International Studies Perspectives (2019) **0**, 1–21

Studying International Relations through Horror Films: A New Approach and Illustrations from *Cannon Fodder* and *Freak Out*

Oren Barak and Daphne Inbar
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract: This paper argues that works of popular culture, specifically horror films, offer valuable insights into dominant and critical perceptions of the sources of violence in ongoing armed conflicts—an issue of concern for scholars of International Relations (IR) scholars, which as yet has not received sufficient attention. Accordingly, we present a new approach that IR scholars can utilize in their analysis of works of popular culture, applying it to two recent horror films from Israel/Palestine: *Cannon Fodder* (2013, dir. Eitan Gafny) and *Freak Out* (2015, dir. Boaz Armoni). The analysis of these films, combined with a discussion of films dealing with violence from other contexts, reveals how works of popular culture in general, and horror films in particular, can help address the question of whether violence in armed conflicts is perceived as *endogenous* or *exogenous* to the groups involved. This can also shed light on specific issues, such as the connection between social representation and violence, the link between the use of military technology and violence, and the blurred boundaries between *endogenous* and *exogenous* sources of violence.

Resumen: En este trabajo, se argumenta que las obras de la cultura popular, específicamente las películas de terror, ofrecen información valiosa sobre las percepciones dominantes y fundamentales de las fuentes de violencia en los conflictos armados actuales; una cuestión que preocupa a los académicos de Relaciones Internacionales (IR) y que todavía no recibió la suficiente atención. Por consiguiente, presentamos un enfoque nuevo que los académicos de IR pueden utilizar en sus análisis de las obras de cultura popular y lo aplicaremos en dos películas de terror recientes de Israel/Palestina: Cannon Fodder (2013, director: Eitan Gafny) y Freak Out (2015, director: Boaz Armoni). En combinación con un debate sobre películas que tratan la violencia desde otros contextos, el análisis de estas películas revela cómo las obras de la cultura popular en general, y las películas de terror en particular, ayudan a abordar la cuestión de si la violencia en los conflictos armados se percibe como endógena o exógena para los grupos involucrados. Este análisis también aporta más información sobre cuestiones específicas, como la conexión entre la representación social y la violencia, el vínculo entre el uso de la tecnología militar y la violencia, y los límites confusos entre las fuentes de violencia endógenas y exógenas.

Résumé: Cet article soutient que les œuvres de la culture populaire, en particulier les films d'horreur, offrent de précieuses informations sur les perceptions dominantes et fondamentales des sources de violence dans les conflits armés en cours—une question qui préoccupe les spécialistes des relations internationales (RI) et qui n'a pas encore reçu une attention

Barak, Oren and Daphne Inbar. (2020) Studying International Relations through Horror Films: A New Approach and Illustrations from *Cannon Fodder* and
Freak Out. *International Studies Perspectives*, doi: 10.1093/isp/ekaa004

suffisante. En conséquence, nous présentons une nouvelle approche que les spécialistes en RI peuvent utiliser dans leur analyse des œuvres de la culture populaire, en l'appliquant à deux films d'horreur récents venus d'Israël/Palestine: Cannon Fodder (2013, réalisé par Eitan Gafny) et Freak Out (2015, réalisé par Boaz Armoni). L'analyse de ces films, combinée à une discussion sur les films traitant de la violence dans d'autres contextes, révèle comment les œuvres de la culture populaire en général, et les films d'horreur en particulier, aident à répondre à la question de savoir si la violence dans les conflits armés est perçue comme endogène ou exogène aux groupes impliqués. Cette analyse apporte aussi un éclairage sur des questions spécifiques telles que le lien entre la représentation sociale et la violence, le lien entre l'utilisation de la technologie militaire et la violence, et les frontières floues entre les sources endogènes et exogènes de violence.

Keywords: violence, conflict, popular culture, horror films, Israel/Palestine, Palabras clave: violencia, conflicto, cultura popular, películas de terror, Israel/Palestina, Mots-clés: violence, conflit, culture populaire, films d'horreur, Israël/Palestine

Introduction

"Birds don't just go and attack people with no reason."

– Deputy Al Malone in *The Birds*

One question recurs persistently throughout Alfred Hitchcock's classic horror-thriller film *The Birds* (1963) yet remains unanswered: what can explain the birds' sudden turn to violence against humans? Indeed, one of the most terrifying aspects of the film is that its protagonists—as well as viewers—are left wondering about the *source* of the senseless and indiscriminate violence inflicted from above upon men, women, and children (Wood 1989).

While the puzzle presented in *The Birds* remains, perhaps purposefully, open-ended, this is not true of all horror films. The present paper suggests that this cinematic genre, which characteristically engages with violent situations and explicitly graphic depictions, invites further reflection by scholars of International Relations (IR) who are interested in issues of conflict and peace. Indeed, as we demonstrate, turning our gaze to horror films can provide valuable insights concerning prevalent perceptions of the sources of violence in armed conflicts, which, if better comprehended, could possibly lead to the amelioration of such situations.

The general question that we address in this paper is whether violence in armed conflicts is perceived as *endogenous* or *exogenous* to the groups involved. This question relates to several research strands in IR that explore perceptions as root causes for conflict and peace.

First, it is important to mention the vast literature on perceptions and misperceptions of warring sides and their impact on decision-making processes. Scholars approaching this topic from the angle of political psychology ask, for instance, how perceptions of "self" and "other," as well as the relations between them, affect political leaders' decisions in matters of war and peace (Levy 1983; Stein 1988, 2013; Jervis 1988, 2017; Yarhi-Milo 2014). However, because these studies focus mainly on state leaders, they tend to overlook the perceptions of other influential actors, especially the general public, and the everyday manifestations of these perceptions in popular culture. Indeed, public perceptions during armed conflicts are liable to impose serious constraints on decision-making processes and political deliberations, making this scholarly lacuna significant.

A second body of relevant research in IR focuses on variations in instances of "opportunistic violence" perpetrated by combatants toward civilians in such conflicts as dependent on the degree of organizational control exerted by the military upon its soldiers (Manekin 2013). It also examines how individual attitudes of ex-combatants toward war and peace are shaped by the type of their military service and especially by their exposure to violence (Grossman, Manekin, and Miodownik 2015). While these works indeed concentrate on the "ordinary soldier," distinguishing between combative and noncombative military service, they do not deal with more general public perceptions of the "self," the "other," and the relations between them, including their representation in popular culture, which may help shape soldiers' attitudes regarding these issues, especially in militarized societies.

A third body of research to which the paper relates, and which has gained momentum in recent years, concerns the question of responsibility for the violence carried out during armed conflicts between states and communities. Scholars of this strand discuss various practices and mechanisms by means of which human groups that have experienced armed conflict deal with the legacy of mass violence, including issues such as truth-telling, formal apologies, forgiveness, reconciliation, and commemoration versus silence (Barkan 2000; Hayner 2002; Kymlicka and Bashir 2008; Löwenheim 2009; Ben-Ze'ev, Ginio, and Winter 2010). However, these works too accord insufficient attention to works of popular culture that address the issue of responsibility for the violence perpetrated during the conflict, including in postconflict settings wherein political leaders refuse to "mention the war."[1]

Focusing on two recent horror films produced in Israel/Palestine,[2] a conflict zone characterized by the continuous presence of violence, as an illustrative case study, this paper demonstrates how horror films can help address the question of whether this violence is perceived by the conflict's protagonists as *endogenous* or *exogenous* to their group. In this way, we seek to add to broader discussions concerning the perception of the sources of violence in armed conflicts, on the one hand, and of the perceived individual and collective responsibility for this violence, on the other.[3] We choose to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it has elicited much attention from IR scholars, who have explored various aspects of it, including the question of violence and its intergroup and intragroup sources (see, e.g., Pressman 2003; O. Barak 2005, 2017; Mitzen 2006; Pearlman 2009; Guelke 2012). At the same time, less attention has been devoted to the ways in which violence is represented in popular culture—specifically in Israeli horror films—and to whether this depiction reaffirms or challenges existing perceptions regarding its sources.

In order to address these general and case-specific gaps, we analyze two recent horror films produced in Israel: *Cannon Fodder* (2013, dir. Eitan Gafny)[4] and *Freak Out* (2015, dir. Boaz Armoni). As noted by film critics, more than half of the horror films produced in Israel in the last decade have focused on its military as an "endless source of local horror stories" (Anderman 2019). The two films discussed here are among the first and most popular examples of this growing subgenre of military horror films.

Fittingly, with soldiers as the leading characters in their explicitly gory plotlines, these films can substantiate or challenge differing perspectives on the violence in Israel/Palestine, and particularly whether this violence is *endogenous* or *exogenous*

[1] An exception is Barak (2007), who discusses the role of civil-society groups, including filmmakers, in defying the state's silence regarding the conflict in Lebanon (1975–1990). A recent Lebanese film that "mentions the war" is *The Insult* (2017, dir. Ziad Doueiri).

[2] Israel/Palestine is the area west of the Jordan River. In Arabic it is referred to as *Filastin* (Palestine) and in Hebrew it is called *Eretz Israel* (Land of Israel) or *Eretz Israel ha-shlema* (the full or complete Land of Israel).

[3] Importantly, fiction films, including horror films, are not the only genre of popular culture that address this issue. A documentary series highlighting the *endogenous* sources of violence since 1945 is *The Untold History of the United States* (2012, dir. Oliver Stone).

[4] Also known as *Battle of the Undead*.

to the conflict's main protagonists: Israelis and Palestinians. Additionally, they can help address specific issues, including the connection between social representation and violence, the link between the use of military technology and violence, and the blurred boundaries between *endogenous* and *exogenous* sources of violence.

In the first film, *Freak Out*, Israeli soldiers on a secluded military base—located in surroundings resembling the occupied West Bank—face unexpected threats from without and within. The second film, *Cannon Fodder*, portrays an Israeli military unit deployed on a covert mission into Lebanon to find the source of a zombie epidemic. Both films depict acts of violence in a tangibly violent setting; indeed, their systematic analysis demonstrates how *fictional* representations of violence can illuminate various popular understandings regarding the sources of *real-life* violence.

However, our focus on these films presents some challenges. Firstly, since both films were independently made, one might ask why other, domestically and internationally renowned—and ostensibly more influential—works of popular culture were not selected for analysis. By contrast, we argue that it is more important to focus on the content of cultural productions than their box-office success or mainstream appeal. One important aspect is these films' relative success within the context of the emerging horror genre in Israel, which has gained increasing popularity in recent years. Considering this, it is significant to note that both films were screened domestically and internationally,[5] that reviews of them were published in leading Israeli newspapers and websites, and that one of them, *Cannon Fodder*, won several prizes at film festivals in the United States and received an honorable mention in a festival in Russia.[6]

Furthermore, a main justification for our focus on independent films, and particularly horror films, is that precisely due to their position outside the mainstream, making them less subject to political and social pressures, they can reveal alternative and counterhegemonic perspectives on the sources of violence in armed conflicts. Indeed, Israeli filmmakers have highlighted the "camouflaging qualities" of horror films, which enable them to express implicit social criticism of consensual issues (e.g., military service, which is compulsory in Israel) by using zombies, murderous technologies, and other elements characteristic of the genre (Anderman 2019). In any case, the "humble beginnings" of independent horror films is not always indicative of their popularity and impact; some of the genre's most seminal works, such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968, dir. George Romero), were produced as low-budget independent films that only later achieved "cult" status.

Secondly, because both films discussed here were produced by Israelis and (mainly, albeit not exclusively) for Israeli audiences, one can argue that the observations gleaned from them refer mainly to Israeli perceptions, thus reflecting the views of the dominant political actor in Israel/Palestine (Lustick 1979; Yiftachel 2006; O. Barak 2017). Relatedly, as Ella Shohat notes, it is important to stress a film's cultural context and "the spectator-in-the-text" (1989, 11) because films are subject to the cultural and political awareness of the audience and because "aberrant readings" and competing understandings of the same text are possible. Thus, by focusing on how Israelis perceive violence in relation to "others" (here Palestinians but also Lebanese), the meaning that we attribute to these films may be contested as "an object of struggle and dispute" (Shohat 1989, 12). While we acknowledge this

[5] *Cannon Fodder* (2013), "Release Info." Accessed October 8, 2019. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2526898/releaseinfo?ref_=tt_ql_dt_2; *Freak Out* (2015), "Release Info." Accessed October 8, 2019. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3846718/releaseinfo?ref_=ttfc_ql_2 According to one website, a total of 16,940 viewers had seen *Freak Out* by October 2019. See: Cinema of Israel. Accessed October 8, 2019. https://www.cinemaofisrael.co.il/%d7%9e%d7%a1%d7%95%d7%95%d7%92-%d7%97%d7%a8%d7%99%d7%92. However, this number is probably higher, because the film is available online and is accessible by cable TV (the same is true with regard to *Cannon Fodder*).

[6] *Cannon Fodder* (2013), "Awards." Accessed October 8, 2019. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2526898/awards?ref_=tt_awd

difficulty, we posit that our focus on Israeli horror films is significant precisely because it sheds light on the perceptions of the dominant group in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which, moreover, presides over the best-organized institution of violence—the Israeli military. That said, it would be interesting to examine how violence in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is perceived in Palestinian (and other Arab) popular culture.[7] A further reason for focusing on these films is that it enables IR scholars to improve their acquaintance with cultural productions made outside the west (albeit still influenced by the US film industry) and how they present violence in armed conflicts.

Our paper is structured as follows. We begin by explaining how popular culture and films, especially horror movies, can serve as a useful tool for IR research, in particular with regard to the perception of violence in armed conflicts and its sources. We then discuss existing approaches to the sources of violence in Israel/Palestine, although with an emphasis on the perceptions of the dominant Israeli Jewish community, and how these approaches are reflected in popular culture. Subsequently, we analyze the two horror films, *Cannon Fodder* and *Freak Out*, asking what specific and general insights they provide regarding the question at hand. The paper concludes with a discussion of our findings and their relevance for IR research beyond the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, in addition posing questions for further research.

Popular Culture and IR Research

In recent years, IR scholars have expressed growing interest in popular culture (Shapiro 2009; Grayson, Davies, and Philpott 2009), exploring various genres such as science fiction (Weldes 1999; Buzan 2010; Dedman 2015), fantasy (Nexon and Neumann 2006; Drezner 2011), and documentaries (Weber 2006; Shapiro 2009).

Broadly speaking, IR scholars tend to approach popular culture from several angles (on the relations between popular culture and world politics, see Nexon and Neumann 2006; Weldes and Rowley 2015). Some regard works of popular culture largely as an *educational-pedagogical tool*, complementing traditional teaching methods (see, for example, Tomé-Alonso and Ferreiro Prado 2019; Boaz 2019). The pros and cons of using such works for didactic purposes are routinely addressed at academic conferences, such as the meetings of the International Studies Association (ISA) and other professional organizations.

Other scholars view popular culture as an *instrument of foreign policy*: a form of "soft power" or "cultural power" that states employ, alongside material forms of power, to further their national interests in the international arena (Press-Barnathan 2017). However, works of popular culture, and particularly films, can also serve as an *instrument of domestic policy*. A telling example is the documentary *Hitler's Hollywood* (2017, dir. Rüdiger Suchsland), which depicts the mobilizing role of Germany's state-run film industry under the Third Reich.

A third approach views works of popular culture as *an arena for initiating political change* (Shapiro 2009). Michael Shapiro, for example, posits that independent filmmakers can help bring about domestic or global change via political documentaries. This includes participation in film festivals, which serve not only as means to distribute new films but also as autonomous sites of political discussion and resistance beyond the state. Others have suggested researching the contribution of specific film directors such as Oliver Stone and considering their distinct accounts of historical events and political struggles (Toplin 2000). Prominent examples of these directors' efforts to call for social action can be gleaned from the public debates elicited by documentaries such as *The Fog of War* (2003, dir. Errol Morris);

[7] Noted examples are the Palestinian film *Paradise Now* (2005, dir. Hany Abu-Assad), which addresses the issue of suicide bombings, and the Lebanese film *Under the Bombs* (2007, dir. Philippe Aractingi), which deals with the Israel-Hizbullah war of 2006.

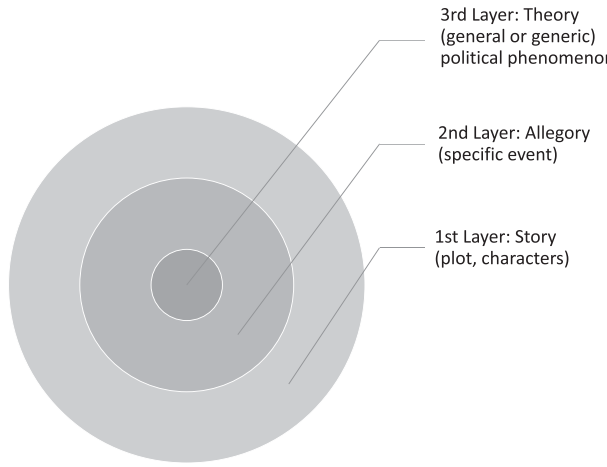

Figure 1. Layers of analysis: works of popular culture

Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004, dir. Michael Moore); *The Power of Nightmares* (2004, dir. Adam Curtis); and *The Gatekeepers* (2012, dir. Dror Moreh).

Finally, some scholars perceive works of popular culture as *mirroring cultural values* in general, and hegemonic ideologies in particular, thereby serving as a useful tool for researching states' foreign policies. In her article on *Star Trek* and US foreign policy, Jutta Weldes argues that "popular, or more accurately, mass culture . . . contributes to the reproduction, and hence the popularization, of official foreign policy discourse and thus to state action" and that policies have "a pervasive cultural basis" and their actions are made "commonsensical through popular culture" (Weldes 1999, 117–119). Similarly, Iver Neumann and Daniel Nexon propose that "IR scholars can examine popular culture as a medium for exploring theoretical concepts, dilemmas of foreign policy, and the like" (2006, 12). These concepts and dilemmas can be explored through the aforementioned cinematic genres or through other cultural mediums, such as television series (Dyson 2019).

Drawing on the latter approach, we focus on a particular genre of popular culture, horror films, which revolves around a specific phenomenon—violence—in search of insights regarding dominant and critical perceptions of the sources of violence in ongoing armed conflicts. While we are primarily interested in exploring how these perceptions of violence are *represented* in works of popular culture, we also ask whether such works can offer us *theoretical insights* on the sources of this violence, and especially on the question of whether these sources are *endogenous* or *exogenous* to the conflict's protagonists. Thus, beyond focusing on the specific case to which these works relate (here, the conflict in Israel/Palestine) and asking how they can better elucidate it, we are also attentive to more general (or generic) insights that these works offer regarding the phenomenon at hand (violence and its sources).

How can this be achieved? We propose that works of popular culture, among them films, possess several layers, and researchers can peel away these layers one by one (see Figure 1). The first layer (*story*) is the work's narrative, including its plot and characters. The second layer (*allegory*) is the specific case that the work represents. This can be historical, contemporary, or a combination thereof, and focusing on it can reveal how it is perceived by the creator of the popular work, and possibly also by others. The third and last layer (*theory*) consists of statements about the general political phenomenon addressed by the work, beyond the particular story it tells and the specific case it represents. When analyzing this third, deepest layer of a work of popular culture, we ask what general theoretical insights, or "leads,"

it may offer with regard to the phenomenon at hand, thereby helping us generate potentially fruitful directions for studying this phenomenon.

A central difference between these three layers is that the first and second are inherent in the film, whereas the third can be inferred by researchers, regardless of the filmmaker's intent. Indeed, in this third layer scholars can employ films to engage broader questions, or puzzles, that interest them, including hegemonic and critical perceptions of political phenomena as well as theoretical concepts. It should also be noted that some works of popular culture purposely blur the boundaries between story and allegory (e.g., by including documentary footage). Noted examples are the film *Waltz with Bashir* (2008, dir. Ari Folman) and the film *BlacKkKlansman* (2018, dir. Spike Lee), which intentionally blur the boundaries between past and present events, using the former to reflect on the latter.

Horror Films and the Sources of Violence in Armed Conflicts

Defending literature in the face of those who seek to censure it on various grounds, acclaimed Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa argues, "[l]iterature is the intermediary vehicle where all of the twisted and malicious elements of the human come to life, and allows us to understand ourselves more profoundly." He continues: "If we didn't have literature as an outlet for these malevolent emotions, then this hidden part of us would come to the surface and escape into the real world" (Llosa 2018).

Similarly, films in general, and horror films in particular, have long been seen as reflecting society's twisted and malicious elements. In his seminal study of films produced in Germany before and during the Third Reich, including the path-breaking horror film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*] (1920, dir. Robert Wiene), Siegfried Kracauer posits that "the films of a nation reflect its mentality in a more direct way than other artistic media" (Kracauer 1947, 5).[8] This, we suggest, includes perceptions of violence in armed conflicts and its sources.

Indeed, films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, in addition to more recent ones such as *The White Ribbon* [*Das weiße Band—Eine deutsche Kindergeschichte*] (2009, dir. Michael Haneke), provide insights concerning the sources of the violence perpetrated by Germany in the twentieth century and also shed light on the sources of violence in armed conflicts more generally. Similarly, numerous films produced in the United States that present violent encounters in that country's history provide clues as to their possible sources. Among them are Westerns depicting the violence of white settlers against the indigenous population in North America (and the latter's violent response), as well as violence among the settlers themselves (e.g., in the film *Heaven's Gate* [1980, dir. Michael Chimino]), police and crime movies, film noirs, science fiction movies and television series, action hero and superhero movies, and also horror films such as the aforementioned *Night of the Living Dead* (1968, dir. George Romero), as well as others. Significantly, these films not only *present* violence but also provide important clues as to its *sources*. For example, a significant number of films suggest that the origins of violence in the United States are *endogenous* to its society, highlighting various structural, cultural, and rational factors,[9] or combinations thereof, such as interracial tensions[10] but also intergenerational ones.[11]

[8] In the preface to his book, Kracauer writes: "This book is not concerned with German films merely for their own sake; rather, it aims at increasing our knowledge of pre-Hitler Germany in a specific way" (1947, v). He adds, however, that "to speak of the peculiar mentality of a nation by no means implies the concept of a fixed national character" (ibid., 8). See also Chapman (2005, 1). We accept this caveat.

[9] On this distinction, see Lichbach (1997).

[10] See, especially, Coleman (2011) and the numerous examples she provides from American horror films, including *Night of the Living Dead*.

[11] See, e.g., the film *The Wild One* (1953, dir. Laslo Benedek).

As our analysis focuses on horror films, it is pertinent to ask whether this genre offers unique insights into violence and its sources. Delving into broader debates regarding the affective functions of horror films as a genre or their influence on popular culture is beyond the scope of this paper. Within the general writing on horror films, researchers have previously addressed the "power of horror" (Kristeva 1982), outlined the cultural history of horror movies (Clarens 1997; Tudor 1989; Jancovich 2002), and traced the development of horror cinema's subgenres (e.g., comedy-horror films) (Hallenbeck 2009).

While these general themes are not the focus of the two works discussed herein, our analysis is indeed inspired by the burgeoning literature on fictional horror and its relation to various political phenomena. Thus, for example, several IR scholars discern creative connections between horror films and various areas of political inquiry such as biopolitics (Debrix and Barder 2013), collective trauma and national identities (Blake 2013),[12] and globalization and international security threats (Drezner 2011; Devetak 2005). Additionally, universally recognizable themes of the genre, such as the mysterious outbreak of a zombie apocalypse, are utilized in horror films around the globe to address politically charged and contested issues, such as the ecological and human costs of colonialism in the Australian setting in *Cargo* (2017, dir. Ben Howling and Yolande Ramke) or real and imagined political dissidence and the toll that American-Cuban relations takes on Cuba's population in *Juan of the Dead* (2011, dir. Alejandro Brugués).

Considering these academic and cultural works, we agree with Richard Devatek's assertion that "politics and international politics have always been haunted by monsters and ghosts" (2005, 622).[13] However, since horror movies deal with violence in an explicit and graphic manner, the "monsters and ghosts" they depict can be useful when investigating the sources of violence in armed conflicts.

Perceptions of Violence in Israel/Palestine

As was noted earlier, the sources of violence in and between Israelis and Palestinians is a subject of ongoing debate. In this section, we discuss some of the existing approaches to the conflict in Israel/Palestine within the Israeli-Jewish community, which, as noted earlier, is more powerful politically and militarily. As we shall see, the two horror films that we analyze relate to these various approaches, also adding to them.

The first approach, advocated by Israeli scholars, public commentators, political leaders, and large segments of the Israeli public, holds that violence in Israel/Palestine is *exogenous* to its Jewish community. Indeed, according to this argument, the violence is rooted, above all, in Israel's volatile Arab and Muslim environment—within it the Palestinians—which has historically been hostile to the Jewish state and is also characterized as generally violent and aggressive. This assumption that violence originates from predetermined differences between rival communities is reminiscent of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" (1993) thesis.

This view was expressed in an op-ed by Dan Margalit,[14] which was published during the bloody clashes that took place in May 2018 between the Israeli military and Palestinian demonstrators near the barrier separating Israel from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, leaving scores of Palestinians dead and hundreds wounded:

[12] The focus on horror films is not limited to political scientists and IR scholars. For an insightful piece on the use of these films in in adolescent therapy and as a means of teaching important psychodynamic concepts, see Schlozman (2000).

[13] Devetak demonstrates how gothic narratives became a distinct discursive feature of post-9/11 international relations.

[14] In 2003, Margalit wrote the foreword to the Hebrew edition of Huntington's book.

> The thousands of Palestinians who tried to breach the Gaza border fence [with Israel] are the grandchildren of the [1948] war generation in which the refugee problem was born, the generation that concocted the petulant demand for the "right of return." (Margalit 2018)

In the face of such an existential threat, Margalit argued, Israeli leaders had no choice but to adhere to the stance adopted in 1956 by General Moshe Dayan, then the army's chief of staff, in his eulogy for Ro'i Rothberg, a young Israeli guard who was killed and mutilated by Palestinians on Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, which was then under Egyptian control. In his iconic speech, General Dayan stated that, given the hatred and yearning for revenge among the Palestinians living on the other side of the border, it is "the choice of our lives—to be willing and armed, strong and unyielding, lest the sword be knocked from our fists, and our lives severed" (Margalit 2018).[15] Notably, however, Dayan himself did not consider the Palestinians (whom he referred to as "Arabs") to be "out for blood" without reason; rather, he acknowledged their grievances and Israel's responsibility for them, at least to some extent:

> Let us not hurl blame at the murderers. Why should we complain of their hatred for us? Eight years have they sat in the refugee camps of Gaza, and seen, with their own eyes, how we have made a homeland of the soil and the villages where they and their forebears once dwelt. Not from the Arabs of Gaza must we demand the blood of Ro'i, but from ourselves. (Ginsburg 2016)

Still, Dayan's conclusion was *not* to seek accommodation with the Arabs. Rather, he stated, "[i]f the hope of our destruction is to perish, we must be, morning and evening, armed and ready" (Ginsburg 2016). The view that violence in Israel/Palestine is *exogenous* to Israel's Jewish society can also be discerned in numerous statements made by other Zionist and Israeli leaders. These range from Revisionist thinker Ze'ev Jabotinsky and his 1923 concept of the "Iron Wall" (1923) to dissuade Arab hostility to the Zionist project (Shlaim 2001), to hawkish Labor leaders such as David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, and Ehud Barak,[16] and Israel's current leader, Benjamin Netanyahu. Indeed, in a speech delivered in 2016, Netanyahu claimed that Israel is surrounded by "wild beasts" and must defend itself by constructing massive barriers (Beaumont 2016; see also Aran and Fleischmann 2018).

However, over the years, and especially following the Lebanon War of 1982, the First Palestinian Intifada in 1987, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the 1990s, alternative views began to emerge in Israel, and they garnered some support among civil-society groups and to a lesser extent among the state's political leaders. Critical Israeli sociologists argued that Israeli society has become militarized and that Israel's use of violence against its foes has become an integral part of its particular brand of militarism (Kimmerling 1993; Ben-Eliezer 1998, 2012, 2019; Levy 2007). Indeed, according to Kimmerling:

> Militarism became a factor in Israel's society when arms and the management of violence came to be perceived as routine, self-evident, and integral parts of the Israeli-Jewish culture, a natural state that could never be changed. Such militarism developed a distinctive character over time (Kimmerling 2008, 135).

[15] For Dayan's Eulogy, see "Eulogy of Moshe Dayan on the Grave of Ro'i Rothberg RIP."Accessed February 6, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=iIR96WCMrxY [Hebrew].

[16] In 1996, Ehud Barak described Israel as a "villa in the jungle" (Barak 1996). In 2017, he added, "[t]here is no mercy for the weak in the Middle East, and there is no 'second chance' for those who are unable to defend themselves. Israel must always be vigilant, strong, and ready to vanquish every assailant" (E. Barak 2017).

As to the sources of Israel's militarism and, interconnectedly, its use of violence to attain its goals, some have called attention to the struggles within the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community in Palestine before Israel's independence in 1948, as well as later on, among members of the new state's political and military elites (Ben-Eliezer 1998). Others, including sociologists, political scientists, and IR specialists, emphasize the cultural, structural, and rational-functional factors underpinning Israel's militarism (Levy 2007; Sheffer and Barak 2010, 2013). At any rate, these writers, as well as other scholars working in kindred disciplines (especially the so-called Israeli "New Historians"; for details see Hirsch 2007), share the view that the sources of violence in Israel/Palestine are, at least in part, *endogenous* to the Jewish community. Furthermore, some identify the rise of "ethno-securitism" (Bar-Tal, Halperin, and Magal 2009) or "ethno-militarism" (O. Barak 2017) in Israel, especially following the state's expansion in the Israeli-Arab war of 1967.

A third approach to violence in Israel/Palestine, which can be found in works by Israeli sociopsychologists and historians, emphasizes the critical role of past intersubjective experiences that members of Israel's Jewish community underwent. These include collective traumas, especially the Jewish Holocaust, as well as the Palestinian Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 and the 1973 war. Such writers posit that these collective traumas continued to shape Israel and its civilian and military institutions even decades after the country gained independence, including with regard to the use of violence against "others"; in the eyes of many Israelis, this is justified by the existential threat that Israel faces (Zertal 2005).[17]

Importantly, these three approaches to the sources of violence in Israel/Palestine, which are not always exclusive,[18] are reflected in Israeli popular culture. The first approach, according to which violence is *exogenous* to the Jewish community, is manifested in Israeli films such as *Ricochets* (1986, dir. Eli Cohen; originally entitled *Two Fingers from Sidon*), *Beaufort* (2007, dir. Joseph Cedar), and *Lebanon* (2009, dir. Samuel Maoz), which portray Israel's involvement in Lebanon in the period 1982–2000 as defensive, depicting the "other" (both Palestinians and Lebanese) as inherently violent (O. Barak 2017). A similar view can be found in *The Gatekeepers* (2012, dir. Dror Moreh), a documentary comprised of interviews with six former directors of Israel's General Security Service (GSS or Shin-Bet) concerning their role in the Occupied Territories since 1967. Although the interviewees mention Jewish acts of violence, such as those committed by the "Jewish Underground" in the 1980s and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, their main emphasis is on Israel's "war on terror." Moreover, most of these officials present the violence that Israel used as a legitimate, if not inevitable, response to the violent acts of the "other" (Bar-Tuvia and Barak 2014).

The second approach, which speaks of Israel's "militarism," is apparent in works such as Amos Kenan's *The Road to Ein Harod* (1984) and Benjamin Tammuz's *Jeremiah's Inn* (1984), two dystopic novels published after the 1982 war. A similar view can be found in the documentary *The Lab* (2013, dir. Yotam Feldman), which suggests a close connection between the ongoing armed conflict in Israel/Palestine and Israel's flourishing arms exports (Gross 2018). As this film suggests, Israel/Palestine has in fact become a "laboratory" for the innovative weapons and military tactics developed by Israel's burgeoning arms industry. The film reveals how the state, particularly the Ministry of Defense, serves as a mediator and facilitator of these domestic-external violent exchanges.[19]

[17] See also Bar-Tal, Halperin, and Magal (2009).

[18] A telling example is Amos Kenan's novel, *The Road to Ein Harod* (1984), which depicts Israel as ruled by a military junta. These generals not only target Palestinians and leftist Israeli Jews, but also historic enemies of the Jewish people, seeking to eliminate them by launching missiles into the past. Kenan's novel served as a basis for the film *Doomsday* (1991, dir. Doron Eran).

[19] On Israel as a "laboratory," see a statement by a former high-ranking IDF officer quoted in Harel (2016). This argument is similar to that made in *The Last Samurai* (2003, dir. Edward Zwick), a film that depicts a US army officer who

The third and last approach is represented in the film *Paratroopers* (1977, dir. Yehuda Judd Ne'eman), which depicts the violence within an Israeli combat unit as directed inward, toward the "misfits" among its soldiers, and not toward the external enemy, which is absent from the film (Silberstein 2013; Preminger 2017). Indeed, *Paratroopers* was one of the first Israeli films to suggest that Israeli society has "internalized" violence and that this violence is no longer connected to *exogenous* factors. The fact that *Paratroopers* was released as Israel seemed to be entering an era of peace—although, as it turned out, this was merely a lull between military confrontations—is telling. A more recent example is *Waltz with Bashir* (2008, dir. Ari Folman). In its representation of the Sabra and Shatila Massacre perpetrated by Israel's Lebanese allies in 1982, the film makes a strong connection between Israel's traumatic experience in Lebanon and the Jewish Holocaust (Morag 2013, see also Raz and Hagin 2013 and compare with Niv 2014; Tomé-Alonso and Ferreiro Prado 2019).

Violence in Israel/Palestine through the Lens of *Cannon Fodder* and *Freak Out*

This section asks what *Cannon Fodder* (2013) and *Freak Out* (2015), two recent Israeli horror films depicting acts of violence in Israel/Palestine and across its border with Lebanon, can tell us about perceptions of violence in this armed conflict, and possibly others. In analyzing the two films, we follow the framework presented earlier, focusing on their fictional narratives (*story*); the political reality that they represent (*allegory*); and the general insights they offer (*theory*). We then juxtapose the two films, eliciting additional insights regarding the question at hand.

Cannon Fodder

Story

Cannon Fodder (2013) is a zombie film set in Israel and Lebanon. An elite unit of the Israeli military, the four members of which represent the major subgroups in the Jewish community in Israel/Palestine (secular Mizrachi, Ethiopian, Russian, and National-Religious; notably, non-Jews who serve in the Israeli military, including Druze, Circassians, and Bedouins, are not represented), is sent into Lebanon on a top-secret mission: to capture a senior member of the party-militia Hizbullah who allegedly developed a secret biological weapon that threatens Israel. After crossing the border, the Israeli soldiers encounter bloody corpses, and upon entering the Lebanese village in which their target resides, they are assaulted by a pack of bloodthirsty zombies. Of all the Lebanese whom the Israeli soldiers encounter during their incursion, only one young woman is *not* a zombie. She is revealed to be the daughter of the Hizbullah official, and she decides to help the soldiers. The latter subsequently discover that the new weapon—which was in fact developed by Israel, not Hizbullah—is out of control and turning all of Lebanon's inhabitants into zombies. The soldiers locate the Hizbullah official, take a sample of his contaminated blood, and fight their way back to safety, pursued by ever-increasing hordes of zombies. However, when they finally cross the border back home, they discover, to their horror, that Israel too has been contaminated.

Allegory

In his book *Theories of International Politics and Zombies*, Daniel Drezner posits, echoing Kracauer, that "[p]opular culture often provides a window into the subliminal or unstated fears of citizens, and zombies are no exception" (Drezner 2011, 4). Indeed,

uses the experience he gained from fighting Native Americans to help Japan's rulers defeat and destroy the Samurais. Here, too, *endogenous* violence is exported and produces violence elsewhere.

a national-conservative interpretation of *Cannon Fodder* may suggest that, in Israeli eyes, Lebanon was transformed from the focus of Israel's hopes (as it was when Israel invaded the country in 1982) into the sum of all its fears, especially following the Israel-Hizbullah War in 2006 (O. Barak 2017). However, a critical reading of *Cannon Fodder* suggests that, in fact, the responsibility for Lebanese violence against Israel—represented by the zombie epidemic that spreads from Lebanon into Israel—lies with Israel, *not* with Lebanon. This can be gleaned from the film's main plot twist: the biological weapon was developed by Israel for use against Hizbullah, yet it backfired, resulting in a zombie epidemic that ultimately also infected Israel. Importantly, this fictional twist accords with the actual historical chain of events: Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 created the political and social circumstances that led to the rise of Hizbullah, ultimately providing the latter with a cause worth fighting for and Israeli targets (the film's title, "cannon fodder," may refer to this).

Cannon Fodder can thus be interpreted as a critique of Israel's involvement in Lebanon and the disastrous and violent repercussions that this had for Israel. The clandestine use of a biological weapon against Hizbullah may allude to Israel's covert operations in its "war on terror," among them the attempted assassination of officials of the Palestinian group Hamas by poisoning; indeed, some such Israeli actions backfired. For example, Israel's decision to deport 400 Hamas activists to South Lebanon in 1992 enabled Hamas to improve its connections with, and learn from, Hizbullah.

In sum, *Cannon Fodder* can be viewed as an allegory of Israel's struggle against Lebanese and Palestinian armed nonstate actors and the dire consequences of this struggle for both sides. As it suggests, Israel bears at least part of the responsibility for this violence, the sources of which are *endogenous*. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that the events of the film supposedly take place on October 5, one day before the anniversary of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, which, at least initially, was a military debacle for Israel.[20] Gidi, the senior Israeli security official responsible for the zombie epidemic, also bears a physical resemblance to Moshe Dayan, Israel's defense minister in 1973: he wears an eye-patch on his left eye, and one of the soldiers refers to him by this name. Furthermore, in direct reference to Dayan's iconic 1956 speech, cited earlier, Gidi lectures Doron, his subordinate: "You can't go on living without killing and without blood. So, stop denying yourself."

Theory

What general insights can be gleaned from *Cannon Fodder* regarding the sources of violence in conflict zones? First, the film suggests that the sources of violence in these settings, although ostensibly *exogenous* and presented as such by political and military leaders, may in fact be *endogenous*. Indeed, throughout the film Israeli officials try to conceal their own responsibility for the violent developments in Lebanon and Israel, yet their subordinates discover the truth. For those following the dynamics of many intrastate conflicts, uprisings, and revolts, including the Arab revolts (2010–2011), this observation comes as no surprise: many states in the Middle East—and Israel is no exception (Guelke 2012; Aran and Fleischmann 2018)—invest considerable efforts in blaming outsiders for the violence engulfing their countries, the sources of which are often *endogenous*.[21]

Second, the film suggests that the use of "dirty tricks" during an armed conflict, especially in the context of the "war on terror"—which the state sometimes perceives as a carte blanche to use emergency and extreme measures—can have grave

[20] A later film by the same director, *Children of the Fall* (2017, dir. Eitan Gafny), explores the sources of violence in another revered Israeli institution—the Kibbutz. Significantly, the film takes place before and during the October 1973 war.

[21] On this debate in postwar Lebanon, see Barak (2007).

consequences for the state's citizens (Kohn 2009). Indeed, as *Cannon Fodder* implies, technology is not always reliable, and its unrestrained use, including directing it against the "other," can have undesired—even horrific—repercussions that extend also to the "self." This refers not only to the use of chemical weapons but also to other technological means employed in armed conflicts, such as drones and eavesdropping devices (Kreps 2016).[22]

Thus, on a general level, *Cannon Fodder* can be viewed as a critique of states' conduct during armed conflicts in general, and the "war on terror" in particular, especially their use of violence. Importantly, this is not only a critique of "militarism," that is, of the use of violence to achieve political goals. Rather, it also concerns the specific means employed: the unrestricted use of technology, treachery, and deceit, even toward the state's citizens, who are no more than a tool—"cannon fodder"—to achieve political and military ends. Indeed, the film suggests that state leaders should be held accountable for the monsters they create in these armed conflicts.

Freak Out

Story

Freak Out (2015) is a combination of horror-thriller and dark comedy. The film's protagonist, an anxious Israeli noncombatant soldier named Matan, is dispatched to a remote military base where he is to spend a week on sentry duty, along with three combat soldiers. Their mission is to guard a mysterious antenna and adjacent bunker.

The opening scene of the film sets the tone of dread surrounding this mission, as Matan desperately attempts to contact headquarters and escape his fate. However, upon reaching the base he discovers that the radiation-emitting antenna located there prevents cell phone reception. For that same reason, no soldiers permanently serve on the base, apart from two noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who alternate their stays on a weekly basis.

One of these NCOs is the eccentric Stas, who greets the soldiers upon arrival. The soldiers who had previously guarded the base inform Matan that Adam, their commander, was tough, whereas Stas, the current commander, appears to be more appeasable. Stas, a Russian immigrant, is a loner who spends most of his time gazing at the antenna and sleeping. He sets two basic rules: no one is allowed into his room or the bunker.

Beset by feelings of impending dread, Matan is obliged to spend the week in the company of the three combat soldiers, who mock him and leave him alone to guard the base when they go out to party with Stas. On his first night at the base, Matan panics during what appears to be a hostile takeover by cloaked Arab infiltrators, although this is revealed to be a prank at his expense by his peers. However, in his flight from the "terrorists," Matan stumbles upon a corpse in the bunker. He informs the three combat soldiers and together they discover the remains of Adam, the soldier with whom Stas had shared his commanding position.

When his dark secret is revealed, Stas sets out on a killing spree, murdering all the combat soldiers, until he is finally stopped by Matan, the noncombatant soldier. In the closing scene, a rescue team arrives at the base and exempts Matan from sentry duty, and Matan decides not to call his mother in order to avoid "worrying" her.

[22] It is noteworthy that in *Night of the Living Dead*, the zombie epidemic is also caused by a scientific experiment (though not a military-related one) that backfires.

Allegory

In an interview, Boaz Armoni, the director of *Freak Out*, explained his use of humor as a subversive tool in the following way:

> [T]he people's army is, in its essence, absurd, and is therefore a fertile ground for comic materials . . . In recent years, the prevailing policy in Israel has been to empower the army and its importance and to establish its necessity in "frightening" elements such as Iran or the Muslim world. Humour is a subversive tool used by artists to undermine militancy and blind patriotism, expose the absurd world behind them, and emphasize the individual and the human at the expense of totalitarianism. (Quoted in Alexander 2014)

Indeed, *Freak Out* can be seen as a satire directed at the Israeli army and various aspects thereof, as well as Israeli society more broadly. The first aspect that the film tackles is the uneasy relationship between combat and noncombatant soldiers (known as *jobniks*, see Inbar and Barak 2018) and also among soldiers of various ethnic origins. Thus, for example, Matan the *jobnik* is presented as weak and incompetent, a stereotyped image reaffirming the conservative gendered discourse in Israel, according to which combat soldiers embody masculinity whereas noncombatant soldiers (both male and female) embody femininity (Lomsky-Feder and Sasson-Levy 2018).

Accordingly, throughout the film Matan is ridiculed by his combat peers, who call him a "female clerk," mock his bursts of anxiety, and regard him as someone who needs to adapt himself to the military's (and consequently their) standards, and not vice versa. In this respect, Matan's meeting with Stas, the soldier-turned-killer, becomes a violent "initiation ritual" for Matan, enabling him to prove his masculinity and redraw the boundaries of socially acceptable deviation. This is evident when Stas confesses to Matan that he murdered the combat soldiers: "After all, you are like Stas, a misfit, you should be happy that we killed them." Stas, the *unacceptable* misfit, thus fulfils the margins' fantasy of violent revenge against the "center," whereas Matan, the *acceptable* misfit, whose main goal is to "fit in," adapts himself to the hegemonic social norms by forcefully suppressing the unacceptable misfit.

Yet, the film goes even further, depicting a killer who emerges from within the ranks of Israel's most revered institution. Moreover, it implies that the killer's violence is, at least in part, connected to his proximity to the mysterious radiation-emitting antenna installed in the base. The film makes it clear that the military—and, by extension, Israel—is responsible for the antenna's horrifying side effects, implicating both in the killing spree. Thus, for example, when Matan and the other soldiers arrive on the base and Stas briefs them about the antenna, he warns them, quite cynically: "It fries your brain, causes cancer in your balls—or vice versa . . . But what are you worried about, the army protects you!" The violence depicted in *Freak Out* is therefore *endogenous*: it stems from the technology that Israel employs, not from any *exogenous* "frightening element."

As was noted above, technology plays a major role in the Israeli military; it is extolled by its top brass, as well as Israel's political leaders. Indeed, in recent decades there has been much discussion of the Israeli army as "small" and "smart" (Ben-Eliezer 2012, 53–54), of its emphasis on technology, its "qualitative edge" and "superiority" over its foes, largely due to its use of cutting-edge technology. However, in *Freak Out* the very technology that enables the Israeli army to preserve its superiority over "others" causes horrific violence among its own troops. Significantly, no *exogenous* factor is implicated in this violence: Palestinians appear only at the beginning of *Freak Out* and prove to be unconnected to the horror that ensues.

The gory slaughter that occurs later due to "(un)friendly fire" further underlines how the fear of *exogenous* violence may result in a failure to discern its *endogenous* sources.

Theory

Freak Out offers a number of general insights regarding the sources of violence in conflict zones. First, the film explicitly shows that these sources can be *endogenous* and are not necessarily *exogenous* to the conflict's protagonists. Second, it suggests twofold sources of *endogenous* violence: the military's increasing reliance on technology, which affects its soldiers in unforeseen ways, including making them more violent, and the attempts of social "misfits" to earn themselves a place within the collective by suppressing and even physically eliminating other "misfits."

It should be noted that a number of works of popular culture, especially from the Cold War period, tackle the possible hazards of technological advancements for individuals, societies, and humankind. For example, in the film *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954, dir. Richard Fleischer), an adaptation of the classic novel by Jules Verne, Captain Nemo uses the nuclear-powered *Nautilus* to stop the world's great powers from abusing nuclear technology and causing a world war. Numerous other books, graphic novels, and movies have dealt with nuclear disasters and their effects.[23] By highlighting the unforeseen effects of scientific advancement, *Freak Out* suggests that in the post–Cold War era too a state's unrestricted use of technology can be a double-edged sword.

Comparison

Following our analysis of these two Israeli horror films, we compare their depiction of three main themes: first, the connection between social representation and violence in armed conflicts; second, the use and abuse of military technology as a source of violence in these conflicts; and third, the considerable blurring of boundaries between *endogenous* and *exogenous* sources of violence in armed conflicts in general and in the "war on terror" in particular.

First, addressing the issue of social representation and its connection to violence in armed conflicts, both films demonstrate how the external or internal "other"—all but one of the Lebanese characters in *Cannon Fodder*, Stas the new immigrant in *Freak Out*—is effectively cast as violent and malign compared to the peaceful and benign "self." This presentation confirms and reinforces prevailing conservative-national narratives in Israeli society regarding various external "others" (Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims), internal "others" (e.g., new immigrants), and narratives concerning who "we" (Israelis) are.

At the same time, both films convey a more nuanced message concerning the "self," the "other," and the relationship between them. In *Cannon Fodder* the "self"—the military unit sent behind enemy lines—is representative of Israel's Jewish community but excludes non-Jews. Indeed, the only Arab to join this unit is the daughter of a Lebanese collaborator. The Israeli military is thus depicted as representative of Israeli society, although this representation, in turn, is limited to its dominant Jewish community. Palestinian "others" are excluded, and only "Good Arabs" (Cohen 2010) (i.e., collaborators and their family members) can join.

Studies of the Israeli military, particularly its highest echelons, note this dual pattern: representing Jewish soldiers stemming from various ethnic and geographical origins while simultaneously excluding most non-Jews (Barak and Tsur 2012, see also Levy 2012). In *Freak Out*, the connection between representation and violence is even more explicit. The Israeli soldiers, who are all Jewish, and especially the

[23] Such as Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Cat's Cradle* (1963).

combat soldiers, behave with belligerence to the Palestinians whom they encounter in a restaurant on their way to the remote base: they insult them and leave the premises without paying. However, later in the film the gaze turns inward and the "misfit"—Matan, who is presented as effeminate compared to the stereotypically masculine combat soldiers—earns his place in the collective by eliminating the other "misfit": Stas, the Russian immigrant with homicidal tendencies. Unlike earlier Israeli films such as *Paratroopers*—in which the "misfit" commits suicide—*Life According to Agfa* (1992, dir. Assi Dayan)—which depicts how characters representing different groups in Israeli society eventually massacre one another—and other examples,[24] *Freak Out* presents such internecine violence as an almost natural rite of initiation for the legitimate "misfit" who defends his comrades—and by extension society—against the threat posed by the illegitimate "misfit."

Regarding the second theme, our analysis of the two films raises critical questions regarding technology and its central role in the perpetration of violence. In this context, we argue that both films present Israel's "small, smart army"—the state's pride—as Janus-faced. In *Cannon Fodder*, the secret biological weapon that Israel develops to wipe out Hizbullah's leaders turns on its creators, dooming them along with their enemies. In *Freak Out*, a radiation-emitting antenna "fries the brain" of the soldier in charge of guarding it, causing him to slaughter his comrades. This criticism is also voiced in *The Lab*, an Israeli documentary film on Israel's burgeoning arms industry: in the film, Israeli inventors of sophisticated military weapons systems and fighting tactics, many of them former security officials who had engaged in fighting against the Palestinians, extol Israel's "technological edge" over its enemies. They note how, among other things, this transformed Israel into a lodestone for counterterrorism experts worldwide, especially after 9/11. However, films such as *Cannon Fodder* and *Freak Out* are even more blunt by suggesting that those who employ these sophisticated weapons—and not only their targets—ultimately pay the price.

Lastly, the third theme raised in the films is the blurred boundaries between *exogenous* and *endogenous* sources of violence in protracted conflicts. In a recent contribution concerning the Israeli military, sociologists Edna Lomsky-Feder and Orna Sasson-Levy discuss the connection between the military's use of external violence and the occurrence of violence within it:

> As the military is the institution whose purpose is to manage the violence on behalf of the state, violence is inherent in every military organization. The military violence is intentionally directed at an external enemy, yet it unavoidably penetrates into the organization itself and is often directed toward the women soldiers (and men soldiers) themselves. The external violence and internal violence feed off each other and are always gendered. (Lomsky-Feder and Sasson-Levy 2018, 87)

The inexorable link between external and internal dimensions of military violence can also be inferred from films such as *Cannon Fodder* and *Freak Out*. However, interestingly, both films present the source of the violence as *endogenous* to Israeli society, in contrast to what many Israelis, especially those adhering to the aforementioned national-conservative approach, contend. Thus, for example, in *Cannon Fodder* the cause of the zombie epidemic is a biological weapon developed by Israel; after it is deployed against Hizbullah, it spins out of control, eventually threatening Israel. This suggests that the boundaries between the two states are porous, and violence can easily pass from one to the other (O. Barak 2017).

[24] Such as Yehoshua Kenaz's novel *Infiltration* (1986), in which various social "misfits"—described by Israeli novelist Amos Oz as "Sparta's defective and rejected sons"—serve together in a separate army unit, and one of them eventually commits suicide (Oz 2012).

Similarly, in *Freak Out* a killer emerges from within the military, affected by the radiation-emitting antenna. At first, the killer claims that the source of his violent behavior is *exogenous*, that it was directed against a dog owned by a Palestinian. However, this attempt to pass the blame to the "other" fails, and the truth is revealed. The film does not draw an explicit connection between the *endogenous* and *exogenous* sources of violence in Israel/Palestine. However, it does allude to it: we first see the Israeli combat soldiers abusing Palestinians; subsequently these same soldiers harass their noncombatant peer, while masked as Palestinian "terrorists"; eventually, the combat soldiers themselves become the victims of their comrade's homicidal spree.

In sum, both horror films suggest that the source of violence is *endogenous* and not *exogenous*. This violence, moreover, is not confined by international borders or by the fences surrounding military bases; it permeates these physical boundaries, affecting both those within and without. Accordingly, the "self"—and not only the "other"—must be held accountable for this violence and its effects.

Discussion and Conclusion

In two recent Israeli horror films, *Cannon Fodder* and *Freak Out*, familiar international horror narratives play out in the local context, specifically within the Israeli military, the state's most revered institution. Even more interestingly, however, these films convey ambivalent messages regarding the sources of violence in the armed conflict in Israel/Palestine and possibly elsewhere.

While on the surface both films appear to reinforce conservative perceptions that this violence is *exogenous* to Israeli society, a deeper analysis suggests a more critical view. Indeed, our analysis suggests that these films regard violence as *endogenous* to Israeli society, emanating from internal divisions, closely connected to the development and use of sophisticated technology by the military, especially in the context of the "war on terror," and transcending the state's borders and other barriers, including the blurred divide between the civilian and military spheres.

These observations question existing approaches and widely held assumptions regarding the way groups involved armed conflicts perceive ongoing violence and its sources. Indeed, they suggest an innovative approach, and their assessment of these perceptions through the prism of popular culture can also be applied to other conflict zones.

As the analysis of these films has shown, works of popular culture can raise issues that are particularly relevant to IR scholars interested in perceptions and misperceptions of the "self," the "other," and the relationship between them, especially during armed conflicts. Indeed, beyond the examples of Israeli horror films and their social commentary on the violence perpetrated in Israel/Palestine, one can identify these issues in other forms of cultural production and protracted wars. In a moving scene in the documentary film *The Fog of War* (2003, dir. Errol Morris), the title of which alludes to the difficulty in making decisions in times of armed conflict, former US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara concedes that only in 1995, more than two decades after the end of the Vietnam War, when he traveled to Vietnam and had a chance to meet his former adversaries, did he realize that, for them, the conflict was not about communist expansion; rather, this was yet another phase in their centuries-long war of independence.[25] This example suggests that leaders who are engaged in armed conflict are liable to misunderstand its true nature. Although examining works of popular culture does not guarantee that such misperceptions

[25] For the film's transcript, see: "The Fog of War: Transcript." Accessed October 8, 2019. http://www.errolmorris.com/film/fow_transcript.html. Concerning the US involvement Vietnam, one can mention Graham Greene's 1955 novel, *The Quiet American*, which depicts the clandestine involvement of an American secret agent in French-controlled Vietnam.

will not occur, the "camouflaging qualities" of these works, noted earlier, enable them to express implicit social criticism of consensual political issues.

In addition, the insights that can be gleaned from these films, which present distinct groups in the military that carry out acts of violence in armed conflicts, including combative and noncombative soldiers, are significant not only in aiding scholarly efforts to "unpack" violence in these conflicts but also for attempts to situate individual acts of violence in relation to broader societal and political perceptions.

Last but not least, since works of popular culture, and particularly horror films, are liable to express critical views concerning the sources of violence in armed conflicts, including the position that this violence is *endogenous* and not *exogenous* to its protagonists, these works can be useful for IR scholars and practitioners who are interested in, or seek to promote, collective responsibility for this violence in postconflict settings. This is particularly true when political leaders prefer silence to acknowledgement of, and taking responsibility for, past atrocities committed by their own community.

Acknowledgements

We thank the editor, Dr. Laura Neack, and the anonymous reviewers for their useful feedback on earlier drafts of this article. We also thank Galia Press-Barnathan, Yuval Benziman, Olga Gershenson, Kyle Grayson, and Jeff Kopstein for commenting on earlier drafts. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 2018 meeting of the Association for Israel Studies in Berkeley and at the 2019 Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association annual conference in Washington, DC.

References

Alexander, Neta. 2014. "Perseverance and *Zero Motivation*." *Haaretz*, June 24, 2014. https://www.haaretz.co.il/.premium-1.2351445.

Anderman, Nirit. 2019. "Why So Many Israeli Horror Films Take Place in the Army." *Haaretz*, January 4, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/movies/.premium.MAGAZINE-why-so-many-israeli-horror-films-take-place-in-the-army-1.6808066.

Aran, Amnon, and Leonie Fleischmann. 2018. "Framing and Foreign Policy—Israel's Response to the Arab Uprisings." *International Studies Review*. doi: 10.1093/isr/viy055.

Barak, Ehud. 1996. "Address by Foreign Minister Ehud Barak to the Annual Plenary Session of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council." February 11, 1996. Accessed February 6, 2019. http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/1996/Pages/FM%20Barak-%20address%20to%20NJCRAC%20-%20Feb%2011-%201996.aspx.

———. 2017. "What the Israeli Right Gets Wrong about Security and the Occupation." *Haaretz*, May 14, 2017. http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.788659.

Barak, Oren. 2005. "The Failure of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, 1993–2000." *Journal of Peace Research* 42: 719–36.

———. 2007. "'Don't Mention the War'? The Politics of Remembrance and Forgetfulness in Postwar Lebanon." *Middle East Journal* 61: 49–70.

———. 2017. *State Expansion and Conflict: In and Between Israel/Palestine and Lebanon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barak, Oren, and Eyal Tsur. 2012. "The Social Origins of Israel's Military Elite, 1948–2010." *Middle East Journal* 66: 211–30.

Barkan, Elazar. 2000. *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Bar-Tal, Daniel, Eran Halperin, and Tamir Magal. 2009. "The Paradox of Security Views in Israel: A Social-Psychological Explanation." In *Existential Threats and Civil-Security Relations*, edited by Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer, 219–48. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Bar-Tuvia, Shani, and Oren Barak. 2014. "*The Gatekeepers*: A Critical Perspective." *Theory and Criticism* 43: 291–300.

Beaumont, Peter. 2016. "Netanyahu Plans Fence Around Israel to Protect It From 'Wild Beasts.'" *The Guardian*, February 10, 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/10/netanyahu-plans-fence-around-israel-to-protect-it-from-wild-beasts.

Ben-Eliezer, Uri. 1998. *The Making of Israeli Militarism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
———. 2012. *Old Conflict, New War: Israel's Politics Toward the Palestinians*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
———. 2019. *War over Peace: One Hundred Years of Israel's Militaristic Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Ben-Ze'ev, Efrat, Ruth Ginio, and Jay Winter, eds. 2010. *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Blake, Linnie. 2013. *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma, and National Identity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Boaz, Cynthia. 2019. "How Speculative Fiction Can Teach about Gender and Power in International Politics: A Pedagogical Overview." *International Studies Perspectives*. doi: 10.1093/isp/ekz020.
Buzan, Barry. 2010. "America in Space: The International Relations of *Star Trek* and *Battlestar Galactica*." *Millennium* 39: 175–80.
Chapman, James. 2005. *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*. London: I.B. Tauris.
Clarens, Carlos, 1997. *An Illustrated History of Horror and Science-Fiction Films*. Boston: Da Capo Press.
Cohen, Hillel. 2010. *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Coleman, Robin R. Means. 2011. *Horror Noire: Blacks in American Horror Films from the 1890s to Present*. New York: Routledge.
Debrix, Francois, and Alexander D Barder. 2013. *Beyond Biopolitics: Theory, Violence, and Horror in World Politics*. London: Routledge.
Dedman, Stephen. 2015. *May the Armed Forces Be With You: The Relationship Between Science Fiction and the United States Military*. Jefferson: McFarland.
Devetak, Richard. 2005. "The Gothic Scene of International Relations: Ghosts, Monsters, Terror, and the Sublime after September 11." *Review of International Studies* 31: 621–43.
Drezner, Daniel. 2011. *Theories of International Politics and Zombies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Dyson, Stephen Benedict. 2019. *Imagining Politics: Interpretations in Political Science and Political Television*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Ginsburg, Mitch. 2016. "When Moshe Dayan Delivered the Defining Speech of Zionism." *Times of Israel*, April 28, 2016. https://www.timesofisrael.com/when-moshe-dayan-delivered-the-defining-speech-of-zionism.
Grayson, Kyle, Matt Davies, and Simon Philpott. 2009. "Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture–World Politics Continuum." *Politics* 29: 155–63.
Gross, Judah Ari. 2018. "Israeli Arms Sales Skyrocket, Increasing 41.5% in One Year." *Times of Israel*, May 2, 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-arms-sales-skyrocket-increasing-41-5-in-one-year.
Grossman, Guy, Devorah Manekin, and Dan Miodownik. 2015. "The Political Legacies of Combat: Attitudes Toward War and Peace Among Israeli Ex-Combatants." *International Organization* 69: 981–1009.
Guelke, Adrian. 2012. *Politics in Deeply Divided Societies*. Cambridge: Polity.
Hallenbeck, Bruce G. 2009. *Comedy-Horror Films: A Chronological History, 1914–2008*. Jefferson: McFarland.
Harel, Amos. 2016. "An Israeli Official Who Has Previously Been Involved in Contacts with the US: Israel Has Lost More than $ 7 Billion." *Haaretz*, September 19, 2016. https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.3071976.
Hayner, Priscilla B. 2002. *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity*. London: Routledge.
Hirsch, Michal Ben-Josef. 2007. "From Taboo to the Negotiable: The Israeli New Historians and the Changing Representation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem." *Perspectives on Politics* 5: 241–58.
Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72: 22–49.
Inbar, Daphne, and Oren Barak. 2018. "'Revenge of the Jobniks': A Critical Analysis of Daily Resistance of Soldiers to the Military in Contemporary Israeli Cinema." *Public Sphere* 14: 123–44.
Jancovich, Mark, ed. 2002. *Horror: The Film Reader*. London: Routledge.
Jervis, Robert. 1988. "War and Misperception." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18: 675–700.
———. 2017. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Kimmerling, Baruch. 1993. "Patterns of Militarism in Israel." *European Journal of Sociology* 34: 196–223.
———. 2008. *Clash of Identities: Explorations in Israeli and Palestinian Societies*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Kohn, Richard. 2009. "The Danger of Militarization in an Endless 'War' on Terrorism." *Journal of Military History* 73: 177–208.
Kracauer, Siegfried. 1947. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Kreps, Sarah E. 2016. *Drones: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *The Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kymlicka, Will, and Bashir Bashir, eds. 2008. *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levy, Jack S. 1983. "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems." *World Politics* 36: 76–99.

Levy, Yagil. 2007. *Israel's Materialist Militarism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

———. 2012. *Israel's Death Hierarchy: Casualty Aversion in a Militarized Democracy*. New York: New York University Press.

Lichbach, Mark I. 1997. "Social Theory and Comparative Politics." In *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, edited by Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, 239–76. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Llosa, Mario Vargas. 2018. "Calling Feminism 'Literature's Main Enemy' is to Show Novels Aren't Innocent." *Peru Reports*, March 19, 2018. https://perureports.com/2018/03/19/opinion-mario-vargas-llosa-calling-feminism-literatures-main-enemy-is-to-show-novels-arent-innocent.

Lomsky-Feder, Edna, and Orna Sasson-Levy. 2018. *Women Soldiers and Citizenship in Israel: Gendered Encounters with the State*. London: Routledge.

Löwenheim, Nava. 2009. "A Haunted Past: Requesting Forgiveness for Wrongdoing in International Relations." *Review of International Studies* 35: 531–55.

Lustick, Ian S. 1979. "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism Versus Control." *World Politics* 31: 325–44.

Manekin, Devorah. 2013. "Violence against Civilians in the Second Intifada: The Moderating Effect of Armed Group Structure on Opportunistic Violence." *Comparative Political Studies* 46: 1273–300.

Margalit, Dan. 2018. "The Arabs Chose to Be Refugees." *Haaretz*, May 24, 2018. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-the-arabs-chose-to-be-refugees-1.6114542.

Mitzen, Jennifer. 2006. "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma." *European Journal of International Relations* 12: 341–70.

Morag, Raya. 2013. *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Nexon, Daniel H., and Iver B. Neumann. 2006. "Introduction: Harry Potter and the Study of International Relations." In *Harry Potter and International Relations*, edited by Daniel H. Nexon and Iver B. Neumann, 1–23. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Niv, Kobi. 2014. *Look Back into the Future: The Israeli Cinema and the Lebanon War of 1982*. Tel Aviv: Olam Hadash.

Oz, Amos. 2012. "Yehoshua Kenaz's *Infiltration*: 25 Years After." *Haaretz*, February 3, 2012. https://www.haaretz.co.il/1.1633326.

Pearlman, Wendy. 2009. "Spoiling Inside and Out: Internal Political Contestation and the Middle East Peace Process." *International Security* 33: 79–109.

Preminger, Aner. 2017. *Reflections on Cinema and Ethos: Israel and Other Scenes*. Tel Aviv: Resling.

Press-Barnathan, Galia. 2017. "Thinking about the Role of Popular Culture in International Conflicts." *International Studies Review* 19: 166–84.

Pressman, Jeremy. 2003. "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23: 114–41.

Raz, Yosef, and Boaz Hagin, eds. 2013. *Deeper than Oblivion: Trauma and Memory in Israeli Cinema*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Schlozman, Steven C. 2000. "Vampires and Those Who Slay Them." *Academic Psychiatry* 24: 49–54.

Shapiro, Michael. 2009. *Cinematic Geopolitics*. New York: Routledge.

Sheffer, Gabriel, and Oren Barak, eds. 2010. *Militarism and Israeli Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 2013. *Israel's Security Networks: A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shlaim, Avi. 2001. *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. New York: Norton & Co.

Shohat, Ella. 1989. *Israeli Cinema: East\West and the Politics of Representation*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Silberstein, Tali. 2013. *That's The Way to Make Soldiers: The Character of the Soldier in Israeli Theatre and Film*. Tel Aviv: Resling.

Stein, Janice Gross. 1988. "Building Politics into Psychology: The Misperception of Threat." *Political psychology* 9: 245–71.

———. 2013. "Threat Perception in International Relations." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, edited by Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears and Jack S. Levy, 364–94. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tomé-Alonso, Beatriz, and Lucía Ferreiro Prado. 2019. "Mapping Orientalist Discourses: Using *Waltz with Bashir* in the Classroom." *International Studies Perspectives*. doi: 10.1093/isp/ekz009.

Toplin Robert Brent, ed. 2000. *Oliver Stone's USA: Film, History, and Controversy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Tudor, Andrew. 1989. *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Weber, Cynthia. 2006. *Imagining America at War: Morality, Politics, and Film*. London: Routledge.

Weldes, Jutta. 1999. "Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action, and Popular Culture." *Millennium* 28: 117–34.

Weldes, Jutta, and Christina Rowley. 2015. "So, How Does Popular Culture Relate to World Politics?" In *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies*, edited by Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton, 11–34. Bristol, UK: E-international Relations Publishing.

Wood, Robin. 1989. *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Yarhi-Milo, Keren. 2014. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Yiftachel, Oren. 2006. *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Zertal, Idith. 2005. *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*. Translated by Chaya Galai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.