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**The Change of Israel Youth's  
Attitudes Towards Individual,  
Social and National Issues:  
A Comparative Study, 1998-2004**

**Tel-Aviv, December 2004**

Prof. Ephraim Ya'ar, Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal,  
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**Editor: Dr. Roby Nathanson**

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# Forward

One of the main tasks, I would even say, the *raison d'être* of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is Political Education for all members of civic society. In Israel, like in other countries around the world we use different methods and tools in order to reach the best outcomes of our pedagogical work – conferences, seminars and workshops, leadership training programs, study visits and others. An absolutely essential tool for our work is research and surveys, like this one, because they are a kind of signpost for our future activities.

In 1998, on the occasion of Israel's 50th birthday the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung initiated its first "Youth Survey". We were trying to find the youth' attitudes toward the state and society in many areas: their hopes toward their personal future and the future of the state. Their attitudes towards themselves while delving into the question of identity, democracy, peace, contributing to society, Germany, the Holocaust and prime minister Rabin's assassination.

The current study deals with almost the same issues. The target group and research methods are quite similar between both surveys. Nevertheless one can find changed attitudes towards major issues like democracy which has lost its value in the eyes of the youngsters since 1998. Another cause of concern is the growing pessimism about the future of Israel. Today almost 50% are pessimistic about the future of their country, not only because of the feeling of an external threat but also as a result of the internal conflicts in Israeli society, especially the tensions between Jews and Arabs.

The criticism towards Germany and Europe also increased in recent years since the renewed outburst of violence, while the image of Germany stayed as bad as it was in 1998. 38% of Israeli Jews still believe that Germany today is not different than what Germany was till the end of World War Two. They believe that a Nazi regime could come into power again.

All in all the results are alarming. There seems to be a direct correlation between the halting of the peace process and the economic recession on the one hand and a more pessimistic Israeli youth on the other hand.

The FES-team in Israel together with our partners will analyze very seriously the outcomes of this study and try to intensify our work with Israeli young people on specific areas, which seem to be problematic at these difficult times. For us, as a foundation with a profound commitment to social justice and peaceful coexistence both within societies and between nations, achieving better results in future surveys is more than another task of our work – it is a huge challenge which we are ready to face.

Sincerely,

Hermann Bünz

Representative of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Israel

# Abstract

In 1998, the Israeli Institute for Economic and Social Research published a comprehensive study on Israeli youth's attitudes toward major issues and institutions.<sup>1</sup> The present study continues this exploration. Then as now, the project's immediate purpose was to describe how young people from every sector of Israel's multicultural society felt in response to the major events that have impinged on their lives. Its ultimate purpose was and remains to present the information needed by decision makers to formulate policies capable of responding to the future generation's needs and aspirations. The uniqueness of the present research lies in the comparison conducted between the responses received in the two periods, a comparison necessitated by the traumas experienced in the interceding years: a second *Intifada* and the wave of terrorism, economic recession and social crisis.

The survey questions focused on the issues of security and democracy, the after-effects of the murder of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's relations with Germany and the Holocaust. Each segment of the research was supervised by a senior scholar specializing in the respective issues. At the conceptual core of the study was an attempt to test which of two hypotheses best describes the Israeli public's response to stress and crisis. The first hypothesis predicts increasing solidarity in response to external threat; the second disintegration of commitment to core democratic values and norms (or "rules of the game"). The survey findings indicate that the second hypothesis more accurately predicted the response of Israeli society — and therefore its youth — to national-level ordeals although this conclusion is subject to modification by sector and issue.

A total of 1,758 young people participated in the present study: 863 in the 15-18 age group, and 895 in the 21-24 age group. The 19-20 age group was excluded due to the preponderance of participation in regular army service. Included in the sample were 407 participants from the Israeli Arab sector. The participants made up a statistically representative sample of every major sector of Israeli society: Arabs and Jews, Ashkenazim and Sephardim, religious and secular, new immigrants and native born.

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<sup>1</sup> The Jubilee Year: Israeli Youth's Attitudes toward Personal, Social and National Issues, Tel-Aviv, June 1998.

The research itself was divided into five parts. The final report presented Hagar Tzameret's survey of the political, economic and social changes experienced in the interim between the two surveys; Prof. Ephraim Ya'ar's analysis of the study's findings regarding attitudes, values and expectations as well as the changes in attitudes observed with respect to Israel's democratic regime and its institutions; and Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal's analysis, prepared with the assistance of Efrat Bornstein, of Jewish and Arab youth's attitudes toward Germany and the Holocaust, the State and its future as well as their personal expectations. A demographic portrait of Israel's youth,<sup>2</sup> written by Efrat Bornstein, was also included.

### **The Major Issues and Events Affecting Israeli Society, 1998-2004**

Put in the most concise terms, the outbreak of the second *Intifada* in 2000, together with the accompanying terrorist attacks within the heart of Israel that took a toll of more than 1,000 deaths, were perhaps the most significant events affecting Israel's relations with the outside world in over a decade. But they were not the sole events to penetrate the lives of Israel's population. The October 2000 killings of 12 Israeli Arabs participating in what evolved into a violent demonstration of this sector's identification with the Palestinian cause was a turning point in the problematic relationship between its two main sectors: Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews. To this traumatic event we must add the recession that has exerted its toll on the weakest segments of Israeli society, including many Israeli Arabs.

The differences in the findings from the two surveys thus reflect changes in the national mood resulting from these unanticipated dramatic events. When the first survey was performed in 1998, optimism still reigned regarding the progress of the peace process. In that same year, while opposing camps were being formed in the Jewish community over support of the Oslo agreement, Israeli Arab public opinion conveyed uniform support of Oslo. Communal consensus was based on two expectations regarding the outcome of the peace process: the first, creation of a Palestinian state and fulfilment of Arab hopes for self-determination; the second, and perhaps more crucial prospect from the Israeli Arab perspective, was transformation of policy toward this minority. The yearning for

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<sup>2</sup> Details of this part of the study are available, upon request, from the Israeli Institute of Economic and Social Research.

equality and the demise of anti-Arab discrimination thus magnified the internal salience of the peace process.

Support for the majority of national institutions — excluding the military, the police and the court system — by Israel's Jewish sector had already dipped by 1998. The major reason for this level of distrust was the 1993 signing of the Oslo agreements, which led to the creation of two extremist camps. Behind the political divisions other social divisions could be found, especially but not only related to religious affiliation. The chasm between the right and left reached its apogee with the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a member of an ultra-nationalist religious faction. With the attendant threat against the country's democratic regime, trust in the country's institutional framework could be expected to decline. The eruption of the second *Intifada* and the wave of terror within Israel brought about deterioration of the public's sense of personal as well as national security, with the change in attitudes that the research documents

The period between 1998 and 2004 was therefore marked by crisis in Israel's internal arenas. For example, in 1998, trust in national institutions — excluding the military and the police — had been higher among Israeli Arab than among Jewish youth; by 2004, trust among the first group had reached a level similar to or below the trust expressed by the second group. The drastic decline of trust found among Israeli Arab youth reflects the loss of hope experienced with the apparent demise of the peace process and its repercussions for internal Jewish-Israeli Arab relations. In addition, the events of October 2000 still reverberate in the sector's collective memory. Irrespective of who was directly or indirectly to blame for the unwarranted violence, the previously touchy relationships maintained between Arab citizens of Israel and the police distinctly deteriorated.

Within this tense atmosphere, the after-effects of Yitzhak Rabin's murder continue to deeply effect Israel's youth. Although the intensity of that impact seems to have mitigated somewhat among Jewish youth in the period between the two surveys, the opposite has occurred among Israeli Arab youth. This phenomenon can be interpreted as one sign of the nation's inability to embed the general-national meaning of Rabin's murder within Israel's collective memory. Hence, commemoration of Rabin's murder



has become part of the confrontation between the left and right, especially given the left's allegations that rightist leaders were indirectly responsible for murder. For the Israeli Arab public, however, Yitzhak Rabin is remembered as the Jewish leader who contributed most to the socio-economic improvement of the Israeli Arab community and as the signer of the Oslo Accords, and a former general who steadfastly supported the peace process until the moment of his death.

#### International Political and Socio-economic Trends

With the inauguration of a new millennium, the "world" as perceived by participants of the 2004 survey was no longer the same entity perceived by the previous survey's participants. The gloom that penetrated the region can be interpreted as a polar response to the positive atmosphere that reigned during the 1990s, when the US, as the remaining superpower, encouraged forward movement by the exercise of an effective carrot and stick policy. Economic, political and diplomatic initiatives had created the ambience required for forward movement of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians but also between Israel and its other Arab neighbours. The Oslo Accords, signed in 1993, had shifted the conflict to the lower rungs of the international public agenda. During the course of the decade, however, translation of the Accords into operative programs soon demonstrated that neither Israel nor the Palestinians were still incapable of overcoming their conflicts of interest and differences of opinion. The 28 September 2000 terrorist attack within Israel marked the culmination of a period of frustration and increasing tension. For the Palestinians, the *Intifada al-Aqsa* represented their response to the stalemate, intensified by the failed Camp David talks (July 2000) and the continuing economic deterioration. Although no direct relationship has been found between the 11 September 2001 attack on New York's World Trade Center, the events initiated an era of world terror. In Israel, 127 Israelis were murdered between September 2000 and September 2001; another 378 Israelis died similarly in the following year. By late March 2003, the death toll had reached 942 Israelis murdered and 2,397 Palestinians killed.

Local events cannot be divorced from the forebodings of international recession observed in 1998. As the growth rates of emerging economies as well as the Russian economy declined, their impacts eventually seeped to the West. With the 50% decline in Nasdaq (March 2000) sent fears of economic catastrophe throughout the world.

Although the most drastic of trepidations were allayed through a series of measures on the international level, local economies continue to be stalled.

### The Political Context

The 1998, just three years after the 1995 murder of Prime Minister Rabin and soon after a series of bloody terrorist attacks, a conservative government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in Israel. In 1999, following his signing of the Wye agreement, Netanyahu's flimsy coalition disintegrated and early elections were called. Elections for the new government (May 1999) were conducted according to the reform dictating direct elections for the Prime Minister, with Ehud Barak the winner. Although the electoral balance had shifted to the left, more than a year passed before Barak and the late Yassir Arafat sat down to resume what would be unsuccessful peace talks at Camp David (July 2000). The September 2000 outbreak of the *Intifada al-Aqsa* symbolized the angry Palestinian disappointment. In the wake of internal criticism against Barak and his willingness to talk with the Palestinians while "under fire," Barak resigned before completion of his term. Ariel Sharon was elected in the subsequent election by a clear majority of 62.38% of the vote. Shortly after Sharon's election, the direct election law was repealed.

Israel's political arena has thus been in turmoil since 1998, and closely related to the conduct of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This turmoil intensified as the number of terrorist victims rose. Within this context, it should come as no surprise that Sharon's stringent policies regarding the Palestinians and security have won the support of almost 80% of Israel's electorate, especially after the 2003 Knesset elections.

### The Economic Context

Israel's economy can be considered to be the political arena's "alter ego." Due to this tight linkage, the political chaos and winds of war experienced since 1998 have triggered the most severe recession experienced in the country's history: For the first time since 1953, GDP has displayed negative growth, with GDP per capita dropping by 3.2% in 2001 and a further 2.8% in 2002. Unemployment, especially chronic unemployment, has grown steadily, with 10.7% of the work force (or 290,000 people) jobless by 2003, up from 8.5% in 1998. The impact on the social security system has been extreme. During the previous decade, expenditures for transfer payments had grown by 87% in real terms, reaching 7.8% in the mid 1990s. By 2001, however, it had risen to 8.7%. This increase was the product of a rise in real income but also changes in legislation that extended eligibility to ever-broader segments of the population, to rising payment levels but also to the ballooning of the number of individuals receiving support. Thus, the number of transfer payment recipients grew by 400% from 1990 to 2003, compared to only a 45% increase in population. Significantly, in the previous decade, the rise in recipients occurred during periods of growth in GDP and declining unemployment.

One major factor prompting the reduction in welfare allowances introduced in recent years is the explosion in the budget deficit, which grew from 2.4% of GDP in 1998 to 6.1% in 2003. The series of programs initiated to reduce the deficit can be summarized as four items: tax increases, transfer payment reductions, public bureaucracy downsizing and uniform ministry budget reductions. Implementation of the programs has had severe repercussions for the chronically poor.

### The Social Context

Social conditions in Israel have deteriorated jointly with the economic crisis. In addition to rising unemployment, inequality increased precipitously. According to the Gini index of social inequality rose when measured both before and after transfer payments. Contributing to the rising inequality were tax reforms and other economic programs that benefited the upper deciles (e.g., tax reductions) but aggravated the economic condition of the lower deciles of the population (e.g., decreased allowances). Because almost all of Israel's poor are found below the poverty line either due to unemployment or low-paying jobs, the previous two measures naturally increased the gaps. The number of poor families has thus risen from 230,000 in 1998 to 325,000 in 2002, including 556,000

children. Poverty also became the bane of focused populations: the elderly, single-parent families, and families with an unemployed breadwinner. The sharp increase in recipients of income maintenance allowances — from 100,790 in 1998 to 159,660 in 2002, an increase of 60% — succinctly demonstrates the depth of the social crisis that has accompanied the crises in other arenas.

### **Israeli Youth and Their Attitudes: 1998-2004**

#### Democracy and the Murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's murder had a profound effect on all sectors of Israel's society; a discussion of just how much, and for whom, remains beyond the scope of the present study. Here, we limit ourselves to the population of young people reaching maturity since the event.

Israel's youth, Jewish and Arab alike, continues to declare democracy to be one of its core values despite the deterioration in internal security (it should be noted here that Israel Arabs comprise 17% of Israel's adult population). Although a slight decline was observed among Jews (from 92% in 1998 to 88% in 2004), the reverse was observed among Arabs (from 88% in 1998 to 92% in 2004), based on responses to the question "Is it important that Israel remain a democratic state?" Nonetheless, the percentage of respondents indicating democracy to be very important declined from 77% to 67% (in 1998 and 2004, respectively) among Jews, but increased from 76% to 82% (in 1998 and 2004, respectively) among Israeli Arabs.

Despite the small overall changes in responses, they are surprising given the negative events that have shaken the region. One might have expected reinforcement of belief in democracy and the desire for peace in the Jewish sector given the extreme suffering experienced since the outbreak of the second *Intifada* (2000). For Israeli Arabs, the opposite might have been anticipated. In this sector, the outbreak intensified tendencies to identify with the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza already visible among young people. Those feelings, coupled with years of discrimination, reinforced problems related to Israeli Arab identification with Israeli society, its culture and values. The October 2000 killing of 12 Israeli Arabs as a result of police firing into groups of pro-Palestinian demonstrators is therefore considered to be a watershed in the development of sectoral relations within Israel.

One method to confirm these trends is to examine responses to a complementary question: “How important is it to you that Israel lives in peace with its neighbours?” The respective findings indicated similar trends: a slight weakening in pro-peace attitudes among Jews (from 92% in 1998 to 87% in 2004) accompanied by a slight strengthening in these attitudes among Israeli Arabs (from 90% in 1998 to 94% in 2004). When questioned as to whether they supported the concept of Israel as a Jewish state (among Jews) or a state for all its citizens (among Israeli Arabs), the responses indicated a very marginal decline among Jewish youth (from 81.5% in 1998 to 79% in 2004) but a more significant decline among Arab youth (from 93% in 1998 to 88.5% in 2004).

These responses, considered independently, indicate long-term consistency of attitudes. In order to investigate the *strength* of these attitudes, the participants were asked to rank democracy and peace among other values considered central to Israeli society. Stated differently, it was asked whether democracy and peace maintained their status when competing with other values — such as maintaining a high standard of living — and how similar are the rankings in the two sectors?

Comparison of the responses received in 1998 and 2004 indicates several changes. Whereas peace was ranked in first place and democracy in second place by Jewish (28% and 26%, respectively) and Arab (38% and 26%, respectively) youth in 1998, that order had reversed by 2004. In the later survey, peace remained in first place among Jews (26.3%) but the Jewish character of the state reached second place (17%), with democracy declining to fifth place (9.5%). Among Arab youth, peace had declined to fifth place (7%), with first place occupied by socio-political equality (24%) and gender equality (23%, a new value) ranked first and second. If we interpret the value “a nation of all its citizens” (third place with 19%) as representing Israeli Arab desires for socio-political equality, we find that contrary to expectations, youth of both sectors ranked the values of peace, democracy, national character and equality quite similarly.

These findings support the hypothesis that commitment to democracy declines in contexts of external threat, especially if the threat is perceived as endangering survival on the individual as well as national level. Among Jewish youth, this response appears to be a response to terror. A different interpretation can be found for the responses from Israeli Arab youth. There, the decline in commitment to democracy appears to be an

outcome of the October 2000 killings, which symbolize the continuing alienation of the Arab community from mainstream Israeli society, and not just military actions against Palestinians.

Attitudes toward democracy also find expression in attitudes toward leadership. Hence, participants in both surveys were asked if they believed that strong leaders were more capable of solving the nation's problems than were the laws and debates integral to a democratic regime. The findings indicate that when confronted with a choice between the two types of regime, commitment to democracy was shaky in both periods. In 1998, a weak majority of Jewish youth (58%) believed that strong leadership was preferable to a democratic regime, a percentage that rose to 67% by 2004. Among Israeli Arab youth, the trend in 2004 was reversed, with support of democracy increasing (65%) in comparison to 1998 (59%). This trend was repeated in responses to questions regarding related issues.

Two alternative although non-contradictory explanations are available for these findings. First, the Israeli Arab sector's negative experience with Israeli democracy has led them to support an autocratic regime just so long as the policies adopted promise improvement in their socio-economic conditions and the elimination of discrimination. An alternative explanation states that these positions reflect attitudes common in the contemporary Arab world; as part of the Arab world, Israeli Arabs are subject to the same ideological influences. Support for the second thesis can be found in the writings of several leading scholars who argue that Moslem-Arab culture is fundamentally anti-democratic.

Furthermore, when asked if even minor threats to the nation's security justified institution of comprehensive restraints to democracy (a new question in the 2004 study), only 29% of Jewish youth and 21% of Israeli Arab youth disagreed. These findings support the argument that when in conflict with core values such national security, commitment to democracy among Jewish youth weakens considerably. Nevertheless, the findings do not directly support either hypothesis regarding the strengthening or weakening of democracy under conditions of external threat. The findings for Israeli Arab youth are especially enigmatic given that the question was asked at a time of bloody confrontations with the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza.

The second major topic investigated was the stability of Israel's democratic regime within the context of patterns of popular protest. Regime stability is particularly pertinent against the background of Rabin's murder and its implicit threat to political continuity. The issue acquired unanticipated immediacy in the wake of Prime Minister Sharon's December 2003 announcement of Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Details of the plan, which included evacuation of all Jewish settlements, aroused fervent opposition then as now. Protest to the plan has extended beyond public demonstrations to dismissal and resignation of cabinet ministers; threats to the Prime Minister's life have raised fears that another political assassination is in the offing.

The research findings indicate that although the majority of Israel's young people continue to support peaceful, legally sanctioned protest in 2004 as they did in 1998, an increasing percentage of Jewish youth approve of different degrees of violent protest. To illustrate, in 1998, 20% of Jewish youth indicated approval of non-violent civil disobedience; by 2004, this percentage had risen to 28%. More troubling, in 1998, 10% of Jewish youth supported violent acts of civil disobedience; by 2004, that percentage had blossomed to 24%, an increase of 140%. Considering that the gap in support for non-violent (legal) and violent (illegal) protest was only 4% in 2004, these findings should be considered highly problematic, especially when the percentages are translated into absolute numbers: they represent tens of thousands of young people. Although it could be argued that the survey does not represent Israel's adult population, and that the older segment of the survey participants provided more moderate responses, the findings remain highly troublesome.

These findings must nonetheless be considered within the socio-political and ideological context of Israel's policy toward the Jewish settlements. Surveys conducted in recent years indicate that the majority of Israel's population supports their evacuation. Opposed is a considerable, vocal minority, composed primarily of persons living in the settlements and their supporters within the Green Line. The so-called "hilltop youth" have been the most vociferous and violent in voicing their resolve not to abandon the settlements though they are not alone.

A similar trend toward the acceptance of violence was observed among Israeli Arab youth. Whereas support for legal protest increased from 69.5% in 1998 to 76% in 2004 and support for non-violent civil disobedience rose from 28.5% in 1998 to 46.5% in 2004, an increase of 63%, support for violent civil disobedience remained constant: 15.5%. The latter percentage is considerable and may, again, reflect the inconclusive aftermath of the October 2000 events.

The decline in commitment to democratic values together with the rising acceptance of violent protest return us to the issue of Rabin's murder and political assassination in general. Given the recent political developments, we thought it relevant to ascertain whether any change had occurred between the two surveys regarding attitudes to the event and what young people believe is the likelihood of a repetition.

Findings from the 2004 survey indicate that about 50% of the Jewish participants consider the Rabin murder to be a watershed in their lives, one that undermined their sense of security as members of Israeli society. Another about 40% related to the murder as a sad event, like other instances of untoward death, but bereft of any effect on their relationship to the state. For 8% of the participants, the Rabin murder represented a severe crisis, paraphrased as "We don't have a country anymore." The distribution of the first two responses deviates considerably from those obtained in the previous survey, conducted in May 1998, just two and a half years after the tragic event. At that time, 61% of the participants described the murder as a watershed whereas about 26% considered the event as sad but not threatening their relationship to the state.

The shifts in attitude can be explained by generational change. At the time of Rabin's murder, the older segment of the 1998 sample had been soldiers on active duty or recently released, whereas the younger segment were sufficiently mature to experience the event's emotional intensity and understand its meaning. Therefore, in 1998, almost no differences were indicated by the responses received from the two age groups. However, by the time of the 2004 survey, nine years had passed. The young people participating in the recent survey had ranged in age from 6 to 15 in 1995. We may assume that the affective response to the murder would be weaker among the youngest participants, an assumption that was confirmed: 54% of the older age group (21-24) versus 45.5% of the younger group (15-18) described the murder as a turning point in



their lives. Furthermore, only a 4% decline was observed in the percentage of participants belonging to the 21-24 age group who treated the murder in those terms.

With respect to the possibility of another political assassination, an issue increasingly salient given recent events, the findings of the 2004 study are particularly interesting: Almost 70% of the Jewish respondents stated that there was a good (30.5%) or even very good (38.6%) chance of another murder. Importantly, the percentage of younger participants was even higher than the percentage of older participants believing in the good chance of a murder: 42% and 35.4%, respectively. These findings should be compared with those obtained in May 1998: At the time, 45% of the survey respondents believe in the likelihood of another political murder.

#### Attitudes toward the State

The political, economic and security upheavals of the past half decade do not appear to have greatly impacted on the personal goals or fundamental optimism of Israel's youth, with 82% of the sample stating they were optimistic about their personal future in 2004. A slight decline was observed, however, in the Jewish sector between 1998 and 2004, from 88% to 85%, respectively. Yet, Israel's youth appears to clearly differentiate between their personal and the nation's future.

Feelings of individual self-efficacy and the capacity to achieve personal goals are fundamental constituents of an individual's attitudes toward his or her future. Nonetheless, external events — particularly the decline in personal security within the borders of Israel — have shaken to some degree confidence in the continued existence of the State, the realization of goals within its boundaries, and the desire to make Israel home for the distant future. Thus, less than half (48%) of the participants in the 2004 survey were optimistic about the nation's future; similar to findings from the 1998 survey, Jewish youth were more optimistic than Israeli Arab youth (52% and 35%, respectively). However, Jewish as well as Israeli Arab young people were less optimistic in 2004 than in 1998, when 56% and 48.6%, respectively, were optimistic about the nation's future.

The greater decline in optimism among Israeli Arabs than among Jews can be explained by two factors. The first, affecting the entire nation, is the stalled peace process. By

2000, those dreams of peace and hope regarding the positive impact of the process on Israel's social fabric were shattered for many Israeli Arabs. The events of October coupled with the economic recession appear to have broadened the gap between the sectors, particularly in Israeli Arab eyes. In 2004, only 48% of the Israeli Arab participants in the survey believed that they could achieve their goals within the confines of Israel, a decline of 10 percentage points since 1998 (58%). Perhaps even more indicative of the transformation was the increase in the percentage of Israeli Arab youth clearly pessimistic about their future in Israel: The percentage of Israeli Arab young people believing their chances for achieving their goals within Israel were quite low increased by 300% between 1998 (5%) and 2004 (17%), while the percentage believing that their chances were good or very good decreased by 15% (from 58% in 1998 to 49% in 2004).

A further, pronounced indication of the declining optimism is reflected in the findings regarding the desire to make a home in Israel. To examine this issue, the participants were asked in which country they would prefer to be born and live if given the opportunity. In 1998, 62% of Israeli Arab youth indicated that they would choose Israel; by 2004, this percentage had declined by almost half, to 32%. A similar yet less drastic decline was observed among Jewish youth: in 1998, 71.3% indicated they wished to be born and live in Israel; by 2004, this percentage had declined to 58.5%.

Differences in optimism between the sectors were also expressed in yet another dimension: locus of control. One objective of the research was to ascertain whether Israeli young people believed that they had control over their lives, whether the capacity to achieve their goals was within individual reach or, perhaps, that control over their fate lay in external factors and institutions. In 2004, almost 85% of the entire sample believed that they controlled their own destinies. When the data was broken down by sector, we found that almost 88% of Jewish youth as opposed to 75% of Arab youth responded in this way. An analysis by age indicates no difference between the two age groups among Jewish youth although this self-confidence declines between the two age groups among Israeli Arab youth: almost 78% of those aged 15-18 yet 72% of those aged 21-24 responded that their future was in their hands. A comparison with the previous survey reveals an increase in the percentage of Israeli Arab youth responding

that the locus of control is internal: almost 69% in 1998 as opposed to almost 75% in 2004.

The declining optimism can readily be understood against the background of political, social and economic unrest described herein. Israel and its youth have therefore found themselves in a constant state of agitation since 2000. In addition, with the deteriorating economic conditions, what social solidarity remained since the early decades of the state has evaporated, only to intensify the sense of crisis. In complementary fashion, the growing percentage of Israeli Arab young people believing that only they themselves control their own futures indicates a loss of confidence in their surroundings as a supportive, nurturing environment. The begged-for conclusion is that Israeli Arabs have suffered the consequences of recent events more acutely, a situation exasperated by increasing alienation from mainstream Israeli society.

### **Attitudes toward Germany and the Holocaust**

Two issues concluded the research: how Israel's young people relate to Germany and its relationship to the Holocaust. Three specific issues were therefore explored in the survey: How Israel's youth viewed Germany's attitude toward Israel, the democratic character of the German regime, and Germany's Nazi past. In general, little overall change in attitudes was revealed between the two surveys. However, some surprising findings did appear in the responses of Israeli Arab youth.

#### Germany's Attitude toward Israel

In 2004, only 36.6% of Israel's youth agree with the statement that Germany is to be counted among the nations friendliest to Israel. However, a deeper examination of the data indicates that much disagreement regarding the subject separates Jewish from Israeli Arab youth: Whereas almost 35% of Jewish young people agreed with this statement, almost 43% of Israeli Arab young people also agreed with it. The "don't know" category of responses likewise indicated sectoral differences: 8.6% of Jewish youth responded "don't know" regarding the question of Germany's attitude toward Israel, but 24.6% of Israeli Arab youth made the same response.

Regarding the latter category, a clarification is in order. The "don't know" category has dual dimensions: One dimension represents persons who are unable to decide, while the

other represents persons who are unable to respond because of a lack of factual information. This qualification holds particularly for all the responses received from Israeli Arab youth because we should recognize the objective possibility that members of this community may truly know less about Germany than do Jewish youth primarily due to Germany's irrelevance to Israeli Arab history and current experience.

The findings obtained from the Jewish participants in the survey should also not be surprising for two reasons. Israel's Jews perceive Germany negatively first and foremost because of its Nazi past and responsibility for the Holocaust. A comparison of the 2004 with the 1998 findings indicates an almost 1 percent increase (from 52.6% to 56.6%) in the number disagreeing with the statement that Israel is among the countries most friendly toward Israel. It is interesting to note here that a greater percentage of Israeli Arab youth (43% in 2004) as opposed to Jewish youth (35% in 2004) agreed with this statement although a decline was also observed since 1998.

As opposed to the consistency found with respect to the previous question, a considerable increase was observed in the perceptions of Germany as a democratic state among Jewish youth. This issue was measured by asking whether the participants felt that the level of xenophobia found in Germany was equivalent to that found in other countries: 48% agreed to this statement in 2004 as opposed to 38% in 1998 (note: in 2004, 41% of Jewish youth disagreed with this statement). Among Israeli Arabs, 43% agreed whereas 33% disagreed with the statement in 2004. If we add the percentage of "don't know" responses received among Jewish (10.3%) and Israeli Arab (24.6%) youth in 2004, the findings indicate that a small majority of young people in both sectors either disagree with the statement regarding German xenophobia (read democratic character) or are unable to make any decision as to how answer.

Turning to Germany's past and the Holocaust, all the participants in the survey were asked whether they believed that the annihilation of the Jews during the Holocaust was supported by the majority of Germans and not solely by the Nazi leadership. Although there was a small decline in support of the statement among the entire sample (from 67% in 1998 to 63% in 2004), a review by age group indicates that among the elder group of Jewish youth (aged 21-24), the decline was more substantial, from 75% in 1998 to 67%, although the younger group of Jewish youth (age 15-18) remained consistent in

its response (74% and 71%, respectively). Consistency was also found in both groups of Israeli Arab youth (about 45% in 1998 and about 41% in 2004).

All told, however, attitudes toward Germany have changed little over the past 6 years, with memories of the past continuing to strongly influence present opinion at least according to the overt responses made by Jewish youth. Yet, this same sector recognizes Germany to be an enlightened democracy, and the majority of the sample (56.4%) concurs that Germany is not fertile ground for the return of a Nazi regime.

Differences in the attitudes held by the two surveys are again apparent in related findings. Specifically, a 15-percentage point decline was observed in the percentage of Israeli Arab youth believing that a Nazi regime could again take power in Germany (from 41% in 1998 to 26% in 2004) as opposed to the 3-percentage point difference observed among Jewish youth in response to this question. A similar attitude is expressed in the 7-percentage point decline observed in the number of Israeli Arab youth believing that Germany was friendly toward Israel, that is, from 50% in 1998 to 43% in 2004. Conversely a 12-percentage point decline was observed among Israeli Arab youth regarding Germany's status as an enlightened democracy, from 66% in 1998 to 54% in 2004.

These results can be considered as expressing the different sectors' attitudes toward two factors: Germany's present — Germany as friendly to Israel, as a democracy and as xenophobic — and Germany's past — the probability of a new Nazi regime and the majority's consent to the Holocaust. These differences are understandable given the distinctive histories of the Jewish and the Israeli Arab communities.

With respect to the Holocaust, two questions were asked, the first general, regarding perception of the Holocaust's as a meaningful event for Israeli society; the second personal, regarding the individual young person's interest in the subject.

The findings obtained in the 2004 regarding the first question were almost diametrically opposed: 60.6% of Jewish youth as opposed to 25.3% of Arab youth believed that the Israeli public perceives the Holocaust in an appropriate light; 29.6% of Jewish youth as opposed to 17.7% of Arab youth believed that the Holocaust is inadequately appreciated; and 8.1% of Jewish youth but 52.8% of Arab youth believed that excessive

importance is attached to the Holocaust. When compared with the 1998 findings, the results for the Jewish sector were fairly consistent. However, significant changes were observed in the Arab sector: the respective percentages had changed 30.4%, 26.7% and 37.8%.

It was also found that personal interest in the Holocaust among Jewish youth has grown in the older age group, from about 56% in 1998 to 64% in 2004, but it has declined somewhat in the younger age group, from 65% in 1998 to 61.6% in 2004. During the same period, as previously mentioned, Israeli Arab interest has remained fairly constant, about 30% for both age groups.

## **Conclusion**

The findings reflect the influence on young persons' attitudes of two major events that have impacted on the Israeli experience in recent years: the outbreak of the second *Intifada* in 2000 and the accompanying economic crisis. As a result, we are witnessing a decline in adherence to democratic values among Jewish youth but a slight increase in adherence to those values among Israeli Arab youth. This trend has been accompanied by deteriorating trust in Israeli institutions, particularly the military and the police by Israeli Arab youth. In similar fashion, the survey has indicated how intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict has affected the two sectors: The majority of Jewish participants in the survey were prepared to prohibit Israeli Arab participation in Knesset elections on the one hand, and viewed the inter-communal conflict as the conflict most threatening to the State's future.

Among the worrisome findings, the most distressing for Israel's future obtained are the rising percentage of young people in favour of violent civil disobedience as well as the large portion who believe that additional political assassinations are highly probable. The implications of these findings are particularly foreboding in light of recent political events such as the unilateral disengagement plan and the possibility of violent resistance to evacuation of the settlements.

Comparison of the findings from the two studies has contributed to a scholarly as well as policy-oriented assessment of whether the attitudes discerned in 1998 were rooted within a specific socio-historical moment or, alternatively, indications of a trend. The results of the comparison indicate that the lesson to be learnt from Yitzhak Rabin's murder is that this traumatic event was more symptomatic of Israel's deepening multi-dimensional crisis than many are prepared to admit.