

DEFENDING
THE HOLY LAND

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*A Critical Analysis of
Israel's Security & Foreign Policy*

ZEEV MAOZ

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In memory of
AVNER YANIV

Preface

This book has been brewing in my mind for nearly three decades. I have closely followed Israel's national security and foreign policy over the years. Like for many other Israelis—scholars and laypersons—who followed these policies, this was not a detached and distant scrutiny. It was an anthropological process of participating observation. I have both taken part and had major stakes in many of the events and processes that are discussed in this book. As a soldier I participated in three of the wars that are discussed herein: I served as a young soldier in the War of Attrition, fighting in the northern section of the Suez Canal. As a reserve officer I participated in the Yom Kippur War and the Lebanon War. I also did numerous tours of duty (in both my standing army career and my reserve duty) in the occupied territories. In the early 1990s I had a brief stint on a team advising Yitzhak Rabin on strategic affairs.

For the most part, this process of observation was rather depressing; only a few years during this period offered rays of hope. What bothered me more than specific episodes of ineptitude, folly, and deception—and there were many of these over the years—were two aspects of policy-making that have not received sufficient attention. First, I was concerned by the persistent failure of the policy community to learn from Israel's mistakes. This lack of self-inspection applied not only to politicians and bureaucrats but also to a significant portion of the scholarly community in Israel, the Israeli media, and—of course—public opinion. In too many areas of policy, Israel has experienced persistent and repeated failures. Yet, many of these failures were explained away or covered up as some-

thing else. Even when they were recognized as failures, no meaningful reforms were undertaken. Things remained pretty much as they had been before the fiascos.

Second, I became increasingly uncomfortable with 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. There is a general agreement on the underlying assumptions of Israel's security and foreign policy (for example, on the elements of the threat to Israel's security). There is a general consensus on some fundamental principles of Israel's security doctrine (e.g., the need to rely on an offensive and escalation dominant doctrine). And there is a fairly consensual interpretation of certain outcomes of these policies (e.g., that Israel's nuclear policy has been a phenomenal success). Consensus is a good thing if it is based on correct assumptions and principles. My feeling was that too many of the foundations of Israel's security and foreign policy doctrine have become religious principles rather than propositions that need to be tested against the empirical facts. Because almost nobody bothered to examine whether this general consensus is based on a correct reading of Israel's environment and policies, there was a significant void in the literature dealing with Israel's national security and foreign policy. There were almost no efforts to evaluate the various contours of these policies. This book is an attempt to systematically examine and review both the foundations of these policies and their operational expressions.

Several institutions and individuals helped me in the process of writing and rewriting this book. First and foremost, much of the data used in this study is derived from the project of the Quantitative History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, which was partially funded by the United States Institute of Peace. In the course of writing the book I have discussed ideas and have shared some of the writings with colleagues in Israel and abroad. I have received numerous comments and suggestions on my nuclear chapter (see acknowledgments in Maoz 2003a, 44) and on my chapter on Israeli interventions in intra-Arab affairs (see acknowledgments in Maoz 2001, 137). Discussions and correspondence with Haim Assa, Gad Barzilai, Isaac Ben-Israel, Michael Brecher, Avner Cohen, Yair Evron, Azar Gat, Orit Kamir, Jack Levy, Benny Miller, Alex Mintz, Ben Mor, Zeev Segal, J. David Singer, Abrasha Tamir, and Lesley Terris have enriched my understanding of the intricacies of the various issues discussed in this book. The second part of the book (chaps. 7–14) was completed while I

was a visiting professor of political science at the University of Michigan. The final round of revisions was influenced by the suggestions of Michael Barnett, the other reviewers for the University of Michigan Press, and University of Michigan Press editor Jim Reische. I am thankful to all those individuals and institutions for their comments, suggestions, and encouragement. Needless to say, none of these institutions or individuals necessarily agrees with or endorses the ideas and arguments of this book. I bear sole responsibility for its contents and substance.

My deepest thanks, as always, go to my family. Zehava, my wife, was an infinite source of encouragement and support. My children, Inbal and Omry, have been critical sounding boards, challenging many of my ideas. Inbal made a great number of useful substantive and editorial comments on the manuscript. One cannot ask for more.

My friend and colleague Professor Avner Yaniv was the person whose views and insights I missed the most in the process of writing this book. Avner—whose writings on Israel's security feature prominently in the coming pages—would probably have disagreed with many of my observations and conclusions. But his knowledge and understanding of Israeli foreign and security affairs, and of the close linkage between domestic and security affairs, went much beyond his writings on these matters. Avner passed away prematurely in June 1992. Twelve years later, I still miss the conversations and debates we had about these matters. I dedicate this book to Avner's memory.

—Davis, California, August 2004

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