# Militaristic Nationalism and War

Zionism was the product of an era when the concept of the nation gained precedence. Across Europe, masses of people who often shared common ethnic characteristics began to see the nation as a focus of belonging and identification. This sentiment fueled a desire for liberation from tyrannical rule or foreign occupation and for independence, in order to allow citizens to become the masters of their own fate. According to the objective criteria sometimes used to examine the phenomenon of nationalism, the Jews were not universally recognized as a nation. After all, they were dispersed in geographical terms and did not own any distinct territory. They did not share a common language, religion no longer served as a common denominator for the many who had become atheists, and their culture varied from place to place. Even in terms of physiognomy—and contrary to familiar stereotypes—they were more similar to their non-Jewish neighbors than to Jews from other parts of the world. Accordingly, it is hardly surprising that the Zionist demand to be recognized as a nation was not readily accepted and encountered fierce opposition, including among the Jews themselves.

The Zionists attempted to overcome these obstacles. They embarked on a program of immigration to Palestine, referring to the country by its ancient name, the Land of Israel (Eretz Israel), and interpreted this immigration as a return to their ancestral homeland following an exile of almost two thousand years. In this old/new place, they refashioned themselves from the outset as a community defined by its distinctness from the local Arab population. They built a new society and saw nationalism as a criterion for identification that took precedence over any religious or class-based distinctions. They also developed what Ernst Renan had already proposed in the late nineteenth century as a vital component of nationalism: national identity. As part of this

project, they transformed the largely fossilized Hebrew of the Bible into a modern spoken language and created a new and original Hebrew culture. They began to secure legal ownership of areas in Palestine through acquisition and settlement and established a political system to manage their own affairs. In addition, during and after the First World War, the Zionist movement attempted to secure international and legal approval for its ambitions in Palestine, achieving considerable success in this respect with the Balfour Declaration. This achievement instilled hope in Zionists that they would ultimately be successful in realizing their nationalist aspirations and establishing their own state.[1]

Zionism was dominated by modern elements, and in this respect its emergence on the stage of history toward the end of the nineteenth century is consistent with the claims of scholars such as John Breuilly (1993) and Eric Hobsbawm (2006) regarding the general phenomenon of nationalism. It is doubtful whether the Zionist movement could have emerged had not many Jews separated from their traditional communities and "come out of the ghetto," to use the phrase coined by the historian and sociologist Yacob Katz (1973), thereby embarking on a significant process of secularization.[2] Like other national movements, Zionism could not have developed without the Enlightenment, which preceded it, and which raised awareness of humans' ability to control their destiny—rather than, in the Jewish context, waiting for the Messiah to bring redemption, as the rabbis advised. Universalist ideals of individual liberty and national sovereignty, inspired by the French Revolution, naturally also influenced these processes. Indeed, as David Vital (1975) and S. N. Eisenstadt (2002: 163–65) noted, the Zionists did not confine themselves to national liberation but also sought to achieve a social revolution. In the early stage, this desire was manifested mainly in the aspiration to normalize the occupational structure of the Jews and to "make them a productive people." Certainly, the Zionists were modern in their aspiration for a state—that is, a political and bureaucratic system of domination capable of representing the nation and of solving its various problems.

However, the phenomenon of Zionism cannot be explained solely by reference to modernity. Some scholars of nationalism reject the idea that a nation, however modern it may be, can be divorced from its ancient past. These scholars, known as "ethno-symbolists," argue that, with isolated exceptions, the potency of the nationalist phenomenon lies in its sources, tradition, and long-standing emotional and irrational components. These in turn have their origins in the emergence of ethnic groups during the early Middle Ages

and, in some instances, even in ancient times. These periods were already marked by the emergence of distinct cultural affinities, myths of origin and a shared lineage, and often a common religion, as well as traditions and ceremonies, a distinct language, and a sense of solidarity and collective identity. In some cases, the blend also included a sense that the ethnic group was superior and chosen.

Ethno-symbolists categorically reject the claim by certain modernists that a nation is no more than an invented political community, created ex nihilo as a substitute for debilitated religion and disempowered monarchies, and intended as a new means for serving the need for domination and control. This approach regards nationalism as a "false consciousness" exploited by cunning rulers in order to secure legitimacy for their rule and to recruit the naive public to their goals. Anthony Smith (2010: 61–62), one of the leading ethno-symbolic scholars, suggested that this interpretation by the modernists fails to recognize the emotional depth of loyalty to the nation, maintained over centuries, on the basis of history and tradition and manifested in tangible terms in the present.

We will see how this disagreement concerning the origins of nationalism is connected with the understanding of wars. For the present we may note that, as a generalization, the ethno-symbolic approach emphasized the cultural dimension of nationalism, while the modernist approach tended to focus on the political dimension of the phenomenon—despite the fact that both approaches claimed to address both of these dimensions. The cultural dimension of Zionism was particularly prominent during the formative years of the movement. The Jewish people had a distinct history; and toward the end of the nineteenth century, Zionist thinkers, writers, and historians, as well as the political leaders of the movement, interpreted this history in a specific manner and, to a certain extent, even invented it—the term used by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983)—in way that served their national goals. However, it is doubtful whether this process of invention could have been successful or feasible had it not been based on a historical and cultural foundation.[3] Those Jews who chose Zionism certainly did so not only for rational or instrumentalist reasons but also under the influence of a romanticist approach, which highlighted both the unique characteristics of each nation as created over centuries or millennia and the bond between humans and the territory they perceive as their homeland. By way of example, we need only recall that since before the Christian era, Jews have read the Passover Haggada every year. This text tells the story of the exodus of an entire people

from slavery to freedom and their return from Egypt to their homeland. And twice a year, Jews end their prayers with the declaration "Next year in Jerusalem."

Naturally, the establishment of a Zionist national movement was also justified by reference to the conditions facing the Jews in Europe. Zionism was perceived as a solution for the existential problems faced by a people who for centuries, wherever they settled, had been subject to discrimination, persecution, harassment, and profound poverty. The emancipation Jews had enjoyed more recently in some areas may have made them equal before the law, but this did not spare them from anti-Semitism in their daily lives. It comes as no surprise that Dr. Yehuda Leib Pinsker, one of the leading Zionist thinkers of the nineteenth century, wrote that emancipation would not solve the "Jewish problem." The Jews, he argued, were in need of "auto-emancipation"—that is to say, a collective solution. They had to take their fate into their own hands, rather than expecting others to solve the problems for them.[4]

Pinsker wrote his essay "Auto-Emancipation" following a wave of anti-Semitic pogroms in 1882.[5] Were it not for these pogroms and many like them that scarred the lives of Jews across eastern Europe, in particular, it is questionable whether the ideas presented by Theodor Herzl in his book *The Jewish State,* published in 1896, would have received such an enthusiastic reception (Eylon, 2006: 106). This enthusiasm led to the establishment of a pan-European Zionist movement that soon became a global organization. As Herzl wrote in 1897, after managing to hold the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, the movement's goal was astonishing clear: "At Basel I founded the Jewish state." He added, "If I were to say this out loud today I would be met with universal laughter. But in five years perhaps, certainly in fifty, the whole world will know it" (Herzl, 1997: 482).

Despite the gravitational pull of the new movement, most of the Jews at the time did not see Zionism as offering a solution to their problems. Some had assimilated in their countries of residence. Others emigrated to the United States during the period when this country was receptive to immigration (some 1.3 million European Jews arrived in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Many remained faithful to their religious beliefs and continued to trust in God's providence. Others still formed the "Bund," a socialist nationalist movement that was vastly stronger and larger than the Zionist movement, and which rejected the idea that the solution to "the problem" lay in emigration to Palestine or in the revival of the language of the Bible. Nevertheless, the national conclusion that the

Land of Israel was the Jewish homeland and constituted the most appropriate and just territorial solution for the Jewish problem became increasingly widespread.

Paradoxically, this conviction spread dramatically following the untimely death of the movement's founder. Herzl recognized that the Jewish longing for Zion was rooted in Jews' history. However, he despaired of realizing his objective of securing international support for the idea of a Jewish state in the ancestral land. Accordingly, he decided in 1903 to present the movement with a proposal to establish a Jewish state in Uganda, as a response to the material and existential crisis facing the Jews of eastern Europe.[6] Perhaps his perception of nationality as a modern and civic phenomenon led him to downplay the importance of ancient history in securing the movement's goal. However, his "Uganda Plan" horrified many members of the movement. The opponents agreed with the comment made by the renowned author and thinker Asher Ginsberg, better known by his Hebrew nom de plume, Ahad Ha'am, that while Herzl's proposal might provide a state for the Jews, this would not be a Jewish state. Like many of his intellectual contemporaries, Ahad Ha'am attached great importance to the cultural and folkish dimension of nationalism, refusing to reduce Zionism to a mere political instrument for solving material or physical distress (Goldstein, 1992). This was a fascinating and principled debate between two opposing perceptions of nationalism, and one that even threatened to divide the movement. The Uganda Plan was eventually rejected by the Seventh Zionist Congress at the beginning of August 1905. Even at this early stage, it was already becoming apparent that, while Zionism embodied a nationalism that had emerged under the conditions of modernity, its stronger foundation was ethnicity and a belief in a common ancient past, combined with particularistic cultural principles, rather than the universal principles that were perceived as the legacy of the French Revolution (Shimoni, 1995; Ben-Israel, 2004: 99–150).

During the same period (from 1904), young Jews from Russia began to put the ethno-nationalist ideal into practice by emigrating to what they saw as their homeland: a stretch of desert under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. These immigrants formed what became known as the Second Aliyah, and they provide the starting point for this book. Their arrival in Palestine symbolized the emergence of practical Zionism, and accordingly it also marked the beginning of the conflict between the Zionists and the Arabs, or Palestinians. After all, contrary to the assertion in the late nineteenth century by Israel Zangwill, the well-known English-Jewish writer, that Israel is

"a land without a people for a people without a land," Palestinians had lived in the country for many centuries, regarded it as their homeland, and were also gradually developing a collective consciousness of their essence as a nation.[7] As a result, from the time of the Second Aliyah down to the present day, the country has faced perpetual conflict and numerous wars.

In this book, I consider the nature of this "century of conflict and war" from a perspective that focuses on the way Zionists and Israelis saw and see the conflict. My main argument is that their particular perspective can be seen as one of the reasons (among others) that have brought war to the region and prevented a resolution of the conflict.

It is already possible to identify different periods in the study of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict. In the 1980s and 1990s, a critical approach developed among Israeli researchers and, in particular, among those who came to be known as the "New Historians" (Shlaim, 2004) or "radical sociologists" (Ram, 1995, 2018). Until this period, Israeli scholars had tended to adopt a basic assumption of the existence of two separate societies.[8] Naturally, the reality of separation that was created in 1948, and which continued through 1967, facilitated the adoption of this dual approach. It also permitted researchers to ignore the fact that throughout the British Mandate period (and earlier, of course), Jews and Palestinians maintained relations on varying levels. The change that occurred in the 1980s in the study of the Israeli-Arab conflict was due in part to criticism of this dual approach.

This criticism was manifested, for example, in the work of Juval Portugali (1993), who argued that even in the past, and certainly following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel in 1967, it was impossible to understand both societies in isolation, since they maintained implicate relations, whereby each society mirrored and influenced the other. For example, just as Palestinian national identity emerged as a response to the spread of Zionism, so the Israeli labor market was influenced by the cheap Arab labor of the hundred thousand Palestinians workers who entered Israel every day from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the early 1980s. The implicate-relations perspective appeared in some works written by Israeli scholars (e.g., Bernstein, 2000; Grinberg, 2003), and even more so among American Middle-Eastern scholars. Zachary Lockman (1996), for example, employed the basic assumption of relational history in his study of Israeli and Arab railroad laborers who worked together in Haifa during the Mandate period. This formed part of Lockman's broader study of the working class in Palestine and the mutual influences between Jews and Arabs in this class. Another

example is Mark LeVine (2005), who argued that it is impossible to understand the "modern" project of the construction of Tel Aviv as a Jewish city without understanding Jaffa, and vice versa.

Exploring Israeli and Palestinian society as a single reality can indeed be productive, and certainly so in fields where there were some relationships, such as in the labor market, working-class cooperation, neighborly relations in mixed towns, or even in the context of a joint struggle for peace. However, this perspective cannot, of course, negate separate research into either one of these societies, or even into a single aspect of one society. Every researcher is free to choose his or her field of study and to set its boundaries, provided the precise framework of the research is clearly presented to the reader. In this regard, I do not claim to provide in this book a comprehensive explanation for the conflict between Israel, the Arab countries, and the Palestinians. The book does not deal thoroughly with the occupation, which has already passed its first half century, nor does it offer a comprehensive and complete picture of Israel's wars. My essential objective is to explore, first, the way the Zionist Jews in Palestine, and later the Israelis, viewed their relations with the surrounding peoples; second, the way they translated such a view into practicalities; and third, the impact it has had on issues of peace and war.

Given this focus, it is clear that our subject here is Israeli society, and accordingly the book is based on sources relevant to that society.[9] As for the aspect of implicate relations, even Lockman (1996: 9–10) himself wrote that by trying to focus not on one or the other of the two communities in Palestine but rather on their mutually formative interactions, the very real specifics of their histories may be obscured. To this I add that such a concern certainly exists if the historical specificity is institutionalized and becomes an ideology that affects the long-term relations between the sides, a possibility that, as I claim in this book, has indeed occurred.

As happens on occasion, these two distinct theoretical approaches reflected contradictory political convictions. The dual approach implied the argument that the Zionists came to settle Palestine alongside the Arabs without any intention of harming them, as evidenced by their establishment of a separate society, whereas the basic assumption of the relational perspective was that the Zionists were colonialists who came to build one society at the expense of the other. In this book I do not attempt to lead the reader back to the politics that underlie the basic assumptions behind the dual society perspective. However, the book addresses the relational perspective by presenting a conundrum: If the relations are so implicate, why does this not lead the

two sides to influence each other in a way that leads to peace? And given that peace has not come—what are the reasons for this?

The argument that emerges in this book is that the past century has been dominated by a Zionist, and later on an Israeli, perception with a relatively fixed and uniform character concerning the conflict. This perception, which I term an ideology, is only marginally influenced by its Arab or Palestinian surroundings and did not include any consideration for their needs or wishes (a reality that, of course, merely reflects a special type of implicate relations). I then proceed to argue that this perception, and the way it was translated into practicalities, is one of the causes that prevent peace and lead to war.

As for colonialism, the idea that the Zionist project is actually one involving a colonialist settler society was manifested, for example, in the work of Gershon Shafir (1989). Shafir examined types of colonialism and identified Israel with "pure settlement colonies" of a particular type, based on the displacement of the "natives" from the labor market with no intention of annihilating them. Many other studies have depicted Israel as a colonialist society (see, for example, Rodinson, 1973; Nahla and Yuval-Davis, 1995; Pappe, 1995; Yiftachel, 1998; Shenhav, 2012; Mitchel, 2000; Yacobi and Shadar, 2014; Zureik, 2016). Some of these works argued that, as in other colonial examples, economic motivation and the quest for profit were also key factors in the Israeli-Zionist project and in its attitude toward the Palestinians. Arguments about the colonialist approach have sometimes touched on questions such as whether Zionism was colonialist in its intentions or solely in its outcomes (colonialism versus colonization). Another question was when it acquired this character—at the beginning of the project in the early twentieth century, or only after the occupation of the territories in 1967, with the confiscation of land and the exploitation of cheap Arab labor that followed (Ram, 1993).

As will become clear, I do not conclude, on the basis of my research findings, that the Zionists came to Palestine with the goal of living alongside the Arabs. They came to inherit what they saw as their homeland. Their awareness that they would have to fight the Arabs in order to achieve this was apparent at an earlier stage than many observers tend to suggest. However, had the roots of the conflict really lain in economic exploitation, as some exponents of the colonialist approach argue, we would surely expect that the conflict would have been resolved in a rational manner by now, through material compensation or some other compromise offering benefits to both sides. I argue that, while economics is important to understanding the conflict, it cannot be explained in a solely materialistic, deterministic manner.

Alongside "material interests," to use Max Weber's (1968) terminology, "ideal interests" must also be examined—and, as I explain in this book, these factors are long-standing. The colonialists of French Algeria and Rhodesia left because it was no longer "worth their while" to stay, given the opposition of the authentic indigenous residents of the country to their presence. The Zionists, however, show no sign of intending to abandon what they consider their land. Neither do they show any real willingness to compromise with the Palestinians. In the following, I try to answer several questions: Why does the conflict have such a violent form? Why does it periodically descend into war between the sides? Why does it persist to this day? The reason is partly based on the Zionist-Israelis' ideology, which was obviously translated into practicalities of domination and subordination.

I essentially present two components of the Israeli ideology—ethnic nationalism and militarism—that have accompanied the Israeli-Zionist project from its inception. I also discuss the impact of these components on the wars in which Israel has been involved and, in some cases, wars it initiated. First, it is necessary to briefly discuss the theoretical importance of these two concepts with regard to war.

### THE CAUSES OF WAR

War has formed part of human existence since the earliest times; some would doubtless claim that it is evidence of the inherent cruelty of "human nature."[10] Yet it is also a social project whose character and causes vary from one period to another, and accordingly it cannot be fully explained by such claims. Since the Enlightenment, there has been a tendency to explain war—which is universally abhorred as a cruel and murderous project—in rational terms. This approach portrays war as the product of a balanced decision, comparing the benefit that it will bring against the price of refraining from war (Howard, 1983: 22). Karl von Clausewitz (1993), who was considered the greatest military historian of the nineteenth century, saw war as "the continuation of politics by other means"—an action to be taken as the last resort when all other means have failed. Clausewitz regarded the state's leadership as rational, peace loving, and driven by the universal raison d'état, which is based on unity, proper governance, and an objective examination of the needs of society. To what extent is it true that states operate on such a logical basis; that the leadership is guided by wisdom, moderation, and caution; and that these are really the reasons why

wars are fought or avoided? The American historian Barbara Tuchman (1986), for example, who discussed the example of the Vietnam War, showed that these reasons were not always the driving force behind the decisions of leaders. Is it not possible that the state's "logic" sometimes reflects the private and utilitarian interests of certain individuals, at the expense of the interests of others and, sometimes, even at the expense of the interests of the majority?

Many researchers tend to regard the emergence of the modern state as a watershed in terms of the causes and even the character of war. Their approach is epitomized in the comment by the late American sociologist Charles Tilly (1985) that "war made the state and the state made war." This connection between the state and war was noted much earlier by German thinkers such as Heinrich von Treitschke, Otto Heinz, and Carl Schmitt, who saw politics as an arena of constant struggle in which the strong contender wins and is entitled to impose his will through the framework of the state, even by means of organized violence, coercion, and war. This was seen as particularly legitimate when the purpose was to advance goals serving the state and contributing to its greatness (Malesevic, 2010: 28–33). The state has indeed become the central political structure of the modern age, and war is its faithful companion. It is hardly surprising that, as Michael Mann (1993) showed, states during the formative period devoted most of their budget to the bottomless pit labeled "war expenses." No earlier political structure managed, whether directly or indirectly, to mobilize most of the population for war, as was achieved for the first time by the French state, whose leaders conceived of the notion of a compulsory army (the famous *levée en masse*), raised in response to the Prussian invasion of 1792. This mechanism was later replicated across Europe (Hayes, 1931).

As for the question of why humans agreed to fight in wars, the literature that seeks to explain wars from a rational standpoint, focusing on the state, suggests three key factors. First, soldiers were mobilized by coercion and had no choice in the matter. Second, soldiers received civil rights in return for their service. The more demanding and expensive the war, the more the state was obliged to offer additional rights, and even political representation, so that the soldier often became a civilian-soldier (Janowitz, 1978: 178–79). Third, states and their rulers used various manipulative means to recruit popular support for war, including the invention of the national factor and nationalist sentiment. These served to conceal their own narrow interests and to lead people to believe that they were fighting for the general good (Giddens, 1985; Tilly, 1994).

However, all these explanations are inadequate. If war was imposed on citizens, how can we explain the enthusiasm that seized those who were called to the flag? Similarly, the motivation to fight cannot be explained by reference to contractual relations or to rights that were realized only after the war—recruits had no way of knowing whether they would survive the war.[11] It is also difficult to accept the suggestion that leaders have such strong manipulative powers, and that recruits have such limited intelligence that they will accept the fiction of the "nation," and even be willing to die for it, without understanding that war is actually the product of the narrow interests of rulers. According to this approach, the emotional appeal is the justification for decisions made by the rational mind. By contrast, I present the opposite possibility: that the rational appeal is often a justification for wars made by the emotional mind.

Before I examine this hypothesis, note that the tendency to explain wars in rational terms, with the state at the center of the explanation, is still prevalent. This approach is evident in the so-called neorealist school, which continues to enjoy hegemony in the discipline of international relations. In its attempt to explain wars in their international context, this school emphasizes that the anarchic character of the international system not only has transformed states into an isolated and suspicious type of organization but also drives their quest for security or benefit in a hostile and unstable environment. To this end, states will do anything, including going to war, in order to protect their interests (Powell, 1994; Levy and Thompson, 2010: 28–54).

However, this approach, too, cannot offer a full explanation for wars, since the response of national leaders to reality is inevitably subjective. In some instances, leaders are aware that their nation is ready for war, capable of winning, and may even gain material or other benefits, yet nevertheless they refrain from launching war. Conversely, even when the anticipated price of war appears to be unreasonably high and victory is doubtful, some leaders still prefer to embark on war, even if they know they will not win.

How, then, can we define situations that increase or reduce the likelihood of war? For many years, the realist and neorealist approaches in international relations were challenged by the liberal approach. While the neorealist approach adhered to the Hobbesian assumption that only a balance of power based on deterrence can prevent the possibility of war and the anticipation of the benefit war will bring, liberal scholars tended to see the utilitarian consideration as offering an opening for reducing the threat of war—for example, by replacing war with trade and economic exchanges benefiting all sides

(Lamy, 2008: 124–41). However, even the casual observer will agree that the idea that economics supersedes and prevents war is not always seen in practice. The liberals also relied on the belief that if regimes become democratic, they will be less inclined to engage in war, certainly with each other, in accordance with the thesis of "pax democratica" (Russett, 1993). This theory, too, has not always proved correct. After all, in the past, it was capitalist, democratic, and liberal nations that did not hesitate to initiate colonial and imperialist wars against weaker nations on other continents, despite the fact that the latter did not pose any threat to them. Liberals also highlight the importance of international law and treaties as a buttress against violence, aggression, and war. Yet again, their argument appears to be based on a flimsy foundation. The problem is not that international laws are not exhaustive, but that their enforcement against states is very rarely possible. Lastly, the assumption that civil society will be able to block the tendency of states and their controlling elites to descend toward war—a belief that liberals have adhered to since the "eternal peace" of Immanuel Kant—has also failed to prove itself in many instances (MacMillan, 1998).

Both the neorealist and the liberal approaches take as their basic premise the idea that people, even in their organized settings, act rationally.[12] The problem with these theories is that they ignore the human tendency to organize around collective identities, such as ethnic, religious, or national groups, that stimulate emotions and influence actions, in a way that regards any compromise or bargaining as undesirable or even impossible.[13]

If the utilitarian explanations for war and peace were broadly valid, it would be reasonable to assume that we would live in a world with fewer wars and with less devastation and loss of lives. After all, it is far from certain that wars are worthwhile. In many cases, war may be a type of project in which all those involved lose out, to a lesser or greater degree. In the future, perhaps, philosophers may wonder how people could even have attempted to explain the most destructive and violent phenomenon of human relations in terms of rationalism and benefit.[14]

Accordingly, it is hardly surprising that not all scholars accept the utilitarian explanation for war. A prominent example is the British military historian John Keegan (1994), who argues that war is not the continuation of politics, nor even the continuation of economics, but rather the continuation of culture. Keegan was particularly critical of Clausewitz's unquestioning assumption that war is a purposeful act intended to realize goals that cannot be secured by peaceful means. He saw this as an excuse, rather than an

explanation, for war, and claimed that Clausewitz had wrapped war in a shroud of rationality in order to conceal its horrors. If war is indeed a manifestation of culture, we must then clarify what it is about a particular culture that invites war.

An example of the importance attached to culture can be found in works reflecting the so-called social constructivist approach adopted in this book. The social constructivists problematize social facts and explore how agents employ ideas, values, and ideologies to shape these facts. They also maintain that the rational approaches failed to address the source of the emergence of interests motivating the decision makers. For example, in international relations, they argued, this source was based not on the existence of a specific and essentially anarchic global system, as the neorealists claimed, but rather on a subjective interpretation of reality. As Alexander Wendt (1992) explained, "Anarchy is what states make of it." The constructivists in international relations also negated the objective character of the state's security needs (or so-called national security), which in their eyes is subject to social definition and institutionalized interpretation (Katzenstein, 1996). Some of these scholars referred to the "security culture" that provides the conceptual framework for the selection of strategic behavior. This culture was discussed by, for example, Jutta Weldes (1999) with regard to the missile crisis between the United States and Cuba in the 1960s, and by Michael Barnet (1999) with regard to the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Naturally, those who place cultural assumptions at the center of the discussion, or those who explain wars in their social context (Levy, 1998; Black, 1998) do not dismiss the importance of the considerations applied by leaders in the decision-making process. Neither do they necessarily reject the importance of differing interests as motivations for action. However, they argue that the interpretation of reality and the discretion that leads to war are determined and delineated primarily by these cultural assumptions, and that these assumptions force agents to strategize within cultural rules or cultural assumptions.[15]

In this book I explore the connection between culture and war through a case study of Israel. I examine the manner in which the subjective interpretations of reality, which I refer to as "ideology," are translated into a "facticity" that intensifies conflict and leads to war or at least increases the probability of war. Ideology is a particular way of presenting reality that embodies ideals and interests; it is connected to the structure of power and exerts a significant influence over reality. It is important to note that ideology is not synonymous with politics. Were the two concepts identical, we would find ourselves back

with the utilitarian perception of wars. Politics is the arena in which power relations affirm or challenge the existing order. Ideology addresses the manner in which these relations and this order are perceived and presented in value-based terms as positive or negative, and the way in which such evaluations shape reality.[16] In order to explain Israeli reality, which is dominated by multiple conflicts and wars, this book must meet a double challenge. First, it must show that the path that establishes the conflict and leads to war is not free of cultural assumptions. Second, it must explain how these assumptions are essentially ideologies that are translated into influential practicalities.

The approach I use is sometimes called path dependence. This is an approach that was born in the economy but which is also used by political scientists and historical sociologists. It undermines the well-known assumption that decision-making processes are undertaken with the rational judgment of leaders who objectively weigh reality and make decisions based on the given circumstances, in order to maximize profits. The approach of path dependence exposes the possibility that decisions are made on the basis of precedents and perceptions from the past, even if this past is no longer relevant and conditions have changed since then. Indeed, this book shows how decisions about going to war, and the fear of peace, are bounded by history and culture. Accordingly, there is a deterministic chain of events based on the ideology that supports military solutions when they come to fulfill the "will of the nation."[17]

In fact, I present two key ideologies of particular relevance for our subject: ethno-nationalism and militarism. What is it about each of these ideologies that exacerbates conflict, causes war, or increases the likelihood of war, while at the same time providing justification for it?

### ETHNO-NATIONALISM

It is difficult to discuss nationalism without thinking of Hans Kohn, who gained a reputation as a scholar in this field immediately after completing his doctoral thesis in law in 1923. Some two years later, Kohn emigrated to Palestine out of Zionist motives, though he soon became critical of the manner in which the Zionist idea was being implemented. As we will see, Kohn's critique constituted a response to the modes of action adopted by the Zionists during this period. For now, we will concentrate on one of the most important distinctions Kohn offered, drawing on the thought of the German

historian Friedrich Meinecke, between two types of nationalist phenomena. The first, "Western" or "liberal" nationalism, has also been termed "civil" or "nation-state" *(Staatsnation)* nationalism. The second is "Eastern," "ethnic," or "cultural" nationalism *(Kulturnation)*. The former type of nationalism is based on the values of enlightenment and the individual and collective liberty granted to individuals by virtue of their affiliation to the nation. According to this approach, affiliation with the nation is perceived as a voluntary matter, and national unity is based primarily on agreement among all the members of the nation regarding the principles that organize them within the framework of the state, by reference to their basic values, including liberty, equal opportunities, and recognition of the value of life. This nationalism was the product of two great revolutions—the French and the American—and Kohn noted that it was manifested in varying forms in England, France, the United States, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, among other countries.

The latter form of nationalism, Kohn argued, emerged east of the Rhine, in central and eastern Europe. Because of the particular circumstances prevailing in this region, nationalism here emphasized atavistic, tribal, and particularistic components and, thereby, became insular, exclusive, and hostile. This form of nationalism was based on the claim of a shared origin in terms of blood and ancestors, and on an ethnic communal affiliation rooted in an ancient culture distinguished by language, customs, and past traditions reflecting "the authentic spirit of the nation" (Kohn, 1961: 29–31, 45–46).

"Ethno-nationalism" often describes the allegedly unique character of the nation in binary terms, emphasizing the difference between "us," the members of the nation, and "them"—members of other national groups (Alter, 1994: 9–31). The focus on unique nationalism has often been accompanied by a motif of chosenness and superiority over other groups, as Anthony Smith (2010) and John Hutchinson (2017: 50–85) have shown in admirable depth. The concept of sanctity is central to the nationalist perception, so that even territory itself is regarded as sacred and indivisible. It is not a piece of land whose importance can be gauged according to objective factors, such as its productivity, the presence of natural resources, or strategic importance. Instead, it is literally the home-land, owned exclusively by the nation by virtue of history and, in some cases, by virtue of divine decree.[18] It is no coincidence that the Zionists spoke not of "migration" to the land they saw as their country, but rather of "aliyah"—literally *ascent*. This biblical term was used to refer to pilgrimages by Jews to the temple of ancient times. Similarly, the purchase of land from Arabs in Palestine was termed "the redemption of land."

In Western, or civil, nationalism, the state is based on universal principles and, accordingly, grants expression and rights to all its citizens. The concepts of state and nation effectively tessellate, as reflected in the concept of citizenship. In Eastern, or ethnic, nationalism, by contrast, the state manifests in varying ways the particularistic "will of the nation," to which all those who belong to the "right" ethnic group are subject. This privilege is, of course, denied to "others."

Kohn's typology has been adopted in varying forms, becoming an important distinction in the study of nationalism (Ignatieff, 1993). However, it has also been the subject of various criticisms, some of which focus on its claim to distinguish between types of nationalism on a geographical basis.[19] Critics have also suggested that Western, or civil, nationalism barely exists (e.g., Yack, 1999); conversely, the characteristics of the exclusive nationalism that Kohn placed in the East, including excessive patriotism, cruelty toward the other, xenophobia and racism, and feelings of superiority, can all also be found in the West.[20]

Many of the criticisms are justified. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two types of nationalism continues to serve as a cornerstone in the study of nationalism. Smith (2006: 174) rightly pointed out that ethnic and civil components are intertwined in the history of every nation. The prominence of one or the other of these components varies from one period to another, and states may move between the criteria of ethnic particularism, on the one hand, and civil universalism, on the other. Smith's claim is also consistent with the argument that these two criteria sometimes exist simultaneously within a given society, in some cases in a state of confrontation (e.g., Smooha, 2000; Kuzio, 2002; Muro and Quiroga, 2005). Both types of nationalism might better be regarded as "ideal types," to use Max Weber's phrase: models that do not exist in their pure form, but which can provide a useful yardstick for gauging reality. Moreover, since there is no society in which both criteria cannot be found together, we may examine the influence each has on the other at a given period in time or over the course of time. Such an examination may yield interesting conclusions regarding the connection between nationalism, war, and peace, as the Israeli example will demonstrate.

Even a cursory examination of the position of the two main schools in the study of nationalism—modernism and ethno-symbolism—regarding the connection between nationalism and war shows that neither school has explored this issue in depth.[21] This is a surprising finding for at least two reasons. First, in our conflicted world, ethnic and ethno-national conflicts

are both commonplace and virulent. Half of the nations of the world have experienced such conflicts since the end of the Second World War, and the number of those killed as a result is almost twenty million. This figure does not include the results of acts of genocide committed after wars by ethnic, racial, or religious groups (Gurr, 2000; Muller, 2008). Second, the theory of modernization, which dominated Western thought during the first half of the twentieth century, anticipated a decline in primordial elements such as religion, ethnicity, and ethno-nationalism and in their relevance for politics. It was assumed that these elements would be overshadowed by rational and secular thought, advancing the general good and even leading to the disappearance of wars (Apter, 1965). After all, what could be more rational than to pursue compromise and peace? This, however, did not happen. Critics of modernization began by arguing that modernity often manifests itself as a destructive force, as Zygmont Bauman (1989) has shown with regard to the Holocaust. Moreover, the rational and peace-loving pretensions of modernity have themselves often concealed ethnic, religious, traditional, and primordial components. While these components have sometimes lain dormant, they have also erupted—as, for example, between the two World Wars and following the end of the Cold War—in ancient hatreds, desires for revenge, and uncontrolled collective sentiments, creating fertile ground for war.[22]

The theory of modernization was also dominant for many years in the Israeli academic research writing about this state. Scholars such as Eisenstadt (1967), Perlmutter (1969), and Horowitz and Lissak (1978) depicted Israel as a country that was freeing itself from traditionalism, ethnicity, and religiosity, thereby evolving into a modern, Western, secular, liberal, pluralist, and democratic state, embodying everything that was absent in its surroundings.[23] These scholars were so consumed by their own theoretical and normative assumptions that they not only believed that the reasons for conflict and war could lie exclusively with the "others"—that is, with Israel's Arab neighbors—but also barely even stopped to examine the question. They thereby created what may be termed "the sociology of no-war," which tended to ignore the conflict and certainly not see it in the context of the Israeli society at large (Ben-Eliezer, 2017).

Returning to our discussion of the two main approaches to the study of nationalism: even when these scholars have examined the connection between the nonrational elements embedded within nationalism and wars, their explanations are far from convincing. The modernists reduce these elements to a form of elite manipulation that mobilizes the masses to support

wars that serve, not the needs of the people, but solely those of the leaders themselves (Hobsbawm, 2006: 115; Gagnon, 1994; Oberschall, 2000). However, this explanation is limited and cannot account for the powerful emotions prevalent among people from all levels of society that accompany nationalist wars (Smith, 2010: 60).

As for the ethno-symbolists, as presented, for example, by Smith (1981, 2003; 2010: 36–39), Mosse (1990), and Marvin and Ingle (1999), their claim is that war itself, and in many cases its accompanying rituals (such as memorial ceremonies for the fallen or military parades), fills a social function. It serves as a means for turning the members of the nation into a united and moral community. The nation thus effectively constitutes a type of secular religion, and the secular rituals associated with war, or even war itself, contribute to the continuity and reinforcement of this religion (Hutchinson, 2007, 2017; Hvithamar, Warburg, and Jacobsen, 2009). The problematic nature of the ethno-symbolic analysis lies in its assumption that "social needs," such as the need for unity, are objective and are not reduced to subjective interpretations and to politics around these interpretations. Second, while war may ultimately contribute to national strength and unity, this is not its cause. We must not forget, as well, that the ethno-symbolic analysis paints war in positive colors, ignoring the fact that it is the most violent and destructive phenomenon of human relations. The British historian Elie Kedourie (1993) accurately identified not only the force of nationalism but also its cruel and destructive character—not least in the Middle East. Walker Connor (1994: 28–66) was also right to point out that wars are just as responsible for nation destroying as for nation building. Andreas Wimmer (2006, 2013) sharply criticized the integrative approach of ethno-symbolist scholars, who misinterpreted exclusion as unification and ignored the potential for nationalism to cause death and destruction and to provide an ideological basis for one nation's control over another. While nationalism may include an element of human solidarity, through the definition of "us," this is accompanied by the denial of belonging and participation to "others."[24]

The potential of ethno-nationalism to lead to conflict and war is due to the cultural and political nature of the phenomenon and should not be reduced either to an instrumentalist and political analysis, on the one hand, or to a functionalist and cultural one, on the other.

As an aside, we should note that Kohn did not argue that ethno-nationalism per se causes conflict or war between nations. There are indeed examples, such as Scotland, French Canada, and even Catalonia, of ethnic groups that

are not involved in a violent conflict with the populations that surround them, despite a strong tendency to emphasize their cultural difference from their neighbors. However, when the national aspirations of different communities, which are of course associated with ownership and domination of a given territory, negate each other, a "zero-sum game" perspective may follow, according to which one party's gain is always at the expense of the other. As a result, nationalism may evolve from a purely self-liberating enterprise into a hegemonic one through conflicts and wars. In such situations, ideas of national exclusivity and superiority (a "chosen people"), and the perception of the nation's full, historical, and "natural" right to its territory, can easily serve to justify conflicts and wars. These concepts encourage the attribution of supremacy to one group over others and maximize the exploitation of the benefits and profits that such a situation can yield.[25]

## MILITARISM

Militarism is a multifaceted concept: it has no agreed-upon definition, and it is not always easy to disconnect it from specific historical examples and from its normative dimension. Though the term often has been associated most closely with Prussia, and later on with Nazi Germany, it was already in use in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the first use of the term can be found in an anti-Bonapartist slogan used by Republicans and socialists under the French Second Republic (Gillis, 1989; Trauschweizer, 2012).

The term "militarism" refers to a wide range of manifestations: aggressive foreign policy based on threatened and actual use of military force; a tendency for the military to intervene in civilian and political life and to influence social and political developments, in some cases through military coups or the establishment of a military regime; the mobilization of society and of economic resources for military goals; the formation of a large military, armed far beyond defensive or objective needs; a constant arms race; and a dominant ideology that lauds the military, military heroes, and past victories. A militaristic society encourages citizens to join the military and transforms military life and values into a model for society as a whole, including an emphasis on uniforms, military emblems, the carrying of weapons, the adoption of a hierarchical and authoritarian structure, and demands for obedience and discipline replicated from military life to the everyday civil sphere. Militarism can foster not only values such as courage and resourcefulness but