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THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE DRUZE COMMUNITY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR MINORITY INCLUSION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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I. INTRODUCTION

Regional Context

Minority communities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are set apart from the majority populations by their different language, religion, ethnicity, culture, and/or historical narratives. The minority communities in the MENA region are not monolithic and embody a wide range of values, characteristics, and identities. They differ with respect to how they view their geopolitical and transnational identity, as well as how the state in which they reside treats them. Some have complex or even violent interactions with state governments. Many of these minority communities do not benefit from social inclusion in their respective states, but rather are excluded from society. As peoples and states seek to establish stability after the Arab Spring, and in the midst of unresolved regional conflicts, including the Syrian Civil War, it is important to consider the kinds of MENA government policies towards minorities that can promote greater citizen inclusion.

This paper assesses the case of the Druze minority in Israel. The Israeli Druze community is a distinct religious and quasi-ethnic minority offering a unique example of a state-minority relationship. Policies implemented by the state of Israel are considered for their utility and applicability to minorities within other MENA countries. Taking *inclusion* as the primary evaluative criterion, the following six questions drive the data and recommendations of this paper.

- What are the principal, defining characteristics of Israeli policies towards the Druze community, as experienced by Druze citizens?
- What are beneficial outcomes and limitations of these policies?
- How could these policies be modified, or more broadly supported, to achieve greater Druze inclusion within the Israeli state?

- Which policies promoting Druze inclusion in Israel are worthy of adoption by other MENA governments towards their minority populations?
- Which MENA countries exhibit state-minority relations of adequate comparability to the Israeli-Druze case so that policy adoption is practical?
- What might these regional governments learn from policy shortcomings in the Israeli case?

If the specific policies of the state of Israel towards the Druze community advance social inclusion, then these policies may be proposed for implementation by other countries in the region that meet the minimum evaluation criteria for inclusion.

Summary of Findings

This paper examines the status of the Druze in two Israeli state sectors – the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the government at the local (administrative) and the national (electoral) levels. These domains were chosen due to time constraints and the desire to focus on areas that are most relevant to policy intentionality, given Israel’s particular situation as a country in the midst of sustained conflict with a legacy of ideology-inspired *mamlakhtiut* or “statism.”¹

Interviews and literature repeatedly substantiate the claim that the Druze are included in Israeli society and serve in the IDF and the Israeli Parliament (Knesset). Though the Druze live in a Jewish state, they are generally afforded rights and non-discriminatory treatment equal to that of Israeli Jewish citizens. There is virtually no discrimination at the institutional level against the Druze during their military service, and the Druze are fully included into the IDF. In addition, Druze do not face difficulties entering politics based on their religion or ethnicity, and Druze have sufficient representation in the government, although the government inadequately

¹ There is no direct translation of *mamlakhtiut*, but the closest English equivalent is “statism.” This refers to the establishment of the Yishuv institutions in pre-Mandatory Palestine and the move towards “independent political sovereignty” after the creation of the state of Israel. [Peter Y. Medding. *The Founding of Israeli Democracy, 1948-1967*. Oxford University Press: New York, 1990, p.134.]

addresses concerns of the Druze community. The IDF and government are examples of “vehicles of the state,” which are structures and institutions that a state consciously employs in order to realize policy objectives.² Through these “vehicles,” a state seeks to access, interact with, and administer segments of society. The military and governance sectors are specific areas of the Israeli state that provide a window into levels of inclusion within state-run sectors.

Despite Druze inclusion in both the military and governance sectors, there are nevertheless policy shortcomings in these two areas. The fundamental pitfalls of inclusionary policies within these two sectors relate to inadequate holistic policies on the part of the state and societal areas beyond the sectors focused on in the paper. Programs in the education sector, private and public sector employment, and infrastructure, for example, have not aided Druze inclusion in a manner similar to that of the IDF and governance sectors. Likewise, the Israeli government has not engaged in a sustained strategic communications campaign directed towards the majority Israeli Jewish population, informing the latter about the unique Druze contribution to Israeli national life and security. These policy inadequacies, however, beyond the military and governance sectors, have not substantially impacted Druze attitudes towards the state and/or the quality of Druze inclusion in the state of Israel. An analysis of the military and governance sectors of Israeli society will thus shed light on the state of Israel’s policies of inclusion of the Druze community, the implications of such policies, and whether or not these policies are applicable to other MENA countries with minority populations.

² Guy Seidman. "From Nationalization to Privatization: The Case of the IDF." *Armed Forces & Society* 36.4 (2010), p. 718.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Goals

The goal of this paper is to analyze the policies that the state of Israel has enacted towards the Druze community. An analysis of these policies will illustrate the state's successful inclusionary policies, as well as any policy mistakes or oversights. The paper will then discuss the extent to which these policies are appropriate for other governments in the region to apply towards their respective minority communities. In order to answer these questions, we conducted an in-depth study of the Druze community in Israel and its relationship with the state of Israel. Our research deals solely with Druze citizens living in the pre-1967 borders of Israel.³ This excludes the Druze of the Golan Heights, who are internationally recognized as Syrian Druze.⁴

This study examines specific policies of the state of Israel towards the Druze community in order to assess whether policies are applicable to other MENA governments with minority communities. Due to this ultimate goal, we evaluate three other state-minority cases—the Kurds in Turkey, the Coptic Christians in Egypt, as well as a hypothetical minority situation in a post-Assad Syria scenario. This selection is prefaced by an examination of a wide range of MENA countries based on criteria relevant to the case of the state of Israel and the Druze community. The exercise of looking beyond Israel to three other MENA contexts will ultimately shed light

³ See map in Appendix A.

⁴ Israel occupied the Golan Heights in 1967, and formally annexed it in 1981. The Israeli government offered the Druze in the Golan Heights Israeli citizenship, but the Druze refused it. The Druze living there still identify as Syrian Druze, (and are recognized as such by the international community). As of 2011, only about 10 percent of the Druze in the Golan Heights had applied for Israeli citizenship. [Isabel Kershner. "In the Golan Heights Anxious Eyes Look East." *The New York Times*. 21 May 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/22/world/middleeast/22golan.html?_r=2&.], ["General Assembly Adopts Broad Range Of Texts, 26 In All, On Recommendations Of Its Fourth Committee, Including On Decolonization, Information, Palestine Refugees." *UN News Center*. UN, 05 Dec. 2008. Web. 24 Apr. 2014.]

on whether the state of Israel's policies towards the Druze, and the latter's experiences, are applicable to other minorities and state governments in the region.

Scope of Research

The scope of the research regarding the Druze in Israel focuses on two main areas of Israeli society – the IDF and the Israeli government at the national and local levels. We recognize that there are other areas of society worth considering, such as the education sector and private business sector, among others. However, the military and governance sectors are critical to understanding the Druze community's inclusion into Israeli society, as will be explained further in the subsequent sections.

Given that military service is mandatory for the majority of Israeli citizens, we focus on the role of the Druze within the IDF and the policies that the Israeli government has enacted to either aid or hinder the incorporation of the Druze within the IDF. The specific questions incorporate the role of the Druze community within the IDF, whether this has changed over time, and whether there are units of the IDF that are exclusively Druze units, or whether Druze soldiers are included in units with other Israeli citizens. Additionally, the questions examine whether the Druze can promote to higher ranks within the military, as well as if Druze soldiers face discrimination, such as harassment or assault, from other Israeli soldiers due to their different religion and/or ethnicity. Keeping in mind Israel's policy of compulsory military service for Israeli Jewish and Druze citizens, the answers to these questions will indicate whether the IDF is an equalizing force, and whether Israeli Druze soldiers are treated the same way as other Israeli soldiers. Post-service enfranchisement, entitlements, and benefits beyond the IDF are also discussed. The fact that Israeli Muslims, Christians, and Circassians, either do not serve

in the IDF, or voluntarily enlist, makes the compulsory aspect of Druze military service even more unique.⁵

Regarding the inclusion of the Druze into the Israeli government, this research measures the extent to which the Druze community is incorporated at the national level, i.e., in the Knesset, as well as at the local level, i.e., municipalities. The research includes the number of members of the Druze community within these sectors, as well as difficulties, such as potential discrimination that Druze face, as a result of their religion and ethnicity. Another issue examined in this paper is whether the Druze community feels that government officials, both Druze and non-Druze, adequately represent issues of the Druze community at the national and local levels, as well as how both politicians and Druze citizens perceive Druze representation in the government. These questions provide further insight into whether the Druze have equal opportunities entering Israeli politics, as well as whether government officials address problems of the minority community. If the Druze community feels adequately represented by its elected officials, and believes that its issues and concerns are considered and then acted upon, then this signifies the Druze community's own perception of its level of inclusion in politics and government.

Sources

Our findings are based on primary and secondary sources. In the United States (Washington, D.C.) and Israel (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Yarka, and Daliat El Carmel), we conducted interviews in Arabic, Hebrew, and English with both Jewish and Druze Israelis. We interviewed a Druze member of Knesset, Druze field grade officers in the IDF, an Israeli Jewish reserve soldier, a Druze family, a Druze cab driver, and we had various informal conversations with several other individuals. We also interviewed an Israeli political science professor and

⁵ Seidman, p. 722.

director of the National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa, as well as Druze and Jewish academicians at the Open University of Israel and the University of Haifa.

Our secondary sources are based on scholarly books and journal articles. Existing literature does not directly address the specific questions we have outlined regarding the state of Israel's inclusionary policies towards the Druze community, as well as whether these policies are applicable towards other state-minority relationships in the MENA region. As a result, we examine many different types of sources that discuss aspects of our research questions. We then assess the applicability of these sources as they relate to the questions that we seek to answer in this paper. The different types of secondary sources we examine and their usage within the context of this paper will henceforth be explained.

Several sources are used to understand specific terms implemented throughout this paper. Scholarly works provide examples of instances where the specific terms that we employ in this paper are used to relate to minority groups.⁶ They offer a framework for the ways in which these terms are used throughout the paper.

Much academic work examines the history of the Druze community in the state of Israel and in pre-mandatory Palestine, as well as how the Druze fit into the Zionist narrative. Several authors examine the demographics of the Druze community throughout the MENA region.⁷ They also discuss how the Druze attempted to remain neutral at the beginning of the 1947-1949

⁶ Works by Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yochanan Peres, Anja Rudiger and Sarah Spencer, and Tove H. Malloy and Michele Gazzola outline the specific terminology for minority inclusion in this research. [Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yochanan Peres. *Is Israel One? Religion, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism Confounded*. The Netherlands: Brill, 2005.], [Anja Rudiger and Sarah Spencer. "Proc. of the Economic and Social Aspects of Migration." Brussels: The European Commission and the OECD. 21-22 Jan 2002.], [MEU Programme Minorities in the EU. European Centre for Minority Issues. *The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities*. By Tove H. Malloy and Michele Gazzola. Flensburg, Germany: European Commission, Dec 2006.]

⁷ Kais M. Firro, Rabah Halabi, and Laila Parsons, examine the demographics of the Druze community throughout the MENA region. [Kais M. Firro. "Reshaping Druze Particularism in Israel." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring 2001), University of California Press, pp. 40-53.], [Kais M. Firro. *The Druzes in the Jewish State: A Brief History*. The Netherlands: Brill, 1999.], [Rabah Halabi. "Invention of a Nation: The Druze in Israel." *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 9 June 2013.], [Laila Parsons. "The Palestinian Druze in the 1947-1949 Arab-Israeli War." *Israel Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 1 (1997).]

Israeli-Arab War, but eventually fought on the side of the Zionists in support of the state of Israel. These historical accounts are extremely important in order to assess the foundations for the current relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community.⁸

In addition, this paper utilizes other books and articles to analyze the role and treatment of the Druze in the IDF and in the Israeli government. They are used to understand the extent to which the Druze community is included in these sectors of Israeli society.⁹ With respect to the IDF, these sources elucidate Israeli policies to fully incorporate the Druze in the IDF, and they explain how the roles of the Druze in the IDF have evolved since the establishment of the state of Israel. These sources support the claim that the IDF is the greatest tool that the state of Israel has created to include the Druze into Israeli society.¹⁰ Regarding the Druze inclusion in the Israeli government, these sources explore the ways in which the Druze community is represented in the Israeli Knesset and local municipalities, and whether the Druze feel as if national and local governments advocate on behalf of the issues that affect their community. By evaluating the aforementioned authors' works, this paper ultimately seeks to assess whether or not policies that the state of Israel has implemented in these two "vehicles of the state" can be applied to governments in other MENA countries with minority populations.

In addition to these sources, this paper also utilizes the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics database, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israeli Knesset, Israel Defense Forces, Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, and U.S. Department of State websites. The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics database examines the demography of the Druze community in Israel as

⁸ This will be discussed further in the section of the paper on the Israel Defense Forces.

⁹ Such works include those by Zeidan Atashe, Nissim Dana, Shlomi Eldar, and Moredecai Nisan. [Zeidan Atashe. *Druze and Jews in Israel – A Shared Destiny?* United Kingdom: Sussex Academic Press, 1995.], [Nissim Dana. *The Druze in the Middle East: Their Faith, Leadership, Identity, and Status*. Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2003.], [Shlomi Eldar. "Druze to Command IDF Infantry Brigade." *Al Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*. 25 October 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/israel-idf-druze-discrimination-alliance-golan-heights.html>.]

¹⁰ This will be explained further in the section of this paper on the Israel Defense Forces.

provided by the state of Israel.¹¹ The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website is useful to understand the type of government and state that Israel is, including specific laws implemented when the state was created, such as the 1948 Declaration of Establishment.¹²

The Israeli Knesset website provides a list of all members of the Knesset.¹³ Based on this list, there are fifteen current or former Druze members of Knesset (MK).¹⁴ The Israel Defense Forces website provides further details about the role of the Druze in the IDF.¹⁵ It discusses accounts of high-ranking Druze soldiers, their experiences in the IDF, and whether the role of Druze in the IDF has changed throughout history. The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook and U.S. Department of State websites help us understand pertinent information about Israel, as well as other countries in the region that this paper explores.¹⁶ These sites are employed for their factual and unbiased accounts of the different types of states, minorities, and government structures. They also explain each country's demography and geography.

Based on the aforementioned sources, this paper's approach diverges from existing literature regarding the relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community. The paper is not chiefly concerned with a socio-cultural understanding of the Druze community in Israel. Rather, the paper seeks to offer an initial step to assess Israeli policies from the perspective of selected regional states. As these governments seek to develop state-minority relations that are advantageous to the state and supportive of minority inclusion, they may draw on policy successes, as well as policy failures or oversights, from the case of the Druze in Israel. Although the findings in this paper do not represent the entire Druze community in Israel or

¹¹ *The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics*. http://www1.cbs.gov.il/reader/cw_usr_view_Folder?ID=141.

¹² *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. <http://mfa.gov.il/mfa/Pages/default.aspx>.

¹³ *The Knesset*. <http://main.knesset.gov.il/>.

¹⁴ This will be discussed further in the governance section of the paper.

¹⁵ *Israel Defense Forces*. <http://www.idf.il/english/>.

¹⁶ These websites include [*Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.] and [*U.S. Department of State*. <http://www.state.gov/>.]

issues of concern to the entirety of literature, this paper does consider the broader literature when formulating conclusions.¹⁷

III. STATE – MINORITY RELATIONS

Terminology

Several terms characterize a minority group's level of social involvement within its respective state. The explanations of these terms, as they appear throughout this paper, will henceforth be explained. There are different words in English that can be used to describe social participation: *assimilation*, *integration*, and *inclusion*. The word *assimilation* is not used in this research because it has the connotation of “an acculturation that includes replacement of the particularistic identity with unmitigated allegiance to the identity of the society and renunciation of social distinction.”¹⁸ *Assimilation* is not considered to be a positive term of social inclusion and does not fit within the context of this paper. The Druze use Arabic as their primary language at home and in school. They later learn Hebrew as a secondary language in elementary school.¹⁹ They are allowed to retain their Israeli Druze identity and speak both Arabic and Hebrew. *Assimilation* also cannot serve as a criterion for social participation because it does not allow for minorities to retain their particularistic identities. If the state has enacted *assimilation* policies towards the Druze, it would negate the applicability of this case study towards the policy implications of this paper. Nonetheless, this paper assesses the presence of *assimilationist* policies in an effort to evaluate the Israeli state's strategies towards the Druze community.

¹⁷ The policies (both positive and negative) that the state of Israel has enacted towards the Druze are analyzed in this paper, although the motives behind such policies are not examined. While we realize that such motives are a valuable factor to consider when looking at inclusionary policies of a state towards its minority community, it is outside the main scope of this research project. Nevertheless, it is mentioned briefly in subsequent sections as it came forth in our interviews.

¹⁸ Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yochanan Peres.

¹⁹ Rami Zeedan. “Perspective of the Druze community towards society and the state.” Personal interview 9 Mar 2014.

Although the term, *integration*, has a less negative connotation than *assimilation*, it is still not the optimal term for the purpose of this research. According to Anja Rudiger and Sarah Spencer, the integration of migrants or minorities in European countries, for example, indicates “their assimilation to a pre-existing, unified social order, with a homogeneous culture and set of values. Integration is perceived as a one-way process, placing the onus for change solely on migrants. [Minority groups] are expected to undergo a unilateral process of change, particularly in the public sphere, so that they can fit into a given order.”²⁰ The acts of *integration* and *assimilation* can be used as policy objectives for nation-building within a state.²¹ This, however, does not apply to the case of the Druze community in Israel because the state of Israel does not require the Druze to partake in a “unilateral process of change.”

In contrast to the above explanations of *assimilation* and *integration*, the term *inclusion* best fits the research focus of this paper. *Inclusion* has the least amount of positive or negative connotation. It is related to *integration* in meaning, “with the advantage of providing a better link to mainstream policy concerns, since policymakers use it to refer to all social groups, not just migrants and minorities.”²² *Inclusion*, as opposed to *assimilation* or *integration*, however, characterizes a social participation that still allows the minority group to retain its distinct features and qualities. This term is applicable to the case of the Druze community in Israel. It will thus be applied to the treatment of the Druze community in Israeli society, as it is the most accurate representation of this specific minority’s level of social involvement.

The term that best describes negative social participation is *discrimination*. Within the context of this paper, *discrimination* can be formal and informal, and/or social and legal. According to a study at the European Centre for Minority Issues, “A multi-dimensional view of

²⁰ Anja Rudiger and Sarah Spencer.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. p.4.

social exclusion holds that social exclusion is constituted by a layering of conditions, one upon another generated by an interaction of economic, social, cultural and political circumstances.”²³ Interviews with Israeli Druze in their local communities helped to determine if the Druze received or perceived unjust treatment by the government, including government policies that might favor Israeli Jews over Israeli Druze. In addition, conversations with Druze scholars gave further details about the historical interaction between the state and the Druze community, as well as Israeli society’s attitudes towards them writ large. *Exclusion* and *discrimination* are used interchangeably in this paper.

Criteria for Selection of MENA Cases²⁴

The relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community is useful to look at from the perspective of other MENA states and their minority populations, and to consider whether or not there are positive and negative policy implications for other states in the region that have minorities. In order to accurately evaluate each case for applicability of these policies, certain parameters must first be set up with various criteria. While no two cases of states or minorities are exactly alike, there are particular features that we have established as the measure for adequate similarity. These criteria will ultimately determine whether or not the policies derived from the relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community can be adopted by other MENA states towards their religious and/or ethnic minorities. This, however, is not a comparative case study, and the degree and scope of inclusion of minorities in other MENA countries will not be judged. The selection of cases is rather a sample of MENA countries that meet the minimum equivalent criteria in which to apply the policies of the state of Israel towards the Druze community.

²³ MEU Programme Minorities in the EU. European Centre for Minority Issues, p, 25.

²⁴ See Appendix D of cases of religious and ethnic minorities in MENA.

The “type of state” was one of the determining factors included in the selection of cases, as well as the “type of minority.” The “type of state” denotes the specific classification of the government such as a monarchy, parliamentary republic, constitutional republic, and democracy. Minorities are characterized as ethnic (or ethno-linguistic), religious, ethno-religious, and quasi-ethnic. Other factors, including demography, geography, and the legitimating ideology of the state towards the minority, were also considered in the overall similarity to the case of the Druze in Israel. The demography of the minority is an important criterion in relation to the Druze because the Druze only constitute 1.6 percent of the total population of Israel. When the proportional representation of the minority is nearly equal to other minorities, or when a minority’s size approaches that of the majority population, it is less conceivable that the Druze case is similar enough to draw policy implications. The geographical location of the minority community is another decisive factor for case selection. The Druze only reside in northern Israel, and are not spread out throughout the country. Other minority communities should thus be concentrated in a select region or part of their respective country – or at least be associated with a specific region – in order for policy implications to be drawn. If the minority has no distinct geographical location within a state, but instead is a geographically scattered group that lacks any communal ties characterizing the Druze in Israel, then it is not a similar case for selection.

Furthermore, the legitimating ideology of the state/regime towards the minority was considered for selection. If the minority exists within a state that seeks to expel or severely repress the minority community, then it is difficult to consider this as a comparable case to the Druze in Israel. There are instances of discrimination found in all minority groups in every state, and the minority groups in the MENA region examined in this paper are no different. There is, however, an important difference between discrimination and an *ideology legitimating animosity*

towards a minority. Some, or even a great deal of, discrimination by the state towards a minority group did not disqualify a case for selection. Rather, if a state's ideology or collection of policies towards a minority community sought its removal or imposition of legal or social disabilities, then it did not meet the criteria for which to apply the policies of the state of Israel towards the Druze community.

The aforementioned criteria were determined in order to eliminate cases that were outside the realm of comparability to the Druze in Israel. The four states and minorities that were not included for selection due to disqualifying factors include Berbers in Morocco, Shi'i in Saudi Arabia, Bahá'í in Iran, and Maronite Christians in Lebanon. Three potential cases of MENA countries with minority communities that met the minimum criteria for similarity with the Druze in Israel include Kurds in Turkey, Coptic Christians in Egypt, and minorities in a hypothetical post-Assad Syrian state. The paper will return to an assessment of these cases after an examination of this paper's focus, which is the state of Israel's positive and negative inclusionary policies of the Druze community in the IDF and governance sectors.

IV. THE DRUZE IN ISRAEL: CONTEXT

The type of state Israel *is* must first be reviewed in order to understand the level of social participation that the Druze have within Israel. The state of Israel is a parliamentary democracy where the government is formed based on an electoral process.²⁵ According to the Central

²⁵ While there are competing arguments concerning the nature of the state of Israel, it is outside the purview of this research to debate this specific political issue. The continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict makes any characterization of the type of state that Israel is to be a politically charged characterization. While we recognize that there are various claims and arguments supported against the notion that Israel is a democratic and non-discriminatory state, we also do not intend to debate this issue within our research. The most neutral and unbiased sources, such as the CIA World Factbook, were used to try to get an accurate picture of the type of state Israel is. With regard to discriminatory practice, this is in fact one of the main parts of our research as it relates to the Druze. Discrimination towards other non-Druze minorities was not included in our primary research objective, although certain examples of it did arise in our interviews.

Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook, and considering the concept in its restricted political process sense, a parliamentary democracy is when the legislature, i.e., the parliament, chooses the government, which includes the prime minister and cabinet ministers. The cabinet ministers are decided based on a party, rather than a district, which receives the most votes in an election.²⁶ This has also been referred to as a “procedural democracy,” in order to focus on process and structure rather than values and norms.²⁷ The Israeli government is formed based on a multi-party system. There is free universal suffrage for all Israeli citizens over age eighteen. The Basic Laws of the state function as a collective constitutional corpus, outlining different functions of the Israeli government, including the roles of the president, the Knesset, the judiciary branch, the IDF, and the comptroller.²⁸

Along with being a participatory parliamentary system procedurally open to all citizens, Israel can be characterized as an ideological state because it is a Jewish state with a Zionist ideology, as explained in the 1948 Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel.²⁹ The Declaration notes that by law, all religious groups are allowed to practice their religion privately and publicly.³⁰ Each religious group has its own religious council and courts that govern “all

²⁶ “Library.” *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2128.html>.

²⁷ Saffon, M. P., and N. Urbinati. “Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty.” *Political Theory* 41.3 (2013): 441-81.

²⁸ “Basic Laws of the State of Israel.” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/State/Law/Pages/Basic%20Laws%20of%20the%20State%20of%20Israel.aspx>

²⁹ “The 1948 Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel.” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>.

³⁰ The 1948 Declaration of Establishment states, “The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations” (*Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*).

religious affairs and matters of personal status,” including marriage and divorce.³¹ The Druze community is a relatively small segment of the overall population. The population of Israel is approximately 7,821,850, of which 75.1 percent are Jewish, 17.4 percent are Muslim, 3.9 percent are defined as other, 2 percent are Christian, and 1.6 percent are Druze.³² Israel is, nonetheless, a Jewish state, and Israel’s “vehicles of state” demonstrate intentional policies towards furthering what the government considers to be Jewish interests.

Approximately 120,000 Druze live in Israel today, predominantly in the Galilee and Golan Heights. While the Druze are a transnational sectarian minority with about 450,000 in Syria, 350,000 in Lebanon, and 10,000 in Jordan, Druze have predominantly demonstrated a feeling of national belonging to the particular country in which they live.³³ As a result, the Israeli Druze have developed a different national identity from the Druze of Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Moreover, the Druze have always been a minority in the respective state within which they live and do not want a state of their own.³⁴

A brief summary of Druze history is essential to understand the origins of the Druze community’s religious and quasi-ethnic identity as a minority group in the MENA region. The Druze religion developed from the Ismaili movement of Islam in the 9th and 10th centuries C.E., from the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt. The Druze religion then spread in Egypt between the years 1017 and 1048. As it developed, however, the Druze religion was faced with much opposition, often violent, from Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims.³⁵ Today, the Druze are not just a minority in Israel, but also a minority in every country in which they reside (Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan).

³¹ “People: Religious Freedom.” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.

<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/People/Pages/SOCIETY-%20Religious%20Freedom.aspx>.

³² “Israel.” *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html>

³³ Halabi, p. 2.

³⁴ Gabriel Ben-Dor. “Inclusion of the Druze in Israel.” Personal interview. 10 Mar. 2014.

³⁵ Halabi, p. 2. and Shawki, Taxi driver. “Historical roots of the Druze in Israel.” Personal interview 8 Mar. 2014.

They are also a religious minority branched off of the Ismaili Shi'ite minority sect of Islam, with a strong sense of history and local territorial connection. As the Druze religion spread throughout the region, it also developed into a quasi-ethnicity. Israeli Druze view the religious designation of "Druze" as also being connected to an ethnicity, hence the term quasi-ethnic. They only self-identify as ethnically "Arab" due to a shared language and culture with other Arabs in the region, but are reluctant to make the self-identification as being "Arab."³⁶ The majority of Druze in Israel define themselves in terms of their Druze religion and Israeli nationality, not their Arab ethnicity, which sets the Druze apart from Israel's Arab minority.³⁷

The Druze community has lived in the territory of what is now Israel since before the state was established in 1948. Approximately 13,000 Druze lived in Palestine in 1948, which was less than one percent of the total population.³⁸ During the Israeli War of Independence, the Druze initially attempted to remain neutral, but eventually they fought alongside the Israelis against five nations – Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. This created an inevitable tension between the Druze and the Arabs, which added to the division between them.³⁹

The state of Israel has passed several laws on behalf of the Druze community at the administrative and legislative levels. In 1956, the state passed a law requiring compulsory conscription for all Israeli citizens. This law also applied to Israeli Druze males.⁴⁰ The state recognized the Druze as an independent religious community in 1957, and established a Druze

³⁶ Zeedan.

³⁷ Ibid. and Halabi, p. 2.

³⁸ Parsons, p. 74.

³⁹ Although the Druze speak Arabic, we discovered ambivalence from our interlocutors regarding their self-identification as ethnically "Arab." Several of our informants stated that since they spoke Arabic they are Arab, but then also distanced themselves from the "Arabs." They view themselves as different, not just religiously, but also ethnically, from Arabs.

⁴⁰ Zeedan.

Religious Council and Druze religious courts.⁴¹ In 1962, identity cards noted that Israeli Druze were Druze, and not simply Arabs.⁴²

After these laws were passed, Israeli officials realized that the Druze needed a separate education system.⁴³ In October 1967, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol told the leadership of the Druze community that “from now on, the Druze will not need the special apparatus that deals with the minorities but the regular apparatus will be open to them.”⁴⁴ The implication of this was that Druze education would be equal to that of Israeli Jewish education. In the 1970s, the Ministry of Education established a Druze education system in Haifa and the Northern district.⁴⁵ By 1976, an education system was established for Druze villages where the majority of teachers were Druze.⁴⁶ The goal of this type of education was to create an Israeli Druze identity among the students. These historical events set the stage for the relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community.

V. DEFENSE AND SECURITY: THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES

Research Questions

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is a state-run sector that is mandatory for all Israeli citizens, including Druze males. Findings based on research and interviews ultimately reveal that the policies that the state of Israel has enacted *aid*, rather than hinder, the inclusion of the Druze into the IDF. Specific questions asked of interviewees focus on the role of the Druze in the IDF, whether there are units of the IDF that are exclusively Druze units, and whether this has

⁴¹ Halabi, p. 3.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Firro, 2001, p. 42.

⁴⁴ Firro, 1999, p. 190.

⁴⁵ Majid Al-Haj. *Education, Empowerment, and Control: The Case of the Arabs in Israel*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, p. 73.

⁴⁶ Firro, 2001, p. 50.

changed over time. Other questions also examine whether the Druze can promote to higher ranks within the military (field-grade officer or higher), and whether Druze soldiers face discrimination, harassment, or assault from other Israeli soldiers due to their different religion and ethnicity.⁴⁷ The responses received from interviewees support research from secondary sources that emphasize that the IDF acts as an equalizing force for the Druze community while they are serving in the military. Israeli Druze soldiers are treated in the same way as other Israeli soldiers, and are essentially fully included into the IDF during their military service.⁴⁸

History and Status of Druze in the IDF

Druze participation in the military predates the establishment of the state of Israel. At the beginning of the Israeli War of Independence, the Druze initially attempted to remain neutral, but eventually sided with the Jews against the Arabs. According to Rami Zeedan, a Druze professor and former IDF Major, some Druze leaders found that by supporting the state in the war, they would have “an opportunity to get connected with Jewish leaders.”⁴⁹ Since the establishment of the state of Israel, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion used the IDF as a means to bring together all Israeli citizens from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, including the Druze. According to Guy Seidman:

Israel is a deeply splintered society, and it was clear that a societal consensus would be difficult to achieve. In executing his melting pot vision, Ben-Gurion much relied on the IDF. As the most trusted government agency and safe keeper of the nation, the IDF was the one agency around which Israelis were willing to coalesce. The IDF was the ideal vehicle of change for transforming the eclectic group of people gathered in Israel into a homogenous nation-state.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ We are aware that our conclusions are based on the select questions that we asked our interviewees and that other questions may have produced different results.

⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, there are instances of discrimination that have occurred towards the Druze. It would be remiss to claim that there is absolutely no discrimination in the IDF, and that the Druze have never experienced an instance of discrimination. Nevertheless, no evidence surfaced during this research to corroborate acts of discrimination towards the Druze in the IDF.

⁴⁹ Zeedan.

⁵⁰ Seidman, p. 723.

Seidman explains how the IDF, a “vehicle of change,” was initially used as a tool to bring about social homogeneity, which at that time manifested in reaching out to an otherwise neutral Arab minority population in the region for support. As part of this plan, the Druze were also offered material benefits for their collaboration with the Jews, and Israeli Jewish authorities gave Druze certain rights that were not permitted to other minority groups, such as allowing the Druze to harvest their crops. A military report from the 1940s states the following:

During [June] the local Druze asked...for supplies and for the possibility to harvest their crops...their request was granted and the fact that from all the fields of the Jewish area only the Druze crops were harvested pushed them to the Jewish side.⁵¹

Several factors, including opportunism on both sides, ultimately led to the Druze supporting the state of Israel, rather than the Arabs, in the war.

Zionist officials recruited men in Druze villages to join the Minorities Unit of the IDF, which also consisted of Bedouin and Circassians, and in 1949, this unit included 400 Druze soldiers out of a total of 850.⁵² Between 1949 and 1953, there was only a small increase in the number of Druze who joined the Minorities Unit. This was mostly because the Druze religious leader, Sheikh Amin Tarif, expressed some skepticism regarding the Druze voluntarily participating in the IDF. However, by 1954, he did not object, and public opinion in the Druze villages largely supported conscripted military service.⁵³

In 1956, the state of Israel passed a law requiring mandatory military conscription for all Israeli Jewish citizens, as well as for Druze males.⁵⁴ Although this was a policy implemented by the state, the Druze community also wanted to be a part of the IDF, and encouraged the

⁵¹ Firro, 2001, p. 41.

⁵² Ibid, p. 42.

⁵³ Ibid, and Raffa Abu Tareef. “Discrimination and Druze Soldiers in the IDF.” Personal interview. 8 Mar. 2014.

⁵⁴ Rotem Pessso. “56 years of Druze soldiers serving in the IDF.” *IDF-Israel Defense Forces*. 3 May 2012. <http://www.idf.il/1283-15853-en/Dover.aspx>

compulsory conscription policy for the Druze.⁵⁵ The Druze viewed mandatory conscription as a source of pride. They did not just “volunteer” in the military, like other minorities, but *all* male Druze participated.⁵⁶ Military conscription was directly linked with the Druze perceived position within the state. The Druze “decided that their future is related to the future of the Jewish population. They are like every citizen in Israel, and they want to live and coexist” with other Israeli citizens.⁵⁷ Joining the military was also initially a way to earn a living, and the Druze recognized the economic opportunities available to them in the military that were not available to them in their villages.

The Druze continued to be part of the Minorities Unit, whose main role was to protect southern Israel from 1948 to 1974.⁵⁸ In 1974, the Druze 299th Battalion was created with the primary job of guarding Israel’s border with Lebanon, and by 1986, this unit was named, “Gdud Herev,” or “the Sword Battalion.”⁵⁹ Although this special Druze unit continued to exist within the IDF, by 1983 Druze soldiers were also included in all units of the IDF.⁶⁰ The inclusion of the Druze into all units of the IDF meant that the Druze served in the military alongside all Israeli soldiers, not just Druze soldiers. Intelligence units, as well as elite combat units, previously open to only Jews, were later opened to the Druze, and Druze IDF members slowly joined these units. Today, 83 percent of the Israeli Druze population enlists in the IDF—a higher enlistment rate than that among Israeli Jews, which is at 76 percent.⁶¹ The IDF can be described as “a fairly meritocratic establishment. It gives eighteen-year olds a fair chance to ‘be all they can be,’ even

⁵⁵ Abu Tareef.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “40 Years Since Establishment of Druze Battalion.” *Israel Defense Forces*. 6 April 2013.

<http://www.idf.il/1283-19099-en/Dover.aspx>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Shimon Avivi. “History and relationship between the Druze and Israel.” Personal interview. 13 Mar. 2014.

⁶¹ Pessu and Abu Tareef.

if their extended family did not receive such a fair chance from the state.”⁶² Promotions and unit assignments are based on qualifications and not on an ethnic or religious identity.

Since the 1960s, Druze soldiers have held high security positions, including roles as border police, and intelligence.⁶³ Most Druze soldiers today take on combat roles, such as in the elite commando unit and since 2000, more than 280 Druze soldiers have died in action. As of 2012, there were four Druze Brigade commanders (Colonels), two Druze Brigadier Generals, 61 Druze senior officials, as well as three Druze pilots in the IDF.⁶⁴ While these numbers may seem small, they are not, given that the IDF’s top rank is a Lieutenant General (a three-star rank), and there is only one in the entire IDF. There are only 21 active duty Major Generals in the IDF, which puts into perspective how many Druze are at the rank of field grade or general officers.⁶⁵ In October 2013, Colonel Rasan Alian, a Druze officer from the village of Shfaram, became commander of the Golani Brigade, which is “one of the most popular and requested combat units in the IDF.”⁶⁶ Shlomi Eldar notes that this is seen as a further improvement for the relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community due to the high esteem in which the Golani Brigade is held.⁶⁷

Treatment of Druze in the IDF

The Druze are fully included into the IDF and there is virtually no discrimination against them while serving in the military. The Druze “see the army as a gateway for their integration into the [Israeli] society as equals.”⁶⁸ There is no other sector of Israeli society where Israeli Druze have the same rights as other Israelis to the extent evident in the IDF. Druze soldiers are

⁶² Seidman, p. 723.

⁶³ Atashe. p. 119.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Israel Defense Forces: General Staff." *Israel Defense Forces Chiefs-of-Staff*. Oct. 2013.

⁶⁶ Eldar.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

guaranteed equal opportunities within the IDF as other Israeli soldiers. Based on the aforementioned account of Druze positions in the IDF, Druze can rise to the same ranks as other Israeli soldiers. Druze soldiers promote to high ranks in the IDF based on their merit and qualifications, not religion or ethnicity, due to the meritocratic nature of the IDF.⁶⁹ Rami Zeedan, a former Druze IDF Major privy to closed-door promotion boards, explained the IDF promotion process. He noted that he never witnessed discrimination at any level (even behind closed-doors) towards the Druze, by the institution or among the collective group of soldiers.⁷⁰

The state of Israel has encouraged Druze participation in the IDF since the state was established, and ultimately made Druze service in the military mandatory in 1956. From the perspective of the state, Druze military service portrayed how a minority group that has a different religious ideology from the Jewish state can still fight for the state.⁷¹ The state of Israel began to offer Druze high school students pre-military services in 1982 to help prepare them for the IDF.⁷² Schools and youth centers helped Druze teenagers in ninth through twelfth grades to cope with issues they would face as Druze soldiers, such as how to balance traditional Druze culture with modern Jewish culture, as well as military institutional culture.

There is also “a preparatory week [that] takes place at IDF bases, one of its objectives being to expose young people to Druze soldiers and officers serving in the IDF.”⁷³ This “preparatory week” starts as early as the ninth grade. It indicates a policy that the state implemented to not only prepare both Druze and non-Druze soldiers for the IDF, but also to create a forum for Druze and non-Druze youth to interact with each other prior to their military service. This program exposes both Druze and non-Druze soldiers to people of different

⁶⁹ Zeedan.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Atashe, p. 108.

⁷² Dana, p. 112.

⁷³ Ibid.

religious and ethnic groups before their IDF service begins. It also is a means of language immersion so the Druze can improve their Hebrew language skills.

Requiring Druze soldiers to serve in the IDF is a mechanism on the part of the state to include the Druze in this essential component of Israeli society. In an effort to fully include the Druze in the IDF, the IDF offered Hebrew language classes to the Druze so that they would be comfortable speaking with non-Druze soldiers. The first commander of the Herev Battalion, Col. (res.) Ahil Salakh said, “The hardest thing, though, was training of the officers. They were used to speaking Arabic and we needed them to speak Hebrew...language classes initiated by the IDF raised their level of Hebrew.”⁷⁴ By learning Hebrew, Druze soldiers are able to communicate with other Israeli soldiers so that there are no linguistic barriers between them. These language classes further suggest an effort on the part of the state of Israel to include the Druze into the IDF.

IDF as an Equalizing Force

Based on the aforementioned analysis, it can be concluded that military service is an equalizing force implemented by the state. According to Col. (res.) Salakh, “When the battalion was established, we finally began to feel a part of the IDF, and not something on the side.”⁷⁵ The inclusion of the Druze into the IDF is based on a common ideology that Israeli Druze share with other Israeli citizens, i.e., loyalty to the state of Israel and to the protection of the country. Dr. Gabriel Ben-Dor explained that IDF service is a “national burden” that Israeli Druze share with other Israelis that signifies their loyalty to the state. Druze want to join the IDF because of their commitment to the state. Current Herev commander, Lt. Col. Shadi Abu Faras, noted that military service of the Druze is “an opportunity to serve their country, and it gives them a chance to join the larger Israeli society. They are highly motivated and many wish to become

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “40 Years Since Establishment of Druze Battalion.”

commanders.”⁷⁶ Druze not only want to serve in the IDF to display their loyalty to the state of Israel, but they also want to be a part of this service that puts them on equal ground with other Israeli citizens. It is during their IDF service that Druze feel completely included in Israeli society. Full language immersion, by way of military service, benefits the Druze not only during military service, but especially post-service, as they are able to use this critical language skill in their pursuit of private sector jobs. Druze also receive the same post-IDF benefits and entitlements as other Israelis, such as mental and physical veteran healthcare, and retirement compensation.⁷⁷

VI. GOVERNANCE: NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

Research Questions

Governance is another state-run sector that sheds light on the extent to which the Druze community is included in the state of Israel, as well as policies that the state of Israel has enacted towards the Druze community. The specific research questions that this paper addresses involve the degree of the Druze community’s incorporation at the national level, i.e., the Knesset, as well as at the local level, i.e., municipalities. Overwhelmingly, findings support the assessment that Druze are able to enter politics, just as other Israelis, and do not face discrimination based on religion when seeking political office.⁷⁸ In addition, this research focuses on whether or not Druze perceive that government officials, both Druze and non-Druze, adequately represent issues of the Druze community at the national and local levels. These questions provide further insight into whether this minority group has equal opportunities entering Israeli politics as compared to

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ben-Dor; Zeedan.

⁷⁸ Abu Tareef; Hamd Amar. “Druze representation and governance in Israel.” Personal interview. 11 Mar. 2014; Zeedan.

the majority population, as well as whether government officials adequately address concerns of the minority community. If the Druze community feels sufficiently represented by its elected officials, and believes that its issues and concerns are addressed, then this indicates the Druze community's overall impression of its agency in Israeli politics and government.

Druze Political Parties

There is no Druze political party, but rather Druze votes and members are split among several Israeli political parties. National elections from the late 1960s to 1990s indicate that the Druze predominantly supported the Labor Party, although the National Religious Party (MafDaL) and the Likud Party (formerly GaHaL) also received Druze support.⁷⁹ More recently in the February 2009 election, Druze votes were divided into three categories – villages with over 90 percent of Druze inhabitants who voted only for Jewish parties, villages that gave some of their votes to Arab parties, and villages that predominantly supported Arab parties.⁸⁰

Raffa Abu Tareef, a retired Druze major, conveyed the plurality of Druze political leanings claiming that the Druze community is found throughout all political parties in Israel, including the moderate and right parties.⁸¹ This indicates that “the Druze are well adjusted within the state of Israel, unlike the Arab minority that founded a political party in its community.” Although the Druze do not have a political party of their own, they still perceive that they are more included in Israeli governance, as opposed to Israeli Arabs. Based on the conversation with Retired Major Abu Tareef, as well as subsequent discussions with other Druze individuals, there does not appear to be a perceived need for a Druze political party within the

⁷⁹ Moredecai Nisan. “The Druze in Israel: Questions of Identity, Citizenship, and Patriotism.” *The Middle East Journal*, Vo. 64, No. 4, Autumn 2010, p. 583.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 584.

⁸¹ Abu Tareef.

Israeli government.⁸² Dr. Gabriel Ben-Dor explained that one of the main reasons the Druze do not have their own political party is because of continuous internal strife amongst various families in Druze villages. Politics in the Druze villages are still in the form of tribal or clan allegiances, and there are numerous disputes and differences among the families. A Druze individual is traditionally loyal to his/her family or clan first and then to his/her village. This has therefore created political divisions amongst the Druze, and consequently has resulted in the lack of any cohesive Druze political body.⁸³ Other religious and ethnic minority groups have a similar family/clan loyalty system but have still been able to organize politically into a party based on a shared identity. While the Druze have not been able to do this due to the aforementioned reasons, this is not to say they are incapable of doing so, or that some Druze do not want to organize politically in the future. Member of Knesset Hamad Amar noted that he was able to organize a political movement for Druze youth, which could be a model for a Druze political body if it is found successful.⁸⁴ There is no indication, however, that the majority of Israeli Druze want a Druze political body at this time. Despite this, the tribal differences present in Druze villages have not impacted Druze inclusion in the Israeli government.

Role of Druze in the Knesset

Since the establishment of the state of Israel, there have been fifteen current or former Druze members of Knesset (MK).⁸⁵ Out of the fifteen MKs, only three of them have more than an undergraduate education. One of them is Laviv-Hussein Abu-Rochan, who recruited Druze fighters during the 1948 war to fight with the IDF.⁸⁶ In contrast to this, Salah-Hassan Hanifes served as a Druze MK, and his only education was in an elementary school in his village, as well

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ben-Dor.

⁸⁴ Amar.

⁸⁵ Knesset website.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

as at a Druze Religious Center in Lebanon.⁸⁷ He also played a role in enlisting Druze men to fight on the side of the Hagana in the 1948 war, and he was a member of the Supreme Druze Council that the government of Israel established in 1949.⁸⁸

Druze have been involved in politics at the national level since the second Knesset in 1951, when Salah-Hassan Hanifes and Jabr Muadi were elected. In the 1970s and 1980s, Zeidan Atashe, a Druze from the village of Usfiya, served as a Member of Knesset (MK) and as an information officer in the Israeli consulate in New York. Asad Asad, a member of the Likud party, was another Druze selected to an Israeli diplomatic post. He became a senior army officer at the United Nations mission of Israel from 1987 to 1988. He also served as an advisor on Druze affairs to the Israeli prime minister and was a member of the Israeli delegation to the 1991 Madrid peace talks.⁸⁹ Since then, more than a dozen Druze have served in the Knesset, and increasingly they have assumed more governmental positions such as magistrate, judge, and even the presidency, for a short amount of time. In 2007, Majalli Wahabi, a Druze politician who is a member of the Kadima party and a former member of the Knesset, became the acting president in Israel. This occurred in 2007 when President Moshe Katsav was indicted, and the Acting President Dalia Itzik was abroad.⁹⁰ Wahabi was not only the first Druze to ever hold the office of the presidency but also the first non-Jew to hold this position. While this was short lived and lasted only one day, this was a significant event for the Druze community in Israel.

Local Levels of Druze Politics and Advocacy

There are sixteen Druze villages in Israel where the Druze consist of the majority population, and in thirteen of these villages, the Druze comprise over 90 percent of the

⁸⁷ Knesset website.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

population.⁹¹ The head of the local municipality in all 16 of these villages is therefore Druze.⁹² Participation in local elections in Druze villages is extremely high with 85 to 90 percent of the population participating in the elections.⁹³

According to Dr. Rami Zeedan, Druze local municipalities are very similar to Muslim local municipalities in Israel, in terms of the election process, fiscal situation, and services provided to citizens.⁹⁴ While all Druze villages have a family health clinic and health services are available to school-age children, the general quality of services in Druze municipalities is not on par with the services provided to Israeli Jewish cities and towns.⁹⁵ In the Druze village of Daliat El Carmel, for example, just southeast of Haifa, 20 percent of houses do not receive electricity from electricity companies.⁹⁶ In addition, there is not a sufficient amount of money to pay the salaries of civil service employees, such as sanitation workers.⁹⁷ These problems are as a result of both Druze citizens not advocating enough on behalf of these issues to their local municipalities, as well as the extent to which local management of Druze villages addresses the concerns of the Druze community.

Another major problem within Druze local municipalities is the quality of education. Less than 50 percent of Druze students in secondary schools are prepared for the matriculation exams.⁹⁸ As a result, fewer Druze students attend university and are able to pass a mandatory English exam at the university level. Out of the Druze students who go to university,

⁹¹ Druze that do not live in predominantly Druze villages live in villages with other Israeli Arabs. A small number of Druze families live in cities where the majority population is Jewish.

⁹² Zeedan.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Dana, p. 113.

⁹⁶ Zeedan.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

approximately 70 percent are female.⁹⁹ One of the reasons for this is that Druze males join the military once they finish high school, whereas females do not.¹⁰⁰ Druze males are less likely to attend university after their military service, and instead enter the workforce.

One exception to this, however, is in the Druze village of Beit Jann. A 2013 study shows that despite Beit Jann's low socioeconomic ranking, this Druze village is ranked third in all of Israel for the percentage of students eligible for a matriculation certificate.¹⁰¹ More than 85 percent of high school students in the village completed the matriculation exam and are eligible to graduate. The village exceeded wealthier non-Druze cities, including Herzliya, Raanana, Ramat HaSharon, Rehovot, Rishon LeTzion, and Netanya.¹⁰² Despite the overall substandard education of the Druze in Israel, it is noteworthy that a significant number of Druze students passed the matriculation exam. This is an example of specific measures implemented at the local level to improve an aspect of the socio-economic situation of the Druze. Other local municipalities should look at the methods and programs used in Beit Jann's education system as a model for other Druze villages.

Legislation Implemented by the State

The state of Israel has implemented specific legislation impacting the role of the Druze community in the governance sector since the 1970s. In 1975, the Israeli government established an inter-ministerial committee that focused on issues of the Druze community.¹⁰³ Following this in 1987, a five-year plan was implemented for the Druze sector where Druze settlements were categorized as "development areas," which put them in the same category as neighboring Jewish

⁹⁹ Amar.

¹⁰⁰ See the section on the Israel Defense Forces.

¹⁰¹ Shlomi Eldar. "Israeli Druze Village Excels in Education." *Al Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*. 9 Sept. 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/israel-arab-sector-druze-beit-jann-education-matriculate.html>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Dana, p. 112-113.

settlements that were similar.¹⁰⁴ This suggests ways in which the state of Israel worked to equalize the types of policies implemented towards Druze and Jewish establishments, aiming to diminish service discrepancies in Druze villages. Furthermore, in 1991, Druze local authorities called a strike on municipal services in their settlements in an effort for Druze settlements to receive equal benefits as Jewish settlements. Two weeks after this strike was started, the state recognized the Druze community's desires and accepted their requests.¹⁰⁵

In 1994, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin initiated a five-year plan that benefitted the Druze community. This plan ensured that the Druze community would receive the same amount of financial benefits from the Israeli government for land allotments as other Israeli communities received.¹⁰⁶ The government of Israel "granted the Druze community preferential and overriding financial outlays in the spirit of 'corrective discrimination'" and until the project ended in 1999, "Druze councils received twice the amount of budgetary grants per person than the Jewish councils."¹⁰⁷ This policy exemplified how the state sought to include a significant issue facing the Druze community on the agenda of the prime minister, and the state as a whole.¹⁰⁸

Druze Community Political Agency and Issue Representation

One of the main factors to assess the representation of the Druze in governance is the way in which Druze and non-Druze government officials adequately represent Druze issues at the national and local levels, as well as whether the issues of the Druze community are a priority for the Israeli government. The main issues that are of utmost concern to individuals of the Druze community involve construction in Druze villages and the privatization of land.¹⁰⁹ Land in

¹⁰⁴ Dana, p. 112-113.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Nisan, p. 588.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Avivi.

¹⁰⁹ Amar.

Druze villages is private and not owned by the state. Druze live their entire lives in the same village in which they are born and are thus connected not only to their respective village, but also to the physical land where their village is located.¹¹⁰ This indicates the high esteem in which Druze regard the land of their villages. If the government owned the land, however, the government would be able to assign a piece of land to individual Druze families and permit the latter to build on the land. The government, however, has not as of yet privatized Druze land.¹¹¹ This has had negative implications on basic services in the Druze villages, including water, electricity, waste management, and road maintenance and repairs.

Methods to address the issue of Druze land are underway at the national level. MK Amar has proposed ways in which to provide better local services, such as consistent electricity and water in every house, by implementing a new map-approval system in the villages.¹¹² Other members of the Knesset have supported him and are aware of problems facing the Druze community regarding planning and building.¹¹³ Moreover, MK Amar was able to allocate a private budget for the Druze community that is almost NIS one billion (\$2.87 million).¹¹⁴ Government officials want to boost tourism, and commercial enterprises in Druze villages in the North. They hope this will counterbalance the remoteness of the Druze villages from urban centers, which will then make more jobs available to Druze individuals. This exemplifies how a Druze government official is not only explaining an issue that his community faces to the broader Israeli government, but how he is also implementing methods to fix this problem. It further indicates how the Druze MK is acting on behalf of the Druze and representing the community's issues on a broader scale.

¹¹⁰ Abu Tareef.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Beyond the consideration of the mere *fact* of physical representation, one of the main factors to assess the inclusion of the Druze in governance is the *feeling* of agency and *perception* of active, community-driven representation that the Druze have through this “state-vehicle.” Most of the Druze interviewed agreed that they have adequate representation in the Knesset and in local municipalities and do not sense any discrimination towards a Druze who wants to enter politics. Nevertheless, they complain about the inefficient method in which the government addresses issues and concerns of the Druze community. MK Amar explained that the private land laws have made it very difficult for the state to agree upon policies concerning land and services in Druze villages. He indicated that this is due to the fact that the state is still a relatively “young” state, and it is still trying to figure out and formulate basic policies that positively affect the lives of its Druze citizens. The agency that the Druze perceive they have to affect change in their local communities, as well as the government services in the Druze villages, thus warrants improvement.

VII. POLICIES OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL: CRITIQUES & RECOMMENDATIONS

IDF

The state of Israel has enacted policies that generally include the Druze community into the military and governance sectors. However, despite these inclusionary measures several facets of these state-sectors warrant improvement. Some previous policies implemented by the state to help include the Druze in the IDF, are now seen as an impediment to full inclusion. The exclusively Druze unit was once seen as a positive policy tool to help include the Druze in the IDF and help them adjust linguistically and culturally to Israeli society. However, now it is seen as a hurdle for Druze advancement. Retired Major Abu Tareef shared that “this unit today

shouldn't be there anymore. Now it's setting things back."¹¹⁵ He further explained that Druze who serve in exclusively Druze units are not motivated to demonstrate their merits or skills. He noted the following:

If they were in another Israeli Jewish unit, they would feel like it's a challenging environment where they have to prove that they are good because they want to show that they have skills. But when they are just with their peers they will take it easy. It becomes a sort of hurdle for them. It's not the country that is preventing them; it's their own will.¹¹⁶

Druze soldiers would be more challenged if they would be fully included in the IDF with other Israelis. The fact that Druze themselves do not see a need for a special Druze unit based on ethno-religious differences, speaks to their overall level of inclusion and treatment in the IDF.

The IDF policies towards the Druze have evolved over time, and while in the past the IDF had some exclusionary policies towards the Druze, such as prohibiting them from certain units, the barriers are slowly decreasing today, and Druze are in effect fully included in the IDF. They hold IDF service in high esteem and view it as a part of their own unique cultural tradition and contribution to the state of Israel.¹¹⁷ The initial motives of the state to include the Druze in the IDF are not fully addressed in this paper because they are out of the scope of this paper's objectives. However, there is no doubt that the IDF now has come a long way in realizing the benefits for Druze service in the IDF, both societally and militarily. The fact that the Druze are well represented in the highest echelons of IDF ranks, based solely on their merit, attests to their commendable contributions in military service, and the IDF's evolving policies and attitudes towards them.

¹¹⁵ Abu Tareef.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Governance

Issues of the Druze community are only represented in national and local governments to the degree in which members of the Knesset and other government officials advocate on behalf of the Druze community. The Druze consider themselves to be adequately represented in Israel's national government. There is no single Druze political party, but Druze are included in different parties, including moderate and right parties. The Druze do not feel a need to have their own political party, while a separate party exists for Israeli Arabs. This indicates the level of inclusion that the Druze feel within the Israeli political system. Moreover, Druze are represented and have held positions within the Knesset since the state of Israel was established.

That being said, the Druze feel that the national government must advocate more for issues of the Druze community. Prime Minister Rabin's five-year plan was a major success of the national government to advocate on behalf of the Druze community. Similarly, MK Amar's policy to improve the local services of the Druze community was successful because of his effort to inform other Knesset members and ministers about the Druze community and their concerns.¹¹⁸ The state of Israel should continue to implement policies, similar to the ones employed by Prime Minister Rabin and MK Amar, to address the needs of the Druze community.

The state of Israel should also advocate more on behalf of the issues of the Druze community within local municipalities. The state should improve essential services, such as electricity, water, and waste management, within Druze villages. Moreover, leadership within local Druze municipalities should focus on improving the quality of education within the Druze villages. This would ensure that more Druze students pass the matriculation exams, attend university, and succeed in their English language exam. Improvements in the aforementioned

¹¹⁸ Amar.

services would ultimately indicate that issues of the Druze community are represented at the local level.

The Druze community's issues and culture should not be taught to Israeli government officials exclusively. Instead, there should be a greater overall societal awareness of this minority group. The Israeli government should incorporate education on the Druze into the curricula of all state-mandated schools.¹¹⁹ This would ensure that Israeli society is knowledgeable about the Druze community, their culture and religion. It is through education that government officials can raise the societal awareness of the Druze community, and their respective issues and concerns. Henceforth they should implement policies that directly address these issues, so that the Druze will be fully included in the Israeli government.

Impediments to Fuller Inclusion Arising from Other State Sectors

Despite the shortcomings by the state of Israel in the military and governance sectors, the Druze view their inclusion as a great success in these two areas. However, the lack of policy holism across all Israeli state sectors and society, including education and private and public sector employment, remain an impediment to complete Druze inclusion in the state. While there is mainly no discrimination against Druze in the military, there often is in civil services.¹²⁰ Once Druze soldiers leave the IDF, they often encounter obstacles in the job market, for example. Senior Druze officers (between ages 45 and 50) often have difficulty re-entering the private market after retirement from the IDF.¹²¹ Retired Israeli Jewish officers have a much easier time finding jobs in public and private sectors than do Druze officers.¹²² Druze experience some discrimination against them by their employers. One of the main reasons Druze have difficulty

¹¹⁹ Avivi.

¹²⁰ Amar.

¹²¹ Seidman; Zeedan.

¹²² Zeedan.

finding employment, however, is due to the fact that they are isolated in northern Israel away from the rest of society.¹²³ They thus have limited contact with Israeli Jewish companies and other social connections that would assist them in finding employment in a post-IDF position.¹²⁴ The state should address these post-IDF obstacles and assist Druze in finding jobs. Moreover, the state should provide programs for employers educating them about anti-discriminatory practices. Companies that still continue discriminatory policies should face repercussions from the state. Likewise, the state should offer tax and contract incentives to companies that have partnerships with Druze villages, or to Druze desirous of starting their own businesses in their villages. By providing training and employment opportunities to the Druze, these companies would not only benefit from better economic conditions under which to expand their business, but the Druze would also benefit from the increase in the new employment and education opportunities available to them.

In addition, the state of Israel should introduce policies in the education sector of Druze communities to make Druze education on par with Israeli Jewish education. Less than 50 percent of Druze high school students pass the matriculation exam at the end of high school.¹²⁵ The state should set aside more financial resources to fund programs that will help Druze students prepare for the matriculation exam, including training programs for teachers on how to prepare their students for the exam. The state should also implement English language training courses at the university level so that Druze students do not have difficulty passing the English language exam, which is required to graduate.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the state should provide incentives for Druze students who attend university. Today, approximately 70 percent of Druze

¹²³ Zeedan.

¹²⁴ Ben-Dor.

¹²⁵ Zeedan.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

who attend university are female since males serve in the IDF and then enter the workforce.¹²⁷ The state should work to ensure that the number of Druze students who attend university is proportional with the number of Israeli students from other religious and/or ethnic groups who go to university. If 50 percent of Israeli Jewish students attend university, then at least 50 percent of Israeli Druze students should also go to university. These policies would thus help increase Druze inclusion in other Israeli state sectors.

VIII. UTILITY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MENA COUNTRIES¹²⁸

Others Minorities in Israel

When looking at the case of the Druze community in Israel, it might seem that the natural candidate for application of similar policies includes Israel's Muslim and Christian citizen populations, including Bedouin, Palestinian, and/or Christian citizens of Israel. However, the Druze are very different from other minorities in Israel. As has already been explained, the Druze predominantly demonstrate a feeling of national belonging to the particular country in which they live.¹²⁹ The Druze have had nationalistic feelings towards the state of Israel since the Druze sided with the Yishuv when the state was established in 1948.¹³⁰ This set the stage for the relationship that exists today between the state of Israel and the Druze community.

Other minorities in Israel, however, have not necessarily had the same attitude towards the state as the Druze. The Bedouin community, for example, can be divided into Bedouin in the southern Negev region and Bedouin in the Northern Galilee region. The former are transnational in alliances, families, and criminal behavior. Unlike the Druze, they are not known to be loyal to

¹²⁷ Ben-Dor.

¹²⁸ See Appendix D.

¹²⁹ Halabi, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

the state in which they live, and have often faced hostility due to issues regarding land, movement, and crime.¹³¹ Bedouin in the northern Galilee region generally consist of families, clans, and tribes. They are positively inclined towards states and have generally benefitted from elements of inclusion.¹³² Although the inclusion of the northern Galilee Bedouin is not the same as it is for the Druze, the former nevertheless enlist in the IDF, and predominantly in the Bedouin unit.¹³³ IDF enlistment, however, is voluntary for them, and the state does not require them to join.

The Christian and Muslim populations in Israel have conflicted attitudes toward the state of Israel. They have explicit sympathies and acknowledge religious and ethno-linguistic commonalities with states and groups who have a belligerent relationship with Israel, i.e., many of Israel's neighboring states.¹³⁴ Individuals from the Arab citizen sector often act as intermediaries with belligerent states or organizations, such as an Israeli Arab citizen, who is a member of Knesset, visiting Syria. In this way, Israeli Arab citizens often remain entangled in anti-state groups. This is entirely different from the sentiments of Druze citizens who generally are loyal exclusively to Israel.¹³⁵

The attitude of the Bedouin, Christian, and Muslim communities towards the state of Israel is very different from the relationship between the state and the Druze community. Inclusion in Israel is greatest when the community as a whole or subsections of it, side with the state, i.e., the Zionist ideology, early on in the establishment of the state. Moreover, it is beneficial when the minority is loyal to the state on a semi-ideological basis. This is seen in the

¹³¹ Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled. *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 113.

¹³² Hillel Cohen. *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948-1967*. California: University of California Press, 2010, p. 17-18.

¹³³ "Bedouin Reconnaissance Unit." *Israel Defense Forces*. <http://www.idf.il/1560-en/Dover.aspx>.

¹³⁴ Ben-Rafael and Peres, p. 36.

¹³⁵ Abu Tareef; Zeedan.

example of the Druze community, who do not define themselves based on a Muslim and/or Arab identity.

Although it might appear that other minorities in Israel are expected candidates for policy applicability, they are less comparable to the Druze than are other MENA cases based on the established criteria. Given these dynamics, and this paper's primary concern, seven examples of minorities in the MENA region and their respective state are assessed based on the aforementioned criteria. The four cases that were disqualified will first be examined – the Berbers in Morocco, the Shi'i in Saudi Arabia, the Bahá'í in Iran, and the Maronite Christians in Lebanon. Subsequently, the three instances where Israel's policies towards the Druze may be applicable based on criteria introduced earlier will be analyzed – the Kurds in Turkey, the Coptic Christians in Egypt, and the minorities in a post-Assad Syrian state.

Cases that were not Selected¹³⁶

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy that has a significant Berber population.¹³⁷ Berbers are approximately 40 percent of the population in Morocco and are an ethnic minority, but practice the same religion, Islam, as Moroccan Arabs, who are the majority in Morocco. Historically, Berbers have been marginalized and excluded from full participation in Moroccan society.¹³⁸ However, recently the King has taken steps to stop this discrimination, such as designating Amazigh, the Berber language, as an official language in 2011.¹³⁹ The Berbers are a transnational entity living across North Africa in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Morocco was not included as a candidate for applicability of Druze policies because of its type of government,

¹³⁶ See Appendix E.

¹³⁷ "Morocco." *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>.

¹³⁸ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman. "Ethno-politics and Globalization in North Africa: The Berber Culture Movement." *The Journal of North African Studies* 11.1 (2006): 71-84.

¹³⁹ Joshua Castellino and Kathleen A. Cavanaugh. *Minority Rights in the Middle East*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 172-173.

as well as the large percentage of Berbers in the country. Due to the Berbers' proportional magnitude, it is difficult to consider them a minority of the same character as the Druze. Since they represent nearly half of Morocco's population, in comparison to the 1.6 percent of Druze in Israel, the policies of the state of Israel towards the Druze community are not applicable to the Moroccan monarchy and the Berber minority.

Saudi Arabia, another candidate for policy inclusion implications of its minority group, is 85-90 percent Sunni Muslim. There is a Shi'i minority that resides mostly in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia and in Medina, constituting 10-15 percent of the population.¹⁴⁰ The Shi'i are a transnational religious minority with strongest ties to their counterparts in Bahrain.¹⁴¹ Saudi Arabia is a Sunni monarchy and has historically dealt harshly with the Shi'i minority. The Shi'i face discrimination from the government, in education and in judicial systems, and they are excluded/under-represented in government employment. Due to the monarchical government structure, and long-standing hostility to the Shi'a community, Saudi Arabia was disqualified as an adequate case to apply policy lessons from the relationship between the state of Israel and its Druze citizens.

The Bahá'í community in Iran numbers between 300,000 to 400,000 people, out of a population of just over 80 million, which is approximately 0.5 percent of the population.¹⁴² It is a transnational community located in Turkey, Egypt, Israel, and the United States. However, the Bahá'í are not unified into a geopolitical entity. According to the International Federation of Human Rights:

¹⁴⁰ Castellino and Cavanaugh. pp. 176-178

¹⁴¹ Ahmad K. Majidiyar. "American Enterprise Institute." *Saudi Arabia's Forgotten Shi'ite Spring*. 17 Aug. 2013. <http://www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/middle-east-and-north-africa/saudi-arabias-forgotten-shiite-spring/>.

¹⁴² "Iran." *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>.

Members of the Bahá'í community in Iran have been subjected to unwarranted arrests, false imprisonment, beatings, torture, unjustified executions, confiscation and destruction of property owned by individuals and the Bahá'í community, denial of employment, denial of government benefits, denial of civil rights and liberties, and denial of access to higher education.¹⁴³

Iran is an Islamic republic and is characterized as a clerical oligarchy, which sees the government of Iran as an instrument for the divine will of God.¹⁴⁴ Although both Iran and Israel could potentially be characterized as ideological states, the treatment of the Bahá'í in Iran, at the hands of the government, is so severe and brutal, that it is incompatible as a case for selection with the Druze. There must be at least a baseline of positive citizen rights and entitlement for the minority to be considered for such selection.

There are many possible minorities to consider for case selection in Lebanon. For this reason, it is difficult to compare them with the Druze in Israel. Maronite Christians account for approximately 21 percent of the population in Lebanon.¹⁴⁵ However, the entire state is based on sects, expressed in the factions and alliances that animate the Lebanese “Unitary Confessionalist Parliamentary Republic” government.¹⁴⁶ The country can essentially be characterized as a country of minorities with no one ruling sect or religion enjoying unilateral dominance. Due to the Confessionalist nature of the Lebanese state, as well as the lack of a single majority in power, Maronite Christians in Lebanon are not similar enough to the Druze in Israel to be selected for consideration.

¹⁴³ International Federation of Human Rights. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. *Discrimination Against Religious Minorities in Iran*. Geneva: August 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "Lebanon." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/ci/le/index.htm>.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Kurds in Turkey

Kurdish civilization traces back to the sixth century B.C.E. in the Median Empire.¹⁴⁷ According to Denise Natali, “Oral and written historiography shows how Kurds have attempted to preserve their culture, language, and territory despite efforts of central governments to prohibit or deny their identity.”¹⁴⁸ The Kurds have continued to “protect their identity by differentiating themselves from the dominant ethnic group. Kurds are Kurds because they are not Arabs, Persians, or Turks.”¹⁴⁹ Kurds have their own distinct language, Kurdish, and ethnicity, *Kurdayeti*, or “Kurdishness.” They have had varying degrees of inclusion and political influence based on the country in which they reside. Kurds share Sunni Islam with the country’s Turkish majority.

Following the victory in the Turkish War of Independence, (won by the Turks against the occupying Allies in October of 1923), the Republic of Turkey was founded. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was the galvanizing leader who ushered in “Kemalist” ideology that sought to promote Turkey as a secular, modern nation-state. Today, Turkey is a state characterized as a “republican parliamentary democracy” or a parliamentary democracy. This type of government is a “political system in which the legislature (parliament) selects the government - a prime minister, premier, or chancellor along with the cabinet ministers - according to party strength as expressed in elections; by this system, the government acquires a dual responsibility: to the people as well as to the parliament.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Denise Natali. *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2005, p. xvii.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ "Turkey." *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>.

Kurds have been a minority since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. They are a transnational group and have neighboring communities in Iraq, Iran and Syria. In nearly every state within which they reside, the Kurds have had transnational state aspirations. The hypothetical geography of *Kurdistan*, that once existed, has dominated the political landscape in Turkey especially in the last 30-40 years. The Kurdish minority constitutes 18 percent of the population (14.6 million out of 81.6 million people), and resides mainly in the southeastern region of the country which covers nine provinces and is home to about 8 million people, the majority of whom are Kurdish.¹⁵¹ Historically, there have been tensions between the Kurds, (and namely the radical violent PKK- Kurdish Worker's Party), and the Turks.¹⁵²

A separatist insurgency begun in 1984 by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - now known as the Kurdistan People's Congress or Kongra-Gel (KGK) - has dominated the Turkish military's attention and claimed more than 30,000 lives. After the capture of the group's leader in 1999 [Abdullah Öcalan], the insurgents largely withdrew from Turkey mainly to northern Iraq. In 2004, KGK announced an end to its ceasefire and attacks attributed to the KGK increased.¹⁵³

While there is no doubt that the relationship between the Kurds and the Turkish state is still tenuous, there have also been great strides towards advancing Kurdish inclusion within Turkey, and the reduction of Kurdish separatist violence. In 2013, imprisoned PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, publicly “declared a cease-fire and the PKK began a withdrawal from Turkey to its bases in Iraqi Kurdistan.”¹⁵⁴ This marked a monumental change in Turkish-Kurdish relations, possibly going so far as to declare an end to 30 years of tension.¹⁵⁵

The Kurds are now turning to elections to bear out the genuineness of the Turkish peace talks, and there is hope on both sides that a new tide is turning. Due to initial steps towards

¹⁵¹ “Turkey.” *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*.

¹⁵² Mark Adams. “Water and Security Policy: The Case of Turkey.” *Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies*. National Defense University, 2002.

¹⁵³ “Turkey.” *Central Intelligence Agency*.

¹⁵⁴ Chase Winter. “Turkey's Strained Kurdish Peace Process.” *Foreign Policy*. 11 Dec. 2013.

¹⁵⁵ “Turkey Local Election Holds Key to Kurdish Peace Talks.” *Voice Of America*. 7 Mar. 2014.

reconciliation, it is now possible to assess inclusion policies of the Kurdish minority within the Turkish state.

While the history of tension and violence between the Druze in Israel and the Kurds in Turkey could not be more different, the policies that have resulted in a more included Druze minority in Israel could still have tangible results for the Kurds in Turkey. The Kurds, though not the exact same as the Druze, share enough similar characteristics to be considered as a case for selection. The type of state (parliamentary democracy), the demographic representation in a specific geographical location of the country, and the relative baseline of positive citizen rights and entitlement for the minority, are all criteria for selection that are met by the Kurds in Turkey.

Coptic Christians in Egypt

The relationship between the Egyptian state and the Coptic Christian community is worthy of examination as a potential case for selection, as well. According to the CIA World Factbook, Egypt is a republic. A republic is “a representative democracy in which the people’s elected deputies (representatives), not the people themselves, vote on legislation.”¹⁵⁶ The population of Egypt is 86,895,099, of which 90 percent are Sunni Muslim, 9 percent are Coptic Christian, and 1 percent is Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Maronite, Orthodox, and Anglican.¹⁵⁷

Coptic Christians are a religious minority. They are not a transnational group and mostly live in Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt, but have had a historically significant presence in the Delta, Sohag, Minya, Assyut, and Cairo. Similar to the Druze, the Copts view themselves as a minority group and do not think in terms of wanting their own state.¹⁵⁸ Copts are Egyptian citizens, while at the same time they are categorized as a “dhimmi,” or a non-

¹⁵⁶ “Library.” *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*.

¹⁵⁷ “Egypt.” *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Ben-Dor.

Muslim group.¹⁵⁹ When Arabs invaded Egypt in the seventh century C.E., Christianity was the majority religion, and almost all of the people spoke the Coptic language. However, in 706, Arabic became the official language of the regime, and in the 12th century, Pope Gabriel declared that Arabic should become the vernacular in sermons and in everyday speech of the Copts.¹⁶⁰ The Coptic language only remained a spoken language in some parts of Upper Egypt until the early 17th century.¹⁶¹

Egypt has been unable to provide full socio-political inclusion to Copts in the modern era, and the degree to which the Copts have been included/excluded in the state has depended on the broader domestic/foreign policy priorities of the regime in power. Under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Coptic candidates were barred from participation in the electoral districts, and only one Coptic minister was included in the government.¹⁶² The Copts were legally equal citizens in Egypt, but they did not retain the same rights as Muslim citizens. As the state under President Anwar Sadat developed a Muslim identity, the Copts therefore remained excluded from the Egyptian state. The Copts were included in President Hosni Mubarak's Egypt in the period from 1981 to the early 21st century. In the 1990s, he implemented literacy and media initiatives in an effort to unite all Egyptians, and he also established the Coptic Christmas as a national holiday in 2002.¹⁶³

Since the fall of President Mubarak and the January 25, 2011 revolution, there has been an increase in discrimination, persecution, and violence against the Coptic Christians. The inclusion of the Copts in the Egyptian state has been threatened since President Muhammad

¹⁵⁹ Asef Bayat. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. California: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 189.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Mario Apostolov. *Religious Minorities, Nation States, and Security: Five Case from the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean*. Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2001, p. 44.

¹⁶² Sohirin Mohammad Solihin. *Copts and Muslims in Egypt: A Study on Harmony and Hostility*. United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation, 1991, p. 57.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 70.

Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood came to power. Under President Morsi, the Copts continued to feel excluded from the Egyptian state as their existence in Egypt was at stake and their specific rights were completely omitted from the constitution. They continued to be constant targets of violence by Muslims, and were increasingly attacked by state-authorized police.¹⁶⁴

The inclusion of the Copts in the Egyptian state has continued to deteriorate since the fall of Morsi in July 2013. According to the July 2013 Egyptian constitution, Islam is the official state religion, and the primary source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia).¹⁶⁵ However, the constitution also notes, “Citizens are equal before the law and they are equal in public rights and duties without discrimination on the basis of sex, origin, gender, language, religion or belief.”¹⁶⁶ This implies that although Islam and Islamic laws govern the state, non-Muslims should be included within the state to the same degree as Muslims. This, however, has not been the case as Coptic Christians continue to be subject to violence by the state military and police.

Although recently the Copts have faced persecution, which is not similar to the treatment of the Druze in Israel, the Copts in Egypt represent not only a current case for selection, but also a future hypothetical case for selection. As Egypt struggles to establish a democratic state, and come to terms with its minority communities, namely the Copts, the policy implications from the Druze should certainly be applied within the Egyptian state. Based on the type of state that Egypt is, the demographic proportion of the minority community, and the treatment of the state

¹⁶⁴ Yasmine Saleh and Paul Taylor. “Egypt’s Pope says Islamist rulers neglect Copts.” *Reuters*. 2012 April 26. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/26/us-egypt-pope-idUSBRE93P0B620130426>.

¹⁶⁵ Bassem Sabry. “First Look at Egypt’s Constitutional Declaration.” *Al Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*. 8 July 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/egyptian-constitutional-declaration-post-morsi-transition.html>.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

towards the minority group throughout history, this case is selected for its similarity and applicability of policies from the Druze in Israel.

Minorities in a Post-Assad Syrian State

As the Syrian Civil War ensues and the political situation in Syria continues to unfold, it is likely that the future government post-Assad, (whomever that might be), will have to come to terms with its various minority communities. A hypothetical post-Assad Syrian state must meet several different criteria in order for the policies of the state of Israel towards the Druze community to be applicable. Certain assumptions regarding this hypothetical scenario, which involves Syria (and its various minority groups), are made in order to meet the minimum criteria as set forth for case selection. In a post-Assad Syrian state, the territorial disposition of modern day Syria must remain largely as it is. The state should consist of several different minority groups, including a relatively large Alawite population, and a majority that will be politically franchised. There must be a recognized national government in the state, and the government has to ensure that all groups uphold the legitimacy of the government. A government in this situation might be weak; however, it should not be fighting a persistent insurgency able to challenge the central government's legitimacy and credibility. This hypothetical government should seek to have a different relationship with its citizens than what the current government has, and it should include some form of freely elected officials or democracy. The state should also strive to treat all its citizens equally, and not display overtly belligerent policies towards its minority groups. The government should not have policies that require sect-based proportional representation, such as in Lebanon, but rather implement policies that seek to detach political participation from ethno-sectarian entitlement. These basic criteria outline the minimum standards that should be met for Syria to adopt policies from the case of the Druze in Israel. The

assessment of policy strengths and oversights of the state of Israel towards the Druze thus offers future policy implications for the government of Syria.

Policy Recommendations for MENA Countries

The case study of the relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community can offer policy lessons for certain states in the MENA region and their respective minority groups. Basic criteria for rendering a MENA state-minority relevant for applying aspects of the Israel-Druze relationship include the type of state (monarchy, parliamentary republic, constitutional republic, and democracy), type of minority (ethnic or ethno-linguistic, religious, ethno-religious, or quasi-ethnic), demography, geography, and ideology of the state towards the minority group. Lessons learned from the inclusion of the Druze community in the military and governance sectors by the state of Israel should be considered when examining the future of minority populations in the MENA region, including Turkey's policies towards the Kurdish minority, Egypt's policies towards the Coptic Christian minority, and the hypothetical state of Syria after the Assad regime. While both the cases of the Kurds in Turkey and the Coptic Christians in Egypt are adequately similar to the Druze in Israel, there is one major determining factor for the assessment of the case of the Druze in Israel as applicable to other minority groups. The Druze community in Israel *thinks* like a minority and does not want a state of its own.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, the Coptic Christians think of themselves as a minority group and do not want a state of their own. The Kurds, by contrast, think in terms of a nation, and historically they have aggressively lobbied for a state of their own. Despite this, however, recent negotiations between both the Turkish state and the Kurds have been underway and are promising in terms of reconciliation. Turkey should implement similar policies to those that the state of Israel has

¹⁶⁷ Ben Dor.

implemented towards the Druze. The Kurdish minority could then be more included in the Turkish state, despite the Kurds' longtime desire for statehood.

Other states in the MENA region should look at the policies that the state of Israel has enacted towards the Druze community in the military and governance sectors as an example. This is not to say that all states should require military service of their citizens. However, what can be learned from the policies that the state of Israel has implemented to include the Druze into the IDF is that some type of equalizing force should be created by the state to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens. States could require all citizens to participate in a type of national or civil service that ultimately benefits the state. The state should also implement policies to ensure that there is equality of all its citizens during this service and that there is no discrimination by the majority population against minority groups. This national service would not only serve the state, but would also offer material benefits, such as healthcare, compensation, and education, to the participating individuals. This could also include post-service preferential hiring for employees. By doing this, states could develop a sector of society where all their citizens, regardless of different religious and/or ethnicities, are treated the same. This could ultimately produce greater societal awareness writ large.

In addition, other states in the region should implement policies to benefit its minority population, such as policies similar to Prime Minister Rabin's 1994-1999 five-year plan. This type of initiative could ensure that the minority group is awarded the same rights and benefits as the majority population. Furthermore, states should work to ensure that both government officials, as well as the rest of society, are educated about the culture, history, and religion of the aforementioned minority groups. By including an education curriculum about minority populations in state schools and at state organizations, the state can play a role in guaranteeing

that society is largely knowledgeable about minority groups, thereby propagating greater inclusion of the minority into the state. This would ensure that the government and majority population is also included in the society of the minority group, and not just that the minority group is included in the majority society.

IX. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This paper began with the primary question of whether the policies enacted by the state of Israel towards the Druze community have implications for the inclusion of other minorities in the Middle East and North Africa. In order to assess this question, we analyzed the military and governance sectors in Israeli society to determine the extent to which the Druze community is included in these two areas. An analysis of the role and treatment of the Druze in the Israeli military indicates that the inclusion of the Druze into the IDF is the most effective policy that the state of Israel has enacted to benefit a minority group. Druze are included in the IDF and receive the same treatment and rights as other Israelis while serving in the military. They promote to high ranks (field grade level) within the IDF, based on their merit and qualifications, and not their religion or ethnicity. Moreover, Druze feel as equally included in the IDF as their Israeli Jewish counterparts. Druze can run for political office and are represented in different political parties. Furthermore, government officials advocate on behalf of issues of the Druze community, and policies are implemented to address these concerns, although not always on a consistent basis. This research ultimately sheds light on the state of Israel's inclusionary policies towards the Druze community within these two state sectors, and whether or not these policies are applicable to other MENA countries with minority populations, such as the Kurds in Turkey, the Coptic Christians in Egypt, and minorities in a hypothetical post-Assad Syrian state.

Future research about the inclusion of minority communities in the MENA region should examine the motives behind the state's inclusionary policies. Such an analysis would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the state's inclusionary policies. It would also indicate how the state's policies towards the minority group would improve or deteriorate in future years.

In addition, further research should assess the minority population's inclusion into all state sectors, not just the military and governance sectors. This project did not allow for ample time to interview individuals in other sectors of Israeli society, such as the business and education sectors. However, such discussions would benefit this type of research to determine the extent to which the Druze are included and represented in these sectors, and whether the Druze face discrimination. In addition, while it was outside the scope of this project to analyze the inclusion of the Druze in the Golan Heights, such an analysis would have most probably resulted in very different conclusions for the level of overall Druze inclusion in Israeli society.

Furthermore, additional research might indicate how Israeli treatment towards other minority groups, such as Muslims, and Christians, is different from that of the Druze. It would be advantageous to examine more closely possible implications of Druze inclusion as it pertains to other Israeli minorities. While the Druze are predominantly included within the IDF and governance sectors, it is valuable to critically evaluate other minorities for their level of inclusion within these state-sectors, as well. Inclusionary policies derived from the case of the Druze in Israel should not be exclusively applied to the Druze, but to all minorities within Israel.

Finally, it would be beneficial to analyze other minority groups in the MENA region, similar to the research conducted with the Druze in Israel. Questions about other minorities in the MENA region could provide an assessment of minority groups' level of inclusion within

their respective societies, and whether or not they are in fact similar to the case of the Druze in Israel. It is this paper's intention that these policy suggestions will ultimately provide the initial steps to improve state-minority relations in the Middle East and North Africa.

X. APPENDICES

*Appendix A: Map of Israel with Pre-1967 Borders*¹⁶⁸



¹⁶⁸ "Israel." U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/ci/is/index.htm>.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

General

- What are the specific strengths and weaknesses of the policies that the state of Israel has enacted towards the Druze community?
- Do you think the standard of living is the same for the Druze as compared with other groups in Israel?
- What do you consider to be the most important factor for inclusion of any minority in a society?
- Do Druze experience any difficulties balancing traditional Druze traditions with modern Israeli society?
- Can the example of the relationship between the state of Israel and the Druze community be applied to other state-minority relationships in the region? Can we learn something from the Israel-Druze case study?
- Where do you see the Druze in Israel twenty years from now?

Israel Defense Forces

- How are the Druze represented in the military? Is their service mandatory or voluntary?
- What role do the Druze have in the IDF? Has it always been the way it is today, or has their role changed over time? Can the Druze promote to higher ranks?
- Is there any difference between Israeli-Jewish soldiers and Israeli-Druze soldiers?
- Do Druze face discrimination, harassment, or assault from other Israeli soldiers due to their different religion or ethnicity?
- Are there units of the IDF that are exclusively Druze units, or are Druze soldiers included in units with other Israeli soldiers?
- Do non-Druze soldiers trust Druze soldiers?

Government

- Does the Druze community feel that it has adequate representation in the Knesset?
- How easy or difficult has it been for Druze to enter politics? Has there been discrimination towards them, either in rhetoric or in policy?

- Do the Druze affect policy-making bodies and governance in Israel?
- Does the Druze community feel that their issues are addressed at the national and local levels?

Appendix C: Interviewees

Knesset Member Hamad Amar, Likud Yisrael Beiteinu Party

Dr. Shimon Avivi, Druze Scholar

Dr. Gabriel Ben-Dor, Political Science Professor and Director of National Security Studies Center, University of Haifa

Dr. Salim Brake, University of Haifa

Abe Lapson, Reserve Soldier, Israel Defense Forces

Shawki, Druze Taxi Driver

Moran Stern, Lecturer, Georgetown University

Retired Major Raffa Abu Tareef, Israel Defense Forces

Abu Tareef Family

Dr. Rami Zeedan, Open University of Israel

Appendix D: Cases of Religious and Ethnic Minorities in the MENA¹⁶⁹

	Type of State: Electoral Participatory Politics	Type of Minority: Ethnic, Religious	Demography: Small, <20%	Geography: Regionally Concentrated	Baseline of Positive Citizen Rights	Selection for Policy Applicability
Druze in Israel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Berbers in Morocco		✓		✓	✓	
Shi'i in Saudi Arabia		✓	✓	✓		
Bahá'í in Iran		✓	✓	✓		
Maronite Christians in Lebanon	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Kurds in Turkey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coptic Christians in Egypt	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minorities in a Post-Assad Syria Scenario	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

¹⁶⁹ All data is taken from the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>) for each individual country.

*Appendix E: Minority Cases Not Selected*¹⁷⁰

	Type of State	Type of Minority	Demography	Geography	Legitimizing Ideology of State towards Minority
Berbers in Morocco	Constitutional monarchy	Ethnic	40%	Atlas Mountain area, Fez	Amazigh became official language in 2011
Shi'i in Saudi Arabia	Monarchy	Religious	10-15%	Eastern province and in Medina	Discrimination (education, judicial system, government employment)
Bahá'í in Iran	Islamic republic	Religious	0.5%	North and Northwest	Arrests, imprisonment, destruction of property, torture, execution
Maronite Christians in Lebanon	Republic	Religious	21%	North of Beirut, Central Coastal	No sect/minority with unilateral dominance

¹⁷⁰ *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook.*

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