

National Resilience and Social Resilience according to Lieutenant General (ret.) Moshe “Bogie” Ya’alon

Kobi Michael and Joel Fishman

Abstract

Seeking a coherent definition of national resilience, this paper conceptualizes the term National Resilience, based on an in-depth interview with Lieutenant General (ret.) Moshe “Bogie” Ya’alon. Ya’alon argues that the components of national resistance are first and foremost leadership, trust in this leadership, faith in the righteousness of our way, shared destiny, and unity of purpose. Israeli society’s purpose ought to be linked to a shared destiny, to the life of a people that has returned to its land and is prepared to sacrifice for its national home. Therefore, it is necessary to have a leadership that will know to present these goals clearly and to say this explicitly. Today we are in a situation of sub-conventional war where the target of enemy attacks is not our military forces but our civilians. In recent years what was tested in all the military campaigns was society’s ability to remain steadfast. This situation requires the leadership to speak directly to the citizens about the cost of independence and to state clearly that the road is long and hard. Leadership which is based upon public trust is a matter of critical importance. Therefore, it is forbidden for the leadership to act under a cloud of doubt as to the purity of its character.

Keywords: national resilience, national solidarity, leadership, trust, education, shared destiny, people’s army model, governance, a Jewish and democratic state

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Introduction

National resilience refers to the nation's capacity to contain a disaster and to preserve the functioning of society in an adaptive manner; the capacity of the affected national community to react to the catastrophe in accordance with its severity and magnitude; and the ability of the affected community to bounce-back from the low point of functionality reached during the disaster to its normal – or even to an improved – level of functioning (Keck & Sakdapolark, 2013; Kwork, Doyle, Becker, Johnston, & Paton, 2016; Lewin, 2012). The concept of resilience became common in the public discourse all over the world with the rise of terror attacks ever since the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of a new millennium. Usually, national resilience is considered to be a form of immunity, that is – the system's capacity to isolate itself from certain hazards, mainly by practicing conceptual, mental and physical steadfastness (Elran, Israeli, Padan, & Altshuler, 2015). The social component of national resilience is frequently measured by patriotism, optimism, perceived collective threats and trust in the country's institutions and leadership. In fact, these factors have been measured in the Israeli case consistently ever since 2000, and published (Ben-Dor & Lewin, 2017).

Seeking coherent definitions of national resilience, and in an Israeli context in particular, we chose to open the first issue of *National Resilience, Politics and Society* with a conceptualization of the term National Resilience, based on an in-depth interview with Lieutenant General (ret.) Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon. Ya'alon is former Chief of Staff of the IDF and served as Israel's Defense Minister after having fulfilled other ministerial posts in addition to his membership in the State Security Cabinet. The interview was held at the INSS, Ramat Aviv, on November 26, 2018.

Ya'alon's point of departure with regard to everything having to do with social resilience and its centrality is rooted in his understanding of the importance of leadership in a country, such as the State of Israel, which faces challenges. According to Ya'alon, most of the basic assumptions which guided David Ben-Gurion, when he formulated his concept of Israel's national security, essentially

remain valid. The existence of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people in this region has not yet been accepted as a legitimate right. Despite the fact that the military challenges of the past, such as threats of invasion by Arab armies, have been transformed into other kinds of threats, Israeli society continues to confront challenges of an existential nature. The ongoing struggle demands a level of social resilience which depends upon a high level of social cohesion and trust in the national leadership, one that does not spread illusions but faces challenges and preserves the foundations of Israel's national interest. It must act in a manner that does not undermine the public trust and reach decisions in matters of national security within the context of the complex interrelationships of the political and military echelons.

Going beyond the issue of national resilience, we should consider the ideas which Moshe Ya'alon articulated in a broader context. When he met with us, he had organized his thoughts beforehand and came with prepared notes. One could say that he both gave us an in-depth interview and a well-reasoned personal statement, a document in its own right. Ya'alon carefully examined and explained the subject of national resilience in the context of Israel's well-established political traditions, especially the relationship of army and society.

In their seminal work over half a century ago, Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba constructed three ideal-typical political cultures: parochial cultures, subject cultures, and participant cultures. In parochial cultures, exemplified by African tribal societies, citizens have low cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation towards political objects. In these simpler traditional societies, there are no specialized political roles and little expectation for political change. In subject cultures, most compatible with centralized, authoritarian political structures, there is high cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation toward the political system and policy outputs, but orientations towards input objects (like political parties) and the self as an active participant are minimal. Thus, orientation toward the system and its outputs is channeled via a relatively detached, passive relationship on the part of the citizen. In participant cultures, members of society have a high cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientation to the political system, the input objects, the policy outputs,

and recognize the self as an active participant in the polity. Social actors tend to be activists and mobilized. In general, participant cultures are most compatible with democratic political structures, where the citizen is expected to obey the law, to be loyal – but he is also expected to take some part in the formation of decisions. Almond and Verba note that political cultures rarely conform to the ideal-types described above; rather, they tend to be mixed cultures. Hence, the civic culture is a fusion of parochial, subject, and participant cultures. It is this mixed quality of the civic culture that mediates the contradictions inherent in democratic systems, namely the tension between government power-effectiveness and government accountability-responsiveness. The parochial and subject orientations foundations of the civic culture modify the intensity of the individual's political involvement and activity. This facilitates elite decision-making and effective governance. Yet the citizen in the civic culture is also a potentially active citizen; his role as active and influential enforcer of the responsiveness of elites, is maintained by his strong commitment to the norm of active citizenship (Almond & Verba, 1963).

Other theories of political culture, following Almond and Verba, addressed the question how political culture takes root and is transferred from generation to generation through political socialization. These include Seymour Martin Lipset's formative events theory, which describes the long-lasting effects of key events that took place when a country was founded (Lipset, 1994; 1996); Louis Hartz's fragment theory, which explains the long-lasting effects of European colonization on countries and societies (Hartz, 1964); and Roger Inglehart's post-materialism theory, which explains the long-lasting effects of childhood economic and social conditions (Inglehart, 1977).

As an ideologue of considerable ability, Ya'alon has built on the existing concepts of Israeli political culture and delivered a coherent statement which provided a new lens and terms of reference for understanding contemporary political life in Israel. If one were to use the terminology of political culture, this transition should now be understood as a form of "advocacy", which in the context of the 2019 elections in Israel helps explain the larger potential meaning of Ya'alon's statement.

Lieutenant General (ret.) Moshe “Bogie” Ya’alon’s Statement on National Resilience (November 26, 2018)

The geopolitical position of Israel is characterized by change, volatility and mainly by the chronic instability of the region. The changes in the strategic environment of Israel present a challenge to the fundamental understanding of its national security. Basic concepts such as deterrence, warnings, and decisive outcomes are being discussed and reexamined according to the changing context of the world of warfare, the destabilization of the regional order, the spread of failed states, and the strengthening of non-state actors, some of whom have become quasi-state actors.

We first must distinguish between national security and national resilience. National resilience is a component of national security. While national security deals with military strength, economic strength, and the strength of the state, resilience relates to softer matters, such as the degree that a society has a unity of destiny, unity of purpose, a faith in the justice of its cause, coherence, social solidarity, and the readiness of the individual to commit himself to the general good. Resilience, therefore, is not measured by the number of tanks or planes which the state owns, but in the readiness of the individual to commit himself to the general good. Above all, these components are linked to leadership and education.

From the dawn of Zionism, we, as a society, are grappling with challenges which are not simple. If, on occasion, one of the leaders argues that this is a country that is fun to live in, I will argue that this is not our purpose, and there must be something beyond personal well-being or personal advantage. As a society, our purpose is linked to a shared destiny, to the life of a people that has returned to its land after a 2,000-year exile, that is prepared to pay for the fulfillment of this idea and to sacrifice for the sake of the existence of the national home of the Jewish People. However, it is necessary to have a leadership that will know how to articulate these goals clearly and explicitly.

Education must enable people to be conscious of our historic task, one that will cultivate a sense of caring about what happens here. A national home is not only a

word with historical meaning, but it is a framework in which every citizen must be ready to accept responsibility for it – to be obligated to defend the national home, to settle it, to develop it, and finally, sometimes, when necessary also to sacrifice for it. Ultimately, living here sometimes demands the readiness of the individual to sacrifice for fulfilling the national dream. And we must be capable of stating such things forcefully.

In this context, the task of leadership is to create coherence, to lead the social process that will produce a sense of mutual responsibility, which is the profound significance underpinning the expression, "all Jews are responsible for one another". Leadership must guide from the top, and the educational system must act from the bottom and thereby provide the foundation for national resilience. Israel is not simply a state but an entity in which its citizens live in a reality where they must still fight the War of Independence of their country. We are still surrounded by certain forces that are not prepared to accept us in this region.

As far as leadership is concerned, an important issue is the degree of the people's trust in its leaders. Trust is an especially important component because, on occasion, the leadership must go to war with the understanding that such a move will exact a substantial price. Among all the different matters that make up our lives, trust in the leadership thus comprises one of the key components of national resilience.

What is crucial is not military striking power but the ability of a society living in today's reality to stand up under pressure. The military achievements of 1948 and later in 1967 made our enemies change their ways. During the Yom Kippur War they no longer thought of conquering the Land of Israel by military force. This was the last conventional war in which an entire army with all its resources had to fight face-to-face against other armies. In fact, it was the last conventional frontal campaign which our enemies initiated. Since then, we have been experiencing something else. The nuclear threat notwithstanding, which is an issue in its own right, we find ourselves today in a situation of sub-conventional war where the target of attacks is not our military forces but our civilians. According to Israel's enemies, the weak link in the chain of our security is national resilience. In the

1990s they saw a society in Israel that conveyed the message that it was tired of wars and put off by victories, along with a big question mark as to whether the reservists would be ready to report for combat when called up. They viewed the Zionist entity as being in retreat and, in the words of Hasan Nasrallah in his speech in Bint J'ail, after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, our enemies assumed that we were a society built upon "a spider's web". They regarded us as a society which appeared to be very strong but really was very weak. Nasrallah referred directly to these factors and expressed his doubts as to whether Israeli society would be ready to defend its national home and make the necessary sacrifices. This was the reason that our enemies chose to direct their attacks against the home front, to attack society and our ability to persevere. Their method was to use terror, mortar fire, and missiles. All the above represent different means of attack with the same strategic concept. The idea is to inflict harm directly on civilians, on society itself, while avoiding a confrontation with the Israel Defense Forces.

Suicide terror attacks along with Quassam rockets and missiles all of which target the civilian population are designed to harm Israel's ability to stand fast. Hence, in recent years in all the military campaigns the enemy tested society's ability to endure. The purpose of Arab propaganda was to destroy our belief in the justice of our cause and our understanding of the need to hold our ground. This type of propaganda was combined with the Second Lebanon War, the Second Intifada, and the various campaigns in Gaza. First and foremost, the purpose of these forms of warfare was to test our ability to stand firm as a society.

This situation requires that leadership speak directly to the citizens about blood, sweat, and tears. Leadership [must] explain to the people that our enemies are trying to harm our very lives and [conquer] this place, and for our part, we must by no means permit ourselves to be broken.

Many years ago, I learned that from a strategic point of view it is retreats which harm our ability to defend ourselves. They tell the enemy that its efforts to push us out are succeeding. It is not a tactical question of where our forces are deployed or their ability to fight in one demarcated area or another, but it is a strategic issue in which it is forbidden to create a situation where someone thinks

that terror pays. We must stand firm and be able to say to the people that the war will take months, and, if necessary – even years. We must never enter a campaign and then immediately ask ourselves when we will reach a ceasefire but we must be able to bear the burden, despite the fact that it entails the suffering of civilians. It is incumbent upon us in every situation to show that we are able to withstand pressure and that we are not giving in. This is the only way to deal with new challenges, and above all this path requires a leadership which knows how to tell the people truthfully what the situation is.

The message of leadership must be that we are still fighting our war of independence and that this task is not about to be completed anytime soon. It is regrettable, however, that over the years, Israeli leaders have cultivated an unjustified feeling of peace and quiet. The “prophets of peace” of Oslo – those who led the disengagement from Gaza, and those who plan further withdrawals – all created a golden calf of imaginary peace to which everybody genuflected. Such statements, unworthy of leadership, inflicted harm upon our national resilience. They fostered the illusion that, if we give in or retreat, we will not have to make any sacrifices.

Therefore, it is necessary to state clearly that the road is long and hard. When the leadership wants to create a false hope and avoids speaking the truth, when political considerations lead to declarations that foster short-term hope, they do harm. There was continuous damage from the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords [1993] until the Camp David summit [2000]. Behind this damage lies the absence of truth-telling by the leadership, even if it would have been difficult.

True and proper leadership is reflected in public trust. Leadership which is based upon public trust is a matter of critical importance. The public is led in military, economic, business, and political areas, and at the top of the agenda is the degree of professionalism and of values on the part of the leader. In order for a people to follow a leader, even if at one point he makes a decision to wage war, the question of trust is of utmost importance. We have already seen how our leaders crumple up and resign when they lose the trust of the public, as for example, after the Yom Kippur War and in the wake of the Second Lebanon War. If citizens

doubt the integrity of their leaders, if citizens suspect that the leadership does not place the good of the state as its highest priority and is simply working for its own financial advantage, serious harm is inflicted upon public trust, and this has a negative impact on national resilience. Therefore, it is completely forbidden for the leadership to act under a cloud of doubt as to the purity of its character. The people must not suspect the leadership of engaging in political manipulation or giving preference to any consideration other than the good of the country.

Furthermore, a people going off to war must know with certainty that it is the [choice of] last resort. When the political echelon makes such a decision, the people must be certain that it has tried everything and that everything was done to avoid it, and in this sense the war was a “war of no choice”. This was the major issue concerning the first Lebanon War [1982], whether or not it was a swindle and whether the deliberations about going to war were conducted honestly or reflected various political motives. The moment there was a doubt that it was possible to act otherwise, without going to war, significant damage to the ability of the leadership to lead resulted. This loss of trust, between the leadership and the people, should never have taken place.

These matters are linked to what we call the standard of placing the national interest above party politics, that deals with the exact degree to which the leadership actually places the good of the country, and only the good of the country, before its eyes. Placing the good of the country above everything else is needed to prevent the various negative symptoms which we have witnessed even in our own time, such as the attack upon the rule of law, against the judges, against senior army officers and the police. What was done to the head of the National Security Service [*Shaback*] with regard to the magnetometers placed on the Temple Mount and to the Chief of Staff in the case of Elor Azaria constitute examples of an assault upon professionals which erodes national resilience.

The average person looks at these events and feels that it is actually a political struggle against the institutions of the State. This should not happen because it is opposed to putting the good of the country above political considerations and will eventually undermine the trust of the citizen in the governmental bodies.

We must remember that all the bases of placing the good of the country above all else make sense in the light of "a Jewish and Democratic State". For example, the soldier Elor Azaria committed an un-Jewish act. When politicians made him into a hero, they inflicted harm upon the concept that "every man is created in the image of God". Thus, they profoundly damaged our spiritual foundations, and, consequently, one of the important anchors of placing the good of the country above politics.

Within this context, it is difficult for me to reconcile myself with a situation where the Minister of Defense, or any other cabinet minister, hides behind the army, namely that certain ministers intentionally give the impression of encouraging a fighting spirit and calling publicly for military activism. Afterward, when a more moderate decision is adopted, and they themselves share in the responsibility, they claim in public that it is the army which does not want to fight. Such behavior creates a chaotic state of affairs, because people do not participate in cabinet meetings and therefore, do not understand what really is happening. Hence, for example, the public is given the wrong impression of a cabinet minister who publically expresses the desire to conquer Gaza, while only the army objects. Putting country before political considerations entails the full acceptance of the principle that the political echelon is above the army. Thus, it is unconscionable that a situation could arise in which the military echelon needs to be on the defensive. Such processes undermine the fundamental principles of placing one's country before politics, harm the public trust, and, naturally erode national resilience.

Generally speaking, as far as the relations between the army and society and between the political and military echelons are concerned, everything has to remain behind closed doors. When, as Chief of Staff, I opposed the disengagement from Gaza, I took pains to see that it would not reach the public. It was clear to me that once the decision was accepted – even if I opposed it – there was a shared responsibility. Thus, in this sense, the Chief of Staff is not a hired hand. Political and military decisions actually are accepted through the fusion of the two echelons: the military and political. If a decision is taken, and subsequently a political player hides behind a military one, eventually the officers will understand that they have no backing. Personally, I have

participated in cabinet meetings from Yitzhak Rabin's government to present, with the exception of the few years when Ehud Olmert served as prime minister. I must say from personal experience that if the principles of placing the good of the country above politics are adhered to, and there will be correct relations between the military and political echelons, as there were during the discussions of the "seven members" from 2009 to 2013, then, as far as security is concerned, the good of the country will prevail, and so will good governance. Nevertheless, when, later on, a change of the human make-up of the cabinet took place, and politics entered the picture, it became clear that it was not possible to hold discussions of strategic thought beyond those that took place in the ministry of defense. When the Prime Minister cannot depend upon a forum, and there is no guarantee that political discussions remain outside the room, the Prime Minister must get involved in political machinations, such as media spins. The transformation of the political discussion from a matter that remains in the room where decisions are taken into a public issue constitutes a proven recipe for undermining [the public] trust and harming national resilience.

When we speak of placing the good of the country above politics and we break it down into codes of behavior, it is clear that the discussion includes governance. The leadership cannot succeed in doing what it has to do because it does not really govern, and a lack of governance also harms the public trust. For example, cabinet minister Benny Begin recommended that the government approve plans for the contour of the Bedouin communities in the Negev. Among other things, their intended purpose was to enable Bedouin veterans of the IDF who have proved their loyalty and have fulfilled their obligation in protecting the country, to live legally as would any other citizen in this country. The plan was quite comprehensive and had a budget of nine billion shekels. It included infrastructures for housing, education, and employment. It was approved by the government but, even to this day, has not been implemented. The result of not carrying out this plan is that the Bedouins understand that we cannot get things done. The Jewish population in the south of the country also understands that there is no one who governs here. When we analyze this case and its consequences, as well as many other cases, it is not

surprising that, as a result of a lack of governance, there has been a decline in the public trust and damage to national resilience.

As we have stated above, the bases of putting one's country before politics derive from the concept of the "Jewish and Democratic State" and from the basic values of Zionism. Both putting one's country before one's politics and governance are linked. Both are linked to agriculture and settlement which constitute an important value in our lives. When we speak of agriculture, we must always remember that in this country there is a national struggle for the land. Therefore, the matter of agriculture is not only a branch of the economy but is partially needed for holding the lands of our patrimony. As Trumpeldor said, "the last furrow of the plough is the future border of the State". Today, this still holds true. We have a problem with minorities who attack farmers, crops, and agricultural equipment, herds or flocks, and property to the extent that farmers have nearly reached bankruptcy. Afterward, the outlaws come and buy the land at a cheap price. For their part, the farmers feel like a persecuted minority. They suffer from criminal-nationalist acts against them. They suffer the burning of their fields and their agricultural equipment, agricultural theft, and the destruction of their farms. In addition, they are exposed and helpless when the state does not provide them with the necessary security.

An additional problem which accompanies Arab attacks on Jewish agriculture is that we have made agriculture a branch of commerce (and nothing more than that) while totally ignoring its importance as a value. While European countries subsidize agriculture mainly for ecological reasons, we completely ignore the idea of nutritional security and view everything through the lens of financial profit. This is the reason why we allow the import of milk, tomatoes, and other agricultural produce. The fact that there are only several thousand farmers leaves them behind as a negligible electoral group and enables the national leadership to ignore their predicament. We must wake up, and, as with other issues, we must view matters over the long run, and consider policies on the basis of values and formulate our policies accordingly.

If we must evaluate things according to any set of priorities, it appears that the components of national resistance are first and foremost, leadership and

subsequently trust in this leadership, faith in the righteousness of our way, shared destiny, and the unity of purpose. The latter are all part of leadership and are the components which the leadership must encourage. In order to do this, the leadership must avoid a politics of divisiveness and incitement. The fragmentation of society and dissention among its classes, religions, ethnic groups and political groups severely harm the social solidarity which is required for national resilience.

It is clear that other areas in public life influence the make-up of national resilience. Economic and social issues are most important in their own right, but without a doubt also have significant effects on security. We cannot allow units in which one soldier receives new equipment from his parents upon his induction into the Israel Defense Forces, while another soldier comes from a home where the refrigerator is empty. Generally speaking, a soldier who feels that the state treats him unfairly and does not give him the opportunities which others receive will be difficult to lead over the long term. In this sense, there is no difference between soldiers and civilians, and the two groups are intertwined. Parts of the population that suffer, that feel alienated, may, over time, turn into social groups that do not participate in the activities of society. Their very existence constitutes a threat to social solidarity.

As far as national solidarity is concerned, which is necessary for national resilience, our model of an army of the nation, which includes obligatory service and reserve duty, is a unique framework which we must preserve. The essence of this model presents a challenge to the leadership because it creates a situation in which every normative family is a stakeholder in the army. Moreover, this is a situation where everyone is invested in the army and thus serves as a restraining factor for the political echelon. Hence, this situation serves to prevent superfluous military adventures. Nevertheless, we must remember that the intervention of the stakeholders, namely the families on the home front, in a negative manner such as the intervention of parents or relatives, only from the narrow point of view of what is important to them, may endanger the war effort. All of the above, as it were, present a challenge to the national leadership and requires it at any given moment to be able to explain its decisions to the people.

On the balance, the model of the army of the nation thus supports unity and solidarity and constitutes an important part of national resilience. As I have previously noted, the Defensive Shield campaign [2003] broke Nasrallah's thesis that Israeli society was like a spider's web. Even before the first bullet was shot, the strength of national resilience proved itself when the army reserves were mobilized. The numbers of those who reported for reserve duty reached 130 percent, and the entire public, parents and spouses, totally supported the mobilized forces. The whole society stood as one, and those who were not mobilized pleaded to be able to serve their country. It was a display of social strength and, even more so, a display of national resilience. After years when we conveyed the message that the Zionist movement was in retreat, here was evidence of a turning point. The mobilization of all of society is one of the sources of resilience. During Defensive Shield, this show of support was no less important than military might and the professional capability which the IDF displayed on the ground.

To be sure, the model of the army of the nation also has a professional advantage which should not be ignored. The Israel Defense Forces is deployed on the borders, and in order to be able to fulfill all its tasks, it must have reserves, which only [civilian] reservists can supply. Because we do not yet have some twenty million citizens, we still are a relatively small people, and the necessity of numbers dictates the need for a reserve army. Only the present model of the people's army makes this possible. Hence, we have no other choice but to preserve it. Nevertheless, we must emphasize that support for the existence of this model derives not only from its professional-military advantage but also from the merit of strengthening nation resilience.

In conclusion, social resilience as an important component of national resilience and national security is the right thing for a society under threat. Israel's case is unique because of the threat against our very existence as a national Jewish home and because our enemies have understood that they cannot defeat the IDF, and therefore, they intentionally target the civilian population. The test of the ability of Israeli society to stand firm becomes critical in such a situation, and depends upon leadership from above and education from below.

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