

## **Are Patriots Really More Patriotic Than Their Anti-Patriotic Rivals? Poking Into Patriotism Through the Israeli Case**

**Eyal Lewin**  
Haifa University, Israel

Patriotism is comprehended by its very definition as the active love for one's country. Anti-patriotism, it goes without saying, is just the opposite: a refusal of any sacrifice that might be demanded.

The Israeli case, however, enables us to study more deeply what patriotism and anti-patriotism is all about: the experience of wars and terror attacks bears an opportunity to inquire directly the various protagonists and to learn from first hand how patriotic the patriot really is and how anti-patriotic his opponent may be.

The analyses of numerous interviews with soldiers and combat veterans as well as the testimonies of pacifists and peace activists reveal a somewhat compound picture: some of the heroes who have excelled in warfare had not necessarily been motivated by loyalty to their country, whereas others, such as those who have refused to fulfill their duty as soldiers, had expressed a very patriotic inspiration.

Understanding the complexity that lies within the definition of patriotism versus anti-patriotism may be essential not only for enriching theory but also for the recognition of a phenomenon called “monopolization of patriotism”, where one of society’s most important resources might be politically exploited – and not necessarily for a good cause.

### **Ambush in Kalat Jabour**

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1999 an Israeli commando unit was patrolling silently deep beyond the enemy lines, near the Lebanese village of Kalat Jabour. After a few hours' advance they have reached their target: A small *wadi* where they were to set a trap for Hizbullah fighters moving in the area. The Israeli force was an elite unit, manned by officers and experienced soldiers.

Upon reaching the site where the ambush was to be set, First Sergeant Offer Sharon located himself at the head of the line where being a gunner he was to give cover when his commanders would advance in order to examine closely the surroundings. Major Eitan Balachsan, the commander, and Lieutenant Liraz Tito went down the *wadi* to make sure the place was safe and fit for the ambush.

It was one past midnight when all of a sudden a machine gun rattle ended the silence; First Sergeant Offer knew on the spot that the commanders in front of him had just been shot to death. He froze.

The deputy, Lieutenant David Granit, who had heard the shootings, called the commander, passed Offer, and went into the *wadi* where a battle between him and the Hizbullah fighters commenced. After a short while the deputy looked back to Offer and called for his help; but Offer dared not move.

Other soldiers, who had heard the deputy's call came closer and asked Offer where exactly their commander was engaged in battle. Offer pointed to where he himself wouldn't go. While his comrades descended the *wadi* and entered battle he stayed behind.

The Hizbullah fighters retreated, but Deputy David Granit who had charged into battle following his commander was killed. Five more soldiers, who had followed the deputy's call for help were injured. Offer Sharon, for his part, explained his reactions in the words: "I knew that charging into battle would be getting killed in a stupid war." Lieutenant David Granit the deputy was awarded an honorary medal for his bravery.

Certainly the commanders of this commando unit have proved leadership that the Israeli army can be very proud of. Indeed the courage and willingness of soldiers as well as officers to risk their very lives, to support each other and continue to fight under storms of bullets is a part of a long heritage of Israeli combat history. However, notwithstanding the true heroism of the three dead officers, is First Sergeant Offer Sharon really the prototype of an anti-patriot?

In a way Offer Sharon was not alone. Many other anti-patriots had long before him cursed their government, mocked its policy, refused military service and declared pacifism. Were all of them anti-patriots?

## Defining Patriotism

The lexical definition of patriotism concerns the love for one's country and the readiness to defend it. Indeed this readiness for action is the loyalty that most researchers find to be patriotism's most significant quality. It is this loyalty that keeps social power as an essential force in our world (Oldenquist 1982). These social loyalties of ours are stronger than many other moral ideas, and no wonder that due to their existence we may be willing to sacrifice and donate beyond any calculated logic (Oldenquist 1982).

As for other characters of patriotism - there is a large variation in literature. Even the basic object of the patriotic love, namely - one's country, is controversial and due to multiple interpretations. Poking into patriotism's in-depth meanings may enable us to focus on a clearer phenomenon:

## **The Object of Loyalty**

When speaking of love for one's country there is a general agreement that the term in use does not necessarily aim to its geographical meaning but rather a description of loyalty towards a political entity and its inhabitants (Primoratz 2002). This patriotic love of a civil group is not a humanitarian love for mankind, but rather affection towards those who originate from the specific group to which one belongs even there being no prior personal acquaintance with them. Mutually belonging to the same social group is thus at the core of patriotic loyalty. However, belonging has nothing to do with personal friendship: the patriot is committed to his people no matter how many of them he really knows, and he is likely to know in person very few of them. The patriotic loyalty, therefore, is something that goes beyond personal connections - it has to do with a strong feeling of community ties (Primoratz 2002).

Other definitions expand the meaning of patriotism even further, relating to it one's loyalty to ideas, principles or various truths that characterize his homeland. A commitment for a certain way of life and the values it carries with it may be a good example for such an outline of patriotism (Viroli 1995). Another set of definitions enlarges the scope of patriotism's object and describes it as loyalty towards ideals that are far beyond one's country of origin. These definitions are focused on those specific ideals, such as the commitment to a constitution that forms a constitutional patriotism, later to be discussed.

## **Belongingness**

The patriot does not only like his country but he also feels belongingness. A passing tourist who has seen the country and its people may decide that he likes it, but it is the feeling of belonging to this country that differs between such a tourist and a patriot (Ben-Amos and Bar-Tal 2004).

It is important to notice that patriotic belonging is a matter of free choice: the patriot decides to adapt a social group to which he feels he belongs not necessarily because he has been born into that group but rather because he consciously wants to become part of it. Such was the case, for example, when Lafayette volunteered to help the American colonies in their struggle for independence or when Hemingway and others joined the international brigades during the civil war in Spain (Tamir 1997).

### **The Extent of Loyalty**

Patriotism is referred to as an obsessive commitment, devotion without boundaries (Tamir 1997). This comprehension of blind patriotism draws from the traditional approach according to which when war breaks out one's logic is to be postponed until fighting is over (Somerville 1981). This is what Stephen Decatur's famous statement from early nineteenth century was all about; as an American naval officer he declared: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong!" (Somerville 1981).

### **The Patriotic Activity**

Just feeling love for one's country is not sufficient; the patriot is expected not only to hold affections towards his country and his fellow countrymen but also to act accordingly. More precisely patriotism is the manner in which one expresses his care for the beloved country in doing more than is usually expected or common (Primoratz 2002). Surely participating in warfare has always been the ultimate demonstration of patriotism. The image that automatically comes to mind when speaking of a patriot is the man at arms willing to risk his life at the battlefield (Somerville, 1981). Yet history has also provided every nation with circumstances for non military patriotism, such as the hardship of pioneers or the struggle against nature hazards. In all cases the patriot is the one who is willing to pay any price, even to sacrifice his life if necessary, for the sake of the patriotic cause.

### **Intention**

Patriotic activity, even when it involves personal sacrifice, can not be counted as patriotism unless it is motivated by anxiety for a shared public good. Soldiers of The French Foreign Legion, for example, may risk their life in combat, and yet shall never be considered French patriots (Tamir 1997). It is the intention that counts, not just the deed.

Having mentioned only a few of patriotism's definitions relating to some of its characteristics, one should bear in mind that there are different types of patriotism:

### **National Patriotism**

Following one approach there is practically no difference between nationalism and patriotism. Patriotism, according to this approach, is at the very least nationalism's

bloody sister (Schaar 1981). This comprehension of patriotism is rooted in understanding its connections as primordial; the ideological framing, the collective hopes and fears, the way the future is envisaged - it all comes down to the territorial and historical mutual origins of the patriot and his compatriots (Schaar 1981).

A contradicting approach refers to patriotism and nationalism as two separate sets of values. According to this concept, the basic difference between the two is that national love for one's country is to be considered as an exclusive one whereas patriotic love is inclusive (Viroli 1995). Charles De Gaul is quoted as having said that "patriotism means that the love towards one's countrymen comes first; Nationalism means that the hatred to others comes first" (Poper 2004: 195).

### **Republican Patriotism**

Republican patriotism is patriotism of freedom. It is as particularistic as nationalism and communitarianism may be, but unlike them it gives priority to the devotion to an idea and to loyalty to a group of people who are carriers of that idea (Viroli 1995). Republican patriotism takes it that the patriot ought to be thankful to his legacy, he ought to be grateful to his country, to his people, to his language, to his memories, to his gods - all of them had outlined his identity (Schaar 1981). All this emerges out of the republican concept according to which we are in moral debt towards our country, having received from this country our education, our basic beliefs, and if lucky - our rights for freedom. Patriotism in the republican context is therefore a moral virtue of civil obligation to serve the community (Viroli 1995). An expansion of this civil obligation is the manner in which the republican patriot acts once his country is involved in any wrongdoings: He does not turn away, neither does he desert a society to which he always keeps his loyalty; he feels disrespect towards his country for having committed unjust actions, but he shall not forsake it. Republican patriotism, hence, means sharing the shame of one's country, had it acted immorally, though not necessarily sharing its guilt (Weil 1952; Viroli 1995).

### **Religious Patriotism**

Even though religious patriotism is often identified with religious nationalism, the backbone of the religious patriot's activity is mainly religious. Religion, of course, does not necessarily contradict the secular law, but it has its own obligatory sets of rules (Yagil and Rattner 2002).

Because of religion's power to arise deep loyalty among worshipers, there are many cases in which it is manipulated by leaders who hold secular objectives.

Those leaders sometimes exploit the religious ability to mobilize social resources and they do so by interweaving religious loyalties and national loyalties together into the form of religious patriotism (Rapoport 1991).

### **Constitutional Patriotism**

As mentioned earlier, some definitions relate to patriotism the loyalty to an ideal or to a set of principles that are connected in one way or another with the country to which the patriot belongs (Primoratz 2002; Viroli 1995). One definition of this sort is the covenanted patriotism that is related to Americans. According to the understanding of covenant patriotism, the very birth of the American nation was due to a collective obligation towards ideas that the Americans have taken upon themselves to lead all over the world. The nation that evolved from 1776 devoted itself to the ideas of freedom and equality that had been embedded in the visions of Lincoln and the founding fathers (Schaar 1981).

This concept is very likely to have been what Jürgen Habermas had in mind when he first spoke of the constitutional patriotism. constitutional patriotism aims at loyalty to a community, or a people, that have consciously and purposely defined themselves as such, out of identification with abstract principles that had been interpreted into an agreed upon set of binding rules (Markell 2000). The essence of constitutional patriotism is therefore a citizen's willingness to act, and in some cases – to sacrifice, for the sake of a fair and just implication of the country's leading moral laws and principles. Such was the case when in 1992 hundreds of thousands of German citizens marched holding torches through the streets of Hamburg, Berlin, Nuremberg and Frankfurt, demonstrating against their government's indeterminate policy and hesitant reactions towards violence against foreigners (Hirschman 1994; Markell 2000).

### **Patriotism: The Israeli Case**

Empirically, regarding Israel as a case study has some important advantages. In fact, Israeli society has been extensively going through certain processes that make it almost a living laboratory: Technological development, changes towards a capitalistic market, large scale absorption of immigrants and a constant war involving all layers of society – all these bear the capacity to turn the empirical findings and conclusions into basic data for further comparative studies (Rebhun & Waxman, 2003). Inquiring the Israeli case, this study refers to patriotism as a phenomenon that combines religious patriotism which is considered to have been the building block of Jewish society since ancient times together with national

patriotism, the origins of which are to be found in the emergence of Zionism within Jewish society since late nineteenth century.

As mentioned before, as far as war affairs are concerned, patriotism is supposed to be blind devotion, unconditional love, willingness to fulfill any duty and at the same time rejection of any logic. Yet examining Israeli war heroes' testimonies reveals not only different forms of motivation but also some very logical -sometimes even egocentric - thoughts.

Shay, a soldier of the October 1973 War expresses it in a general saying (Liblich 1988: 244): "In high school we often had the feeling of an important mission to fulfill. But when you grow up and experience war, and also in peace times, the thoughts of an important mission are gone."

Amir Tal, who has served as a fighter in a tank during the 1982 war in Lebanon puts it this way (Gal and Hamerman 2002: 59):

[...] All I knew was that I wanted to survive. I had been brought up on the Yom Kippur war legacy, where many soldiers were burnt to death in their tanks. That was my nightmare - to burn inside the tank. I was ready all the time for the moment when I might need to put out the fire. I kept thinking about the fire extinguishers and where exactly they were located. This was what really kept my mind busy - survival. I admit that I was thinking most of the time about my personal survival.

And yet beyond personal survival, Amir Tal - like many other soldiers participating in various battles - charged towards the enemy without hesitation. It is for us to find out why they did so.

If patriotism is not only sacrificing one's life for the sake of sacrifice, but rather giving priority to a general good (Tamir 1997), some Israeli patriots fail to live up with these definitions. The reasons to going into battle are often far away from any true patriotic comprehension. Offer Braver, an infantry officer during the 1982 war, indicates this in his testimony. Offer had not been intended to take part in the war, so he did so out of his own free choice (Gal and Hamerman, 2002:37):

[...] I joined a supply unit that carried food and I entered Lebanon with them. Actually, I went to war voluntarily.  
[...] I had no unit [...], I had had a quarrel with my commander and he wanted to throw me out of the squad, so I was sent home until he would decide where to post me.

[...] I woke up Sunday morning and found out that there was a war going on out there. I couldn't stand the thought of being left out. The situation of a war going on without me taking part in it was unthinkable; I have been waiting so much for war, for something to happen.

It seems that the urge to take part in war because war is something else, something huge, that one ought to experience at first hand, is typical not only for the young soldiers of the 1982 battlefield but also for their elder brothers from 1973. Moti Aviam, a tank commander in military division 188 that was almost wiped out during the October 1973 War, expresses similar feelings (Aviam 2004):

[... After the war started] we were doing routine activity as an auxiliary force. I wanted so much that something would happen that we would have to start firing at the Syrians again... I had asked to be posted at division 188 in order to fight. They wanted to send me to officer's course, but I preferred to be a tank commander. I told them I have no intention to shoot barrels [as in drills - E.L.], and requested to serve in the only division that had fighting opportunities those days. But since I had arrived nothing happened. I felt like I had brought some bad luck with me. Several weeks before my arrival the last battle with the Syrians took place, and now all we could do was shoot barrels...

A clearer feeling of some self fulfillment through warfare can be found in Etai Shilony's statement. Etai was a young lieutenant commanding an infantry platoon in Lebanon. His description of the first days of the 1982 war has it all (Shiloni 1986:8):

I wanted so much to take part in this war. We all did [...]. There was a tremendous excitement towards a first war. My father had attended two or three wars, everyone else [in my family] did. [...] I wanted my share. The excitement was overwhelming. [There was] also fear, definitely fear. But excitement more than anything else. I wanted to be there when it happens, and I wanted it to happen. I was mentally and physically ready for it. I felt like I had a good platoon, good soldiers to command over. I was ready to fight the enemy, I was ready to fight.

Perhaps Uri Schwartzman, a sergeant during the 1982 warfare, gives it a more vivid dimension (Gal and Hamerman 2002:29):



[...] My opinions were leftist and in my mind I was against this war. But emotionally I was just like any other adolescent: war had washed me with excitement; there was even a sense of euphoria. All the hormones were storming inside me. There was curiosity towards an experience so different from any that I had ever known. This expectation was swelling by the minute as we entered this enormous experience of military force in motion. Your private ego disappears into a collective one from which you draw new forces [...].

Yet prudence should prevent us from concluding that courage has originated only in hormones, quoting sergeant Schwartzman, or that bravery was solely the result of emotions evoked by the large military forces. After having gone into war the soldiers met its uglier face, where mortar shells and bullets had torn people into pieces. In combat, where attacking and storming was so dangerous, they proved bravery and demonstrated heroism, leaving us with the basic unanswered question: why?

Researchers have indicated that the object of patriotic loyalty is a community to which the patriot belongs without personally knowing its members (Primoratz 2002). Searching for such devotion for a people in its almost metaphysical dimension can indeed be found in a testimony given by Offer Segal who as a reserves' officer commanded a platoon in Genin in 2002. During the action in Genin many of the paratroopers of this unit were killed.

Offer Segal describes his feelings when traveling from home to his unit, which had been called into action after several deadly terrorist attacks (Segal Az Caariel 2006:10):

[...] I come from a capital city that has become a ghost town, people unwilling to leave their houses unless they have to. So how do I feel? I feel like I am going to defend Jerusalem, to defend home.

[...] I felt something in the air and it was ever so strong [...] I had a feeling of destiny like I had never experienced. Yoram, the company commander said "let's pray together that at the end of the fighting we shall all be here alive". I felt shivery when I thought of the meaning of what he was saying. This was not one more drill, this was fighting itself! I realized there was a high probability that some of us, me included, might never come back.

[...] I gathered my platoon. We stood together embracing each other. I spoke to them and said: "They are killing us daily, they murder innocent citizens, women and children, and they have paralyzed our state [...] it's time we fought back.

The feeling of a mission to be completed can certainly be located in other testimonies belonging to other wars. Such is the one given by Moti Golan who had experienced the 1982 war as a reserves' infantry first sergeant (Gal and Hamerman 2002: 83):

As for myself, if there is no other choice, also today, in spite of my war traumas, I would go to war. The target was clear, and if I lived in a bombarded city in the north I would expect that this operation would take place for me. There was a large arsenal of weapons in Lebanon. Had we not taken care of this threat they would have torn apart the whole northern region of our country, maybe even more than that.

Reading Moti Golan's testimony, we should have no doubt that we are dealing with a soldier who genuinely feels that he is protecting with his body the northern region of Israel. Alas it is exactly this very feeling in which Moti Golan differs from so many other soldiers who had given their accounts of personal feelings before and during battles. Poking into testimonies raises evidence that the soldiers' brave actions are often dictated by immediate personal friendship and not by the thought of the large community that surrounds them. One monumental account is given by Shay, who participated as a soldier in the October 1973 war (Liblich 1988: 244):

[...] The fighters, my friends in the regiment, are something far more meaningful than any ideology. When you live together with several more people inside a tank you become a cohesive group. And when you fight, you test your behavior according to the norms of this group and certainly not according to any general set of values. What [we are fighting] for is a totally tasteless question once you are under enemy fire.

[...] What exists is only loyalty to your group, to your regiment, and maybe through them to the rest of the army. I think that if my unit was hit and no one survived, or if the unit was dismantled for any reason, and if I was to be posted with soldiers I didn't know, as a soldier – not as their commander, I would be probably tempted to step aside and cease fighting. Maybe I would even enter a state of shock, which to me is just the same. The army fights the way it fights not because of the feeling of a mission or the loyalty to a cause, but because of the brotherhood within the small units. The more cohesive the unit is the better the ability they can demonstrate once they are in combat. A sense of mission or moral

values may exist at some Meta level but they have nothing to do with what bothers the soldier when fighting takes place.

The close friendship factor as an explanation for what we might often interpret mistakenly as patriotism can also be traced in the testimonies of participants in later wars, such as 1982, where first sergeant Yuval Banay took part as an artillery soldier. He tells his story (Gal and Hamerman 2002: 69):

My father [Yossi Banay, a well known Israeli singer – E.L.] wrote letters; spoke with anyone that he had ever known, urging them to take me out [of Lebanon]. [...] One day the commander came to me and said: Yuval Banay, I have a letter from the chief of staff ordering me to send you home. I said no, I am not going home, you might as well forget all about it. And I stayed; I didn't leave Bachamdoun [...].  
[...] my mother is a left activist, she has gone through all the demonstrations, and she is in "peace now" and "women in black" and all. But she had no chance of convincing me, because my obligation to my fellow soldiers was so much stronger: could I have possibly gone home when they were staying in Lebanon?!

Yehuda Meltzer, an activist who opposed the war in Lebanon from its very beginning, writes an open letter to other left wing activists who totally agreed with him but preferred to obey orders, to cooperate with army authorities and to go to war (Meltzer 1989):

[...] It is time to tell [you]: You have gone to war because there was a call of duty, but it was not the government behind this call of duty, nor was it the shirkers whom you despise. Behind the call of duty stood a force you have always obeyed: the friends.  
[...] All of you, all of you went to combat because you couldn't refuse your friends. This is the basic truth that every normal reserves' soldier knows: the call of duty is the call of the friends. Sure, there is also the threat of prison, but the great problem is the friends: What shall I tell them? How shall I look them in the eye?  
[...] "Peace now" activists did not have the courage to step aside, to pose themselves where everyone would look at them scornfully.  
[...] They did not have] the courage for non- conformism when conformism meant committing crimes.

Getting back to those who did fight enables us to trace numerous indications that confirm Meltzer's thesis. Shuky Yeshuv, a paratrooper, first sergeant in his reserves' military service in 1982, puts it this way (Gal and Hamerman 2002:54):

I insisted that I would not enter Beirut. But I didn't want my refusal to hurt my friends. The brotherhood was so strong, the feeling of belonging so powerful, that crossing this borderline and opposing your fellow soldiers was too hard. I loved the soldiers [in my unit], so I found it easier to let things go.

And yet again, perhaps all this is merely speculative? Perhaps the patriot's action in combat is nothing more than mechanic? Couldn't it be that bravery is all about technical execution of skills that had been acquired through drills and exercises? Perhaps heroism is no more than a successful accomplishment of repetitive practices? It is this question that leads us once again to Moti Aviam, the tank commander from Division 188 in the October 1973 War (Aviam 2004):

[...] Unknowingly, my mind made me press the button. I have become a war machine. My brain thought in terms of a tank engine, cannon, and a gun's sight. [...] Some commanders have already realized at this point that we were actually in war. Others have heard about it in the radio. But I did not understand [that this was war] until I woke up in hospital. I did not stop to think, I just acted. I gave orders, I pressed buttons, I shot, I calculated ranges for our next shots, and did so over and over again.

Jewish history draws a heroic line of legacy symbolized by the famous words of Yossef Trumpeldor, who had been shot in battle; moments before he died he whispered "never mind, it's good to die for our country". But could it be that the heroic patriot has simply no other choice? Moti Aviam's hard moments during the October 1973 War illustrate how sometimes the willingness to make a final act of sacrifice is when all other options simply cease to exist. Aviam tells of the moments when together with other soldiers he was trapped in a bunker, surrounded by Syrian soldiers, practically awaiting death (Aviam 2004):

[...] Menachem suggested that someone would go out and surrender. I remember someone getting up, taking off his undershirt, and going out. After a while we heard them shooting him. We figured that the Syrians were not going to take prisoners of war. It was obvious that they were

going to enter the bunker and kill us all. That was the very end. We knew that we were about to be shot in our heads or butchered with knives.

[...] Menachem said that everyone should take a hand grenade and pull the safety catch. When the Syrians come he would give an order and we should blow ourselves up together with them. This made sense; it was better to die this way, shortly and without pain.

[...] A long time had passed before Menachem said “they are not coming in. Everyone has to look for his safety catch”. And so, in a tiny room where wounded soldiers were laying one on top of another we had to cast about in order to find the safety catches.

What, then, turns a patriot into being what we consider a patriot? It is true that some warriors speak about true love for their country; however, other testimonies bear different insights to this issue. Some testify that it was adolescent excitement, others point out the tremendous effect of becoming one with the gigantic military force in motion. Some suggest that military repetitive practices were all it took, and others speak of there practically being no other choice. There is a large portion of testimonies that indicate that submission to the collective norms and fear from the social price of non-conformism was by and large the motivation that drove them to battlefields. All this indicates that many frontline soldiers did not really match the essential definition of what a patriot may be.

### **Israeli Anti-Patriots**

Once World War II was over, American pragmatism has won over the ideologies of modern Europe. Individualistic liberalism that promoted the American free market concepts was totally different from classical European liberalism: The new pragmatic neo-liberalism neglected the burden of heritage and gave top priority to the practical future (Schweid 1996). At the very center of this neo-liberalism stood the autonomous right of every man for himself. Every individual has his moral legitimate right to strive to personal happiness. The common good takes priority in this scheme only when ensuring conditions for the personal prosperity is at stake (Ibid).

The result of this prevailing orientation is that belonging to a moral historic community has changed into belonging to a universal functional society. National heritage has turned from a moral value to an undesired difficulty, and the individual living his present life has shoved aside the collective cohesive public (Ibid). This in a nutshell is a very superficial description of some of the tendencies that had taken place also in Israeli society during the past two or three decades.

Even though there has been draft resistance in Israel as early as the fifties, the phenomenon became far more widespread as years went by, especially after the war in Lebanon. Disobedience in its core is considered to be strongly connected with the rise of an individualistic ethos that stands in contrast with the conformism that characterizes military service (Epstein 1999).

Objectors have always been thought of as a negative factor that threatened to tear society apart. Disobedience to a law that had been designed to mobilize social resources for collective good is considered the opposite of patriotism. If the ultimate image of the patriot is the soldier storming towards danger in order to save the nation from its enemies, then the draft objector is the exact negative of such image. Objecting draft means harming the war effort. Therefore, whereas the patriot is the nation's savior the objector is conceived of as close as possible to being the nation's enemy (Epstein 1999).

On the other hand, researchers have pointed out that participating in warfare is only one form of sacrifice for one's country and certainly not the only one. The militaristic patriot may not necessarily be the only patriot in town, as indeed is reflected from some of the objectors' testimonies. Indeed the objectors refuse to take the easy way out even when such a possibility is at hand. Such was Avner Wishnitzer's experience once he has informed the army that he would refuse to fulfill military service in occupied territories (Wishnitzer 2004):

[...] From being totally anonymous you are all of a sudden in the midst of a personal attack by half the state. We were called cowards, defectors, traitors, Nazis, and a whole lot of other names. We got letters by mail threatening us and our families. [...] It is hard to imagine. There I was, suddenly, naked in the town square, with everyone having something to say about me – starting from Ehud Barak and Sharon [Israel's leaders at the time – E.L.], going on to Boggy [IDF's chief of staff – E.L.] and Mofaz [Israel's defense minister – E.L.], and then people just everywhere and especially people in the media. And I am on my own against the rest of the world!

Wishnitzer and some of his friends served, first as young fighters and then as reserves' soldiers, in a top elite commando unit that for decades stood as the living myth of Israeli heroism. Having announced their objection to serve in the controversial territories they were dismissed from that unit never to be called to service again.

Chagay Mattar and four of his friends have experienced more hardships than these; some of them were imprisoned for years. A striking fact is that there

had been an easy way out; sitting in jail could have easily been evaded (Mattar 2004):

[...] the possibility of being dismissed by the military psychiatrist is a great temptation. About 40% of the conscripts do that and go home, work, study, go abroad... Wouldn't it be splendid? [...] And yet we insisted on having it the hard way. Why? Why would five young people sacrifice so much? Why did we agree to sit two years in jail, to have the hard time of our lives, instead of just meeting the psychiatrist and letting go? Why? [...] Because we felt we had responsibility, we were committed [...] we felt like we had an obligation to reflect to the Israeli society a reality that people were unaware of. We were offering an alternative route. It was important to try and make a change.

[...] Of course it wasn't easy. It was very hard to go against social conventions. It was hard to promote the suggestion that we would fulfill an alternative service instead of the military one. It was hard to recognize how the army did not really care about society; they would rather have us waste our time in jail. It was hard to manage a trial while we were imprisoned, and to give testimonies day by day about the occupation, about the way society had been corrupted [by the occupation], about our conscience [...] it was ever so hard to sit in jail for a whole two years!

Yonatan Shapira, a reserves' chopper pilot, had signed a letter written by a group of pilots who refused to fulfill immoral missions. He was immediately dismissed from his squadron. The extent to which dismissal from a squadron is a hard punishment is by no means a matter for subjective judgment. However, taking a close look at Shapira's testimony one cannot but be impressed with the intentions and deeds that fit so well into patriotism's criteria (Shapira 2004):

[...] I have seen a lot of blood during my last days in the squadron. Taking commando units into West Bank cities I flew the vehicle with which the wounded were taken to hospitals. Soldiers, civilians, sometimes children [...]. At times we would let them off at the hospital, clean the chopper's floor from blood, and go back to fetch some more.

[...] Recently I have volunteered to work with an organization that helps new immigrants who had been injured in terror attacks. I spent time helping them recover, instructing families who had lost their dear ones and orphans. There are so many circles of pain and grief, like a stone that is thrown into the water leaving endless vibrations... pain, anger, distress, sorrow...

[...] So there is no doubt that terror has to be fought against, and if I had to kill a suicide bomber on his way to kill people I would do it even if it meant giving my own life. I would do it wholeheartedly knowing I was saving lives. But that is exactly what we were not doing [in West Bank and Gaza].

The object of patriotism as reflected by most researchers is the country; not by its geographical meaning but rather by its essence as a political unit where a certain community leads its civil life (Prinoratz 2002). Indeed the objectors' testimonies demonstrate loyalty towards Israeli society and deep feelings of a chosen belonging to this society. Avner Wishnitzer describes a struggle for the very sake of the Israeli people (Wishnitzer 2004):

[...] I do not deny the rule of law and if I am thrown to jail like many other objectors I will be willing to pay the price. I also hope that the public debate this will cause will evoke discussion about the values I believe Israeli society should hold.

Yoav Hess, a man in his forties after decades of reserves' military service, puts it this way (Hess and Hadad 2004):

[...] First of all let me tell you that I am just as Zionist as anyone else. Discriminating other people is anti-Zionism. In the declaration of independence it was very clearly stated that equality should be established no matter what religion, race or gender one belonged to.

[...] My Zionism means also accomplishing equality amongst all the people who live in my country. Now if someone thinks that this is no Zionism – he is the one who has a problem. I would define him as a racist.

[...] I define myself as a Zionist who believes that the Jewish people deserve a homeland just like any other people, including the Palestinians. No matter what I decide to do – it will always be meant for the good of my people and for the good of my country.

Yonatan Shapira, the dismissed chopper pilot, expresses his belonging to Israeli society as a destiny (Shapira 2004):

[...] When my country is like a plane diving towards the ground I have three choices: I can abandon... I can continue flying to death... and I can



hold the stick with all the power that I have so as to avoid the crash. And we are now on our way to crash.

Patriotism is often referred to as loyalty to ideas that go beyond the boundaries of the patriot's country (Primoratz 2002). Such is the case of Avner Wishnitzer as reflected in his testimony (Wishnitzer 2004):

[...] I am going to act according to rules that have always guided me. These are the rules that are accepted in a liberal democracy, and I hope these will be the rules according to which the struggle for our society's values shall be lead. Unfortunately I am not sure about the results, but I am most definitely sure that the struggle must continue. Our means ought to be non violent ones. We should encourage people to think, to look in the mirror and to wonder whether or not the reflection appeals to them.

Yoav Hess too focuses his objection in a moral dimension (Hess and Hadad 2004):

[...] I am a selective objector, who thinks we do not have the privilege to be pacifists because of the threat on our very existence. I'd love to be a pacifist if only I could afford it. But struggling for existence does not give us any right to be war criminals. Leading a just war gives us no excuse for atrocities. This is where I draw the red line.

Dr. Ygal Shohat is a reserves' colonel and an ex-pilot. In 1970 his plane was shot down and he became prisoner of war in Egypt where his foot was cut off. Nowadays Shohat is a medical doctor who has joined an organization of doctors who promote human rights. The objection Shohat preaches for is one of moral conscience (Shohat 2002):

I think that tearing down houses just because they are in somebody's way is an immoral military action. I am no lawyer and I am in no position to determine what is legal and what is illegal, even though I have reason to believe that the law does not allow these acts. However, the question when an order is to be disobeyed is a personal one. One cannot just wait for the judges to decide, because by the time they do so it will already have been too late.

[...] Some people have no moral problems, not even when murder takes place. Others, like me, experience moral thoughts only once they grow old. When I was a young pilot I never stopped to think things over – I did

what I was told to do. Today I understand things differently and I believe one ought to disobey any order he suspects to be of an immoral nature.

Studying what the objectors say encounters us with a group of Israelis who are not in the least less patriotic than others who fight the wars. Actually in some of the cases we may be referring to almost the same people: Yesterday's warriors have become today's objectors. The patriotic character of this group makes them just as patriotic as their fellow soldiers, perhaps even more.

### **Monopolization of Patriotism**

So far we have dealt with the characters of patriotism that enable us as researchers to inquire into the extent to which certain chosen protagonists are – or are not – patriotic. However, in day to day life the decision who is a patriot and who is not is no matter for social research but rather a matter of living up to society's norms. At any given time it is society itself that dictates what should be considered patriotism, and it does so disregarding any social research. The result is that yesterday's enemies of the people might very well be today's heroes, and vice versa. The decision whether the real patriots were the generals leading the Wehrmacht into useless wars or rather Count Claus Von Stauffenberg who planted a bomb under the Führer's chair was a decision that has changed over time. This decision was bound to change by circumstances and most of all by the manner in which these circumstances were intentionally interpreted by social protagonists.

It is leaders and groups of society that tend to use the strategy of monopolization of patriotism: defining who exactly is the patriot and who should be considered an anti-patriot. This deliberately established typology has often nothing to do with the above mentioned criteria that had been drawn out of scientific research. It has undesirable results, mainly for those who are declared anti-patriots: Being an anti-patriot, especially in times of war, is considered next to being a traitor. Monopolization of patriotism, therefore, is a means of delegitimation of political opponents (Oren and Bar-Tal 2004). Indeed monopolization of patriotism is intended to draw the lines between the people and those who seek to harm them, the enemies from within. Defining anti-patriots is often intertwined with holding them as responsible for all the nation's miseries (Ibid).

Israeli government, right or left, has always used this strategy. During the eighties, "Peace Now" activists were declared traitors and were spoken of as a symbol for defeatism. Ytshak Shamir in his days as foreign minister declared that "Peace Now" demonstrations strengthened the PLO and prevented the terrorists' leadership from agreeing to evacuate Beirut (Maariv, July 16<sup>th</sup> 1982).

Monopolization of patriotism may have disastrous effects. On February 10<sup>th</sup> 1983 Emil Gruntzweig was killed in a demonstration condemning the war in Lebanon. Yona Avrushmy, the assassinator who had thrown the deadly grenade at the demonstrators, admitted that he had been motivated by a deep anger at traitors (Oren and Bar-Tal 2004).

A decade later it was Israeli right wing groups' turn to become the victims of monopolization of patriotism. In his speech in the Labor Party convention Prime Minister Ytzhak Rabin put it this way (Haaretz, July 4<sup>th</sup> 1994):

[The settlers] are abandoning their villages, their children and women, and leave the burden of securing their lives to the IDF forces. I regret to see thousands of them in Jerusalem [in demonstrations]. It would have been better for them had they established a partnership with the security forces in order to take care of their families and children.

[...] The settlers of Judea and Samaria do not share the same qualities of responsibility as the northern border inhabitants. Let the settlers of Judea and Samaria learn from the people who live next to the Lebanese border how cooperation with the IDF should be handled.

Referring to his right wing opponents, Rabin used the following words (ibid):

[...] The extreme Moslem organizations, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, [who] oppose the [Oslo] agreement, have found a partner in Israel in the shape of the extreme rightists who exploit the murderous attacks of Hamas and Jihad and turn terror victims into instruments in the struggle to prevent peace.

[...] A vicious circle has been established, where partnership between Hamas butchers and extreme right in Israel takes place.

Shuki Broyar, a settler in Psagot (a West Bank settlement – E.L.) who had taken part in organizing a visit for prime minister Rabin in several settlements, has expressed the effect monopolization of patriotism had had for him as a citizen (Lewin 2005):

[...] The change [of opinion towards the settlers] took place once Rabin has started calling us names. All of a sudden we have become animals, murderers. We were the preventers of peace, or the way Rabin had put it: assassins of peace. Suddenly every settler had to fit to the image of a man with a beard holding a gun. Leftist [reserves'] soldiers who were serving

around here were astonished to find that we were normal people just like them.

Social environment in Israel had made it easy for the government to use the strategy of monopolization of patriotism. The dominant perception amongst Israeli citizens had been for years the one interpreting opposition in times of war as simply treason. The prevailing concept was that the government had but one object – the benefit of the public. Debates were perceived to be endangering national security, and the media was held responsible for allowing the damaging discourse that eventually - according to this perception – has harmed Israeli image all over the world (Barzilai 1996).

Monopolization of patriotism is not necessarily the sole domain of governments, and it could be used as a strategy by any group within society. Israel serves as a good example where all opponents of the ideological contention have had their share of monopolizing patriotism. Gush Emunim, for example, a right wing social movement supporting the full annexation of Judea and Samaria; have always been convinced that theirs was the real Zionist way whereas the rest of Israeli society was suffering from the fading away of patriotic attitudes (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2004). Monopolization of patriotism was undoubtedly the major line for delegitimation of Ytzhak Rabin and his government by ex-parliamentary right wing organizations (Shprintzak, 1995), a political way of thought the very result of which was the political murder.

Once patriotism is monopolized it becomes destructive. Instead of crystallizing society into a positive unity it becomes the bread and butter of political violence. The conclusion may be that it is a democratic civilian's duty to distinguish between patriotism and the political motivation of those who define patriotism for him.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Researchers have characterized patriotism using various criteria stressing the origins of a protagonist's motivation: the object of loyalty, above all - the deep love for one's country and one's fellow countrymen, the scope of social belongingness, and the manner in which loyalty is expressed. Different forms of patriotism have been defined: national patriotism, republican patriotism, religious patriotism, constitutional patriotism.

The nature of patriotism as an act of demonstrating self sacrifice for a common cause leads us almost automatically to seek it mainly within combat fighters. Battles form scenery where personal courage meets collective needs; in this situation the heroic soldier who is willing to bravely storm without any

hesitation towards his death, just for the sake of his community, embodies in his action the best of patriotism.

Israeli reality of decades of combat encounters gives us a chance to closely study human reactions – especially those of patriots who have proved love of their country in numerous opportunities: by deciding to serve in combat duties, by volunteering to elite commando units, by participating in action, by functioning heroically even when bullets whistle around. There is of course a certain flaw in such a research, resulting from the fact that those who had fully completed the patriotic action by sacrificing their lives are no longer here with us to give testimony of the personal processes they have experienced. However, second best are the available patriots who had volunteered, who had been into hell and were willing to go there over and over again knowing that they too might be demanded to pay the highest possible price – their lives. Each of them had a chance to change his mind and retreat, every one of them could at any point of time abandon his obsessive love for his homeland and save himself. Indeed, the opening story of the battle at Kalat Jabour gives evidence that there were also those who at the moment of truth preferred to withdraw from the deep commitment to society and thus to save their souls. However, it is the presence of a soldier who has decided to care only for himself that emphasizes the devotion of the others who have acted patriotically.

And yet the testimonies given by war heroes, courageous as they may have been at the battlefield, expose motivation that does not fall within the patriotic categories. Even worse than that – exhibition of egocentric motivation may raise the doubt that we may be dealing with something totally different from patriotism. The warriors from all the warfares that have been surveyed are found to have been acting according to anything but loyalty to their people and country. Some of them mentioned the automatic execution of repetitive practice where no place for behavioral dilemma was left. Others described the urge to live as the only thought in their mind throughout the whole battle. Not the homeland, not the people, not even Jewish history or national destiny; as most – the close family waiting at home.

Some of the warriors tell us about the young excitement deriving from the ultimate demonstration of power in motion. Others mention a personal need to follow their parents' legacy by adding a war to their own curriculum vitae. And above all, whereas patriotism results from love to a people who form the patriot's community but have no personal acquaintance with him, it seems that many fighters are motivated by social pressure of the immediate group of their friends in the army unit.

The conclusion is, therefore, that even though we should cherish the action of those who protect our lives, we must also refrain from automatically calling them patriots. It seems that not everyone who has preformed a noble act of

sacrifice had done so for noble reasons. Research of patriotism being about motivation, one should be cautious in determining the patriotic dimension behind the soldiers' actions.

Storming to battle being the ideal image of the patriot, war objectors and draft disobeyers symbolize anti-patriotism. Their action is dictated by focusing on individuality instead of collectivity, sanctification of life itself instead of willingness to sacrifice it, and above all – questioning community's morals in public and out loud instead of going as one to save this community from its enemies. One should also bear in mind that by being absent in battlefield the objector leaves an unequal burden to be carried by those who had not defected. But interviews with Israeli objectors reflect, unexpectedly, patriotism at its best. Some of them had also experienced military actions prior to their objection – there are amongst them officers and commanders, pilots and commando fighters, not to mention those who had been wounded or had spent time as prisoners of war. Sometimes it is their dismissal from military duty and preventing their right to sacrifice in warfare that establishes – for their part – the perfect punishment.

Those who refuse to become soldiers in the first place do so with the willingness to pay the price. They do have an option to abandon anonymously once they have met a military psychiatrist who had received clear orders to discharge candidates who might be unfit for army service, but they insist on having it their way. They end up spending years in jail, banished from society.

Researchers have established definitions of patriotism that refer to patriotism in its form of loyalty to an idea or to a moral set of values, such as the constitutional patriotism. Yet the objectors' patriotism goes far beyond loyalty to an idea: it is specifically their testimonies more than others that give rise to a terminology comprising expressions of love towards the people, the country, and the community. The objectors, unlike many of their fellow fighters, refer to the large society to which they belong but whose members are personally unknown to them.

Disobedience in its very essence is related to as an action that combines clinging to humanistic ideals with deep concern to the fate of a chosen collective group. According to any typology this undoubtedly reflects a pure form of patriotism.

In day to day life, the boundaries of dichotomy between patriotism and anti-patriotism are not determined by scientists of social studies. Rather, the decision who is to be considered a patriot is mandated by those who have declared themselves to be the real patriots. This phenomenon is called monopolization of patriotism and it forms a strategy that is used by political leaders no matter if they are right or left, governmental or oppositional. It is therefore an unfortunate reality that patriotism is defined not necessarily by patriots and the norms of loyalty to the

country and the people are not necessarily asserted by those who are themselves loyal. The privilege to decide that the difference between patriotism and anti-patriotism is no other than the difference between “us” and “them” has been handed over to those whose patriotism may not have been tested yet.

Moreover – labeling someone positively as a patriot or labeling somebody else negatively as an anti-patriot is often a means in mobilizing social resources for the cause that patriotic monopolizers have decided upon. Thus patriotism, originally a genuine love for one’s country and its people, turns into a normative frame established by forces whose agenda is far from containing the essential loyalty that lies in the core of true patriotism.

The pure patriotic belief that had led heroes such as the officers who have fought in Kalat Jabour to their death holds us responsible for a constant alert for the true intentions that lie behind the use of patriotism as a term. Political science students, as well as democratic citizens, should bear in mind the process in which political intrigues might exploit the term patriotism in an anti-patriotic manner. Patriotic citizenship calls for an awareness of the phenomenon of monopolization of patriotism that might turn out to be no more than manipulation of patriots.

### References

- Aviam, Moti. 2004. Division 188 in the Yom Kippur War [*Hebrew*]  
<<http://uploaded.fresh.co.il/2004/08/30/858373.doc>>
- Barzilai, Gad. 1996. “State, Society and National Security – Mass Media and Wars.” In *Israel Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Society, Politics and Culture*, eds. Lisk Moshe and Kney-Paz Baruch. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press. [*Hebrew*]
- Ben-Amos, Avner. 1997. “The Uses of the Past: Patriotism Between History and Memory.” In *Patriotism in the Lives of Individuals and Nations*, eds. Bar-Tal Daniel and Staub Ervin. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Ben-Amos, Avner and Bar-Tal Daniel. 2004. “Patriotism as a Psychological Social Phenomenon – An Introduction to an Analysis of the Israeli Case.” In *Patriotism – Homeland Love*, eds. Ben-Amos Avner and Bar-Tal Daniel. Tel Aviv: Dyonun, University of Tel Aviv. [*Hebrew*].

- Epstein, Alec. 1999. "Struggle for Legitimizing – Conscientious Objection in Israel from the Formation of the State until The Lebanon War." *Israeli Sociology* 1(2): 319-354. [Hebrew].
- Gal, Irit and Hamerman Illana. 2002. *From Beirut to Genin – The War of Lebanon*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved. [Hebrew].
- Hess, Yoav and Hadad Refram. 2004. Objectors' testimony [Hebrew]  
<<http://www.yeshgvul.org>>
- Hirschman, Albert O. 1994. "Social Conflicts as Pillars of Democratic Market Society" *Political Theory* 22(2): 203-218.
- Lewin, Eyal. 2005. "Social Trust Amongst Jewish Settlers in Post-Oslo Era"  
A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
M.A. at the Open University of Israel [Hebrew].
- Liblich, Amia. 1988. *Tin Soldiers on Jerusalem Beach*. Tel Aviv: Schocken. [Hebrew].
- Markell, Patchen. 2000. "Making Affect for Democracy? On "Constitutional Patriotism" *Political Theory* 28 (1): 38-63.
- Mattar, Chaggay. 2004. "Observing Military Disobedience in the IDF" [Hebrew].  
<<http://www.yeshgvul.org>>
- Meltzer, Yehuda. 1989. "The Torments of Peace Now." In *Boundaries of Obedience*, eds. Menuchin Yishay and Menuchin Dina. Tel Aviv: Siman Kria. [Hebrew].
- Oldenquist, Andrew. 1982. "Loyalties" *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (4): 173-193.
- Oren, Neta and Bar-Tal Daniel. 2004. "Monopolization of Patriotism in Israeli Society." In *Patriotism – Homeland Love*, eds. Ben-Amos Avner and Bar-Tal Daniel. Tel Aviv: Dyonun, University of Tel Aviv. [Hebrew].
- Primoratz, Igor, ed. 2002. *Patriotism*. Amherst, New York: Humanity Books.
- Poper, Micha. 2004. "IDF as Educator of Patriotism." In *Patriotism – Homeland Love*, eds. Ben-Amos Avner and Bar-Tal Daniel Tel Aviv: Dyonun, University of Tel Aviv. [Hebrew].



- Rapoport, David C. 1991. "Some General Observations on Religion and Violence" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3 (3): 18-140.
- Rebhun, Uzi and Waxman Chaim I. 2003. "Israel in the Early Twenty-first Century: Challenging Internal and Global Developments." *Israel Affairs* 9(4): 1-16.
- Schaar, John H. 1981. *The Case for Covenanted Patriotism, Legitimacy in the Modern State*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books.
- Schwied, Eliezer. 1996. "Beyond All – Modernism, Zionism, Judaism." In *Zionism – a Contemporary Debate – Observing the Resurrection of Israel*, eds. Ginossar Pinchas and Bareli Avi. Sde Boker: Ben Gurion University Press. [Hebrew].
- Segal-Az-Caariel, Offer. 2006. *Fighting in Jenin 2002*. Israel: Ministry of Defense. [Hebrew].
- Shapira, Yonatan. 2004. "The Pilots' Letter to the Chief of Staff" [Hebrew]. <<http://www.yeshgvul.org>>
- Shilony, Etai. 1986. *Fickle-minded Lebanon*. Tel Aviv: Sreberk. [Hebrew].
- Shohat, Yuval. 2002. "Black Flag." *Haaretz* February 8<sup>th</sup> 2002 [Hebrew]
- Somerville, John. 1981. "Patriotism and War" *Ethics* 91(4): 568-578.
- Sprinzak, Ehud. 1995. *Political Violence in Israel from Exparliamentary Protest to Terror* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Research) [Hebrew]
- Tamir, Yael. 1997. "Reflections on Patriotism." In *Patriotism in the Lives of Individuals and Nations*, eds. Bar-Tal Daniel and Staub Ervin. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Viroli, Maurizio. 1995. *For Love of Country*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Weil, Simon. 1952. *The Need for Roots – Prelude to a Declaration of Duties towards Mankind*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Wishnitzer, Avner. 2004. *Looking Aside Forms a Crime* [Hebrew]. <<http://www.yeshgvul.org>>

Yagil, Dana and Rattner Arye. 2002. "Between Commandments and Laws: Religiosity, Political Ideology, and Legal Obedience in Israel" *Crime, Law and Social Change* 38 (2): 185-209.