



Zion's Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)

By Charles D. Freilich

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In *Zion's Dilemmas*, a former deputy national security adviser to the State of Israel details the history and, in many cases, the chronic inadequacies in the making of Israeli national security policy. Chuck Freilich identifies profound, ongoing problems that he ascribes to a series of factors: a hostile and highly volatile regional environment, Israel's proportional representation electoral system, and structural peculiarities of the Israeli government and bureaucracy.

Freilich uses his insider understanding and substantial archival and interview research to describe how Israel has made strategic decisions and to present a first of its kind model of national security decision-making in Israel. He analyzes the major events of the last thirty years, from Camp David I to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, through Camp David II, the Gaza Disengagement Plan of 2005, and the second Lebanon war of 2006.

In these and other cases he identifies opportunities forgone, failures that resulted from a flawed decision-making process, and the entanglement of Israeli leaders in an inconsistent, highly politicized, and sometimes improvisational planning process. The cabinet is dysfunctional and Israel does not have an effective statutory forum for its decision-making?most of which is thus conducted in informal settings. In many cases policy objectives and options are poorly formulated. For all these problems, however, the Israeli decision-making process does have some strengths, among them the ability to make rapid and flexible responses, generally pragmatic decision-making, effective planning within the defense establishment, and the skills and motivation of those involved. Freilich concludes with cogent and timely recommendations for reform.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Zion's Dilemmas* is the most detailed analysis to date of the inner workings of Israel's national security establishment. It presents seven case studies: the two Lebanon wars (1982 and 2006); the peace processes with Egypt and the Palestinians; the unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon, in 2000, and Gaza, in 2005; and the failed Lavi fighter jet project, an ambitious attempt to build an indigenous warplane with U.S. funding, which was canceled in 1987."?Aluf Benn, *Foreign Affairs*

"Freilich's book, which furnishes a unique glimpse into the Israeli national security decision-making process, is sure to become the 'go to' work on the subject. It is a must read for anyone interested in how and why Israeli governments have made?and continue to make?the national security decisions that they do."?David Rodman, *Israel Affairs*

"This volume is by one of the foremost analysts of Israel's national security policy (NSP) It analyzes seven case studies dealing with NSP toward the Palestinians, Gaza, and Lebanon, and the building of the Lavi jet fighter Freilich argues that it is imperative for Israel to correct its NSP failures in order to meet expected strong challenges in the future. Those interested in Israel's NSP and its foreign policies will benefit greatly from this study. . . . Summing Up: Highly recommended."?Choice

"How often is a reviewer assigned a book he or she can confidently predict will become not only an indispensable reference work but the essential reference point for future research on a given subject? *Zion's Dilemmas* is one such instance, and its author is to be congratulated for his outstanding scholarly contribution to the field of contemporary Israel studies writ large, and more specifically to the analysis of the country's internal policymaking processes and status as a highly controversial yet formidable Middle Eastern and global state actor."?Israeli Journal of Foreign Affairs

"The author...presents a very informative account of how Israel formulates its national security policy...The book also presents an in-depth analysis of the DMP in several major case studies in Israel's national security history." ?Efraim Inbar, *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 2014)

"The extraordinarily important *Zion's Dilemmas* is the authoritative book on the making of Israel's national security policy. Charles D. Freilich lays out fundamental institutions of Israel's national security infrastructure, identifies five pathologies, and takes the reader through several cases of decision making around war, peace, and weapons procurement. Even the most knowledgeable student of Middle Eastern politics will learn from this thoroughly detailed and comprehensive book by an author with deep knowledge of Israel's politics."?Janice Gross Stein, Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management, University of Toronto, author of *Street Protests and Fantasy Parks*

"This book is a superb guide through the labyrinth of Israel's policymaking process, skillfully demonstrating how major decisions were taken at the most crucial historical junctures. The great advantage to the reader is that it was written by someone who has seen it all from the inside."?Ehud Yaari, Lafer International Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy

"This is a unique book providing deep insights into Israeli national security decision making. Synthesizing unusual personal knowledge with theoretical originality, Charles D. Freilich identifies and shows five main pathologies of Israeli security decision making in seven case studies of critical Israeli choices. On this basis a series of important improvement proposals are developed. *Zion's Dilemmas* is essential reading for all interested in Israeli statecraft, and also of profound significance for the comparative study of national security policies."?Yehezkel Dror, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; author of *Israeli Statecraft: National Security Challenges and Responses*

About the Author

Charles D. ("Chuck") Freilich is a Senior Fellow at the Belfer Center, Harvard Kennedy School and teaches political science at Harvard, Tel Aviv University, and elsewhere. Prior to serving as deputy national security adviser, he was a senior analyst in the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Freilich is the author of numerous op-eds, appears regularly in American, Israeli, and international media, and speaks widely on Middle Eastern issues.

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Edward White:

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