

19.1x24.38	1/4	38 עמוד	the jerusalem report	09/04/2014	41972093-5
נאמן מוסד למחקר מדיניות לאומית בטכניון ד"ר ראובן ג - 85300					



MARKETPLACE SHLOMO MAITAL

# RETHINKING THE DRAFT

How can conscription be modernized and improved to achieve Israel's goals and maintain its security?

**ON MARCH 12**, the Knesset passed a historic law calling for the conscription of Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) men.

MK Ayelet Shaked of Bayit Yehudi, who led the Knesset committee that prepared the law, told The Jerusalem Post, "for 65 years, there was an exemption for all yeshiva students. The change the coalition made is proportionate and gradual and correct."

The law passed by a vote of 67 to 1 – the opposition boycotted the debate. Earlier, a massive demonstration of hundreds of thousands of Haredim opposing the law brought Jerusalem traffic to a halt for hours.

A week after the vote, my colleague Dr. Reuven Gal, a former Israel Defense Forces chief psychologist, and I convened a discussion at the Samuel Neaman Institute, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology on how to revise and modernize the IDF conscription law. Some 25 experts, each with extensive experience and/or research background, discussed whether conscription should be ended or seriously modified. The participants included an active-duty major general, two retired brigadier generals, a former director-general of the Finance Ministry,

GENERATION Y IS NOT SUITED TO LONG YEARS OF MILITARY SERVICE EXCEEDING TWO YEARS, AND NEEDS APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION

two former pilots, several scholars, and two high school students soon to begin military service.

Why in the world should experts discuss ending or modifying conscription precisely when the Knesset and the coalition government are trying to expand the draft to include Haredim? How could Israel even think of ending the draft when the threats on all its borders seem to multiply daily? With major support for sharing the burden of military service more equally, why consider moving further away from universal army service?

There is wide consensus that the IDF's regular conscripted army has significant hidden unemployment. According to the British think tank IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), the IDF has 629,000 soldiers in the regular and reserve armies; of those, 184,000 are regular army (compulsory service and professional soldiers), while 445,000 are reservists. The law requires the IDF to draft everyone except those exempted by law.

In contrast, Britain, with seven times Israel's population, has an army 40 percent smaller – 206,000 professional soldiers and 182,000 reservists.

The Israeli military is apparently overmanned. Many non-combat IDF soldiers are simply not needed. Yet the principle of fairness and equal-burden sharing can make a strong case for continuing the draft. And in an emergency or a war, every single soldier might be desperately needed.

Maj. Gen. Gershon HaCohen, head of the IDF's General Staff Corps, strongly supports conscription for this reason. He reasoned that "in the past decades, what prevented a wide-scale conventional attack on Israel, like that

20.19x24.48	2/4	39 עמוד	the jerusalem report	09/04/2014	41972097-9
נאמן מוסד למחקר מדיניות לאומית בטכניון ד"ר ראובן ג' - 85300					



Gender equality: Female infantry soldiers of the Caracal Battalion carry a comrade on a stretcher during a 23-kilometer march marking the end of their training; the battalion, two-thirds of whose members are women, was established in 2004

in the Yom Kippur War, is the known existence of a mass army, active and ready, that can be called up when needed.”

Dr. Ze’ev Drori, a former Givati Brigade commander and Army Radio commander, noted that Israel needs conscription because it does not have the luxury to experiment and take chances with its security. He monitored the Nahal Haredi Battalion for a decade, from its inception, and insists that threatening criminal sanctions against ultra-Orthodox youth who fail to serve, as the new law does, will ruin all efforts to draft Haredim. Drori now heads the Shomron Center at Kinneret College.

All this suggests there is need for creative thinking about who and for how long to draft.

Worldwide, there is a strong trend to end compulsory conscription. The United States ended the draft in 1973, shifting to an all-volunteer army. Of 100 major countries in the world, 78 percent had conscription in 1968, but fewer than half have it today. In Europe, in the past 40 years, half of all nations ended conscription. A dozen European nations ended conscription in the past de-

cade. Among the world’s 13 biggest economies, only China, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and South Korea maintain conscription. Two major causes of the shift to an all-volunteer army were the end of the Cold War and the need to slash defense spending and reduce deficits.

America’s experience is instructive. The US military was transformed, according to a Rand Corporation study, “from a poorly disciplined force of conscripts... into a force of professionals revered throughout the world.” The US is now downsizing its military to 1940 levels, investing in technology rather than boots. According to Rand, the quality of America’s armed forces declined initially after the shift to a professional army, but has now risen markedly.

Our roundtable discussion focused on four key areas – military and strategic, economic, social and minorities.

**GAL OPENED** the discussion by quoting founding prime minister David Ben-Gurion, who said in 1949 that the IDF was not only a “fighting force” but should also change the face of the nation, playing a role in absorbing

immigrants and integrating society. He also quoted MK Ofer Shelach (Yesh Atid), whose 2003 book “The Silver Platter: Why the IDF Needs a Revolution” called for an end to the draft because the threats Israel faces today are utterly different from those it faced earlier. Shelach, a former journalist and paratrooper, lost an eye in the First Lebanon War (1982); he is a candidate to head the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Brig. Gen. (res.) Amir Rogovsky, former head of IDF Manpower Planning, supported conscription. He observed that the optimal size of the IDF requires a long 20-30 year planning horizon, including reserve duty. He said that Israel is not like other countries, because it constantly faces an existential threat. We must not allow the quality of draftees to fall, he said; and to maintain this quality, the IDF must screen everyone, so it can choose the very best. We cannot maintain a high-quality military technological infrastructure without a compulsory draft, he argued.

In response, Shlomo Kalish, a former Israel Air Force pilot, co-founder of Jerusalem Global Ventures and now a Chabad rabbi,



18.65x22.83	3/4	40 עמוד	the jerusalem report	09/04/2014	41972102-6
נאמן מוסד למחקר מדיניות לאומית בטכניון ד"ר ראובן ג - 85300					

rejected Ben-Gurion's concept, saying that "the role of the IDF is to defend the country, period... no more than that." He suggested a short period of training for everyone, perhaps three months, with a mainly professional army. Far more Haredim would volunteer for a professional army, he said, than in a forced conscription model.

Boaz Arad, a hi-tech manager and head of an Israeli Ayn Rand society, strongly supported the shift to a professional army. "There is no end to the amount of 'security' that we can buy, expensively," he said, "but we need to optimize, and consider other needs, too."

Brig. Gen. (res.) Yehudit Grisaro, who now heads customer service for El Al, said that conscription of everyone is a valuable social asset, but is degraded by inefficiency. The IDF must become more efficient, she said, if the draft is to be maintained.

As a former adviser to the IDF chief of staff on women, she stressed the need for more gender equality in the army. "What is the most gender-equal service in the IDF?" she asked. The answer is surprising: The Border Police. Why? "Because the Border Police are not overwhelmed with volunteers, they need to make optimal use of their manpower. This requires giving equal roles to women."

She quoted Ben-Gurion, who said that a nation that does not demand equal obligations from women will in the end not give women equal rights.

One of our two high school students, Neta Gabai, who will be drafted in July, also stressed the need to give women more meaningful roles in the IDF, rather than boring desk jobs.

Prof. Shai Linn, a reserve lieutenant colonel, MD, and dean of Haifa University's Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences, has for years strongly recommended paying a proper wage to conscripted soldiers. Today, non-combat compulsory service soldiers get NIS426 a month (\$123), and combat soldiers get NIS850 (\$246) a month. This is a tiny fraction of what they could earn in civilian employment.

At the same time, yeshiva students get thousands of shekels every month as stipends.

Thus, those who serve are economically discriminated against and pay a unique illogical and immoral tax (equivalent to three years' pay). By pricing soldiers' time at nearly zero, the IDF has an incentive not to use this resource efficiently. Let soldiers receive an average wage, Linn said, say, NIS 5,000.

I think this is analogous to the Israel Electric Corporation giving free electricity to its

20,000 employees, who as a result use twice as much electricity as paying customers. Any resource that is "free" is wasted. Charge the IDF for soldiers' time at the real-opportunity cost, and the inefficiency will drop. This was proven when the IDF had to explicitly budget the hidden cost of reserve soldiers' time; as a result, reserve call-ups were reduced and made far more efficient, with reserve service devoted mainly to training exercises rather than border duty.

## CAN ISRAEL AFFORD THE VERY LARGE AND GROWING DEFENSE BUDGET, AND THE LARGE STANDING ARMY THAT EXISTS AT PRESENT?

Haifa University Prof. Oz Almog, also a Neaman Institute fellow, is an expert on Generation Y, those born between 1980 and 1993, and has written a forthcoming book on the subject with his wife, Dr. Tamar Almog (see *The Jerusalem Report*, January 13). He stressed how the IDF will need to take into account the unique nature of Gen Y, a cohort with less mental resilience, permanently connected with friends via media, narcissistic, less willing to sacrifice their lives for their country. The IDF does not fully understand how different this generation is, Almog said. Gen Y is not suited to long years of military service, exceeding two years, and needs appropriate compensation.

**EITAN ADRES**, an entrepreneur and former combat pilot, cited the results of a 2012 survey carried out on 2,705 11th and 12th grade students. It was found that about 40 percent of male respondents opt for what Adres calls "quasi evasion," that is, willingness to serve but in a risk-free role. Those choosing quasi-evasion were more "globalized," lacked active local ties and had a high level of consumerism. The study was published in the journal *Armed Forces & Society*. Adres told the gathering that in a 1988 survey asking high school males if they would volunteer for an all-professional army, 94 percent said yes. Today, that percentage is sharply lower, only 58 percent.

Adres noted another recent study showing that more globalized individuals (those who

perceive themselves more as citizens of the world than citizens of a particular nation) tend to contribute less to the public good; they pay less taxes and serve less in the military. This phenomenon, given the unique geopolitical situation of Israel, poses a critical challenge to the future of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Adres said this challenge requires special attention to education and requires creative solutions for compulsory service policies.

Also participating were Father Gabriel Naddaf, head of the Greek Orthodox community in Israel, and Shadi Halul, a hi-tech manager, paratroop captain (reserves) and spokesperson for the Christian IDF Officers Forum that supports enlistment in the IDF. Both spoke strongly in favor of Israeli Christian Arabs enlisting in the IDF. Naddaf's son was badly beaten after indicating his intention to enlist. Despite this, Naddaf continues to campaign for Israeli Christians to enlist. Some Israeli Muslims have fiercely attacked the Israeli Christians for seeking to enlist.

Naddaf and Halul both stressed that army service is crucial for full integration into Israeli society.

My own experience with the IDF supports this. I immigrated with my wife in 1967 and got a call-up notice for army service in 1968, well before I received my blue ID card. I did basic training with members of society I would never have met as a Technion lecturer. I doubt I would be truly Israeli today, 46 years later, without that IDF experience, which continued during nearly three decades of reserve duty.

But I realize that perhaps many of today's youth feel differently, although Leo Baeck High School student Itai Asayag told the roundtable that virtually everyone at his school, admittedly an elite one, will do army service, many in combat or technology units.

While serving in the IDF is a highly emotional issue for many, related to core values of patriotism and defending the homeland, there is also a mundane but crucial economic issue. Can Israel afford the very large and growing defense budget, and the large standing army that exists at present?

In January 2006, a committee headed by Prof. Avi Ben-Bassat, former director-general of the Finance Ministry, delivered a report to the government on reducing the length of compulsory army service. The committee's recommendations were supported by the chief of staff and top experts, and confirmed by two subsequent committees. They make a lot of sense.

19.46x24.41	4/4	41 עמוד	the jerusalem report	09/04/2014	41972103-7
נאמן מוסד למחקר מדיניות לאומית בטכניון ד"ר ראובן ג - 85300					



Haredi draft: Conscripts part from their family and friends at the gate of an army base in Jerusalem, as they join the Nahal Haredi Battalion

The committee recommended preserving conscription, but gradually reducing compulsory service to two years (for men and women equally). Those whom the IDF chooses to serve an additional four months, according to IDF needs, would be paid the average prevailing civilian wage during this time, giving them a nice nest egg to launch their studies or careers. Despite widespread support, including from the IDF itself, the Ben-Bassat Committee's reforms have not been implemented; the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in 2006 soon after its report was tabled was one temporary cause.

Ben-Bassat was one of our panelists. I asked him why his committee's recommendations, pragmatic and with very wide support, were not implemented. We agreed that there are many strong committee reports that nearly everyone supports but that are never put into practice. Perhaps the Ben-Bassat Committee's recommendations should now be revived and brought again to the Knesset committees.

I recently watched a movie called "Captain Phillips" about a brave American sea captain, played by Tom Hanks, whose Maersk container ship is captured by Somali pirates. Phillips is held hostage by four ragged Somali pirates brandishing AK-47 rifles in a tiny closed lifeboat, and is eventually rescued by US Navy Seals. The rescue operation involves helicopters, a helicopter carrier, a de-

stroyer, satellites and commandos, facing the four pirates. In the end, a ruse wins the day, not gold-plated technology.

Many viewers perhaps lauded the American capabilities and the captain's bravery. But as an economist, I couldn't help observe the incredible asymmetry, with many billions of dollars in American technology, hardware and trained manpower facing four ragtag Somalis carrying only rifles.

Israel faces a similar dilemma. Cheap handmade rockets fired from Gaza are intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missiles that cost up to \$100,000 each. The claim that "you cannot put a price on human life" is simply false, because we do put a price on life daily, both in healthcare and in defense spending, through budget decisions on drugs, equipment, and technology. In an age of asymmetric warfare, where the military threats facing Israel have changed from armies to terrorism and rockets, the whole notion of the "army of the people," conscription and the draft must be reexamined carefully, weighing costs and benefits.

The 2014 defense budget will reach 62.8 billion shekels (\$18 billion). There is another \$1.7 billion in hidden costs, if regular army conscripts are to be paid NIS 5,000 a month, the minimum opportunity-cost of their time. Can Israel afford this, when other civilian and social needs are pressing and urgent?

There are many alternatives between the

polar extremes of an all-professional (volunteer) army and conscription that drafts every 18-year-old. In reexamining conscription, Israel must not succumb to what Almog called "Machiavelli's paradox" – the stubborn resistance to change of any kind.

Noam Gavrieli, a physician, physiologist and medical devices entrepreneur who initiated the idea of convening this round table, asked, "Will a peace agreement, if ever achieved, influence the ability to change from mandatory conscription to a voluntary and professional army? If so, should this have an impact on how Haredim relate to such a peace agreement? Clearly a hypothetical question, but nevertheless critical in possibly bridging the most acute schisms in present day Israeli society," Gavrieli said.

As Albert Einstein taught us, it is more important to frame questions properly than to find answers. The question is: In light of rapid geopolitical changes in the Mideast and the world, and in light of the changing nature of the threats facing Israel, and with sweeping social changes unfolding within Israel, how can conscription be modernized and improved to achieve Israel's goals and maintain its security?

It is time to broaden the debate far beyond the issue of enlisting the ultra-Orthodox. ■

*The writer is senior research fellow at the S. Neaman Institute, Technion*