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Israel's Future



Blind to future implications Photo: AFP

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The day after tomorrow

Op-ed: Secular Zionists losing control of society by being blind to future implications of well-intentioned steps

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Let's say the "suckers" generate "historic change" and, starting next year, every haredi will be drafted into the army on his 18th birthday. What will Israeli society look like the day after we witness the heart-warming scenes of yeshiva students clutching a Talmud and a submachine gun?

The [IDF](#) will have to form many special battalions for Haredim. In addition to the existing haredi battalion "Netzah (Eternity) Judah," there will be "Netzah Benjamin" and "Netzah Samaria" and "Netzah the Separation Wall." These battalions will have more than one supreme commander.

In the expected chaos of the next war, the Palestinians will find themselves under the control of settlers, a Border Patrol unit comprised of minorities and the deprived, and haredim from the Netzah command. Perhaps everything will turn out okay and perhaps we should already invite international forces to protect the Palestinian population and save us from ourselves.

IDF commanders will have to engage in rebuilding the IDF as a collection of militias that practice strict gender separation. The integration of haredim in other IDF units is liable to cause some backtracking from the revolution the IDF has undergone in the egalitarian placement of women in military service.

Incidentally, do "the people" really want complete equality? The inequality in military service among women is much more severe than among the men. There is no mention of rectifying this inequality in the demands of the "suckers." Aren't the "suckers" also a bit chauvinistic?

There is concern that the complications will ultimately result in the cancellation of mandatory service, a risk we cannot permit ourselves. The modern strength of the IDF lies in a rare group of talented people who make up the elite IDF units that truly engage in Israel's security and not in beating up rock throwers. If these changes occur, it is not at all certain whether this group would volunteer to work in the IDF.

It is true that military service means the loss of three years of income for most of the conscripts. The solution: Pay conscripts (and not yeshiva students) a salary for their period of service. There is no reason that a young person who serves for three years should not emerge from his service with 150,000 shekels in his bank account.

And besides, for many of those who serve, military service is not only a burden. Military service provides them an entry into the world of business, connections and government. It is no coincidence that many Israeli high-tech firms were built on the connections and know-how acquired during military service. It is also no coincidence that the elite Sayeret Matkal unit has eight members of Knesset, a larger representation than that of all of Ashkenazi haredi Jewry.

The haredim deserve reproach for enjoying public services (such as health and security) without sufficiently contributing to the economy. But there are other ways to address this injustice. Negative income tax, which encourages people to work at low pay levels, could be expanded. There is logic in dramatically increasing VAT (which incidentally is a neutral tax and not a regressive one as the social advocates tend to argue) together with a significant reduction in income tax for the middle classes. This would ensure that even those who choose to be poor would nonetheless bear the

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economic burden they impose upon the public.

The secular Zionist public is gradually losing control of Israeli society. It is doing this in a series of measures that all derive from good intentions, positive values and a blindness regarding the day after tomorrow. Thus, in 1967 we united around the spirit of Rabbi Goren and paved the way for an unsolvable situation in the territories. During the years of massive immigration, we were so liberal that we encouraged the immigration of hundreds of thousands of people whose only Jewish connection is a genetic shard. And thus we changed the demographic composition of the Jewish people forever.

In recent decades, we longed to improve our standard of living and we imported tens of thousands of migrant workers, most of whom will remain here forever. A power-intoxicated street now demands the conscription of yeshiva students. This is liable to turn out to be another irresponsible measure of abandonment.

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