources at their disposal, and the less confrontation they had to endure from oppositional forces, the more able they were to reinforce the control of civil authority over the military (Ibid). India is a clear example of a country that abided by the British tradition of strict military-politics separation, and upheld democratic civil authority (Ibid).

The failure of many governments to establish political authority over their militaries led to military coups in numerous countries. To some extent, military coups became the default for many postcolonial states. For instance, in 1963 the military assumed power in Peru for a whole year, and in the same year militaries overthrew the governments of Guatemala, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic as well. In 1962, failed coups took place in Lebanon, Portugal, Turkey, and Venezuela (Finer, 2017, p. 1). Successful coups during these years were conducted in Syria, Burma, El Salvador, South Korea, and other countries (Ibid). Successful or failed military coups also occurred in most African countries post-independence (First, 1970, Introduction). Some of the most prominent examples are Ghana (Bennett, 1973), Sierra Leone, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Togo, Mali, Egypt, Congo (Zaire), and Benin. One researcher found that in the eight years between 1965 and 1973, military coups occurred in 15 different African states (Bebler, 1973, p. 68). It is estimated that two-thirds of the postcolonial countries in South America, Asia, and the Middle East underwent various forms of military interventions. In 1960-1982, no less than 90 plots for government overthrow were counted among these states, as well as 60 attempted coups, 50 of which were successful (May & Selochan, 2004. p. 2).

***Between aspirations for independence and immediate needs***

One central point of discussion regarding postcolonial countries in general and Israel in particular, is the degree and fashion in which a given country was influenced by the outgoing colonial rule. Many countries experienced tension between their strive for independence and the needs and deficits that drove them to rely on colonial knowledge, human resources, and traditions, which in many cases, had existed for many years. This tension affected the establishment and activity of their militaries as well. Different countries continued to employ and maintain the mechanisms and methods established under colonial rule even after its withdrawal. These include certain bureaucratic trends that were integrated into the mechanisms of independent countries, as well as certain values and practices that continued to be upheld. In the military domain, this was reflected by the substantial amount of military personnel trained by colonial militaries or local militaries established by colonial rule, who continued their service careers, at a higher rank of course, in the new militaries established by the independent states. In some cases, this helped mitigate inherent society-military tensions, as soldiers and officers who served in the British military had internalized its values, including the separation of military and politics (Barany, 2014, p. 599; Vajpeyi & Segell, 2014). It seems that postcolonial countries, including Israel, experienced tension between the aspiration to pave their way independently and eschew the legacy of colonial rule, and the will or need to preserve aspects and practices of colonial rule that had proven to be effective (Barany, 2014; Chari, 1977). One ramification springing from this gap between aspiration and realistic abilities in real time, is the shortage in resources, as I will review here: (1) The shortage in command and professional personnel in postcolonial militaries in general; (2) The shortage in commanding-professional personnel in the early IDF: A shortage of thousands of officers and military professionals; (3) A shortage of thousands of commanders in the regular and reserve service.

*(1) The shortage in command and professional personnel in postcolonial militaries in general*

One of the most challenging issues for many postcolonial states was a severe shortage in qualified human resources for commanding and professional military ranks. In many cases, this problem stemmed from the nature of colonial rule, which did not train local manpower at a quantity, level, and quality that could meet the needs of new independent militaries. Under colonial rule, local militaries were relatively small. In times of peace, they were mainly tasked with internal policing, and during the two world wars, some were sent to the battlefront. Though a small, elite group of colonial subjects had been trained in British institutions, mainly the Sandhurst military academy (Chandler, 1991; Yardley, 1987), the establishment of a new, much larger national military required a vast quantity of commanding officers that was simply non-existent. The shortage of officers in different military units, or the low quality of existing commanders forced the independent states to find proper solutions. In various instances, including in Israel, hundreds and even thousands of officers and NCOs [Non-commissioned officers] were needed. This crisis drove many countries to recruit British officers and NCOs who continued to command the postcolonial militaries.

Express examples of this phenomenon are India (Chari, 1977; Marston, 2009; Barua, 1992) and its rival neighbor Pakistan. Both developed out of colonial India, which was freed from British rule in 1947. During the colonial period, the Indian military was under British command, which was subordinated to the British political rank. Concerned about their rule being undermined, the British safeguarded their control over the Indian military, and despite training commanding personnel in various ranks, British officers always filled the highest ranks up to the time of Indian independence (Chari, 1977). The establishment of Pakistan (like that of Burma, now Myanmar), and its separation from India, exacerbated the shortage of high-ranking commanders in the Indian military, especially in light of India's conflict with Pakistan in 1947. In an attempt to solve this problem, India recruited British officers into its military who continued to serve it for over a decade. Thus, for instance, it was not until 1958 that a local officer was appointed to the Indian Navy, replacing his British predecessor. This state of affairs was mirrored by Pakistan, which also suffered from a severe shortage of command personnel. At its inception, the Pakistani military was in need of 2,500 officers, and roughly 500 British mercenary officers filled these positions until a generation of local officers became qualified enough to replace them. Thus, during the Kashmir conflict in 1947-1949, it was not only local NCOs and junior officers, former colleagues from the British Indian military, which stood on the two opposing sides – but British officers as well (Barany, 2014, p. 600).

The Kingdom of Jordan is another example of British command personnel being utilized post-independence, as the Arab Legion (the official name of the Jordanian military until 1956) operated for 10 years under the command of British General John Bagot Glubb ("Glubb Pasha"), who had established and commanded it during the colonial period. He was a native of Britain, a senior British officer who commanded the Arab Legion (Jordanian Military) in 1939 – 1956. He was commander during the War of Independence opposite the IDF, and he held anti-Semitic beliefs, turning him into a staunch opponent of Zionism (Morris, 2007).

Additional British officers served alongside Glubb as well. According to Benny Morris, in May 1948, upon the outbreak of the Israeli War of Independence, 37 British officers served in the Arab Legion as well as several dozen NCOs who were subjects of the United Kingdom (Morris, 2007). However, unlike the Indian and Pakistani examples or the NCOs in the Jordanian military, Legion commander John Glubb was not a mercenary, but rather served as an emissary and official representative of Her Majesty's Government. The military of the Republic of Ghana, which gained independence in 1957, also suffered from a severe shortage of command personnel, and British soldiers served as its commanders up until 1961. Only 29 local officers served in the Ghanaian military upon its inception, and matters were even worse in other African countries (Barany, 2014, p. 601). In the Ghana case, it important to note that although parliamentary and prime-minister elections were held following the withdrawal of the British, the government became progressively dictatorial overtime, until it was overthrown in 1966 through a military coup and replaced by military rule for many years to come (Adekson,1976; Hettne, 1980).

 An earlier example of a similar solution to manpower shortage is the Yemen case (Rabi, 2014: 43-45). Upon the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Imam Yahya declared the independence of Yemen (aside from the Aden region, which remained a British colony). The Imam did not have manpower that was suitable for commanding ranks, but only traditional, tribal combat capacities. His solution was to recruit Turkish officers, former members of the defunct Ottoman military (Fattah, 2010).

The shortage of command personnel in the new states was directly related to one of the most complex challenges facing new rulers: the ability to establish a military whose commanders were both skilled and loyal to political rule. An additional aspect of the manpower crisis was a shortage in technical professionals, the root of low technological capabilities in the new militaries and the absence of sufficient training frameworks for professional human resources. This challenge became increasingly severe as these militaries acquired advanced ammunition, which required expertise and professional maintenance capacities. The challenge was not only the lack of personnel, but also the lack of methods and knowledge pertaining to various combat support units such as ammunition, maintenance, and engineering units, among others.

*(2) The shortage in commanding-professional personnel in early IDF: A shortage of thousands of officers and military professionals*

Much like in other postcolonial states, at its inception the IDF suffered from a severe shortage of commanding and professional personnel. The Haganah was the main Jewish paramilitary organization under the British mandate of Palestine. Established in 1920, the Haganah evolved over the years to cover all Jewish settlements. As part of the Jewish population, the Haganah was known for its social cohesion and highly motivated members. From the military aspect, the militia lacked military discipline. The organization served as one of the main cores of the establishment of the IDF. On the eve of the UN's declaration of the partition plan, the Haganah had in its possession 10,073 rifles, 186 medium machine guns, 444 light machine guns, 1,900 submachine guns, 96 3-inch mortars, and 672 2-inch mortars (Ostfeld, 1994). At this stage, the Jewish forces had no artillery, armor, engineering, supply, adjutancy, or medical services and supply units. During the first part of the War, the solution for the shortage came from civilian bodies. The air force had approximately 40 pilots and 9 light aircrafts, most of which were civilian sport aircrafts (Cohen, 2004; Yonay, 1993). Purchasing aircrafts, armor, communication devices, and other advanced weaponry required training professional manpower for its operation as well as developing maintenance infrastructure. Professional human resources in early IDF were highly limited, and a severe shortage was quickly felt in armament forces, logistics personnel, and many other professions.

The IDF was in fact undergoing two parallel processes that quickly caused a significant human resources crisis. On one hand, in light of the IDF's developing technological capacity, was increasing need for professional, skilled human resources; on the other, the immigration waves flooding into Israel caused a decline in the level of human resources recruited into the IDF, such that major concerns arose regarding their ability to operate and handle the military's technological systems. In February 1950, six months after the War ended, a report was submitted to the deputy director of the Manpower Directorate that estimated a shortage of 5,863 professionals in the military (According to Report submitted to Deputy Director of the Manpower Directorate on February 3, 1950, by the Auditing, Coordination, and Selection Office of the Manpower Directorate. Taken from the IDF Archives, "IDFA", 1950-1864-1950).

The severity of the IDF's lack in academic professionals is evidenced by a discussion held at the end of 1952 regarding the Academic Reserve Track (the Israeli equivalent to the American ROTC), which was one of the solutions implemented to address the shortage. During the discussion, the representatives of many different military cops presented the shortages in their units. For instance, the representative of the Engineering Corps reported having only 120 engineers that year, despite a need for 250 permanent engineers. He claimed Israel lacked the capacity to train engineers at this scale, and noted a shortage in mathematicians and physicists as well. (according to statements by the Engineering Corps representative in the protocol of the meeting on the Academic Reserve Track – cohort C, held November 15, 1951. IDFA 1962-182-1).

The Medical Corps representative reported a shortage of over 100 physicians, which could not be overcome due to a shortage of physicians in the general population. The Ordnance Corps representative also reported a shortage in mechanical engineers, which would persist over the coming years as well (according to the above mentioned statements by the Engineering Corps representative). There were also shortages in the basic professions, particularly in technical and mechanical personnel such as vehicle and weapons mechanics and metalworkers. The list of shortages was particularly long in the general professions, notably in food service workers and cooks, print service workers, lab workers, and more (from an internal document of the coordination department at the Manpower Directorate, dated January 20, 1954). For instance, from March 1955 until the end of March 1956, the military suffered a shortage of hundreds of drivers relative to the official standard, with a shortage of 433 drivers in March 1955, 385 drivers in September 1956, and so forth (according to Development of the Drivers' Inventory in 1955-1956, in an internal document of the Manpower Directorate [undated] IDFA 1965-55-312).

As early as 1950, the Air Force commander reported an expected shortage of hundreds if not thousands of professionals in mandatory and permanent service, particularly in the technical fields (according to Statements by Air force Commander Major General Aharon Remez at a General Headquarters meeting on February 6, 1950, pp. 2-8. IDFA 1962-847-14).

In June 1955, the shortage in aircraft maintenance and electronics personnel in the Air Force stood at 265 soldiers, roughly 20% of the human resources standards in these fields at the time (Addendum B in an internal document of the coordination department at the Manpower Directorate, dated January 20, 1954, IDFA 1965-55-312). Reserve forces suffered from many shortages as well, in drivers, weapons, various types of mechanics and technicians, electricians, and more (document by Lieutenant Colonel Yehuda Blum, dated December 1, 1952, ibid, IDFA 1965-55-312).

*(3) A shortage of thousands of commanders in regular and reserve service*

At the end of the War of Independence, a severe shortage of command personnel was prompted by the high number of casualties during the War, a high percentage of which were commanders (Sivan, 1991, pp. 48–53, 61), the release of many commanders, and the enlistment of low-quality human resources. Changes in the composition of IDF human resources only exacerbated the crisis. In late December 1950, Lieutenant Colonel Tzvi Tzur, head of the IDF General Headquarters Planning Directorate, noted that in 1951-1953 the IDF regular military suffered a shortage of 2,030 officers and 2,180 NCOs (Planning committee report for 1951-1952 by head of the planning committee Major General Tzvi Tzur, sent to Deputy Chief of Staff on December 29, 1950. IDFA 1961-346-4). The shortage was not limited to combat forces but extended to non-combat personnel such as logistics officers as well (main points from the General Headquarters meeting on October 28, 1951, p. 5. IDFA 1952-1559-178). In a report on the activities of the Manpower Directorate from 1950, Directorate Head Major General Shimon Mazeh also cited the shortage in command personnel. The human resources deficit affected the reserve units as well. For instance, in the IDF strength-building report, Major General Tzvi Tzur notes a predicted shortage of 2,500 officers and a severe shortage of 12,000 NCOs in reserve units in the 1951-1952 work year (IDF Strength-Building Report – Manpower 1950-1955, by the Manpower Directorate. IDFA 1965-1034-1165). Referring to the general shortage of human resources in the IDF, Tzur states:

The inventory of officers does not meet current IDF needs… the shortage in this area is so severe, that even if we prioritize officer training we will still be a long way from meeting the necessary numbers (Planning committee report for 1951-1952 by head of the planning committee Major General Tzvi Tzur, sent to Deputy Chief of Staff on December 29, 1950, p. 15. IDFA 1961-346-4).

***Challenges and concerns regarding military intervention in early Israeli statehood***

Israel, as we know, never experienced a military coup, but fear of this scenario was palpable during its first years of statehood. At first, concerns arose regarding the IZL, which refused to cooperate with government and military authorities during the Altalena affair (Nakdimon, 1978; Givati, 1994, pp. 147–156). This fear somewhat quelled following the establishment of the state (Lebel, 2008). After the War, an ideological-political conflict broke out between Ben-Gurion's statist approach and the partisan approach of the Kibbutz movement and its primary political representative, the MAPAM party. MAPAM was a left-wing party, MAPAM was established in 1948. Following the first Knesset elections, it became the second largest parliamentary group, an oppositional party, and a fierce critic of MAPAI (Tzahor, 1994; Tzur, 1988). This ideological cleavage continued, affecting the IDF and its establishment as well. This began during the War in the affair surrounding the dismantling of the Palmach and continued thereafter. MAPAM leaders demanded that the IDF be cultivated as a pioneering military "of the people" that was not based in bureaucracy and military discipline (Azati, 2015, p. 45). Their approach was perceived as a distinct threat to the political stability of the State and its military, and there were concerns that MAPAM would seize control of both. For instance, upon the outbreak of the War of Independence, MAPAM attempted to establish a military force under the auspices of the Histadrut in order to prevent a coup by the right-wing organizations and the dissidents. This concern continued after the war as well, in light of the large quantities of ammunition stored in the kibbutzim. In a few instances, the amount of legal and illegal weapons stored in the kibbutzim exceeded the amount of weapons held by the IDF (report by Military Secretary to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion Nehemiah Argov, addressed to Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Vardi, from June 21, 1950. Ben-Gurion Archives, Personal Archives – Shabtai Teveth Archives, Subject Files, File No. 180, File Name – IDF – The Establishment of the IDF, the Development of the IDF; Tzahor, 1997, p. 197). The purpose of ammunition storage in the kibbutzim is debated to this day. Ya'akov Hazan, among the leaders of Ha'kibbutz Ha'artzi, claimed that the weapons were meant to prevent the IZL and Lechi from seizing control of the state(Azati, 2015, p. 198). Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, among the leaders of Ha'kibbutz Ha'meuchad, claimed they were meant for self-defense in case the kibbutzim came under threat. He did not clarify whether this potential 'threat' was in fact the State and IDF, but emphasized that despite its rivalry with Ben-Gurion MAPAM had no intention of taking power by force (Azati, 2015, p. 115). Aharon Cohen, a member of the left branch of Ha'kibbutz Ha'artzi, who was later convicted of spying for the Soviet Union, claimed that the weapons were meant to aid the Red Military in conquering the Middle East in the event of an inter-bloc war (Tzahor, 1997, p. 199).

Ben-Gurion's degree of concern regarding this subject is expressed in his following statements:

Without preservation, cultivation, and reinforcement of the precious values bequeathed to us by the Haganah, the new [military] will have no great value… but it has been necessary to add military training and discipline to these – and total subjugation to the high civil authority of the State. And this has been no easy task… with the Haganah's transformation into a military – we could not settle for the fictitious authority of the State. A military that is not wholly subjugated to the democratic rule of the people – is bound to seize control of the nation and lead to military anarchy […] though I must add: if we were to rely on this heritage alone – we would be lost (Ben-Gurion, 1950, p. 154).

***Heterogeneity and ethnic multi-heterogeneity in postcolonial militaries***

An additional problem that affected different postcolonial countries, and therefore the postcolonial militaries they established, was the extensive ethnic heterogeneity that characterized many of them, including Israel and its military. In many cases, tensions and struggles between different ethnic groups began prior to independence, but tended to intensify in light of challenges that arose during the first years of statehood. A good example of ethnic conflict that preceded national independence can be found in India, where two independent states were eventually established in light of ethnic-religious differences (Barua, 1992). In the colonial era, the British prevented ethnic conflicts from seeping into the military by selectively appointing members of groups perceived as loyal or lacking in political aspirations to the ranks of commanders and officers in many different countries. In India, they preferred peripheral groups such as the Sikhs, Nepalese, or members of the warrior caste (Barany, 2014). As a result of this policy, in the first years of Indian independence Sikh soldiers comprised roughly 11% of the military's combat personnel, while accounting for less than 2% of the general population (Barua, 1992). Nigeria and its military are another example of this phenomenon. Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1957 and experienced its first military coup in 1966. Upon the establishment of the Nigerian military, the Igbo ethnic group (a Christian ethnic group concentrated primarily in southeast Nigeria) accounted for approximately 60% of officers while comprising no more than 20% of the population (Barua, 1992). Ethnic heterogeneity in new states creates a tension between aspirations to establish militaries "of the people" that represent all population sectors, and government concerns over ethnic conflicts infiltrating the military, or the provision of ammunition to groups perceived as less-than-loyal to the political rank.

Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah provides an example of an opposite solution to the issue of ethnic heterogeneity. He too, saw pervasive heterogeneity as a potential threat to stability, but rather than apply the "divide and conquer" approach developed and honed by the British and cultivate one minority that would protect the military and exclude other groups, Nkrumah boldly attempted to make the military an instrument of African-Ghanaian cohesion and national identity. In his view, the military was meant to be the melting pot that fosters a new nationality, one that would gradually reduce the political significance of distinct ethnic identities and therefore their threat to central government (Adekson, 1976). However, recruiting members of different groups into the various military units proved fertile ground for tensions to form and escalate to the point of destabilizing military order and functionality, and his attempt ultimately failed. A more successful example of the military as a launching pad for national cohesion is young Israel, in which ethnic heterogeneity was significant enough to characterize it as a multi-ethnic country.

***Conclusion***

The establishment of the State of Israel enabled mass immigration from many different countries. This had extensive impact on the demographic composition of the young State, which became heterogeneous overnight. The effect of the immigration wave on the IDF, which subsequently became a heterogeneous military, was quickly felt. The Israeli Defense Service Law (published in the *Reshumot* on October 1, 1949) which mandated the conscription of 18-year old individuals from all social sectors to the IDF, obligated the military to absorb all those who met draft qualifications (Hadar, 1979; Gelber, 1986, p. 506). The IDF therefore became a "demographic mirror" of Israeli society, half of which was comprised by new immigrants. Military personnel and political leadership saw the change in the makeup of draftees as a severe problem that could destabilize the IDF's ability to withstand different threats. Research conducted by the IDF Manpower Directorate in December 1948 shows that at the time, natives of Israel comprised 21.4% of the IDF, while the rest of the military became ethnically heterogeneous. At this stage, the IDF consisted of 27% Polish immigrants, 11% Romanian immigrants, 8% German immigrants, and 5% or less North-African immigrants, north and south-American immigrants, and immigrants hailing from Yemen, Turkey, Greece Czechoslovakia, and many other countries. (report by the Auditing, Coordination, and Selection Office of the Manpower Directorate from February 13, 1949. IDFA 1949-6722-14).

This continued into the years following the War as well. During a discussion at the General Headquarters, Chief of Staff Yigal Yadin estimated that in 1950, about half of the new recruits would be new immigrants. GOC of the Northern Command estimated that in some units, the rate of new immigrants would climb to 80% (General Headquarters meeting on February 12, 1950. IDFA, file: 1962-847-14). Yadin claimed that if the military does not act decisively and comprehensively to address the change in the composition of human resources within the IDF, the results could be disastrous. He believed that failure to address problems in culture and education could sabotage the operation of the IDF (General Headquarters meeting on February 12, 1950. IDFA, file: 1962-847-14). The new cultural and linguistic diversity posed a barrier to the execution of complex actions. Commanders had to deal with foreign behavioral patterns they had never been exposed to, and this cultural distinction damaged the functionality of IDF units and military operations and impaired military discipline. The following statement by Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ben-Gurion at the General Headquarters illustrates the severity attributed to this issue:

Our military does not absorb human material akin to that of the English military – but alas, human material akin to that of the Iraqi military(General Headquarters meeting on April 23, 1953, p. 32. IDFA, file: 1962-847-25).

In sum, this article has discussed the postcolonial problems that characterized the IDF in its first years, and it seems safe to say that early IDF was indeed a typical postcolonial military, challenged by many of the same issues that affected other postcolonial militaries at their inception. These issues stemmed primarily from colonial rule withdrawing without leaving stable military infrastructure behind, which prompted comprehensive organizational issues in the IDF that affected daily life as well as military operations. At the same time, and this is a matter for another article, the solutions Israel employed to address these fundamental structural issues were quite unique, which might explain the different outcome achieved by the IDF compared to other postcolonial militaries. From the outset, Israel resolved to establish the IDF as a modern, technological military akin to western militaries. This reinforced the Zionist enterprise and Jewish *yishuv* as modern entities characterized by modern economy, political organization, culture, and military forces (Eisenstadt, 2004). As a byproduct of this approach, Israel developed its military through local resources, and worked consistently to sustain its military needs as independently as possible. These two agendas were undoubtedly a central and significant component in transforming the IDF from a postcolonial military in its early stages to a modern, advanced military in later years.

***Bibliography***

Abate, Y. (1984). Civil–military relations in Ethiopia*. Armed Forces & Society*, *10* (3), pp. 380–400.

Adekson, J. B. (1976). Military in a multi-ethnic society: The case of Nkrumah's Ghana, 1957–1966. *Armed Forces & Society*, *2*(2), 251–267.

Azati, A. (2015). *"Can't do without us?": The kibbutz movements and the Israel Defense Forces 1948–1957*. Yad Tabenkin, Yad Yaari, Ben-Gurion University and Bar-Ilan University (Hebrew).

Babou, C. A. (2010). Decolonization or national liberation: Debating the end of British colonial rule in Africa. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *632*, 41–54.

Barua, P. P. (1992). Ethnic conflict in the military of developing nations: A comparative analysis of India and Nigeria. *Armed Forces & Society*,  *19*(1), 123–137.

Barany, Z. (2014). How postcolonial militaries came about: Comparative perspectives from Asia and Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 49*(5), 597–617.

Bebler, A. (ed) (1973). *Military rule in Africa: Dahomey, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Mali*. Praeger.

Ben-Gurion, D. (1950). From an underground militia to an organized military: From discussions at the Mifleget Poalei Eretz Israel Committee [Undated]. *As Israel Fought*. Tel Aviv: Mifleget Poalei Eretz Israel (Hebrew).

Chandler, D. (1991). *Sandhurst*. Harmony House.

Chari, P. R. (1977). Civil–military relations in India. *Armed Forces & Society*, *4*(3), 3–28.

Cohen, A. (2004). *The air force during the war of independence*. Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense (Hebrew).

Eisenstadt, S. N. (2004). *Transformations in Israeli Society*. Ministry of Defense – Universita Meshuderet (Hebrew).

Ejiogu, E. C. (2007). Colonial army recruitment patterns and post-colonial military coups d’état in Africa: The case of Nigeria 1966–1993. *Scientia Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies*, *35*(1), 99–132.

Fanon, F. (1963), *The wretched of the earth*, New York: Grove Weidenfeld.

–––. (1967). *Black skins, white masks*, New York: Grove press.

Fattah, K. (2010). A political history of civil–military relations in Yemen. *Alternative politics*, *special issue 1*, 25–47.

Finer, S. E. (2017). *The Man on Horseback*. London, New York: Routledge.

First, R. (1970). *Power in Africa*. Pantheon Books.

Gelber Y. (1986). The emergence of a jewish military: The veterans of the British military in the IDF, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi.

Givati M. (1994). *In the path of desert and fire: History of the 9th battalion*, Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot Publishing – Ministry of Defense (Hebrew).

Hadar, T. (1979). *The defense service law: The law and its interpretation*. Ministry of Defense, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6 (Hebrew).

Halder, M. J. (2014). Democratizing the Indonesian military: Changing civil–military relations from sukarno to the present. in D. K. Vajpeyi, & G. Segell (Eds.), *Civil–military relations in developing countries* (pp. 77–103). Maryland: Lexington Books.

Hettne, B. (1980). Soldiers and politics: The case of Ghana. *Journal of Peace Research*, *XVII*(2), 173–193.

Hutchful, E. (1997). Reconstructing civil–military relations and the collapse of democracy in Ghana, 1979–81. *African Affairs*, *96*(385), 535–560.

Lebel, U. (2008). *The road to the pantheon: IZL, Lechi, and the borders of israeli memory*, Jerusalem: Carmel Publishing (Hebrew).

Lee, T. (2000). The nature and future of civil–military relations in Indonesia. *Asian Survey*, *40* (4), 692–706.

Levy, Y. (1993), *The Role of the military sphere in the construction of the social-political order in Israel: The conduct of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a statist control strategy*. [doctoral dissertation] Tel Aviv University.

–––. (2003). The other military of Israel: Materialist militarism in Israel, *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

Marston, D. P. (2009). The Indian military, partition, and the Punjab boundary force, 1945—1947. *War in History*, *16*(4), 469–505.

May, R .J. & V. Selochan. (2004). *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific*. ANU Press.

Morris, B. (2007). *The road to Jerusalem: Glubb Pasha, Palestine and the Jews*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved,.

Nakdimon, S. (1978). *Altalena*. Idanim Publishing.

Ostfeld, Z. (1994). *A military is born: The primary stages of the Ben-Gurion-led military*. Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense (Hebrew).

Plave Bennett, V. (1973). The motivation for military intervention: The case of Ghana. *The Western Political Quarterly*, *26*(4), 659–674.

Rabi, U. (2014). *Yemen: The anatomy of a failed state*. Tel-Aviv: Ha'Kibbutz Ha'Meuchad.

Sivan, E. (1991). *The 1948 generation: Myth, profile and memory*. Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot Publishing, Chapter 7 – The Extermination of the Elites (Hebrew).

Tzahor, Z. (1994). MAPAI, MAPAM, and the establishment of the first government of Israel 1949. *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, *4*, 378–399 (Hebrew).

–––. (1997). *Hazon, a life's movement: Ha'shomer Ha'tzair, Ha'kibbutz Ha'meuchad, MAPAM*. Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and Yad Yaari, (Hebrew).

Tzur, E. (1988). *Landscapes of illusion: MAPAM 1948–1954*. Sde Boker: he Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute (Hebrew).

Vajpeyi, D. K. (2014). Civil–military relations in India and Pakistan: Genesis of two models in South Asia., in D. K. Vajpeyi, & G. Segell (Eds.), *Civil–military relations in developing countries*. Maryland: Lexington Books.

Vajpeyi D. K., & Segell G. (Eds) (2014). *Civil–military relations in developing countries*. Maryland: Lexington Books.

Yardley, M. (1987). *Sandhurst.* London: Harrap Ltd, 1987.

Yonay, E. (1993). *No margin for error: The making of the Israeli air force*. Keter (Hebrew).

**About the Author**

Dr Elad Neemani is a History of Education researcher. Educator by profession and academic supervisor of the teachers training program at the open university. His academic sphere is the relations between military systems and educational systems as part of the civil–military sphere. This includes primary schools, secondary schools and institutions of higher education.