Give me one good reason to be optimistic about Israel.

OK. Here is one: The World Economic Forum benchmarks 75 countries’ competitiveness every year. This year, despite all her troubles, Israel is ranked #19, up from #24 last year. (See graph) By comparison: France fell to #30.

Let me get this straight. Inflation, recession, stagnation, political instability, terror – and Israel becomes more competitive than France? How come?

Harvard Business School’s Prof. Michael Porter notes that in today’s global economy, winners are countries best able to innovate. Israel’s creativity and technology remain strong. A core technology today is Information Technology. In this area Israel is a global leader, partly because Technion is.

What role does Technion play?

Let’s take a concrete example. Former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich once wrote an article titled “Who is Us?” He asked, “Is Motorola a U.S. company?” Sure, the shareholders are mostly American. But Motorola products are almost all made in Southeast Asia. So – Is Motorola “us”?

In Israel, we can ask, is Intel an American company? Its shareholders are 80 percent American. But I can make a strong case that Intel is an Israeli company. Intel imported $1.756 b. in 2001, making it Israel’s leading exporter and it employs 5,270 Israelis. Intel Israel Development Center (IDC) – Haifa designed the Banias chip that will power the world’s next-generation mobile computing devices. Intel worldwide is betting its future on this. Leading this revolution is IDC co-CEO David Perlmutter, Technion Electrical Engineering (EE) grad, who is also VP. Mobile Platforms Group for Intel Worldwide. IDC co-CEO Moody Eden, also an EE grad, is now in the U.S. helping put the Banias chip into production.

Most of IDC’s talented design engineers are Technion-trained. Many of them started working at Intel when they were still Technion students. This means that Intel’s core next-generation technology originated in Israel, through Technion graduates. In that sense – Intel is a Technion-driven company. Is Intel “us”? I think so.

For the IDF, the impetus for developing this program was need, and a desire to carve a place of excellence for mechanical engineering. “During the high-tech revolution of the last decade, mechanical engineers weren’t sexy, and we found ourselves with a decent of qualified candidates for B & D,” reminds A. “Instead, applicants were coming in with watered-down skills.”

As a result, the choice to offer this exclusive program at the Technion was not incidental. “What other university in the country could equip these young people with a strong core curriculum, and with the basics of mechanical engineering?” asks A. rhetorically. Moreover, Technion offers a rich array of 170 courses for first and second degrees in mechanical engineering.

Prof. Gerahon Grossman, former dean of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, and the current dean, Prof. Zalman Palmer, both encouraged and supported A. all the way.

“There was total agreement, support from the faculty and a keen desire to help,” he says.

The 15 Braham students, who live in the dormitories on campus, come from all corners of Israel. At the opening ceremony in October 2002, students from the center of the country and the periphery, Russian immigrants, secular and religious youth, snacked on knife seed cake and a pitted tea, exchanging jokes and plans for the future. A. is confident of their success. “I expect to see the fruits of this program in four years,” he predicts.

Mini parallel robot sampling the bone for total knee replacement (TKR); 200,000 TKRs are done annually in the USA alone.

This year’s recipient of the Sanford Kaplan Prize in Creative Management for 21st Century High Technology is Prof. Moshe Shoham of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, where he heads the Technion Robotics Laboratory. Shoham received the award for his work in medical robotics, focusing on total knee replacements (TKR).

Bringing his research from the lab to the marketplace, Shoham is involved in Masor Robotics, a start-up company located in Technion’s Incubator (TEIC), which specializes in research, development and manufacturing of robots for medical applications, such as minimally invasive surgery.
**TECHNION’S ONE-TWO PUNCH MAKES ISRAEL A POTENTIAL WINNER**

BY SHLOMO MAITAL

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It takes more than technology to achieve market success!

Quite right. Technion provides Intel with a one-two punch, just like Joe Louis or Rocky Marciano: Technology + Management. In a pioneering program that began last November, TIM—Technion Institute of Management now provides 32 Intel Group Leaders (project managers) with management training, so that their business skills and mindset will complement their management training, so that their business skills and mindset will complement their technical skills.

If it were not for Israel’s weakness in its management and economic policy, Israel would rank far higher than 19th! In “macroeconomic environment,” Israel ranked 62—behind Nigeria and only three places above Argentina. TIM has taken its manager-clients on global benchmarking trips to the five top-rated countries to observe and learn. TIM Chair Lester Reich once wrote an article titled “Who is Us?” He asked, “Is Motorola a U.S. company?” Sure, the shareholders are mostly American. But Motorola products are almost all made in Southeast Asia. So—is Motorola “us”?

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