



Conflict Alongside Unity – IDF's 'Citizens-Soldiers' in "Sword of Iron" War

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Introduction

The "Swords of Iron" War, Israel's response to Hamas invasion on October 7 2023, differs significantly from all the other wars Israeli society has had to deal with in recent decades - this is a military conflict that broke out following a severe incident of failure of Israel's military defenses occurred in the southwestern region of the country. This resulted in hundreds of the local residents being slaughtered plus the slaughter of whoever else happened to be in the region on that day. Another feature that sets this war apart from all others is the multiple arenas in which it is taking place: in the Gaza Strip against the Hamas terrorist organization, on the northern border against the Hezbollah organization, an Iranian proxy, on the Golan Heights against Shiite militias, in Judea and Samaria against Palestinian terrorism, and in the Red Sea arena against the Houthis in Yemen.

At that day Israel's military reservists were called up in numbers unparalleled in the past 50 years: The Israeli government declared mobilization of over 300 thousand reservists, who have been taking part in the fighting in all arenas as part of Operation "Swords of Iron", which is comprised primarily of a massive ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip. This combination of the number of reservists, the multiple arenas, the operational failure at the outbreak of this war, its duration, and the intensity of the fighting all come together to pose a significant challenge in everything that concerns the reserve military service operation which, in the past had been susceptible to the aspects of prolonged campaigns, quality of the battle gear, and the accomplishments on the battlefield.

The scope and reach of the mobilization of the reservists and their full-scale involvement in the fighting are proof that the IDF is totally dependent on the resolve of the reservists and their readiness to continue fighting for lengthy periods, both in the war itself and in holding the ongoing security lines that is likely to be needed once this war has ended. This issue also has economic and social implications that also influence the willingness to continue serving in the reserves.

In the past decade the motivation to serve in the IDF reserves has been an issue of debate, which has intensified since the beginning of 2023 and lasted the whole year, while social unrest broke out in Israeli society, in which thousands of reservists took part. Some even

threatened to discontinue their voluntary service due to a political-legal conflict and draft legislation in the Knesset - the Israeli parliament, which has been controversial due to the social impacts in terms of legal backing of the service men and women, and the legitimacy of military action in regions in dispute in the international arena.

The current study attempts to examine the impacts the war that broke out on October 7 has had on the reserve military servicemen and women, on the way they perceive the military conflict, and on their willingness to serve in view of long-term implications.

Main Research Question:

To what extent are the reserve military servicemen prepared to continue serving in the long term within the "Swords of Iron" conflict?

Secondary Questions:

1. To what extent are the reservists confident in achieving the goals of the war, and what influences this confidence?
2. Is there variability in assessing the battlefield achievements between the various arenas, particularly the northern and southern arenas?
3. What factors have been influencing the morale of the units in the current war?
4. What kind of impact do the components of this three-way commitment have: the unit, the family and the economic situation - on the motivation to continue serving in the reserves in the current war?

An in-depth examination of the research question may assist in understanding the point of view of Israeli society, which has been a polarized society in a political context in recent years, a significant part of which is the question of military service in the IDF as the "citizen-soldier" military, and especially the reserve system, which constitutes its main strength. An attitude examination of the reservists who were drafted on an unprecedented scale may reveal the nature of the conflict in Israeli society, whether it is cultural, economic, or political, and moreover, whether the inscription in Israeli society influences their enlistment in the war for survival as the current campaign ("Swords of Iron") is perceived by the Israeli public.

The main hypothesis is that the existential threat situation that Israel found itself in in October 2023 has manifested itself in the IDF's reserve system in all its intensity – great determination and willingness to enlist, which stem mainly from the survival and cultural elements that have characterized Israeli society, with an emphasis on Jewishness for many generations. However, despite the fact that this is an extreme situation of threat, the basic conflictual situation that Israeli society entered before the war has not changed substantially – alongside the unity of mission that characterizes the reservists, the political debate is still a significant point of contention, stemming from conceptual gaps, mainly in political and socio-economic contexts.

The study stands to significantly contribute toward the motivation for reserve military service in Israel at present, while there is an ongoing war that continually and directly threatens the Israeli home front, under circumstances of multiple arenas and threats, and including an amplifying media dimension, primarily the social media, which features unprecedented media traffic.

Reserve Military Service in Israel - trends in the past decade

The central pillar of the national resilience of the State of Israel is the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 has been a defensive mechanism, but no less a mechanism of social resilience. At the center of the idea of the IDF structure is the reserve system, which is the main component in the view of the IDF as the "People's Army" [1]. The reserve army constitutes the main strength of the IDF, and this means that the central defense apparatus of the State of Israel is a mechanism that is based on civilians according to the concept of "citizen-soldier".

Reserve Military Service in the IDF has been undergoing considerable changes since 2006 with the end of the second Lebanon war with Hezbollah, which ended with the reservist's bitterly criticizing issues like their fitness for war, stressing the reduced training periods, the quality of their weapons and equipment they had at their disposal in this war [2].

Following the Second Lebanon war, the IDF carried out a multi-year reform program. Huge sums were invested in fitness of the military reserve force for war. During this period the finding showed that the level of motivation to serve in the reserves increased markedly, as did the degree of confidence the reservists had in their commanders and their units [3]. The degree of utilization of reserve military service was also cut back, to the extent that in subsequent years there was once again criticism of the level of readiness of the reserve military force for war [4].

Besides a substantial reform in the IDF's handling of the reservists, which included focusing their service on training and reducing their use for routine security, the counter-criticism was about the impacts of the readiness level for a multiple-arena combat scenario, which began emerging over time [5].

This scenario had Iran at its core, being suspected of developing nuclear weapons, and who had installed terrorist outposts in the form of Jihadist militias in the countries bordering with Israel [6]. As early as 2019, some believed that the IDF, and in particular the reserve force, were not prepared for such a scenario and that should it materialize, it would lead to a catastrophic situation in which the IDF forces will be unable to cope with the threats [7].

This process was exacerbated by two years during which Israeli society dealt with the Covid pandemic. Call-ups for reserve military service were drastically cut back, in particular the training cycles that had been planned for 2020 to 2022. Concurrent with this, Israeli society found itself in a political conflict that deteriorated into six rounds of elections within three years and social unrest, some of which dealt with the disparities in the distribution of the reserve military service load within Israeli society [8].

The year 2023 began with the swearing in of a government consisting of conservative, nationalist and religious parties. Roughly

half of the members of that government had never done any military service in the IDF. This issue, coupled with the continuation of the political conflict and controversial legislative proceedings, inflamed the social unrest. At its height, reservists threatened to cancel their volunteerism for service, some even announced they would no longer serve in future.

On October 7 Israel endured a terrorist onslaught by the Hamas terrorist organization, in which the IDF within the southern command failed to prevent a catastrophic conquest of settlements, murder of civilians, and the kidnapping of over 200 people into the Gaza Strip, where they were, and most are still being held as captives, by the terrorist organization. Several weeks after this attack, the IDF embarked on Operation "Swords of Iron", which involved mobilization of hundreds of thousands of reservists to fight on all fronts. This is an event unprecedented scope- It led to hundreds of thousands of Israeli civilians having to leave their homes, while the home front was under daily threat of missiles and rockets being fired against the home front.

The reservists heeded the call for mobilization issued by the Israeli government in numbers that exceeded expectations - many arrived at their units without having been called up at all, some had already passed exemption age. At the start of Operation "Swords of Iron" the Israel's Minister of Defense stated that this was going to be a battle that would last for a year and that this would mean continuity of the service on the part of the reservists over many months– a dramatic change after the last decade which was characterized by a very limited reserve service (Israel Ethos).

In view of the events related to the IDF's reserve force over the past decade, and with emphasis on the social conflict and the need for mass mobilization, the question arises - to what extent are the reserve military servicemen committed to the protracted war, and in this context - what are the implications of the social conflicts of the past decade on the motivation of the reservists in all matters pertaining to long-term service?

Research Methodology

The current research data is based on a semi-structured Internet questionnaire- 742 participants responded, 77% of them are reservists that were recruited for Operation "Swords of Iron" in all arenas. The participants came from over 20 different IDF units. The questionnaire was distributed via social media one month into the war, where the aggregation of the answers was done on GOOGLE FORMS. Further to the data collection, quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis were done out of semi-structured questions.

The qualitative part of the study is necessary in order to understand the positions of the reservists in their own words. As mentioned, the "Sword of Iron" war is a unique event in Israeli culture, and in many respects also on a global scale. The incident has profound implications, many of them emotional, in light of national humiliation and a large number of casualties. Hence, words are of great importance in completing the research picture.

This method enabled quick reaching a broad sample size, diverse and devoid of geographic constraints. The research subjects were asked to leave personal contact information to enable further investigation in the event the research would continue on - over 35% left personal details.

This is indicative of a high level of reliability and willingness on the part of the reservists to be part of a research process. It is also a participatory platform enabling them to make their voices heard through means which are informal and, most importantly, extra-military.

Participants characteristics:

Average age: 32, average time in the reserves - 7 years

Ranks: 65% soldiers, 24% officers, 11% others.

Role in the reserves: 63% combat soldiers, 22% logistic soldiers, 11% home front, 4% others.

Residential region: 30% center, 39% close periphery, 23% remote periphery, 85 frontier communities.

Occupation in civilian life: 69% salaried employees, 15% self-employed, 13% students, 3% unemployed/other.

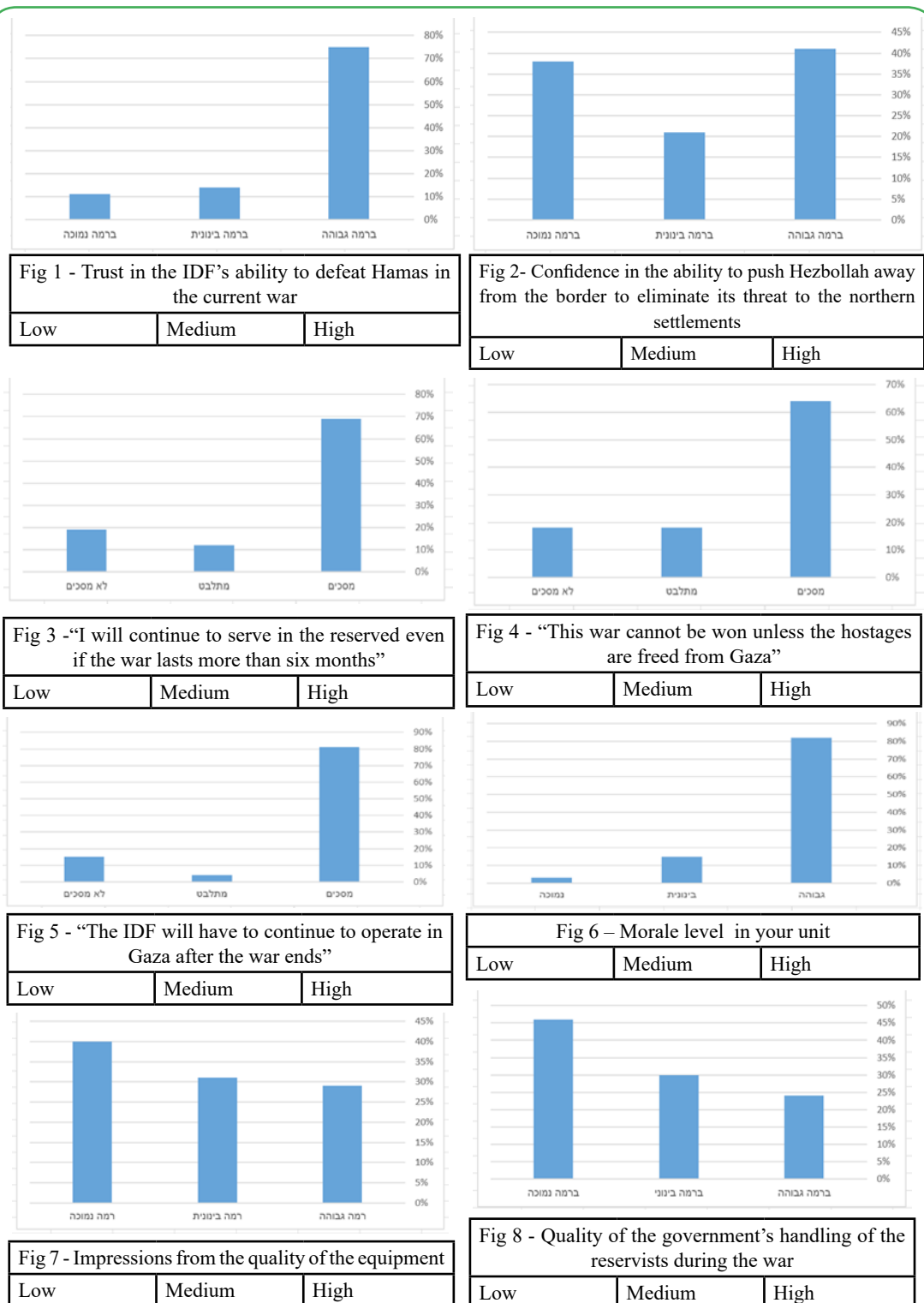
Research limitations:

The research did not study two groups within Israeli society: the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) group and the Arabic group. It is therefore not possible to draw conclusions regarding these groups. It is worth noting that in the past, the Arab society has taken clear anti-war positions [9]. Any war in Israel places Arab society in a position of clear, even two-fold remote periphery state of mind. Conversely, Haredi society in times of war have historically exhibited a reverse trend of spiritual support for the war effort, which is expressed in substantial social volunteerism.

Albeit these two groups being absent from this research, the effects between them in the context of impacts of the war conceivably cancel each other out due to the said opposed perceptions, however their relative size, being over 30% of the population of Israel, might cause a certain bias in research within contexts of social impacts. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that they make up less than 0.5% of the IDF personal, and even less than that in the reserves. Therefore, in all matters related to reserve military service, there is no bias due to under-polling of these groups.

Descriptive Statistics:

Figures 1-8 describe IDF reservist's attitudes toward operation "Sword of Iron": readiness, confidence to achieve victory in fronts, and willingness to continue service for the long run:



Research Variables:

The variables examined in the study have been presented in various studies in the past as significant in the context of their impact on various aspects of reserve service in the IDF [10]. In the present study, two dependent variables will be examined, which provide the context for the purpose of the study: the morale of the reservists and the position in the context of the State of Israel's government assistance to the reservists who were drafted for the war.

In order to examine these variables, three groups of independent variables were determined: the socio-economic status group, which includes area of residence, occupation, and age; The group of variables related to the type of reserve service: position, rank, and seniority; and the group of variables dealing with the reserve experience: the level of equipment, confidence in the ability to achieve the operational mission, and the expectation of future service.

These groups of variables have also helped in past studies of reserve service in Israel, but this is the first time that their impact has been examined in times of war, which is unique in its duration, as well as in the intensity of the security threat reflected in it – an existential threat that the State of Israel has not yet experienced [11].

GEO – place of residence - center-periphery-frontier – ordinal (Center=5, Frontier=1)

AGE – Serviceman's age - numeric

DUT-POS – Role in the reserves - home front, non-combatant, soldier- ordinal

EXP – Reserve experience - in year – numeric

CIV-DT – Occupation in civilian life - student, salaried employee, self-employed - Nom

OF_NC – Officer/NCO - binary

HMS – Attitude in the context of defeating Hamas - ordinal, scale of 1-5 (no military success for the IDF=1, full military success for the IDF=5)

HIZB – Attitude in the context of a change in the security situation

EXT_SVC – Position regarding continued extension of reserve service period by another 6 months - ordinal, scale of 1-5

MORAL – Unit morale - ordinal, scale of 1-5

POL_CHNG – The need for change in the political system - ordinal, scale of 1-5

EQUIP – assessment of the quality of the unit's combat equipment – ordinal, scale of 1-5

GO_AID – attitude in the context of the quality of the assistance provided to the reservists by the government – ordinal, scale of 1-5

		GEO	AGE	DUT_POS	EXP	CIV_DT	OF_NC	HMS	HIZB	EXT_SVC	POL_CHNG	MORAL	EQUIP	GOV_AID
GEO	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.03	-.12	-.06	.03	.09	-.08	-.05	-.11	.14	-.13	-.06	-.16
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.368	.001	.037	.403	.010	.033	.139	.003	.000	.001	.100	.000
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
AGE	Pearson Correlation	.03	1.00	.10	-.16	-.06	-.04	.07	.02	-.05	.01	.02	-.02	.03
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.368		.006	.000	.081	.336	.062	.647	.190	.801	.621	.530	.441
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
DUT_POS	Pearson Correlation	-.12	.10	1.00	-.01	.04	-.23	.09	.04	.02	-.05	.02	-.10	.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.006		.733	.239	.000	.011	.265	.633	.216	.592	.006	.975
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
EXP	Pearson Correlation	-.08	-.16	-.01	1.00	.25	.13	-.02	.03	.11	-.02	.14	.18	.06
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.000	.733		.000	.000	.536	.358	.004	.507	.000	.000	.081
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
CIV_DT	Pearson Correlation	.03	-.06	.04	.25	1.00	.11	.08	.06	.09	.02	.08	.05	.02
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.403	.081	.239	.000		.004	.037	.087	.011	.679	.023	.187	.611
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
OF_NC	Pearson Correlation	.09	-.04	-.23	.13	.11	1.00	-.11	-.10	.01	.09	-.01	.13	-.04
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.336	.000	.000	.004		.003	.005	.852	.014	.798	.000	.289
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
HMS	Pearson Correlation	-.08	.07	.09	-.02	.08	-.11	1.00	.63	.17	-.22	.21	.10	.27
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.062	.011	.536	.037	.003		.000	.000	.000	.000	.005	.000
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
HIZB	Pearson Correlation	-.05	.02	.04	.03	.06	-.10	.63	1.00	.20	-.15	.24	.11	.26
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.139	.647	.265	.358	.087	.005	.000		.000	.000	.000	.002	.000
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
EXT_SVC	Pearson Correlation	-.11	-.05	.02	.11	.09	.01	.17	.20	1.00	-.13	.32	.08	.20
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.190	.633	.004	.011	.852	.000	.000		.000	.000	.022	.000
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
POL_CHNG	Pearson Correlation	.14	.01	-.05	-.02	.02	.09	-.22	-.15	-.13	1.00	-.17	-.14	-.45
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.801	.216	.507	.679	.014	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742
MORAL	Pearson Correlation	-.13	.02	.02	.14	.08	-.01	.21	.24	.32	-.17	1.00	.22	.26
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.621	.592	.000	.023	.798	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742	742

Table 1 – Correlations between variables

Correlations with significant weight:

- Region of residence: there is a significant connection between residents of the frontier periphery and the need for government-financial assistance.
- Role of the reserves: combat soldiers are greater believers in the ability to deal with Hezbollah compared with the rest. Also, combat soldiers see a significant connection between the quality of their equipment and the ability to overpower Hezbollah.
- There is a positive connection between seniority (number of years in reserve service) and the trust in the ability to cope with Hezbollah and Hamas.
- Combat equipment quality: the officers are more acutely sensitive to this issue than the NCO's.
- Significant connection between the trust in the ability to achieve decisive victory on the north and south arenas (success in one arena has implications on the trust in success in another arena).
- Motivation to continue serving: connected with government assistance for the reservists.

- Political tensions: impact trust and combat determination among the reservists.
- Unit morale: is affected by the government's support for the reservists and by the quality of the combat equipment.

Multi-variable regression analysis:

The presented regression models are based on variables that have been examined in the past as having the most influence on perceptions and attitudes in the context of reservists in Israel, especially in the context of the commitment dilemma, between the family unit, individual utility, utilitarianism, political position, as well as socio-economic status related to the area of residence, whether central or peripheral, including peripheral areas [12].

The current study, which examines the motivation of reservists to serve in the event of an exceptional security event by any scale, enables an understanding of the impact of variables and the determination of the intensity of the impact in light of the fact that Israel has not experienced a crisis of the magnitude of the events of October 2023, at least in the past 50 years.

Model Summary (MORAL)					
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.33	.11	.10	.78		
ANOVA(MORAL)					
	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	56.44	6	9.41	15.27	.000
Residual	452.86	735	.62		
Total	509.30	741			
Coefficients (MORAL)					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig.
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.53	.17	.00	20.30	.000
GEO	-.06	.03	-.07	-2.02	.044
DUT_POS	.03	.04	.02	.62	.533
EXP	.01	.00	.09	2.60	.009
OF_NC	-.05	.07	-.02	-.64	.523
EQUIP	.11	.03	.16	4.36	.000
GOV_AID	.14	.03	.20	5.61	.000

Table 2 – dependent variable – Unit moral

The regression model examines the most highly-influential variables that affect unit morale from the reservist's perspective, and their readiness to continue and serve over prolonged period. The model was found to be highly-significant with special emphasis on several aspects:

1. Higher, unconditional motivation to continue serving in the current war (significant intercept and at a level of 3.5 out of 5).
2. Significant influences: region of residence, number of years as a reservist, combat equipment quality, government assistance.
3. Grading of the affecting variables (in descending order): government assistance, equipment quality, number of years as a reservist, region of residence.

Occupation	Readiness to serve (mean)	Morale (mean)	Satisfaction with government assistance (mean)
Students	4.00	4.03	2.49
Salaried employees	4.36	4.27	2.61
Self-employed	4.20	4.30	2.61

Table 3- Occupational Effects Rating of averages among variables (maximum value: 5)

These data indicate low variance between the various sectors: morale and readiness to serve are at high levels, while satisfaction with the assistance these reservists receive from the government is medium.

Multiple-variable regression in the context of satisfaction with government assistance to reservists:

Model Summary (GOV_AID)					
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.49	.24	.23	1.04		
ANOVA(GOV_AID)					
	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression Residual Total	250.94	6	41.82	38.78	.000
	792.77	735	1.08		
	1043.72	741			
Coefficients (GOV_AID)					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig.
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.42	2.25	.00	.19	.851
GEO	-.11	.04	-.10	-2.95	.003
DUT_POS	.00	.00	.04	1.31	.190
EXP	-.03	.05	-.02	-.54	.592
OF_NC	.06	.09	.02	.72	.473
EQUIP	-.31	.02	-.41	-12.56	.000
GOV_AID	.17	.03	.17	5.19	.000

Table 4 – dependent variable – Governmental aid

The significance level of the regression model is very high. The most interesting finding here is the opinion regarding political change (Frontier civilians are against it). It is worth pointing out that the place of residence variable is significant, and it is negative in its effect. In other words, the closer the subject lives to the center of the country, the lower the satisfaction with the financial aid to the reservists. This is an interesting finding because the main criticism on the current government in Israel is the abandonment of security in the periphery and on the borders.

It is important to emphasize that an analysis of the two models before us presents a particularly intriguing picture of the main effects of reserve service in the "Iron Sword" war – while it is possible to identify a high level of motivation to continue serving in this war for many months, the level of motivation is still clearly related to socioeconomic and political variables. This aspect may illustrate that

in addition to the uniformity regarding the level of the security threat and the operational consequences expressed in the use of military force over time, the variables that most affect the motivation of reservists are political and socio-economic – this is an interesting phenomenon in itself that presents social solidarity in the face of danger, albeit with a limited scorpion.

Qualitative analysis – Main categories

The personal interviews were conducted by telephone, and in a semi-structured manner – the participants in the interviews were required to answer three questions dealing with the way they perceive the circumstances of the war and their understanding of the required operational achievement, but in the second part of the interview they were given the opportunity to freely present their position, both in the context of the war's achievements and in the context of the successes, difficulties and challenges on the agenda.

The statement	Statement frequency	Meaning
Destruction / subduing of Hamas	Very high	Expected achievement on the battlefield at the end of the current war
Gaza	Very high	Expectation of a dramatic change in the Gaza Strip: a change in consciousness, demilitarization, expulsion, destruction
Pushing Hezbollah away from the border	Medium	Required military achievement along the northern border
The hostages	Very high	release of the hostages is perceived to be a significant goal of this war
Unity / sense of affinity	High	Great pride in the people's unity
The government / politicians	Very high	Disappointment with the political discourse, sectarianism, infighting
IDF	Medium	General sense of pride mixed with a degree of disappointment with the opening of the battle and the readiness
Media	High	Excessive attention to the insignificant aspects of the war
Economic situation	Very high	Lively conversation regarding required financial assistance
Family	Low	The hardship due to separation from the family, concern over the family's resiliency
Business/Work	Medium	Sense of uncertainty and need for assistance
Equipment	Low	Shortages of basic equipment

Table 5 – Primary categorical analysis

Words absent from the conversation:

Left, right, Netanyahu, defeat, Intelligence Corps, Chief of Staff, Palestinian Authority.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that at the end of the second month of the war (when the data was collected), IDF's reservists' level of confidence in the ability to achieve the war's goals is high with emphasis on the southern front in Gaza - these findings are corroborated by a high level of the morale in the units themselves, and in the willingness to continue to serve in for a long time in the current war in order to achieve these goals. These findings might be due to three main aspects: clarity of the war's goals, identification with the goals of the war, and a sense of cumulative combat accomplishments [13].

The findings also indicate the influences of the political conversation before and during the war - there is significant variability in the context of the reservists' place of residence, and the significant difference between the center and the periphery.

Whereas residents of the center of the country indicate low levels of satisfaction, and also dependency on political aspects, the frontier and conflict area residents who are serving in the reserves are at higher levels of identification, motivation and trust in the ability to achieve a decisive outcome. The political standpoint, consistently with previous pre-war research, influence numerous parameters across the board, however in all matters concerning the overall view of the reservists, according to the subjects in this research, the willingness to continue in the service is high.

In all things concerning the "dual" dilemmas, such as the unit versus

the family or the occupational / financial aspect - it is evident that they are of lesser influence. The family aspect has almost no influence; however the financial aspect has considerable influence. Medium satisfaction with the financial assistance is evident with the majority of the serving reservists. Equipment indicates a medium level of preparedness of the units as far as the reservists can see. It is notably negative among the officers, who feel that their unit was less prepared than the NCO's. In previous wars the issue of equipment and readiness occupied a major part of the conversation during and after the war. However, in the current war, despite the sense of mediocrity, the quality of the equipment has only a minor effect on the sense of achievement and the trust in the ability to reach resolution.

Analysis of the free text supports the quantitative findings and puts them in clearer proportions - in this context it is worth mentioning that the degree of identification with the ability to defeat the Hamas and the imperative of returning the hostages who are held in Gaza are afforded intense conversation among the reservists, especially under the context of values-based, doable missions. The unity and cohesion aspects also emerge clearly and positively. However, the reservists criticize the political and media conversation, particularly in the context of dwelling on matters which are not conducive to the war effort. The totality of the findings shows that the level of motivation among the reserve military servicemen in Israel - to fight and defeat the terrorist threats - within Operation "Swords of Iron" is very high, and in principle is unconditional. The findings indicate that among the reservists the pre-war political conversation is virtually non-existent. This issue is supported by the fact that keywords related to Israeli politics are virtually non-existent in the answers given by the subjects - this finding might indicate that it is quite possible that the current war has an extremely powerful damping effect in the contexts of politics-based social polarization.

However, the place of residence continues to be a significant factor for the prevalent mood in certain dimensions between residents of the center of the country and residents of the periphery. This repeats itself in quite a few of the studies, and it corroborates a theory that has emerged in Israel in the past decade in view of the disparities between the places of residence. This theory [14] claims that in effect there are two societies in Israel existing side by side - the "first Israel", which consists primarily of residents of the center of the country. These typically belong to higher socio-economic percentiles and experience little friction with terrorist factors. The "second Israel", comprised mainly of residents of the periphery who are compelled to deal with financial issues and with direct threats of terrorism on daily basis. This might be the dividing line of polarization in Israeli society in the present era.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that it is possible to rely on the reserve forces in Israel for a prolonged period, primarily due to the clarity of goals set for the war and due to identification with them, including the ability to achieve them. These findings are extremely significant at this point in time where the war is extending far beyond the length of previous wars: it is clear that the reservists accept this and understand the situation, that they are willing to be part of the drive to achieve victory, and that they feel this effort is bearing fruit and is achievable with a high degree of probability.

The IDF and the Israeli government would do well to focus on several aspects:

1. Continue to emphasize combat achievements and their cumulative value.
2. Increase financial support for the reservists along with outreach and publicity of the increased support.

3. Retain the level of fitness and the logistics of maintaining the weaponry.
4. Create a more unifying atmosphere in the political conversation and curtail conversation about secondary aspects.

Yet, it is advisable that the issue of the "first Israel" and "second Israel" be placed on the research agenda - in the past social rifts in Israel were mainly due to national and ethno-cultural contexts. However, in this past decade it is quite possible that the fault line is along socio-economic lines. This issue requires further examination and should be followed by the question - is a national catastrophe like that of October 7 2023 a positive catalyst for unification of Israeli society?

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