Introduction

"Did I see only America?"

John Steinbeck could not make up his mind up about Israel. Spending a month in the country in early 1966, Steinbeck initially stated his ambition "to see the simple little people."[1] At the end of his stay he composed two different accounts of his visit. First, in a letter to his friend, White House aide Jack Valenti, Steinbeck marveled: "the Israeli are the toughest and most vital people I have seen in a long time ... Their army is superb."[2] A piece Steinbeck published in *Newsday* two months later, however, struck a more reflexive tone. Driving through Israel's Negev Desert, Steinbeck found himself "saying, or agreeing – yes, that's like the Texas panhandle – that could be Nevada, and that might be Death Valley."[3] An American lens, he suddenly realized, was superimposed over his view of Israel, affecting his perception of the country. The conclusion shook the Nobel laureate: "I have always fancied myself as a fairly objective looker, but I'm beginning to wonder whether I do not completely miss whole categories of things ... Did I see only America?"[4]

As intent as Steinbeck was on recognizing vaguely described "simple little people," his mind was soon overcome with appreciation of Israeli

[1] John Steinbeck as quoted in: Shraga Har-Gil, "I Write 2000 Words a Day," *Maariv*, February 2, 1966 (in Hebrew). All Hebrew sources translated by author.
[2] John Steinbeck to Jack Valenti, February 12, 1966, in the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Archive (hereafter LBJ), GEN FO 5 7/10/65, Box 47, folder: FO5 International Travel, 2/2/66–3/31/66.
[3] John Steinbeck, "Letters to Alicia," *Newsday*, April 2, 1966.
[4] Ibid. On awarding Steinbeck the 1962 Nobel prize in literature, the prize committee noted Steinbeck's "keen social perception." See www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1962/, accessed August 1, 2017.

military prowess, followed by a sense that American concerns conditioned his view of Israel. Like Steinbeck, hundreds of American commentators – journalists and artists, scientists and diplomats, students and businessmen, tourists and policymakers – looked at 1960s Israel and saw it as a society defined by civilian vitality and military steadfastness. Steinbeck's superimposition of American contours on the Israeli scene was also not his alone. During the Vietnam War, as the crisis of the citizen-soldier model in the United States deepened, many Americans looked at Israel through the lens of their concerns about the role military commitments should take in a free society. Keenly aware of that American interest, Israelis often fed it, propagating an image of Israel as a state maintaining liberal proclivities even through demanding national commitments. Together, Americans and Israelis constructed an image of Israel as a liberal, democratic, yet united and militarily potent society. Such perceptions mattered, because they provided the cultural backdrop that made Americans consider their country's support for Israel reasonable. One indication of the power and endurance of these imaginary constructions is that no country received more US foreign support than Israel in the second half of the twentieth century.[5] This book examines the circumstances and calculated efforts that brought elite American commentators to think about Israel in certain ways, and inspects the ways Israel's mutation in the American mind defined US-Israeli relations from the 1950s to the 1980s.

What mechanisms brought Steinbeck and others of his cultural, political, and generational milieu to see Israel as a people both tough and vital? How would American impressions of Israel change over time – following its social changes in the early 1960s, its victory in the June War of 1967, the exposure of its vulnerability in the October War of 1973, the Camp David peace agreement of 1978–9, and the Lebanon War and Palestinian uprising of the 1980s? Identifying Israel as a state of a united, committed, yet liberal citizenry that willingly fulfilled frequent military obligations tied the Middle Eastern country in American elite circles to deep-seeded sentimentalism around the citizen-soldier model. At its prime, this vision

[5] The sums of US support were relatively small in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1962 the United States first agreed to sell sophisticated weaponry to Israel, and in 1968 Congress approved a significant increase in military loans to sell supersonic jetfighters to Israel. US military loans to Israel grew substantially in 1971, and from 1974 onward no country received more annual assistance than Israel, aside from Iraq and Afghanistan during particular years in the twenty-first century. See Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service*, December 22, 2016, available at https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf, accessed July 23, 2017.

of Israel emphasized sophisticated yet robust masculinity, one defined by ease of passage from individual artistic, commercial, or professional pursuits to military duties and back.[6] These were not stable notions, however, and they were sharply transformed by the Vietnam War, which shook to the core dominant ideas about the citizenry's relationship to national duty and about the American mission in the world. How did changes in American society and culture feed Americans' definitions of their country's relationship to Israel during and after the campaign in Vietnam? Recognizing that Israelis played an active role in the relationship invites another set of questions: how did Israelis brand their country to Americans, in their effort to sustain and enhance American interest?[7] What strategies did Israelis adopt to make American citizens see Israel as a country worth supporting? What problems did some Israelis have with the terms of American support? And what were the effects of decades of American support on Israeli society? These questions stand at the center of this book.

THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER SOCIETY

Influential American commentators saw Israel first and foremost as a society of citizen-soldiers. This view of Israel was at its prime between the late 1950s and the 1980s. The ethos of the citizen-soldier society in the late twentieth-century United States emerged from World War II mobilization, and the societal aspiration to find harmony between individualism and the national mission. Propaganda messages in post–World War II United States constructed citizen-soldiers, in the words of historian James T. Sparrow, as "rights-loving paragons of a free society in which

[6] Notions of ideal masculinity were themselves unstable, which further explains the change in the ways elite US commentators saw Israel. Scholar Leo Braudy writes that historical concepts of masculinity "have shifted in response to social and cultural dilemmas." See Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2003), xiii.

[7] I adopt the term "nation branding" from Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht's discussion. The questions the term invites include "Which characteristics do image campaigns repeatedly stress? How do they relate to the reality of the state? Who are the target groups, how can they be reached and how can the state be marketed among those groups? Who could best serve as agents and actors of marketing?" See Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "Nation Branding," in Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 232–44; 237.

self-interest and patriotism mixed in just the right proportions."[8] Citizen-soldiers, Sparrow notes, were expected to regard "their military service . . . as a crucible" of their citizenship.[9] Many elite US commentators in the 1940s and 1950s recognized national mobilization as a socially edifying enterprise.[10]

In the conclusion of his 1949 treatise *The Vital Center*, Arthur M. Schlesinger found willingness to serve the country in battle as a necessary condition for a free society: "Free society will survive, in the last resort, only if enough people believe in it deeply enough to die for it . . . Our democracy has still to generate a living emotional content, rich enough to overcome the anxieties incited by industrialism, deep enough to rally its members to battle for freedom – not just for self-preservation."[11] Schlesinger expected that the public should not escape the duty of performing or suffering state-sanctioned violence in uniform. Schlesinger's expectations were part of a broader demand among leading intellectuals that, in the words of historian John McCallum, "the public confront the darker facets of internationalism as a duty of citizenship."[12] Dominant American commentators in the post–World War II United States saw meeting the demands of national duty within a democracy as an important test of social virility. To be sure, the citizen-soldier model was always more myth than reality: the governmental policy of channeling helped

[8] James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 202–3.

[9] Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 203. Influential sociologist Morris Janowitz identified the three principles guiding military conscription policies under the citizen-soldier model: the service needs to be obligatory, universal in principle (if rarely in practice), and enjoy broad democratic popular support. See Morris Janowitz, "The Citizen Soldier and National Service," *Air University Review* 31, no. 1 (November–December 1979): 2–16. On the way the US government tried to market the citizen-soldier model to Americans during World War II, see Benjamin Alpers, "This Is the Army: Imagining a Democratic Army during World War II," *Journal of American History* 85, no. 1 (June 1998): 129–63.

[10] In the words of historian Wendy Wall, "the institutions devoted to publicly defining for Americans their common ground . . . were spawned or greatly strengthened by the nation's war effort." See Wendy Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106.

[11] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 245. For a discussion of the popularity these ideas enjoyed from World War II to the late 1960s, see Wall, *Inventing the "American Way"*; Kevin Mattson, *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of American Liberalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

[12] John McCallum, "U.S. Censorship, Violence, and Moral Judgement in a Wartime Democracy," *Diplomatic History* 41, no. 3 (2017): 543–66, 544.

many middle-class American men avoid military service.[13] And yet, on the level of theoretical commitment and basic citizenship demands, the citizen-soldier ethos remained dominant until the Vietnam War.

At the height of the citizen-soldier era, Israel's purported ability to rally its members to battle captured Americans' attention. Clearly, other impressions of Israeli society were making the rounds as well. Understandings of Israel as a victim society built from the ashes of the Holocaust as well as the notion that Israel was an ethnically white and culturally Western society certainly informed early US ideas about the state.[14] But these images, too, were tied to the understanding that Israel was a vibrant democracy that could fight and win in difficult circumstances. The perception of Israel as a citizen-soldier state, first popularized in the late 1950s, had a long staying power. Representations of Israeli civilian society as it meets national commitments, images of Israeli soldiers, and narratives of Israeli military exploits and stinging failures provided the main prism through which an array of influential Americans understood the Middle Eastern country and their responsibility toward it.

If existing studies of US-Israeli relations tell us that Americans in the 1960s and early 1970s looked at Israel as a militarily effective state or as a force to advance divine prophecies, this book complicates this understanding in three important ways.[15] First, it shows that a swath of non-conservative and secular-minded commentators, well beyond the usual

[13] Amy J. Rutenberg, "Drafting for Domesticity: American Deferment Policy during the Cold War, 1948–1965," *Cold War History* 13, no. 1 (2013): 1–20.

[14] This image was fed by the fact that Israel's elite and most of the 1948 generation was of Eastern European origin. Waves of immigration from the Middle East and North Africa changed Israeli demography in the 1950s and 1960s, but they did little to transform that initial impression among many observers. On Israel's perception as a Western society, see Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 6; Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 94.

[15] Melani McAlister's path-breaking study of evangelical and neoconservative fascination with Israel at the end of the Vietnam War influenced a range of studies of the United States and the Middle East, including the present book. This book expands on McAlister's pioneer work by examining broader elite views of Israel across the political spectrum and their mutation through time. See Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and US Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001). Also see Colin Schindler, "Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship," *Israel Studies* 5, no. 1 (2000): 153–82; Neil Rubin, "The Relationship between American Evangelical Christians and the State of Israel," in *Israel and the United States: Six Decades of US-Israeli Relations*, ed. Robert O. Freedman (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012), 232–56.

cast associated with fascinations with a fighting Israel, weaved and propagated the idea that Israel was a citizen-soldier utopia. Israeli exceptionalism, in American eyes, was ensconced not only around a hawkish admiration of Israel's perceived military effectiveness, but also around the notions that unlike other emergent nations, the civilian leadership held confident authority over the military; that the Israeli military was an effective and disciplined organ of state building and social welfare; and that civilians happily commited to national service without sacrificing their individual preferences in the process. In short, liberals as well as conservatives appreciated Israel for its reputation as a militarily active citizen-soldier society.

Second, this book demonstrates Americans did not create this image of Israel all on their own. Israelis played a defining role shaping their country's place in Americans' minds. Israeli state and nonstate actors actively assessed American sensitivities and worked to promote representations of their country that they hoped would gain American sympathies. Not all Israelis supported these efforts and these efforts were not always effective. But it is impossible to make sense of Israel's place in Americans' minds without paying close attention to the purposeful and energetic efforts Israeli actors invested in influencing Americans' perception of their country.

Third, this book reveals that American perceptions of Israel changed and fractured through time in accordance with changing American and Israeli circumstances. Most emphatically, this study sees the mid-1970s as a defining moment in which dominant American commentators reconceptualized their country's mission toward Israel. Doing so, I argue, they sought to reinvent their country's image in the post–Vietnam War world, envisioning it as a benevolent diplomatic powerhouse. For many American commentators talking about American responsibilities toward Israel became a way to prescribe the broader role of the United States in the world.

AMERICANS

A range of moderate and liberal American commentators well beyond the ranks of self-identified hawks, conservatives, Jews, or Christian evangelicals were enthused with Israel's attitude to conflict in ways that went deeper than current treatments allow.[16] American observers were

[16] McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 155–97. Michelle Mart's *Eye on Israel* provides a rounded analysis of American attitudes toward Israel in the first decade of the country's existence (1948–56). The way American views of Israel changed in the decades that followed remains beyond the scope of Mart's treatment.

interested not in the Israeli army alone but in Israel as a fighting *society*. Mainstream commentators saw Israel as a state where individual liberal pursuits were not compromised by frequent military call-ups, but rather enhanced by them. This perception was most common between 1967 and 1973. At the zenith of the perceived Israeli citizen-soldier utopia, as presented in central US media outlets, Israeli soldiers supposedly moved with a smile from tank to discotheque, university seminar to the trenches, and family camping trip to artillery training; they took their three-year mandatory military service (for men) and a lifetime of reserve duty to follow, in stride, and a burgeoning consumer culture kept them entertained without diminishing their collective national commitment. Or so the dominant narrative went at the time.

Many elite observers with no religious inclination, no Jewish background, and no conservative leanings were deeply invested in Israel. Such commentators saw the state through the lens of their concern with the question of the fight against communism, and the demands this fight put on a liberal civilian society. Interests in Israel as a state that *seemed to have* maintained civilian consent and prosperity during military mobilization developed from the 1950s and peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the very same time when the United States appeared to struggle upholding this equilibrium. Popular American fascination with Israel as a fighting society pre-dates the time Christian evangelicalism or the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) became dominant political forces in the 1970s, and before neoconservatives formed a coherent intellectual voice in the early 1970s or found a semblance of influence on policymaking in the 1980s.[17] A wide and influential cadre of American

[17] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt find that it was only during the tenure of Morris Amitay, who became the executive director of AIPAC in 1975, that the organization was transformed from "an intimate low-budget operation" into one with a budget measured in the tens of millions. Neoconservative influence in Washington must also be historicized: Justin Vaïsse's work shows that neoconservatives gained a foothold in the White House only in the 1980s, and even then, they were disappointed to recognize their influence was very limited. It was only during the presidency of George W. Bush in the early twenty-first century that neoconservatives enjoyed a clearer sense of influence on policymaking. See John Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 119; Justin Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 194–7, 239–44. On Judeo-Christian affinities and Christian evangelical interest in Israel, see McAlister, *Epic Encounters*; Caitlin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012); Colin Shindler, "Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship," *Israel Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring

commentators from the late 1950s onward, and especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s, saw Israeli society as one that managed to deal with military demands admirably while, simultaneously, following US recipes for the development of a free society to their fruitful conclusion.

This view did not stay frozen in time. Developments in the Middle East including the October War of 1973, the Lebanon War of 1982, and the Palestinian uprising of 1987–8 pushed American commentators to redefine their views of Israel. The ripples of the Vietnam War, which brought elite US commentators to redefine their attitudes towards warfare as a social enterprise and envision their country's place in the world in a new light, also dictated a redefinition of American responsibilities towards Israel. Change through time defined US-Israeli relations during this dynamic period. Claims about timeless "shared values" between the two societies tend to be grossly underexamined, based mostly on the calculated statements of political figures.[18] Indeed, such

2000): 153–82; Michael T. Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (Westport, CT: 1997); Paul Charles Merkley, *American Presidents, Religion, and Israel: The Heirs of Cyrus* (London: Praeger, 2004); Andrew Warne, "Making a Judeo-Christian America: The Christian Right, Antisemitism, and the Politics of Religious Pluralism in the 20th Century United States," PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 2012; Michelle Mart, "The 'Christianization' of Israel and Jews in 1950s America," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 109–46; Rubin, "The Relationship between American Evangelical Christians and the State of Israel." For broader treatments of US foreign policy and religion, see Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Anchor, 2012); William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On lobby politics, see Mearsheimer and Walt, *Israel Lobby*; Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill Books, 1985); David Howard Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jewish Lobby for Israel* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1990); Alison Weir, *Against Our Better Judgment: The Hidden History of How the U.S. Was Used to Create Israel* (New York, NY: Createspace, 2014).

[18] The "shared values" claim is usually repeated as an axiom rather than examined rigorously. For example, a report Robert D. Blackwill and Walter B. Slocombe prepared for the *Washington Institute* think tank claims the United States and Israel shared values in "common democracy, mutual experience in fighting for freedom, roots in Judeo-Christian culture and civilization, and commitment to the right of nations, large and small to live in security while manifesting the will of the people." The authors do not supply any example or support for these assertions. Similarly, political scientist Mark R. Amstutz argues that "shared values" brought the United States and Israel together more than anything else, referring more specifically to a Judeo-Christian tradition, a commitment to democracy and "the protection of human rights," as examples of these values. The statement is left unexamined. The only citations Amstutz provides to support this sweeping claim are a reference to neoconservative commentator Michael Novak and

platitudes are often meant to lend a sense of benevolence, permanence, and unavoidability to the relationship, glossing over frictions, differences, and dramatic changes of attitude. To be sure, the mutating narratives influential Americans disseminated about Israel provided the explanatory rationales for continued material support and popularized the country's long-standing investment in Israel. Dominant American observers propagated these rationales in respectable and highly visible platforms as well as in exclusive forums. The fact the main actors in this history boasted the most prestigious journalistic credentials and commanded the attention of the most influential readership, enjoyed direct access to policymakers, moved among the Hollywood elite, and taught at the nation's finest universities meant that what they thought of Israel, and what they said about it, went a long way to determining accepted wisdom.[19] But their attitudes did not remain stable throughout history, and their statements should not be taken at face value.

To be sure, different social groups were interested in different aspects of the Jewish state: Christian evangelicals tended to interpret Israel's military exploits through the lens of millennialism and divine destinies. Many Jewish Americans, meanwhile, perceived Israel as central to their ethnic, cultural, and religious life as an American minority and saw it as an important guarantee of Jewish security. Arab Americans, and from the late 1960s New Left intellectuals as well as civil rights activists, often witnessed American admiration of Israel with a sense of exasperation and isolation. Finally, the neoconservative movement in its different incarnations has always seen unquestioning support of a militarily robust

a reference to the memoirs of the former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that stated, "Americans across the ideological spectrum support Israel because we see in that society qualities with which we identify and that we admire." See Robert D. Blackwill and Walter B. Slocombe, "Israel a Strategic Asset for the United States," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 2011, available at www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/Blackwill-Slocombe_Report.pdf, accessed July 25, 2017; Mark R. Amstutz, *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 131–2. Also see Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977 (1981)), 572; Peter Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 316.

[19] The point is not that the views expressed by elite American commentators toward Israel moved funds or weapons from the United States to Israel but that the popularization of positive ideas about Israel created wide popular acceptance of US support for Israel, and marginalized resistance. In other words, such commentators created a context in which supporting Israel made sense.

Israel as central to its ideological commitments.[20] Each of these groups and all of them together played important roles in US-Israeli relations. But their distinct trajectories cannot fully account for Israel's central and dynamic place in national imagination.

This book examines changing elite US attitudes toward Israel on a national scale. It focuses on the most influential commentators who defined Israel in widespread mainstream media outlets, popular culture, policy circles, and scholarship. The generation of dominant media professionals, cultural producers, scholars, and political leaders that reached its prime during the heyday of the citizen-soldier era following World War II played a crucial part in disseminating particular ideas about the Israeli state. Such individuals usually lived in major American cities and saw themselves as political moderates who were committed to the idea of the vital center and to consensus politics even as (and because) the tenants of these notions came under duress through the late 1960s and early 1970s.[21] Some of them produced content for nationally distributed newspapers and magazines, network television, and Hollywood production companies, while others enjoyed easy access to the Oval Office, compiled reports in the intelligence community, taught in universities, sat on think tanks, or drew popular cartoons. Encompassing individuals such as Chief Justice Earl Warren through sociologist James Coleman, filmmaker Otto Preminger through journalist Joseph Kraft, and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow through Peace Corps head Sargent Shriver and legal scholar Roger Fisher, among many others, this book introduces a wide circle of influential American commentators who anchored Israel's place in

[20] Most American Jews hoped to conform their Zionism and their ties to Israel to a Cold War vision of pluralism in American society. At the same time, the attitude of many Jewish community leaders toward Judaism was troubled by Israeli leaders who believed in the negation of the diaspora: the idea that all Jews should actively join Zionism by immigrating to Israel. See Emily Alice Katz, *Bringing Zion Home: Israel in American Jewish Culture, 1948–1967* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015); Zvi Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship: American Jewish Leadership and Israel, 1948–1957* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005). On attitudes on the US left and African American rights movement toward Israel post-1967, see Keith Feldman, *Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 79. On Arab-American views of US support for Israel, see Salim Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 70. On neoconservative interest in Israel, see Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 10, 109, 110, 236–7.

[21] Of the cracks that appeared in consensus politics during the 1960s, see Wall, *Inventing the "American Way,"* 287–9; Vaïsse, *Neoconservatism*, 21–43.