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Armed Forces & Society 2007; 33; 518 originally published online Apr 20, 2007;
DOI: 10.1177/0095327X06298730

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://afs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/4/518>

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The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil–Military Relations

The “Discourse Space” Model and the Israeli Case during the Oslo Process

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There is a common desire to seek a proper equilibrium that will assure civilian superiority over the military and prevent the military’s intervention in domestic affairs. This article addresses the unique situation in Israel during the Oslo process, in which the military was deeply involved in the political process and influenced the political echelon by its knowledge and persuasive argumentation, mostly in private intellectual encounters between the echelons. We show how the military led the civilian arm to make choices that eventually determined strategy. The military with its knowledge infrastructure was hegemonic in this encounter, its influence was significant, and civil control was weak or inefficient. The Discourse Space model used in this article provides complementary tools for describing and analyzing the encounter between the echelons. The model provides an appropriate examination of how this encounter was conducted and what outcomes it produced, at least for the Israeli case.

Keywords: *discourse space; civil control; Israel; influence; civil–military relations*

In *The Soldier and the State* Huntington defines the basic and central dilemma of civil–military relations as an inherent tension between the need to assure a strong military that will be able to defend the country and the need to assure that a strong military will follow civilian directives. Huntington defines the dilemma as a tension between the functional and the societal imperatives. He maintains that the most effective mechanism for resolving this dilemma is “objective civilian control.”¹

Over the years, the concept of civil control has become an organizing concept of all the theories that deal with civil–military relations. In the literature there is a broad spectrum of definitions. At one end of the spectrum, Kohn defines civil control as an absolute² while at the other end Bland suggests transforming the concept into “civil