Obligations versus Rights: The Views of Arab Teachers in Israel Regarding Serving in the Israel Defense Forces or Volunteering in the National-Civic Service

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Abstract

The study showed six main findings. First finding showed that the majority of interviewees see themselves as Israelis, yet in parallel view the Palestinians as their brothers. Second finding revealed that the majority of interviewees did not agree with compulsory military service but do not reject serving in the IDF or volunteering to do national service if one chooses to do so. Our third hypothesis was that not the draft itself would produce changes in the relationships between the societies, but that a change in government policy towards the Arab sector. Fourth finding showed that the Arab public believes that the rights are universal and not contingent on the fulfillment of obligations. The fifth hypothesis stressed that there is no agreement regarding the social implications that may follow the drafting of the young men. The final finding showed that Arab schools do not hold discussions about compulsory military service on their own initiative.

Keywords: Israel, Arab population, Arab teachers, Israel Defense Forces, National-Civic Service, Obligations, Rights.

1. Introduction

The establishment of the State of Israel led to substantial changes in the dispersion of Palestinian Arab society in the country. Whereas many left the country as refugees or settled in Gaza and the West Bank, only 150,000 Arabs stayed in the towns and villages within the newly founded State of Israel (Ganim, 2001). The scattering of the Arab population throughout the State of Israel did not undermine their aspirations to reunite with the Palestinians living abroad. The idea of reunification constituted a central factor in the rift between Jews and Arabs (Smooha, 2001).

The volatile relations between the Arab and Jewish populations led to violent confrontations between the two groups, which in 2000 reached its climax. In clashes between thousands of Arab demonstrators and security forces, 13 Arab demonstrators were killed. This event intensified the feelings of lack of trust existing between the two groups (Jamal, 2007). Many Arabs do not see themselves as having successfully integrated in Jewish Israeli society. While over the last few years, a call has been heard from the Jewish public appealing for the Arab public to participate in the Israeli military and national service systems, for many members of the Arab public, these systems symbolize acquiescence with the policy of Israeli occupation against the Palestinians. The Arab public believes that advancement of equality in a democratic society is not conditional on compulsory military service or volunteering in one or another type of service, but is a basic right of all citizens living in a democratic state (Gal, 2008).

For the majority of the Jewish population, IDF service is perceived as a crucial step in building Israeli society, whereas Arab society perceives itself in terms of Palestinian nationalism, and as such, the military establishment represents an institution preserving the inequity meted out to the Arab public (Or Commission, 2003). In order to facilitate integration of the Arabs into Israeli society, different volunteer frameworks have been established to give Arab citizens an alternative way to contribute to society. This is the national-civic service program. This program has no connection to security domains and enables the volunteer to take an active part in Israeli society (Tibi & Biton, 2011).

At the end of their service, each volunteer receives different monetary grants, and integrates more efficiently into Israeli society (Gal, 2008). The Arab elite totally rejects this program, given that it may create a process of Israelization and as such, cause Arab youth to abandon the idea of Palestinian unification (Abraham Foundation Initiatives, 2012). Various Arab Knesset members work actively in schools to prevent Arab youth from volunteering for national service (Smooha & Lechtman, 2010). Various Arab schools do allow discussion of the issue to take place, and at the end of the day, leave the decision in the hands of the young people themselves (Smooha & Lechtman, 2011). Thus, in recent years, we can see a trend of increasing involvement of young Arabs in the national-civic service. In reality, however, we are talking about a very minimal number that does not reflect the real potential. Only approximately 1000 young Arabs volunteer each year to the program from a potential population of 70,000 high school graduates (Smooha & Lechtman, 2012).

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

The conflict started with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The heart of the conflict lies in two identical claims for the same area: The Israelis and the Palestinians claim that the same area (Israel/Palestine) belongs to them. This dispute has led to clashes between the Zionist movement, which aspired to establish a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, and the national Palestinian-Arab movement, which claimed that the territory belongs to the Palestinian nation. Some supporters of Israel assert that the reason for the conflict is the refusal of Palestinians to recognize Israel as the national state of the Jewish people. Conversely, the Arabs argue that the heart of the conflict is the violation of the natural rights of the Palestinian people to establish a state in their country of origin (Dowty, 2012). Over the years, many attempts to settle the conflict and reach a final resolution, but none has been successful (Morris, 2003; Peters, 2001). Even prior to the establishment of the State, relations between Arabs and Jews in the Land of Israel were hostile, and violent events led to many casualties on both sides (Segev, 1999). However, the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel created a significant and critical change, when Arab armies invaded Israel, and the different military organizations such as the Palmach, Haganah, and Etzel repulsed the foreign forces while simultaneously uprooting from their homes many Palestinian residents. The geopolitical changes propelled many Palestinians to leave of their own free will the area of the Land of Israel and head to Arab countries. Many Palestinians made new homes in makeshift refugee camps in Jordan and the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and in Lebanon (Smith, 1986).

The founding of the State of Israel led to the dispersion of Arabs throughout Arab countries. In addition, it led to the establishment of enclaves in different areas such as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip - ruled by the Egyptians and Jordanians, respectively - and to the creation of Arab communities within the borders of Israel, under direct Israeli rule. The Arab population in the Land of Israel called this process "Nakba, The Catastrophe". Even though the Arab population was split in two, each part believed that it was united with the other under the definition and identity of being Palestinian (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007). The State of Israel saw Arab population as a minority group and Israeli policy for dealing with the Arab problem operated according to three principles. These principles were (1) security- that is to say, the Arab threat from outside the state's borders and within; (2) establishing the Jewish Zionist state, with preference given to Jews; and (3) establishing a democratic liberal state (Ganim, 2001).

The first principle – security: The Arab-Israeli sector, for the most part, sees itself as belonging to the divided Palestinian people and aspires to reunite with it. This perception led to the creation of a double nationalism, which in turn created a lack of trust between the Arabs and the Jews, with each side trying to minimize its contact with the other. The lack of trust has an impact on the security processes vis-à-vis the Arab population, which include an ongoing tense interaction between the rule of law and security agencies and the Arab population. The second principle - a Jewish Zionist state: Cultural, religious and language differences position each party on opposing sides of the fence. Jewish Zionism does not view the State of Israel as the state of all its citizens, but rather the state of the Jewish people, and accordingly, cannot relate to the Arab population as equals. In other words, the State of Israel does not expect the Arabs to develop an identity and loyalty on the same level as they do of the Jews. These processes led to unequivocal and clear discrimination between the Jewish and Arab sectors (Smooha, 2001). The third principle is liberal democracy. Israel has created a watered-down citizenship for Arabs. They are able to participate in democratic processes, enjoy government budgets and state institutions and have a separate school system that enables them to preserve Arab culture; yet, at the same time, this perpetuates the split between the societies. Arab society is still characterized as a minority group suffering from discrimination (Rabinowitz, 2001).

The Arab population, consequently, finds it difficult to integrate into Jewish Israeli society. The laws of Israel prohibit discrimination, yet in social terms, the Arab public is not accorded nearly the same level of development and budgets as Jewish sector. It would seem that the State of Israel is the one that perpetuates the gaps between the two groups. The ability and the encouragement of the State of Israel to enable the Arab population to preserve its cultures, in reality, prolong the social differences and entrench discrimination toward the Arabs (Saban, 2004). The Six Day War was perceived as a formative event from the perspective of the Palestinian Arabs. It brought the residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under complete Israeli rule. This was perceived as demeaning, especially for those who saw themselves having a Palestinian identity. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza suffered social, economic, political and security discrimination. The Arabs in Israel enjoyed access to Israeli services, but their brothers in the West Bank and Gaza were seemingly cut off from these services. The empathy of these two groups toward each other has increased over the years. Today, political borders are perceived as irrelevant, and most Israeli Arabs see themselves as Palestinians- leading to hostility between Jews and Arabs (Harms & Ferry, 2012).

The dissimilarity, isolation and cultural differences led to violent clashes between the Arab population and the Israeli establishment. Arab population wanted to break away from the State of Israel and unite with the Palestinian people. The support of the Palestinians ignited a number of direct confrontations with the Israeli security forces, with the most violent of these occurring in October 2000. Thousands of Arab youths disrupted the public order in Israel by holding coordinated demonstrations in a number of Arab towns. The fervor of the Arab youths led to a disproportionate response by the Israeli security forces, resulting in the killing of 13 Arab men. The scope and intensity of this event raised many questions regarding the character of the relationship between the State of Israel and Arab population. Most Jews boycotted the Arab towns and villages, and the Arabs, in opposition, lost their faith in the state's authorities, growing alienated from it (Jamal, 2007). This alienation was highlighted when both the Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis again demanded equality of rights and obligations, with one of the latter being military or national-civic service. Politicians, intellectuals and the general public, primarily among Jews, stressed the proposition that without equal obligations, there could not be equal rights (Abraham Fund Initiative, 2009). The opposing view asserts that in a civilized and progressive democratic state, all communities and populations enjoy equal basic rights, and in certain situations, minority groups may enjoy rights that are not given to other groups, with the purpose being to help ensure integration, cooperation and tolerance among the groups (Goldberg, 1997).

The Arab Israeli viewpoint regarding serving in the IDF

Every year tens of Arab go into the IDF and the Police. This number may sound impressive but as a proportion of the Arab population in Israel (1.65 million residents, according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013), this number is fairly insignificant (Stern, 2008). Moreover, in terms of the fact that close to 70,000 young Arabs graduate high school each year (Smooha & Lechtman, 2012), we can see that the number of draftees in reality is very low. This fact has created a fierce debate regarding obligations and rights in the state, given that the Arabs claim longstanding discrimination. The question is asked why do different groups of Jews that are not drafted into the army (e.g., ultra-Orthodox Jews) still have all their rights, while the Arab population does not (Gal, 2008)? When trying to compare the case of the ultra-Orthodox and the Druze and Bedouin, many of whom serve in the army, we can distinguish substantial economic discrimination. The ultra-Orthodox receive significant financial allocations from the state, whereas the Bedouin and Druze suffer budgetary inequality. In other words, army service does not guarantee equal rights (Frisch, 2000).

Conservative and more extreme views can be found among Arab political movements in Israel. Without exception, they all vehemently refuse to cooperate with the security forces and in any way, facilitate and encourage military draft of Arabs. For example, Member of Knesset (MK) Jamal Zahalka, chair of the Balad faction (in 2008) called the few Arabs that were going into the army "despicable" (Stern, 2008). MK Hashim Mahameed (Hadash) noted that in government and civilian companies, Arabs are not trusted as a result of the continuing hostilities, so that talk about drafting of Arabs is empty slogans. Mahameed also said that one cannot expect Israeli Arabs to be drafted into the army while the army continues to occupy Palestinian land (Frisch, 2000). Brant (2011) believes that there has never been a compulsory draft in Israel, given that the ultra-Orthodox and the Arabs have the option of not being drafted. Yet while the ultra-Orthodox receive a draft notice, which they can get waived or postponed on the basis of "study is his raison d'être", Arabs do not even receive a draft notice owing to the fear that they will want to be drafted, which will spark questions about double nationalism.

For example, will the Arabs agree to fight against persons they view as their brothers, will the entry of Arabs into the security forces harm State security and will confidential information make its way into the enemy's hands? Historically, starting as far back as the 1950s, Arab youth did ask to serve but after registering, nothing happened and these boys were never asked to continue the induction process. It seems that while the Arab sector, in general, is not interested in joining the security forces, the State of Israel and the security forces especially are also not keen to absorb Arab youth. In contrast, the army has required the Druze population to serve in the army (since 1956), because Druze society is essentially different than Arab society: the Druze gives their loyalty to the state in which they reside (Smooha, 1993). Nevertheless, because of blood ties, the Druze may see themselves as closer to the Arabs than the Jews. The drafting of Druze youth into the IDF has contributed to a rift between the Arab sector and the Druze, because the Arabs believe the Druze who are serving are traitors, and their link to their Israeli identity is questionable and full of contradictions. Druze society itself is split, with one side seeing itself as belonging to Israeli society and believing that, therefore, they must serve in the army, and the other side seeing itself as having blood ties to the Arab society, and therefore, asking for an exemption from service (Halaby, 2006). In the Israel Defense Service Law of 1986, all citizens and permanent residents are eligible for compulsory draft. Arabs in Israel are not exempted from compulsory draft. The Minister of Defense has never decided to sign off on exemption for Arabs, in contrast to the ultra-Orthodox case, the respective Ministers of Defense have signed off on exemptions for the ultra-Orthodox. However, only in the early years of the state did Arab youth receive official call-up papers; today, they do not. The military establishment has never called upon this population to serve (Orgad, 2007).

The perception of Israeli Arabs of national-civic service

No ethnic or religious group will be able to sever itself in terms of morality (and even the law) unilaterally from its obligation to the State, and at the same time ask it for all its rights. The phenomenon also existed among ultra-Orthodox Jews. Perhaps though there is a national policy according to which citizens can contribute to the State, in the same way as if they were serving in the army, and receive in return full rights. The national-civic service seemingly offers an appropriate solution, given that it encourages volunteering in places and government institutions such as the courts, schools and hospitals. These bodies do not deal with security issues, only social, moral and ethical issues. The benefits volunteers receive are exactly the same as those accorded to youth who serve in the army; for example: study grants, discharge grants, loans for purchasing a home, income tax breaks etc. National service facilitates advancement of social equality and enables social and economic integration of different ethnic and religious groups in Israel (Gal, 2008).

Arab society actually supports volunteering in the national-civic service. In 2009, for instance, two-thirds of the overall Arab population supported volunteering in the national-civic service, in the hope of encouraging social equality, and more than a half of the young people were prepared to volunteer to this service. The actual numbers still indicate that there is low involvement but with a steadily rising trend. For example, in 2005, 240 young Arabs volunteered for national service and in 2006, 289 volunteered. In 2007, there were 628 volunteers; and in 2009 – 1,256 volunteers (Smooha & Lechtman, 2009). In 2011, there was a record enrolment of 1,459 volunteers (Hatib & Biton 2011). The government ministries have yet to formalize the area of national-civic service legally but they are increasing the volunteer slots every year. The call is made to the Arab sector directly by advertisements in Arabic through the Internet, television, radio, and newspapers. Most young people who decide to volunteer for national service do so for personal and/or practical reasons such as getting good grants and benefits and as an easy way to integrate in Jewish Israeli society (Smooha & Lechtman, 2012).

Representatives of the Arab sector vehemently reject any idea of volunteering through it. Their main claim is based on the fear of Israelization of the Arab society that may lead them to abandon the Palestinian idea (Abraham Fund Initiative, 2012). An additional reason is because this service is essentially run and implemented by the security forces that have oppressed the Palestinian nation (Zarik, 2011). Initially, the volunteer program was run by the security forces, but in recent years, Ministry of Science and Technology, a neutral entity, has been administering the program (National-Civic Service Authority, 2012). Israel is trying to cope with the negative attitudes toward the idea of volunteering by circumventing Arab representatives and bypassing the Arab leadership. This process of no discussion actually leads to stronger resistance among Arab political representatives, because they believe that the volunteer program does not suit the norms of Arab society, and the national-civic service reinforces only the Jewish-Israel idea and does not reflect the feelings of the Arab population (Abraham Fund Initiative, 2012).

This resistance is manifested in their attempts to encourage high school youth to abandon the idea of volunteering to the program. Various MKs such as Jamal Zahalka of Balad have threatened that every Arab youth who volunteers for national service "will be considered in our eyes as a leper, and Arab society will disgorge him from within it" (Smooha & Lechtman, 2010:16).

The influence of school on students' decisions

Most of the information about the national-civic volunteer service disseminated mainly through various media such as the Internet, newspapers and television. The Arab MKs utilize the Arab schools as they are the ideal gathering place where they attempt to convince young Arabs not to join the national-civic volunteer service (Smooha & Lechtman, 2011). In an investigative report that appeared in *Ma'ariv* (Wilf, 2013), volunteer program activists acknowledged that high school principals themselves refuse to allow them to come into the schools to discuss the various programs. This is an absurd situation in which young people are interested in volunteering in the program but different Arab schools are not interested in cooperating with the program. Consequently, young women who have studied and planned to integrate into the Arab educational system have difficulty doing so through volunteering.

This is not a phenomenon seen in all the Arab schools, however, and in most Arab villages and towns, one can find schools allowing representatives from both sides to speak: for and against. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the schools that do allow the supporting position to be presented are schools that are "known for" their support of the Israeli establishment. They do not, albeit, openly encourage serving in the IDF yet do enable a deep and productive discussion of the issue (Smooha & Lechtman, 2011).

Every year, about 70,000 potential volunteers graduate from high school and have to choose to volunteer or not. Despite the interest of young Arabs in volunteering, only 4.2% actually do so. The representatives of the Arab population who are against the volunteer program present different positions that claim that volunteering will pave the way to compulsory army service and not to social equality between Arabs and Jews; and the feeling is that the volunteer may be thought of by the community in which he or she lives as an accomplice of the security agencies (Smooha & Lechtman, 2012).

Methodology

Research method

The method that was chosen to conduct the study was the qualitative research method, which is based on in-depth structured interviews. The qualitative method places the emphasis on how people understand and interpret their personal world and helps us understand in the best way their behaviors and thoughts (Shekadi, 2003). Further, the method tries to understand how they interpret their way of life and helps us recognize their viewpoints and understand how they understand things (Tzabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1990).

Research tools

We used deep interviews comprising questions. These questions were composed in advance and allowed the interviewee to answer at length and in detail to each question (Shekadi, 2003).

The interview had two parts: a demographic questionnaire and open questions.

Questions 1, 11, 17, 18, and 19 examined the personal and social viewpoints regarding compulsory military service or volunteering for national service.

Question 2 examined the influence of being drafted on the integration of Arabs in Israeli society.

Questions 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10 examined the issue of equality, obligations and rights.

Questions 5, 6, and 12 examined the identity of the interviewees, whether they see themselves as Israelis or Palestinians.

Questions 13, 14, 15, and 16 examined the impact of being drafted on Arab society.

Questions 20, 21, and 22 examined the attitude of the school toward the draft.

Field site

Arab schools in Israel: Elementary, junior high and high schools. Schools were selected randomly.

Research population

The research population comprised 50 interviewees, randomly selected. All interviewees were teachers who had a post-secondary education (undergraduate or graduate degree). They had been working for an average of 10 years in the following teaching fields: Hebrew literature, Arab literature, geography, history, English, mathematics, computers, civics, and/or sports. The research population included 15 women and 35 men, of which 30 were Muslims and 20 Christians. The field work was conducted between 2015 and 2016 and included deep interviews, data collection and analysis. The interviews were carried out in the schools or in a place chosen by the interviewee such as their home, a café, or restaurant. Each interview took place during one meeting, which lasted from one to two hours, and each interviewee knew in advance the purpose of the interview and the subjects that would be discussed. Each interviewee was allowed to express his or her opinion freely.

Findings

In the interviews, six main themes (ideas) were raised: a. Israeli or Palestinian identity; b. personal opinion regarding being drafted into the army or volunteering; c. the impact of being drafted or volunteering on the relations between Arabs and Jews; d. the impact of being drafted or volunteering on rights, obligations and equality; e. the impact of being drafted on Arab society; f. the attitude of the school toward the impact of being drafted and volunteering. The themes did not represent the positions of the individual interviewees. Illustrative examples were given for each claim. Nevertheless, all the opinions were taken into consideration in the summary of the theme and presentation of the overall picture.

1. Israeli or Palestinian identity

In order to examine the sense of being able to integrate into society, having equal rights and obligations, one must first determine if the individual sees himself as part of the society in which he lives. The majority of interviewees see themselves as more or less Israeli. Identity, from the interviewees' perspectives, was having been born in Israel, belonging there and seeing them as part of the collective Israeli identity. Some noted that they see themselves as Israeli Arabs (e.g., interviewees 3, 5, 10, 11, and 18), and assert that this factor should not prevent them from developing an Israeli identity. Noteworthy is that most interviewees answered that they feel Israeli and immediately raise the issue of obligations and rights. Even though the first question did not broach this issue, the interviewees introduced it, saying that various obligations are allocated to those who see themselves as Israelis but in parallel, they do not enjoy rights such as the Jewish sector have. In the words of Interviewee 3, who answered the question: "To what degree do you feel that you are Israeli?" "To a great degree, even though we, as Arabs, do not get all our rights. In spite of the problems, logically as an Israeli citizen, I should feel a sense of belonging to the state."

Interviewee 5's response:

"I am an Arab Israeli for all intents and purposes. I belong to the Arab nation in historical terms, heritage and language and I am also an Israeli citizen loyal to the state, its laws and regulations. I have obligations and rights, even though I have not yet been accorded some of my rights fully." When interviewees said that they see themselves to a moderate degree as Israelis, the subject of rights and obligation constituted the critical factor influencing their identity. For example, Interviewee 1 said: "To a reasonable degree. The thing comes from the inequality of Arabs. I am interested and want to be fully Israeli, in terms of obligations and rights, but the state pays less attention to us than the Jewish sector and then we don't feel that we belong 100%."

All the interviewees linked the degree of their Israeli identity to the level of equality, rights and obligations vis-à-vis the State. That is, they stated that they would begin to feel more Israeli if the State accorded them their rights in full. Regarding the idea that identity develops from different elements linking the members of a group together, e.g., values, experiences, norms, culture, and others (Hogg, 2013), it was interesting to see that all the interviewees associated the element of identity with the issue of obligations and rights. Interviewee 14 claimed that his Israeli identity is the result of his having been born here, as well as his parents, but he does not mention a link to obligations and rights:

"I was born here and my parents also were born here. This is our country and it should be the state of all its citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity and gender." Interviewees 2, 6, 20, 30 and 33 asserted that they do not see themselves as Israelis given that the country has abandoned them in comparison to the Jewish sector. So, for example, Interviewee 2 said:

"I do not feel myself to be an Israeli. First of all, I want my rights. As long as we don't get our rights, I won't feel 100% Israeli." When the interviewees were asked about the claim that "I am not prepared to serve in the army because that would mean I would be fighting against my own brethren who are on the other side of the border," some did indeed say that this issue presents a dilemma, and many believe that the population on the other side of the border are "brothers". Interviewee 2 is quite adamant: "I firmly support this claim. On the other side of the border are our brethren and relatives, so it is inconceivable that the day might come and I would fight them."

Interviewee 6 said: "I agree to a great degree that I cannot disconnect myself emotionally and not express sympathy and pity for my brethren. I know many young men in my village who are interested in serving in the army but they are hesitant because they do not want to have to fight their kin someday." In contrast, other interviewees view themselves as Israelis to a moderate degree, and simultaneously also see themselves as Palestinians. In the words of Interviewee 1:

"On the other side are my own people and I'm not interested in fighting them. On the other side of the border are my people and this is preventing young Arabs from serving in the army. If the armies were not an occupier and my people were not on the other side, I believe that this would pave the way for young Arabs to serve in the army." The issue of identity is hazy among some interviewees. In contrast, Interviewees 11, 14, and 50 assert unequivocally that they see themselves as Israelis and do not agree with the claim that fighting the people on the other side of the border would be fighting their brothers, but rather it is a fight between two different peoples.

For example, Interviewee 50 said: "I am an Arab Israeli living in the State of Israel, and if I have to fight soldiers from the other side of the border, I will fight them. It is not a battle against my brothers." It appears that most interviewees see themselves as having an Israeli identity to one degree or another. Many see the Palestinians on the other side of the border as their brothers, and this causes an identity crisis. There is, however, a small number that do not recognize the Palestinians on the other side of the border as their brothers. In addition, the idea of identity is linked, for most of the interviewees, to the subject of obligations and rights, and they are prepared to develop an Israeli identity if the State gives them the same rights that it gives the Jewish sector.

2. Personal opinion regarding serving in the army or volunteering for national service

The majority - 36 of the 50 interviewees - expressed the opinion that there is no need for compulsory service for Israeli Arabs. The justifications were varied and did not necessarily include elements of hostility but rather more moral and social factors. For example, Interviewee 2 totally rejects compulsory draft. To the question: "Do you think that serving in the army should be compulsory for everyone?" he answered:

"The Israeli army is the army of occupation whose doctrine is to war against my people. As long as the army is the army of occupation, I am against the draft. I am in favor of the positions of the representatives of the Arab sector that totally reject the draft."

Whereas Interviewee 12 rejects the idea of being drafted into the army because of the war against his people: "No, from the establishment of the State, Israel has been fighting the Arabs, and in my opinion, an Arab cannot fight another Arab."

In contrast, other interviewees such as 3, 4, and 45 claim that serving in the army should be by free choice. As Interviewee 3 said: "Draft should be compulsory for anyone getting all their rights. Compulsory draft is a violation of individual rights. It should not be compulsory and everyone should decide on his own whether or not to serve." Interviewee 8 rejected compulsory draft but did not reject serving in the army entirely, saying that if someone is really interested and believes that he can contribute to society, then he should serve. He also believes that Arab youth will become more interested in serving only when the state begins treating the Arab sector differently.

14 of the 50 interviewees were in favor of a compulsory army draft: For example, interviewee 7 said: "Yes, I am in favor of compulsory draft since we are living in this country and we are considered its citizens. Therefore, it is our duty to protect it, but in parallel, the state should accord the Arab sector all its rights."

The opinions of the other interviewees were similar. They all claim that they are citizens of the State of Israel and it is their duty to fulfill their obligations. It is interesting to note that most of those who support a compulsory draft - 10 of the 14 interviewees - are Christian Arabs, and Christian Arabs were mentioned as being stronger supporters of Israeli institutions. They want to stress that they are not Arabs, are not Palestinians. They are Israelis, citizens of this State, and they see themselves as loyal to it, whereas Muslim Arabs support of Israeli institutions is much less strong (Kanaaneh, 2008; Nadaf, 2014).

When we examine the interviewees' opinions regarding the public positions that call for rejecting the army draft, we get a mixed picture. Whereas most interviewees do not agree with compulsory army draft, many recognize the fact that society itself may hold different views, and that the view of those who totally reject army service is wrong. Interviewees 2, 12, and 13, in contrast, claim that the call of both the Arab MKs and the Arab Higher Monitoring Committee to reject the draft is correct and proper. For example, Interviewee 12's answer to the question: "What is your opinion about the position of the heads of the Arab sector and its representatives in the Knesset, which totally reject drafting of Arabs into the IDF or volunteering for national service?" "I agree with them, and as long as the present situation continues, I will support their position." Interviewee 1 believes that the above call is not necessarily correct: "I do not automatically reject their position but we have to check the issue more deeply and create a situation in which we, as Arabs, can integrate into society. Sometimes, their position is extreme and unrealistic. They sometimes are unaware that the reality has changed and the new era requires all the state's citizens, Arabs and Jews alike, to serve in exchange for equal rights and obligations. Sometimes I feel that they are seeking political gain."

Interviewee 6 believes that there are changes in Arab society and that young Arab society has undergone "Israelization" and most of the opinions rejecting army draft belong to older people. Interviewee 8 said that there is understanding of the call by Arab representatives to reject army service but he certainly supports national service. We can see that most interviewees do not agree with compulsory army draft but have different and varied reasons for their opinions. Except for three interviewees that agreed with the call to reject army draft and volunteering for national service, the interviewees disagreed with the total rejectionist position, and believe that integration of the Arabs into Israeli society will come through army service. Further, it appears that Christian interviewees see themselves as basically Israeli, want to contribute their part to the State, and support the army draft because this is the way to integrate the Christian sector into Israel and the State's institutions.

3. The impact of being drafted or volunteering on the relations between Arabs and Jews

In the literature review, it was noted many times that there are two societies - Arab and Jewish - living with an essential rift lying between them. The general picture is that serving in the army may make a positive contribution to the relations between the two sides. Nevertheless, the interviewees believe that a change in government policies toward Arabs will improve the relations, not just serving in the army. So, for example, Interviewee 10 answered the question: "Do you believe that drafting young Arabs into the army or doing voluntary national service will help the integration of Arabs into Israeli society?" "I do not think that serving in the army will help that much. Maybe it will help a little bit and even about that I'm not sure. Integration of Arabs into Israeli society will happen if the government begins investing in the Arab sector, and if doors start opening for young Arabs to get positions in all the state's institutions."

Interviewees 3 and 8 gave similar answers. In contrast, Interviewee 7 was more emphatic: "Yes, it would help a lot. It would help bring people from both sectors closer; each one would get to know the other's culture. It would also open up possibilities to integrate in work in the Jewish sector for young Arabs." Interviewees 11, 14, 18, 37, 50 and others had similar opinions. Interviewee 5 holds the opposite opinion and does not believe that serving in the army will lead to better relations between Arabs and Jews: "No. It's related to government policy toward the Arab sector and not an issue of serving in the army." Interviewees 2, 6, 13, 23 and 43 held similar opinions.

The findings regarding the present theme suggest that serving in the army may help bring the two societies closer but the government policy toward Arabs is what actually determines the relationship between the societies. Lately, we are witnessing efforts on the part of the government to integrate Arabs into the job market. The integration is expressed by investments in industrial areas, infrastructure and roads, and in increasing the frequency and number of buses and bus lines. Those supporting this position see this integration as achieving three main targets: (1) turning Israel into one of the most prosperous countries in the world; (2) reducing the crime rate in the Arab sector; and (3) creating a more homogenous and healthier society, improving the economy while expanding the workforce for businesses (Liss, 2012; Sheva, 2014A; Sheva 2014B).

4. Serving in the army or volunteering versus the issues of obligations, rights and equality

The common claim as presented in the literature review is that the discrimination and inequity suffered by Arab society stems from, among other reasons, the fact that it does not fulfil its obligations as equally as does Jewish society. The findings are, for the most part, unmistakable. There is a clear and comprehensive understanding that the Arab public in Israel does not enjoy the same rights as the Jewish public does.

We see the claim that the existence of obligations does not constitute a prerequisite for being accorded equal rights and everyone who lives in a democratic state must enjoy the same rights. Arab society wants the Israeli government to recognize its unique characteristics, which are affected by the political/security conflict, and give this group the privilege to enjoy freedom of choice vis-à-vis the issue of being drafted. Thus, for example, Interviewee 1 said, in response to the question: "How much, in your opinion, are the rights we have as Arabs not contingent on anything? Should we be accorded rights even if we do not go into the army?" "We are a minority. We must be treated as deserving of equal rights as all citizens and in parallel, look at the options for contributing our part to the community. If we get all our rights, then we can think about serving in the army or volunteering for national service. I'm not against the draft but we must get all our rights. Look at how the ultra-Orthodox get their rights and in parallel do not serve in the army."

Interviewee 3 said: "Meanwhile we aren't required to serve so we should get our rights like the ultra-Orthodox who don't serve. If there's a universal draft law, then the state has to invest in the Arab sector."Other interviewees such as 7, 11, 14, 37, 40, and 50 stated that only when the Arabs fulfill their obligations can they call for equal rights. So, for example, Interviewee 7 said: "We must be drafted into the army like everyone. Nothing comes from nothing and there are no rights and grants and assistance without giving and contributing." In contrast, when examining the question whether serving will lead to more rights, and improvement and help for Arab society, we can see more voices that agree that serving in the army will improve the position of Arab society. This viewpoint is echoed by Interviewees 3, 7, 9, 11, 14, 37, 40, and 50. Most of the Arab public does not see a link between being granted rights to fulfilling obligations. According to the majority, the rights are universal and they are not contingent on fulfilling obligations. Arab society sees itself as a special minority affected by the continued political-security conflict, and therefore, they ask to enjoy freedom of choice regarding the draft. Further, a sizeable part of the Arab population does not believe that drafting of young boys to the army will lead to a significant change in the rights given to Arab society. And even though some of the interviewees maintain that serving in the army will improve the position of Arab society in Israel, they believe that the change, if it happens, will be positive but limited. In the end, Arab society believes that essential change toward Arab society will happen only when the government policy toward the Arab population changes.

5. The impact of serving in the army on Arab society

The Arab public is divided in its opinions about serving in the army. Its representatives in the Knesset and elsewhere have even said that young men who agree to be drafted will be excommunicated (Smooha & Lechtman, 2009). Undoubtedly, drafting young Arab men into the army will affect Arab society. Examining the findings, we see a range of views regarding the likely social implications if it happens. Interviewees 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 27, and 34 believe that there will be a fundamental split in Arab society, a breaking away from roots, culture and language. Further, the animus within Arab society, especially with regard to the young men who will be drafted but not necessarily toward those who volunteer for national service, will increase. Interviewee 2 answered the question: "To what degree, in your opinion, does serving in the IDF or volunteering for national service, threaten to sever Arabs from their national and cultural roots?", saying: "Some of those who do go into the army will begin to break away from their roots and integrate into Israeli society, and thus will begin to separate themselves from their history, traditions and land."

Other interviewees do not agree with this argument and believe that the negative impact will be minimal, and in the future, may even disappear. For example, Interviewee 14 said: "Serving in the army will not destabilize the identity of anyone who wants to preserve his identity. Many draftees have remained true to their roots. I think that it will not split Arab society. There are a few people against it but this doesn't bother or stop people from serving. Usually, those who are against it are the older people, public figures and MKs, but their views don't prevent young people from serving and the fact is that in last few years the number of draftees has risen." Similar viewpoints were expressed by many other interviewees including Interviewees 11, 18, 40, and 50, who defined themselves as essentially Israelis. They are in favor of serving, because the draft, as they see it, will help the Arab sector. It will not lead to a split in Arab society and will not separate young Arabs from their roots. It appears that there is no consensus regarding negative implications for Arab society as a result of serving in the IDF. We can distinguish two opposing views among our interviewees. The first one says that drafting young Arab boys into the IDF will split Arab society and will result in severing them from their roots and the second view says that army service will not undermine the boys' Arab identities, will not cause a split and that these boys will remain connected to their roots. Nonetheless, there is almost complete agreement about doing national service.

Doing national service in the framework of Arab society is not perceived as something endangering the values and traditions of Arab society and it does not lead to quarrels. We saw that in many of the interviews, the greater part of the criticism targets the older people who have more conservative and extreme views, whereas the younger people are more exposed to social and cultural changes and hence are perceived as more flexible in their opinions regarding serving in the army and its impact.

6. The opinions of the schools regarding serving in the army or volunteering

Arab schools have different opinions, but in general, most do not encourage the draft, though some do not prevent the holding of discussions about the issue (Smooha & Lechtman, 2011). We see that schools tend not to talk about the issue and mostly do not initiate discussion about it unless a third party (e.g., Ministry of Education) compels them to do so. The schools certainly do not reject discussion of the issue and conduct the discussion showing both sides and the dilemmas that may arise. Most of the teachers noted that they live in a democratic society that requires them to present all views.

Interviewee 3 answered the question: "How do you relate to the subject of the draft in your position as a teacher?" "We live in a democratic country in which there is free speech. I view the subject from both sides and try to mediate and present benefits and disadvantages." Interviewee 4 expressed a similar opinion: "I am in favor of democratic free choice. I emphasize the subject of obligations and rights that should be shared equally by Jews and Arabs. We have to stress that the state should be for all its citizens and carrying the burden should be equally shared between Arabs and Jews." In contrast, other interviewees prefer that the discussion about serving in the IDF not be carried out in the framework of studies. Interviewee 2 said: "It is preferable that the aforementioned discussion be held within a different framework, not during school hours, and the school should prevent the discussion from being held on school grounds."

We see that most interviewees do not discuss the issue on their own initiative but only if they are asked to do so. Notwithstanding, when it is raised, they present all sides and positions. Likewise, we can distinguish two viewpoints regarding holding discussions about serving in the IDF in school. Some interviewees were in favor of holding the discussions in school because we live in a democratic state and the school is the place to present students with all sides and views. In opposition, other interviewees maintain that this is a sensitive subject and discussion of it should be held off of the school's premises.

Discussion and Conclusions

Whereas different voices in Arab society call for equality of obligations and rights, others say that any young man who goes into the army or does national service will be excommunicated from Arab society. The first finding demonstrated that most interviewees report that they see themselves as Israelis in varying degrees, yet in parallel, they see the Palestinians as their brothers. This position creates confusion among the Arab population in Israel. This element is not surprising when we realize that many Palestinian refugees who lived in the past in villages and towns in Israel were forced to leave their homes as a result of different wars (Smith, 1986).

Ganim (2001) recognized that most Arabs in Israel see themselves as basically Palestinians. Smooha (2001) too found that the Arab-Israeli public in Israel, for the most part, sees itself as belonging to the divided Palestinian nation. This perception leads to the creation of a phenomenon of a dual nationality. Our study also revealed these positions, but we also identified another view according to which a significant number of young Arabs— Christians and Muslims—define themselves as Israeli to a reasonable degree and are interested in and want to become totally Israeli, with attendant obligations and rights, but that the State does not treats them as it does the Jewish sector so that they do not feel that they belong to the State of Israel 100%. Another group conditions their feeling Israeli on receiving their rights. Significant number of the Arab population in Israel sees itself as Israeli, exposed to the same values and culture, born in Israel and influenced by the same political, social and security processes. Yet, the reason why the Arab public do not enjoy equal rights and obligations as given to the Jewish population is rooted in the feeling that the Israeli Arab public displays a double allegiance—both to the Palestinians and the State of Israel, and when the Jewish Israeli public feels that the Palestinian side is receiving more support and loyalty on the part of the Israeli Arabs, a lack of confidence between the two sides is created, which affects the rights and obligation allocated by the state (Smooha, 2001). It appears that most interviewees do not agree with a compulsory draft but there is no all-encompassing rejection of volunteering to serve or doing national service if the government changes its position toward the Arab sector.

A prominent reason was the worry that Arabs serving in the army will have to act against their Palestinian brothers and as such, many of the Arab public wants to stay away from the military forces that may require them to hurt people they perceive as family. This view was presented by Gal (2008), who stated that the Arab public in Israel sees itself as the progeny of the Palestinian people and being drafted into the army may lead to a dilemma by requiring them to act against their Palestinian brethren. In contrast, other evidence shows that some support serving in the army - even if it is compulsory - because they see themselves as part of the State of Israel and as such they have to fulfil the laws of the State and protect it. From the findings, it appears that the interviewees believe that it is not the draft itself that will lead to changes in the relations between the two societies, but rather it is a change in government policy that will lead to a better and friendlier relationship between them. The draft in this context may help but it will not impact the relations to any great extent. Saban (2004) believes that the government in Israel is the one that perpetuates the gaps between the two groups in that it encourages, on the one hand, the Arab public to remain true to its tradition and, on the other hand, is very careful in allocating resources for development and infrastructure repairs in Arab villages and towns.

Most of the Arab public does not link the army draft and getting rights because they claim that in a democratic country, these are universal and are not contingent on the fulfilment of obligations. The Arab population sees itself as a special minority group, directly affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict, and therefore, this group must enjoy freedom of choice in relation to a compulsory army draft. Goldberg (1994) asserts that all the cultures and communities share the same minimal basic rights, yet in certain cases, special rights are accorded to a specific group in order to guarantee harmony and tolerance between the communities in the state. Accordingly, one can understand the Arab public's demand to unlink rights and obligations as not essentially exceptional.

From the findings we see that there is no consensus about the social impact it may engender. This state of affairs is in line with the literature review. On the one hand, there is a claim that the Arab public supports national service more than the draft and believes that it will not have extraordinary ramifications; yet there is room for army service if the young men are able to decide for themselves to join the army or security forces (Smooha & Lechtman, 2009, 2012). In opposition, we also saw the call to reject and condemn any boys who go into the army or do national service (Abraham Fund Initiative, 2012). Further, we see from the research that the exposure of the young people to social and cultural changes as a result of globalization reaching Arab society has influenced their perception and opinions, which have become more moderate relative to the older population. This explains the fact that some interviewees were pro-draft and did not see it as a factor that could split Arab society and lead to the draftees being cut off from their roots. In the literature review, we saw that government elements are trying to bypass the older representatives of Arab society, whose views are traditionalist (Abraham Fund Initiative, 2012) and the appeal to young people today is via media known best by the youth such as the Internet, television, radio programs and more (Smooha & Lechtman, 2012). The study shows that most schools do not hold discussions about the draft on their initiative, but when the subject does come up, they do not try to shut it down and they present both sides of the issue being debated. Smooha and Lechtman (2011) present the claim according to which most Arab schools in Israel do not prevent discussion of the draft and they are not in favor or against the army draft.

An interesting finding is that there are Muslims who are perceived as supporting the drafting of young men into the army and national service in order to gain equality in Israel, despite the fact that a significant number of them still define themselves as belonging to the Arab nation. This position contradicts Kanaaneh's (2008) claim that the Muslim Arab Israelis see themselves as clear opponents of the Jewish Israeli establishment. In parallel, the research data explain the jump in the number of young Arabs going into the IDF in the last few years (Frisch, 2000; Stern, 2008). Another interesting finding is that there are Israeli Christian Arabs who have firm opinions about their Israeli identity and support the draft of young men for the army or national service. This finding is in agreement with Kanaaneh's (2008) finding that Israeli Christian Arabs are seemingly considered more supportive of the Jewish Israeli establishment. The study found that most Christian interviewees - except for one – are in favor of the draft and this is in line with the mindset among the Christians over the last five years. We are witnessing a rise in the number of young Christian Arabs going into the IDF, which led to the establishment of the Israeli Christians Recruitment Forum in 2012 by a group of Christian IDF veterans. The forum, headed by Father Gabriel Nadaf and Captain (Ret.) Shadi Haloul, is garnering increasing support from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Jewish ministers and MKs. Since its establishment, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of Christian Arabs enlisting in the IDF.

If up until 2012, 35-49 Christians enlisted, beginning in 2013, the number jumped to 150. Moreover, according to the inductions figures of the March 2014 draftees, it appears there will be another sharp increase. Gabriel Nadaf, age 43, a Christian Arab priest, victimized by the Arab Israeli establishment, says: "We want young Christians to integrate into Israeli society, and this also means equality sharing the burden. Our future as a Christian minority is bound up with the State of Israel. We want to give more to society and to contribute our part like everyone else. Among the Christians, there is great potential for recruitment, and most of our boys see themselves as Israelis." He explains: "We support integration of the Christians in Israeli society. Israel is a multi-cultural mosaic. We want to connect to Jewish society in Israel. We feel secure in the State of Israel and see ourselves as citizens of Israel with obligations as well as rights." He sees that the events of the Arab Spring, and the civil war in Syria, creating a sense of the waning of pan-Arab nationalism, which was nurtured by former Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser and former Syrian President Hafiz el-Assad. In the name of secular and socialist Arab nationalism, they kept extreme Islamist elements out of government circles to the extent that they were persecuted and thrown into jail. Now, Islam is once again rising.

The collapse of the pan-Arab perception is also felt among Israeli Arabs. More and younger men are not obeying the directives of the leaders of the Arab sector in Israel who boycott the state, the army and the establishment. Instead, they are choosing to volunteer for civic service, national service and even army service. They are doing so despite the furious responses of most of the society surrounding them. And during the last few years the number of Christian young men and women trying to enlist, many of whom are encouraged by the Israeli Christians Recruitment Forum, has risen (Siroyti, 2013; Hashmona'i, 2014; Nadaf, 2014).

The Israeli Christians Recruitment Forum has successfully convinced the Israeli government of the seriousness of its objective to convince more Christian youth to enlist. As a result, beginning in 2014, the IDF began to change the way it addresses Christian Arabs, and has been sending them "volunteer call-ups" in which they are called upon to come to the draft board and begin their induction process. These notices are not compulsory but the army believes that it will encourage other youth to serve in the army. At the induction center, they learn about the different army tracks open to them. According to the army's plan, in the beginning only Christian men will get a call-up for the "process of appearing for initial processing". The forum is very pleased with the decision and views it as a historic decision that turns a new page, a page of hope for all the areas and mutual responsibility between Jews and Christians in Israel. The decision enables young Christians to integrate more smoothly into Israeli society, and gives them a boost on the ladder of both military and civilian jobs (Cohen, Liss, and Khoury, 2014).

Summary

We can see relatively moderate views held by the interviewees regarding serving in the army and the general picture is one that says that being drafted or volunteering for national service may occur in greater numbers if it is allowed to be done voluntarily, when the Israeli government changes its attitude toward the Arab sector, and when Arab society feels equal in status to Jewish society. The second conclusion is that a significant percentage of Israeli Arabs still view themselves as Palestinians. The study's findings indicate that there is a high potential for serving in the army among Christian Arabs and most of this group feels itself Israeli vis-à-vis obligations and rights. That most interviewees - Muslims and Christians alike - who define themselves as Israelis, are the ones who support young Arabs serving in the army, are the ones that see this service as a way for Arabs to integrate into Israeli society and believe that this service will advance the Arab sector.

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