

## Tel Aviv Forum: Contemporary Aspects of National Resilience

Hod Ben Zvi  
October 26, 2012  
UPF - Israel



**Tel Aviv, Israel** - Following UPF-Israel's round table discussion in August, which dealt with defining the term national resilience, a group of experts in various related fields convened at the Renaissance Hotel in Tel Aviv on October 26 to further develop the theme.

Resilience in general refers to the ability to be flexible and withstand pressure without breaking down or the ability to return to the original state after being challenged. National resilience can be defined as the ability of a nation to maintain its collective identity and its citizens' freedom and enable their prosperity during long-term conflicts or in the wake of natural calamities.

The presenters were Prof. Eliezer Glaubach-Gal, President I. Foerder Institute and a political writer; Mr. Shay Ben Dov, a high-tech entrepreneur; Prof. Eldad Pardo, an expert on Iran and the Middle East, The Hebrew University; Dr. Drora Ben Dov, strategy expert, a political consultant, and spokeswoman of the Israeli Media Association on international affairs; Hon. Ran Cohen, former Knesset member and Minister of Trade and Commerce, a writer and a lecturer; and Mr. Hod Ben Zvi, senior advisor of UPF-Israel.

Each presentation was open open to questions and answers from among the other participants, who contributed enlightening comments.

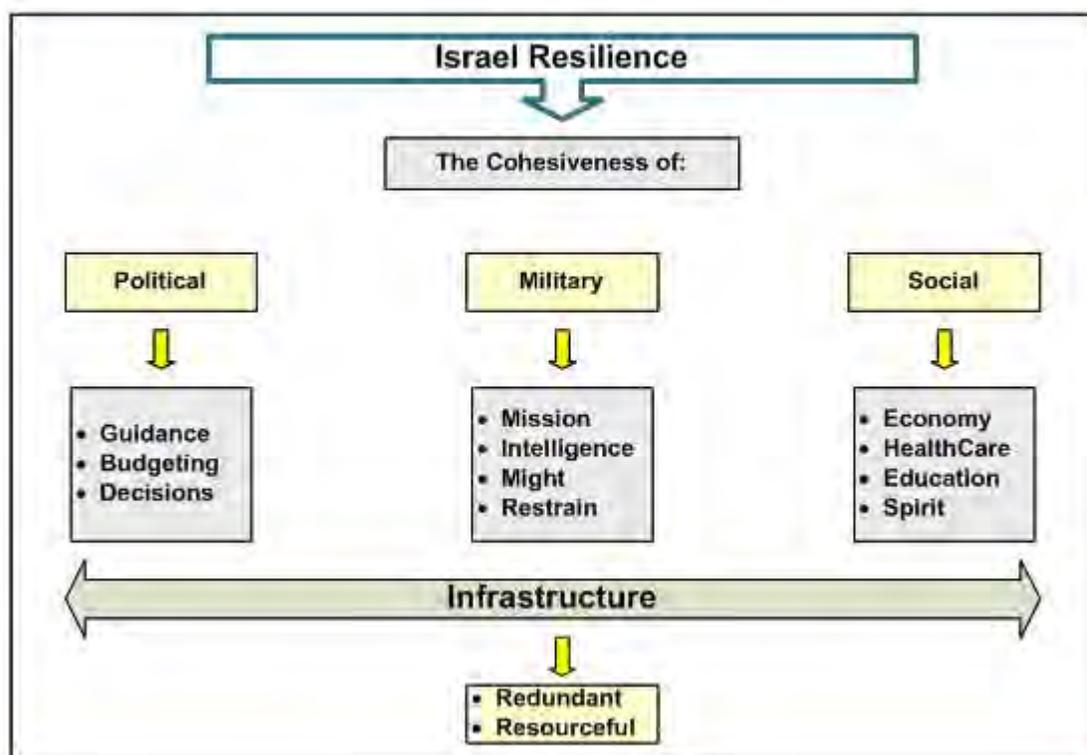
### **Opening remarks by Prof. Eliezer Glaubach-Gal**

North Sudan is an example of how Iran is building logistics centers in order to harm the State of Israel. On October 25, the New York Times reported, 'Military Factory Bombed in Sudan's Capital.' That center is known as a weapons factory mostly employing Iranian workers. Does this event relate to national resilience? Definitely so in Israel, as it is a direct threat to the lives of our people. The Jewish people for so many years have developed an inner resilience to combat dangers, and that is why as the nation of Israel we are continuously seeking peace based on the prophetic concept of world peace. We are dealing with contemporary challenges and threats that Israel faces on all levels, including national security and practices. We also aim to be able to share our experiences with other nations facing similar threats.

### **Mr. Shay Ben Dov**

I'm an Israeli Navy veteran with an extensive executive career in Europe, the Far East, Korea, China, and the Philippines. Israel's spirit of national resilience comes from the cohesiveness of our political, military, economic and social systems. Any military action requires the general public's consensus; otherwise, it will be like Israel's war in Lebanon or the US engagement in Vietnam. Social factors are the most important for national resilience in order to build up the nation's spirit. Infrastructure and resources are

required for any military action by government order, and together there is a lot of needed support from civilian initiatives.



### Prof. Eldad Pardo

While Israelis typically consider themselves part of the Western world and are proud of their vibrant democracy, a closer look at the geography, population, culture, and history of the country will reveal that it inextricably belongs to the Middle East. Israel's impressive record as a free country does not make it a foreign – Western – implant in the region, even if, unfortunately, the penetration of democratic values to the Middle East still faces great hurdles. The Biblical and historical attachments of the Jewish people to the Holy Land are well known across the world. Less known is the fact that the great majority of Israelis – Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Druze – have lived for millennia in Muslim-majority lands and remain attached to the culture.

Israel forms part of the Shami/Levantine section of the Middle East that includes also Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories, yet its culture also includes myriad regional deposits, or sediments, from Moroccan to Afghani, Iranian and Kurdish, and from Palestinian to Sudanese, Turkish, Iraqi, Uzbeki, and Azeri. All these impact the daily evolving of the country's bubbling culture alongside other influences from around the world. Moreover, while everyone knows about the exodus of European Jews after the Holocaust, few are aware of the even larger exodus of Jewish refugees driven out of Arab and Palestinian territories into Israel largely in tandem with the exodus from Europe that played a dramatic role in Israel's makeup and identity. Even fewer are aware of the Arab-Turkish dimensions of Israeli culture, a legacy of centuries of Ottoman rule.

In fact, Israel remains the only non-Arab country in the world in which Arabic and Arab culture form part of its official identity and legal system. Just as Israel's democratic culture takes precedence over memories of persecution under Christendom, so should regional cultural affiliation not be hindered by Islamic persecution in the past and by conflicts that linger into the present. Israel, as an open society, should embrace its Middle-Eastern identity more emphatically.

### Dr. Drora Ben Dov

There are regular missile attacks on a quarter of Israel's population. Although most nations could not cope with similar circumstances, Israelis can continue life as normal as possible. Our economy and society are doing well enough in the world because national resilience is a part of our reality on both national and personal levels.

Citizens count on our authorities to provide the means to live and prosper freely, and the news media continuously promote how the army is protecting the nation and dealing with terrorism and missile attacks, so the population feels safer.

Israel's news media is not government manipulated. Journalists have served in the army and their children do too. Thus, the general population sees the media as committed and loyal to their security.

### **Hon. Ran Cohen**

Hon. Ran Cohen focused in his paper on two unique aspects related to Israel's resilience: (1) historical human dimension and (2) nuclear policy. He pointed out the seemingly contradictory fact that children who are raised in loving homes and peace-seeking societies such as the kibbutz can naturally serve as soldiers and even volunteer to be elite troops. He could testify to such an experience first hand. Explaining this phenomenon, Hon. Cohen brought up several points, including the effect of the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel as an independent state.

The Jews who grew up in the years of the Second World War were deeply affected by the enormous destruction of the Holocaust. Since one third of the Jewish people were exterminated in this war, the survivors developed an important sense of responsibility for their lives. They shouldn't trust or expect anyone else to take care of protecting them. The Jewish people would not survive unless they took full responsibility for their own self-defense. This generation experienced the birth of the state of Israel. Its defense policy was embedded in the national foundation even prior to its establishment, by setting up human and economic resources and establishing settlements to protect the borders.

Being a small and young nation, the joint efforts of the entire population were required in order to support the army as it fought for the nation's life. Only great courage and a willingness for self-sacrifice ensured the establishment and the existence of the Jewish state. Thus, victory was gained by a very small army (only several tens of thousands of young people) over the large and established armies of seven neighboring states.

While self-defense became the Israelis' way of life, Hon. Cohen expressed confidence that in the long run, only peace will guarantee security and prosperity.

The IDF was founded as a national army with compulsory service rather than a professional army. This volunteer basis ensured the fact that even 64 years after the establishment of the state, and even in times of disintegration of social solidarity, the majority of the young people serve in the army and are still willing to risk their lives to protect their country.

The young soldiers of today are contributing to the security of their state not only through admirable courage and the ability to withstand suffering (as demonstrated by Gilad Shalit!) but also with their intelligence, creativity, and innovation in and out of the battle field.

For its nuclear policy, Israel chose the path of nuclear ambiguity. Regarding the question of whether Israel has in its possession such weapon systems, such policy has a deterrent effect on potential enemies while not exposing Israel to international pressures of disarmament. In addition, Israel has managed to create a geopolitical understanding that does not tolerate the possession of nuclear weapons by nations who threaten to destroy the state of Israel.

### **Mr. Hod Ben Zvi**

National resilience can be characterized by the ability to be flexible and withstand pressure without breaking down, plus having the ability to return to the original state after being challenged. No doubt that politics are one of the major components in building national resilience. Thus, I would like to briefly explore some positive and negative effects of various political agendas towards the development and sustainability of Israel's resilience.

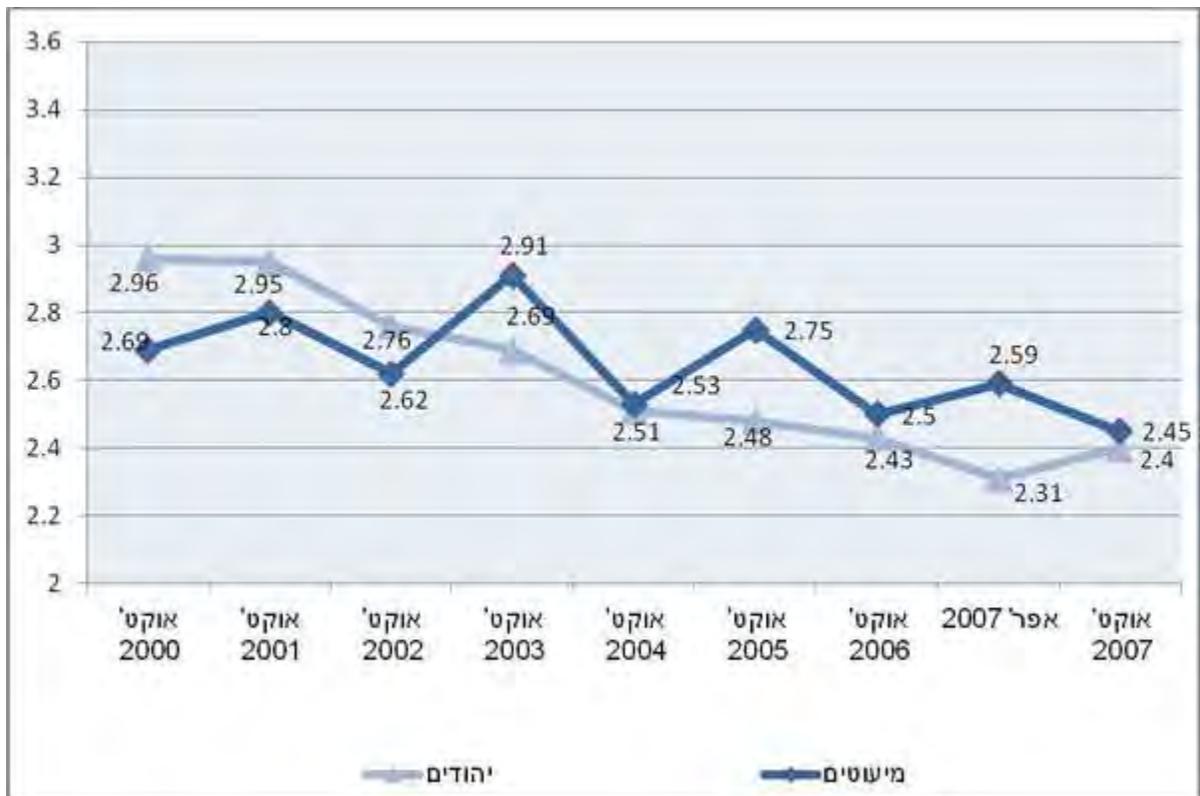
There are many obvious factors, such as the call for increase or decrease of security-related budgets, promoting or opposing education with a national narrative, advocating responsible or populist economy, etc. However, people often ignore the importance of ethical and moral standards in politics as an essential component in building national resilience. Proper ethical standards give nations a moral strength unrelated to the standards of others and attract positive reactions from the international community.

Since recent research shows an ongoing decline in trust towards political institutions, we must seriously examine the measures needed to be taken to alter such a dangerous direction. Such measures could include setting a clear ethical threshold for entering political life, minimizing the size of sectoral politics, and developing high moral standards for leadership training.

Having a sound, reliable, and responsible political system should not be regarded as luxury or a matter of luck, but incorporated as a building block of national resilience.

(Below) Trust in political institutions in Israel, From 1 (don't trust at all) to 6 (in total trust)

Dark gray – minorities, light gray - Jews



Hod Ben Zvi's presentation is below.

The positive and negative effects of the existing various political agendas towards the development and sustainability of Israel's National Resilience

National resilience can be defined as the ability of a nation to maintain its collective identity and its citizens' freedom and enable their prosperity during long-term conflicts or in the wake of natural calamities. The ability to be flexible and withstand pressure without breaking down and be able to return to the original state after being challenged.

**Prof. Gabriel Ben Dor, Dr. Drora Ben Dov**

### Major national resilience components

- **Military**
- **Social**
- **Political**



**Guidance  
Budgeting  
Decisions**

**Shay Ben Dov**

# Israel's political structure

- Like other nations around the world: Right, Left and Center
- However, the defining components are different and tend to change periodically.
- In addition there are 3 sectorial blocs:
  - Orthodox
  - Immigrants
  - Arabs
- Politics in Israel primarily revolve around security and only then around social and economic issues.
- Belonging to Right, Left or Center is often related with

**The Palestinian issue**  
**Terror and threats to national security**  
**Settlements**  
**State & religion**  
**Economic policy**

# Possible positive effects of political agendas towards strengthening national resilience:

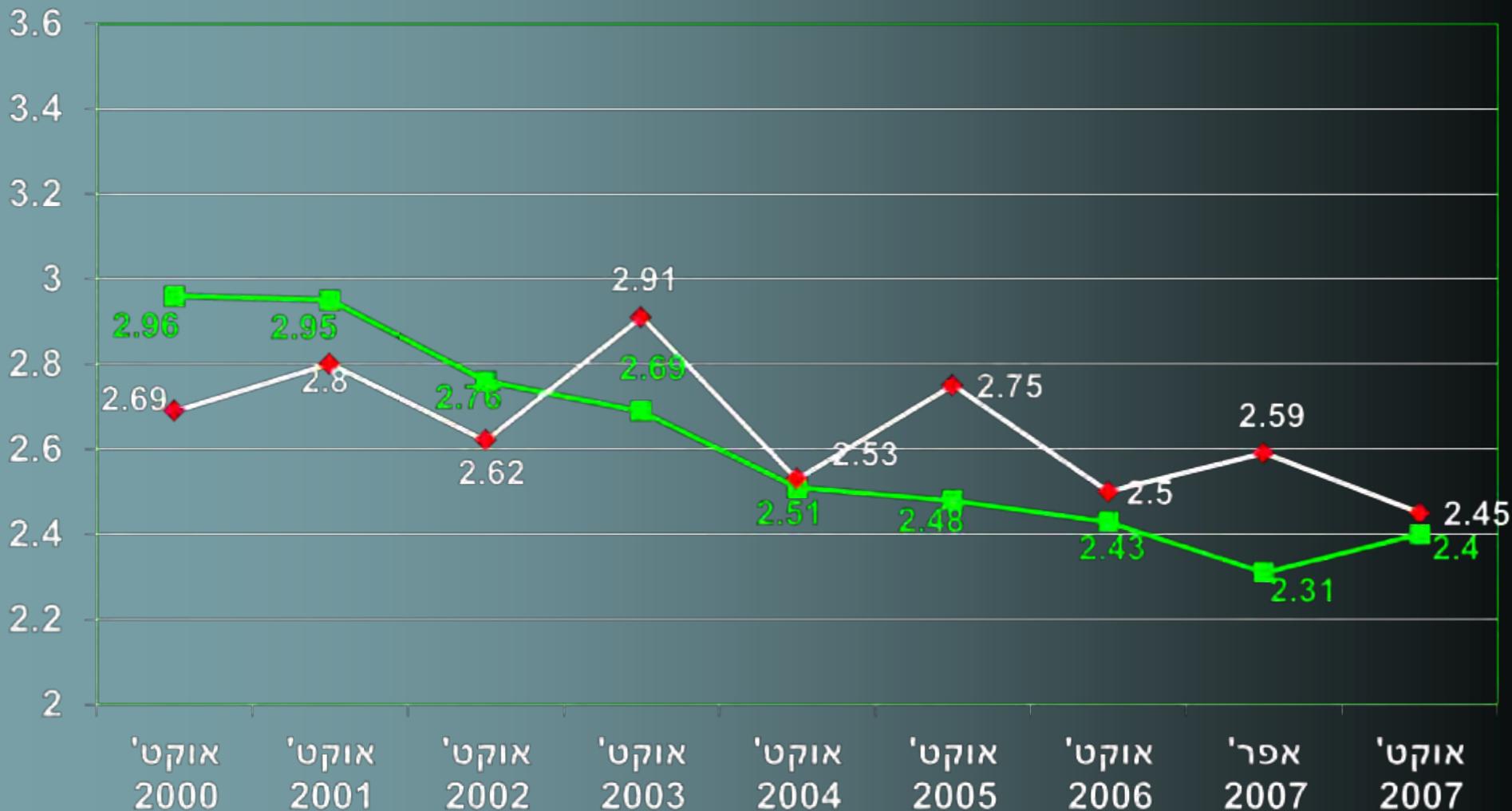
- **Allocating sufficient budgets to national security**
- **Strengthening self esteem and national pride**
- **Advocating equality in national service**
- **Developing better education systems**
- **Creating international alliances**
- **Developing economy to attract international investments**
- **Advocating integrity and social justice**
- **Resolving conflicts with enemies to reduce potential threats**

# Possible negative effects of political agendas towards strengthening national resilience:

- **Allocating insufficient (or overgrown) budgets to national security**
- **Lowering self esteem and national pride**
- **Advocating sectorial needs over national ones**
- **Creating international isolation**
- **Weakening economy to satisfy populist trends**
- **Despising integrity and creating social injustice**
- **Fueling conflicts with enemies, thereby increasing potential threats**

# Trust in political institutions

From 1 (don't agree at all) to 6 (in total agreement with)



■ יהודים

◆ מיעוטים

תרשים 7: שיעור הלא סומכים על גורמים שונים בישראל (מוסדות ממשלה, ארגונים ומוסדות חברתיים) 2004-2009



Social resilience survey, 2009

נערך ע"י מאגר מוחות - מכון מחקר ויעוץ בינתחומי בע"מ

# National Social Resilience at Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Prof. Amir Barnea , Prof. Rafi Melnik

- **Political index**: measured by the strength of the rule of law, corruption, governance, stability, and democracy
- Israel compared to the 20 OECD countries (20% lower) and 4 neighboring countries: Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan (30% higher)
- Examining the Israeli political index shows a continuous decline over the past two decades parallel to the decline in social index.

## Conclusions:

- **Ethical and moral standards are an essential component in building national resilience in two aspects:**
  - Internally – how we see ourselves, moral strength unrelated to the standard of others**
  - Externally – how other nations see us**
- **The political sectorial blocs should gradually diminish, allowing those who uphold the wider national interest to grow.**