

2013

Arab-Israelis and the Israeli Defense Force

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Recommended Citation

Blakelock, Catherine K., "Arab-Israelis and the Israeli Defense Force" (2013). *CMC Senior Theses*. Paper 719.
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CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

Arab-Israelis and the Israeli Defense Force

SUBMITTED TO

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AND

DEAN NICHOLAS WARNER

BY

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for

SENIOR THESIS

Fall 2013
02DEC13

Acknowledgements

There are a series of people, who without their support I would never have finished my thesis.

First, Professor Ilai Saltzman, thank you for being incredibly supportive throughout this entire process. There is no way I could have completed this without your guidance or the countless meetings in your office. I would still be searching for a topic if it hadn't been for the current events in your class last spring.

Mama and Papa B, your support and love from Boston were invaluable. You were always there for a moral support phone call. AlPal, I appreciated every snapchat and picture you sent me while you knew I was suffering in Poppa.

Christina, and the rest of my computer lab comrades, we survived. Here is to a fabulous rest of senior year.

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Introduction

Israel is a country of dichotomies. It is a nation with two peoples living in it. On one hand there are the Muslim and Christian Arabs; the population of people who might like to refer to the whole land as Palestine. On the other hand there are the Jewish-Israeli's; the rightful owners of part of the land after it was given to them by the United Nations in 1947. Within the borders of Israel both people live and work together. However, only the Jewish Israelis are required to serve in the Israeli Defense Force. Even though the Arab-Israelis live in Israeli proper and are Israeli citizens, they are not required to serve in their nations armed forces. Yet, a small number of individuals in the Arab-Israeli community choose to enlist every year. This paper seeks to understand why certain Arab-Israeli's choose to join the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) while others would consider that to be treason. Obviously, a critical piece of information to examine is how the individuals who join the IDF self-identify. This brings up another important within Israel, how does one identify himself? There is no one cohesive Arab-Israeli identity. Some identify more as Israeli with others are die-hard supporters of the Palestinians living in the territories and identify as Palestinian. Sammy Smooha collects data every year on a variety of topics but most importantly for the purposes of this paper, he compiles data on how Arabs living in Israel identify themselves. The take away item from Smooha's work is that Arab-Israelis each have their own way of identifying as well as their own way of dealing with Jewish-Israelis and the Israeli establishment. As a way of examining the various identities of the Arab population in Israel, this paper will also look at the identities of Jewish Israelis. It is important to look at the Arab and Israeli identities

simultaneously because they have developed together. The two were developed side by side and are mutually constitutive. Trying to peel them away from each other would not be helpful because it would be like looking at one historical event in a vacuum, the context is required for it to make sense. In most cases the identities play off of each other, and it is necessary to see the opposing viewpoint to understand either identity.

There has been an extensive amount of research completed on the Arab-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli identities. But this paper seeks to take it a step further, and address a pressing and specific issue of the implications of Arab-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli identity in regards to the IDF. The desire to serve their country should be rooted in the core of all Jewish-Israelis. Not only because all of their family members have served, but also because there is the perception that they are always under threat from an aggressive Arab nation. But, what compels the Arab-Israelis to serve? This question is one that is not often researched or talked about because of the relatively small number of Arab-Israelis that enlist in the IDF. Examining the question of why Arab-Israelis choose to join the IDF is relevant because there have been new bills introduced in the Israeli Knesset (parliament) that would mandate that Arab-Israelis participate in some type of national service. Generally these bills focus on national service at the community level. Rather than demanding that all Arab-Israelis serve in the IDF, the legislation states that Arab-Israelis must teach in a school in their town for two years or work in a community health clinic. The service opportunities are not set in stone, but the idea is that the Arab-Israelis give back to

their nation just like the Jewish-Israelis, but they do so in a way that is potentially more palatable to those who consider serving in the IDF to be akin to treason.

The way this paper will examine the question of why certain Arab-Israelis join the IDF is by first examining identity. Identity has many facets, including but not limited to religion, culture, history, and language. Each of those items contributes to how an individual identifies himself in relation to the larger community. When this paper examines identity it will not look just at modern identity but also at some of the historical challenges with Arab-Israeli identity. The second way this paper will seek to address its research question is by looking at individual cases of why people chose to join the IDF. Learning about why specific individuals joined the IDF allows us to get a real sense of what compels people to serve. Data is obviously a beneficial tool, but real soldiers explaining why they joined is just as important because it gives us an anecdotal framework to work with as well.

There are some limitations to approaching this question in this way. First of all, all of the data regarding identity is self-reported. Generally there is a self-reporting bias when it comes to thinking about one's identity. Another limitation of using identity as a primary differentiator between Arab-Israelis is that just because there is a correlation between certain identity components and those that join the IDF doesn't mean that these identity components are the cause of the IDF enlistment.

This paper is ultimately going to examine which subsets of the Arab-Israelis choose to serve in the IDF. It finds that those who identify in some way as Israelis will be more inclined to serve. For example, those who refer to themselves as Israeli,

or Arab-Israeli might be more likely to support Israel and serve in the IDF. However, those who highlight the Palestinian aspect of their identity are significantly less likely to want to serve in the IDF. Those who include Palestinian in their identity title would sympathize with those living in the occupied territories and therefore likely see the IDF as a tool of brutal oppression used against their people. Political identity will also likely play a role in the decision to serve in the IDF. Those Arab-Israelis who support politicians that are willing to work with the Israelis in the Knesset are more likely to be open to joining the IDF due to their more moderate political views. How an Arab-Israeli self-identifies as well as who they support politically are both indicators that suggest they might be open to joining the IDF.

Literature Review

The field of scholarship about the relationship between Arab-Israelis and the state of Israel is extensive. Some of the field's most pertinent works include "Some Problems of Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel" by Sammy Smooha and John E. Hofman, *A Question of Loyalty* by Alon Peled, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000* by As'ad Ghanem, and *Israel's Security and Its Arab Citizens*, by Hillel Frisch. Some of these works look at historical policies within Israel that created tensions between Arab-Israelis and their home nation. Others look at how identity and religion play a part in the conflict between Jewish and Arab Israelis. They look at the disparities between what it means to be a Jewish-Israeli and an Arab-Israeli. Due to the focus of this paper, I am primarily concerned with the differences between Arab and Jewish Israelis in the realm of civil service, how these disparities started and what they mean for Arab-Israelis today.

The article entitled "Some Problems of Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel" lays out four principles that if met will lead to peaceful coexistence between the majority and minority groups of people. The article supposes that these principles are currently not being met in the most beneficial ways, but that if changes were made such that these conditions were satisfied peace could be achieved. These four items are: a shared ideology of partnership, cultural autonomy, equality of resources and interpersonal accommodation¹. A shared ideology of partnership is the idea that both parties are equal partners in their relationship and that they want said

¹ Smooha, Sammy, and John E. Hofman. "Some Problems of Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel." *Middle East Review* (1976): 6-14. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

relationship to be based on peaceful coexistence². Cultural autonomy would allow the minority party to be solely responsible for all of their own institutions, as well as preserving their history and cultural heritage as a way of maintaining their own unique cultural identity³. Equality of resources is a simple concept because all it is espousing is that the minority group is allocated a proportional share of the “socioeconomic and power resources”⁴. Finally, interpersonal accommodation expects that both majority and minority citizens hold “positive and symmetric attitudes toward each other”⁵. What Smootha and Hofman find in their research is that in Israel the four conditions laid out above are not being met. Each one of the conditions is a piece of what Smootha and Hofman consider to be conditions for cooperative coexistence. There are examples of progress being made in each of these categories but in practice Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis are not meeting these definitions. From the beginning of the State of Israel, a shared ideology of partnership has not been enforced or really encouraged between the Jewish and Arab Israelis. Under the British Mandate, dissociation was the policy rather than coexistence, which is why today there are clear Jewish and Arab communities. Therefore, it is possible to see the current tensions between Arab and Jewish Israelis as a amplification of the colonial legacy. A legacy that continues to play itself out in the present day. The separation between the two communities was further solidified by the separate view points and cultures being expressed by Jewish-Israeli

² Smootha, Sammy, and John E. Hofman. "Some Problems of Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel." *Middle East Review* (1976): 6-14. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

and Arab-Israeli leadership, as well as the conflict between the Jewish-Israelis and the Arabs during the 1920s and 1930s. The Jewish leadership was preaching a Zionist ideology while the Arab-Israeli leadership was focused on a building a Palestinian national movement⁶. For cultural autonomy to be present in Israel, moderate Arabs maintain that they would need to be in control of their own institutions⁷. If we examine the education system in Israel we see that the Arabs have their own schools that are taught in Arabic. However, upon further investigation it becomes clear that these schools, while they are taught in Arabic are still under the supervision of the Israeli Ministry of Education, which is a predominately Jewish organization⁸. The same set of characteristics applies to the Arabic communications media. While the Arabs have access to print and other types of media in Arabic these publications are cursorily monitored by predominantly Jewish governing bodies⁹. Essentially Jewish-Israelis could have control over what Arab-Israelis can publish in their newspapers and show on their air of their television stations. It is unlikely that the Jewish-Israeli cursory involvement is in anyway effecting the Arab Media; however, it is unclear how these organizations can provide cultural autonomy to the Arab-Israelis when they are being overseen by Jewish-Israeli organizations. Equality of resources between Jewish and Arab Israelis

⁶ Smooha, Sammy, and John E. Hofman. "Some Problems of Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel." *Middle East Review* (1976): 6-14. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

is absolutely a problem. Still today Arabs are at the bottom of the economic barrel and are minimally involved in political life¹⁰.

Israel's two main priorities are its own national security as well as its ability to maintain its Jewish character. As a result, there are few opportunities for Arabs to move up in society to take advantage of resources because most of the resources and being guided towards national security or maintaining Israel as a Jewish state¹¹. The issue of interpersonal accommodation is one that Smooha studies frequently in his yearly indexes. The crux of this issue is whether or not Jewish and Arab Israelis can trust each other as communities as well as on an individual level. The two communities currently do not trust each other for two reasons; the first is the broader Arab-Israeli conflict¹². For the Jewish-Israelis it is hard to trust the Arab-Israelis when they consider them to potentially be affiliated with their enemy or even worse be a potential 5th column of sorts that is waiting to bring Israel down from the inside. The second reason that interpersonal accommodation isn't happening between the Jewish and Arab Israelis is that there is "a feeling of superiority among Jews as the institutionally dominant group in the Jewish state"¹³. This article provides a solid framework for addressing the challenges facing the relationship between Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis. The four main points that it hits clearly address points of tension between the two parties.

¹⁰ Rivlin, Paul. *The Israeli Economy*. Boulder: Westview, 1992. Print.

¹¹ Smooha, Sammy, and John E. Hofman. "Some Problems of Arab-Jewish Coexistence in Israel." *Middle East Review* (1976): 6-14. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

When looking at *A Question of Loyalty* it is clear that the structure of that book is primarily historical. It takes a chronological path starting with the formation of Israel and examines how the Israeli Defense Force used as a political and cultural tool. After the war of independence in 1949 David Ben-Gurion declared that the IDF would be a tool of nation building for Israel¹⁴. He believed that in the IDF all soldiers would be equal; the children of the elite would be the same as those Israelis who grew up ignorant, dirty and valueless¹⁵. Ben-Gurion's goal for the IDF was to make it Israel's melting pot. However, the values being taught to IDF soldiers are clearly Jewish values. Ben-Gurion wanted all new immigrant soldiers to learn "the Hebrew language, Jewish history, Israeli geography, Jewish friendship, valor, mutual responsibility, habits of culture and even hygiene"¹⁶. In the same year the Ben-Gurion was telling the Knesset about all of the positive aspects of the IDF, the Arab members of the Knesset were lobbying to ensure that Arab-Israelis would not be conscripted to serve in the IDF. It was their fear that they would be forced to fight their cross-border brethren under the Israeli flag¹⁷. After the conclusion of the war of independence, the Arab Knesset members debated the merits of having Arab-Israelis join the IDF. At that time the Arab villages were under IDF military rule and the logic of the Arab Knesset members was that if young Arab-Israelis joined the IDF then surely the military rule would have to end¹⁸. The Arab Knesset members also wanted to show their Jewish-Israeli neighbors that they were also loyal to Israeli

¹⁴ Peled, Alon. *A Question of Loyalty*. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1998. 128. Print.

¹⁵ Ibid. 128.

¹⁶ Ibid. 128-129

¹⁷ Ibid. 130.

¹⁸ Ibid. 131.

and not secret enemies of the state¹⁹. On the whole, this book examines how the attitudes of Arab Knesset members as well as Ben-Gurion and Jewish Knesset members shaped the policies related to Arab-Israelis serving in the IDF during the formative years of Israel. Through this text one can see that Arab-Israeli Knesset members examined the possibility of using Arab-Israeli IDF service as a potential “get-in” card into Israeli society.

The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israeli, 1948-2000 takes a historical look at the factors that contributed to Arab-Israeli identity. The most prominent idea that this book sets forth is that Arab-Israelis can identify with the Arab states while still being supportive of the State of Israel. Arab-Israelis could identify with their Arab roots, history and traditions while still recognizing that they are now a part of the nation of Israel. This trend of dual-identification continued through 1967, the Jewish-Israelis considered their Arab-Israeli counterparts to be nationally Arab but civically Israeli²⁰. This bi-polar identity came about due to their residence within Israel but also due to the fact that it is impossible to separate themselves from the history and culture of the Arab people purely because of their location²¹. The 1970s mark a surge of identity solidification for the Arab-Israelis. During the post-1967 time period the Arab-Israelis were more vocal about their connection to and identification with the Palestinian people, while at the same time continuing to

¹⁹ Peled, Alon. *A Question of Loyalty*. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1998. 131. Print.

²⁰ Ghanem, As'ad. *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001. 51. Print.

²¹ Ibid. 51.

emphasize their strong ties to the State of Israel²². Sammy Smooha is quoted in this text and what he has to say perfectly sums up the contradiction of being an Arab-Israeli during this time, while also making clear why it is a cohesive identity, “The Arab citizens in the state of Israel are an integral part of the Palestinian people and the same time loyal Israeli citizens. I do not think that there is any conflict between being a proud Palestinian Arab who is loyal to the Palestinian people and the Arab nation and being an Israeli citizen who is loyal to the state”²³. Just as Jews in the US can be loyal citizens of the United States while still being loyal to the people of Israel. The previous quotation summarizes the bulk of what this book is trying to argue. The basis of the argument is that the Arab-Israeli identity is two-fold. Arab-Israelis are Arab by culture and heritage but that does not preclude them from being loyal and proud Israelis.

The final major piece of scholarship in this field is *Israeli's Security and Its Arab Citizens*. The piece of this book that is pertinent to this paper examines whether or not the State of Israel provides fair public services to its Arab-Israeli citizens. Much like Ghanem, Hillel Frisch also looks at the timeline of the IDF and how Arab-Israelis fit into that picture. In 1954 the IDF mandated that all Arab youth register to be a part of the draft²⁴. The logic behind this move was that by extending this obligation to the Arab-Israelis the same way it is extended to the Jewish-Israelis

²² Ghanem, As'ad. *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001. 52. Print.

²³ Ibid. 52.

²⁴ Frisch, Hillel. *Israel's Security and Its Arab Citizens*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. 39. Print.

then the Arab population would no longer feel discriminated against²⁵. Ultimately the decision on who would be conscripted into the IDF was highly political. The Druze and Circassians were included in the draft as a show by the Israeli government that they considered them to be full, loyal citizens of Israel, while Christians were not included in the draft because they had more bargaining power than the other groups²⁶. The Christians had more bargaining power than other minority groups because many within Israel felt that if they drafted a unwilling bunch of Christian Arabs the majority Christian western nations would retaliate against the newly formed and fairly fragile Israel²⁷. One of the official reasons given for not drafting the majority of the Muslim or Christian populations in Israel into the IDF was to avoid fighting “my people who are the enemy of my state”²⁸. On the whole this source combines the chronological approach to looking at the policies of the IDF with the identity aspect of looking at who is included or excluded and for what reasons. The identity aspect of who is included in the IDF draft is addressed broadly through looking at what religious and ethnic groups are required to serve.

This paper will combine the approaches of all of the above sources in order to seek to look at how identity plays a role in determining why so few Arab-Israelis join the IDF while also acknowledging the historical policies, and political moves that have led to the exclusion of Arab citizens. The framework set forth by the scholarship above provides a good starting place for the question of which Arab-

²⁵ Ibid. 39.

²⁶ Frisch, Hillel. *Israel's Security and Its Arab Citizens*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. 40. Print.

²⁷ Ibid. 40.

²⁸ Ibid. 41.

Israelis join the IDF and why, but more concrete data is needed to truly address that question. Beyond merely looking at why Arab-Israelis join the IDF it will also examine the potential for integrating civil service into the Arab-Israeli community. Superiority of the Jewish Hegemony will lead to nothing but tension and turmoil between the two groups. The Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis need to start to see eye to eye before any real progress can be made on what matters.

Identity and Political Action

Identity is important to everyone. It is what distinguishes us from other people, and it helps us relate to the world around us. At times it can be confining, but in general it is a tool that helps us figure out how we fit in with our peers, society and the world as a whole²⁹. In Israel, there are two major identities at play, the Jewish-Israeli identity, and the Arab-Israeli identity. However, while those may seem like nice big boxes that can encompass every citizen, they are not. Within the Arab-Israeli community alone, there are at least nine different identities. Within this group of Arab-Israelis, identity is key in determining how connected they feel to the state of Israel or how much kinship they feel towards the Arab world or the Palestinian people. As a result, identity is important in looking at why certain Arab-Israelis choose to join the IDF.

To start, let's discuss a historical approach to the identity of Arab-Israelis from 1948 through the 1980s. For the most part this look at how Arab-Israelis are identified comes from the position of the Israeli government not the Arab-Israelis themselves. In 1948 in Israel, there were two ways of looking at the Arab-Israelis living within Israel's borders, as a group or as an individual. The term for the group of Arab-Israelis was the Palestinian minority, while the individual term is Israeli Arab³⁰. This bipolar sense of identity was characterized by an Arab national identity

²⁹ Jenkins, Richard. *Social Identity*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

³⁰ Ghanem, As'ad. *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001. 50. Print.

while still maintaining an Israeli civic identity, and lasted well into the 1960s³¹. Prior to the 1967 war, identifiers generally remained the same, the group of Arab-Israelis was referred to as the Palestinian minority, while individuals were known as Arab citizens of Israel³². At this time there was a focus placed on, Arabs-Israelis as being Israeli citizens, but at the same time acknowledging their connection to the Arab world³³. An interesting note about literature from this period is that it does not link Arab identity with Palestinian loyalty³⁴. The distinction between identity and loyalty becomes an interesting one when the 1967 war breaks out. During the 1967 war, a new challenge for Arab-Israelis came to light, there was a call for them to choose a single identity³⁵. The call for a single identity caused a rift in the Arab-Israeli community because some members felt more connected to the Israeli community while others felt a kinship with the Arab world. In essence, this is the emergence of the “Palestinian question” or “Palestinian problem”. In the 1970s the identity of Arab-Israelis moved from being a split identity to being more focused on emphasizing their connection to the Palestinian community³⁶. This was a big shift considering that in the past there had been a clear distinction between the Arab world and the Palestinian people, and the Arab-Israelis had been focused on connecting or associating with the Arab world rather than with the Palestinians. Finally, in the 1980s, there was a realization that Arab-Israelis are both Israeli and

³¹ Ghanem, As‘ad. *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001. 51. Print.

³² Ibid. 51.

³³ Ibid. 51.

³⁴ Ibid. 51.

³⁵ Ibid. 52.

³⁶ Ibid. 52.

Palestinian but regardless they are loyal to the state of Israel³⁷. It is clear that over the 40 year history that I just laid out, Arab-Israeli identity has changed significantly; from its bipolar beginnings of recognizing both Arab and Israeli ties, and not acknowledging a Palestinian connection to shift in identity in the 1980s where it is acceptable to identify as Palestinian as long as one remains loyal to the state of Israel.

Let's take a moment to think about identity as we move away from the history and into the concept of modern collective identity. Identity can be incredibly personal, or very tied to a collective group. Either way it is an important tool for a person to have. It allows them to figure out how they relate to the people around them as well as how they fit into the world as a whole. Identity tells you which people should have been supporting you, as well as which people are your theoretical enemies. Sammy Smooha has done the bulk of the data based research in the field of Arab-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli relations. Starting in 2003 he published a yearly index on the relations between the Jews and Arabs living in Israel, entitled the *Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel*. The questions that Smooha used in his surveys from 2003 to the present are either identical or very similar to the questions that were used in a similar survey that was completed from 1980 to 2003³⁸.

As a part of his more recent index, Smooha lays out 11 goals and 15 issues that need to be examined in order to obtain a full picture of the relations between

³⁷ Ghanem, As'ad. *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948-2000: A Political Study*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001. 52. Print.

³⁸ Smooha, Sammy. *Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2004*. University of Haifa, 2005. 18. Web. 15 May 2013.

Jewish and Arab Israelis³⁹. The overarching theme of the goals that Smootha lays out in his research is whether or not Arab and Jewish Israelis can coexist⁴⁰. Due to the extensive research Smootha has done on Arab-Israeli identity his data and analysis are invaluable in examining modern Arab-Israeli identity. Moreover, his surveys ask questions that get to the root of the unrest in Israel and provide concrete data to researchers who are interested in a wide variety of topics related to Arab-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli relations.

One of the most important things that Smootha does as a part of his research is break down how Arab-Israelis view themselves in relation to Israel. In his index, he looks at what part of personal identity is most important to Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis. In 2004, when given the three options of citizenship, religion or nation, 47.6% of Arab-Israelis say that the most important part of their identity is their religion, while 42.5% of Jewish-Israelis cite nation as the most important part of their identity⁴¹. When asked again in 2008, 46.6% Arab-Israelis still cite religion as the most important part of their identity but 19.8% say that their Israeli Citizenship is what is most important⁴². It is interesting that Jewish-Israelis recognize the nation of Israel as being the most important part of their identity rather than being Jewish. This seems to be a conundrum because Israel is intended to be a Jewish and democratic state and yet the Jewish-Israelis identify more with the state of Israel than they do with their own religion. This may be due in part to

³⁹ Smootha, Sammy. *Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2004*. University of Haifa, 2005. 17. Web. 15 May 2013.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 15.

⁴¹ Ibid. 47.

⁴² Ibid. 19.

the number of secular Jews living in Israel and the overall secular nature of the establishment. The second crucial identity item that Smooha examines is the terminology that Arabs use to self-identify. He gives the Arabs nine options for how they can identify themselves. These options are Arab, Israeli Arab, Arab in Israel, Israeli, Israeli Palestinian, Palestinian in Israel, Palestinian Arab in Israel, Palestinian, and Palestinian Arab⁴³. 38.3% of Arabs living in Israel identify as a Palestinian Arab in Israel⁴⁴. Palestinian Arab living in Israel is clearly a term that has changed over time. As we discussed earlier individual Arab-Israelis associating themselves with the Palestinian people only began in the 1980s. Furthermore, this term also addresses their association with the Arab world and in some sense their loyalty to Israel. The term Palestinian Arab living in Israel is deeply problematic, even though most of the Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis believe that this term properly identifies those Arabs living in Israel. However, 80.8% of Jewish-Israelis do not think that an Arab citizen of Israel who identifies as a Palestinian Arab in Israel can be loyal to the state of Israel⁴⁵. Clearly this is a problem. If the most commonly used self-identifier for Arab citizens of Israel strikes fear and distrust into the hearts of Jewish-Israelis it is easy to understand why tensions between Arab and Jewish Israelis are so high. One's identity obviously plays a crucial role in how they view themselves, as well as how they interact with their nation. Identity makes it clear

⁴³ Smooha, Sammy. *Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2004*. University of Haifa, 2005. 48. Web. 15 May 2013

⁴⁴ Ibid. 48.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 48.

which group one is loyal to. This will come into play later when we look at which Arab-Israelis are choosing to join the IDF.

Clearly Sammy Smootha has established a very solid base of research with his yearly Index. However there are other individuals who are also researching how identity plays a role for both Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis in Israel society. The 2013 Israeli Democracy Index is an excellent additional source for looking at how both Jewish-Israeli and Arab Israelis view the status of the state of Israel. This report asks slightly different questions than Smootha's annual index. For example, one interesting question was, "Do you agree or disagree that we must narrow the gap between rich and poor in Israel, even if it means that most of us will have to higher taxes?⁴⁶" This question was asked of both Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis and overwhelmingly they concurred that taxes should be raised if it means that the gap between the rich and the poor could be narrowed. 64.2% of Jews and 60.3% of Arabs agreed strongly or agreed somewhat that the taxes should be raised to benefit the poor⁴⁷. While this question does not have a direct relationship as to why Arabs are choosing to join the IDF it is a basic tenant that both the Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis agree on. Agreeing on something as simple as increasing taxes to help the poorest Israelis demonstrates that Israelis, both Jewish and Arab, care about their fellow Israelis regardless of religious identity. The other interesting thing that this statistic brings up is that Arab-Israelis would be okay paying more taxes to the government. If the Arab-Israeli population did not strongly identify with the nation

⁴⁶ Hermann, Tamar, Ella Heller, Nir Atmor, and Yuval Lebel. *The Israeli Democracy Index 2013*. The Israel Democracy Institute, 2013. 23. Web. 08 Oct. 2013.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 24.

of Israel why would they be willing to pay more money in taxes to the government? The answer in my mind is that they wouldn't. Their willingness to pay more taxes shows loyalty to the Israeli government, because even though the Arab-Israeli population makes up the majority of the poor population in Israel it does not make up the entire impoverished population. The ultra-orthodox also are large contributors to the poor population in Israel. The Jewish-Israelis may be initially accepting of the increased taxation due to the poverty of the ultra-orthodox Jews, however not all of their tax dollars would go to help Jewish-Israelis, some of that money would have to go to help less fortunate Arab-Israelis. The Jewish-Israelis must feel some connection to their Arab-Israeli counterparts or else they would be significantly less like to be willing to accept the increased tax burden.

While Smootha's index focuses more on how Jewish-Israelis are interacting with Arab-Israelis, the Democracy Index focuses more on how Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis are interacting with their government. This index shows us two important things. First, it establishes how little Arab-Israelis trust the Israeli government and other state institutions. Second, it proves that there is some common ground on which Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis agree. The Democracy Index looks at whether or not respondents are satisfied with the functioning of Israeli Democracy.

68% of Arab-Israelis stated that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Israeli democracy⁴⁸. Continuing on that theme, another set of data from the

⁴⁸ Hermann, Tamar, Ella Heller, Nir Atmor, and Yuval Lebel. *The Israeli Democracy Index 2013*. The Israel Democracy Institute, 2013. 26. Web. 08 Oct. 2013.

Israeli Democracy Index examines how much trust Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis have in various government institutions.

Institution	Percentage of Jewish-Israelis That Trust the Institution	Percentage of Arab-Israelis That Trust the Institution
IDF	90.9	34.9
President of Israel	78.7	41.7
Supreme Court	62.7	49.7
Police	61.9	43.5
Government	57.9	33.3
Knesset	54.5	38.5
Prime Minister	51.7	31.0
Media	47.2	48.1
Chief Rabbinate/Religious Leaders	43.0	43.3
Political Parties	36.7	43.2

*Figure 1- Trust in institutions based on ethnic identity*⁴⁹

The survey asks respondents if they trust the IDF, the President of Israel, the Supreme Court, the police, the government, the Knesset, the Prime Minister, the Media, religious leaders, and political parties (see Figure 1). The institution that Jewish-Israelis overwhelmingly trust is the IDF⁵⁰. The Arab-Israelis trust the Supreme Court more than any other government institution⁵¹. Overall this table provides context on which Israeli institutions the citizens trust and which both Arab and Jewish Israelis see as untrustworthy. It is also interesting to note that Arab-Israelis trust the media, religious leaders and political parties more than their

⁴⁹ Hermann, Tamar, Ella Heller, Nir Atmor, and Yuval Lebel. *The Israeli Democracy Index 2013*. The Israel Democracy Institute, 2013. 42. Web. 08 Oct. 2013.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 42.

⁵¹ Ibid. 42.

Jewish counterparts⁵². Examining how the Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis interact with their government is another way to examine identity. Part of one's identity can include whom they trust and how they choose to interact with the government. These particular results do more to explain the apprehension in the Arab-Israeli population than anything else. The fact that there isn't a single government institution in Israel that at least half of the Arab-Israelis trust is very telling about their experiences with these institutions. In all likelihood, they felt discriminated against or have been discriminated against by these institutions based on their Arab identity, and therefore they do not trust them. These results speak less about how the Arab-Israelis identify themselves, and more about how the Arab-Israelis perceive the Israeli government and the Israeli establishment as a whole.

Another key item that the research in this field looks at is how much Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis trust each other. Both Smooha's index and the Israeli Democracy Index look at this question. Smooha's 2004 index looks had a series of issues that are generally categorized as "Alienation toward the Other Side". Two of the issues he looks at under this category are whether or not an Arab-Israeli or Jewish-Israeli is ready to have a friend from the other community. Taking it a step further, Smooha also examines if they would be okay having a neighbor from the other community. 12.5% of Arab-Israelis and 34% of Jewish-Israelis are not prepared to have a friend from their opposing community. 25.7% of Arab-Israelis and 52.5% of Jewish-Israelis are not prepared to be living next to someone from

⁵² Ibid. 42.

their opposing community⁵³. At first glance, it is interesting that both Arab and Jewish Israelis are more prepared to have a friend who is not from their community than they are to be living next to someone who is not from their community. However, moving past that quick glance look these numbers are striking, especially when one is thinking about what it would mean for Arab-Israelis serving in the IDF. Serving in the military makes people move past friendship and into a community of intense brotherhood. This would be challenging when you think about the fact that 34% of Jewish-Israelis can't even think about being friends with an Arab-Israeli. Since all Jewish-Israelis must serve in the IDF, it is distinctly possible that 34% of IDF soldiers can't imagine being friends with an Arab-Israeli let alone serving alongside one. Essentially, the results of this set of data show how Arab and Jewish identity in Israel effect divisions within Israeli society. These divides absolutely affect the potential willingness of an Arab-Israeli to serve in the IDF but there are obviously broader implications about living in a deeply divided society.

The Israeli Democracy Index from 2013 takes a slightly different approach to examining how Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis interact with one another. This index asserts the statement "It would bother me to have as neighbors..." and allows the respondent to fill in the blank⁵⁴. The Jewish respondents have the following options to choose from: people who do observe the Sabbath and holidays, people who do not observe the Sabbath and holidays, Haredi Jews, a homosexual couple, an

⁵³ Smooha, Sammy. *Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2004*. University of Haifa, 2005. 23. Web. 15 May 2013.

⁵⁴ Hermann, Tamar, Ella Heller, Nir Atmor, and Yuval Lebel. *The Israeli Democracy Index 2013*. The Israel Democracy Institute, 2013. 87. Web. 08 Oct. 2013.

Arab family, and foreign workers⁵⁵. The Arab respondents were given three options: foreign workers, a Jewish family, and a homosexual couple⁵⁶. Surprisingly most Arab and Jewish respondents did not select a family from the other community for who they would least like to live next to. 46.2% of Arab-Israelis stated that they would least like to live next to a homosexual couple⁵⁷. 56.9% of Jewish-Israeli respondents said that they would least like to live next to foreign workers⁵⁸. In both cases, Jewish families and Arab families came in second place for least inclined to live next to⁵⁹. To be fair, nine years have passed between the Israeli Democracy Index and Smooha's Index from 2004, but it is interesting that when presented with multiple options most Jewish-Israelis and Arab-Israelis have a group of people that they dislike more than each other. This demonstrates that the issue is more complicated than just we hate you or we don't trust you as an entire group. Pulling more recent data from Smooha's 2012 report entitled "Still Playing by the Rules", 55.3% of Arabs would consider living in Jewish neighborhoods, and 45.7% of Jews would be okay with Arabs moving into their neighborhoods⁶⁰. This question is phrased slightly differently than it was in the 2004 Index, however, what the data shows is that relations between Jewish and Arab Israelis have declined a bit since 2004. The effect of this data is similar to that of Smooha's Index because it again

⁵⁵ Ibid. 87.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 88.

⁵⁷ Hermann, Tamar, Ella Heller, Nir Atmor, and Yuval Lebel. *The Israeli Democracy Index 2013*. The Israel Democracy Institute, 2013. 88. Web. 08 Oct. 2013.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 87.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 87-88.

⁶⁰ Smooha, Sammy. *Still Playing by the Rules: Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2012*. University of Haifa, n.d. 13. Web. 08 Sept. 2013.

highlights the rifts between the Arab-Israelis and Jewish-Israelis. This splice between the two communities again illuminates the lack of cooperation between Arab and Jewish Israelis.

Identity obviously plays a very powerful role in how Arab and Jewish Israelis interact. This chapter examined how Jewish-Israelis have viewed Arab-Israelis historically. It then went on to look at current data about how Arab-Israelis self-identify. Then finally it moved on to examining how Jewish-Israelis feel about Arab-Israelis in the modern day. It was necessary to look at all of these items prior to considering why an Arab-Israeli would choose to join or not join the IDF. Clearly identity plays a large role in why an Arab-Israeli would choose to join the IDF. They have to feel compelled by their love of country to join an institution that is dominated by Jewish-Israelis, some of whom discriminate against Arab-Israelis and don't consider them to be equal citizens.

Arab-Israelis and the IDF

Serving in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is arguably one of the cornerstones of being an Israeli Citizen. There are currently only two groups in Israel that are formally exempt from IDF service, the Christian Arabs and Muslim Arabs. The Ultra Orthodox Jews had been exempt up until August of 2013. Beyond not being conscripted, there is a history of Arab Muslims being discriminated against in the IDF due to their race and religion. This section will seek to examine why Arab-Israelis join the IDF even though they are not required to, and they are discriminated against.

In 1948 Israel was a new nation facing many challenges. They had just won the war of independence and were now facing a massive influx of Jewish immigrants. The new immigrants came from all over the world and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion commented that, “the vast majority of our people, from a Jewish perspective, are nothing but human dust, with no language, no tradition, no roots, no linkage to normal state of life, no habits of living in an independent society”⁶¹. Due to what Ben-Gurion viewed as a very malleable population and the social, political and military needs of the state, he decided that Israel would become a great melting pot for the Jewish people. However, due to a lack of resources and funding there was no framework to establish this melting pot except for the IDF⁶². Now, generally speaking, the military is an interesting framework to create cultural cohesion. One of the benefits of using the military for this purpose is that the entire

⁶¹ Peled, Alon. *A Question of Loyalty*. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1998. 127. Print.

⁶² Ibid. 128.

experience of military service tears every individual down and builds them back up as a larger community. That is an effective way to create cohesion and a unified culture in a country of immigrants. However, Ben-Gurion has focused on assimilating all of the Jewish immigrants into the Zionist culture of Israel. As far as the IDF was concerned, he was not thinking about how to deal with the Arabs that were already living in what is now the state of Israel and that becomes problematic. On the whole however, the “Arab Question” had been omnipresent. The IDF cannot be the great melting pot of Israel if it only focuses on instilling Jewish values and teaching Jewish history and culture, when there is a large Arab minority living in the new nation of Israel.

In 1954, the Israeli government mandated that all Arabs register to be drafted into the IDF⁶³. The logic behind doing this was that by extending obligations of full citizenship to the Arab-Israelis then they would stop feeling as though they were being discriminated against⁶⁴. This plan was initially met with excitement from the Arab youth, until the Arab press got a hold of the real plans for Arab IDF soldiers. The media reported that these new Arab recruits would not serve alongside Jewish-Israelis in normal units, but would rather be relegated to the Negev Desert to serve in segregated units conducting menial tasks⁶⁵. The IDF said that the recruitment was part of “freeing the Arab population from the feeling of discrimination”⁶⁶. Segregating the Arab-Israelis into Arab-only units is undeniably

⁶³ Frisch, Hillel. *Israel's Security and Its Arab Citizens*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. 39. Print.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 39.

discrimination. In the United States we would historically call this separate but equal, however that is no longer allowed. With this bait-and-switch type recruiting tactic, how could any Arab-Israeli believe the IDF's claims during the recruiting process. After this failure to conscript Arab-Israelis in 1954 the Israeli government has never again tried to mandate that they serve in the military.

If against all odds, a Christian or Muslim Arab did decide that they wanted to join the IDF the process was entirely different from their Jewish Israeli counterpart. At that time, Jewish-Israelis were drafted into the IDF with no education requirements, letters of recommendation or requirement for comprehension of the Hebrew language⁶⁷. For them, being Jewish was enough of a reason for them to be qualified to serve in the IDF. While if an Arab-Israeli wanted to serve he or she needed to meet a litany of requirements. For example this individual would need to prove that he or she had command over the Hebrew language, had completed at least 10 years of school, and had to be under the age of twenty-two⁶⁸. Furthermore, those Arab-Israelis who wanted to serve needed recommendations from Jewish-Israelis to support their applications⁶⁹. Finally, the Arab-Israelis who were deemed worthy enough to serve in the IDF were forced to serve in frontline units because there were already enough Jewish IDF soldiers serving in the safer headquarters units⁷⁰. This is interesting considering many believed that Arab-Israelis in the IDF could act as a "fifth-column" in a combat situation. Rather than fighting for Israel

⁶⁷ Peled, Alon. *A Question of Loyalty*. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1998. 138. Print.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 138.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 138.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 138.

they would turn and fight for the neighboring Arab nations. Given how difficult it is for Arab-Israelis to join the IDF, and that they were being placed in units that are more likely to actively engage and enemy it is not surprising that there was not a greater influx of Arab-Israelis lining up to join the IDF.

Moving past the discrimination and logistical challenges that Arab-Israelis faced when they were trying to join the IDF in the 1960s and even continue to experience to some extent today. Though the IDF publically states that after an Arab-Israeli declares his or her intention to join the service the process is almost identical for Arab and Jewish Israelis⁷¹. The process may be the same but the end result is often not. Arab-Israelis loyalty continues to be questioned. Let's look at why those individuals who chose to join actually join the IDF. Each of the following individuals is either a Muslim or Christian Arab-Israeli. They have been interviewed in Israeli publications and have discussed why they joined the IDF. The biggest reason it seems that most of them joined is out of pride for their family or love for the State of Israel.

Let's start with a young Christian Arab named Shirin Shlian. Shlian grew up in the one of the Arab villages near the Galilee, but now she is a recruiter for the IDF⁷². She visits high schools all over Nazareth Illit, a predominately Jewish city, and explains to them the process of enlisting in the IDF. She talks them through the process of receiving their first draft notice as well as the many opportunities that

⁷¹ Ahmed, Ramiz. "Brothers in Arms." Israeli Defense Force, n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013. <<http://www.aka.idf.il/brothers/klali/default.asp?catId=57464&docId=>>.

⁷² Moskovitz, Israel. "Arab IDF Soldier: Proud to Serve My Country." *Ynet*. N.p., 19 Jan. 2012. Web. 15 Oct. 2013

the Army in Israel has to offer. The students that she talks to are primarily Jewish and so when they find out that she is Arab they often ask her why she chose to join the IDF. She responds by saying, "it must be the good education I received at home"⁷³. Shlian is not the only member of her household to join the IDF, two of her brothers are serving as well. One is a major in a combat unit while the other is serving in the Border Police⁷⁴. Presumably the education she received at home was an education that instilled the values of love of country in her. Her parents likely emphasized that regardless of their Arab roots it was important to identify with the state of Israel and participate in the things that make the nation great, such as serving in the IDF. Clearly that education made an impact on the whole family as the Shlian family has three children in the IDF.

Slightly changing topics, Al Wahid is the most senior Arab-Israeli officer serving in the IDF. Unlike Shlian he is a Muslim. He is quoted as saying, "I believe in the Muslim faith, and I will never abandon it, but I think that Zionism is more than a religion. It is something that fully represents my sense of belonging to the State of Israel and to Israeli society, and the immense commitment I have to protecting and guarding the country of which I am part"⁷⁵. This again displays an Arab-Israeli's loyalty for the State of Israel as well as his strong identity with Israel over any other source. What I find particularly compelling about his statement is the notion that he is both a Muslim and a Zionist. And that in his mind Zionism transcends religion and

⁷³ Avraham, Rachel. "Stories of Israeli Arab Soldiers in the IDF." *United with Israel*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Oct. 2013.

⁷⁴ Moskovitz, Israel. "Arab IDF Soldier: Proud to Serve My Country." *Ynet*. N.p., 19 Jan. 2012. Web. 15 Oct. 2013

⁷⁵ Avraham, Rachel. "Stories of Israeli Arab Soldiers in the IDF." *United with Israel*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Oct. 2013.

shows more about his love for his country than anything else. He truly embraces the idea of nationalism, as he is willing to put his country before himself regardless of how many people in his country view him.

Let's look at one more, slightly different case. This particular woman did not serve in the IDF but she insisted that all of her children serve. Anat Hasakhia is a Muslim Arab-Israeli. Her three children all serve in the IDF. Hasakhia believes that by serving the state of Israel, Arab-Israelis will have an easier time integrating into Israeli society. Effectively she believes that the IDF could act as a 'get-in' card for Arab-Israelis trying to integrate into Israeli society, just as it is for Jewish-Israelis who are from the former Soviet Union or Ethiopia. Furthermore she believes that every Israeli regardless of religion should give back to their country and become an Israeli war hero⁷⁶. If they are not willing to become an Israeli war hero Hasakhia is okay with that as long as they are willing to give back to their country by at least participating in national service⁷⁷. Hasakhia obviously values her identity as an Israeli so much that he instilled it in her children that they must serve in the IDF. Also based on her comments on national service it is clear that she believes that everyone is responsible for the success of the nation of Israel and therefore must give back in whatever way they can.

In 2006, an unnamed Arab-Israeli high school student declared his intentions to join the Israeli Air Force to become a pilot, ideally in one of the IAFs elite units. The IDF had already deemed him qualified to be drafted when he submitted the

⁷⁶ Avraham, Rachel. "Stories of Israeli Arab Soldiers in the IDF." *United with Israel*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Oct. 2013.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

paperwork to be admitted into the pilot training program⁷⁸. The obstacle he immediately ran into was that the aviation program requires an additional security clearance, and the IDF was unsure of whether or not he could be eligible for such a clearance given his Arab roots⁷⁹. Major Michael, a current IAF pilot, was his instructor when he obtained his civilian pilots license. In a letter to the IDF, Major Michael said, "I was amazed by his capability and love of flying. He learned to fly quickly, feels excellent while in the air, and the harder the maneuvers get, the more thrilled he is"⁸⁰. Major Michael also told this young man however, that there would be questions regarding his loyalty, that commanders would have a hard time sending a young Arab to bomb other Arabs⁸¹. The IAF candidate said in response to the question of his loyalty, two things. First, "I belong to the state of Israel, just try me and you'll see. I live in this country, and am willing to do what is required of me"⁸². Clearly he takes great pride in being an Israeli. There are very few people that would readily state that they are the belonging of a nation. That takes it one step farther than being a citizen because one is stating that they are the possession of something larger than themselves. The second thing he said when his loyalty to the state of Israel was questioned was, "Although I am not obligated to join the IDF... I want to serve like any other citizen in the country. I was raised on the values of loving Israeli, and the moral commitment to contribute to the state"⁸³. This quotation clearly shows that has grown up with a strong commitment to Israel. That

⁷⁸ Yehoshua, Yossi. "Arab Muslim Wants to Join IAF." *Ynet*. N.p., 2 Jan. 2006. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

⁷⁹ Yehoshua, Yossi. "Arab Muslim Wants to Join IAF." *Ynet*. N.p., 2 Jan. 2006. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

he was raised to see himself as an Israeli, not as a minority or an outsider, but as someone who should be proud of where he lives and what his country stands for.

Each of these individuals goes above and beyond by putting their love of their country above their religious and individual identity. All of them are devoutly religious but recognize that loyalty to Israel does not take away from their faith. Their identity lies in the love of their country rather than in the love of a smaller tried. Moreover, these individuals recognize that they could be ostracized from their ethnic community simply by serving in the IDF, but again they feel that their love of country supersedes that potential set back. Furthermore, they are defending a country that does not treat them as equal to their Jewish-Israeli counterparts. But they push all of that aside because they are proud Israelis who feel that it is their duty to protect the country they love. Each of them possesses a belief that they must make the best of the circumstances they are in now. This means moving past historical conflicts and prejudices and serving the country that they now call home. On the whole I think that recognition of the fact that while Israel is not a perfect nation it is still their home country is what allows these individuals to shift how they identify themselves and then ultimately join the IDF.

Conclusions

Every year, a small number of Arab-Israelis choose to enlist in the IDF. In 2008 there was a steep increase in the number of Christian and Arab Muslims serving in the IDF⁸⁴. They risk alienation from their community, and put their lives on the line for a country where not all of the citizens consider them equals. Since the founding of Israel, the Arab-Israelis have been discouraged from joining the IDF and when they try to join they have been discriminated against. Yet, every year a few brave souls put all of those things behind them and put their love of Israel first.

Those who choose to join do so because they believe down to their core that it is the right thing to do. It really comes down to ones individual identity. Those who choose to join state that they are proud to be from the state of Israel and that is why they feel compelled to serve. Many also cite the way they were raised as a key reason as to why they joined the IDF. Presumably, their parents taught them to value their Israeli citizenship and to do what is needed of them to ensure that their homeland is protected. An individual and practical incentive is to gain equality through the existing institutions. This desire to put country above self is what draws Arab-Israelis as well as people all over the world to serve.

But what about civil service? The woman who insisted that all of her children join the IDF made a comment about those who are not willing to die for their country. She said that those who do not believe they can die for their country should

⁸⁴ Stern, Yoav. "Number of Israeli Arab IDF Recruits Dramatically Increases in 2008." *Haaretz.com*. N.p., 10 Oct. 2008. Web. 23 Nov. 2013.

at least be prepared to contribute to the success of the nation through civil service. Civil service is a great option for two different groups of people. The first are the people who are pacifists. They could be opposed to fighting for a variety of reasons, including ideology, but in this case it would likely be because they do not want to be forced into a situation where they need to attack Israel's Arab neighbors in Lebanon or Syria. For example, it is completely understandable to not want to fight against someone who shares part of your identity. This paper has already addressed that Arab-Israelis very much have a split identity when it comes to their cultural and religious heritage and their citizenship in the state of Israel. The second group of Arab-Israelis that civil service is a good option for are those who live in Israel but don't want to serve the state directly because they feel more connected to their immediate cultural community. In the United States, civil service consists of joining an organization such as AmeriCorps and teaching in a local school, or volunteering in a community organization. There is absolutely no reason why this couldn't be implemented in Israel. Those who didn't want to serve in the IDF and directly serve the state of Israel could serve in a civil service capacity. They would be serving the state of Israel but their efforts would not be felt on a national level, instead they would be felt directly in the communities where they were living and working. Israeli civil service could be an outstanding opportunity for all Israeli citizens, Arab and Jewish alike, to contribute to Israeli society in a positive way, other than by serving in the military. It could also benefit Arab-Israelis who are searching for that 'get-in' card by allowing them to participate in the betterment of Israel in a way that they are more comfortable with.

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