Overview

What is security? What is threat? What does it mean to secure a nation?

Traditionally, the term ‘national security’ has been applied to the security of states. As such, it has focused in ways in which the state projects violence either in its defense, or in the pursuit of its interests. As a sovereign body, it has been widely held that the right to wield violence is the state’s prerogative, and various intellectual and governmental arts have evolved to help it do so efficiently: strategy, public administration, diplomacy.

Because we traditionally view states as uniform in structure and function, our studies of interstate violence have tended to develop along general, almost scientific lines. State violence is studied through the disciplines of strategy and tactics, and through the language of international relations. We speak this way, because by referring to states, we refer essentially to a set of bureaucratic functions that are presumed to function more or less similarly the world over.

But none of these assumptions hold true when we speak about nations. Nations, unlike states, are held to be complex, shifting, and culturally dynamic entities: fusions of memory and history, of culture and practice, of languages and traditions, nations are more easily anthropomorphized. Nations suffer traumas; experience victories; leapfrog into periods of great creativity or lapse into periods of torpor. And so we ask: what does it mean to secure a nation?

We cannot, for all the reasons noted above, speak of such ideas in the abstract. Culture can only be understood through practices. Security speaks to expectations, to fears, to shared understandings of the status quo both in its physical dimensions (as in the tactics of the battlefield or the borders of a state) and in political, economic and cultural aspects.

We seek, then, to explore the sensibilities, priorities, memories and expectations of Israeli people. Not to judge or moralize, but to interrogate: patiently, sensitively and persistently. We will examine memories, as these are experienced, codified, and passed on; common sense, as it forms and is deployed; and space, as it is traversed. Israeli security culture must be felt as well as analyzed: what incites fear, what gives a sense of safety.

In so doing, we hope to discover the ways in which Israelis have fused memory and history with fears and anticipations. In so doing, we hope to come to re-understand strategy and tactics in profoundly different terms: to develop a language of security which is consciously intuitive and contingent rather than scientific; which emerges from relationships and cultures, rather than abstract principles.

Requirements: Students are expected to arrive to class prepared, to participate fully in discussions, and to submit either two short papers (7-10 pages) on class readings or one longer paper in consultation (15-20 pages) with me. For students’ benefit, it is suggested that longer
topics be agreed upon by Week 9 of the course. Film screenings, while strongly recommended, are optional (with one exception). Each week (beginning week 3), students will also briefly present on the various readings, to help us start each week’s discussion.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed at least one class in international politics, and would ideally have some background (formal or otherwise) in Middle Eastern politics.

Enrollment: 15

Readings:

Part I: Terms of Art – Nations and Security

Class One: Introduction: What is security?

- Introduction to core concepts and review of course requirements.

Class Two: What is security (continued)?

- Reading and Discussion

  Yisrael Tal: *National Security: the Israeli Experience*. (Praeger, 2000), chs. 1, 2, 5 and 6. (pp. 3-17, 33-44)
  Michel Foucault: *Society Must be Defended*. (Picador, 2003), Lectures 1-3 (pp. 1-63).

Class Three: What is the Nation?

- Reading and Discussion


  Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities*. (Verso: 1991), chs. 1-3 (36 pages)

Rawi Abdelal: *National Purpose in the World Economy.* (Cornell, 2001), ch. 2, pp. 24-44. (Recommended)

**Class Four: History, Memory and Nation**

- Reading and Discussion
- First short paper topics distributed


Yosef Haim Yerushalmi: “On the Uses of Forgetting” from *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory.* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1996), ch. 4 and postscript, (36 pages).


**Competing Conceptualizations of the Nation.**

Select two from the following readings, and be prepared to analyze them briefly for your classmates. Who is the author addressing? What is he describing, and from what standpoint? Consider origins, histories, symbols, ceremonies, and goals.

- Natan Alterman: *The Silver Platter*
- Benjamin Ze’ev Jabotinsky: Selections. (The Political and Social Writings, pp. 28-53.)

**Sources:**

**Part II: Securing the Nation: Who, What, and Where?**

**Class Five: The Location of Security (I): the People in the Land**

- Readings and Discussion

  Tom Segev: *One Palestine: Complete* (Metropolitan Books, 2000), chs. 10 and 12 (pp. 224-48; 270-92)
  Theodor Herzl: *Old-New Land.* (Markus Weiner: 1997), pp. 61-82; 115-126. (32 pages)
  Rachel (Rachel Bluwstein): “A Melancholy Tune.” (“Zemer Nugeh”) (handout)

**Class Six: The Location of Security (II): the New Israeli**

- Readings and class discussion
- First short paper due

  Almog: *The Sabra*, ch. 1 (50 pages)
  George L. Mosse: *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism.* (Brandeis, 1993), ch. 11.
  Moshe Shamir: *He Walked Through the Fields.* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1957) (play)

**Class Seven: The Practice of Security (I): Strategy and Tactics**

- Readings and class discussion

  Ariel Levite: *Offense and Defense in Israeli Military Doctrine.* (Westview, 1990), ch. 2. (37 pages)
  Mark Heller: *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy.* (London: Adelphi Papers #335, International Institute for International Relations, 2000), entire (68 pages)

**Class Eight:** *The Practice of Security (II): Normality and Anti-Normality.*

- Readings and class discussion

  
  Charles C. Moskos, David Allen Williams and David R. Segal: *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War.* (Oxford University Press, 2000), chs. 1 and 12 (pp. 1-13; 224-241).
  
  

  Film Screening (required): *The Siren’s Song* (Shirat ha-Sirena)  Director: Eytan Fox, screenplay Irit Linur (1994).

**Part III: Challenges and Peripheries**

**Class Nine:** *Challenging Anti-Normality*

- Reading and Discussion
- Long paper topics should be set by this week

  Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari: (eds.): *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society.* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), chs. 1 and 12. (33 pages)
  
  
  Jonathan Mahler: “Israel’s New Historians Take a Hard Look at their Nation’s Past.” *Lingua Franca,* August 1997. (10 pages)
  

  Meir Ariel: “A Quiet Night for Our Forces on the Suez” (pop lyrics, handout)
  
  Yehuda Amichai: “My Child Smells of Peace.” *Infra* Esther Raizen: *No Rattling of Sabers.* (poem)

  Optional Film: *Beyond the Walls* (me-Ahorei ha-Soragim). Dir. Uri Barabash, screenplay Uri Barabash and Benny Barabash (1984).

**Class Ten:** *The Necessity of Peace?*
• Reading and Discussion


Optional Film: *Kedma* (‘Eastward’). Dir. Amos Gitai, screenplay Amos Gitai and Mordechai Goldhecht (2002).

Class Eleven: *The Disappearing Self (I): The Challenge of Peace*


Class Twelve: *The Disappearing Self (II): Anti-Normality Strikes Back*

• Reading and Discussion

Yoram Hazony: *The Jewish State: the Struggle for Israel’s Soul* (Basic Books, 2000), Intro., pp. 3-6, 18-33; 63-73. (46 pages)

Binyamin Netanyahu: *A Durable Peace: Israel and its Place among the Nations*. (Warner, 1999), ch. 9. (45 pages)


Class Thirteen: *Securing What? And for Whom?*

• Reading and Discussion
• Papers Due
Shlomo Brom: “The Many Faces of Unilateral Separation.” *Strategic Assessment.* (4 pages)


