

REVIEW

of the doctoral dissertation of Mr Ronen ITSIK, MA:

“Citizens Soldier” Military – The Contribution to Socialization in the Late-Modern Era

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1. General assessment of the dissertation

The dissertation under review is non-standard, both in terms of content and form. First, it concerns the foreign subject of research, the social contexts of the functioning of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). Second, it is not a compact, fluent text with a continuous narrative; instead, in its essential, the research part (pp. 31-105) is a combination of five articles published in various periodicals, in different parts of the world and at different times (2020-2022). The main part has been supplemented with the required descriptive elements (research thinking process, introduction and research objectives, summary and the main conclusions) as well as with formal elements (list of figures and tables, references, and attachments).

Despite its ‘originality’, the dissertation is a series of compatible segments of considerations concerning the social aspects and implications of serving in the Israeli Defense Forces. It is an appealing and well-developed study of the functioning of the IDF in Israeli society (130 pages of valuable text). The Author systematized the knowledge within the scope of the adopted topic, complementing it with an interesting empirical survey. He made a comprehensive and deep reflection on the issues under consideration, successfully combining theoretical analyzes with direct research practice. The entirety of the presented data, reflections and narratives constitute a generally coherent whole (although, at places, with duplication of content), providing readers with an interesting picture of the impact of military service in Israel on the social attitudes of former IDF soldiers.

The structure of the dissertation is largely accurate and logically precise. It consists of six chapters (methodological, theoretical and analytical, and four empirical/reporting ones). What is not fully clear is why the *Summary* part is placed at the beginning of the considerations (p. 12-16), after the *Acknowledgements* and *Research thinking process*, still, before the main chapters. The term 'summary' is – somewhat obviously – repeated at the end of the analyses in the form of *Summary and the main conclusions*. It seems quite awkward to put the summation at the beginning of the discussion. What appears to be more significant is that the *Summary* is not much slimmer in volume than the section preceding it; additionally, the nature of the considerations included there does not significantly differ from those previously posted. The part also contains certain elements that are more typical for the methodological chapter that follows.

The presented considerations have been aptly provided with illustrative materials – graphics, diagrams, tables, and charts. The work is based on a wide and properly selected literature on the subject. The bibliography includes 144 items, including 11 online articles.

2. Detailed assessments – methodological issues

The methodological assumptions of the dissertation are presented in the first chapter: *Introduction and research objectives*. Much as the generally accepted assumptions seem accurate, they cannot be left without several essential remarks. The first concerns the compatibility of the adopted research problems and hypotheses. Although the formula of the problems does not raise objections, the adopted hypotheses have their shortcomings; specifically, their excessive generality. Among others, the remark applies to hypothesis no. 2, which should be more precise, for the juxtaposition of social integration with pluralism may raise justified scepticism. Furthermore, the empirical verification of hypotheses in the cited articles was quite smooth. The Author, *expressis verbis* does not comment on the scope of the empirical verification carried out at the last point of his considerations.

The work was based on surveys conducted in cyberspace with the use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) as well as with the assistance of WhatsApp and SMS. The empiricism of the work is based on survey research. Only a slight complement is the secondary analysis of data from other sources and the interview (in the last article) with a small number (30) of respondents for in-depth analysis. It is a pity that the Author did not include in the appendix the form of the questionnaire or questionnaires (not clearly specified) of the survey.

In the context of survey research, there appears uncertainty as to the size of the sample. In the *Summary* and the methodological chapter, the figure $N = 3,400$ respondents was mentioned (p. 16, 27). However, the articles show different numbers of respondents participating in the studies described therein: 3,200 (p. 49), 1,426 (p. 77), 3,800 (p. 83), and 4,200 (p. 96). It seems to me, the methodological chapter should have presented the issue in

that way. Furthermore, the reported samples are not homogeneous. In addition to former soldiers, there are also students; however, the proportions between the two subgroups have not been clearly indicated. Despite the remarks, the size (or even redundancy) of the tests carried out deserves a positive note.

Significantly, the Author did not directly formulate the variables concerning the overriding research problems. It also does not always indicate the variables considered in the presented articles. It also does not specify the indicators – inherent in the analysis of variables. The analyses presented in the articles are sometimes more journalistic than strictly scientific.

3. Detailed assessments – theoretical and empirical issues

Theoretical issues and considerations are placed in various places of the dissertation, not only in the presented articles but also in the preceding elements, as well as in the *Summary and the main conclusions*. A solid foundation of the considerations on many sources is a significant value of the reviewed dissertation. The main content in the form of previously published articles is contained in Chapters 2-6, which cover the substantive topics, show the basic research areas, and determine the essential cognitive value of the dissertation. They constitute the core of the work – the most significant part of the research.

It begins with the article *Israel's defence ethos: military service as a turning point*, published in the Polish scientific journal “Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny”, 3/2020, p. 299-309. The article is theoretical in nature and constitutes an introduction to more detailed analyses, setting up further considerations and narration. The article formulates the thesis that military service is an essential element, a platform for Israel's socialisation, liberalizing the traditional ethos developed over the centuries, characterised by the ‘Siege Mentality’ and ‘Defence Belief’. The essence of this evolution is reflected in the statement: “The enemy that was a ‘demon’ became a human who also suffers” (p. 42). If that is the case, it is a pity the Author did not outline the scope of such attitudes in the whole society (based on reports of other researchers).

Chapter Three is the article *Compulsory military service as a social integrator*, published in the Academy of War Art journal “Security and Defence Quarterly”, 3/2020, p. 65-80. The paper is an empirical confirmation of the thesis presented above. The Author analyses the respondents' statements, confronting the opinions of former soldiers (up to the age of 24) with the opinions of high-school students before military service (aged 16-18). The Author concludes that “serving in a citizen-soldier army in a democratic state could build bridges for major social and national conflicts and be an integration accelerator” (p. 56).

Chapter Four presents the article *The Intergenerational Effect of Military in a Country with a Citizen-Soldier Army*, published in “The Journal of Political & Military Sociology”, University of Florida, 1/2021, p. 195-210. The paper aims to present the influence of ex-military parents on the social and defensive attitudes of their children. The weakness of the

presentation is the bias and subjectivity of the research undertaken. Analyses were conducted exclusively on opinions and declarations of young reservists (aged 20-24) without the participation of parents (although the case also concerns them as well). In addition, the analyses basically covered the answers to one question. The analysis addressed to question: "Should the model of the army be maintained as the citizen-soldier army or changed to a professional army?" after all, do not fit the merits of the considerations outlined in the title. I think the problem is too complex to be resolved on the basis of such scarce data.

Chapter Five, *Military Service and Female Empowerment*, as the only one titled differently from the title of the article contained therein, *A Battlefield of Social Challenges Military Service and Female Empowerment*, 2/2021, p. 42-50, which was published in the Indian Scientific journal "International Journal of Business and Management Innovation". The paper shows the specificity of women's service and, simultaneously, their important role in shaping national security. Not only does their active participation in the IDF enrich them, but also augments the human resources of the armed forces.

Chapter Six contains the article *Motivation for Reserve Military Service in Israel*, published in the British periodical "The Royal United Services Institute" 2/2022, p. 1-17. The article presents an analysis of the impact of seven variables on attitudes toward service in the reserve corps. Research indicates that "reservists still carry a significant defence ethos, and their level of social awareness is very high" (p. 104), and "the readiness to serve in the reserve corps [...] results from the combination of social and security elements" (p. 105).

The considerations conclude with the *Summary and the main conclusions* indicated as Chapter Seven. Summaries and discussions are included there, situating the findings against a broader, theoretical, historical, and international background. With the phrase: "Military service is an effective normative socialisation mechanism" (p. 112), the Author ultimately confirms the main thesis of the work.

4. Detailed assessments – the technical side of the work

The work is generally not well prepared in the technical sense. The Author did not avoid numerous shortcomings, editorial and proofreading clumsiness. In addition to standard typos and punctuation mishaps, the following are examples of more glaring and noticeable failings:

- chaotic management of text space, i.e., either excessive breaks between text points or their absence (from the title page); blank page 43; blank verse continuations (e.g., p. 20, 28, 115, 116), etc.;
- lack of precise page numbers in the footnotes of the "descriptive" text, while they are provided in the articles;
- no visible rules governing the use of italics, especially in the bibliography;
- unjustified use of a different font in a fragment of the text on p. 23;
- unlabelled footnote 10 (p. 27);

- inappropriate titles of articles on pages introducing them as chapters (pp. 60, 90), etc.

5. Basic conclusions

Despite the indicated limitations, which may arouse justified insufficiency, certain doubts, or controversies, the dissertation under assessment is a **valuable contribution to the development of sociology, mainly its two sub-disciplines: military sociology and security sociology**. The Author is an undisputed specialist in the field of civil-military relations. The issues raised are extremely important from the point of view of the internal cohesion and efficiency of the Israeli Defence Forces, in the conditions of permanent threat to national sovereignty and statehood at the same time.

When assessing the compatibility of the content of the articles concerning the adopted research problems, it is necessary to indicate a discrepancy in the ranges. On the one hand, the content of the articles often goes beyond the substantive framework outlined by the content of the problems (e.g., the article from Chapter 5 concerning Problem 4). The substance of articles is most often focused on solving 'own' research problems (e.g., p. 47, 81, 93, 96). On the other hand, the solution to certain problems (e.g., 3) is limited.

In the context of critical remarks, I would like to finally enquire the Author about several unclear issues:

- 1) Why, in the title of the dissertation – did he replace the already standard/classic phrase 'citizen-soldier army' with 'citizens soldier army', while in the text he never returned to this expression? Especially since he did not refer to his 'innovation' anywhere in the text.
- 2) How to interpret the lack of the Author's share in the first two presented articles – tables: p. 32 and 45, since such a share is specified in the table on p. 12?
- 3) In numerous places in his dissertation, the Author emphasises the 'social' nature of the Israeli Defense Forces. However, is the IDF the army of *citizens* or, rather, the army of the *state*? Due to the importance of the state functions performed (defence against permanent threats to statehood, fight against terrorism, etc.). The term "the army that builds the society" (p. 105) also indicates the subjective status of the army in relation to society.
- 4) The Author uses the term 'erosion' as in "erosion of the defence ethos during military service" (p. 55, 75, 101, 114). In the context of other positive statements, would the word 'evolution' ("evolution of the defence ethos during military service") possibly sound better?

The presented critical remarks – natural in the case of qualifying theses – do not change the fact the dissertation is a scientifically valuable and cognitively interesting but also noteworthy work.

6. Final conclusion

As a result of the analysis and evaluation, I conclude the doctoral dissertation of Mr Ronen Itsik, MA titled: "*Citizens Soldier*" *Military – The Contribution to Socialization in the Late-Modern Era* meets the conditions provided for in the Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Title (dated March 14, 2003); therefore, the required formal and methodological standards, content and qualifications. The work contains a solution to the adopted research problems and verification of the assumed hypotheses. The dissertation proves the Author is well-versed (even an expert) in the issues under consideration, has high conceptual and editorial skills, can skilfully use facts and arguments, and properly develop and present them.

Considering the above, I kindly request that Mr Ronen Itsik be admitted to further proceedings and defence of the dissertation.

Stanisław Jarmoszyk