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Abstract

This article starts with a broad discussion related to theoretical and conceptual aspects comprising the concept Social Resilience at the national level, as well as its multiple definitions, dimensions and measurements. This is followed by a unique case study – a longitudinal study conducted in Israel, during the critical period (with over 1000 terrorism-related deaths) of the Second/ *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (2000-2004), showing some unexpected findings related to community resilience, at the national, mass-behavioral level. These findings comprise both public behavioral indices as well as attitudinal measures. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first time such measures are used to assess social resilience. A critical discussion follows, in which the author presents several theoretical and practical challenges to students of the Social Resilience paradigm.

Keywords

resilience, security, terrorism

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Social resilience has become a central notion in crisis management theory and practice. Along with economic strength, political stability, and military power, social resilience is now increasingly recognized as a major factor when considering the nation as a whole, or the capacity of a given community to withstand severe challenges, whether natural or man made.

This article presents a discussion of social resilience at the national level in times of protracted crises, giving definitions, methods, a case study, measurement methods, and conclusions. Several definitions of national–social resilience are presented, followed by some qualifications regarding these definitions. The case study, that of Israel, focuses on the period of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, between October 2000 and December 2003. The article closes with some possible conclusions, as well as suggestions for further studies and policy actions.

Definitions of Social Resilience

There are numerous definitions of the term *resilience*, several of which are included in this volume.¹ Indeed, as Walklate et al. indicated in their article, *resilience appears to be both a stretchy and pervasive concept and there is a relatively small body of analytical work that has addressed its historical origins and conceptual dimensions*. Initially, the term *resilience* was used in natural sciences (especially physics and mathematics) to describe the capacity of materials or systems to restore their equilibrium after displacement. A resilient material, for example, bends and “bounces back” rather than breaks, when stressed.^{2,3} Gradually, the term *resilience* was adopted by behavioral sciences to describe the adjustment and coping capacities of individuals,^{4,5,6,7} human communities,^{8,9} and larger societies.^{10,11,12}

At the individual level, resilience has been used frequently to refer to those attributes, or coping capabilities, that sustain the individual during stressful life events. Thus, a resilient individual is one who is able to continue functioning normally under adverse circumstances, and then, to revert back to his or her original state and function when the stressors cease.¹³ In the military, being resilient means that a soldier is able to experience stressors (as in combat conditions) and perform his duties and tasks in a reasonably normal fashion, and later, not display any negative consequences, such as posttraumatic stress reactions or similar symptomatology.¹⁴ In fact, the US military, for one, has recently applied a multimillion dollar program—the Master Resilience Trainer (MRT)—that teaches resilience skills to junior commanders in the Army, as the first phase to disseminate the MRT concepts to the entire force.¹⁵ While it has become one of the largest psychological interventions ever undertaken by a single institution, its effectiveness, nevertheless, is dubious and there is little evidence supporting prophylactic resilience training.¹⁶

Indeed, the rapid expansion and the growing popularity of the term *resilience*, as well as its elusiveness of meaning, are reflected, as our colleagues Walklate et al. have noted, in the depiction presented at the New American Foundation’s recent symposium (2012), entitled *Defining Resilience*:

The ability to bounce back, to absorb shocks, to persevere, to retain functionality over time, to endure, to adapt, to succeed, to survive, to sustain . . . so many verbs are conjured up by the term “resilience.” Whether we’re talking about our bodies, our minds, our communities, our institutions or our natural environment, the R-word provides a conceptual framework for designing a better tomorrow.¹⁷

The more specific term *Social Resilience* focuses, obviously, on the group’s, rather than the individual’s, level of resilience. The “social” adjective here serves not only to “oppose” the psychological or the physical version of resilience but also to emphasize the “community” or “societal” aspect of the term. Clearly, social resilience may apply to any collective entity, from a small community and a neighborhood to a large city and a whole nation. However, moving from individual resilience to social resilience does not imply an additive change, but rather a cumulative one. Discussions of community resilience often note that the “whole is more than the sum of its parts,” meaning that a resilient community may comprise also nonresilient individuals, or experience less-resilient moments, although community resilience as a whole, as a “unit,” will be high.^{18,19} Furthermore, as Brown and Kulig²⁰ observed, “people in communities are resilient together, not merely in similar ways.” However, is being “resilient together,” the same for small communities and close neighborhoods as it is in large cities and whole nations? Does social resilience mean the same for a distressed collective of people who are familiar with each other as for a whole-nation population under common adversity?

While at the current level of theory and research in this field there are no definite answers to such questions, several distinctions, nevertheless, can be drawn. In small communities, social resilience will be expressed primarily by prompt collective refunctioning and will rely mainly on reciprocal mental and physical support, on local and domestic resources, and on lay and professional local leadership, both formal and informal. Conversely, we postulate that the social resilience of a mass population, under a nationwide disaster, will be characterized by quick individual adaptation and a return to the “business as usual” mode, which is not necessarily dependent upon the state’s pace of recuperation. Furthermore, it is postulated that national–social resilience (i.e., social resilience on a national scale) will be contingent upon individuals’ well-being, sense of patriotism, and trust in state leadership, and curbed by the level of fear.

In light of the above qualifications, we chose a sample of definitions of social resilience, which seem relevant and compatible with the case at hand:

- The capability of a system to maintain its functions and structure in the face of internal and external change and to degrade gracefully when it must;²¹
- The capacity of a society to prepare itself for and to contain and manage major national crises effectively, to react in accordance with their severity and magnitude, and to “bounce back” expeditiously to an enhanced functioning;²²

- The ability of systems, infrastructures, governments, businesses, and the citizenry to resist, absorb, and recover from, or adapt to, an adverse occurrence that may cause harm, destruction, or loss of national significance.²³

While these definitions vary slightly in their emphases, they all, however, share the following characteristics of social resilience: first, the society's capacity to maintain its functions, or to contain a disaster or a series of catastrophes, in an adaptive manner; second, the aspect of relativity, that is, the capacity of the affected community to react to a disaster in accordance with its severity and magnitude; and third, the capacity of the affected community to "bounce back" from a low point of functionality reached during the disaster to its normal—or even an improved—level of functioning. It is important to point out that all three definitions emphasize "recovery" aspects—*degrading gracefully, bouncing back expeditiously, recover from, or adapt to*—thus highlighting differences between resilience and resistance (p. 8).²⁴

The question still remains as to what exactly the indicators of *society's capacity to maintain its functions . . . in an adaptive manner* are. How does a large community—say, a whole nation—exhibit its social resilience? The literature on social resilience is divided here into two conceptual directions. One approach, prototypically represented by Williams and Drury, emphasizes the inner-group attributes and the collectivity of the community. Williams and Drury define collective resilience as *the way people in crowds express and expect solidarity and cohesion and thereby co-ordinate and draw upon collective sources of practical and emotional support adaptively to deal with an emergency or disaster*.²⁵ We claim that such an approach can only apply to a small community, where interpersonal relationships can provide support and a sense of cohesion. When dealing with whole-nation resilience, the second conceptual approach, articulated by Fran Norris and her colleagues, comes in handy:

Although we recognize that a community is not merely the sum total (or average) of its members, we recommend that community-level adaptation be understood as "population wellness," a high prevalence of wellness in the community, defined as high and non-disparate levels of mental and behavioral health, role functioning, and quality of life in constituent populations.²⁶

Our choice of mass-behavior indicators, as delineated below, will reflect the second approach.

Although the focus in this study is on man-made disasters, rather than natural (the differences between the two, vis-à-vis resilience, is beyond the scope of this article), a definition taken from the field of ecological systems is of special interest for us. In the early 1970s, Crawford Holling²⁷ referred to two distinct aspects of resilience: one that focuses on the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes and one that focuses on the speed at which systems return to their normal condition. While systems rarely, if ever, return exactly to status quo ante,

what is meant is a return to normality,²⁸ albeit a new, slightly altered normality. Some experts²⁹ would include in their definitions even an “enhanced” level of functioning following crisis. Clearly, then, resilience is a dynamic, not a static, concept. Subsequently, the assessment or measurement of social resilience can only be achieved on a successive base, applying repeated measures across the crisis period. The effectiveness of such a sequential methodology is demonstrated in this article.

The uninformed reader may ask, “Why is defining resilience important at all? And, once defined and assessed, what can be done about it? What could resilient behavior achieve? Of what practical use is the actual assessment (or measurement) of a community’s resilience?” Obviously, the answers to these questions have a direct impact on both the early preparation for and possible prevention of disaster-related health or mental health problems of community members and maintaining effective organizational behavior and optimal disaster management during the crisis period.

However, monitoring and assessing the level of national resilience successively may also have implications at the national strategic level. It may affect the whole-nation way of life during extreme crisis and shape the strategic policies of national leaders. Historical examples, such as Finland during its Winter War, or the United Kingdom and the Battle of Britain are self-evident.³⁰ To address these practical aspects of national/social resilience, we have proposed³¹ two additional, “functional,” definitions:

- National–social resilience is the public’s readiness to face a major crisis, without compromising on their national and strategic objectives, or on their basic ways of life³²;
- “Demonstrated resilience” is the ability of the public to refrain from insisting that national leaders make hasty or premature decisions (e.g., either surrender to or take radical measures against threats).

The application of these “functional” definitions to national level decision-making processes will be demonstrated below with regard to the Israeli case.

Before continuing, it is also worth mentioning what is *not* included in all of the above definitions. The definitions of national–social resilience discussed in this article do not pertain to the following aspects:

- Economic strength (gross domestic product [GDP], state/national budget, unemployment rates, etc.);
- Political resilience (government stability, public support of leadership, etc.);
- Military power;
- Diplomatic relations and international status.

Indeed, these exact aspects (in addition to “the observance of individual liberties and civil rights”) were used by Richard J. Chasdy, in this volume, to assess levels

of national–state resilience of five states, including Israel, that have experienced “high intensity” terrorist assaults.³³

The present study has three objectives. First, in light of the relative ambiguity involved in the term social resilience, having chosen carefully several definitions of the term, we aim to demonstrate how they apply in practice, using a particular (yet not that distinctive) case study. Second, we will present a unique set of social-resilience measurements, at the national, mass-behavioral level. These measures are objective, unobtrusive, and are at the whole population level, rather than sample based. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first time such measures are used to assess social resilience. Third, while this study does not attempt to critically examine various theories of social resilience, it provides an opportunity to illustrate, through behavioral and attitudinal examples, the “bouncing back” pattern, often included in definitions of social resilience.

A note of caution: This study did not begin as a meticulous research design, nor was it conducted in an academic setting. The National Resilience Project resulted from a genuine and compelling need of the Israeli National Security Council (NSC), during the 2000–2004 *Al-Aqsa Intifada* period. While this might be considered a potential methodological weakness, it could also be this article’s strength.

The Israeli Case Study: The Second Intifada

During the two decades following the mid-eighties, Israel experienced a series of security-related crises: The First Intifada (from 1987 to 1993); the Gulf War (from January 17, 1991, to February 28, 1991); and the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (from September 2000 to 2004). The common characteristic of those three events is that, although they involved military forces, their main impact was on the civilian population. It is during these years and under these circumstances that the issue of national resilience became dominant in Israel’s public agenda. The forthcoming discussion, however, will focus on the manifestations of national resilience during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*.

Intifada is an Arabic word, which literally means “shaking off.” Though it is usually translated into English as “uprising,” “resistance,” or “rebellion,” it is often used to denote popular resistance to oppression.

The Second Intifada, also known as the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, was a period of intensified Palestinian–Israeli violence, which began in late September 2000 and continued in its intensive mode until early 2004.

The Intifada was characterized by frequent (sometimes daily) fatal attacks, perpetrated by Palestinian guerillas, in highly crowded civilian targets: shopping malls, restaurants, and public transportation. Many of these attacks were carried out by suicide bombers,³⁴ hence their high level of lethality. The suicide attack at the Park Hotel in Netanya (a popular beach town in central Israel), in which 30 civilians were killed while celebrating Passover, was the climax of the bloody month of March 2002, in which more than 130 Israelis, mostly civilians, were killed. The total death toll on the Israeli side during the entire period of the Second Intifada amounted

to 1,100 Israelis (not including the perpetrators) and sixty-four foreigners. Close to 50 percent of the death toll was caused by the suicide bombers.³⁵

Thus, the Second Intifada, throughout its entire period (of approximately three years) became one of the worst acts of indiscriminate homicidal terrorism in the twenty-first century. A systematic analysis³⁶ indicates that the Israeli citizens experienced during that period one of the highest frequencies of suicide attacks in modern history, resembling only those in Sri Lanka and Iraq.

The need to assess the changing levels of national resilience among Israeli citizens was based on the assumption that terrorism, in general, is actually psychological warfare waged against civilians in order to demoralize the adversary's society perpetually by killing innocent civilians.³⁷ Such demoralization will, in turn, damage the major functions of this society. In Israel, a country of circa seven million citizens in 2003, many of whom were recent immigrants and almost all affected by prolonged security-related crises, such an impairment may have crucial consequences.

Hence, the ultimate response to terror would be to strengthen the nation's social resilience; this would deter terrorists from achieving their political goals, and enable the continuation of normal daily functioning. To strengthen resilience, it has to be assessed systematically and its fluctuations have to be measured.

There was yet another reason for systematically monitoring how Israelis, throughout the State and the diverse society of Israel, will manage (according to the above definitions of social resilience) *to maintain their functions and structure in the face of a major national crisis*; whether they will *resist, absorb and recover from, or adapt to, an adverse occurrence that may cause harm, destruction, or loss of national significance*; and to what extent they will be successful in *reacting in accordance with the severity and magnitude [of the crisis], and "bounce back" expeditiously to an enhanced functioning*. This reason lies in the two "functional" definitions mentioned above. When the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* broke out, the Israeli Government (then headed by the hawkish-portrayed Ariel Sharon) adopted a restrained policy toward the Palestinian Authority (PA) that was responsible for the terror attacks. Except for limited retaliatory operations (mostly airstrikes) conducted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against various Palestinian targets, Sharon's government refrained from waging an all-out military attack against the Palestinians.³⁸ Such a large-scale operation would have meant reconquering the West Bank and Gaza, thus eradicating the Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the PA seven years earlier (September 1993)³⁹ and causing massive losses on both sides. The Israeli government found itself caught between a rock and a hard place.

One of Sharon's main dilemmas was whether he could sustain his restrained policy in face of the daily terror events. Taking into account the enormous intensity of the attacks, especially the suicide attacks, and the high fatality rate, the key question was how much more could the Israeli public take. How much longer would Israelis maintain their normal way of life? Holling suggested examining systems' resiliency from the aspect of the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before the system breaks.⁴⁰ Ariel Sharon's quandary, then, was how long the Israeli government

could avoid taking radical measures against the Palestinians—or, alternatively, yield to their demands (e.g., total withdrawal from all occupied territories)—before the Israeli public would “break down.” In short, how solid was the national resilience of the Israeli society? Only an accurate and objective assessment of the Israelis’ level of resilience could answer that question and thus provide crucial groundwork for Sharon’s decision-making process.

The PM’s query was delivered to the NSC, and, specifically, to the Domestic Policy Division.⁴¹ It was here, at the NSC’s civic-oriented section, that the National Resilience Project was launched and the measures of national–social resilience were developed.

Ways of Measurement

The basic premise of the initial R&D effort was that social resilience comprises two separate (though not totally independent) aspects: the behavioral and the attitudinal. A second premise was that both resilience dimensions are dynamic, constantly changing, and particularly susceptible to recent extreme events, namely to occurrences of terror attacks. Thus, the measurement approach adopted was based on a compilation of three sets of data:

1. *Situational database*: This category comprises the actual number of terror attacks (with a separate category for suicidal attacks), and their fatal consequences (number of casualties), between October 2000 and December 2003 (the main *Intifada* period), monitored monthly. The data are based on the official reports of Israel’s security forces (IDF, Israel Police). This “situational database” is actually representing the *major national crises* or the *adverse occurrence that may cause harm, destruction, or loss of national significance*—as the disastrous situation that is referred to in the resilience definitions above.
2. *Measurements of public behavior*. The main methodological challenge was to determine the behavioral indicators that would represent the *system’s [ordinary] functions and structure*, people’s ability to *react in accordance with the [crisis’s] severity*, or the public’s ability to *resist, absorb and recover from, or adapt to [the] adverse occurrence*. Based on the concept of *population wellness*, coined by Norris et al.,⁴² we looked for behavioral indicators which would adequately displays of *high and nondisparate levels of mental and behavioral health, role functioning, and [maintaining] quality of life* among the larger population of Israel during the protracted crisis. Consequently, we came up with the following four areas and their related behaviors:
 - (a) Daily routine (e.g., attendance at— or absence from—work and school);
 - (b) Economic conduct (e.g., visiting malls, banking transactions);

- (c) Manifestations of distress (e.g., urgent calls to local hotlines, crime rates, referrals to emergency rooms);
- (d) Recreation and leisure (e.g., movie and theater attendance rates, frequency of vacationing and traveling abroad).

These indicators were monitored in terms of monthly averages. The data were collected through the official relevant agencies. Thus, for example, the numbers of theater and cinema attenders was derived from monthly reports of the Israeli Cinema and Theater Association; "Calls to Hotlines" is the exact number of calls reported by all hotline agencies in Israel; and crime rates were based on police records. In other words, the public behavior measures represent the behavior patterns of all Israeli citizens, by monthly intervals, throughout the country. Since the basic pattern of all indicators showed similar trends (see below), we chose to present three typical indicators: "Calls to Hotlines"; "Cinema Attendance"; and "Number of Murders and Attempted Murders."

3. *Measurements of public attitudes.* Lewin and Ben-Dor⁴³ identified several components of social resilience that can be assessed, in their view, as subjective attitudes. A *sense of patriotism*, for example, is a leading social component of national resilience, because it motivates citizens to preserve and protect their country, to safeguard their life, and to defend their ideals once their nation enters a state of war or protracted terror attacks.⁴⁴ As Lewin distinctively described it, *without patriotism . . . , peoples are bound to fall apart.*⁴⁵

Other attitudinal components of social resilience, according to Lewin and Ben-Dor, are *collective fears* (as they encourage willingness to act against the threatening factor, consequently advancing patriotism and support of governmental policy) and *political and institutional trust* (the degree to which people have faith in the authorities and are willing to rely on their national leaders).

Based on Lewin and Ben-Dor's conceptualization, as well as our own postulation, we compiled data from various public attitude surveys, with specific regard to mood and morale (*well-being*), sense of security, sense of patriotism, fear of terror, and perceptions regarding the state of the country.

Results

Situational Database

Figure 1 portrays the actual number of terror attacks (with a separate category for suicide attacks) and the number of casualties, between October 2000 and December 2003, monitored monthly. The main characteristic of this portrait lies in its fluctuations, that is, noticeable ups and downs in the monthly frequencies of the terror attacks, which is significantly correlated (see below) with the fluctuations in numbers of casualties. While the incidence of suicidal attacks fluctuated as well, a distinct escalation is evident in the spring of 2002, peaking during the Passover

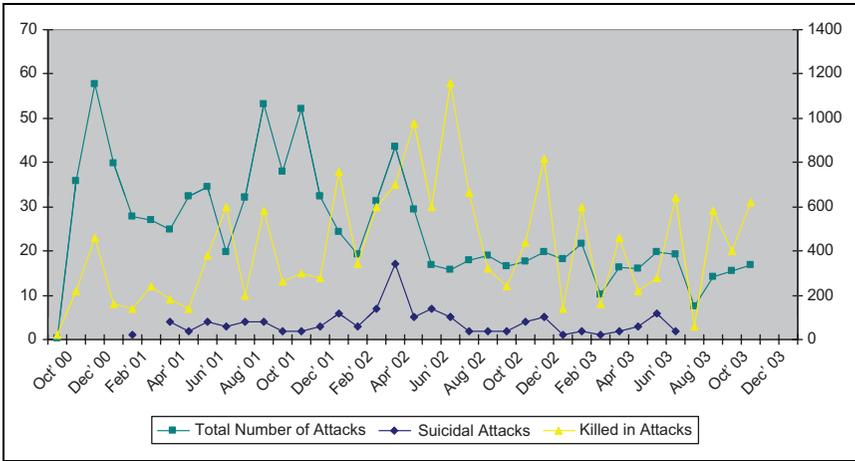


Figure 1. Situational database.

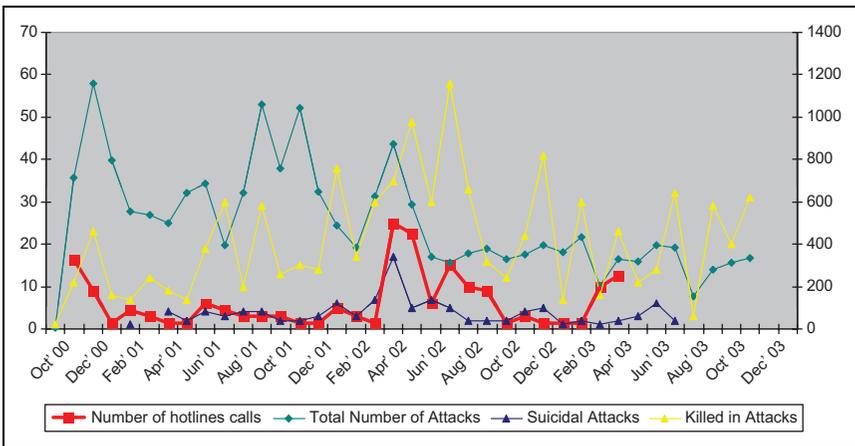


Figure 2. Calls to hotlines.

holidays. The statistical Pearson correlations between the three indices is .43 ($p = .02$) between “number of suicide attacks” and “number of casualties”; and .29 and .04 for “suicide attacks”/“total number of attacks,” and “number of casualties”/“total number of attacks,” respectively (both nonsignificant at the .10 level).

This situational database will serve in the following figures as the “background” data against which the corresponding measurements of public behavior will be displayed.

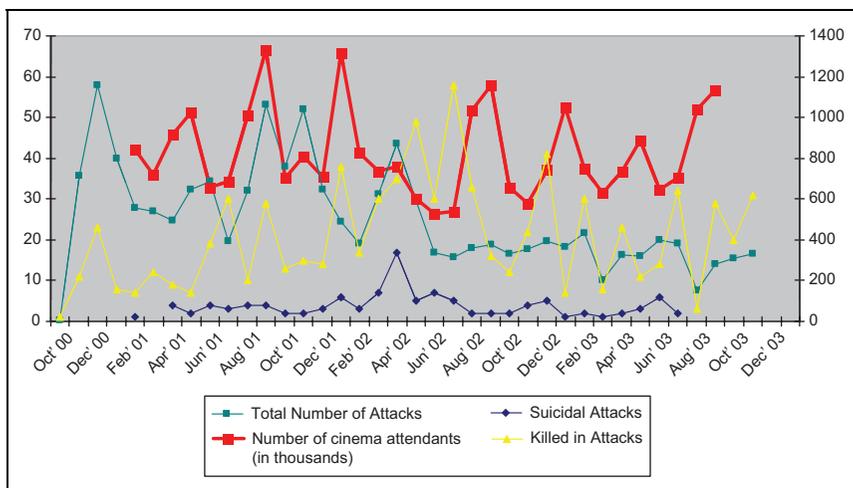


Figure 3. Cinema attendance.

Measurements of Public Behavior

Figures 2, 3, and 4 represent three examples of aggregated public behavior during the studied period: Calls to hotlines; cinema attendance; and number of murders and attempted murders.

The use of hotlines normally reflects a sense of distress. The aggregated number of hotline calls across Israel during the period of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* reveals an overall relative low level of distress, with several peaks: one at the very onset of the *Intifada* (October 2000) followed by a gradual decrease to “normal” level (December 2000). A sharp rise in the number of hotline calls is noticed in March 2002 (following the Park Hotel massacre in Netanya), and again in July 2002 (which was, again, an especially bloody month); both peaks were followed by a quick bouncing back to the minimal level. Finally, there is a noticeable increase in the number of calls in the spring of 2003. Unfortunately, we do not have the data to demonstrate another bouncing back pattern. The statistical analysis reveals a Pearson correlation of .552 ($p < .005$) with “number of suicide attacks,” .475 ($p < .01$) with “number of casualties” and .037 (ns) with “total number of attacks.”

The Cinema attendance indicator represents an aspect of citizens’ recreation and leisure habits. One may assume that under stressful conditions, such as repeated terror attacks, people will reduce their recreation and leisure activities, especially outside the home. Moreover, since many of the terror attacks (especially those carried out by suicide bombers) were conducted in large shopping malls, the common location of cinema theaters, attending those places would be most frightening. The repeated fluctuations seen in the Cinema attendance graph in Figure 3 show almost the opposite: while the actual correlations between cinema attendance figures and

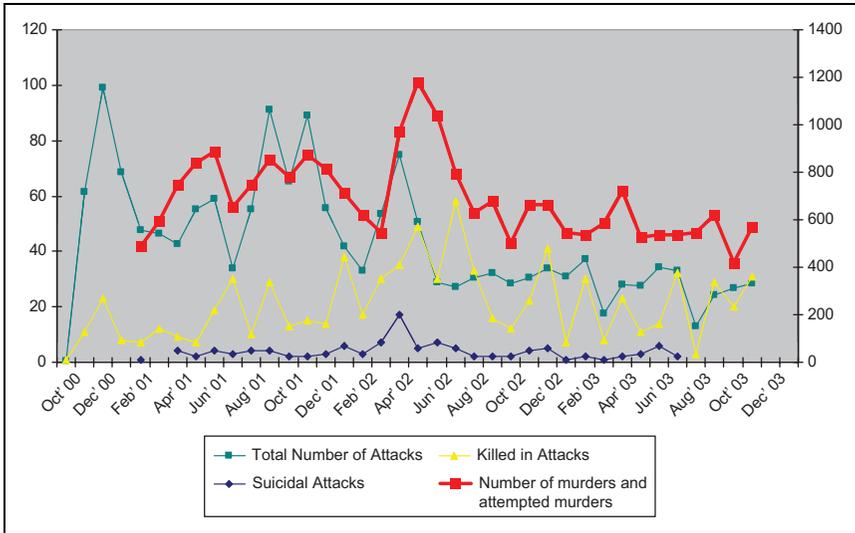


Figure 4. Murders and attempted murders.

the three situational indices are, as expected, in the negative direction ($R = -.18$, $-.16$, and $-.12$, for *number of casualties*, *total number of attacks*, and *number of suicide attacks*, respectively), the overall average frequency of Israelis visiting cinema theaters remained stable over the three-year period of the *Intifada*.

Criminal and violent behavior, including murders, attempted murders and domestic violence, may serve as an indirect manifestation of distress, as stress and aggression tend to reinforce each other.⁴⁶ Furthermore, recent literature shows that violent behavior is on the rise during wars and lethal conflicts, as demonstrated both in the Middle East,⁴⁷ in general, and in Israel, in particular.⁴⁸ The aggregated reports of the occurrence of murders and attempted murders throughout the three-year period of the lethal *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, as shown in Figure 4, do not show any such rise. They do, however, strongly correlate with the occurrences of terror acts: the numbers of reported murders and attempted murders correlated positively and significantly with variations in all three situational indices ($R = .54$, $.43$, and $.36$, for “total number of attacks,” “number of suicide attacks,” and “number of casualties,” respectively). Thus, the rates of criminal and violent behavior in Israel during this troubled period are characterized by sharp fluctuations related to the stressful cycle, but also by a steady average across the entire period.

Measurements of Public Behavior: Overall Picture

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above figures, with regard to the public behavior during the observed period:

- All measures of public behavior show strong fluctuations during the three-year period of the *Intifada*.
- The fluctuations are typically in correlation with the situational database, namely, with the variations in terror acts: immediately after a terror attack, there is a significant decrease (e.g., in cinema attendance) or a sharp increase (e.g., in the case of hotline calls, or crime and violence) in the behavioral indicators. However, these deviations in behavior patterns are usually followed by a relatively quick return to a “baseline” level.
- Notwithstanding the fluctuations, the overall trend (as reflected in the average level across the fluctuations) was relatively stable over the three-year period.

Using the phraseology of the social resilience definitions we sampled for this report, it is evident that the behavioral indicators of the Israeli public showed a relatively high level of *adjustment and a capacity to maintain (or contain) its functions and social structures*. Further, it seems that the public reactions were *in accordance with the severity and magnitude of the critical events*. Finally, at least over the three-year period observed, the Israeli public showed *the ability to bounce back expeditiously to its earlier functioning level, or to degrade gracefully to its normal standards*.

In conclusion, during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, under a prolonged period of daily terrorist acts and suicide attacks causing hundreds of casualties, the Israeli society demonstrated a relatively high level of national–social resilience, as reflected in their mass-behavioral indicators. In fact, taking the example of recreation and leisure behavior portrayed in Figure 3, it could be concluded that cinema attendance (and by definition—attending shopping centers, in general) has become the symbol of the Israelis’ “counterterrorism” demonstration.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of baseline measures (i.e., levels of these public behaviors prior to the outbreak of the *Intifada*) it is impossible to assess whether this average level of public behaviors deviates at all from normal levels. Suffice it to say, however, that the fact that there was no gradual decrease (or increase) of these indicators throughout the three-year period of the *Intifada* is plausible proof of their normal level.

From the theoretical point of view, the findings so far strongly substantiate the proposed postulation regarding social resilience of a mass population under a nationwide disaster. As we have hypothesized, the phenomenological expression of this social resilience will be characterized by quick individual adaptation and a return to the business as usual mode. The successive repetition of the fluctuating pattern of the behavioral indicators, as well as the relevant correlations and the absence of deterioration (or acceleration) of the public’s stress-related “symptoms” over the three-year period, clearly validate the bouncing back motif frequently emphasized in social-resilience definitions.⁴⁹ The following section, focusing on attitudinal measures, will provide additional validity to this conceptual thesis.

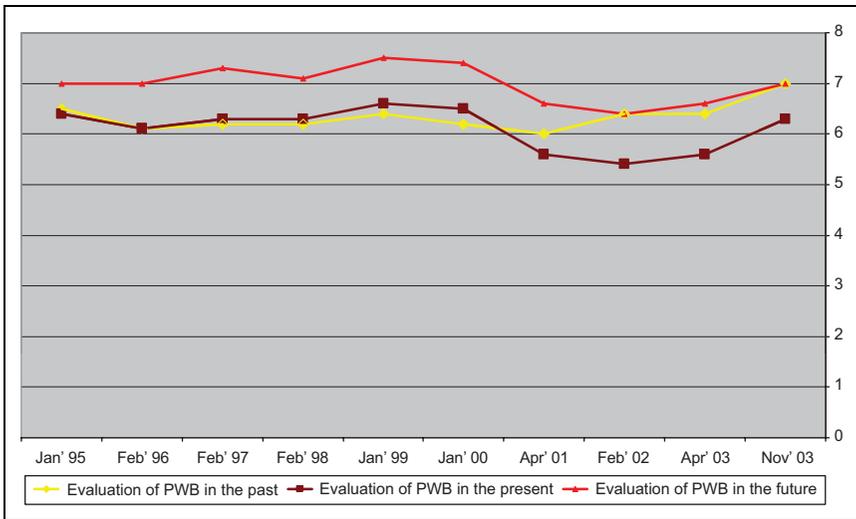


Figure 5. Personal well-being.

Measurements of Public Attitudes

Paradoxically, measuring the public's attitudes during the Intifada period was a harder task than monitoring its behavioral indices. Since running a monthly survey was not possible (for various technical reasons), a single comprehensive survey, which was subsequently compared with previous similar polls, had to suffice.

The survey was conducted in November 2003. The population was defined as "the entire Israeli population, fifteen years old and over." From this population, a representative sample of 700 individuals was surveyed (by telephone poll). The sample included both men and women, of all Israeli ethnic groups (e.g., Israeli Arabs, Sephardi, and Ashkenazi Jews). The results of this survey were compared to previous surveys, resembling that of November 2003 in terms of sample size and items articulation.⁵⁰ Four such surveys were used, conducted in January 2000, April 2001, February 2002, and April 2003, respectively. Furthermore, we managed to make comparisons on several items as far back as 1995.

Of the numerous items included in all the different surveys, we chose for the purpose of our study those which pertain to well-being, fear, patriotism, and trust in the State's strength.

The four scales selected are:

- *Personal well-being* (1—very low; 8—very high; as perceived in the past, present, and future).
- *Concerns/Fear*⁵¹ of terror attacks (percentage of those reporting "somewhat concerned/afraid"; "very concerned/afraid"; and an integrated measure—"concerned/afraid").

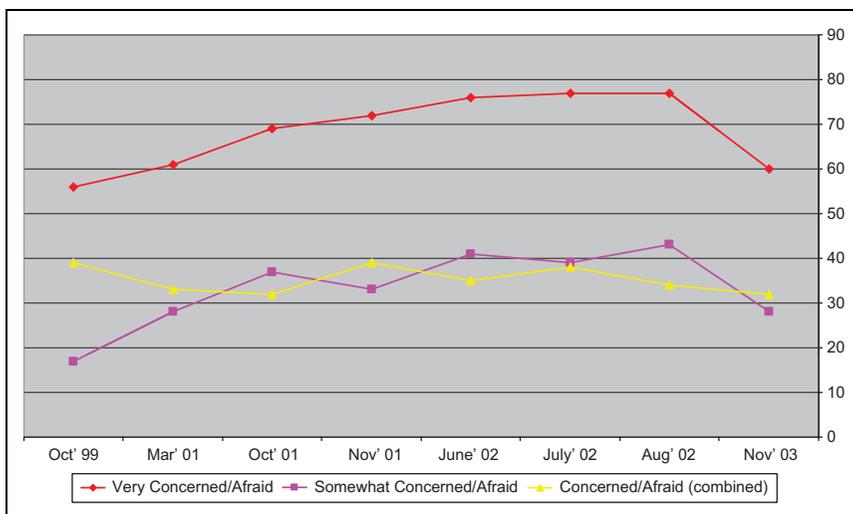


Figure 6. Concerns/fear of terror attacks.

- *Willingness to live in Israel*, in spite of terror (percentage of those reporting “I’m determined to live in Israel.”) This item, which is more of an intention statement than a perception, or appraisal, of the situation, is normally used in Israel as a reflection of one’s level of patriotism.
- *Perceptions regarding the condition of the State* (1—very bad; 8—very good; as perceived in the past, present, and future).

Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8 delineate the results of the above four scales.

As can be seen, the general levels of personal well-being among Israelis, though they *gracefully degraded* at the beginning of the Intifada (as reflected in the April 01 survey), bounced back toward its end (February 03) to the same level as in 1995 and onward. Interestingly enough, the average perception of “past” well-being (usually the lowest of the three) gradually *scaled up* during the Intifada period. While this propensity might be caused by a sense of *nostalgia* for better days, the parallel increase in both “present” and “future” levels of reported personal well-being toward the end of the Intifada indicates gradual adaptation even to the point of optimism. One cannot but recall the *enhanced functioning* expected—according to one of the social resilience definitions cited earlier⁵²—in the bouncing-back phase, following crisis.

Figure 6 shows the percentages of those concerned about, or afraid of, terror attacks. Evidently, the level of fear increased significantly from the period before the outbreak of the Intifada (October 1999) to the horrifying months of the repeated terror attacks. Surprisingly, however, in the November 03 survey (when terror attacks were still occurring frequently), Israelis *recovered* back to a level of fear that was quite close to peacetime level.

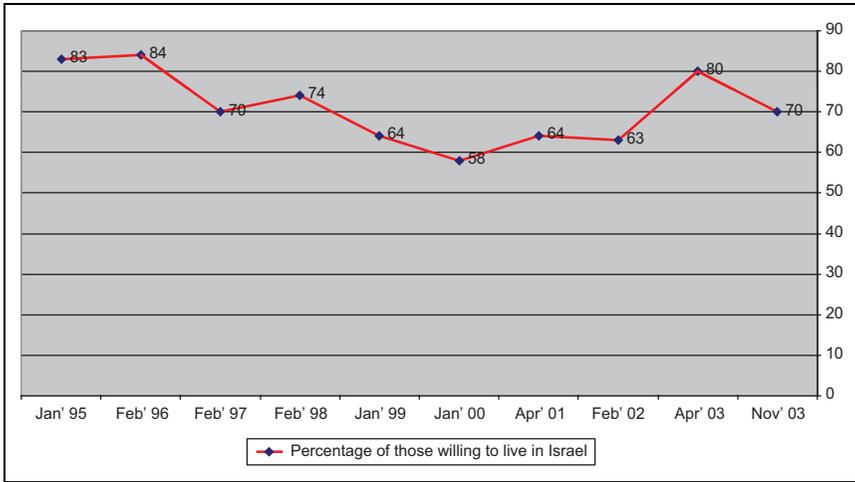


Figure 7. Willingness to live in Israel.

The curve in Figure 7 describes the peculiar way terrorism affects Israelis' willingness to continue living in Israel rather than leave it, under these circumstances. For various reasons (mostly economic and domestic), the level of patriotism, as reflected by this item, showed a gradual decline in the years preceding the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*: the percentage of Israelis declaring their willingness to continue living in Israel dropped from 83 percent to 84 percent in 1995–96 to the alarming level of 58 percent in January 2000, and then, under the protracted daily threats of suicide bombers, Israeli patriotism rose back to the level of 80 percent (April 2003). Here, again, we witness the capacity of the Israeli society to bounce back to its *normal* functioning. If patriotism is a component of national–social resilience, then the impact of terrorism on the resilience of Israel's society, during the 2000–2003 Intifada, was positive!

The findings depicted in Figure 8 parallel quite closely those related to perceived personal well-being (Figure 6), and reflect how Israelis perceive the condition of their state, namely the country's well-being. Once again, this perception, on average, drops quite sharply, especially at the height of the Intifada era (winter of 2002) and specifically with regard to the state's *present* condition. However, as in the case of personal well-being, it bounces back in the spring of 2003, almost to the same level as eight years earlier.

Obviously, fluctuations in attitudes and perceptions regarding social resilience cannot be homogeneous, and differences between ethnic sectors, age groups, genders, socioeconomic classes, and so on, can be expected. Indeed, several background variables yielded some differences. The major ones are:

- On most issues, the evaluations provided by Jewish respondents were more positive than those of the Arab⁵³ subjects.
- On most issues, the evaluations of teenagers were more positive than those of adults.

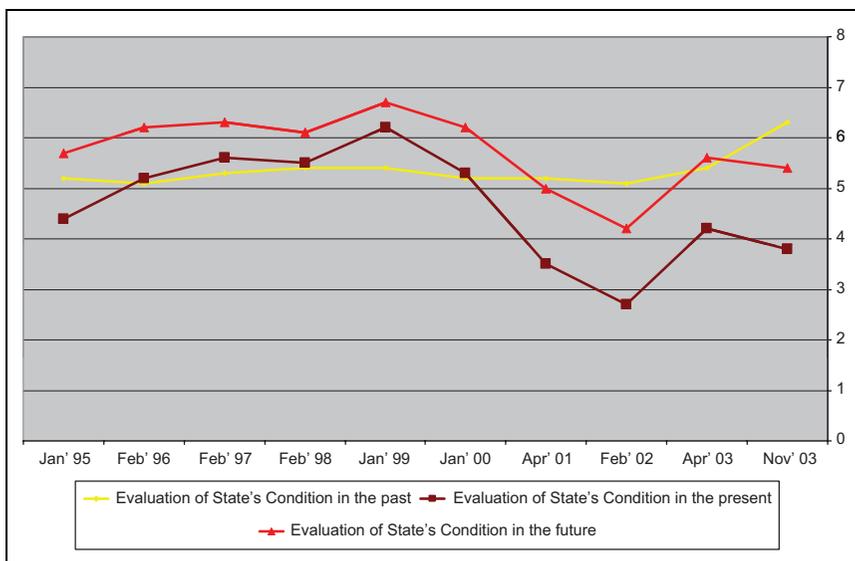


Figure 8. Perceptions regarding the condition of the state.

- The perceptions of women were usually more negative than those of men.

Education, income, and Jewish ethnic origin (e.g., *Sephardi–Ashkenazi*) did not generate significant differences.

To conclude the attitudinal chapter, it is quite evident that—like in the case of the behavioral indicators—the attitudinal fluctuations of the Israeli citizens, on issues related to personal well-being, fears, patriotism, and trust in State reflect the “recovery,” or “adaptability” attribute that distinguishes resilience from resistance,⁵⁴ and is repeatedly emphasized in the social-resilience definitions cited above.

Summary and Conclusions

The findings in both the behavioral and the attitudinal dimensions demonstrate quite clearly that, after three rough years of terror-inflicted bloodshed in Israel, the public reaction was, in general, normative.⁵⁵ The public reacted immediately to the harsh events, protected itself against them, and then returned quite quickly to its life routine. On most of the social resilience indices, the Israeli society demonstrated a relatively high level of what Fran Norris et al. called *population wellness*.⁵⁶

Moreover, even though the public admits to the difficult situation of the state, most citizens report a future perception that is positive and optimistic. This perception is also translated into a stronger sense of patriotism and commitment, which even surpasses earlier levels. As expected, there are differences between attitudes

and actual behavior, in terms of both intensity and pace: while the attitudinal measures show growing fear and concern at the onset of the Intifada and during most of its first two years, the behavioral indications fluctuate almost by month, but maintain, over time, a normative level.

The findings of this study are congruent with and provide validity to the resilience definitions offered at the beginning of this article: they demonstrate the capacity of a society *to contain and manage effectively major national crises, to react in accordance with the severity and magnitude of the events, and to “bounce back” expeditiously to [the normal level, or even to] an enhanced functioning.*⁵⁷ The reactions of the Israelis during the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* revealed the *ability of . . . citizenry to resist, absorb and recover from, or adapt to, an adverse occurrence that may cause harm, destruction, or loss of national significance.*⁵⁸ Furthermore, in contrast to Lewin’s assertion that *without patriotism . . . , peoples are bound to fall apart,*⁵⁹ we venture to claim that the reality is almost a mirror-like opposition: in order for peoples, under protracted threatening conditions, *not* to fall apart—patriotism is imperative. The bouncing back of functional behavior and optimistic attitudes demonstrated by the Israeli public throughout the *Intifada* is not simply the mere reflection of the Israelis’ social resilience; rather, it is its generator.

The relatively high and consistent level of resilience shown by the Israelis during this period is compatible with Chasdi’s findings about the Israeli level of resilience following the first series of suicide bombings in 1994. According to Chasdi’s analysis, Israel earned an overall resiliency score of 10.5 (only 1.5 points less than the perfect score of 12) on the Resiliency Continuum.⁶⁰ Though derived from different measures and related to very different situations, the compatibility of these two independent outcomes may add to the validity of the quantitative approach to assess national–social resilience.

However, the outcomes of the National Resilience Project at the Israeli NSC also resonated with the two “functional” definitions of national resilience and provide unique “intelligence material” to decision makers. The continued accumulation of the behavioral and attitudinal data enabled the NSC to furnish the Israeli Government, in real time, with critical information regarding *the ability of the public to refrain from insisting that national leaders make hasty or premature decisions (e.g., either surrender to or take radical measures against threats).*⁶¹ In fact, this information served as “evidence” for the Cabinet (a smaller forum, within the Israeli Government) members, that social resilience among the Israeli population remained relatively high throughout the *Intifada* period. The systematically repeated measures and the high compatibility among the different indices ensured the Cabinet members that this source of “intelligence” was indeed an accurate and objective assessment of the Israelis’ level of resilience during those days. Based on this evidence, then, the Cabinet (chaired by PM Ariel Sharon) could conduct its decision-making processes and bring its strategic recommendations to the Government’s plenary.

Evidently, the Israeli government pursued its policy of restraint (although not completely without occasional forceful reprisals) throughout the entire period, thus

avoiding an all-out Middle-East crisis.⁶² Much of the Government's patience and restraint was the result of this project's outcomes.

Furthermore, as some of the behavioral indices, as well as the findings about the enhanced patriotism, revealed, the "demonstrated resilience" of the Israeli public reflected its *readiness to face a major crisis, without compromising on national and strategic objectives, or on their basic way of life*.⁶³ Evidently, an extreme sense of distress can exist simultaneously with ordinary and normal behavior.

The results of this study demonstrate that prolonged distress (or protracted threat) does not always, or necessarily, result in disintegration and social chaos. A society (or a community) can, in practice, be more resilient than its individual members. While at the individual level we usually refer to the term resilience as the positive capacity of an individual to cope with stress and adversity, the combined, or collective, social resilience of a whole society is, apparently, greater than the sum of its individual members' coping resources.

Yet, it is not just the synergy that generated the relatively high-level national resilience found in this case study. Israel, as an "experienced" war-stricken society, had seen also other patterns of social reactions. The collective depression and massive public protest against the government that characterized the entire Israeli society following the *Yom Kippur War* (1973)⁶⁴ is one such example. Why did the *Second intifada*—lasting much longer than all of Israel's wars and resulting in over 1,000 civilian casualties—not generate a devastating reaction, as did the *Yom Kippur War*?

It is our assertion that the protracted, nonconventional nature of the *Intifada*, along with the growing sense (and consensus) that there was no easy and fast solution to the suicide-bombing tactics, led to a transformation in the public mind-set, from *war* to *traffic accidents* mode. The latter implies a sense of an uncontrolled, almost unavoidable impending adversity. You cannot fight it, you definitely cannot join it—you can only cope with it and get through it. As with traffic accidents, you learn how to live with it. One may apply here Max Weber's concept of "routinization of everyday life,"⁶⁵ spontaneously evolving after a collective upheaval. This initial hypothesis was never examined methodically. Like the other questions listed below, it requires further research.

Points for Further Studies and Policy Actions

This study was conducted in a real-life situation, in response to Governmental needs, and without an underlying sound theory or a carefully designed methodology. Many questions may, justifiably, arise from its findings:

What can we learn from this case study? Can it be generalized to other countries or societies? How can the measurement tools used in this case study be tested for reliability and validity? Is social resilience under a security threat (such as a war or prolonged terrorist attacks) similar to that in times of economic crisis, natural disaster, etc.? What are the interrelationships between military, economic, political,

and social resilience? What are the independent variables that influence national–social resilience?

These and further questions require further theorizing, conceptualization attempts, and field studies. While the present article may provide a field-research paradigm for national–social resilience, a good example of a conceptual exercise is Guntram Werther’s attempt, presented in this volume, to place resilience within the broader context of the “change” concept and use it as a society-specific change assessment and future forecasting tool.⁶⁶ Several recent publications^{67,68} demonstrate genuine attempts to combine new theorizing of the concept with subsequent practical implications. These and other academic attempts will subsequently find their ways to policy implementations and political-leadership considerations.

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Notes

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41. As mentioned earlier (note 31), Dr. Reuven Gal served between 2002 and 2004 as Deputy Director of the Israeli National Security Council, and Head of the Domestic Policy Division. The National-Resilience Project at the NSC was initiated and directed by him. Mr. Meir Elran, currently at INSS (Tel-Aviv University), served as a senior assistant in this project.
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