

Review of the doctoral dissertation
MSc Ronen Itsik
“Citizens Soldier” Military - The Contribution to Socialization in the Late-Modern Era

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The problem of the role of a soldier in society has been discussed by sociologists around the world for many years. Some of the Polish researchers in this field, who are worth mentioning, are Adam Kołodziejczyk, Aneta Baranowska or Sławomir Fiodórow. Military research is not easy due to complicated procedures, which soldiers need to go through, as well as due to the specific character of soldiers as a professional group. So with great pleasure and curiosity I have read Ronen Itsik's phd thesis *“Citizens Soldier” Military - The Contribution to Socialization in the Late-Modern Era*. The subject of the doctorate, like its author (a former soldier of the Israeli army), is uncommon. There are many surprises in it – starting with the topic, which is rather new in Poland, very unusual, direct language, the multitude of the author's personal threads woven into the content of the work, and, finally, the very length and structure of the doctoral dissertation.

The thesis comprises 131 pages and is composed of the List of *Figures and Tables*, *Acknowledgments*, *Research thinking process*, *Summary* and 7 chapter, which is also not typical to this kind of dissertation. The first chapter (*Intruduction and research objectives*) is actually an introduction to the thesis, and the last one is *Summary and the main conclusions*. At the end, there are *References* and two *Attachments* – the first one is a characteristic of the sample group and the second one presents independent variables. Five chapters in the middle are also unusual because they are simply reprints of the articles which the Author has published in the last three years in Polish and foreign scientific journals. This structure is very unusual to the Polish universities, but it is in accordance with the law on doctorates in force in Poland. However, I have a few comments about this structure. Since

the doctoral dissertation is written in Poland, despite the fact that its author is a foreigner, it would be advised for the structure to be in line with the guidelines adopted in Poland. Therefore, it should have an introduction and an ending. Also, the content of the scientific articles presented in the form of chapters could be woven into the content of the work itself, or at least each of the chapters should be provided with an introduction presenting anticipated following content. Moreover, the reprints of the articles should be of a better quality, as some of them are difficult to read in their current form. However, these deficiencies do not significantly reduce the value of the doctoral thesis itself.

The author practically begins his doctoral thesis with a few pages of acknowledgments, which, in fact, are not just acknowledgments, but also the military history of the PhD student and his reflections on the Israeli army. The observations that led him to pose the scientific questions which later became a motivation for the development of his scientific passion and the eventual creation of the doctoral thesis. *During this significant period, I have adopted a new hobby related to my scientific experience, that I could not have envisaged. I published three books on the relationship between the IDF and the Israeli society in various contexts. It was an empowering experience that led me to continue my research and reach the required conclusions* (p. 6).

In the next section of the thesis (*Research thinking process*) the Author presents a short current state of knowledge on the topic and presents the theoretical assumptions of the work and the main research challenges he had to face. They concerned mainly methodological problems related to sample selection and access to research participants.

The next point of the thesis is the *Summary*. However, also here the Author surprises us, because the *Summary* is not a short presentation of the content of the work (as we might expect from the definition of this term), but a continuation of the previous part (*Research thinking process*). Here, the Author presents both the history of the IDF, but also the changes that have taken place in the world in the recent decades in the transition from the citizen-soldier model to the professional model. He also describes the problems faced by the IDF and the research sample for the research he conducted in the years 2015-2020 and the most important conclusions. The whole chapter seems a bit chaotic, especially in the context of the following chapter I, which in practice is an introduction to the work.

Chapter I (*Introduction and research objectives*) is divided into seven parts: *Background and motivation, Research questions, Research assumptions, Theoretical background, Conceptual and methodological framework, Research limitations and Research*

Importance. Some of them are then divided into smaller parts again. This division, however, is not reflected in any way in the table of contents of the work.

In *Background and motivation* we can find again the history of IDF and of the Israeli army itself. At the same time, the author points to the existing research gap regarding the role of the IDF in Israeli society and indicates the main goal of the study. *Indeed, there is a knowledge gap. Hence, based on the above, it is important to understand the type of society a "Citizen-Soldier" army creates, and to examine if indeed it corresponds with the intentions of the nation's forefathers, and with the new social and national challenges – that is the main goal of this research (p.18).*

In the second subchapter of this chapter (*Research questions*), the author poses the main research question: *How does the service in a 'citizen soldier' military affect social and national attitudes?* and four secondary research questions:

1. *What kind of ethos is formulated during military service in the IDF?*
2. *How does compulsory military service in Israel affect social integration?*
3. *How does parents military service in Israel affects their children's motivation to contribute for the society?*
4. *What are the differences between genders concerning the social role of military service in the IDF?*

These questions were formulated correctly.

The third subsection consists of *Research assumptions*. The author put forward four research hypotheses, the verification of which we would expect at the end of the work. However, there is no information about this in the work. The proposed hypotheses are:

1. *The defense ethos defines mostly teenagers, while discharged soldiers are moderate, with a liberal trend.*
2. *Compulsory military service in Israel affects social integration by empowering the value "Pluralism", combined with tolerance and acceptance. This contributes social solidarity and cohesion.*
3. *Parents who served in IDF mediate the service to their children as a community contribution more than a security contribution. Hence, the motivation for military evolved as social.*
4. *During military service woman are more affected socially then man- the service in rear unites that characterizes women more than men enrich them with inter-personal communication skills and social awareness.*

The hypotheses were formulated correctly.

In the fourth part of this chapter Author presents the theoretical background of the Citizen-soldier Military model based on the concepts of many theorists, including Janowitz, Lewin, Levy, Duignan. During these theoretical considerations, he poses many questions about the impact of serving in the IDF on the lives of young Israelis. It raises an extremely interesting topic of volunteer military service in Israel in cultural, ethical and religious contexts. The whole of these theoretical considerations is extremely interesting, because the author looks at the described phenomenon from many sociological perspectives, e.g. intergenerational impact, ethnic, religious, cultural or gender conflicts. This is one of the most interesting parts of the thesis.

Part five of this chapter is the *Conceptual and Methodological Framework*. In his work, Roman Itsik uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative research was conducted in 2016-2020 on a group of 3,400 men and women from all over Israel participated: *The number of men and women participating was equally divided, about 50% were secular, 20% traditional, 15% religious (minority of ultra-religious), and the rest defined themselves as 'religion-less'. 90% were of Jewish nationality, 5% Druze and the rest Moslem Arabs (mostly Bedouin). The participant's military service characteristics resembles their distribution in the IDF: 30% served as combat soldiers (men and women), 40% in supporting roles and the rest as home-front soldiers. All the participants finished their military service in the IDF* (p.27). The results of these studies are presented in detail in the following chapters of the doctorate. The study was conducted digitally; *structured internet questionnaires were sent out based on social media. The internet questionnaires were distributed in Hebrew language via Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn social networks and groups. Participants from unique communities who are not connected to social networks received the questionnaires via WhatsApp and SMS messages using Snow-Ball method. The questionnaires were anonymous. Participants were asked to provide details of their military service, their parents' service, family education and socio-economic status* (p.28). The data based on the answers was collected in a Google Sheets spread sheet. It is worth emphasizing that three pilot trials were conducted on the questionnaire before its final version, in order to minimize duplications, avoid potential misunderstandings and to create an option of contacting the participant for additional interviews or a follow-up questionnaire.

Additionally, the participants were offered the option to attach their e-mail address for an optional personal interview. More than 300 left their address, and 30 of those were randomly selected for the second part of the study - in-depth interviews to examine

the common aspects related to the effects of military service and reserves, both for the social and cultural dimensions.

The qualitative phase includes two layers: *The first is coding the issues raised in the interviews by categories, in order to define a common denominator between participants as to the manner that the military service influenced them. The second is a deeper layer to identify characteristics on the personal level of the interviewees, and their subjective experiences during their military service* (p.28). It should be emphasized here that in the study conducted by the doctoral candidate the research sample was very large and the of the research methods used should be praised.

The sixth part of this chapter is *Research limitations*. The author points out the problems he had to face during the research. The most important ones are: unequal representation of various types of the Israeli troops in the survey and the possibility of concealing sensitive data related to the economic situation. In an online survey, there is also no certainty that the survey is actually completed by the person to whom it was addressed. Despite these limitations, I consider the study itself to be very valuable.

The last part of this chapter is *Research Importance*. The author indicates that his research is focused on the social effect of the military service, and contributes knowledge on the connection between the military service and the containment of social diversities. The uniqueness of this research and its biggest value are based on the fact that Is that long term trends of social values are examined with the use of a modern data collecting platform. It is especially important in a period of time when social and national discourses have become more nationalistic and separatist, while the extreme social groups are getting more and more popular.

Each of the next five chapters of this thesis is a separate, previously published article that could be found in a scientific peer-reviewed journal. Each of the chapters deals with another challenge related to the research question. I don't see any special need to evaluate deeply the one after another because they have been already evaluated twice by two reviewers each. All of them are written correctly as well. The second chapter, entitled *Israel's defense ethos – Military Service as a Turning Point*, bring us to the idea that military service effects are at fully affected by ethos. Taking into account the contemporary social challenges related to the rapidly taking place, also in Israeli society, social changes (among other also the tension between national and liberal point of view in the Israeli army), the author rightly made this problem a theoretical basis for next arguments and analysis of phenomena.

The next chapter - *Compulsory Military Service as a Social Integrator* – presents the author's ideas on how to approach the socialization effect of military service – How to collect data, analyze it, elaborate on the theory and put it into a concise and coherent piece of work. As Ronen Itsik says, this article is a huge mile stone for the Israeli army. It was mentioned that even their military chief of staff used it recently for decision making. This means that the research has already proved to be useful in practice.

The third article *The inter-generational effect in a citizen-soldier army* is devoted to the influences of the families on the soldiers. This study examines the effect of past service in the IDF on the positions that the families have on both the community and the military service as a family tradition. Also during this research a huge sample (1400) of respondents was questioned. The author also created a new "intergenerational" analysis tool in order to create a bridge between reserves and servicemen.

Military service and female empowerment is the fourth article presented in this PhD study. In this study the Author examines, with the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods how women are affected by the military service. A sample of 3800 Man and Woman responded to an internet questionnaire and among them 30 were randomly selected for phone interviews. The findings of this research show that military service experience for females is mainly social. It is a really interesting consideration.

I found the last article *Motivation for Reserve Military Service in Israel* especially interesting. It is worth to underline that also during the research Ronen Itsik presented himself as an experienced researcher. More than four thousands veterans responded to his questions and the findings of this play a role in handling the reserve crisis in Israel.

The last chapter of this thesis is *Summary and the main conclusions*. The author briefly presents the most important conclusions from the research presented in individual articles and poses further questions for reflection. However, there was a lack of clear answers to the research questions contained in the first chapter of this work and information on whether and how the research hypotheses were verified. Regardless of this, the conclusions drawn by the doctoral student are very interesting (as well as the research itself), although sometimes also debatable. But that's what science is all about, after all. Particularly interesting is the observation that there is a significant movement towards liberal values among male and female soldiers and that the tradition of passing values (including service in the IDF) from father to children is still strong. Everything is also well presented graphically, both in the form of graphs borrowed from other authors, and by the doctoral student himself.

To sum up my review, I would like to draw attention to three most important aspects. First of all, there is no doubt that the doctoral student has extensive theoretical knowledge of the presented issues. The literature cited by him is up-to-date, and references to authors are justified, although the doctoral student very rarely engages in polemics with them. Secondly, the doctoral student has undoubtedly proved that he has the ability to independently conduct scientific work. The research conducted by him fully meets the standards of sociological research both in terms of the research methods used and the conduct of the research itself. The size of research samples that Mr. Itsik was able to collect deserves attention and emphasis.

And last but not least, without a doubt, this doctoral dissertation is an original solution to a scientific problem. Especially in Poland, this topic is rarely taken up, mainly due to difficulties in accessing data. In the presented work, the doctoral student presented new research results, which, as he himself indicates, are also practically useful and have already been partially implemented in the Israeli army.

To conclude my review, I would like to emphasize that some of my remarks are only polemical and not allegations. I think the Author will refer to them in his reply to the review. In his work, the doctoral student showed great erudition in the subject matter and great research maturity - he collected both quantitative and qualitative material, which he skillfully analyzed. The reliability of the conducted analyzes of the research material and the high level of statistical analyzes should be emphasized. The doctoral student also consistently adhered to the adopted theoretical concept. From the technical side (especially in the structure), the work is not perfect. Most of the remarks I have already presented earlier in this review. It is worth mentioning that the thesis in its current shape lacks the research questionnaires, which were created by the author for the purposes of quantitative research, and scenarios of in-depth interviews used in qualitative research. They should be presented in the attachment. There are also stylistic or spelling errors, but in the cited works there are always well-marked references, refined and clear charts and tables, as well as consistently uniform markings. The work is written in a good, easy-to-read language.

To sum up, it is a substantively and methodologically correct solution to the posed problem, and the way it is presented gives a good testimony to the general theoretical and methodological knowledge of the PhD student. The results obtained and the method of their analysis provide many interesting conclusions and can be an inspiration for further exploration of the subject, which I strongly encourage you to do.

I believe that the doctoral dissertation presented by Mr. Ronen Itsik is a valuable scientific study of the subject. The work reviewed by me fully meets the requirements for doctoral theses specified in art. 187 sec. 1 of the Act of July 20, 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science, which qualifies MSc. Ronen Itsik to obtain a doctoral degree in the field of social sciences in the discipline of sociological sciences. The work may therefore be the basis for admitting the Author to further stages of the doctoral thesis.

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