The Druze and the Zionists in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Inter-Ethnic Alliance

Gunnhildur Eva Ólafsdóttir

Department of Political Science, Haverford College
Advisor: Professor Raslan Ibrahim
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Chapter I: Introduction

Puzzle & Research Question:

The Druze community is an Arab minority with populations inhabiting Israel/Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. They are distinct from other Arabs in the region due to their religion and culture, yet in Israel/Palestine, they participate in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) alongside Israelis. In 1956 the Druze Conscription Agreement was passed into law requiring all non-religious Druze males to participate in the IDF. However, the Druze fought alongside the Zionists long before 1956, and even before the establishment of the Israeli State in 1948. The Druze have a unique history in the region unlike the histories of other Arabs and the Zionists, and this unique history is an element that has had a major influence on the relations with the Zionists and other Arabs. The Druze are the only Arab minority in Israel/Palestine that are required to participate in the IDF. What is puzzling about this fact is that at first glance the Druze have far more in common with other Arabs than they do with Zionists in terms of their shared Arabic language and Arab ethnic origins. The goal of this thesis is to understand why the Druze have a generally good relationship with the Zionists and a bad relationship with other Arabs. In addition, this thesis will focus on the puzzle of why this Arab minority participates in the IDF by analyzing the Druze-Zionist/Israeli alliance that emerged before 1948 and has continued through the present.

Argument:

Druze identity and history caused Druze-Zionist cooperation before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, while economic pressures and state manipulation of the Druze community maintained the alliance after 1948 and through the present. These elements (identity,
history, economic pressures, and state manipulation) facilitated the Druze-Zionist alliance and directly lead to Druze conscription in the IDF beginning in 1956.

Structure of the Thesis:

Chapter two of this thesis begins with a section discussing the Druze identity. It will answer the question of who the Druze are, in addition to providing general information on the history and culture of the Druze who inhabit Israel/Palestine. Following this section there is a description of the Druze Conscription Agreement. Chapter three begins with a literature review that describes the most prominent sources used in the thesis, followed by a section dedicated to reviewing alliance formation theories by two of political sciences most well-known scholars: Stephen Walt and Alexander Wendt. Chapter four provides an analysis of the body of work presented in the thesis. The first section is an analysis of Walt and Wendt’s theories and how they apply to the Druze-Zionist alliance. The second section discusses identity and history as the driving forces behind pre-1948 cooperation between the Druze and the Zionists, while the third section identifies economic pressures and state manipulation as the factors responsible for the maintenance of the Druze-Zionist alliance. The final chapter of the thesis, chapter five, serves as the conclusion. The first section of this chapter is a summation of the argument and findings, and the second section provides a brief overview of the changing trends regarding Druze conscription the IDF and the anti-conscription movement. A complete list of references used for this thesis can be found on the final pages of the thesis.
Chapter II: The Druze

Who are the Druze?

The Druze people inhabit the states of Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. They are ethnically Arab but are otherwise distinct from all the other Arab communities in the Middle East because of their religion and history. While focusing on the area of Israel/Palestine, this section will answer the question: who are the Druze? The focus of this section and of the entire thesis will be the Druze in Israel/Palestine due to their unique position within the Israeli State and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole that sets them apart from the other Druze communities in the Middle East.

There are less than one million Druze in the world, of which approximately 130,000 reside in Israel. These 130,000 Druze account for less than two percent of the Israeli population and they reside in eighteen villages located in the north of Israel. Though they often live in villages alongside Palestinian citizens, they are considered a distinct nationality by the Israeli State. In the article “The Druze in Israel: Questions of Identity, Citizenship, and Patriotism” by Mordechai Nisan, the author states that the Druze are “close to the Jews in the domains of mythology and the military, yet close to the Arabs linguistically and culturally” (596). From this assertion, it is clear that the Druze identity overlaps in some ways with the Arab identity and the Israeli identity, yet the Druze do not fit entirely within either one.

The Druze population in Israel/Palestine is not only different from the Druze populations in Lebanon and Syria, it is also distinct from the Arab and Israeli populations within Israel/Palestine. The core elements of the Druze identity are: their history in the region, religion, military service, and ethnic integrity. By no means can these elements describe the entirety of the
Druze identity, nor can they account for the nuances and variations in identity between each individual Druze in Israel/Palestine; the purpose of this section is to understand what it is about the Druze identity that prevents them from being incorporated into the Palestinian or Israeli identities.

This section will begin by describing the Druze history in the Middle East, and more specifically their history in the region that is now Israel/Palestine. The discussion of the Druze history will be followed by a description of the Druze religion. The aspect of the Druze identity that most obviously distinguishes them from the Arabs and Israelis is their religion and will therefore be discussed in depth. The Druze tradition of military service will account for the following section because it has played an especially important role within the last century in strengthening the Druze identity. Finally, there is a section devoted to Druze ethnic integrity. This section will discuss the ways in which the Druze and Israeli leadership have institutionalized the Druze identity.

History:

The Druze have been present in the Middle East for over a thousand years and currently inhabit Lebanon, Syria, and Israel/Palestine. The Druze have always maintained a distinct identity, both as a means in which to preserve their unique traditions and as a necessity when faced with religious persecution. The origins of the Druze community coincide with the origins of the Druze faith, which emerged in the 11th century in Egypt. Faced with persecution in Egypt by Muslims because of their non-Muslim faith, the majority of the Druze community migrated to the Levant where they currently reside (Dana 15).
Once they settled in the areas of modern-day Syria, Lebanon and Israel/Palestine, the Druze came into conflict with a number of regional powers. The early Druze communities were organized in a feudal fashion which were lead by religious leaders, or sheikhs. In 1841, the Druze and the Maronite Christians engaged in an armed conflict in Lebanon that spread across the region but resulted in no clear victor. In 1925, a Druze faction, lead by one of most important Druze sheikhs, staged an uprising against the French colonialists in Syria which was deemed “The Great Druze Uprising.” The Druze employed guerrilla tactics in the struggle against the French but the uprising ultimately fizzled with the Druze on the losing end. In a different case during the nineteenth century mentioned by Dana, the author mentions skirmishes “both with the local Bedouins and with the Egyptian army. The latter tried to subdue the mountain dwellers in the course of its conquest of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. The Druze stood fast, exploiting the ground conditions and the desert character of the region” (8). The history of armed engagement between the Druze and various populations following their migration from Egypt solidified their reputation as skilled warriors.

The Druze community in Israel/Palestine is geographically isolated from the Druze populations in Lebanon and Syria due to the Arab-Israeli conflict that has compelled the Israeli authorities to greatly restrict movement across its borders. This section will focus on the history of the Druze population in Israel/Palestine due to its isolation from the other Druze populations in the region, which has inevitably lead to divergent identity narratives.

The presence of the Druze in Palestine before the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict inevitably lead to interactions between the Arabs and Israelis within the framework of the conflict. Both the Arabs and the Israelis solicited the Druze for support when war broke out
because the Druze “remained aloof from the Zionist-Palestinian conflict throughout the Mandate period” (Firro 41). Both the Arabs and the Zionists attempted to rally as many supporters as possible, and even the tiny Druze community was not immune. Though the Druze are Arab, they had no particular motivation to side with the other Arabs in the conflict, in fact the community as whole sided with the Zionists. Dana explains this when he states, “there were two reasons for this: First, the Druze found that the Yishuv was gaining no little success in its struggle against the Arabs; secondly, many of the Druze themselves suffered from the consequences of the revolt” (11). The Yishuv, a term referring to the Zionists, were gaining ground in their armed conflict with the Arabs in their military successes. The revolt that is referred to here is a reference to the series of Arab uprisings against the colonial powers in Syria and Lebanon, and though the Druze did not play a heavy role, they suffered the same colonial reprisals as the Arabs involved.

The Druze did not have as much at state ideologically in the Arab-Israeli conflict because they possessed no national affinity beyond the realm of religion (Dana 108). Unlike the Arabs engaged in the war against the Zionists, the Druze did not connect their nationality to a specific territory that they viewed as a homeland (109). With a long history of violent conflict with the other Arab communities in the region because of their religion and no demand for sovereign independence, an alliance between the Palestinians and the Druze never formed.

The triumph of the Zionists in the war did not result in a loss of ties between them and the Druze community, but quite the opposite. The Druze and the Israelis maintained a close relationship and in 1956 the Druze Conscription Act was passed which stated the requirement of all Druze males over the age of 18 to participate in the IDF. In 1957, the Israeli government
granted the Druze community with legal and religious independence from the rest of the Arab population in Israel/Palestine. In sum, history contributed to the creation of a distinct Druze identity because the bond of a common Arab ethnicity between the Druze and the rest of the population was overshadowed by Druze traditions that were deemed incompatible with the other Arab communities. Druze identity is bound to their history in the region because their identity is delineated from the other Arabs of the Middle East. The formation of a distinct Druze identity is due in part to their physical and ideological isolation from other Arabs in addition to the religious persecution they suffered that other groups did not. Because of the events that lead to the limitation of interaction between the Druze and the rest of the regional population, the alienated Druze community was receptive to cooperating with another alienated group: the Zionists.

Religion:

The Druze religion is what sets the Druze community most apart from the other Arabs. The origins of the Druze religion can be traced back 1000 years to Ismaili-Fatimid Shi’ite Egypt (Hitti 577). At the birth of the Druze religion, religious leaders welcomed new followers and converts, a trend which was later reversed and lead to the perception of the religion as secretive. The Druze religion is portrayed as intensely secretive and closed to non-Druze. In Origins of the Druze People & Religion, Hitti states that “no one could be admitted into the Druze fold or permitted exit from it,” meaning that in order to have access to the Druze religion, one must be born a Druze. Hitti further states that “the Druze religion [is] wholly hereditary, a sacred privilege, a priceless treasure to be jealously and zealously guarded against the profane” (12).
The most glaring difference here between the Druze religion, referred to as “Tawhid”, and other religions such as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity is the non-existent trend of acquiring new members (Obeid 95). This was not the case in the early years of the religion, but as discussed in the previous section on the Druze history in the region. The persecution of the Druze because of their religion by Muslim Arabs drove them to lengths of extreme secrecy in order to protect their traditions and themselves, and hence explains the lack of attempts to attract converts. Muslim Arabs responded violently to the Druze when they denounced the five pillars of Islam in what the Muslims deemed as blasphemy, so the Druze took to secrecy as a means of self preservation. The number of people who follow the Druze religion corresponds directly to the number of Druze in the world, meaning the number of Druze religious followers remains stable, a trend that is not witnessed in any of the major religions whose rates of participation fluctuate.

Hitti states that “the Druzes consider all former religions, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam as forerunners and varied types of Druzism, which supersedes and excels them all” (39). The Druze religion draws on elements of all the major religions of the world, as well as some more obscure ones. The religion is organized hierarchically, much like other religions, but to a more detailed extent. As an offshoot of Shi’ite Islam, the Prophet Muhammad is venerated, but Tawhid includes six other prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad al Ishmail (37). Each of these seven prophets has one minor prophet that serves as a lieutenant or substitute, who are: “Ishmael, Aaron, Simon, Ali, that of disciples, Enoch, Daniel, and Plato.” These minor prophets are silent, meaning that they do not offer any new doctrines; their sole purpose is to communicate the message of the major prophet that they serve. However, the major
and minor prophets do not represent the top tier of the religions hierarchy, that position belongs to the divine masters of the faith. The divine masters of the faith are of “universal mind, soul, and word” and are the few masters that are all-knowing of the Druze faith (37).

The Druze faith was established when Hamzah, the founder of the Druze faith, renounced the five pillars of Islam and substituted them for the four articles of the Druze faith relating to the knowledge of God, the recognition of Hamzah as its founder, as well the recognition of the ministers and the seven moral precepts (41). The seven moral precepts include the vitally important decrees that “enjoin the love of truth in speech, watching over one another’s safety, recognizing the existence in all ages of the principle of divine unity in al Hakim and acquiescing in his actions whatever they be” (41). An important figure that is mentioned in one of the moral precepts is al Hakim (al Hakim bi Amr Allah), who is the deified Fatimid Caliph (996AD-1020AD) and viewed by the Druze as the human incarnation of God (31).

As a caliph, al Hakim was the figurehead of the Islamic faith, but the Druze were the only group to view him as the human incarnation of God. Deification is strictly prohibited in Islam because it challenges the notion of the singularity of God who resides in Paradise. Deification of al Hakim and the rejection of the five pillars of Islam were what fractured the association between Druzism and Islam. The disappearance of al Hakim pushed the Druze community in Egypt to flee to the Levant where they reside today, and those who remained in Egypt went into hiding. The moral precepts and the deification of al Hakim are what most significantly set the Druze faith at odds with Shi’ite Islam and what lead Islamic leaders to declare the Druze as infidels, a move which cast the Druze from the Arab Islamic fold. The declaration of Druze as infidels is vitally important because it permanently removed the Druze from the Muslim Arab
milieu. As a marginalized community, the Druze would never been seen as equal to the Muslim Arabs, nor would they be accepted into the greater Arab social sphere ever again.

Though the establishment of the Druze faith arguably sets the Druze community apart from all the other Arab communities, not all members of the Druze community are knowledgeable of the Druze religion. Just as the faith itself is organized in a hierarchical manner, so is the Druze community itself. According to Hitti, the Druze community is divided into two groups of people: the “Uqqal” and the “Juhhal” (42). The Uqqal, also referred to as sheiks or the wise, are the most respected members and leaders of the Druze community and are described as “initiate, intelligent, and spiritual.” Opposite the Uqqal are the Juhhal, or simple people, who are members of the Druze community that have lesser knowledge of Tawhid and are described as “initiate, ignorant, and worldly” (Dana 20). Dana states, “Druze society expressed the distinction between the ‘uqqal and the juhhal in the past by the appointment of two shaykhs as leaders: one for religious purposes…and the other for secular matters…” (21). Regarding the Uqqal, Hitti says,

“no one can aspire whose character has not marked him out as one entirely trustworthy and capable of extreme secrecy. Before admission, however, he must be subjected to a rigorous process of long trial and probation. Then follows the ceremonial rite of induction. This secret ceremony has been witnessed and described by only one or two outsiders throughout the whole history of the Druze religion” (42).

In addition to this ceremony, the Druze have managed to keep all of their religious texts, known as Epistles (Dana 16), within the Druze community, and the only times when non-Druze have gained access to these texts have been in times of community chaos, most often during times of
war (Hitti 25). The rare occurrence of an outsider acquiring Druze religious texts did not shed the amount of light on Druze religious practices that one might expect. Due to the complexity and vagueness of the language, the texts can only be understood by the most elite Uqqal. This level of secrecy in practice and ascendance is unlike any other religion in the world which makes it a staple of the Druze identity.

With this information in mind, Hitti’s claim that “the Druze riddle [is] one of the most baffling in the history of religious thought” is completely justified (25). Dana claims that the “belief in the revelation of God in the form of a human being is considered the most important fundamental principle of the Druze faith” (15). No other monotheistic faith holds this ideal, nor do the other monotheistic religions have a history of letting this ideal exist without comment; persecution of the Druze was most commonly committed at the hands of those belonging to other monotheistic religions. The gates to the Druze religion were effectively “locked” in 1043 after the disappearance of the Druze founders of the faith and the resulting persecution of the Druze community at the hands of multiple religious groups (15). Only those who are born to a Druze mother and a Druze father can be considered a Druze and this identity is fiercely revered and unchanging. The Druze religion is tied with identity because only the Druze practice the Druze faith in addition to being the only major cultural difference between them and other Arabs. All Druze are Arab and each individual has a specific position within the Druze faith. The Druze religious community is the Druze community; identification with the Druze faith defines Druzeness.
Military Service:

The Druze have a long history of military involvement, stretching back to the Crusades when they fought alongside the Muslim armies to gain control of the Holy Land (Hitti 2). During the Ottoman control of the Levant, there were various attempts to conscript the Druze into the Ottoman army due to the reputation of the Druze as a “strong and warlike people” (Hitti 8). The Ottoman attempts to conscript them failed due to strong opposition by the Druze and the Ottoman’s inability to force the tight-knit and isolated community into military service (Hitti 8). Perhaps the most significant era of Druze military involvement has been the Druze conscription in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) that the world has witnessed in the past century. The impact conscription has had on the Druze identity in Israel/Palestine has been significant.

Unlike the Christian, Muslim, Circassian and Bedouin Arab populations in Israel/Palestine, it is mandatory for the Druze to participate in the IDF. The Druze Conscription Act was agreed to between sixteen leaders of the Druze community and the members of the Israeli State and was passed into law in 1956 (Hajjar 3). But before there can be an analysis of the consequences that mandatory Druze conscription had on the Druze identity, it is important to note that the Druze fought alongside the Israelis before 1956, and even before the establishment of the Israeli State in 1948. In his article “Reshaping Druze Particularism in Israel,” Firro speaks about the beginning of Druze and Israeli military cooperation that began during the turmoil created by the Arab and Zionist clashes before 1948 which prevented the Druze from accessing their agricultural fields. Firro states, “during this period, Zionist recruiters went around to Druze villages promising the villagers free access to their fields if their sons signed up for a newly created special force of the Israeli army, the ‘Minorities Unit’” (41). This incentive pushed many
Druze men to fight alongside the Israelis against the Arab forces, and Firro goes on to state that beyond Israel wanting more soldiers on their side, the purpose of the agreement with the Druze “was to use the Druzes as ‘the sharp blade of a knife to stab in the back of Arab unity’” (42). With the Druze on their side, the Zionists did not have to face a unified Arab front.

The success of the Israelis in the war for Palestine did not end the military relationship with the Druze. The Minorities Unit was maintained after the war ended, and in 1949 it consisted of 850 officers and men, 400 of which were Druze, followed by 200 Bedouin, 100 Circassians, and 150 Jewish officers and professionals that provided the leadership for the unit (Firro 43). The inclusion of the Druze in the IDF provided a unique economic opportunity for the traditionally agricultural community, and also served to further alienate the Druze from the remaining Arab population in Israel/Palestine that had not been displaced by the war. Between 1948 and 1956 Druze participation in the IDF was voluntary. In 1956, Druze community leaders and officials of the Israeli government agreed to make Druze service in the IDF compulsory for men over the age of eighteen, which excluded women and religious males. The act required the same length of military service in the IDF as the Jewish community, which is three years, despite the segregation between Jewish IDF units and minority IDF units. The law also imposed the same consequences for refusal to participate in the IDF as it imposed on the Jewish population who refused to serve: imprisonment.

Though it is known that the conscription act was agreed to between members of the Druze community and the Israeli authorities, Firro states that “most documents in the Israel State and IDF archives on the events surrounding the application of conscription law remain classified, [making it] difficult to know the driving force behind the law” (44). According to the Israeli
archived documents that were declassified, the conscription act was applied to the Druze at the request of the leaders of the Druze community (Firro 44).

There was an immediate negative response from some members of the Druze community, including some of its leaders, when it learned that participation in the IDF was no longer voluntary. Leaders and members of the Druze community who openly opposed the law were stripped of their social and political standing by both the Druze and Israeli leadership and were thus prevented from gathering support for a collective anti-conscription effort (Firro 48). Additionally, by 1956 the Druze had fallen victim to the same land confiscation program as the Arabs in Israel/Palestine which threatened their tradition as an agrarian community. The Druze ended up abandoning agriculture faster than the other Arab communities in Israel/Palestine knowing that there was greater economic opportunity and job stability in the security sector after participating in the IDF. This move away from the agrarian tradition in the 1950s and 1960s had negative consequences for the Druze collective identity according to Firro (49); the Druze identity was no longer situated within an independent Druze tradition, it became inextricably tied to the Israeli State.

The economic shift from an agrarian society to one dependent on the Israeli State for job opportunities -mostly in the security sector- has strengthened the traditional security role of the Druze as one minority policing another. The Druze role in the IDF has served to strengthen the Druze identity in the way that it separates them from their Arab counterparts in Israel/Palestine, while at the same time restricting their identification with Israeli society to the sphere of the military. Even within the military sphere, Jewish citizens enjoy a level of flexibility that the Druze do not. The Druze rate of participation in the IDF is 83%, which is a percentage far greater
than the Jewish participation in the IDF, of which only about a quarter serve in military combat units (Nisan 577). Jewish citizens have a far wider range of options of how to perform their required military service as well as enjoying a greater number of options that excuse them from the military requirement completely, which explains why nearly half of the Jewish population is granted exemption from military combat units. With fewer options for exemption, the lack of job opportunities outside of the security sector, and the threat of imprisonment for refusing to participate, the vast majority of the Druze population serves in the IDF.

Military service is an element of the Druze identity which serves to maintain Druze autonomy and ethnic integrity. As greater numbers of the Druze community became involved in the IDF, the Druze military identity became entangled with the Jewish Israeli military identity. In the past, the Druze managed to fend off groups that threatened their communal identity with their military prowess. In the years following 1956, all Druze drafted into the IDF were placed in minority units, but as the years passed, more and more Druze were drafted into mixed Druze/Jewish units. This was a deliberate process by the Israeli State to further alienate the Druze from other Arabs and establish interaction between the Druze and Jewish soldiers; this is a manifestation of how the Druze military identity became linked to the Jewish military identity. The military alliance with Israel provided the groundwork for official recognition of the Druze community by Israel, but it also marked a shift in the Druze military identity from bolstering community autonomy to fusing the Druze identity with the Jewish military identity.
Ethnic Integrity:

In the case of the Druze, ethnic integrity refers to their ability to maintain a separate identity from the other populations of the region, and more specifically in Israel/Palestine. The Israeli State plays an integral role in maintaining the Druze ethnic integrity, most notably in the Druze education system and Druze political participation. The Druze education system, which is separate from all the other education systems in Israel/Palestine, plays a more obvious role in the shaping of the Druze identity than the Druze patterns of political participation - yet the latter cannot be overlooked.

Education System:

For decades Druze children have been educated in Druze-only schools. These schools started being established after the State of Israel declared the independence of the Druze community from the Arab communities in Israel/Palestine. By 1977, the Druze curriculum was completely separated from the Muslim and Christian Arab curriculums (Firro 50). The Druze curriculum is distinct because it includes the history of the Druze people taught by Druze teachers. Funding for these schools is provided solely by the Israeli State, unlike the other Arab schools in Israel/Palestine which rely on some funding from the State and some funding from their respective religiously affiliated institutions (50).

Despite this state funded project which enables Druze children to be taught about their Druze heritage and history, complaints abound about the inadequacy of the Druze education system. One complaint stems from inadequate funding of Druze schools. Muslim and Christian Arab schools receive funding from Mosques and the Christian Church, whereas the Druze community must rely solely on the Israeli State to keep the doors of their schools open. The
Druze community lacks the same stream of religiously-based income that Muslim and Christian communities enjoy because the Druze religious community is closed to new members and sources of funding (Nisan 590).

This reality puts the Druze in the position of choosing to send their children to either a Christian or Muslim Arab school where education is generally better, or choosing to a Druze school where the quality of education is generally lower, but the curriculum includes Druze history that is absent from all other Arab curriculums. Most Druze families end up choosing the latter which accounts for the lower rates of education in the community, and a lower percentage of Druze who have the ability to pursue higher education— all of which stems from the dual Druze and Israeli desire of maintaining the ethnic integrity of the Druze community.

The gap in education rates between the Druze community and the other communities of Israel/Palestine evidenced in a quote by Dana,

“In the area of education, most Druze youth tend to take the easy way out and find a job with one of the security services, and refrain from contending with either high school or higher education. This has led to slow but continual regression in the education of the community in comparison with other communities. In 1983, only 3% of Druze families had someone with an academic degree, compared with the 4.3% among Muslim families, 8.3% among Christian families, and 13.4% among Jewish families” (114).

There are clear benefits and pitfalls that are a result of a separate education system for the Druze, but regardless, has played an important role in maintaining Druze ethnic integrity as an element of the Druze identity.
Political Participation:

Since the establishment of the Israeli State, the Druze have been involved in and shaped by the Israeli political system. Frisch states, “lacking political clout through the party system, the Druze are all the more dependent on the State and its ethnicization policies. Their voice is government” (58). Frisch argues that the Druze are limited to Israeli democratic channels to have their voices heard because of the reliance that Firro describes in which the Druze are dependent on the state for funding and infrastructure (64-65).

Druze involvement in the Israeli political system is most interesting because by-and-large because a major portion of the Druze community votes for right-wing Israeli political parties, like the Likud (Nisan 584). Nisan states, “the Druze electoral balance sheet tends towards a nationalist right-wing orientation” and 3/4 of the Druze that have been elected to the Knesset are, or have been, members of the Likud party (585). Nisan also looked at the voting trends in the eighteen Druze villages of Israel/Palestine and he found that villages in which the Druze constituted over 90% of the population, Jewish political parties won most of the votes whereas Arab political parties won very few; villages with mixed Druze, Muslim and Christian Arab populations were the only villages where the Arab parties won a somewhat competitive number of Druze votes (584). This trend indicates that villages whose populations are almost solely Druze are the villages in which the Israeli State has the most direct influence, and this influence is not challenged by other Arabs like it might be in villages with mixed Druze and Arab populations. Though not every Druze is involved in politics, every Druze is affected by politics and the Druze identity itself is shaped by politics. Political involvement is one of the only
platforms that the Druze have in influencing the Israeli State as a semi-autonomous non-Muslim Arab community.

**Conclusion:**

The Druze identity is shaped by a complex interplay of history, religion, tradition of military service, and ethnic integrity. Despite the waves of war, colonialism, the rise and fall of empires, and the establishment the modern-day state system, the tiny Druze community has managed to maintain its unique identity. The Druze identity is rooted in history and religion, and has been strengthened by their military involvement in the IDF and state-mandated policies that maintain Druze ethnic integrity. The Druze community in Israel/Palestine also maintains a distinct identity from the Druze communities of Lebanon and Syria, though they number just over 130,000. The co-evolution of the Druze community with the Israeli State will continue to be significant in the terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict which remains an issue, and we will continue to witness the importance of the Druze identity in the behavior of the Druze community.

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**The Druze Conscription Agreement:**

The Druze Conscription Agreement is a manifestation of the alliance between the Druze and the Israelis. Mandatory conscription for every Druze male over the age of eighteen became law in 1956 after negotiations took place between leaders of the Druze community and members of the Israeli government. Information regarding the negotiations that lead to the creation of the Agreement is still classified by the Israeli State, so there exists a gap in information regarding the driving force behind the Agreement and the negotiations of its terms (Firro 44). Excluding
females and religious members of the community, the Druze are the only Arabs who are required
to serve in the IDF. Arab Muslims, Christians, Bedouins, and Circassians are not required to
serve, nor do they risk imprisonment for not participating in the IDF like the Druze do.

The foundation for mandatory conscription was set long before the Conscription
Agreement became law in 1956; as mentioned in the introduction, the Druze fought alongside
the Zionists before 1948 in the Minorities Unit. The Conscription Agreement that was enacted in
1956 was an extension to the pre-existing Minorities Unit, and in the early years of mandatory
Druze service, all Druze servicemen were placed in minorities units. Later on the Druze had the
option of either being placed in a minorities unit or being placed in a mixed Druze/Jewish unit,
which is an option that remains today; the vast majority of Druze serve in mixed units (Frisch
63).

The consequences of the Druze Conscription Agreement are vast in terms of
understanding the alliance between the Druze and the Zionists. As Arabs, the Druze find
themselves fighting fellow Arabs which delineates an intra-ethnic conflict that is not
characteristic of the Arab-Israeli Conflict as a whole. The Druze participation rate in the IDF is
83% - a percentage much higher than the Jewish participation rates which fluctuate around 25%
(Nisan 577). Because the Druze population is so small in Israel/Palestine, there are still more
Jews who serve in the IDF than Druze, but what is evident with the percentage of participation
between the two groups is that the Druze community is more militarily entrenched in the Arab-
Israeli Conflict than the Jews. To explain the Druze participation in the IDF, an examination of
the alliance formation between the Druze and the Zionists is necessary while keeping in mind
that the Conscription Agreement - among other factors - is a necessary element in the maintenance of the Druze-Israeli alliance.
Chapter III: Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

Literature Review- Druze-Zionist Relations:

There is an abundance of existing literature regarding the Druze history, relationships with other ethnic and religious groups, and identity. However, there is not a great body of literature which discusses how the Druze identity and history of the region lead to the Druze-Zionist alliance before 1948 and its connection to the 1956 Druze Conscription Agreement, which is a gap that this thesis seeks to fill. The collection of sources used in this chapter focus on various areas of information which are pertinent to my argument, but none of which answers the research question completely when looked at individually.


Dana’s main argument is that the history of conflict between the Druze and Arab Muslims lead to cooperation between the Druze and the Zionists. Dana’s historical narrative provides an important body of information regarding the friction and conflict that arose between the Druze and Muslims. This history became important when conflict erupted between the Zionists and Arabs and the Druze had to choose which side to align with. Firro argues that Druze conscription
in the IDF was, and continues to be, a deliberate process to fracture the Arab population in order to prevent them from coalescing into one unified group with Zionism as the common enemy.

Firro’s piece is valuable in that it shows that Druze involvement in the IDF and Druze-Zionist relations are a result of not just cooperation, but also manipulation. Frisch’s article argues along the same lines as Firro’s article, but has added information regarding Druze traditions, religion, and political involvement in Israel. According to the information in Frisch’s piece, the relationship between the Druze and the Israeli State after 1948 can be described as one that began with cooperation, but has become one of manipulation of the Druze by the Israeli State.

Hitti’s book serves as the most valuable source in describing the Druze religion and origins in the Levant. With his description of the Druze faith, Hitti is able to argue that it stands alone from the other religious schools of thought common throughout the region, which is why the Druze ultimately came into conflict with Muslim Arabs. Lastly, Nisan’s piece analyzes the question of Druze citizenship in Israel after 1948. Nisan argues that citizenship within the Israeli milieu has become part of the Druze identity in a form that is not experienced by the other Arabs in Israel/Palestine, therefore creating a distinct Druze identity.

The information gleaned from these sources is how the introduction of this thesis answers the question: who are the Druze? Referring to only one of these sources does not provide enough information to answer the question of what elements form the core of the Druze identity, but when reviewed together, they provide an understanding of what distinguishes the Druze from the other populations of the region.

There is a significant body of theoretical work that describes alliance formation. The works of Walt and Wendt are most relevant to the topic of this thesis, but again, there is no single
theory that can describe the alliance formation between the Druze and the Zionists by itself. Portions of the essays by the aforementioned theorists are helpful in trying to understand the Druze-Zionist alliance, but there is little in these works to provide a connection between the formation of the alliance before 1948 and the maintenance of the alliance after 1948 which lead to the 1956 Druze Conscription Agreement. Walt and Wendt’s theories are useful in understanding the initial alliance formation between the Druze and Zionists, but other sources are required to explain the endurance of the alliance after the period of war in 1948 which lead to the Conscription Agreement.


Landau’s book focuses on the political roles that members of the Arab minority have played within the Israeli State apparatus. Though Landau’s book does not focus specifically on the Druze, it provides a valuable lens through which one can analyze minority political participation and its challenges in Israel. The main argument of this book is that social and economic factors shape the political participation of minorities in Israel, which is very relevant to
the Druze specifically, and is discussed in further detail in the analysis portion of this thesis. The books by Lustick, Parsons, and Rogan each describe the events leading up to and following the war for Palestine in 1948 while focusing on the Druze community specifically. These pieces are all framed as historical narratives, but unlike other historical narratives of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, they spend large portions of their writing talking about the interactions between the Druze and Zionist communities. These historical accounts are made even more valuable when analyzing them with trends in alliance formation; the accounts of Druze-Zionist interaction often fall directly in line with the alliance formation theories provided by Walt and Wendt. Lastly, Nadim’s article argues that there has been a process of ethnicization among the Druze fueled by the Israeli State which has shaped the Druze identity after 1948. Nadim’s piece is vital because it shows how identity can be influenced and constructed to serve the needs of a group and how ethnic states deal with ethnic minorities within the state. Important questions of ethnic preference, contradictions between ethnic and democratic structures, and ethnocracy vs. meritocracy are discussed and provide an understanding of the Israeli State structure after 1948.

Supplementary articles provided more specific information on Druze participation in the IDF and the changing societal norms within the Druze community with regards to the Druze and the IDF, which are discussed in the final chapter of this thesis. The driving force behind this thesis was the dissatisfaction that emerged with the lack of literature surrounding the Druze-Zionist alliance. There are plenty of sources that discuss the Arab-Israeli Conflict and sources that mention the position of the Druze community within the conflict, but critical examination of the Druze-Zionist alliance is missing from these bodies of work. This thesis will seek to fill some portion of this gap in the following section by looking at alliance formation theories created by
some of the most influential political scientists in the field to explain the Druze-Zionist alliance before 1948.

None of the literature written about the Druze and the Zionists uses the theories of alliance formation to explain the relationship between the Druze and the Zionists. Historical narratives are not sufficient in explaining why an alliance formed between the Druze and the Zionists, though they play a role in describing their cooperation throughout history. This thesis combines the valuable information provided by historical accounts of the Druze and Zionists while applying common theories of alliance formation to better understand the establishment of the Druze-Zionist alliance. The importance of this thesis is the way in which it combines the discussions of history with discussions of alliance formation theories, things that until now have always been discussed separately.

Theoretical Framework:

In order to understand how the alliance between the Druze and the Zionists formed before the war of 1948, it will be helpful to consider some theories of alliance formation. The theories proposed by Stephen Walt and Alexander Wendt have proved to be some of the most helpful theories when it comes to understanding the Druze-Zionist alliance formation. Some elements of these theories will be more helpful than others, but valuable information is undoubtedly present.

The theories on alliance formation that these well-respected political scientists propose are mostly relegated to the international level of interaction, i.e. state-to-state interaction. This thesis will take their theories one step further in the analysis section by asserting that they can be applied to the interactions of non-state groups. But before Walt and Wendt’s theories can be
applied to the topic of this thesis, the following section is dedicated to understanding the relevant portions of their arguments.

Walt

“Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power” provides an explanation for states behavior when faced with a threat. But first, it is helpful to refer to Walt’s definition of alliance written in his book Origins of Alliances; Walt defines an alliance as “a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states” (12). In his article “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” Walt argues that there are four factors that influence the level of a threat: 1) distribution of power, 2) geographic proximity, 3) offensive capabilities, 4) perceived threat (4). Based on the threat level, a state will either balance, bandwagon, or assume a neutral position. When a state balances, it will align itself with other states to oppose the threatening state; when a state bandwagons, it aligns itself with the threatening state; when a state assumes a neutral position, it removes itself politically and denies siding with either the aggressor or the threatened.

Walt’s theory is set against the backdrop of the international system, meaning the theory is created to apply to state-to-state interaction. He argues that the international system is more secure when states choose to balance against an aggressor because the aggressor will face a combined opposition. On the flip side, security in the international system is scarce if states choose to bandwagon because it creates a system in which aggression is rewarded, which leads to a higher likelihood of inter-state conflict.
Walt goes on to assess different theories of what binds states together or drives them apart. He argues that alliances that are formed on the basis of a common ideology (i.e. religion, type of government, etc.) are generally weaker than alliances formed on the basis of a common goal or interest. On page 24, Walt states, “security considerations take precedence over ideological preferences, and ideologically based alliances are unlikely to survive when more pragmatic interests intrude.” An example of an interest-based alliance is one where two sides have the common interest of maintaining their security, and this type of alliance has a higher chance of survival and success because an alliance based on ideology is not guaranteed to maintain the most basic desire of the state: survival.

The last relevant portion of Walt’s essay discusses the ways in which states create and maintain allies, and more specifically, the ability of the state to use economic aid, propaganda, or political penetration to attract allies (4). He argues that these elements of “bribery” are not likely to give suppliers effective political leverage for three reasons:

“First, unless the supplier is the only available source of economic or military aid, leverage will be limited because the recipient can always obtain it elsewhere...Second, because recipients are usually weaker than suppliers, they will bargain harder because they have more at stake...Third, the more important the recipient is to the donor, the more aid it is likely to receive” (28-29).

Threat levels, the response to a threat, security, alliance strength, and incentives are the most relevant elements of Walt’s essay to the topic of this thesis and will be analyzed in the following chapter.
Wendt

Wendt’s essay “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics” is constructed around the concept of anarchy. Wendt defines anarchy as a system absent of central control, is self-help, and is absent of collective security (392). Like Walt’s essay, Wendt’s piece is situated within the framework of the international system where states interact with other states, but his theory can be easily applied to the intra-state level of analysis which is done in the following chapter of this thesis.

According to Wendt, there are three different cultures of anarchy: enemy, rival, and friend. In enemy-based anarchy, competitors observe no limits in fighting each other for the upper-hand. In rival anarchy, competitors will use violence to advance their interests but will refrain from killing one another. Lastly, in friendly anarchy, groups will not fight each other and they will cooperate with one another when faced with a common threat. The question of how alliances form in anarchy depends on the type of anarchy: enemy, rival, or friend. Though there are three different types of anarchy culture, the most relevant type for this thesis is the first type: enemy culture. Once the British relinquished control of Palestine in May of 1948, there was an immediate emergence of an enemy-based anarchic system, with the Zionists one side and the Arabs on another. This structure of Zionists versus Arabs was how the Druze viewed the emergence of the conflict before the Zionists solicited them for assistance in their cause. The Druze were not making the same territorial claims as the other Arabs in the conflict so they had no inherent disposition to side with them, nor were they motivated by the claims the Zionists were making in their struggle in this state of anarchy. For a short period of time the Druze were an outside party that witnessed the enemy-based anarchic system before they sided with the
Zionists which established them as players in the anarchic system. This unfolding of events is specific to the Druze case in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it is important to understanding how anarchy is experienced within a single state.

Wendt goes on to reject the notion that anarchy is classified as an institution. He takes a constructivist approach by arguing that anarchy is a process which is created by state and non-state actors. This means that anarchy is not a state of existence that automatically occurs when there is an absence of central authority or governing structure, instead it is a process that occurs when actors behave in a way where the outcome cannot be predicted. Wendt says, “this involves a ‘sociological social psychological’ form of systemic theory in which identities and interests are the dependent variable” (394). In an anarchic system, the identities and interests of actors are shaped by the threat; there is not a singular response that can address every kind of threat.

The second relevant portion of Wendt’s argument relates closely to the first. Wendt says, “identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations” (398). Simply, the interests of actors are shaped by the situation. Decisions are made by the actors based on their interests, but they are also made on the basis of probability of success (405). The actions taken by actors arise out of interaction with other actors and the threat, and the course of action the actor chooses will be based on which course has the highest probability of success. Again, the course of action the actor selects will be based on the situation, and no actor will take the same course of action for every kind of threat.

Wendt’s discussion of anarchy is essential in understanding alliance formation in situations of anarchy. The culture of anarchy inevitably affects the interests and actions of actors
because the interests of actors are not the same in every situation. In order to understand the
interests of actors, one must understand the nature of anarchy. Threats faced under anarchy shape
interests, and interests influence actions. When applied in conjunction with Walt’s theory of
alliance formation, a better understanding emerges of why an alliance formed between the Druze
and the Zionists, all of which is discussed in detail in the following chapter of this thesis
beginning on the following page.
Chapter IV: Analysis

Theoretical Explanation:

The pre-1948 Druze and Zionist communities formed an alliance within the borders of the Palestinian Mandate that was under British control, but the alliance that formed between these two communities is comparable to an alliance formation process between two states. This section is dedicated to applying the theories of Walt and Wendt to provide theoretical explanations for the alliance that formed between the Druze and the Zionists before 1948 that has lasted through the present.

Walt

Walt’s essay “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power” begins with a section discussing the trend for states to either “balance” or “bandwagon” when faced with a threat. Walt states that “alliances are most commonly viewed as a response to threats” and the level of threat is influenced by four factors: distribution of power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived threat (4). The response to these threats vary greatly, but can usually be categorized as either balancing, bandwagoning, or neutrality behavior. When a state chooses to balance, it means that it will ally in opposition to the source of the threat; alternatively it will bandwagon by allying with the state posing the threat. When a state assumes a neutral position, it removes itself from siding with either party, but in the case of the Druze and Zionists in the Palestinian Mandate neither side assumed a neutral position. Walt argues that if states chose to balance as opposed to bandwagon, then the international system is more secure because the
aggressor will face a combined opposition. If states bandwagon, security is scarce because it creates a system in which aggression is rewarded.

Despite the fact that Walt’s definition of an alliance applies to state-to-state interaction and his theory is focused on the behavior of states in the international system, his theory of balancing versus bandwagoning is perfectly applicable in explaining the structure of the alliance between the Druze and the Zionists. In the conflict that preceded the establishment of the State of Israel which witnessed military clashes between the Arabs and the Zionists, the Zionist forces proved to be stronger and more successful than the Arab forces. History shows us that the majority of clashes between Arab forces and Zionist forces ended in Zionist victories. The Zionist forces take on the role of “aggressor” by Walt’s standards because of their clear efforts to establish a new state where a state already existed. Additionally, the waves of Jewish immigrants to the area put pressure on the Zionist forces to remove the Arab inhabitants of the area in order to make room for the desired Jewish State. The Zionist threat level was high as indicated by the four aforementioned factors: they were powerful, geographically close, had massive offensive capabilities, and were perceived as a threat by the entire non-Jewish population of Palestine.

The emergence of war in Palestine placed the Druze in a precarious situation: they could balance against the Zionist forces alongside the less effective Arab forces, or they could bandwagon by allying themselves with the Zionists, while considering which side was the greatest threat. As was discussed in the introduction of this thesis, we know that the Druze sided with the Zionists in the war for Palestine for a multitude of reasons that produced a multitude of consequences, the most important of which rewarded the aggressive actions of the Zionists.
Simply stated in Walt’s terms, the Druze bandwagon with the Zionists, they did not balance against them.

The second portion of Walt’s essay discusses the “contrasting hypotheses that ideological or cultural similarities can either bind states together or drive them apart” (4). Instances where states that have opposing ideologies form alliances can be explained by Walt’s statement that “when ideology calls for the members to form a centralized hierarchical movement obeying a single authoritative leadership, the likelihood of conflict is increased” so alliances between states with differing ideologies becomes advantageous (21). An alliance based on a common ideology is ripe for quarrels regarding the interpretation of the common ideology which can threaten the alliance. Walt also states that “security considerations take precedence over ideological preferences, and ideologically based alliances are unlikely to survive when more pragmatic interests intrude” (24). This portion of Walt’s theory is applicable to the alliance that formed between the Druze and the Zionists. The Zionists were concerned about establishing a secure state and the Druze were concerned with maintaining their property and way of life, which were concerns that the Arab forces could not guarantee to the extent that the Zionist forces could. The Zionist forces proved to be adept at military operations while the Arab forces failed to challenge the emerging Zionist military power in nearly every skirmish the opponents engaged in. The Arab forces could not promise the Druze physical protection with their forces, but the Zionists could.

The Druze and the Zionists did not share a common religion, ethnicity or territorial claim desires, but they did have common security concerns. The Druze and the Arabs of Palestine had far more ethnic similarities than the Druze and Zionists, but one could argue that an alliance did
not form between the Druze and Arabs of Palestine based on ethnicity because neither the Druze’s identity as Arabs nor their religious traditions were threatened; their greatest concern as an independent community was security. Despite their shared Arab identity, the Druze and the other Arabs did not form an alliance because of the violent history between them; being of a common Arab ethnicity was not enough to bind the Druze with the other Arabs against the Zionists. The Arabs had threatened the security of the Druze in the past through religious persecution so when the Druze were faced with choosing a side in the conflict that erupted between the Zionists and the Arabs, they chose the side with whom they had no violent history: the Zionists. The beginning of the conflict between the Zionists and the Palestinians did not threaten the Druze based on Druze religious practices or traditions, but the conflict threatened Druze survival merely based on the fact that their land was transformed into a war-zone. The Arabs and the Druze of Palestine had been co-existing far longer than the Druze and Zionists in addition to sharing the same ethnicity, so the alliance between the Druze and the Zionists is not one that can be attributed to close ideological or ethnic similarities.

Security for the Druze community was a concern that the Zionists were able to capitalize on due to the history of persecution inflicted upon the Druze at the hands of other Arabs throughout history. The history of violent conflict between the Druze and primarily Muslim Arabs meant that there was an ingrained perception of threat to the Druze by other Arabs, whereas there was no inherent perception of threat between the Druze and the Zionists when the conflict between the Arabs and the Zionists began. This portion of Walt’s theory and its manifestation in the Druze-Zionist alliance provides another explanation as to why the Druze chose to bandwagon with the Zionists as opposed to balancing against them. Additionally, the
notion that the Arab-Israeli conflict is one that is divided along ethnic or ideological lines is disproven by the existence of a security-based alliance apparatus between the Druze and Zionists that began before 1948.

In the third and final portion of Walt’s essay, the author discusses “the ability of states to create allies or proxies by military and economic aid, propaganda, or political penetration” (4). Walt argues that “bribery” does not often give the supplier bargaining leverage unless three conditions exist: the supplier is the only source of economic or military aid, second, the supplier and recipient have the same thing at stake, and third, the presence of only one supplier and one recipient (27). Firstly, the Zionist forces were the only group that could offer the Druze a meaningful level of protection and aid; secondly, both the Druze and the Zionists had their security at stake; thirdly, the Zionists were the only reliable suppliers of aid while the Druze were the only minority that was both communally independent from the Arab population and had a historically ingrained perception of threat from Muslim Arabs. Had these three conditions not existed, an alliance based on bribery would not have been likely to form between the Druze and the Zionist forces.

Throughout history, states have offered material incentives to attract allies, the relationship that formed between the Druze and the Zionists before 1948 was one instance where it was effective. As mentioned in the history portion of the introduction, Zionist leaders approached the Druze community in the midst of the fighting that was occurring between the Arabs and Zionist forces. The Zionists offered the Druze the ability to remain on their ancestral lands in order to continue their agricultural way of life in exchange for a military alliance that would unite the Druze with the Zionists and pit them against the Arab forces. One would not be
able to argue that the alliance formed between the Druze and Zionists based on Druze trust of the 
Zionists, but because the Druze community was faced with a lack of options. The superior 
military strength of the Zionists over the Arabs made a Druze-Arab alliance unlikely because the 
Arab forces could not guarantee security for the Druze community like the Zionists could. The 
Zionists had aggressive intentions, which is evidenced through their program of land 
confiscation; faced with the threat of having their land confiscated and becoming refugees like 
other Arabs suffered, the Druze formed an alliance with the Zionists.

The strength of the Zionist forces became increasingly apparent in the years leading up to 
1948 and it became clear that the area of Palestine would no longer look the way it did in the 
centuries that followed the Crusades leading up until the early 20th century. By 1946, one third 
of the population of Palestine was Jewish, amounting to just over 600,000 people. This was a 
25% increase to what the Jewish population was in Palestine in 1914, and after 1946 the Jewish 
population continued to grow at increasing rates (DellaPergola). Since the beginning of the 20th 
century and especially after WWII, there was a Zionist push to reclaim the area of Palestine as a 
Jewish homeland, and the persecution that the Jews faced during the Holocaust only made the 
desire for a homeland greater. The Jewish immigrants to Israel were all the more willing to fight 
for a homeland in Palestine in order to escape the aftermath of WWII in Europe, and their 
formidable numbers made them a force to be reckoned with when conflict between the Jewish 
community and Arab communities erupted.

The Druze could not remain neutral in a conflict that raged all around them, and with the 
Arab forces failing to defeat the Zionist forces, the Druze had little choice but align with the side 
that promised them the maintenance of their traditional way of life. It is unclear whether the
Druze would have chosen to align with the Arab forces if they had the ability to offer such alliance incentives, but the fact remains that the only security guarantees that were made to the Druze came from the Zionists. The ability of the Zionists to incentivize an alliance with the Druze through economic aid, propaganda, and political penetration continued to an even greater extent after the establishment of the Israeli State, but the roots of the Druze-Israeli alliance can be traced back before 1948 when the possibility of the establishment of a Zionist-lead state became a reality.

Wendt

Portions of Wendt’s “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics” can be directly applied to the alliance that formed between the Zionists and the Druze before 1948. Firstly, Wendt describes anarchy as a system absent of central control, self-help, and absent of collective security (392). There are three cultures of anarchy: enemy, rival, and friend; enemies observe no limits in fighting each other, rivals are competitors that will use violence to advance their interests but will refrain from killing each other, and friends do not use violence against each other and they cooperate when faced with a threat. The Druze-Zionist alliance formed before 1948 while Palestine was under mandated British control, but one could argue that once the British relinquished control over Palestine, the territory was plunged immediately into a state of enemy anarchy where the opposing Zionist and Arab parties were thrust into an outright state of war in which the Zionists prevailed. The success of the Zionists in the war for Palestine and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel ended the technical state of anarchy with the creation of a central Israeli authority.
Wendt rejects the notion that anarchy can be defined as an institution and instead views anarchy as a process which is created by state and non-state actors. This constructivist approach to defining anarchy essentially means that anarchy is not a state of existence that occurs automatically when there is a power vacuum, instead it is a process that takes place when actors behave in a certain way where the outcome cannot be predicted. On page 394 Wendt states, “In contrast to the ‘economic’ theorizing that dominates mainstream systemic international relations scholarship, this involves a ‘sociological social psychological’ form of systemic theory in which identities and interests are the dependent variable.” As with Walt, Wendt’s theory is focused on the international system as opposed to the state-level system, but his theory is valuable in deciphering the intra-state level of interaction between the Druze and the Zionists.

The idea of the above quote is applied to the alliance formation between the Druze and the Zionists before 1948. The dependent variable -identity and interest- is affected by the independent variable -in this case the independent variable was the threat posed to the security and existence of the Druze community with the outbreak of armed conflict between the Zionists and Arabs before 1948. Simply, the interests of the Druze community changed when the security of the community was threatened by the war raging around them. When considering whether to side with the Arabs or the Zionists in the war for Palestine, Druze leaders had to consider which alliance would serve their interests in remaining on their ancestral land, maintaining their religious and communal identity, -and most basically- which side could guarantee the community’s security. With these considerations in mind, the Druze chose to side with the Zionists, not just for the simple reason that throughout history the Druze perceived a threat from
the Arabs based on the Arab persecution of the Druze, but because the Zionists could provide security, something the Arab forces could not.

The second portion of Wendt's theory that applies to the alliance formation between the Druze and the Zionists is described with the statement: “Identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations” (398). The emergence of the armed conflict between the Zionists and the Arab forces and the ensuing threat to the security of the Druze community shaped the interests of the Druze before 1948. The interest of the Druze became security when conflict erupted between the Zionists and Arabs. Wendt is correct in his assertion that interests are shaped by situations, and proof of this can be found in Druze history in the region. As was mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the Druze have historically faced religious persecution at the hands of Arab Muslims. The interest of the Druze community in instances where Muslims targeted the Druze community based on their faith was to maintain their religious traditions, and they did so by closing off their religion to converts and electing to live in remote areas in mostly Druze-only communities. The actions taken to serve interests are unique to the situation. The Druze identity was the basis of the Druze security concerns when conflict between the Zionists and Arabs erupted because the pre-1948 Druze identity was intricately tied to religious tradition, their agricultural way of life, and close-knit Druze-only communities. The Druze were solely interested in their security in order to maintain their identity. An alliance with the Zionists was the option that would most likely provide the Druze with security, and ultimately the maintenance of their distinct identity.
Another tenant of Wendt’s constructivism that applies to the relationship between the Druze and the Zionists before and after 1948 is exemplified in the following quote: “...the meaning in terms of which action is organized arise out of interaction...most decisions are and should be made on the basis of probabilities” (404-405). Before 1948 and during the period when Palestine was still under British mandate, the Druze and the Zionists interacted under the assumption that once Britain decided to dissolve the mandate status of Palestine, war between the Zionists and the Arabs would be inevitable. The outcomes of the skirmishes that were already taking place before 1948 placed the odds of victory firmly in the hands of the Zionists. The war between the Arabs and the Zionists threatened the security of the Druze community, and was what pushed the Druze to side with the Zionists. Probability stood to reason that the Arab forces would fail, and in 1948 the establishment of the State of Israel became evidence of that. The military aid that the Druze contributed to the Zionist forces was recognized by the newly established Israeli government and it ensured that Druze-Israeli interaction would continue. To paraphrase, the action organized between the Druze and Zionist arose out of their interactions; the decision for the Druze to align with the Zionists was made on the basis that the Zionist forces would probably triumph over the Arab forces.

Wendt’s essay on the role of anarchy in alliance formation provides valuable theories in analyzing the seemingly unlikely alliance that formed between the Druze and the Zionists before 1948. The excerpts that best describe this alliance formation do not represent the entirety of Wendt’s argument, but they remain invaluable. Wendt’s essay provides additional discussions on the role of sovereignty, anarchy in the international system, and conflict outcome probability, so one must not assume that a constructivist approach can fully describe the formation of the Druze-
Zionist alliance. When considered in conjunction with the theories of Walt, Wendt’s statements provide some insight into the alliance between the Druze and Zionists, but as with any theoretical examination, one must interpret his theory with a grain of salt.

**Cooperation before 1948:**

*History & Identity*

Cooperation and the subsequent alliance formation between the Druze and the Zionists before 1948 can be attributed to the factors of history and identity. The Druze history in the region is colored by conflict with Muslim Arabs and communal isolation. Strife between the Druze and Muslim Arabs was based on the Druze identity; Muslim Arabs were violently opposed to the Druze religion which they viewed as heretical. Despite sharing a common ethnicity and language, the Druze and the other Arabs of the region did not unify as a common force against the Zionist threat and the Druze ended up being the only Arab minority to hold a steadfast alliance with the Zionists.

As was discussed in detail in the first chapter of this thesis, the Druze history in the region dates back over one thousand years. During this time, the Druze were faced with the constant threat of persecution based on their religious beliefs by Muslim Arabs. This pushed the Druze community into isolation where contact between Druze and non-Druze Arabs was limited. The Druze have a long history of armed engagement with various populations following the Druze migration to the Levant from Egypt in the 11th century. Clashes between Muslim Arabs, Maronite Christians, and the French solidified the Druze’s reputation as skilled warriors (Dana 8).
The history of animosity between the Druze and Muslim Arabs intensified in the early 20th century with the growing migration of Jews to Palestine. Tension between the Palestinians and the Jews came to a head in 1936 with the start of the Palestinian Uprising that lasted through 1939 (Parsons 24). The Druze community assumed a position of neutrality and most Druze did not join the Muslim Arabs in the Uprising which came as a surprise to the Muslim Arabs who assumed that their common Arab and Palestinian identities would rally the Druze to participate. Many Arabs accused the Druze of betraying the Palestinian cause and a series of reprisal attacks took place against the Druze, making it increasingly unlikely for the Druze to view Muslim Arabs as allies (Parsons 20-24).

The Zionists actively rallied the Druze for support while the other Arab groups made the mistake of assuming that the Druze would side with what was viewed as a common Arab cause. Before 1948, the Zionists had a strategy of reaching out to minority communities across the Middle East in an effort to rally support while the Palestinians hoped to rally support from Arab states as a whole. The Druze community of Palestine was - and is - the smallest Druze community in the Middle East, accounting for only 1% of Palestine's population, so Palestinian Druze often deferred to their Syrian and Lebanese counterparts in matters of politics and leadership. Zionist strategists knew that garnering Palestinian Druze support could provide a gateway to gaining Druze support in Syria and Lebanon. Parsons quotes Colonel Kisch, co-head of the Joint Bureau for Arab Affairs who stated that the Druze “might have some usefulness in the sense that ‘their main importance’ lay in the links they had with their leaders in the north [referring to Syria and Lebanon]” (22). Propaganda released in 1939 by Zionist leadership also made the claim that: “the Druze are not only unlike Muslim Arabs, they are like Jews, since their
experience of persecution (and their subsequent dissimulation) at the hand of a brutish [Muslim Arab] majority is analogous to that of the Jews” (Parsons 37).

Multiple scholars argue that cooperation formed between the Druze and Jews based on ideological similarities. Firro says, “scholars in Israel emphasize the tendency of the Druzes to ally with other minorities as a primary motive for their good relations with the Jews throughout history,” and along the same vein, Nisan states, “although distant from the Muslims and their religion, the Druze found a religious and ideological proximity with Judaism and the Jewish people” (578). Hajjar says,

“Zionist leaders believed that there was a historical basis for a ‘special relationship’ between Jews and Druze. The was contingent on the belief that the Druze were a non-Muslim minority with an endemic animosity toward the Muslim majority, that they had a historical ‘love’ for the Jews, and that they were brave warlike people who allegiances would rally to the strongest force in the land” (3).

The precedent was set for cooperation between the Druze and Jewish communities and as a result, hundreds of Druze fought alongside the Israelis in the newly established “Minorities Unit” of the IDF and according to Nisan, not a single Druze fled or was expelled in the war for Palestine in 1948 (580).

Unlike the Arabs engaged in the war against the Zionists, the Druze did not connect their nationality to a specific territory that they viewed as a homeland nor did they have any national affinity beyond the realm of religion. When outright war broke out between the Palestinians and the Zionists in 1947, the gains made by the Zionist forces and the guarantees of being able to remain on their land lead to the official alliance between the Druze and the Zionists. Some Druze
joined in the fight alongside the Zionists and by 1949, victory was firmly in the hands of the Zionists and the newly established State of Israel (Nisan 580).

When the Druze community of Israel sided with the Israelis in the war for Palestine, a line was drawn separating the Druze from the Arab cause. The Druze had little to gain by siding with the Arabs in fight for Palestine, not solely due to the history of persecution by the Arabs in the region, but also because it is was clear that the strong Jewish presence in the area was not about to change. Whereas the Israelis offered the Druze the ability to remain in the area where they could maintain their livelihoods and traditions, the Arabs could offer no such promise. This consolidation with Zionism is not to say that the Druze believed in the same Zionist principles as the Zionist Israelis, but according to Nisan, the Druze were aware that they would never be “a free and independent community” (580) and their alliance with the Zionists in 1948 was merely more advantageous than an alliance with the Arabs.

The Druze-Zionist alliance has roots that pre-date any Druze-Zionist interaction. The primary difference between a Druze and all other Arabs is the Druze religion. This difference sparked violent conflict from the origins of the Druze faith and created a permanent rift between Druze and non-Druze Arabs. Being a Druze means the assumption of a Druze identity, and the persecution of the Druze based on their identity beginning in the 11th century by other Arabs is what set the stage for a future Druze-Zionist alliance. With a little help from Zionist propaganda and political strategy that exploited concepts of Druze identity and history, these two minorities created an alliance that lead to the establishment of the Israeli State in 1948.
Continued Cooperation:

Pre-1948 cooperation between the Druze and the Zionists provided the basis for their continued cooperation but, analyzing the cooperation and formation of the alliance between the before 1948 is not sufficient in explaining how this alliance has managed to last through the present. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the institution of mandatory Druze conscription in 1956, two factors have served to maintain Druze-Israeli cooperation: economic pressures and manipulation by the Israeli State.

Economic Pressures

Mandatory Druze conscription created a host of consequences for the Druze community, notably in the realm of the economy. Refusal to serve in the IDF is punishable by imprisonment, which applies to Druze and Jews. However, the rate of participation in the IDF is far higher in the Druze community than the Jewish community of Israel because the Druze do not enjoy the same amount of alternative service options (Nisan 577). Mandatory service in the IDF is required for three years, and most of the Druze who serve in the military spend this time in combat units. Jewish citizens can fulfill their service requirement in non-combat positions and many are excused of their service entirely for a host of reasons that are not available to the Druze. Because most Druze only have the option of prison or a three-year term spent in a combat unit of the IDF, most choose the IDF. For those who refuse to serve and are imprisoned, the likelihood of getting a stable or well-paying job after being imprisoned is essentially reduced to zero (Firro 44).

There are an extensive set of economic incentives for the Druze to fulfill their service in the IDF. Despite Zionist promises to the Druze community made before 1948 in terms of
remaining on their land, the Druze community fell victim to the same land confiscation policies experienced by the other Arabs of Israel/Palestine (Pirro 49). With their land confiscated, the Druze’s traditional agrarian way of life came to end leaving the Druze with few options of economic income. With that reality, the IDF became the most viable option for economic opportunity; by serving in the IDF, citizens are able to obtain employment in Israel’s security sector while being eligible for employment that those who refuse to serve in the IDF are not. Frisch states, “30 to 40 percent of the Druze work force is employed in security-related jobs, compared to approximately 15 percent of the Jewish majority” (62). During times of economic hardship, some Druze have even been known to reenlist in the IDF as it is one of the only stable sources of income available in the Druze community (Landau 33). Because the Druze serve in the IDF, the Israeli State provides funding for Druze schools and community infrastructure, something that is not enjoyed by the rest of the Arab minority in Israel/Palestine (Nisan 592).

The economic pressures facing the Druze are influential enough to keep Druze participation rates in the IDF high. The fact that the Druze are still required to serve a three year term in the IDF would indicate that the Druze-Zionist alliance remains strong, but as will be discussed in the following section, Israeli state manipulation and the lack of options for the Druze are perhaps stronger reasons for the maintenance of the Druze-Zionist alliance.

_Israeli State Involvement: Protection to Manipulation_

Before the outbreak of war between the Arabs and the Zionists in Palestine, we know that the Zionists were interested and heavily involved in the affairs of the Druze. What began as cooperation based on the existence of a common enemy and an agreement of protection in
exchange for loyalty has now become more of an alliance based on a lack of alternative options for the Druze. When the Zionists first began to consider the Druze as possible allies in the struggle against the Arabs, the Zionists had clear ulterior motives in fostering a relationship with the Druze beyond the desire of a benevolent relationship with an Arab minority. The Zionists wanted to fracture the Arab population so that they would not have to face a unified Arab force. Hajjar states, “the construction of minority identities was intended both to fragment Arab collectivity within Israel and differentiate citizens’ rights according to communal affinities” (2).

Since the Druze Conscription Law was passed in 1956, the Israeli state has implemented a ‘divide-and-rule’ tactic in which the minority Druze community has a responsibility to police other members of the Arab minority (Frisch 51). This policy of one minority policing another has institutionalized the rift between the Druze and the other Arabs of Israel/Palestine, and most Druze have no choice but to cooperate lest they desire a prison sentence. Keeping the Druze involved in the IDF is an obvious opportunity for the Israeli State to maintain its security. Nisan states:

“A cynically critical interpretation of the military alliance would identify an Israeli policy of ‘divide-and-rule’ that employs the martial race of Druze to check and manage the large Arab population…The Arabs have been known to refer derivatively to the Druze soldiery as [mercenaries], lacking in patriotism and loyalty and serving for no motive other than personal benefit…The political hierarchy in Israel would begin with the Jews at the top, descend to the Druze, and drop to the Arabs at the lowest rung” (579-80).

The willingness of the Druze to cooperate with the Israelis is clearly rooted in the history of their persecution by other Arabs and in another quote by Nisan, the author states, “military service
provides the cultural anchor for Druze identity, exhibiting their innate masculinity, assuring dominance over the Arabs, offering group protection, and providing moral grounds for full equality” (594). Nisan may exaggerate some of his claims but as a community that constantly faced threats to their identity, Druze cooperation with the Israeli State through military service appeared to provide protection from further threats.

Numerous wars since 1948 and the seemingly never-ending state of hostility between the Zionists and non-Druze Arabs means that it is still in the interest of the Israeli State to maintain a fractured Arab minority. Israel continues to make every effort to define the Druze as a separate community from the Arabs, and in doing so, it is working to fracture the Arab population who oppose the Israeli State. Nisan sums up this notion well in his quote:

“Israel is then the political project of its Druze citizens. In defending the state they assure the defense of their ‘tribal’ community. In living with the Jews in a multicultural Israeli society, the dialogue with other cultures does not so much as threaten but rather enhances the identity of this small minority community, part of and separate from the wider society” (594).

Though the Druze identity became inextricably tied to the Israeli State, this is not to say that the Druze have ever been treated on an equal level as Israel’s Jewish citizens. It is evident that the Druze would not be seen in the same light as the Arab population in Israel/Palestine because of their involvement in the IDF, so in 1967 the then Prime Minister of Israel, Levi Eskhol, “disassociated the Druze from the Arab or minority affairs section of the government and enabled them instead to turn directly to different and appropriate government departments on an equal basis with Jewish citizens” (Frisch 53). This action by the Prime Minister was taken due to
the impressive military displays and sacrifices by the Druze in the 1948 war and the Six Day War in 1967. The Druze were rewarded with support from Israeli government departments, which other Arabs were not, but they were serviced on a Druze-specific basis which maintained the distance between the Druze and Jewish population.

Most scholars agree that service in the IDF is the only place where Druze feel some semblance of equality to their Jewish counterparts. Frisch speaks on this issue extensively in his article “The Druze Minority in the Israeli Military: Traditionalizing and Ethnic Policing Role,” and he says, “one Druze officer stated that ‘we are grade ‘A’ soldiers and class ‘B’ citizens’” and quotes one Druze officer who states “‘[w]e are soldiers at the front, [and] those discriminated in the rear’” as well as saying the Druze “‘were Jews at the front but Arabs at home,’ meaning that they shouldered the civic burdens like Jews but were discriminated against like Arabs by the state and Jewish society in their civilian life” (60). The state and civilian levels of discrimination against the Druze prevent any real opportunity as being considered equal to the Jewish population, and implies that they are merely a tool used by the Israeli State. Frisch further explains that due to the fact that the Druze are native Arabic speakers and bear similar social norms as Palestinians, the Druze role in policing is indispensable (61).

With increasing integration of Druze and Jewish units, a process which continues to accelerate today, the Druze have to compete with the Jewish soldiers for promotion. Frisch states,

“The army might allow for some Druze advancement and integration, but, under prevailing economic conditions, the net result for the majority will only be ethnicization. Most Druze, in the absence of village industrialization or an adequate education
infrastructure, will seek low status security-related jobs, thus diluting prospects for
effective integration in the more elite branches and units in the IDF. Only a vast
improvement in the educational system and the development of auxiliary cultural services
will enable young Druze to compete in the IDF on the basis of merit under conditions of
intense competition with the Jewish population” (63).

Today, the Druze have the option to enter into a minority unit or a mixed Druze/Jewish unit, but
the problem here that Frisch touches upon is the fact that the Druze cannot compete with the
Jewish soldiers for promotion on the same level. Traditionally, the minorities units of the IDF
were stationed in areas with low levels of conflict, primarily along the Dead Sea facing Jordan.
Because of this, there were fewer opportunities for promotion based on performance causing the
Druze to become increasingly drawn to mixed units which were stationed in more active areas.
This goes to show that even though many Druze men claim that their service in the IDF provided
some semblance of equality with the Jewish population, there are still wide economic and social
discrepancies present in and outside the IDF.

The Druze identity was officially institutionalized in the mid 20th century when the
Israeli state decided to legally differentiate the Druze from the larger Arab community, but it was
a process that was rooted in hundreds of years of Druze history in the region. It has become
difficult to say definitively whether most Druze feel that mandatory conscription is evidence of a
strong and benevolent alliance or simply a fact of necessity, but either way, limiting alternatives
to military service the Israeli State has been able to institutionalize Druzeness apart from
Arabness.
In the same way that the Israeli State has used Druze participation in the IDF to shape the Druze identity, the state instills what Firro refers to as an “Israel-Druze consciousness” to influence Druze political participation. Firro states, “...the vicious circle of inadequate education and low-level jobs creates an almost complete dependency on the Israeli authorities, which the latter then can easily exploit to inculcate in them their ‘Israel-Druze consciousness’” (50). What Firro describes in this quote is the process of dependency that the Israeli State has created for the Druze community; the Druze rely on the state for economic opportunities and funding for their schools - all while playing the important role of maintaining the institutionalization of the Druze identity. The Druze are therefore separated from political channels used by the other Arabs of Israeli/Palestine because their reliance on the Israeli State forces them to operate in accordance with Israeli codes of conduct.

The Israeli State has much to gain from the Druze/Arab distinction in terms of control and influence, and this is manifested in the political process. The dependence of the Druze community on the Israeli State is a product of the co- Druze/Israel desire to institutionalize the Druze identity and the trends of political participation in Druze villages is evidence of just how institutionalized the Druze identity is within the Israeli State and political system. Despite the comparatively tiny community of Druze in the Israeli State that number approximately seven million, the Druze have become and indispensable tool for the state, and the state has become indispensable for the Druze.

The Druze in Israel/Palestine are faced with a precarious identity dilemma. They find themselves as the only Arabs that are required to serve in the IDF, as well as being the only Arab minority whose economic opportunities are limited to security-related positions. When the
Zionists first approached the Druze community during the turmoil of the war between the Arabs and Israelis in the late 1940s, the Druze were offered a way to maintain their identity and connection to their land if they served with the Israelis in their war for independence. At the time, this appeared to be an adequate trade-off, especially in comparison to the alternative faced by the other Arab communities: removal, relocation, loss of land, life, and statelessness. The relationship between the Druze and the Israeli State began as a trade of protection for allegiance, but has turned into one of manipulation where the Israeli State benefits and something the Druze must endure.
Chapter V: Conclusion

Summation:

The cooperation and alliance between the Druze and the Zionists before 1948 can be explained by referencing relevant portions of Walt and Wendt’s theories, and by considering the Druze history and identity. Continued cooperation between the Druze and the Israeli State after its establishment in 1948 can be explained by economic pressures faced by the Druze and manipulation by the Israeli State. The Druze Conscription Agreement of 1956 is a product of the pre-1948 Druze-Zionist alliance as well as being part and parcel to economic pressures and Israeli State manipulation.

The Druze identity which has been shaped by their history in the region, religion, tradition of military service, and ethnic integrity is vital in understanding how an inter-ethnic alliance can form in a conflict that is largely viewed as one drawn along ethnic lines. The Druze of Palestine/Israel were unable to remain neutral in the Arab-Israeli Conflict because it was unfolding all around them; the Druze had to pick a side. The stance that the Druze decided to take in the Arab-Israeli Conflict was influenced by their identity - an identity which was very much shaped by their history of persecution and marginalization by other Arabs. Once the Israeli State emerged in 1948, the Druze and the Israelis both had vested interests in maintaining their close relationship, but has the twentieth century progressed, it became more and more apparent that the Israelis were gaining more from the alliance than the Druze. What began as a seemingly mutually beneficial relationship between the Druze and the Zionists has turned into a relationship
which benefits the Israelis in their goal to fracture the Arab base within Israel while further marginalizing the Druze as a minority within the Arab minority.

Despite being widely viewed as a conflict drawn along ethnic lines, the Druze-Zionist alliance in the Arab-Israeli Conflict is proof that inter-ethnic alliances can be present in conflicts that are depicted as ethnicity versus ethnicity. One cannot explain the alliance between the Druze and the Zionists as a simple exchange of allegiance for protection when war began between the Zionists and the Arabs before 1948. We must instead look at history to understand what made cooperation possible. The Zionist goal in forming an alliance with the Druze was not one based on benevolence, it was based on a strategy created by the Zionists meant to serve the goal of fracturing their Arab opponents. This is not to say that the Druze have not benefitted in some ways from the alliance with the Zionists, but one simple fact remains: they are not Muslim, but they are still Arab. Evidenced by their rates of participation in the IDF, their experiences in the IDF, evidence of land confiscation, and high rates of unemployment and underdevelopment, the Druze are not seen or treated equally as Jewish Israelis. Similarly, despite their common ethnicity, language, and similarity of traditions, the Druze are not treated or viewed as fellow Arabs by the other Arabs of Israel/Palestine.

The theoretical explanations of alliance formation by Walt and Wendt are invaluable, but based on the unique alliance between the Druze and the Zionists, these theoretical explanations can be added to. Walt and Wendt’s theories only partially explain the Druze-Zionist alliance and there are additional explanations to this alliance that can add to the theories of Walt and Wendt. Firstly, in Walt’s book Origins of Alliances, Walt defines “alliance” as something that occurs between two sovereign states. If this notion is to be accepted, alliances only exist when they
occur between two states, but the Druze-Zionist alliance is proof that an alliance can form between groups that are not states. Walt’s definition of an alliance must be broadened to account for alliances that form beyond the state level because the Druze-Zionist alliance is proof that these types of alliances occur. Since an alliance formed between two non-state actors in the case of the Druze and the Zionists, it is safe to assume that the Druze-Zionist case is not the only time in history when a formal alliance has formed between two non-state actors.

Secondly, Walt states that alliances can be described in three forms: balancing, bandwagoning, or neutrality. What Walt is missing in his explanation is how an alliance may not maintain the same status that it began as, for example, a balancing alliance may form initially between two actors but there is the chance that this balancing relationship could turn into a bandwagoning one. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Druze-Zionist alliance; the Druze and the Zionists initially formed an alliance to balance against the Arab majority, but it has shifted into a bandwagoning relationship where the Druze as a minority population maintain an alliance with the largest and arguably most threatening group: the Zionists. In an alliance that has lasted as long as the Druze-Zionist alliance, one cannot assume that the form it takes today is the same as the form it took when it was established. What began as a balancing relationship between the Druze and the Zionists has turned into a bandwagoning alliance, a shift that Walt’s theory does not explain. In order for Walt’s theory to apply more to an alliance like the one between the Druze and the Zionists, there must be a theoretical framework in place that explains how the type of alliance can change over time.

Similarly, Wendt’s theory as it stands is missing important explanatory elements that play a major role in explaining the Druze-Zionist alliance: the factors of religion and identity. Wendt
states that the interests of actors are based on identities and that actors do not have a set portfolio of identities independent of situations that arise; because actors do not have a fixed identity, they do not have a fixed set of interests independent of situations arise. This assertion is problematic when considering the identities and interests of the Druze. The Druze religion is a fixed element of the Druze identity because their religion is the element that most sets them apart from the other Arabs of the region. Likewise, their history of persecution by Muslim Arabs based on their religion has created an ingrained and unchanging interest in preserving their own security, which is an interest which exists regardless of the situation. Wendt’s argument could be revised to include the fact that there are cases in which actors maintain at least one aspect of their identity and one interest that is present at all times, regardless of the type of threat they face.

It is important to note that the perception of the Druze-Zionist alliance is changing. The following and final section of this thesis briefly discusses the growing anti-conscription movement among the Druze. Despite being rooted in a thousand years of history, the Druze-Zionist alliance is subject to change, like most other alliances that have existed between groups since the beginning of time. We can expect that the growing interest in the anti-conscription movement and the general war-weariness among the Druze will end up changing the Druze-Zionist alliance, as well as the shape and outcome of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Druze in the IDF Today: Changing Norms & The Anti-Conscription Movement:

The strength of the Druze-Israeli alliance has shifted in the half century since its establishment. There is a rising sentiment, especially among young Druze, against the mandatory period of service in the IDF. The participation rate of Druze in the IDF remains far above that of
the Jewish population in Israel, which can be partially attributed to the consequences of refusing to serve in the IDF. For those who are not exempted from service but still refuse to abide by the mandatory conscription law, the punishment is imprisonment. Those who are sentenced to jail are usually sentenced for multiple prison terms, each lasting twenty days, and upon completion an individual can be re-sentenced if they continue to refuse their military service requirement (Hass).

Since the institution of the mandatory conscription law in 1956, there have been a handful of Druze who refused to serve in the IDF and/or openly stated their opposition to the alliance between the Druze community and the Israelis. However, these Druze were few in number and their protests were muffled by the Israeli State and by members of the Druze community (Strickland). The growing shift in the Druze community against mandatory conscription, and the Druze-Israeli alliance itself, is evidenced by the increasing numbers of Druze refusing military service and the establishment of organizations that encourage conscientious objection and provide services for those who refuse to serve. Groups like “Refuse” and “War Resisters’ International” are organizations that provide guidance and legal services for those facing imprisonment for service refusal - groups that were unheard of a decade ago (Brock).

Eighteen-year-old Orwa Saif, a Druze who is refusing military service stated: “I refused obligatory service because I can’t raise a gun against my own people... I can’t raise a gun against any human. I don’t want to be a part of any oppression in any place at any time. I am against the army and its occupation.” Despite pressure from his parents and community who still generally view the Druze-Israeli alliance and mandatory conscription favorably, Saif and each of his three
older brothers chose to turn themselves in for a series of prison sentences for refusing military service (Strickland).

The vast and growing social and economic inequalities between the Druze and Israelis who are equally obliged to serve a minimum of three years in the IDF has encouraged more young Druze to refuse military service. The roots of the Druze-Israeli alliance that formed before 1948 seem to be weakening as it becomes more apparent that the Druze and Palestinians, who both suffer at the hands of Israeli State policies, share more in common than the Druze and Israelis. The antagonism between the Druze and Muslim Arabs of the region that existed for a thousand years before the establishment of the State of Israel appears to be replaced by the Druze opposition to the consequences of the Israeli alliance.

Even more recently there has been a discussion of a bill proposed by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that seeks to classify Israel as a “Jewish state.” What this means is that Israel would effectively become a state in which in the interests of Jewish citizens take precedent over the democratic structure that is currently in place where all Israeli citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, have an equal vote (Tait). This puts the Druze in an interesting position; despite being allies with the Zionist government, their non-Jewishness places them within the same sphere as all the other Arabs of Israel. The Israeli Cabinet approved the bill in November 2014 which has strained the Druze-Zionist alliance further, though the application and consequences of the bill are still developing because it is so new. The Druze are gaining less and less from their alliance with the Zionists so the alliance is likely to keep changing.

The Druze-Zionist cooperation that took place before 1948 can be attributed to the factors of identity and history, while their continued cooperation can be explained by economic
pressures and Israeli State manipulation of the Druze. Mandatory Druze conscription in the IDF is a manifestation of this alliance, but as is discussed in this thesis, the Druze-Zionist alliance is changing. As this alliance continues to change, we can expect the perception of the Druze Conscription Agreement to change as well. What the future holds for the Druze-Zionist alliance is bound to be just as interesting as its history.
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