

## Organizing Intelligence for Resilience: An Israeli Perspective

MEIR ELRAN

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Resilience is a recent and emerging theme in the Israeli political and academic discourse. It is mostly associated with the growing security threat to the civilian home front, which finds itself exposed in the last two decades, time and again, to severe terrorist attacks manifested in a variety of means: from massive perpetual suicide bombings, as was the case in the Second Palestinian Intifada of 2000-2004, to high trajectory rockets and missile launches, as happened in the Second Lebanon War with Hezbollah in 2006; and in the conflict with Hamas in and around the Gaza Strip in 2008-2009. The common denominator to all these cases is the preplanned assault on civilian targets, considered to be the weak link of the system ("spider web" to Hezbollah's Nasrallah), in order to bring about the demoralization of the civil structure, and the dysfunction of the political and social systems. This is designed to cause acute pressure on the political leadership, and to force it to change its positions on issues of national importance pertaining to the prevailing conflict with Israel's neighbors.

These consecutive episodes – three in a decade – have brought about the growing realization that what Israel faces here is not another round of a regular conflict, one that can be handled mostly by the military and the security services. Rather, it is a new paradigm of confrontation, which intentionally focuses directly on civilian targets (almost 80% of the 1000 casualties in the Second Intifada were civilians, many of them children and women). It has become apparent that even if the security and military organs have a major role in actively suppressing the terrorist attacks, the resilience of the civilian systems – their capacity to bounce back rapidly following the repercussions of the trauma – will shape the image of the conflict outcome: the more resilient the

civilian front appears to be internally and externally, the more flexible is the freedom of maneuver for the government and the military to exercise their force over the perpetrators. This is evidently true also the other way around, as was exposed in 2006. Furthermore, the Israeli experience has taught us that resilience is not a static capacity, but one which depends on multiple social and political factors. It can and should be enhanced before the next crisis.

At the same time it has also become clear that resilience is not only a significant capacity for Israeli society in the framework of its conflict with its neighbors. Resilience is also an important component in the strategy of Israel's adversaries. In all three rounds since 2000, and expectedly also in the future, Israel has been engaged in a profound psycho-social duel, in which civil populations on both sides are subject to traumatic pressures, and consequently its resilience, or the lack thereof, is crucial for the outcome of the conflicting rounds. Admittedly, the socio-political setting is not the same in all cases. Whereas Israel is a liberal democracy where vertical and horizontal channels of communication are short and open to swiftly reflect social vulnerabilities and post traumatic syndromes, the situation in Gaza, the West Bank or in Lebanon is different. Those are societies characterized in distinct manners by dogmatically ideological – and religious – patterns in which the discourse between the political leadership and its constituency is not necessarily based on liberal practices. In these societies, social resilience or vulnerability is reflected differently from liberal democracies which makes it more difficult to assess from a western perspective. It is therefore necessary to address the role of intelligence in assessing resilience, as manifested on both sides of the fence.

Israeli social resilience can theoretically be measured and assessed on a continuous basis. This is yet not the case. Israel is still to a large

extent captured by the conventional offensive paradigm of resisting/repressing terrorist actions rather than enhancing the resilience of their victims as a defensive factor to neutralize or minimize terrorist political gains. Still, there are some early indications that this traditional strategy is being re-examined, to give way to the realization that augmented social resilience can be a major asset in combating terrorism. Israel's ministry of Defense, the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), and the Homeland Command of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), have recently started to address the notion of social resilience as a key factor in counterterrorism, and have even initiated several new – admittedly limited - projects to enhance community resilience in this specific context. So far, these early and hesitant steps have not altered the traditional role and modus operandi of the intelligence community in Israel. It still gives clear priority to the collection and processing of information for active prevention of terror by military and associated means. Resilience is engaged to a lesser degree with defensive measures, such as early warning and data gathering for active defense and to an even lesser extent with issues related to field of resilience. In fact, the proclaimed official priority of the IDF's Home Front Command presently centers on two missions. One is to upgrade intelligence gathering and dissemination capacity in order to improve the early warning capacity by narrowing the geographic scope of the adversary's missiles' targets, so as to enable those outside the marked zone of danger to keep up their so called "emergency routine". The second priority mission is associated with the multi-layered defense system, based on integral close circuit intelligence. Both are correctly considered to contribute to social resilience. What is still missing is the capacity to measure and assess the state of resilience of the public in general and systems of special national strategic importance in time of crisis in particular. This void is due in part to the lack of awareness as to the centrality of resilience, but partly because there is yet no

accepted method how to do it. Discussion of measuring the public's resilience also raises the sensitive issue of who will take responsibility for this unique kind of data collection and interpretation. In Israeli democracy there is a basic reluctance on the part of the intelligence community to enter into subjects that might infringe on domestic politics. Certainly none of the existing intelligence organizations can fulfill this task, perhaps apart from the National Security Council in the Prime Minister's Office.

*The social resilience of Israel's adversaries* is an issue which definitely resides in the responsibility realm of the intelligence community. The intelligence community is expected to produce analysis and insights on the reactions of the Palestinian and the Lebanese population to the military and political steps, often harsh, taken by Israel to suppress and respond to terrorism. There are two associated challenges for the intelligence community to tackle in this respect: the less convoluted one would be to gauge the rate of resilience of the hard-core terrorist organizations. More complicated is the assessment of the resilience of the political and social systems that are associated with them. Even more of a challenge, but a necessary mission, is to evaluate the resilience of the general public in the territories controlled by the terrorist groups. This is vital for the understanding of the effectiveness of the counterterrorist strategies: Quite often there is wide collateral damage caused by the military or other restraining measures taken against terrorist targets. This damage might have diverse effects on the social and political surroundings of the core radical groups. Only a sound understanding of those effects by the intelligence community would reveal the true picture and could help to shape the correct strategy. In too many cases Israel was wrong in forecasting the response of the public surrounding the militant leadership. In more than a few instances it was not understood that harsh measures, which inflict traumatic

damage on the civil population, might bring about the consolidation of the popular support of the militants rather than its weakening. Too often the social resilience and the capacity of the people on the other side to bounce back, even on a low level of social conduct, were not taken into consideration. This is, of course, a crucial issue present in the Middle East, particularly within an asymmetric paradigm of conflict. It is doubtful that conventional intelligence practices are sufficient. Perhaps we lack the depth of learning of the culture, language, and the value systems of the societies engaged, particularly where the religious fundamentalist beliefs and social structure contribute to molding the concept of the struggle against Israel, perceived as a secular arch-enemy, aligned with and supported by the western world. The broader question is whether western democracies can contrive a true comprehension of the drive of a radical Muslim environment. Humble judgment would suggest that this is an enormous challenge, which is not necessarily limited to the Israeli intelligence community.

In conclusion this paper will offer three final concrete challenges relating to intelligence and resilience:

1. *High social resilience depends on thorough preparedness, which requires a balanced threat assessment; a widespread and open intelligence dissemination system, which knows how to differentiate between two distinct cliental: the political and military establishment for the sake of decision making, and the general public. The latter might not always understand the fine tuning and complex language of the experts. Special "filters" have to be introduced in order to regulate the discourse between the professionals and the public. Also, the intelligence evaluation of the threat must be frequently updated, to provide a solid basis for civilian response.*

2. *In time of actual crisis*, the most important intelligence product would be the strategic and tactical early warning, to serve both the military and the civil front. Here again communication with the public is a unique challenge, which needs special skills and mechanism of delivery. It must be unmistakably clear, succinct, and timely.
3. *At the organization level*, it is imperative to ensure the resilience of the intelligence apparatus – as a vital national asset - in time of crisis. The intelligence community has to recognize its own vulnerabilities, to foresee the risks it faces, and to prepare well in advance to ensure its full capacity when it is mostly needed.

