

The establishment of the state was characterized by statehood and the shunting aside of the voluntary bodies, and the kibbutz movements in particular, from their significant role in the spheres in which they had been leaders in the Yishuv period. To a great degree, their Utopian aspirations and tendencies to shape the state in their own image, to cope with the reality of immigrant absorption, influence youth education, determine labor relations, and shape the image of the IDF, failed. As voluntary movements whose Weltanschauung was anchored in national-Zionist-socialist ideologies, the kibbutz movements were forced to deal with a political reality in which party and "state" interests determined the image of the State of Israel.

influence of Ben-Gurion and Mapai over the army. Over the years they redirected their criticism from the army to Mapai when they realized that their ideas and plans regarding the army were Utopian. For people used to being at the center of activity it was hard to accept a situation whereby not everything was decided by them.

The Utopian aspiration of the kibbutz movements that the State of Israel would give total preference to settlement needs was incompatible with the changes undergone by the state in its early years. The change undergone by the IDF with the strengthening of the attacking approach also influenced them. The channeling of Nahal soldiers and kibbutz sons to combat units impaired the movements' power, and no less importantly, it strengthened the symbol of "the fighter", which had developed gradually from the events of 1936-1939, and increasingly and inevitably, with the establishment of the state and the reprisals of the 1950's, it eroded the symbol of "the pioneer", with which the kibbutz movement was identified.

In conclusion, despite the ideological and organizational differences between the kibbutz movements, no significant differences were found in their practical attitude towards the IDF and their sons' service in it. The army was extremely interested in recruiting kibbutz members and sons into elite units and the regular army, and made great efforts to achieve this, but the army and the minister of defense avoided appointing people who were not Mapai members to senior positions in the General Staff.

The kibbutz movements' leaderships were very interested in their members serving in significant positions and made every effort to compel the kibbutzim to send the best of their members to the army. The more remote kibbutzim had serious reservations regarding their members enlisting for extended service in the army out of the concern that they would leave the kibbutz during their service, and that the officers would be missed in the economic and administrative setup of the kibbutz. The large majority of kibbutz sons served in significant positions in the army and were greatly appreciated. For many years the Nahal was the apple of the eye of all the kibbutz movements and they fought incessantly to prevent its diminution.

army was interested in the kibbutz sons serving in the elite units because as a result of IDF screening, kibbutz sons had the personal qualities suitable for service in these units. The movements even encouraged the kibbutz boys to go on officer training courses and join the IDF officer corps, but in the main the kibbutz sons wanted to complete their compulsory service and go back home.

The Kibbutz Artzi preached maintaining traditional values and avoidance of the use of force in solving problems. In general terms this movement did not support reprisals, mainly because of the fear of harming innocent people, and opposed preventive war. The Kibbutz Dati, too, did not generally accept the belligerent solution. Opinions in the Ihud were divided, when in some cases they sided with the government's position. As a movement that supported radical security activism, the Kibbutz Me'uhad, through its Ahdut Ha'avoda-Poalei Zion party, supported the Sinai Campaign of late October 1956 and even opposed withdrawal from Sinai under pressure from the Great Powers in early 1957.

The enactment of the Defense Service Law that obliged almost every soldier, male and female, to undergo agricultural training, was in effect a manifestation of acceptance of the pioneering ethos by the state, although the kibbutz movements were suspicious of its enforcement. With the establishment of the Nahal the attitude of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi towards it was at first reserved as they did not wish to see it as replacing the Palmach, but they later acknowledged its importance and fought for its continued existence. Hever Hakvutzot and the Kibbutz Dati accepted the Nahal with open arms as a means of training youngsters for their kibbutzim.

The kibbutz movements perceived themselves as an important component of the serving elite that had also been active in security prior to the establishment of the state. Their members saw themselves as worthy of being part of the state's security establishment. Their willingness for endeavor in the security sphere was there, despite the disparity between their political positions and those of the ruling party. However, they failed in all their efforts to neutralize the dominant

was not part of the other movements' beliefs. The Kibbutz Artzi, Hever Hakvutzot and the Kibbutz Dati were basically moderate movements.

The situation of the border settlements influenced the positions of all the movements in that they all fought for the reinforcement of territorial defense. Moreover, they all lived with the anachronistic model of the "fortress-settlement" that not only defended itself but also assisted the army in halting the enemy's advance, a model that was suited to the Yishuv period and the early stages of the War of Independence.

Reservations with regard to extended service in the regular army were typical of all the movements. They mainly derived from personal reasons, but senior officers from 1948 who were mainly from the Kibbutz Me'uhad, and some from the Kibbutz Artzi, felt that they were unwanted in the army, as they had not been offered positions commensurate with their standard and experience.

The army was in a predicament as its officer corps had dwindled after the large-scale releases of 1949, and there was a great shortage of skilled instructors and officers. And indeed, in the first years of the state it was almost impossible to find kibbutz members in the General Staff and senior positions.

The General Staff Manpower Branch, in conjunction with the kibbutz movements, invested great efforts into recruiting kibbutz member officers into extended service in the regular army, but without much success. The officers themselves, as well as their kibbutzim, which were interested in their contribution to the kibbutz economy and society and their remaining in their kibbutz home, were the first to oppose it. There was only partial success for short-term enlistment, in junior command positions. Senior officers did not go back to serving in the army. The movement secretariat decided whether or not a member should enlist, with military service being considered as part of the quota that each kibbutz had to send to movement positions.

The kibbutz sons were interested in volunteering for elite units where they could fulfill their capabilities as fighters. And indeed, many enlisted into the paratroopers and others volunteered for special missions in the naval commandos or as air force pilots. It should be emphasized that the

positions regarding enlisting in the army, and particularly in special units, officer training courses and the regular army?

- Were there any disparities between the positions of the movements and those of the general kibbutz population, and the positions of the enlisted soldiers?
- What was the role of the Nahal? Was it to provide young manpower from the youth movements to the kibbutz movements, or was it a military tool in the hands of the state for achieving state objectives?

In this study I have examined the attitudes of the different movements towards the army from aspects of similarities and dissimilarities between them. Attitudes towards the army mainly derived from the movements' different ideological positions. In the practical fields the disparities between the movements were extremely small.

Serving one's country for Zionist aims was an important part of the essence of the Kibbutz Me'uhad. This movement saw itself as one with a national ideology combined with radical socialist and class positions, and perceived itself as leading the workers' camp. It viewed its path as the essence of Zionist realization and its members as a serving elite. The Kibbutz Me'uhad was a central component of the Ahdut Ha'avoda-Poalei Zion party, and in the early years of the state had a partner in united Mapam. In its political framework as the Ahdut Ha'avoda faction in united Mapam, the Kibbutz Me'uhad also viewed itself as part of a party with responsibility for security issues.

The Kibbutz Artzi, which supported bi-nationalism, whereby the Jewish and Arab peoples would live in a single state, was compelled to accept the fact that the partition plan had been accepted. The Kibbutz Artzi was a central component of Mapam. Hever Hakvutzot, later Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim, generally accepted Ben-Gurion's approach to borders and security. The Kibbutz Dati supported a national-religious approach and identified with its political movement, Hapoel Hamizrahi, and later with the National Religious party (Mafdal). On the central issue of military service for religious girls, the Kibbutz Dati was completely at odds with its political party and the religious and rabbinical establishment. The Kibbutz Me'uhad supported security activism, which

ruling party, consolidated its position. Those who did not identify with it and constituted a political and ideological opposition to it had no part in the government system. Ben-Gurion accused the Mapam leadership, the majority of whom were the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi, of aspiring to take control of the upper echelons of the IDF, which had been formed during the war. Even prior to the declaration of the state Mapam was accused of conducting party politics through an army faction. This kind of accusation proliferated during the discussions on dismantling the Palmach headquarters.

The transition period between an army engaged in war and one of a period of calm was accompanied by a crisis whose essence was the character of the army. In the wake of a bloody war, the IDF was a young army with a large portion of its experienced combat commanders and fighters leaving it, and it attempted to rebuild itself. The enlisted forces were reduced and an army of compulsory service, regular army and reserve soldiers was built up. The army was deployed along the country's long borders and was compelled to deal with numerous infiltrations and sabotage operations. At the same time, a large number of the army's experienced combat commanders and fighters left it with bad feelings. Kibbutz members were not numbered among the army's high command. There was a certain alienation between the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi movements and the young state's security apparatus.

The relationship between the kibbutz movements and the army raises a number of questions, which the present study attempts to answer:

- How did the kibbutz movements deal with the change in their role as standing ready to serve the people?
- How did the different political positions of each of the kibbutz movements impact on security issues?
- How did the security situation affect the kibbutz movements' positions regarding the army?
- How did the situation of the border settlements, many of which were kibbutzim, affect positions on issues of territorial defense (*haganah merchavit*)?
- What were the practical implications of the kibbutz movements'

ministries, etc. The authority of the state and the power of the law replaced the voluntary bodies. To a great extent, settlement on the borders was directed by the government, albeit settlements were also established and reinforced by pioneering settlement "nuclei" (*garinim*). Recruitment to the security establishment was also done by law. Thus, roles that in the Yishuv period had been under the aegis of parties and movements, were transferred to the state.

Ben-Gurion was inclined to view the kibbutz movement en bloc. He demanded that the collective agricultural settlements place themselves unconditionally at the disposal of the state. Those who were not Mapai members suspected that this was, in fact, an attempt to consolidate Mapai's superiority, while the Mapai members viewed any opposition to it as a sign of disloyalty to the state and its leader. This conception also harmed the supporters of Ben-Gurion and Mapai in the kibbutzim, and not only the members of Mapam, their political adversaries.

The IDF was founded to replace the voluntary bodies, the Hagana and the dissident underground organizations. But military service was based upon the Compulsory Military Service Law, not on recognition and volunteering. Nevertheless, the attitude towards the ethos of service was as it was towards voluntary service.

It was founded on egalitarian mass compulsory service. The unique aspects of the IDF's egalitarian ethos were as follows: compulsory service for women; a uniform initial service track for officers and men, which later developed into specialist training; the "follow me" ("*achari*") doctrine, which manifested the officer's involvement in his men's actions.

The relationship between the settlement movement and the IDF was anchored in the concept of combining settlement and defense. Even at the most difficult times during the War of Independence, settlement was one of the most important issues on the agenda. The General Staff Settlement Branch was even involved in the physical planning and location of settlements. The IDF command was interested in kibbutzim being the first line of defense, for their resilience was preferable to that of the immigrant moshavim.

The strength of the voluntary bodies was negated while Mapai, the

contradictions, one of which was the nature of their role in the security establishment. The importance of the contribution of the kibbutz movements to victory in the War of Independence and the maximal enlistment of their settlements and members to the war effort was vast. Indeed, the kibbutz was a serving elite in the period prior to the establishment of the state and in the course of the War of Independence. Relatively large numbers of kibbutz sons and members had fought in combat units and casualties were high relative to the general population.

However, the party-political linkage of the kibbutz movements exacerbated the conflict between their leaders and the national political leadership. Ben-Gurion blamed the Mapam leadership that was mainly comprised of the leaders of the Kibbutz Me'uhad and the Kibbutz Artzi, who aspired to take over the upper echelons of the army, which had been formed in the course of the war.

The reasons for the deterioration in attitudes towards the kibbutzim in the early years of the state include:

1. A USSR-oriented ideological opposition that aroused antagonism towards it,
2. The kibbutz as an active, pragmatic ideological organization, and not only a political party.
3. Adherence to an outdated ideology.

It should be noted that the large number of members, among them quite large numbers of youth movement and Palmach graduates, that left their young kibbutzim heightened the feeling of failure in the kibbutzim. Moreover, there were quite a few kibbutz members who, prior to the establishment of the state, held important public offices in the Histadrut Labor Federation, the Jewish Agency, the Hagana, the Palmach, etc. They were asked to continue in office and others were recruited to fill positions in government. Those who remained in the kibbutzim viewed these people as "deserters".

The establishment of the state marked the end of an era. Ben-Gurion's conception was that with the establishment of the state, achieving national targets like security, settlement, immigrant absorption, and so on, would be managed by the state and its various arms: the army,



their national role come to an end, or were they to continue in their role as a tool for the attainment of national goals in the transition from the Yishuv to statehood? In the early days of the state there was a clash between statehood and movement voluntarism.

Pioneering was a way of life equated with being part of the state-bureaucratic system. David Ben-Gurion's intention of combining pioneering with the state's establishment was unsuccessful. Shifting the social center of gravity from the voluntary organizations to the state did not help "state pioneering" to flourish.

The majority of the kibbutz movements, whose members and training groups played an important role in the fight for independence, found themselves outside the main circle of life in the young state. In governmental circles a place was found for those who identified with the ruling party – Mapai. Movements that were part of the political and ideological opposition had to fight for their status in government and decision-making.

The transition from the Yishuv of the nascent state to an independent state marked a stage of development. On the one hand, the Yishuv institutions that were organized during the British Mandate period became the institutions of the new state, albeit it was necessary to build new, additional governmental systems, while on the other, from a number of aspects the establishment of the state constituted a turning point and generated shockwaves in the accepted order and customs of the Yishuv, and also in the relative weight of the various foci of power.

The turning point experienced by the kibbutz movement derived from a number of factors: a shortage of new manpower due to the consequences of the Holocaust and the failure to absorb mass immigration; the transition from a society of individuals to a family society; the establishment of an extremely small number of new kibbutzim; weakening of their political influence with the consolidation of Mapai as the ruling party; and their diminished influence in the security establishment, as this is presented in the study.

In the transition from a voluntary society to one guided by a central government, the kibbutz movements found themselves in a set of

they also viewed themselves as worthy of influencing the society around them. It was the realistic-Utopian concept that guided their actions.

During the Yishuv (pre-State Jewish community) period, the kibbutz ethos was both acknowledged and held in high esteem in extensive circles of the community. The kibbutz movement was reinforced by the pioneering youth movements in the Diaspora and Eretz Israel, and even gained some support from the Zionist movement.

The establishment of the state did not change the central motif of the kibbutz movements – pioneering. However, they had great difficulty in meeting the challenge of the establishment of the state, for they chose to preserve the ideological characteristics that were suited to the Yishuv period, and did not adapt them to the changing reality. The movements actually failed to meet the main challenges that faced the young state: absorbing immigrants as members of their settlements; making contact with the large immigrant population from the Islamic states; or accepting the positive facet of statehood. Despite their positive activity in the field of training young people from Youth Aliya, assisting new immigrants in the transit camps, increasing agricultural productivity for providing food, etc., their achievements were relatively few and insufficiently appreciated.

The supportive atmosphere surrounding the kibbutzim and their way diminished, so that despite the kibbutz continuing with its attempts at achieving Utopia, reality outside shunted it aside from its special status. While before the establishment of the state the Yishuv needed the real endeavor of the kibbutz, in the spirit of its Utopian perception, once the state was established reality outside the kibbutz changed and the need for its unique contribution became unclear.

The establishment of the state weakened kibbutz society's vision of voluntarism, and its Utopian components ran counter to the state's establishmentarianism. Life, which during the Yishuv period was guided by the real-Utopian conception, was now guided by the state. A sense of crisis and missed opportunities beset many in the kibbutz and labor movements. The establishment of the state placed the voluntary bodies in general, and the kibbutz movements in particular, in a dilemma: had

## Abstract

The present study examines the disparity between the aspirations of the kibbutz movements vis-à-vis the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) between 1948 and 1957. The study attempts to compare the ideologies and endeavors of each movement with regard to the IDF, and conducts a comparison between the movements themselves. I will discuss whether, despite ideological, organizational and political party differences, there actually were great disparities between the movements, especially in their security conceptions. The movements in the study are the Kibbutz Me'uhad, the Kibbutz Artzi, Ihud Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim (until 1951, Hever Hakvutzot), and the Kibbutz Dati. The study concentrates on the tension between the social-Utopian tendencies and political stances that influenced security conceptions.

The study has four parts, each of which is devoted to one movement. Each part contains an introduction describing the movement's relationship with the issue of security in the years prior the establishment of the state, and in the course of the War of Independence. This includes their perception of the IDF; the relationship between their political positions and the current state of security and territorial defense; their attitude towards the Nahal (Pioneering and Fighting Youth); preparation of the kibbutz children for military service, their volunteering for service in elite units; and their attitude towards extended service in the regular army.

The unique organizational structure of the kibbutzim, and their social and political awareness, placed them in the vanguard of voluntary activity in settlement, immigrant absorption, rescue and immigration missions, security, and numerous other fields of endeavor. The kibbutz movements believed in the possibility of creating a Utopian society, a society espousing the values of equality and cooperation. They developed an exclusive social, educational and cultural life. However,

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Aharon Azati

## "Cant' Do Without Us?"

The Kibbutz Movements and the Israel Defense Force

1948-1957

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