



Divine Service?: Judaism and Israel's Armed Forces (Religion and International Security)

Stuart A, Professor Cohen

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Religion now plays an increasingly prominent role in the discourse on international security. Within that context, attention largely focuses on the impact exerted by teachings rooted in Christianity and Islam. By comparison, the linkages between Judaism and the resort to armed force are invariably overlooked. This book offers a corrective. Comprising a series of essays written over the past two decades by one of Israel's most distinguished military sociologists, its point of departure is that the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, quite apart from revolutionizing Jewish political activity, also triggered a transformation in Jewish military perceptions and conduct. Soldiering, which for almost two millennia was almost entirely foreign to Jewish thought and practice, has by virtue of universal conscription (for women as well as men) become a rite of passage to citizenship in the Jewish state. For practicing orthodox Jews in Israel that change generates dilemmas that are intellectual as well as behavioural, and has necessitated both doctrinal and institutional adaptations. At the same time, the responses thus evoked are forcing Israel's decision-makers to reconsider the traditional role of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) as their country's most evocative symbol of national unity.

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