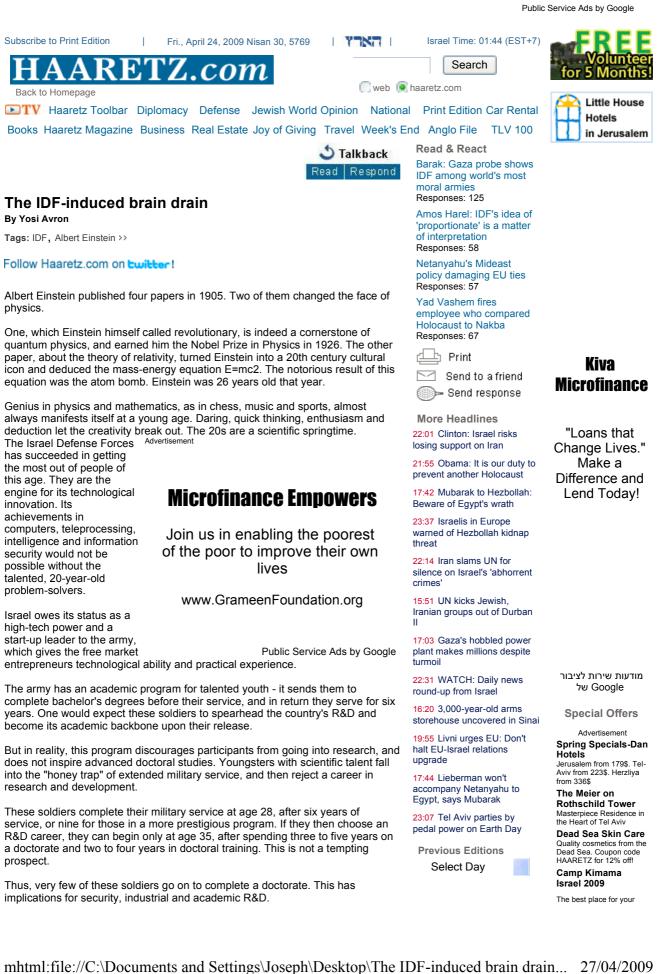
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To find one's place in Israeli academia, one must first prove oneself in the international academic community. The latter sees six years of military service as a black hole during a critical period of potential scientific activity. These demobilized soldiers begin their doctoral studies at an age when most academics are seeking jobs as junior professors.

Under these conditions, Israelis will find it difficult - or even impossible - to take part in scientific research at leading universities.

The crisis caused by the IDF's academic program can be seen in the fact that none of the Technion Physics Department faculty members hired over the last 15 years came from this program. This is not good for the IDF either, because gifted youngsters will not choose a track that closes academic doors.

The IDF academic program must therefore be reorganized in order to provide the IDF with the personnel it needs, while encouraging and enabling participants to complete a doctorate at a reasonable age. This is the only way to ensure strong R&D, advance Israeli academia and create a viable basis of quality personnel for the IDF.

The writer is dean of the Technion's Physics Department.

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