

Abstract

Master thesis entitled “The Israeli Druze: Military Service as a Tool to Influence Domestic and Foreign Policy“ regards the relations of the Israeli Druze Community and the State of Israel. Druze people live also in Lebanon and Syria and are usually categorized as an ethno-religious and transnational group. They are distinctive for their secretive and esoteric religion and tightly-knit social bonds. The Israeli Druze community (composing less than 2 % of the Israeli population) is specific for its mandatory service in the Israeli Defense Forces, which marks a difference from other Arabic speaking citizens of Israel. The service in the Israeli army implies that the Israeli Druze people are loyal both to the state and the transnational Druze community. Using the framework of a theoretical concept of Strategic Military Refusal by Udi Lebel, the goal of the thesis is to examine whether the Israeli Druze community was able to influence domestic and foreign policy of the State of Israel in order to reach its own political goals, whether these efforts were intentional, strategic and successful. Alongside, it is also identified which factors may influence the loyalty of the Israeli Druzes towards the State of Israel. To achieve this goal, two cases are analyzed: 1) the reaction of the Israeli Druze community to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and 2) the response of the Israeli Druze community to the National State Law approved by Knesset in the summer of 2018. The empirical evidence related to military refusals of the Israeli Druze and political behavior of the community is acquired from secondary literature, official documents, media and correspondence with prominent members of the Israeli Druze community involved in examined situations.

Keywords

Druze, Israel, IDF, army, identity, minority, Strategic Military Refusal