All Able-Bodies, to Arms! – Attitudes of Israeli High School Students toward Conscription and Combat Service

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“All able-bodies, to arms!” From the Palmach2 anthem, by Zrubavel Gil’ad

Abstract

The IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) has been long known as “The People’s Army”. Army service is based on the militia model. All able Jewish persons, as well as the Druze minority group, are required by law to serve a 3-year tour and then continue serving in reserve units until the age of 45. Recently surveys have shown that a mere 60% of each age group conscripted complete their full course of duty. Only 12% of all reservists are actually summoned for reserve duty. The paper analyzes the changes that have taken place in this regard over the years. It also analyzes the attitudes of a convenience sample of Jewish teenagers towards conscription and combat service. The main conclusion of the article based both on official data and on sample findings, is that although conscription rates are rapidly decreasing, motivation has not changed dramatically among those who are not ultra-orthodox. Motivation has been found to be higher among male believers than among non-believers. The reverse was found to be true of females. The highest motivation for combat service is found among teenagers from the kibbutzim (collective settlements) and moshavim (cooperative settlements).

Keywords: IDF, People’s Army, compulsory draft, combat service, motivation to serve

A. Nation in uniform and the People’s Army

For many years Israel was known as a Nation in Uniform and the IDF was considered the People’s Army (Suleiman & Cohen, 1995). In the Israeli context, the term Nation’s Army was formulated in the ‘40s by Yehoshua Globerman, a Haganah strategist. At that early date this national organ already had two universal goals: recruiting maximum national resources in times of war, and creating social, organizational, and cultural integration (Dromi, 2001, 10). In late 1948 David Ben-Gurion, the founder and first Prime Minister of the State of Israel, presented three tenets as the guiding principles of the People’s Army (ibid.):

• The nation is defended by the People’s Army;
• Conscription must apply to everyone;
• The army has social and educational roles and it is a major partner in the nation’s construction.

In March 1949, towards the end of the War of Independence, IDF General Headquarters published a document listing the guidelines for reserve forces (ibid.). This model was based among other things on the importance of serving in the defense and military forces as a civic duty. Thus reserve duty

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1 Palmach: The elite force of the Jewish Haganah underground, operating in Palestine during the days of the British rule. The Palmach was established in May, 1941, during the 2nd World War.

2 I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my two students, Michal Katz-Shalev and Neta Shoval, who participated in a seminar on values, socialization, and the Israeli society under my supervision, and compiled (and also analyzed) a large part of the data supporting the empirical part of this paper.
became an important dimension of belonging to the Israeli collective. The militant heritage of the IDF was formed, and initial doubts as to its relevance to Israeli reality only began appearing in the ‘90s (see below).

Some think (Suleiman & Cohen, 1995) that the status of the IDF as the People’s Army was augmented by two combined variables: the environmental variable and the organizational variable. The environmental variable is manifested in Israel’s recurrent violent conflicts with its Arab neighbors, endured throughout its existence. The organizational variable, reinforcing the IDF image as a People’s Army, is the “three-tier” structure of its human resources: a core consisting of regular soldiers, young compulsory service conscripts, and the reserve system. The conception of Israeli society as a “Recruited Nation” or a “Nation in Uniform” is based on this organizational structure (ibid.).

Despite the major status of the army within Israeli society, most scholars think that the term “draft state” is not appropriate in this case. Few are those who compare Israel to militarist societies (Kimmerling, 1983). Most researchers have until recently defined the relationship between Israeli civil and military sectors as a “partnership”. This partnership has two foundations: On the one hand, it stems from the lasting dominance of security considerations in Israel’s political culture; on the other, from the above-mentioned militant nature of the IDF. This nature serves to obscure official boundaries between the civil and military systems (Horowitz & Kimmerling, 1974; Lissak, 1986). On this issue one of the major Israeli sociologists stated (Lissak, 1987; Lissak, 1991) that the Israeli civil-military partnership creates an absurd situation. On the one hand, the IDF maintains moderation and possibly avoids dissociating from society and becoming a distinct entity. However society pays a price in the form of pervasive military characteristics. The military and civil systems are interactive. Some even conclude (Ben-Eliezer, n.d.) that cooperation between political and military echelons led to a certain blurring of roles. This blur also eventually led to cultural militarism and militarist politics.

In contrast, recent years have seen the emergence of various opinions perceiving a possibility of increasing military threat towards the civil system. Some scholars hold the opinion that such a threat may develop in the future as a result of growing political-civil failure to control the army. In consequence, the army will attempt to leave its aggressive signature on the political world both formally and practically, intimately but also publicly (Levy, 2004). One prominent Israeli political scientist (Shefer, 2004) warns that despite Israeli civil political passivity its defense forces enjoy enormous financial allocations. Moreover, since security issues have a high place on the Israeli public agenda an extensive “security network” has evolved, composed of senior IDF officers and other security personnel, as well as businessmen who reap financial benefits from existing threats. This network has increasing influence on policies and social behavior in all fields: cultural, social, political, and economic. Since it controls many political, social, and economic resources, it succeeds in awarding clear preference to “security policies and procedures”.

B. Rates of IDF service and the concept of the “People’s Army”

Historical data on compulsory IDF service indicate that until 2005 the relevant age groups for conscription had been slowly growing, i.e. each year it should have been possible to draft more young people for compulsory service. However actual conscription rates of Jewish boys and girls have been gradually declining. While the male conscription rate was 84% in 1990, in 2008 it is expected to reach 74%, and while the female conscription rate was 67% in 1990 it is expected to reach 58% in 2008 (see table 1) (Dromi, 2002,
Moreover, approximately one third of all male conscripts do not complete the compulsory three-year term of service and are released earlier. When these dropout data are added to the nonservice data it seems that only 60% of each age group complete three years of compulsory service as required (Dromi, 2002, 14). But this is not the end of the story. Reserve duty is only performed by a small proportion as well. According to calculations by the Israeli Institute of Democracy, in 2000 the number of reserve soldiers was estimated at 425,000. In that particular year the number of reservists who actually served was 200,000, i.e. less than 50% of the forces. The average number of service days per reservist was 16. Approximately one half of those who served in the reserves did so for only 1-3 days, in what is termed “administrative call-ups”. Only approx. 100,000 reservists served four or more days. These comprise approx. 12% of all Jewish males aged 21-45 (ibid.). The number of those who served a period of 26 days or more is estimated at about 30,000-32,000, i.e. approx. 4% of the relevant population (ibid.).

C. Teenage motivation to serve in the IDF

Two conclusions may be reached from the above data: First of all, the proportion of those exempt from conscription is consistently rising; secondly, the proportion of those exempt for reasons of “mental incompatibility” rose only slightly. In 1980 and in 1990 this category constituted less than 4% of all candidates for the security forces. In 2007 they constituted almost 5% (Cohen, 2007). This is a 25% increase. More than eight thousand men from the class of July 2007 exempted themselves from serving in the IDF through this clause or by leaving the country. In view of the changes in Israeli society, expanding rifts between left and right, between religious and secular, and between new
immigrants and veteran Israelis, and the serious conflicts regarding peace talks and the national consensus in recent years, some say that it isn’t the rise in the proportion of those avoiding military service that is amazing, rather that evasion is not much more prevalent (Cohen, 2007). In any case, due to the major significance of security issues, the IDF Department of Behavioral Sciences as well as external research organs have been investigating teenage motivation to serve in the army in recent years. Motivation to serve is usually examined by a number of measures, such as readiness to enlist, readiness to serve in combat units, readiness to volunteer for special units, and the desire to reach the officer rank. Analysis of the various findings shows that they are not consistent over time. An important mediating variable affecting teenagers’ view of conscription is of course the spirit of the age (Zeitgeist in sociological terms). The spirit of the age is notably influenced by security events.

For example, a study held among teenagers in the months of March-May 1988, about six months after the beginning of the first Intifada (Meisels & Gal, 1990), indicated that a high degree of readiness to serve in the IDF in general and in combat units in particular. The Gulf War, which occurred in 1991, struck large population centers for the first time (this happened again in 2006 during the Second Lebanon War) and raised the anxiety curve among the Israeli public to unprecedented heights. This existential anxiety seems to have had a positive effect on the views of adolescents regarding military service. About 87% said that a successful military service holds significance for them (Israelashvili, 1994).

A summary of the findings of studies and surveys performed by the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) Research and Information Center (Shpiegel, 2001) seems to indicate a drop in the level of motivation to serve in the IDF among secular youth during 1986-2000 (tables 3,4). The situation among religious youth is more ambiguous (table 3).

### Table 3: Desire of secular and religious youth to serve in IDF combat units, 1988 and 1994 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Orientation</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>Kibbutz</th>
<th>Moshav</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988 – state secular school</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 – state secular school</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 – state religious school</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 – state religious school</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Views of military service among seniors in state religious schools, 1986-2000 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intention to enlist in the IDF after high school</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to serve the full 3 years in the IDF</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to serve in combat units</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to serve as combat officers</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to serve as officer in the regular army</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another survey, held at the behest of the Union of Local Authorities in Israel (Degani & Degani, 2000), indicated a large drop in motivation to serve between 1998-2000. Here too researchers believe that time-related circumstances were influential. In their opinion the public debate surrounding IDF withdrawal from Lebanon at the time of the survey influenced adolescents’ views on this issue. A subsequent survey held by the IDF Department of Behavioral Sciences a short time after the Second Lebanon War in 2006 in order to investigate the views of candidates for military service, provides additional support of the effect of time-related circumstances. The survey showed that readiness to serve in the army was 5% higher than in a survey held by the army in November 2001. The survey also indicated that candidates for military service expressed a very high desire to excel in their military duties and readiness to volunteer for officer duty. In contrast, there was a conspicuous drop in their degree of trust in the army (Azulay & Kashti, 2007).
Table 5: Views of candidates for military service towards the IDF – state of affairs in November 2001 and in November 2006 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Readiness to enlist</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Desire to excel</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Readiness to become officers</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. IDF Professional and skilled army</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The IDF is much appreciated by society</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The IDF is not attentive enough towards its soldiers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here too the researchers believed that the war reinforced motivation to serve. From this respect the findings confirm a list of previous findings which indicated a rise in readiness to serve in times of security hardships.

D. Views of a group of high school students towards IDF service on the eve of the Second Lebanon War

D.1. Research setting, tools, and method

Based on all the above, in the spring of 2006, approximately two months before the eruption of the Second Lebanon War, an attempt was made to examine the views of eleventh and twelfth grade students in Dan Metropolitan area schools towards IDF service. The study was based on two convenience samples in four high schools. Three of the institutions were secular, and the fourth was religious. The questionnaires were distributed to the students in class, after receiving the consent of the management and the teachers.

The research employed two separate questionnaires. One form, distributed among 152 male and female students in two secular schools, was based on a questionnaire composed in 1989 (Luski). It was comprised of several parts. The findings, which will be discussed below arise from analysis of the chapter dealing with participants’ views on IDF service. The second questionnaire was distributed among 118 eleventh and twelfth grade students in two academic high schools, one secular and the other religious. 51% of respondents were religious by their own declaration and 49% were secular. 59 of respondents were male, 60 were female. The questionnaire was based on a research survey from 1995 (Helinger) and was intended to examine the significance attributed by teenagers to their impending conscription as well as their motivation to serve in the IDF in general and in combat units in particular. Consistency of the content world of questions in both questionnaires was examined by alpha- Cronbach coefficients. Both were found to have high internal consistency. The first questionnaire was found to have a consistency coefficient of α=0.82. The second questionnaire was found to have a consistency coefficient of α=0.96.

D.2. Findings of the first questionnaire

The first questionnaire produced a list of findings, of which some were mutually supportive and confirming. For example, approx. 71% of respondents declared that they are proud or very proud to be nearing IDF service. Approx. 63% declared that it is very important and even extremely important for them to succeed in their military service. Approx. 60% wrote that if they find out that they are to be sent to a combat unit they will not attempt to change this. 59% stated specifically that if they are medically fit they’d like to volunteer for an IDF voluntary unit. Approx. 74% said that it is important and even very important to contribute to the army while serving. Approx. 73% perceived military service as a sacrifice for the country. Finally, approx. 79% stated that their personal view of enlistment is positive or very positive. Obviously, there was a high correlation of 0.815 (p<0.001)
between high readiness to serve in the army and high readiness to volunteer for combat units among males. A high positive correlation of 0.723 (p<0.001) was found also between positive views of the IDF and high motivation to serve. Finally, respondents were asked to what degree they define themselves as Israeli. Here they were asked to rate themselves on an 8-point scale. It must be stated, that in this random sample a deep feeling of Israeli identity was found among the teenagers. Approx. 79% rated themselves as belonging to the two highest grades of Israeli identity. Unsurprisingly, the more the respondents perceived themselves as Israeli the more positive their attitude towards military and combat service. The positive correlation found was high as well – 0.691 (p<0.001). On the other hand, teenagers also tended to recognize the personal benefits of their military service. Aside from altruistic and voluntary considerations they were realistically cognizant of their personal benefits, not necessarily negatively (table 6).

Table 6: Considerations of personal benefit during military service and without military service as perceived by teenagers (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Examined</th>
<th>Greater Chance during Military Service</th>
<th>Similar Chance</th>
<th>Greater Chance without Military Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To acquire prestige in society (140)</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prove your skills (152)</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To contribute to the country (152)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire experience as a manager/leader (152)</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assume responsibility (152)</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prove to yourself your personal abilities (152)</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To contribute to your personal advancement in life (152)</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire significant friends (152)</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To experience new situations (152)</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire new skills and capabilities (152)</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To direct your personal life as you understand (152)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To influence the character of the country (152)</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acquire mental maturity (152)</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state of affairs reflected in the table above confirms Prof. Ziv’s (1984) statement that Israeli teenagers perceive military service as tantamount to a “transition ritual” to maturity. This point has been examined and confirmed in an important study on teenage views of the army (Meisels, Gal & Fishoff, 1989), which found that the value of self-realization occupies an important place in this transition ritual. The instrumental considerations of personal development, preparation for life, and experiencing new experiences or situations, so conspicuous in the table above, occupied an important place in a survey held a dozen years ago as well (Meisels, 1995). Thus, from this respect nothing has changed despite the changes within Israeli society.

D.3. Findings of the second questionnaire

The second sample included, as stated, students of a secular high school and students of a religious high school. In this group an attempt was made to examine whether religiousness and gender have any effect on motivation to serve in the IDF and motivation for combat service. The questionnaire distributed among students of the two institutions examined three spheres:

- General motivation to serve in the IDF;
- Motivation for the dimension defined as “meritorious service”;
- Motivation for combat service.

The findings indicate that both religiousness and gender have an effect on motivation to serve. Regarding religious effects on motivation, a sharp, clear and statistically significant state of affairs was evident in the two first spheres. The motivation of religious teenagers (both male and female) was greater than that of secular teenagers. The average score on general motivation to serve in the IDF was 3.33 (on a scale of 1-5, SD=1.01) among the religious but only 2.81 (SD=.78) among secular
teenagers. The mean score on motivation for service defined “meritorious” was 3.33 (SD=.98) among religious and 2.82 (SD=.77) among secular teenagers.

The following questions were among the statements examining the “meritorious service” sphere:
- “Do you find it important to contribute to your maximal abilities during your military service?”
- “Are you interested in a military position which will demand participation in many courses?”
- “Will you try to reach officers’ course?”
- “Are you interested in performing your military duties beyond the requirements?”
- “Are you interested in volunteering for assignments that are not compulsory during your military service?”

The mean score of religious teenagers (both male and female) (3.32; SD=1.42) was higher than that of secular teenagers (2.78; SD=1.05) in the field of motivation for combat service as well. However, due to standard deviations, the t-test for independent samples indicated that this difference was insignificant.

Regarding the effect of gender on motivation to serve, once again a clear state of affairs was revealed: Male motivation is significantly higher than female motivation. This is true of all three spheres. The mean male score on general motivation to serve in the IDF was 3.32 (SD=.92); the female score was 2.84 (SD=.91). The mean male score on motivation for “meritorious service” was 3.30 (SD=.89). The female score was 2.87 (SD=.92). The mean male score on motivation for combat service was 3.48 (SD=1.29) and the female score was 2.63 (SD=1.11). T-tests for independent samples were held for all these findings. The differences were found to be significant.

In this context it is interesting to mention the different state of affairs found on the joint basis of gender and religiousness in the two sectors: An ANOVA of the three spheres – general motivation to serve, motivation for “meritorious service” and motivation for combat service – in regard to both religiousness and gender, exposed an interesting distinction: Among males the mean score of religious teenagers is higher than that of secular teenagers for all types of motivation (4.02 versus 2.89, respectively, for motivation to serve; 3.97 versus 2.90, respectively, for motivation for “meritorious service”; 4.45 versus 2.89, respectively, for motivation for combat service). In contrast, among females the mean score for motivation is higher among secular teenagers than among religious teenagers. This is true of all spheres (2.88 versus 2.80, respectively, on motivation to serve; 2.89 versus 2.84, respectively, on motivation for “meritorious service”, and 2.80 versus 2.47 for combat service). Even when the differences are not statistically different their direction is clear; the motivation of religious males is higher than that of secular males; the motivation of secular females is higher than that of religious females.

E. Discussion and Summary

This paper was written in response to the gradual erosion of the IDF “People’s Army” image over the past generation. As stated above, only approx. 60% of each age group conscripted complete their full military service. Forty percent of the Jewish population no longer see themselves as an inseparable part of the model envisioned by David Ben-Gurion in 1948. History has left its mark and the social transformations that have occurred since the First Lebanon War have impaired the willingness of many Israelis to serve in the IDF.

The factors that contributed to this erosion include the deep dispute over the war in Lebanon, differences of opinion on the issue of Jewish settlements in the territories, indignation over sweeping exemptions from military service for yeshiva students, deep and wide cultural transformations, and the growing trend towards individualism (Oren, 2005). This was augmented by the wrath of right-wing youth of the “orange shirts” as a result of the evacuation of the Qatif Bloc and Amona. Be that as it may, since the ‘90s many ideas have been voiced, aimed at changing the image of the IDF and shifting from a People’s Army militarist format to that of a professional army of full-time soldiers, not
based on ideology or on the “Auschwitz mentality” (Shelah, 2003). One of the proponents of this idea said (Klein, 2003): “I see an army with no ideological obligations, an organization that receives money and manpower and produces a certain type of security. I want it to resemble the National Firemen’s Association more than it does today.”

Examination of conscription data indicates a large discrepancy between sectors, towns, and schools. National conscription data published in September 2006 – a short time after the Second Lebanon War – depicts an interesting state of affairs (The Israeli Forum for the Promotion of Equal Share in the Burden, 2007). They show that in the cities 74% of each age group was in fact conscripted, of these 40% volunteered for combat service; in the moshavim 91% (!) of each age group was conscripted, of these 54% for combat service; while in kibbutzim 86% of each age group was conscripted, of these 65% (!) for combat service. Both moshav and kibbutz residents are characterized by high conscription rates and high rates of volunteering for combat service. This is particularly conspicuous in the case of kibbutz youth, in sharp contrast to their prevalent public image. Perusal of conscription data for various Israeli cities indicates large differences. At the top one finds the "leading twin" – one town with 90% enlistment rate and another one with an 88% enlistment rate. On the other hand, at the bottom of the list one finds Jerusalem (sic!) with a 44% enlistment rate and another town with a 16% (!) enlistment rate (ibid). This is true both of conscription in general and of combat service. On the one hand the leading five towns have high combat volunteer rates: 42%-59%. In contrast the five towns at the bottom have very low rates of 26%-29% (ibid.). Obviously, this is also true of the educational system. Here too there is a large diversity between high schools. The five institutions with the highest rates of volunteering for combat service are all Regional Council schools, i.e. rural areas schools. The five top schools have volunteering rates of 87.1%-85.3%. The five schools with a particularly low rate of conscription are all urban schools with volunteering rates of 46%-34.2% (ibid.).

This discrepancy in readiness to enlist in general and combat service in particular is also manifested in the distinction between the religious and secular sectors. As early as the ’90s (Levin, 1999), disadvantaged high school students in the religious sector were marked by their tendency to choose command roles and serve in the IDF regular services. It seems that in the religious kibbutzim a high proportion of both boys and girls choose to serve in combat units, volunteer units, and command and regular roles (ibid.). Other studies (Meisels & Gal, 1990; Meisels, Gal & Fishoff, 1989) have also indicated a greater level of motivation to serve in general, and to volunteer for combat service in particular, among the religious sector. On this point the findings of our study confirmed the general conclusion but indicated an interesting reservation – low motivation of religious versus secular female high school students. This finding is compatible with data received from the IDF, which indicate a sharp drop in the rate of female conscripts – from 32.6% exemptions in 1991 to 42.3% exemptions in 2005 (The Israeli Forum for the Promotion of Equal Share in the Burden, 2007).

Conscription data from November 2007 indicate the lowest motivation for combat service in the past four years. While in November 2004 the rate of volunteers for combat service was 68.9%, in November 2005 it was 69.6% and in November 2006 – 70.8%, and in November 2007 it dropped to 67% (ibid.). These data indicate a drop in motivation for combat service after a previous increase. However both the increases and the drops were not dramatic. In this context, attention should be paid to an important analysis (Gal, 1999) which categorized motivation to serve in the IDF as belonging to four different types. It is necessary to consider changes in the relative weight of each of these types as involved in decisions concerning military service; one type of motivation may diminish while another increases:

1. **Survival** motivation, characteristic of periods of existential crisis, “to be or not to be”, when the mere existence of society is questionable. The War of Independence and the Yom
Kippur War are examples of such periods, when personal interests were subjected to communal interests.

2. **Ideological** motivation, based on moral, ideological, or religious devotion. Such motivation is basically emotional and it is accompanied by deep justification of the path chosen and full legitimization of almost all activities performed during military service. This motivation was characteristic of those who volunteered for the underground movements during the British Mandate.

3. **Normative** motivation. This motivation is based on the socially customary and legitimate.

4. **Individualist** motivation. This motivation originates with the individual’s need for self-realization, a very deep need among teenagers.

Increasing and expanding changes in Israeli society over the past generation have been accompanied by an increase in the weight given to individualist motivation within the process of deciding whether to enlist in the IDF. Some say that since 1987 this is the predominant motivation among youth (ibid.). The findings displayed in table 6 indicate that the three types of motivation – ideological (wish to contribute to the country), normative (wish to receive social prestige, wish to prove skills) and individualist (wish to experience new situations, wish to acquire mental maturity, wish to assume responsibilities, etc.) – are expressed in the individual’s considerations before enlisting in the army. The findings leave no room for doubt that the foundations of individualistic motivation are very conspicuous. Moreover, the findings displayed in table 6 also reconfirm the findings of Meisels (1995), which indicated that the possibility of serving the country, the chance of experiencing various adventures, the possibility of preparing for life, as well as the possibility of mentally developing and maturing – all these contributed to the motivation of teenagers when deciding whether to serve in the IDF. Thus the empirical findings collected in the field study presented in this paper support the conclusions reached previously by various scholars: Adolescents expressing interest in IDF service perceive the service not only as “giving” (to the homeland, the country) rather also as “receiving” (on the personal level). It is a mixture of patriotism and personal psychological factors.

**References**


