**[Nation of soldiers](https://www.dawn.com/news/1815652/nation-of-soldiers)**

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WITHIN a short time after the founding of Israel, a persecuted people who had never warred became “a nation of soldiers”. As historians Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz write in their book, The Israeli Army,“two ex-generals drove garbage trucks in Tel Aviv and famed scientists sorted the mail in [occupied] Jerusalem” during the 1973 Ramazan war.

I am, of course, wrong when I say that the Jews had “never warred”. Over the course of 2,000 years of life in Europe, it was impossible for the Jewish people not to serve in their countries’ armed forces. They were in the German army too — even in the Wehrmacht — and earned the coveted Iron Cross, though their Nazi detractors claimed they served only for the record and withdrew from the army quickly on one pretext or another. There were Jewish officers in Luftwaffe, including air marshal Erhard Milch, Hermann Goering’s deputy, who rebuilt the German air force after World War I. Goering, like Hitler ignored the fact that Milch was of Jewish heritage and once remarked: “I decide who is a Jew!”

As history shows, ‘nations of soldiers’ pillaged their neighbours but ultimately destroyed themselves. Can any Arab country follow Israel and become a nation of soldiers? Frankly, no, because no Arab country has the fundamentals needed for a state to become a nation of soldiers. Israel has universal literacy, science and technology of a kind second to none in the world, a pool of scientists and technocrats of the highest order, and well-established democratic institutions.

This democracy, of course, openly flaunts its ethnic prejudices, like the unwritten apartheid against the Palestinian civilians. Besides, there is something Nazi about its raison d’être that goes against the very spirit of democracy and human rights, for unlike other countries in the world, Israel is not a state of its citizens; it’s a state for Jews the world over. In fact, the Law of Return passed by the Knesset in July 1950 gives Jews living anywhere in the world the right to ‘return’ to Israel. Those who ‘returned’ to Palestine included David Ben-Gurion, born in Russian Poland; Yitzhak Shamir, born in Belarus; Golda Meir, born in Ukraine, Menachem Begin, also born in Belarus. The list is endless.

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Israelis do not bother about such considerations. Their dedication is to their raison d’être — Israel’s survival and its territorial expansion at the expense of its neighbours.

Israel’s Achilles’s heel is its manpower, because it cannot fight a long war. A long war will mean factories, farms and offices would be without hands. So all the wars it has fought with its Arab neighbours were of a short duration: the Suez Canal crisis in 1965 lasted nine days, the Six-Day war in 1967 and the 20-day-long 1973 war.

However, Benjamin Netanyahu can continue this war against Hamas till eternity because it is a war Israel has never fought before. A war means a clash between two armies, even if one of the armies is no match for its enemy, but it is an army nevertheless. In Gaza, one of the world’s most powerful armies is ‘fighting’ hungry, thirsty, wounded and homeless women and children. This genocidal war can continue endlessly, because Western powers led by the US have vetoed every attempt to have a ceasefire resolution passed by the Security Council. The Likud regime will continue this Hitlerite barbarism till Gaza becomes a people without land, conforming to the old Zionist shibboleth — for a people without land, a land without people (effectively countered by Ghada Karmi in her book Married to Another Man).

What Arab countries should learn from this ‘nation of soldiers’ is the sense of equality that prevails in society; this esprit de corps is refl­ected in the working of the armed forces, and Moshe Dayan was usually addressed as ‘Moshe’. Unnecessary saluting is discouraged, and a man may have two ranks, and will report to the unit that is mobilised. He may be a major in one unit and a corporal in another, depending upon where he is needed. Even old women who have retired from the army help in mobilisation by passing on sensitive information on the telephone in coded language.

PS: My last article reproduced in good faith the denials by some Zionist leaders, including Ariel Sharon, that they had been misquoted. One of the quotes which Zionist lobbyists denied was a statement attributed to Sharon, in which he said among other things: “With one hit I’ve killed 750 Arabs.” But in his book, The Myths of Zionism, John Rose, a Jewish scholar, says Yeshayahu Leibowitz, a religious philosopher, was outraged when in 1953 “an Israeli army unit, led by Ariel Sharon, killed 50 Palestinian Arab civilians at the village of Kibya” in Jordan.

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