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The People Speak:
Israeli Public Opinion on National Security
2005-2007

Institute for National Security Studies

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Yehuda Ben Meir and Dafna Shaked

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Executive Summary

Most Israelis view the results of the Second Lebanon War as inconclusive, with half believing that neither party won and the other half almost evenly divided between those who think Israel won and those who believe that Hizbollah won. Half of the population report that their confidence in the IDF has decreased and also see a decrease in Israel's deterrent capability. Nevertheless, over 80 percent of the Jewish population feel they can depend on the IDF to defend the country. While faith in the political leadership is quite low, over two thirds support the decision of the government to go to war against Hizbollah, though the vast majority believe that Israel should have continued the war until either the destruction of Hizbollah or the return of the abducted soldiers.

These are among the primary findings to emerge from the 2007 annual survey of the National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP) of the Institute for National Security Studies. The 2007 survey was conducted in February and March – one half year after the Second Lebanon War. Also recorded here are results for two additional surveys, one taken in 2005 just prior to the disengagement from Gaza, and one conducted in 2006, just prior to the national elections of that year.

One observation affirmed by the study is the strength and stability of the Israeli center. Over half of the Jewish population in Israel can be described as belonging to the center. The hard core extreme right as well as the hard core extreme left are marginal, each consisting of no more than 10 percent. The center, together with the moderate right (13 percent) and moderate left (18 percent) groups, comprises 80 percent of the sample. One can conclude from these results that there is a good deal of flexibility in Israeli public opinion and under certain circumstances – primarily strong and charismatic leadership or dramatic events – there is considerable room for change.

Of all the demographic variables examined, the factor most strongly correlated with the attitudes, positions, and opinions of the respondents is religious self-identification. The ultra-Orthodox and religious sectors are significantly more hawkish on almost all political questions relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than the rest of the Jewish population. The schism between the ultra-Orthodox and religious sectors and the majority of the Jewish population should be of great concern, as it poses a serious challenge to the cohesion and unity of Israeli society.

Israelis' threat perceptions increased slightly in 2007, although a significant majority of the Jewish public remains confident that Israel can cope successfully with any conceivable threat. Nuclear weaponry in the hands of Iran is viewed as the most serious threat facing Israel, followed by "corruption in the public system." The number of respondents who see a high or medium chance for outbreak of a war between Israel and an Arab country or Hizbollah in the next three years rose from 37 percent in 2006 to 76 percent in 2007.

Among the other major conclusions to emerge from the survey:

- The demographic challenge is of growing urgency to most of the Jewish population and helps define the collective approach to national security issues.
- Israelis remain hawkish on security but dovish on political issues, manifesting a readiness for territorial compromise and concessions in the context of a permanent settlement and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Israelis remain committed to the search for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even though they question the existence of a viable Palestinian partner and are generally doubtful of the Palestinians' true desire to reach a peace agreement.
- Construction of the security fence continued to enjoy massive support among the Jewish population. Indeed, it is hard to find any issue in Israel about which there is so wide a consensus.
- Unilateralism has been largely rejected as a legitimate political option, primarily given the violent aftermath of the 2005 disengagement and the Second Lebanon War.

- Concern over potential intra-Jewish civil strife in light of a potential agreement with the Palestinians has ebbed, as has the readiness to condone a soldier's right to refuse an order.

Finally, the general mood of the population rose gradually from 2004 to 2006, and then changed direction in 2007. In the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, the assessment of the general state of the country reverted to the level of 2005. Overall, the national mood and the sense of future prospects are not decisively positive, hovering around the mid-point of a 1-9 scale. There is, however, a distinct difference between the assessment of the overall state of the country and the assessment of one's own personal state. Not only is the perception of the latter positive and significantly higher than that of the former, but the ratings as to one's own personal state for 2007 maintain the high level of 2006, showing no effects of the Second Lebanon War.

Introduction

The search for the seemingly elusive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflict continues to captivate the attention of the international community. Although Israel is perforce a vital factor in any resolution, it remains doubtful whether sufficient weight is given to Israeli public opinion. Israel is a vibrant democracy with a relatively highly informed body politic served by a zealously independent and extremely active media. As such, no Israeli government can ignore the exigencies of public opinion. Add to this the highly divisive nature of Israeli politics, the multi-party system, and the fact that all governments in Israel have been coalition governments. Consequently, the policies and decisions of any Israeli government on key national security issues are constrained to a large degree by the pressures of public opinion. This reality is compounded by the fact that national security decisions are often deemed by much of the public to have an almost existential nature.

True, national leaders and governments can influence, shape, and at times even radically change public opinion. But there are limits, especially in this day and age, to the ability of governments to shape public opinion and to forge a majority in support of their policies. And without such support, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for any government to implement key and far-reaching national security decisions.

Given the crucial importance of understanding Israeli public opinion, its development over time, and its policy implications, the National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP) was established. The aim of the NSPOP is to measure, describe, and analyze on an ongoing basis Israeli public opinion, and more specifically the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of the Jewish population in Israel on all issues of national security over time. Starting in mid-1985, in-depth surveys of representative samples of the adult Jewish population of Israel were conducted, more or

less on a yearly basis. From June 1985 until March 2007, twenty-two such surveys were conducted, each of which included between 700 and 1200 respondents. All the interviews were conducted on a face to face basis at the home of the respondents.

The Israeli body politic is composed of Jews and Arabs. The breakdown between the two groups for the overall Israeli population is approximately 79 percent Jews and 21 percent Arabs. However, due to the higher birthrate among the Arabs (most of whom are Muslims), when speaking of the "Israeli voting age population," i.e., those eighteen years old and above, the breakdown for the two groups is approximately 85 percent Jews and 15 percent Arabs. From its inception, the NSPOP has surveyed the Jewish population of Israel. Including the Arab population in the studies incurs two significant complications. First, it involves a substantial increase in costs. Second and more important, public opinion in the Arab sector on key national security issues differs, in many instances even radically, from that of the Jewish sector. As a result, averaging in the Arab data with the Jewish data confuses the true picture and in some instances may be no more than a statistical artifact. Given the predominance of the Jewish population, overall Israeli public opinion on the vast majority of issues doesn't vary from that of the Jewish population by more than 5 percent. Thus, when this study refers to "Israeli public opinion" or "Israelis," it in effect refers to the public opinion of the Jewish community in Israel, although in most instances it also largely reflects Israeli public opinion overall.

The key feature of the NSPOP is the questionnaire. The questionnaires used in these studies have listed over 100 questions on a wide range of national security issues as well as a large number of demographic indicators. Topics covered in the questionnaires have included, inter alia: attitudes and perceptions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflict; opinions regarding possible solutions dealing specifically with territories, settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem; the national mood, including feelings of security and insecurity, threat perception, and overall optimism and pessimism; attitudes regarding the Arab minority in Israel, the IDF, and the rule of law; and the relative importance of key national values. Demographic indicators include gender, age, country of origin, education, socio-economic status, level of religious identification, and military service.

Contributing to the value of the survey as an insightful measurement over time is that the questionnaire has retained may of the same questions over the years. The original intent was to use the same questionnaire from year to year, maintaining the exact wording of most of the items, thus enabling the analyst to chart and plot development and changes in Israeli public opinion over time. As the years progressed, many questions became irrelevant or outdated and new issue arose. In some cases, the exact wording of certain items had to be modified, but the questionnaire nonetheless includes numerous questions that have appeared for many years, and in some instances for over two decades. As a result, the NSPOP is a unique depository of invaluable data gathered over more than twenty years that taken together identifies and paints the changing face of Israel.

This study covers a three year period, 2005-2007, and presents the results of three surveys conducted during this period. The first survey was conducted just prior to the actual implementation of the disengagement from Gaza, from July 5 to August 11, 2005 (the disengagement commenced on August 15, 2005). The second survey was conducted six months after the disengagement and just prior to the national elections, from February 21 to March 27, 2006 (national elections for the Knesset were held on March 28, 2006). The final survey was conducted one half year after the Second Lebanon War, from February 25 to March 25, 2007.

1
Main Findings

The Israeli center – sometimes known as the silent majority – remains strong and steady. Over half of the Jewish population in Israel can be broadly described as belonging to the center. There is little homogeneity in any group, including the extremes of the spectrum; moreover, the hard core extreme right as well as the hard core extreme left are marginal, each consisting of no more than 10 percent of the population. There is a good deal of flexibility in Israeli public opinion, what allows under certain circumstances – especially strong and charismatic political leadership or some dramatic event – considerable room for change.

At the same time, over the past three years there has been a high degree of consistency in the basic attitudes and opinions of the adult Jewish population in Israel regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and possible solutions. The results of the survey completed in late March 2007 are of particular interest, as they reflect the impact of the past year's events on Israeli public opinion, and specifically the Second Lebanon War. The data confirms that basic attitudes and opinions did not change dramatically as a result of the 2006 war in Lebanon, although there were some far-reaching changes on a small number of specific issues. Overall, Israelis remain hawkish on security but dovish on political issues, manifesting a readiness for territorial compromise and concessions in the context of a permanent settlement and an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At the same time, relative to 2005 and 2006, there was a shift to the right on a number of issues, in the range of 5 to 13 percent, but on most issues moderate positions still enjoyed majority support, even if somewhat reduced.

One major and consistent conclusion from the studies conducted over the last few years is the predominant effect of religious identification on

one's political opinions. Of all the demographic factors investigated (gender, age, country of origin, education, and socio-economic status), the one with the strongest influence on the attitudes and opinions of the respondents was one's own definition of his or her religious identity. The ultra-Orthodox and the religious were the most hawkish, the secular population had the most moderate positions, and the traditionalists were in the middle.

In 2007, support for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza was 55 percent, down from 61 percent in 2006; support for the solution of "two states for two peoples" was 63 percent, down from 70 percent in 2006. Nonetheless, both propositions still enjoy a clear majority among the Jewish public. One major change surfaced with regard to unilateralism, which suffered a major blow and has fallen from favor with the Jewish public.

Demography continues to dominate over geography. Respondents were asked to rank four key values in order of importance:

a. a country with a Jewish majority
b. Greater Israel
c. a democratic country
d. a state of peace

For over twenty years, the value ranked as the most important has been a Jewish majority. In 2006, for the first time, an absolute majority of the Jewish population (54 percent) listed it as the most important value, vs. only 7 percent who chose Greater Israel as the preeminent value. The corresponding numbers for 2007 are 50 percent and 9 percent. In 2006 and 2007, 72 percent and 71 percent, respectively, chose "a country with a Jewish majority" as "the most important" or "the second most important" value, vs. 27 percent and 29, respectively, who named Greater Israel as their priority value. The dramatic similarity of the findings demonstrates that we are dealing with a fundamental and consistent parameter of Israeli public opinion.

The prioritization of demography over geography is manifest in the readiness to evacuate certain settlements in the West Bank. Support for removal of all the settlements, including the large settlement blocs, was negligible – 18 percent in 2006 and 14 percent in 2007. However, 46 percent in 2006 and 45 percent in 2007 supported the removal of all the small and isolated settlements. Taken together, 64 percent in 2006 and 59

percent in 2007 were ready to evacuate certain settlements in the West Bank in the context of a permanent settlement.

Israelis have remained committed to seeking a solution to the conflict, although they are quite pessimistic regarding the Palestinian partner. Support for halting the peace process has remained low. In 2006, on a 1-7 scale, 20 percent agreed with the proposition that the peace process should be suspended, vs. 69 percent who disagreed (11 percent were in the middle). The comparable numbers for 2007 were 22 percent, 62 percent, and 16 percent. On the other hand, in 2007 only 31 percent believed in the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, slightly down from 34 percent in 2006. In 2007, support for the Saudi initiative, even in principle, was limited: 27 percent supported a positive Israeli response to the initiative, vs. 49 percent who were opposed (24 percent were in the middle). When asked what Israel's position should be if a Palestinian unity government would be formed on the basis of the February 2007 Mecca agreement, there was no consensus. Forty-two percent opposed any contact with such a government vs. 24 percent who favored negotiating a long range truce (h*udna*) with the government. Twelve percent supported day to day coordination on practical issues but no political negotiations with the PA; 17 percent were in favor of continuing to negotiate with Abu Mazen; and a mere 4 percent supported a further unilateral move in the West Bank.

Similarly, Israelis are quite pessimistic about Hamas. When asked whether there was any chance that Hamas would go the way of the PLO and recognize Israel, 44 percent responded "no chance," and 46 percent chose "very little chance." Only 8 percent said that there was "a fairly good chance" and 2 percent responded "a very good chance." At the same time, Israelis have not completely given up on a political solution. Only one third agreed with the statement that "there is no political solution to the conflict" and this figure has remained constant over the past four years (2004-2007). It should also be noted that 49 percent in 2006 and 44 percent in 2007 believed that "most Palestinians" want peace.

Construction of the security fence continued to enjoy massive support among the Jewish population. Indeed, it is hard to find any issue in Israel about which there is so wide a consensus. Eighty percent in 2004, 82 percent in 2005, 79 percent in 2006, and 76 percent in 2007 supported the

construction of the fence. In the context of a question relating to the various proposals on the route of the fence, 81 percent in 2005, 75 percent in 2006, and 78 percent in 2007 disagreed with the statement that "the fence should not have been constructed at all." Respondents were also asked if under certain circumstances, e.g., no possibility of political progress with the Palestinians and a resurgence of terrorism in the territories, would they agree that Israel declare the fence as its permanent border. A clear majority were in favor in 2005 (57 percent) and in 2006 (60 percent). However, by 2007 the Jewish population was evenly split on the issue: 49 percent in favor and 51 percent opposed. This decline primarily reflects the disenchantment of Israeli public opinion with unilateralism.

The events of 2006, namely the continuation and intensification of the Qassam rocket attacks against Israeli towns and cities from the Gaza Strip after the disengagement – culminating with the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by Palestinians and the killing of two others on June 25, 2006 and the Second Lebanon War – brought home to many Israelis the dangers and drawbacks inherent in unilateralism. The dramatic effect on public opinion can be seen in the latest results. Support for "unilateral disengagement involving evacuation of settlements" declined sharply from 50 percent in 2004, 47 percent in 2005, and 51 percent in 2006 to 28 percent in 2007. In 2004, 56 percent of the Jewish population supported Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan in Gaza and northern Samaria. In the days just prior to the actual implementation of the disengagement (August 2005) and one half year later (March 2006), the Jewish public was evenly split (50 percent – 50 percent) with regard to the plan. When asked in March 2007 what was their after-the-fact opinion of the disengagement, only 36 percent supported the disengagement plan vs. close to two thirds (64 percent) who opposed it. It is clear that Israeli public opinion views the disengagement from Gaza as a dismal failure and this perception will inevitably have a strong influence on the decisions and actions of the Israeli government in the near future. Support for the removal of some settlements (mainly the small and isolated ones) in the context of unilateral disengagement declined from 55 percent in 2006 to 41 percent in 2007.

The Jewish public expressed mixed feelings regarding the results of the Second Lebanon War. Fifty-one percent believed that neither side won the war. The remainder was evenly divided, with 23 percent saying that

Israel won and 26 percent that Hizbollah won. In the aftermath, 46 percent indicated that their confidence in the IDF has decreased as a result of the war, vs. 46 percent who said it hasn't changed (8 percent said it increased); 53 percent felt a drop in Israel's deterrent capability. At the same time, confidence in the ability of the IDF to defend Israel remains extremely high: 83 percent of the Jewish population said they can depend on the IDF to defend the country. On the other hand, faith in the political leadership is low, with only 34 percent saying that they can depend on the government to "make right decisions on questions of national security." Regarding the decision by the government to go to war, 20 percent justified it outright, while another 49 percent viewed the decision as justified but believed that Israel should have continued the war until either Hizbollah was destroyed or the abducted soldiers were recovered. In contrast, 20 percent would have preferred a limited military response, and only 11 percent were of the opinion that there was no need for any military response. Thus while Israelis by and large were clearly unhappy with the results of the war, over two thirds in principle supported the government's decision to go to war, believing that under the circumstances it was justified. This finding has clear implications for the future.

There was a slight increase in the threat perception of Israelis, although a significant majority of the Jewish public remains confident that Israel can cope successfully with any conceivable threat. In 2007, 76 percent saw a high or medium chance of an outbreak of a war between Israel and an Arab country or Hizbollah in the next three years, up from 37 percent in 2006 and 39 percent in 2005. Nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran were viewed as the most serious threat facing Israel: 6.2 on a 1-7 point scale. Interestingly, the second most serious threat in the eyes of Israelis was "corruption in the public system."

Particularly noteworthy is the distinct difference between a respondent's assessment of the overall state of the country and the assessment of his/her own personal condition. Not only is the perception of the latter much higher than that of the former; in addition, while regarding the state of the country there was a clear decline in 2007, ratings as to one's personal state remained as high as ever in 2007. On a 1-9 scale there was a progressive improvement in the assessment of the state of the country from the aspect of national security from 2004 to 2006 (an average score of 4.1, 4.6, and

4.8, respectively) only to drop in 2007 back close to the 2004 level (4.3). Assessment of the individual personal state increased from 20004 to 2006 (an average score of 5.5, 6.0, and 5.9) and remained in 2007 at 5.9. The picture is identical regarding optimism. Assessment of the state of the country from the aspect of national security "five years hence" increased from 2004 to 2006 (an average score of 5.2, 5.3, and 5.5, respectively) only to drop in 2007 back to the 2004 level (5.2). The comparable numbers for 2004 to 2007 regarding the assessment of one's own personal state in five years are 6.6, 6.6, 6.9, and 6.9. The improvement in one's personal mood over the four year period and in the assessment of the state of the country from 2004 to 2006 reflects the sharp decrease in terrorism over this period as well as the rapid improvement in the economic situation and the rise in the standard of living of most Israelis. The decrease in the national mood from 2006 to 2007 reflects the disappointment with the results of the disengagement from Gaza and the unsatisfactory results (at least in the view of most Israelis) of the Second Lebanon War.

Interestingly, Jewish attitudes towards the Arab minority, i.e., the Arab citizens of Israel, did not change significantly as a result of the Second Lebanon War. There remains a great deal of ambivalence in the attitude of Israeli Jews towards Israeli Arabs. A large majority opposed allowing Israeli Arabs to participate in crucial national decisions or including Arab ministers in the cabinet, and supported the voluntary emigration of Israeli Arabs from Israel (63 percent in 2006 and 66 percent in 2007). At the same time, a large majority of Jews supported the granting of "equal rights" for Israeli Arabs – almost three quarters of the respondents in 2006 and two thirds in 2007. When asked what Israel should emphasize in its relations with its Arab citizens, 60 percent in 2006 and 57 percent in 2007 chose the option of "equalizing their conditions with those of the other citizens of the state" over "intensifying punitive measures for behavior inappropriate for Israeli citizens."

Following the disengagement from Gaza in late 2005 and probably as a direct result of its smooth implementation with minimal violence, the concern about possible civil strife as a result of a political settlement with the Palestinians involving territorial withdrawal and evacuation of settlements has decreased significantly. In 2007, 29 percent saw a possibility of civil war as a result of Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria in the context

of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, down from 37 percent in 2006 and 49 percent in 2005 (prior to the disengagement). Both in 2006 and 2007, the vast majority – three quarters – of the Jewish population viewed a refusal by a soldier to serve in the territories or to obey an order to evacuate settlements as illegitimate.

2

The Profile of the Israeli Body Politic

What is the profile of the Israeli body politic? Taking all the data together, what is the genuine face of Israeli society? How is the Jewish population of Israel divided in terms of right, left, and center? What is the true strength of the Israeli center? The general elections in 2006 was the first time in decades that a genuine center party – Kadima – became the largest party in the Knesset, receiving a quarter of the vote. Does this reflect the actual tenor of public opinion? One would expect some correlation between public opinion on national security issues and voting behavior. At the same time, one's vote is influenced and determined by many other factors – e.g., economic considerations, family and ethnic loyalties, past voting behavior, and the candidates themselves. On the basis of the survey, can we derive an accurate public opinion profile of Israeli society?

In order to answer these questions, we performed an analysis on the individual level. We examined in the 2005 and 2006 surveys the response pattern of each individual on the key questions relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The idea was that on the basis of the individual response pattern, each individual could be assigned to one of five categories along a left (dovish) to right (hawkish) continuum. Thus, an individual who chose the most extreme hawkish response to each of the questions would be classified as "extreme right"; those who chose moderate hawkish responses to each of the questions would be classified as "moderate right"; an individual who chose the most extreme dovish response to each of the questions would be classified as "extreme left"; those who chose moderate dovish responses to each of the questions would be classified as "moderate left"; and all those individuals not falling into one of the above categories would be classified as "center."

Results for the 2005 and 2006 sample were quite similar, and thus the discussion will explore the 2006 analysis in detail, and summarize the analysis for 2005 at the end of the chapter. The 2006 questionnaire included eight questions that had several possible responses ranging from extreme right to extreme left. A ninth question had an extreme right and an extreme left response. Two other questions had an extreme right response (the other responses did not necessarily reflect a clear right or left position) and four additional questions had an extreme left response (with the other responses not necessarily reflecting a clear right or left position). Thus, there were thirteen "extreme left questions," i.e., questions having an extreme left alternative, eleven "extreme right questions," and eight "moderate right" and "moderate left" questions. Table 1 shows the fifteen questions used in the profile analysis and the responses coded as "extreme right," "extreme left," "moderate right," and "moderate left."

Table 1. Questions and Responses Used in the Profile Analysis

#	Question	Extreme Right	Moderate Right	Moderate Left	Extreme Left
1	Territories should be returned for peace – 1-7 scale (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree)	1	2, 3	5, 6	7
2	No military solution to the conflict (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree)	1	2, 3	5, 6	7
3	No political solution to the conflict (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree)	7	5, 6	2, 3	1
4	Solution of two states for two people	strongly oppose	oppose	support	strongly support
5	Israel declaring the fence as its permanent border and removing all the settlements east of the fence	definitely disagree	disagree	agree	definitely agree
6	A Palestinian state on 95% of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel retaining the large settlement blocs	strongly oppose	oppose	support	strongly support
7	Transfer Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem – except for the Old City – to the Palestinians	strongly oppose	oppose	support	strongly support

#	Question	Extreme Right	Moderate Right	Moderate Left	Extreme Left
8	Establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza	strongly oppose	oppose	support	strongly support
9	Evacuation of Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria in the context of a permanent settlement	no removal of settlements under any circumstances			ready for removal of all settlements including the large settlement blocs
10	Return or retain isolated settlements on mountain ridge of eastern Samaria	retain			
11	The "most important" value	Greater Israel			
12	Temple Mount will be given to the Palestinians and Wailing Wall retained by Israel				support
13	A limited number of refugees will be permitted to return to Israel				support
14	Ready to return or retain Gush Etzion (the Etzion Bloc)				return
15	Ready to return or retain the Jordan Valley				return

In theory, the "extreme right" group should comprise those individuals who chose the extreme right response to each of the eleven "extreme right questions" (questions 1-11). The same holds true for each of the other three groups – "the extreme left" group (choosing the extreme left response to each of thirteen "extreme left questions") and the "moderate right" and "moderate left" groups (choosing the appropriate response to each of the eight "moderate right" and "moderate left" questions). This would give us "pure" groups. It should be noted that for a number of questions, the responses coded as "moderate right" or "moderate left" responses could have been given and no doubt were indeed given by individuals who are in the center. It is thus the accumulation and concentration of responses in a given direction that determines the assignment of an individual to one of the "moderate" groups, rather than to the center.

However, as happens only too often in real life, theory and reality are not the same and it is very rare to find "pure" groups. This is the case regarding the empirical data collected, and this may be the most fascinating finding of all. There are no "pure" groups. If we adopt the most stringent criteria, i.e., assign individuals to a given group only if they gave the appropriate response to all the relevant questions, we would end up with empty categories. Only one single individual out of 724 respondents gave the "extreme right" response to all eleven "extreme right questions" and another five did so to ten of the eleven questions. In other words, less than 1 percent chose the "extreme right" response to at least ten out of the eleven "extreme right questions." This picture repeats itself with the other three groups. There is no pure "extreme left," inasmuch as no one gave "extreme left" responses to all thirteen relevant questions and only five individuals did so to twelve of the thirteen questions – once again less than 1 percent.

Table 2 shows the number of respondents choosing the coded response in each of the four coded groups ("extreme right," "moderate right," "moderate left," and "extreme left") to all the questions, fewer than all (each possible aggregate number of questions), or none of the relevant questions. Looking at table 2a, for instance, we can see that 195 respondents (27 percent) did not give any "extreme right" responses whatsoever and another 156 respondents (21 percent) gave only one "extreme right" response. At the other end of the scale, we can see that 64 respondents (9 percent) chose the "extreme right" response on seven or more of the eleven "extreme right questions" and 95 respondents (13 percent) chose the "extreme right" response on six (more than one half) of the eleven "extreme right questions." The results for the other three groups appear in tables 2b, 2c, and 2d. The picture for the "extreme left" (table 2d) is almost identical – 25 percent did not give any "extreme left" responses and another 22 percent gave only one "extreme left" response (out of thirteen questions). At the other end of the scale, 61 respondents (8.5 percent) chose the "extreme left" response on seven or more of the thirteen "extreme left questions" (slightly over half of the questions). The results for the "moderate right" and especially the "moderate left" are more complex as these groups verge on the center.

Table 2. Number of Respondents Choosing a Specific Coded Response for Each Aggregate Number of Relevant Questions (from none to all), 2006

2a. Extreme right

No. of questions answered with "extreme right" response	frequency	percent
0	195	26.9
1	156	21.5
2	111	15.3
3	58	8.0
4	66	9.1
5	43	5.9
6	31	4.3
7	20	2.8
8	19	2.6
9	19	2.6
10	5	0.7
11	1	0.1
Total	724	100

2b. Moderate right

No. of questions answered with "moderate right" response	frequency	percent
0	191	26.2
1	194	26.8
2	148	20.4
3	98	13.5
4	65	9.0
5	20	2.8
6	7	1.0
7	1	0.1
8	0	0
Total	724	100

2c. Moderate left

No. of questions answered with "moderate left" response	frequency	percent
0	84	11.6
1	125	17.3
2	146	20.2
3	116	16.0
4	119	16.4
5	80	11.0
6	41	5.7
7	10	1.4
8	3	0.4
Total	724	100

2d. Extreme left

No. of questions answered with "extreme left" response	frequency	percent
0	178	24.6
1	163	22.5
2	122	16.9
3	81	11.2
4	55	7.6
5	41	5.7
6	23	3.2
7	22	3.0
8	9	1.2
9	12	1.7
10	7	1.0
11	6	0.8
12	5	0.7
13	0	0
Total	724	100

The empirical data shown in table 2 demonstrates that stringent criteria are inapplicable – there are no "pure" groups. This finding in and of itself is fascinating, highly significant, and endowed with far-reaching implications. It illuminates a basic feature of Israeli public opinion and carries a very important message regarding Israeli society. Not only is there a large center, comprising half of the Jewish population, but the other half is not divided into antipodal homogenous groups and instead ranges along a continuum. Thus, there really is no homogenous "extreme right" or even "moderate right" group. Instead, those on the right are spread out along a continuum, ranging from the extreme "extreme right," which includes almost no one, to the "moderate right," which can easily be incorporated in the center. The same holds true for the left. This is dramatically demonstrated in the vertical progression of the frequency of respondents in each of the four parts of table 2. What this means is that Israeli public opinion is not rigid, but rather manifests a certain degree of flexibility and under certain circumstances may be subject to significant change. The implications of this insight for decision makers and for the formulation of future policy are clear.

This significant finding notwithstanding, an effort was made to divide the entire sample into the five groups set forth above. In so doing there is no choice but to use flexible criteria, i.e., various cutoff points, which by their very nature are to a large degree arbitrary. It was thus decided to assign an individual to one of the four groups if he/she chose the particular coded response to at least half or slightly more than half of the relevant questions for that group. One additional consideration in determining the cutoff points was to have a minimal number of respondents in each group so as to enable an analysis of the demographic makeup of each group. The cutoff points could have been moved one or two places in either direction, but this would not have significantly changed the picture. The results for the entire sample are shown in table 3 (which in effect is derived from table 2). The cutoff point for the "extreme right" group was set at 7 or more questions, i.e., those respondents who chose the "extreme right" response to at least 7 out of the 11 "extreme right" questions were included in the group. The cutoff point for the "moderate right" group was set at four or more questions (out of eight questions), for the "moderate left" group at

five or more questions (out of eight questions), and for the "extreme left" group at seven or more questions (out of thirteen questions).

Table 3. Breakdown of the 2006 Sample into Right, Left, and Center

	frequency	percent
Extreme right	64	8.8
Moderate right	93	12.8
Moderate left	133	18.4
Extreme left	61	8.4
Center	373	51.5
Total	724	100

The data presented in table 3 confirms and reinforces the conclusion drawn from table 2, demonstrating dramatically and clearly the strength of the Israeli center. Half of the Jewish population is in the center and does not embrace a definite right or left, hawkish or dovish point of view regarding the crucial issues relating to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict and its solution. Furthermore, the "moderate right" and "moderate left" groups, which are close to the center, account for another 30 percent of the population. The "extreme right" and "extreme left" groups are quite marginal, each hovering around 10 percent of the overall Jewish population. There is, indeed, a great deal of flexibility in Israeli public opinion. It should also be noted that the left is slightly larger than the right (27 percent vs. 21.5 percent), and this is manifest primarily in the "moderate left" group – over 70 percent of the respondents chose at least two "moderate left" responses vs. less than half (47 percent) who chose at least two "moderate right" responses.

The analysis described above for the 2006 sample was performed also for the 2005 sample, using the same method, criteria, and cutoff points. The results are quite similar and are shown in table 4.

Finally, the profile of each of the 2006 four "right" and "left" groups in terms of the various demographic factors was examined. Most of the demographic variables, which are analyzed in the following chapter, are not significantly correlated with one's "right" or "left" profile. For example, the total number of men and women included in all four groups (excluding the center) is identical – 175 men and 176 women. There is no difference regarding the "left" groups. As far as the "right" groups are concerned,

Table 4. Breakdown of the 2005 Sample into Right, Left, and Center

	frequency	percent
Extreme right	96	13.6
Moderate right	94	13.4
Moderate left	93	13.2
Extreme left	74	10.5
Center	347	49.3
Total	704	100

men are represented more in the "extreme right" group – 58 percent men vs. 42 percent women – while women have a higher representation than men in the "moderate right" group – 59 percent women vs. 41 percent men – but for the overall sample the differences are not statistically significant. A significant difference is found regarding an academic degree – those having an academic degree are more left oriented that those lacking an academic degree.

The one demographic factor that is dramatically and most strongly correlated with one's profile is religious identification. The ultra-Orthodox and religious sectors emerged as much more right wing and hawkish than the rest of the population, and this correlation is statistically significant at the .0001 level (i.e., there is one chance in 10,000 that this correlation between religious identification and opinion profile is not found in the Jewish population as a whole). Interestingly, the differences between these two sectors and the rest of the Jewish population do not affect the center at all, but are manifest only with regard to the "right" and "left" groups. The majority of the ultra-Orthodox and religious respondents, in line with the overall sample, are included in the center group (and even slightly more so). However, the remaining 44 percent of the ultra-Orthodox respondents and 43 percent of the religious respondents fall almost exclusively in the "right" groups and especially in the "extreme right" group. Two thirds (67 percent) of the ultra-Orthodox respondents who are not in the center are in the "extreme right" group and another 15 percent are in the "moderate right" group. Only one ultra-Orthodox respondent, out of a total of 63 respondents, is "extreme left," and another four respondents are in the "moderate left" group. Close to half (46 percent) of the religious respondents who are not in the center are in the "extreme right" group and

another 36 percent are in the "moderate right" group. Only two religious respondents, out of an overall total of 91 respondents, are "extreme left" and another five respondents fall in the "moderate left" group. It is thus clear that leftist opinions do not penetrate the ultra-Orthodox and religious communities; evidently religion and the left – at least in the context of the Jewish population of Israel – do not currently go together.

3

Key Factors in the Formation of Israeli Public Opinion

What are the factors that have an impact on the formation of public opinion? What foundation underlies the matrix of Israeli perceptions, opinions, and attitudes? What factors can account for the range in attitudes and opinions of various segments of the Jewish population and for the differences between one respondent and another? What variables lie behind the individual differences and determine the specific opinions and attitudes of each individual? This chapter attempts to answer some of these questions and probe the infrastructure of Israeli public opinion. To this end, it will examine two sets of factors that in addition to events on the ground and the influence of charismatic leaders seem to have a significant effect on the formulation and development of public opinion: the value system and demographic indicators.

The Value System

From its inception, the approach adopted by the NSPOP to the study of the value system of the respondents was one of "value equilibrium" or "balance of values." Contrary to the conventional approach that places individuals along a continuum such as "left-right," "liberal-conservative," or "dove-hawk," the basic premise of the value equilibrium approach is that every individual embraces a number of values, some of which may under certain circumstances lead to contradictory opinions or behavior. One's behavior or opinions is determined not by one's place along a continuum, but rather by one's preferences for the values within his/her overall value system, i.e., the rank order of the various values in terms of their importance to the individual.

The surveys named four key values, akin to ideals, related to national security issues within the overall value system of the Jewish public. The four values are:

a. a country with a Jewish majority
b. Greater Israel
c. a democratic country (equal political rights for everyone)
d. a state of peace (low probability of war).

Respondents were asked to classify the four values by ranking which was "the most important," "the second most important," "third," and "fourth." Each year, without exception the value that received the most support as the most important was a Jewish majority, while Greater Israel received the fewest votes as the most important value. Democracy and peace were in the middle, with the order between them changing from time to time. In 2006, there was a significant increase in the priority of a Jewish majority. Over half – an absolute majority – of the Jewish population ranked "a country with a Jewish majority" as "the most important value," and for close to three quarters of the population it was "the most" or "second most important value." Only about 10 percent of the population chose "Greater Israel" as the most important value, and for only one quarter of the Jewish population was it the most important or the second most important value. The results for 2007 are almost identical. Results for 2004-2007 appear in figure 1.

The similarity of the findings over time makes clear that we are indeed dealing with a fundamental and consistent parameter of Israeli public opinion, unchanged by ongoing events. This fundamental value judgment is what to a large degree underlies and explains the relative consistency of most of the basic attitudes and opinions of the Jewish population over time. The only findings that deviate from the overall and relatively consistent pattern are the numbers for the value of "a Jewish majority" in 2006 and 2007, which are even higher than in previous years. This is probably due to the heightened salience of the demographic factor as a result of the Gaza disengagement in August 2005 and Ehud Olmert's convergence plan in early 2006. The rationale behind both plans was the vital need for Israel to preserve and maintain a strong and solid Jewish majority in order to guarantee its character as a Jewish and democratic state. The results confirm what many pundits and observers of the Israeli scene have already

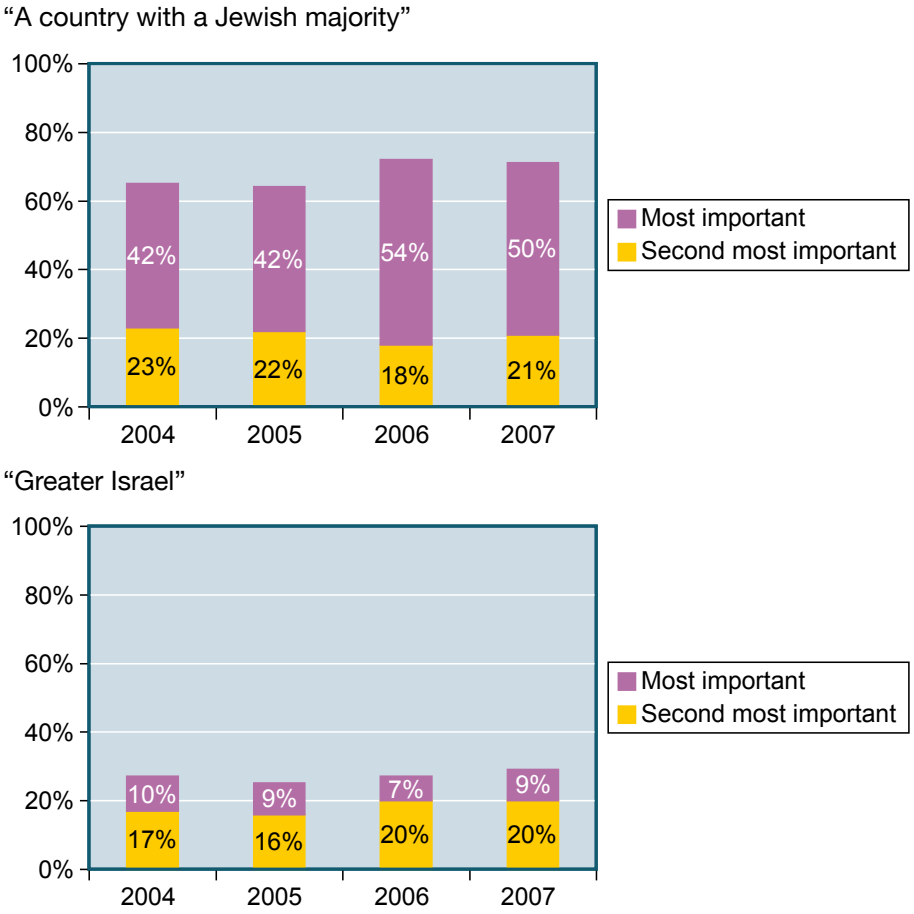


Figure 1. Percentage Prioritizing "Jewish Majority" and "Greater Israel" Values, 2004-2007

noted, namely, that for more and more Israelis demography has become more important than geography.

The supreme priority of the value of maintaining a Jewish majority can go a long way in explaining much of the data presented below. Israelis are attached to the land, believe in Zionist ideals, support settlements, and remain very suspicious of the intentions and goals of the Palestinians, but when they have to choose between alternatives and prioritize their goals, the need to preserve and maintain Israel as a Jewish state takes precedence over everything else.

Demography and Religious Identification

Data was collected for all respondents as to the following variables: gender, age, country of origin (for those born in Israel, by country of birth of the father – second generation Israelis were classified as "Israeli"), religious identification, education (measured both by number of years of formal education and by academic degrees), economic status (measured by monthly expenditures and by the size of one's home in terms of number of rooms), and military service (whether or not one served in the IDF and if he/she had served in the territories). The demographic breakdown for each of these nine indicators was examined for 27 key questions in both the 2005 and 2006 surveys. Using a chi-square statistical test, each of the 243 distributions for 2005 and 2006 was checked for statistical significance at the .01 level. A statistically significant result means that (99 times out of 100) there is, for the entire population, some degree of correlation between the specific indicator and responses to the specific question. Table 5 gives the number of significant results found for each of the nine indicators.

Significantly, the various demographic indicators are not independent of each other. Rather, many of the indicators are interrelated, at least to some degree. Origin, for instance, is related to the socio-economic indicators (education and income) as well as to religion. Consequently, a correlation between a certain indicator and public opinion may be in effect an artifact of a high correlation between public opinion and a different interrelated indicator. For example, this is probably what explains the high degree of statistically significant correlations for military service. Military service is correlated with religious identification. Although Israel has a universal draft, the ultra-Orthodox community does not serve in the IDF and many women from the national religious community are exempt from military service. In 2006, out of 56 male respondents who did not serve in the IDF, 30 percent were ultra-Orthodox or religious, compared with 20 percent in the overall sample. Thus to a large degree, the differences between those who served in the IDF and those who didn't serve reflect the huge differences between the ultra-Orthodox and religious Jews and the rest of the Jewish population. Conversely, some indicators are contaminated by various factors and thus fail to act as predictors. This is probably why formal education, as measured by years of schooling, fails to predict the

responses of the respondents. Of all nine indicators, formal education – both in 2005 and 2006 – is the least significant, due to the composition of the group that reports over twelve years of schooling, which includes on the one hand respondents with a university education as well as many ultra-Orthodox respondents who spend fifteen years or more in yeshivot (Talmudic academies) with no post-elementary formal education. These two sub-groups respond very differently to the questionnaire, leaving the indicator with very little predictive ability.

Table 5. Number of Statistically Significant Relations between Each of Nine Demographic Indicators and 27 Key Questions (at the .01 level)

	2005	2006
1. Gender	14	3
2. Age	18	7
3. Country of Origin	12	8
4. Religious Identification	27	24
5. Formal Education	6	3
6. Academic Degree	7	14
7. Monthly Expenditure	10	13
8. No. of Rooms	11	6
9. Military Service	24	20

Careful examination of table 5 can tell us much about the changes in Israeli society. The main conclusion from the results presented in the table, as well from the voluminous data from which they are derived, is that the demographic differences in Israeli society, at least as far as public opinion on national security issues is concerned, are less significant than is normally assumed. With the exception of the overwhelming influence of religion, which divides the nation into quite distinct groups, most demographic variables have limited influence on public opinion. Country of origin was hypothesized to be the fault line of Israeli society. Oriental Jews, i.e., those of Afro-Asian origin, were considered to be much more hawkish than those of European and Anglo-Saxon origin. In the survey, however, country of origin was related to less than half of the questions in 2005 and less than a third in 2006. Furthermore, even where it was related, in some instances the West European and Anglo-Saxon sector was more hawkish than the

Oriental sector, primarily because of the high proportion of religious Jews in that group. Besides religion and military service, which to a large degree is an artifact of religion, only age in 2005 (the older the respondents the less hawkish and more dovish) and academic degree in 2006 (holders of an academic degree were less hawkish and more dovish) were correlated with at least half of the items that were examined. Gender in 2005 and expenditure showed a medium degree of correlation with public opinion.

The numbers in table 5 do not tell the whole story. They show whether there is a statistically significant relationship between a demographic variable and specific questions, but they do not describe the extent of the relationship. Examination of the actual numbers for each item highlights the overwhelming influence of religious identification. Not only is religious identification the only variable that correlates with every single item in 2005 and almost every item in 2006, but the extent of the relationship between one's self-identification as to religious behavior and one's responses to the questionnaire is of a different magnitude than that for all the other demographic indicators.

This point is illustrated with a number of examples from the 2006 study, and while a more complex analysis of certain issues appears below, certain trends can already be identified. Eleven percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 21 percent of the religious believe that there is some possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, vs. one third of the traditionalists and 44 percent of the secular respondents. Regarding a preference for an agreement involving major territorial concessions, unilateral disengagement with less territorial concession, or neither, 84 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 79 percent of the religious chose "neither," vs. 46 percent of the traditionalists and 37 percent of the secular respondents. This is, in effect, a mirror image of two very different sub-populations. On the Gaza disengagement plan, only 10 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 15 percent of the religious supported the plan, vs. about half of the traditionalists and over two thirds (67 percent) of the secular respondents. Finally, on the question of a Palestinian state, 21 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 36 percent of the religious agreed to a Palestinian state, vs. 51 percent of the traditional religious, 67 percent of the traditional non-religious, and over three quarters (76 percent) of the secular respondents. In other words, the percentage of secular Jews supporting a Palestinian

state is more than double that of religious Jews. No such difference is found for any of the other demographic variables, which suggests that what emerges is something very close to two different peoples. This split between the religious and secular communities poses a great challenge for Israeli society.

4

The National Mood and Threat and Security Perceptions

The Mood

An important component of public opinion is the overall national mood and the general feeling of optimism or pessimism regarding the future. The general mood and the outlook for the future reflect the collective perception of the national security situation and are good indicators of the public's future behavior. Mood, by definition, is volatile and highly dependent on current events. Measuring the national mood at any given point in time is of little significance, as it might change quite rapidly and dramatically. What is interesting is to chart the mood over time, observing the changes and relating these changes to national security events. Respondents were asked to assess the general state of the country as far as national security is concerned – now, five years ago, and five years hence. Following are the results for a four year period, 2004-2007.

The overall mood demonstrates gradual and continuous improvement along with increased optimism for 2004-2006, but changed direction in 2007. In 2004, 10 percent rated the overall state of Israel as "very good" or "good," vs. 61 percent who assessed the overall state as "not good" or "poor"; in 2005, the respective numbers were 20 and 41 percent and in 2006, 25 and 37 percent. In 2007, 16 percent rated the overall state of the country as "very good" or "good" vs. 48 percent whose assessment was "not good" or "poor." Although there was a downturn compared to 2006, the overall mood remained significantly better than in 2004 and not much worse than it was in 2005. Figure 2 shows the average score (on a 1-9 scale) for the state of the country from the national security point of view at three different points in time. Figure 3 shows the average score (on a

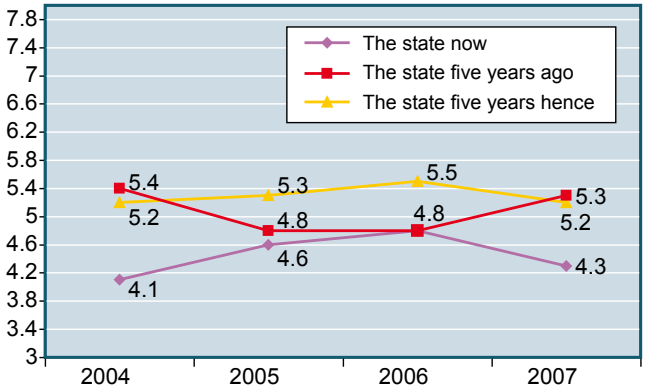


Figure 2. Assessment of the State of the Country from the National Security Perspective, 2004-2007 (average score on a 1-9 scale)

1-9 scale) for the personal and individual state of the respondents at three different points in time.

The numbers in figure 2 confirm the trend for the 2004-2006 period. There is a gradual increase in the assessment of the national security situation, from 4.1 to 4.8, almost reaching the mid-point (5 on the 1-9 scale) in 2006. Even more significant is the rise in optimism. In 2004, respondents expected the national security situation to be better in five years than its current state, but still less good than it was five years ago. As we move to 2005 and 2006, not only did expectations for the future rise (from 5.2 in 2004 to 5.3 in 2005 and 5.5. in 2006), but the prospects for the future were also seen as better than the assessment of the national security situation as it was five years ago. The general rise in the overall mood and specifically in the assessment of Israel's national security situation is probably due to the improved economic situation and especially the marked improvement in the security situation, as a result of Israel's significant achievements in the fight against terrorism. The number of Israelis killed in terror attacks dropped from 451 in 2002 to 210 in 2003, 117 in 2004, 55 in 2005, and 30 in 2006. The number of suicide bombings in those years dropped from 60 in 2001 to 5 in 2006. Yet in 2007, there was a reversal of this positive trend. The average score for the current state of the country was down to 4.3 (still slightly higher than that for 2004) and the optimism score reverted to the

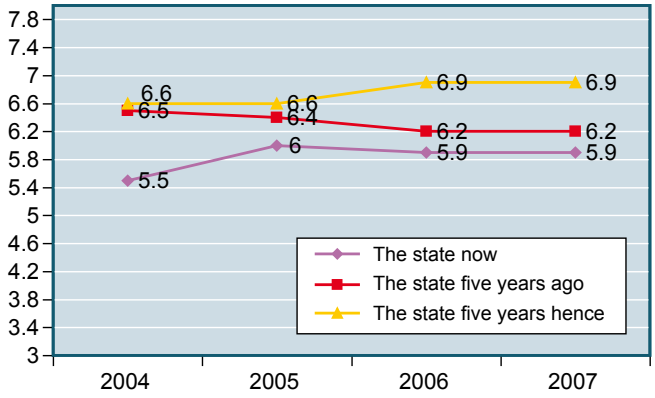


Figure 3. Assessment of the Individual's Personal State, 2004-2007 (average score on a 1-9 scale)

2004 level (5.2). This result reflects the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War and the malaise that fell upon the Israeli body politic.

Figure 3 corroborates the results of figure 2, except for 2007. The period of 2004-2006 shows an improvement in the rating of one's individual state and the increase in optimism. It is interesting to note that the assessment of one's own individual state – in the present, past, and future – is considerably higher than one's perception regarding the state of the country in the area of national security. This phenomenon repeats itself over the years and is known to recur in many other studies, indicating that people tend to see their individual situation as much better than that of the country as a whole. Contrary to the numbers in figure 2, the assessment of one's individual state at different points in time over a number of years are all positive, reaching in 2006 and 2007 close to a score of 7 on prospects for the future. Surprisingly enough, the results for 2007 are identical with those of 2006. Indeed, as far as mood in concerned, the whole is seen as far different from the sum of its parts. The rise in concern for the overall state of the country, at the present and in the future, primarily as a result of the Second Lebanon War (as well as to the growing reports of corruption in high places) does not seem to carry over to the perception of one's own situation. Evidently on the personal level, one's mood is a function of a feeling of security and safety in one's day to day life and one's economic situation and standard of living. These have certainly not changed for the worse in 2006 and 2007.

Threat Perceptions and Feelings of Security

In order to gauge the threat perceptions of Israelis, two similar sets of questions were posed to the respondents. In the first set, respondents were given a list of ten events or situations and were asked "whether the State of Israel could or could not cope successfully with each of them." In the second set, respondents were given a list of ten different situations or scenarios and were asked to rate each one (on a 1-7 scale) as to "the degree to which it posed a threat in your eyes." Table 6 gives the results for the first set of questions and table 7 for the second set.

Table 6. Ability of Israel to Cope Successfully with a Variety of Threats, 2004-2007 (percentage answering in the affirmative)

		2004	2005	2006	2007
1.	All-out war with all the Arab countries	67	72	76	64
2.	War launched by Syria against Israel	96	96	96	90
3.	Potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with biological and chemical weapons	70	78	79	74
4.	Potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with nuclear weapons	52	65	66	55
5.	Continuous and significant terrorist activity	84	87	88	86
6.	A revolt by Israeli Arabs	52	88	89	90
7.	Internal dissent with regard to the territories and peace	85	86	91	89
8.	A threat of surface to surface missile attacks on Israel	86	92	93	90
9.	Social and religious divisions	72	78	83	86
10.	America will reduce its support for Israel	53	58	62	62

Two striking conclusions for the years 2004-2007 emerge from the findings charted in table 6. First, Israelis enjoy a high feeling of security. A majority of the Jewish population is convinced that Israel can cope successfully with every one of the threats presented. With the exception of three threats in 2004 (nuclear attack, a revolt by Israeli Arabs, and a diminishing of American support for Israel), only one threat in 2005 and

2006 (a diminishing of American support for Israel), and three threats in 2007 (nuclear attack, a diminishing of American support for Israel, and an all-out war with Arab countries), over two thirds of the Jewish population – and in many cases over 80 percent – are convinced that Israel can successfully cope with the various threats. Thus as of 2007, Israelis felt quite secure, notwithstanding the grave threats facing the country.

Second, the degree of consistency over the four year period is remarkable. The ranking of ten threats in terms of severity is almost identical for 2005, 2006, and 2007 (with only a small and inconsequential internal shift between questions 5, 6, and 7 and questions 4 and 10 in 2007), and quite similar for 2004. Out of thirty data items, only one – namely the low percentage of those in 2004 who believed that Israel can cope with a revolt by Israeli Arabs (52 percent) – fails to conform to the overall pattern. This number is indeed quite incongruous and must be viewed as an unexplained artifact. Overall, the two most severe threats, which stand out relative to all the others, are a drop in American support for Israel and the threat of nuclear attack. In 2007, there was an increase in threat perception regarding two items only: threat of a nuclear attack and all-out war with all the Arab countries. These are due to the heightened preoccupation of the international community with the Iranian nuclear issue and Ahmadinejad's threats, the Second Lebanon War, and Bashar Asad's saber rattling. The fact that four samples in four years yield such similar results on a wide variety of items strongly supports the reliability and validity of these studies.

Table 7 exhibits much of the same remarkable degree of consistency over the years, as far as the relative severity of the various threats is concerned and the moderate degree of threat perception, with a slight rise in 2006 (an average threat score of 4.92 – up from 4.85 in 2005) and a more significant rise in 2007 (an average threat score of 5.15). The rank order of the threats is almost identical for all four years. A return of territories for peace, unilateral disengagement, and the establishment of a Palestinian state are not viewed as real threats. Chemical and biological weapons and nuclear weapons in the hands of an enemy state were consistently viewed as the two most serious threats. Internal issues – social and economic crises and the undermining of Israel's democratic character – as well as terrorism on a large scale and in 2007 war with Syria earned medium threat levels. In 2007, the item "corruption in the public system" was added. This

item was viewed as the second most serious threat, second only to nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran and even higher than the danger of chemical and biological weapons.

Table 7. Threat perception for a variety of situations or scenarios, 2004-2007 (average score on a 1-7 point scale)

	2004	2005	2006	2007
1. Return of territories for peace	4.1	3.58	3.7	4.2
2. Hamas control of the PA (*)	–	–	5.13	4.0
3. Chemical and biological weapons in the hands of an enemy state	5.9	5.71	5.74	5.72
4. Undemocratic regime in Israel	5.4	5.46	5.36	5.26
5. Unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians	3.6	3.71	3.98	4.5
6. Nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran	6.1	5.93	5.83	6.2
7. Establishment of a Palestinian state	4.3	4.02	4.01	4.5
8. Renewal of terrorism on a large scale	5.1	5.24	5.51	5.62
9. War with Syria	4.5	4.46	4.51	5.3
10. A deep social and economic crisis in Israel (**)	-	5.62	5.46	5.61
11. Corruption in the public system (***)	-	-	-	5.74
Average Threat Score	4.87	4.85	4.92	5.15

(*) This item was introduced only in 2006. In 2007 it was worded: "Establishing a national unity government."
(**) This item was introduced in 2005.
(***) This item was introduced in 2007.

Finally, concern and anxiety at the individual level about personal security and fear of terrorism remained very high. Since the onset of the intifada in late 2000, approximately 80 percent of the respondents expressed concern that they or a member of their family might become a victim of a terrorist attack, reaching a height of 92 percent in 2002. Subsequently, this number decreased to 83 percent in 2003, 78 percent in 2004 and 2005, 72 percent in 2006, and 69 percent in 2007. This decrease reflects the sharp decline in terrorist attacks in Israel during these years. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that terrorism, and specifically the spate of suicide bombings, has left its mark on Israeli society. The number of Israelis killed in traffic accidents

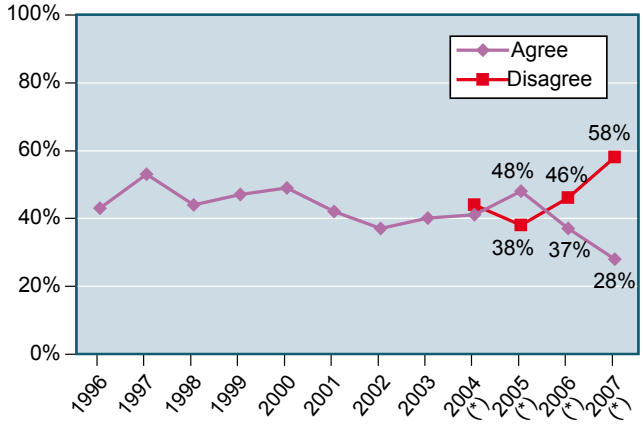
in 2006 was more than twelve times that of those killed by terrorists, yet it is hard to imagine that close to three quarters of the Israeli population would express concern that they or a member of their family might be a victim of a traffic accident. Starting in 2005, respondents were asked whether they sensed a change in their feeling of personal security during the past year. In 2005 and 2006, 52 percent reported no change. In 2005, 21 percent said they were less concerned, vs. 26 percent who said they became more concerned; the respective numbers for 2006 were 15 percent and 33 percent. In 2007, 60 percent reported no change, 4 percent said that they were less concerned, and 36 percent were more concerned.

5

Attitudes Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Possible Solutions

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including formulae for its solution and all the consequent direct and indirect ramifications, has been the central issue in Israel for the past forty years. Any meaningful discussion of this issue from the Israeli internal point of view must take into account the immense complexity of public opinion with regard to the entire Israeli-Palestinian issue. Indeed, if there is one overriding quality that characterizes public opinion in this realm, it is the intense complexity. As is often the case in public opinion studies, the slightest change in the wording of a question can lead to different results. Stating a basically similar issue in alternative terms can result in a dramatically different picture and lead to a different conclusion.

Juxtaposing similar questions shows what apparently seem to be contradictory results. An uninformed and non-professional observer, upon examining all the results and specifically comparing the results for certain items, might reach the conclusion that either the respondents are totally confused or that they didn't take the interview seriously. This, however, is not the case. The seemingly confused and sometimes contradictory results merely demonstrate the complexity of public opinion in Israel on issues of national security. They also explain why any genuine attempt to understand public opinion in depth and fathom its implications for policy decisions cannot be based on one or even a small number of questions. Rather, such an attempt must include a large number and wide range of items that incorporate different wording and divergent approaches. Only by considering all the diverse responses and looking at the entire puzzle



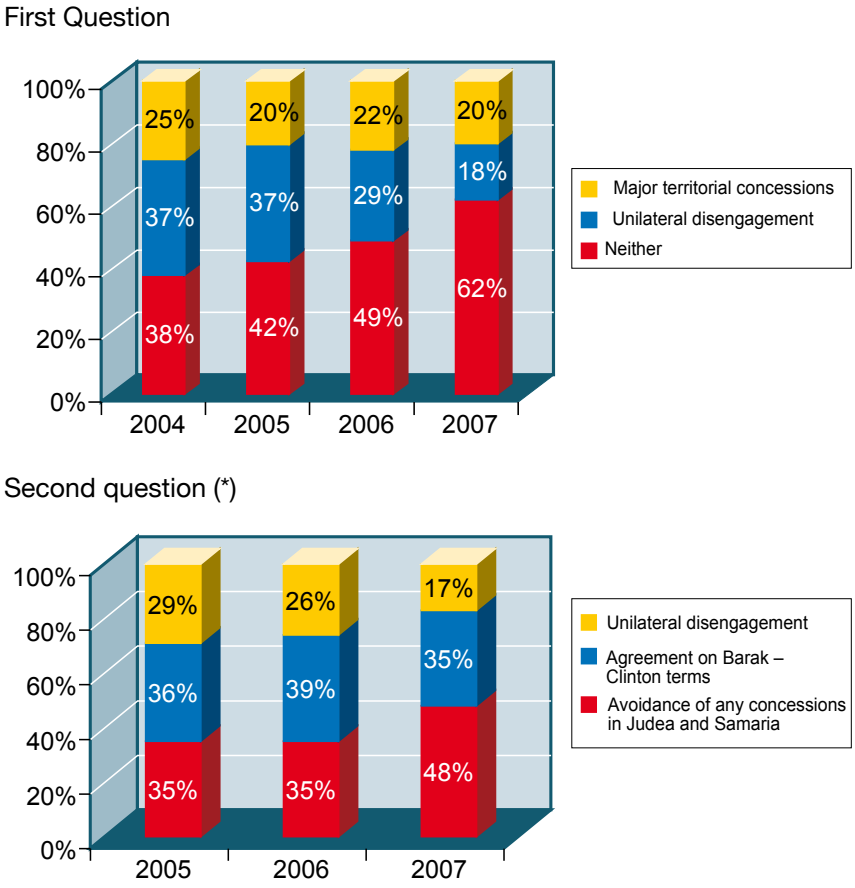
(*) The remaining respondents – approximately 15 percent – chose category 4 on a 1-7 scale, thus in effect adopting a neutral position.

Figure 4. Support for the Principle of "Land for Peace," 1996-2007

in all its complexity can one arrive at an accurate picture of Israeli public opinion.

Territories and Settlements

A major issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the future of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 – primarily Judea and Samaria, otherwise known as the West Bank – and the future of the Jewish settlements established in these areas. Does Israeli public opinion support the principle of "land for peace"? The answer depends to a large degree on how the question is framed. Israeli public opinion is far from thrilled with the concept of land for peace. Only once in the past decade, in 1997, was there a slight majority in support of this principle. Figure 4 shows the degree of agreement over a period of twelve years with the statement: "Territories should be returned for peace." As can be seen from the graph, there was a significant rise in support for the principle of land for peace in 2005, but this was followed by a sharp decrease in 2006 – probably due to the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in January of that year and to the negative result of the disengagement in Gaza. A further significant decrease in 2007 likely resulted from the increased terrorism from Gaza and the Second Lebanon War. Indeed, support for the principle of "land for peace" in 2007 was at its lowest point in the past decade, being rejected by a margin of two to one.



(*) The second question was not included in previous surveys.

Figure 5. Territorial Alternatives for an Israeli–Palestinian Agreement, 2004-2007

This was most likely due to a growing conviction among many Israelis that concessions to the Palestinians in particular and to the Arabs in general do not lead to peace but only to more terrorism and hostility.

However, when one is faced with the need to choose from alternatives, a different picture emerges. Two similar questions were posed to the respondents. The first question was: "What do you prefer: an agreement involving major territorial concessions, unilateral disengagement with less territorial concession, or neither?" The second question was: "If it is not possible to reach an agreement with the Palestinians on better terms than those included in the Barak-Clinton plan, what is preferable: a) unilateral

disengagement from the Palestinians involving withdrawal from most of Judea and Samaria but retaining the large settlement blocs b) an agreement even under the terms of the Barak-Clinton plan; or c) avoidance of any course that entails Israel's surrender of Judea and Samaria. Figure 5 shows the results for both questions.

Figure 5 charts very different results for the two questions. In parallel to the results in figure 4, the results for the first question show a clear decrease in 2006 and a further decline in 2007 in the readiness for territorial concessions. While in 2004 and 2005 approximately 60 percent supported territorial concessions, whether in the context of an agreement or as part of a unilateral disengagement, in 2006 the respondents were evenly split between those supporting either alternative and those preferring neither. In 2007, over 60 percent rejected any form of territorial concessions. It should be noted, however, that the overall decrease, both in 2006 and 2007, stems entirely from a decrease in support for unilateral disengagement, which as in the case of figure 4, is probably due to the bitter disappointment of many Israelis with the negative results of the Gaza disengagement, the surprise election victory of Hamas, and the Second Lebanon War.

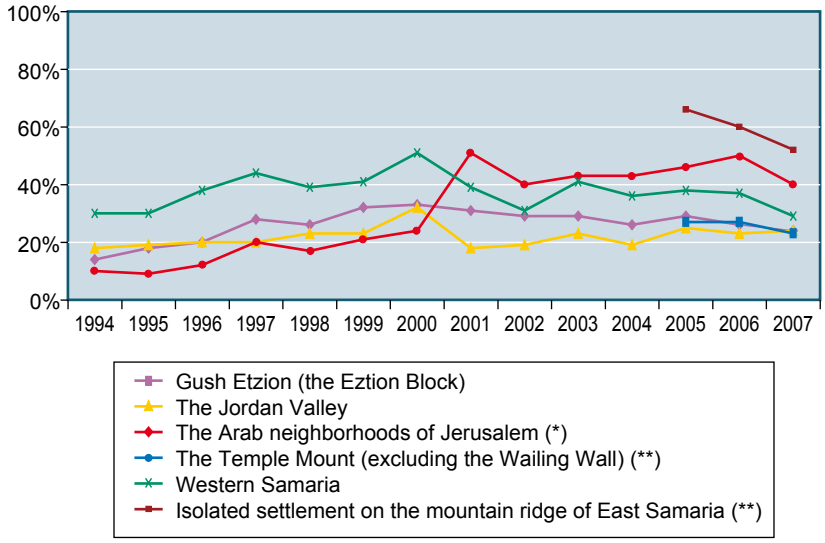
The second question, however, is a different story. Results for 2005 and 2006 are almost identical and show stronger support for territorial concessions – close to two thirds of the respondents. While according to the first question, half of the 2006 sample opposed almost any territorial concessions, only one third (35 percent) was opposed when relating to the second question. The results for 2007, reflecting the continuing deterioration in Gaza and the Second Lebanon War, showed, as in the previous question, a significant decrease in support for unilateral disengagement. Still, slightly over half of the sample supported some form of territorial concessions.

Our assumption is that the difference lies in the wording of the questions. The first question deals with one's preference in an abstract sense; hence the results are similar to those in figure 4, reflecting a basic lack of enthusiasm within the Israeli public for withdrawing from Judea and Samaria. On the other hand, the second question relates to the ability or inability to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. As will be demonstrated below, the Israeli public is acutely aware of the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the need to find some solution. The wording of the second question raises one's awareness of this aspect, and hence the different response.

Table 8 shows the combined results for both questions for the 2006 sample. Theoretically, the respondents should all fall in the diagonals, i.e., in squares 1, 5, and 9. As can be seen from the table, only 55 percent of the sample actually did so. For each column and row, the appropriate square does contain the highest number of respondents (square 1 is higher than squares 2, 3, 4, and 7; square 5 is higher than squares 4, 6, 2, and 8; and square 9 is higher than any other square). Nevertheless, 45 percent of the sample did not fall in the exact diagonals. However, upon further examination, our assumption as to what explains the difference in the results is strongly supported by the numbers. Only 54 percent of those who answered "neither" on the first question also chose the third alternative on the second question (185 out of 341), but 77 percent of those who chose the third alternative on question 2, i.e., "avoidance of any concessions in Judea and Samaria," also answered "neither" on the first question (185 out of 239). Thus, close to half of those who preferred "neither" on an abstract question, when put in the explicit context of "reaching an agreement with the Palestinians" support some form of territorial withdrawal. Conversely, of those who even regarding an explicit agreement were against any withdrawal, only 23 percent nevertheless supported some form of territorial withdrawal on the abstract question and 7 percent (sixteen respondents) were in favor of major territorial concessions.

Table 8. Combined Results for First and Second Questions on Concessions, 2006

Second question: if no agreement is possible	First question: preference			
	Major territorial concessions	Unilateral disengagement	Neither	Total
Agreement on Barak-Clinton Terms	1 108	2 69	3 97	274
Unilateral Disengagement	4 30	5 93	6 59	182
Avoidance of any concessions in Judea and Samaria	7 16	8 38	9 185	239
Total	154	200	341	695



(*) Prior to 2001, this area was referred to as "East Jerusalem."
(**) The item was introduced in 2005.

Figure 6. Support for Returning Specific Areas of the West Bank, 1994-2007

This effect becomes evident when the question of territorial concession is stated in the context of a permanent settlement and specified in more detail. Respondents were asked "whether in the context of a permanent settlement that would terminate the conflict, Israel should be ready to return any of a list of specific areas or to continue to retain them even at the cost of avoiding a permanent settlement." Careful examination of figure 6 shows remarkable consistency amidst diversity over a period of fourteen years. There are of course fluctuations, which reflect primarily changes on the ground in the ongoing relations between Israel and the Palestinians. However, the variance notwithstanding, a number of observations can be made with a relative degree of certainty.

First, from 1994, immediately after the Oslo accords, to 2000, support for returning various areas of the West Bank grew from year to year, slowly but surely. There were, of course, ups and downs, but the trend is clear. Support for returning Gush Etzion increased from 14 percent to 33 percent (more than double), for the Jordan Valley from 18 percent to 32 percent, for western Samaria from 30 percent to 51 percent, and for East

Jerusalem from 10 to 24 percent. The outbreak of the intifada in 2000 reversed this trend. From 2000-2007, there was a decline in support for withdrawal regarding each of the specific areas. Thus, on returning Gush Etzion support dropped from 33 percent to 24 percent, on the Jordan Valley from 32 to 24 percent, and on western Samaria from 51 to 29 percent.

East Jerusalem is a special case. As for other areas, support for returning East Jerusalem – though quite limited – more than doubled from 1994 to 2000, from 10 percent to 24 percent. However, contrary to the trend for all other areas, support for territorial concession in East Jerusalem more than doubled from 2000 to 2001 – reaching 51 percent, and remained, more or less, at that level until 2006. This dramatic change is due to two reasons: first, as pointed out in the note to figure 6, the wording was changed. Until 2000, the area was referred to as "East Jerusalem." Returning East Jerusalem in the eyes of the respondents is synonymous with dividing Jerusalem, which is an anathema to most Israelis. Starting from 2001, the area was referred to as "the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem," thus accentuating the positive demographic aspect of such a withdrawal. Evidently, for many Israelis, returning the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem is not dividing the city, but rather guaranteeing its Jewish majority. Here we can see how the dilemma of demography vs. geography comes into play. Secondly, for the first time since 1967, Prime Minister Ehud Barak expressed on behalf of the Israeli government at the 2000 Camp David summit a readiness to transfer those neighborhoods to Palestinian sovereignty as part of a permanent settlement of the conflict. Although no agreement was reached, the very fact that Israel's prime minister put the proposal on the table gave legitimacy to this position. Here we can see a clear example of how a policy decision adopted by the Israeli government can influence public opinion. In 2007, support for returning the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem dropped back to the level recorded in 2002 – 40 percent, yet it remains relatively high compared to most of the other areas.

One can rank the various areas in terms of the emotional attachment and ties Israelis have for them. Although the actual percentage may vary from year to year, the order remains constant. On the basis of the results for 2006 and 2007, one can classify the various areas into four groups:

a. Gush Etzion, the Jordan Valley, and the Temple Mount (excluding the Western Wall) – only one quarter of the population were willing to return
b. western Samaria – approximately one third were willing to return
c. the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem – 40 to 50 percent of the Jewish population were willing to return
d. isolated settlements on the mountain ridge of eastern Samaria (this area was included only in the recent studies) – a majority, reaching as high as two thirds in 2005, were willing to return this area in the context of a permanent settlement and the termination of the conflict.

The concept of land for peace in the West Bank is deeply intertwined with the question of settlements. Over 250,000 Jews live in more than 100 communities throughout the West Bank. When one talks of withdrawing from Judea and Samaria or returning certain areas, this has a direct bearing on the future of the communities and on their residents. Does Israeli public opinion support the removal of these settlements? Here too the answer depends to a large degree on how the question is posed. As with the concept of land for peace, Israeli public opinion is far from happy with the idea of removing settlements. Nevertheless, from a practical point of view, there is significant support under certain conditions for the evacuation of many settlements – primarily the small and isolated ones, though not the large settlement blocs.

The respondents were asked for their opinion regarding "evacuation of Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria in the context of a permanent settlement" and were given three alternatives. Table 9 shows the results over a period of four years. The pictures for 2004 and 2005 are quite similar. Hard core opposition to any removal of settlements, i.e., the hard core right, is limited to about one quarter of the Jewish population (27-28 percent). While support for evacuation of all the settlements, i.e., the hard core left, does not exceed one fifth of the Jewish population (16-20 percent), a little over a majority of the respondents were in favor of removing all the small and isolated settlements, which are viewed by many Israelis as "political settlements." In 2006 and 2007, after the traumatic disengagement from Gaza, Hamas' surprise victory in the Palestinian elections, and the Second Lebanon War, there is a clear decrease in support

for settlement evacuation. Hard core opposition increased from a quarter to 40 percent, with slightly less than half supporting the removal of all the small and isolated settlements. Nevertheless, a clear majority (in the vicinity of 60 percent) still supported some settlement evacuation.

Table 9. Support for Evacuation of Jewish Settlements as Part of a Permanent Agreement or in the Context of Unilateral Disengagement, 2004-2007

	2004	2005	2006	2006	2007	2007
				unilateral disengage-ment		unilateral disengage-ment
Removal of all the small and isolated settlements	57%	52%	46%	41.5%	45%	36%
Removal of all the settlements including the large settlement blocs	{73% 16%	{72% 20%	{64% 18%	{55% 13.5%	{59% 14%	{41% 5%
No removal of settlements under any circumstances	27%	28%	36%	45%	41%	59%
Total	100%	100%	100%		100%	100%

Attitudes towards settlement evacuation were also examined in the context of unilateral disengagement and the construction of the security fence, discussed below.

Unilateralism and the Fence

In December 2003, Ariel Sharon presented the Israeli public with his disengagement plan, i.e., the removal of all twenty-one Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and the complete withdrawal of any Israeli civilian and military presence in Gaza, as well as the removal of four settlements in northern Samaria. The disengagement plan did not stand on its own, but rather was part of a new political concept, unilateralism. The essence of this concept is that inasmuch as there is no Palestinian partner – evidenced, inter alia, by Arafat's rejection of the Barak-Clinton plan and the outbreak of the violent intifada – Israel must take its future into its own hands and

undertake unilateral steps that change the reality on the ground, i.e., without prior agreement with the Palestinians. From a practical point of view and for most intents and purposes, unilateralism is viewed primarily as Israeli withdrawal from areas currently controlled by the IDF, in the context of Israel determining its permanent borders by itself. In this sense, Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon to the recognized international border in May 2000 was a forerunner of unilateralism. In the same vein, one can say that to a certain degree the construction of the fence, a physical barrier between the West Bank and Israel, is a manifestation of unilateralism, albeit with a different logic behind it.

How do Israelis view unilateralism and what is their attitude regarding the fence? Given the events of the years since mid-2005 one should not be surprised by the fact that the Israeli view of unilateralism has undergone dramatic changes from 2004 to 2007. To be precise, Israelis were never overly excited about unilateralism. Looking at the first question charted in figure 5, we can see a clear preference for unilateral disengagement over major territorial concessions in 2004 and 2005, but this preference dropped significantly in 2006 – evidently as a result of the negative effects of the disengagement from Gaza – and it vanished completely in 2007, reflecting the continued attacks from Gaza and the Second Lebanon War. On the other hand, on the second question charted in figure 5, where the alternative is a specific plan, i.e., "agreement on the Barak-Clinton terms," unilateral disengagement was the least preferred option at all times.

Table 9 indicates that already in 2006, support for the removal of settlements in the context of unilateral disengagement was significantly lower than in the context of a permanent settlement (55 percent vs. 64 percent), although there still was a majority in favor of removing some settlements. In 2007, this result was reversed and there was a clear majority against removing any settlements in the context of unilateral disengagement. When the question regarding the evacuation of settlements in the context of unilateral disengagement was posed in a general sense, i.e., without specifying which settlements, support for evacuating settlements was even lower. Figure 7 presents the responses to a question on whether one agrees or disagrees "to unilateral separation (disengagement) from the Palestinians even if it involves evacuation of settlements." The results for 2004 through 2006 were almost identical – the Jewish population was evenly split on

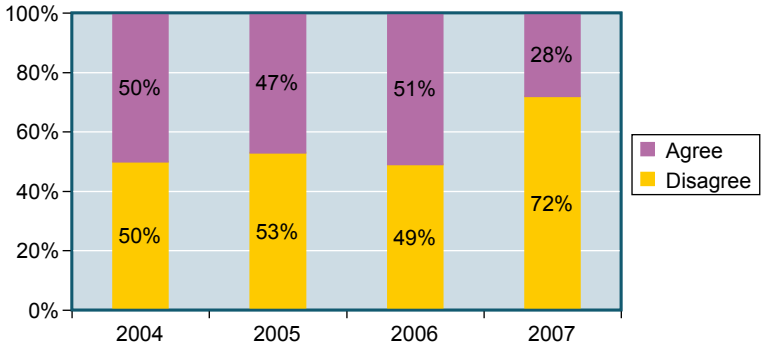


Figure 7. Support for Unilateral Disengagement Involving Evacuation of Settlements, 2004-2007

this issue. In 2007, however, there was a dramatic decline in support for unilateral disengagement involving the evacuation of settlements. Given the difficult consequences of the evacuation of the Gush Katif settlements in August 2005 and the events of 2006, the Israeli public does not support any further unilateral forced evacuation of settlements.

The decline in support for unilateralism is also manifest where unilateralism was actually implemented, namely the disengagement from Gaza. Respondents were asked in 2004 and 2005 whether they agreed or disagreed with Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement plan. In 2006 and 2007, they were asked whether after the fact they supported or opposed Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement plan from Gaza and northern Samaria. Results are presented in Figure 8. In 2004, a clear majority supported the plan. In 2005, just prior to its implementation, and in 2006, a half a year after its implementation, Israeli public opinion was evenly split in its attitude towards the plan. In 2007, after the sharp increase in Qassam rocket attacks from Gaza against Israeli towns and the abduction of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit – and one half year after the Second Lebanon War – close to two thirds of the Jewish population opposed the plan.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to dismiss unilateralism altogether. Unilateralism has a logic of its own, and under certain circumstances might yet be revived. Starting in 2005, we introduced a hypothetical question as follows: "If after the fence is completed there will be no possibility of any progress with the Palestinians and the terror in the territories will resume, do you agree or disagree that Israel should declare the fence as its permanent border and move the settlers who live

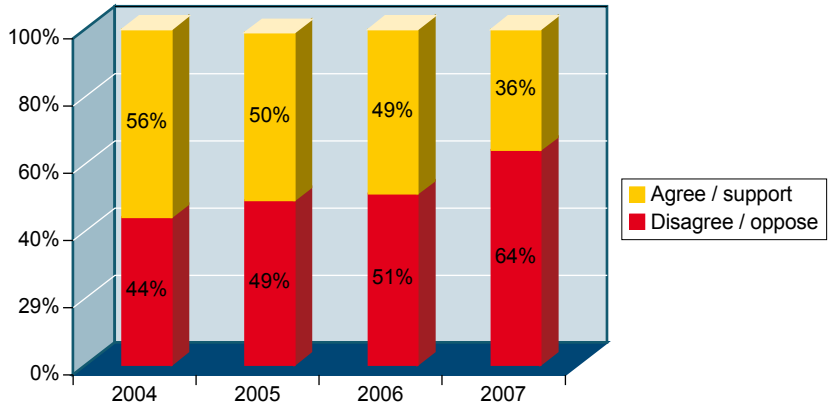


Figure 8. Support for Sharon's Disengagement Plan in Gaza and Northern Samaria, 2004-2007

outside (i.e., east of) the fence to Israeli territory?" Note that most Israelis have probably never actually seen the fence and are quite unaware of its exact route – it is the concept that is important. In 2005, 57 percent of the respondents agreed, rising to 60 percent in 2006. One must bear in mind that we are dealing with a hypothetical question and two caveats – diplomatic stalemate and a surge in terrorism; consequently, the numbers should be viewed with much caution. Nevertheless, the results do seem to indicate that as of 2006, many Israelis have internalized the view that the "fence" is more than just a security barrier and has attained features of an eventual permanent boundary. In 2007, however, there was a decrease in support for this option, with 49 percent agreeing and 51 percent who disagreed. Still, the very fact that notwithstanding disenchantment with disengagement and unilateralism half of the Jewish population doesn't reject this option is quite significant.

As far as the fence itself is concerned, support for its construction is overwhelming. Indeed, it is hard to find any issue in Israel about which there is so wide a consensus. No less important is the fact that this immense support has remained consistent over time. Asked whether "you agree or disagree with the construction of a fence between us and the Palestinians" – 80 percent in 2004, 82 percent in 2005, 79 percent in 2006, and 76 percent in 2007 agreed. We interpret the massive support for the fence primarily as Israeli preoccupation with security concerns and with the need to combat terrorism, specifically suicide bombers. However, support for the fence

may also have a deeper meaning. It signifies the fact that most Israelis have come to realize that the answer to the conflict lies in separation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Respondents were asked about the various proposals regarding the route of the fence. The results are not very relevant as far as support for the fence itself is concerned, but they do shed light on the issue of settlements and how Israelis differentiate between the various kinds of settlements. Table 10 shows the results for the years 2005 to 2007. The results as of 2006 give a clear and more or less consistent picture. The first two alternatives (a and b) are mirror images of each other. When asked, in effect, to choose between including "the major portion" of the settlements on the Israeli side of the fence vs. constructing the fence more or less along the Green Line and excluding the "major portion" of settlements – 63 to 72 percent chose the former, while 27-37 percent chose the latter. There is a slight shift in 2006 from the former to the latter. The third alternative (c) makes a distinction between "large settlements" and "isolated settlements." In this case, a clear majority (60-62 percent) support a route for the fence that will include the large settlements on the Israeli side (or what is known as the "large settlement blocs") but exclude isolated settlements. This finding matches and confirms the results reported in table 9. The results for 2007 reflect a certain degree of confusion regarding the desired route. Support for each of the three alternative routes declined from 2006 by 7-16 percent, yet the overall relative picture remained the same. Alternative (a) was supported by about 2:1 over alternative (b), and while alternative (c) lacked the strong support it had in 2005 and 2006, 44 percent still agreed with it. Affirming the underlying premise, support for the construction of the fence itself was overwhelming (75-81 percent).

Further Insights and Policy Implications

What conclusions can be derived from the mass of data presented above? What are its implications for future policies of Israeli governments? What does it have to say about the chances of moving forward toward a solution of the conflict? Presenting some additional findings and analyzing a number of deeply held beliefs of the Israeli body politic will help describe where the Israeli public stands on this issue overall.

Table 10. Support for the Various Proposals on the Route of the Fence, 2005-2007

(a) The major portion of the existing settlements in Judea and Samaria will be included on the Israeli side of the fence		2005	2006	2007
	Agree	69%	63%	53%
	Disagree	30%	37%	47%
	Total	99%	100%	100%

(b) The fence will be constructed close to the Green Line, excluding the major portion of the existing settlements		2005	2006	2007
	Agree	27%	31%	24%
	Disagree	72%	69%	76%
	Total	99%	100%	100%

(c) The large settlements in Judea and Samaria will be included on the Israeli side of the fence, but not isolated settlements		2005	2006	2007
	Agree	62%	60%	44%
	Disagree	37%	40%	56%
	Total	99%	100%	100%

(d) The fence should not have been constructed at all		2005	2006	2007
	Agree	19%	25%	22%
	Disagree	81%	75%	78%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Once again, underlying this data is the Israeli public's acute awareness of the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the need to find some solution. Furthermore, one can say with a great degree of confidence that Israelis are committed to a two-state solution. Support for the establishment of a Palestinian state is the West Bank and Gaza in the framework of a permanent settlement rose from 21 percent in 1987 to 35 percent in 1993 (just prior to the Oslo accords) and up to 50 percent in 1997. From 1997 to 2007, the level of support fluctuated between 50 and 60 percent; in 2004, 50 percent supported the establishment of a Palestinian state, 58 percent in 2005, 61 percent in 2006, and 55 percent in 2007 (figure 9). After Oslo and until the intifada in late 2000, the percentage of respondents predicting that within five years a Palestinian state would come into being was over 70 percent. Since 2001, the response has been between 50 and 60 percent – 51

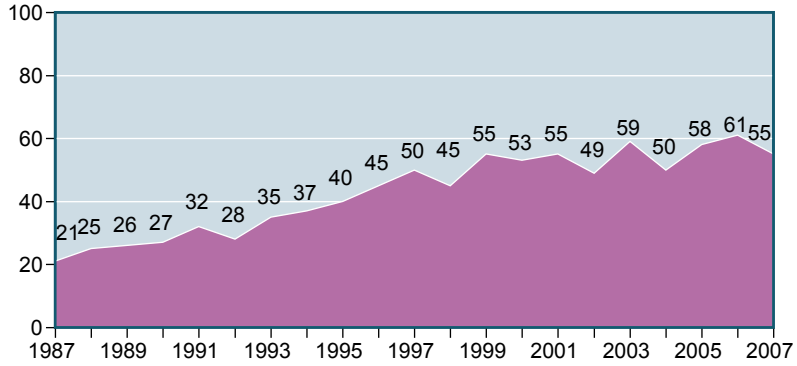


Figure 9. Support for the Establishment of a Palestinian State, 1987-2007

percent in 2004, 55 percent in 2005, 58 percent in 2006, and 47 percent in 2007.

Although a clear majority of the Jewish public supports the establishment of a Palestinian state, the term "Palestinian state" still has a negative connotation for many Israelis. In order to neutralize this effect, in 2006 we introduced a new question: "Do you support or oppose the solution of two states for two peoples?" In 2006, 70 percent answered in the affirmative, i.e., 9 percent more than those who agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. In 2007, 63 percent answered in the affirmative, i.e., 8 percent more than those agreeing to a Palestinian state. From a logical point of view, of course, the two items are identical. One cannot support a "two states for two peoples" solution if one doesn't agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and vice versa. This finding is only one of many examples demonstrating the importance of the exact wording of a question. Table 11 shows the combined results for both questions for 2006. As can be seen from the table, 562 – 80 percent of the respondents – answered in a "logical" way and fell in the two expected diagonals. Less than 20 percent – 136 respondents – answered in a seemingly contradictory way. However, in accordance with our hypothesis, the vast majority of these respondents fell in square 2, i.e., opposed a "Palestinian state" but supported the "two-state solution." Only 32 respondents – less than 5 percent of the entire sample – opposed a two-state solution and at the same time agreed to a Palestinian state. This is about equal to the margin of error.

Table 11. Combined Results for Palestinian State and Two-State Solution

	Agree or Disagree with Establishment of a Palestinian State		
Support or oppose a two-state Solution	Agree	Disagree	Total
Support	1 393	2 104	497
Oppose	3 32	4 169	201
Total	425	273	698

A fascinating finding is that all the dramatic changes, disappointments, disillusionments, terrorism, and bloodshed notwithstanding, Israeli public opinion has remained committed to the search for a solution. Respondents were asked over many years to express their agreement or disagreement with the proposition that: "the peace process should be brought to a halt, even if it entails the risk of another war." At no time did a majority agree with this proposition. The results for 2004 through 2007 are almost identical (figure 10). Close to two thirds (62-69 percent) of the Jewish population were against discontinuing the peace process if it could lead to war. Less than a quarter of the sample – closer to only one fifth (20-23 percent) – supported the proposition.

Finally, the respondents were presented with six possible elements of a peace treaty with the Palestinians and were asked, regarding each proposal, whether they supported or opposed it in the context of a peace treaty. Table 12 displays the results for 2004 to 2007, which show remarkable consistency over the four years. Except for the Temple Mount proposal, there is a slight increase in support from 2004 to 2006, but in three out of five cases, the difference is well within the margin of error. In line with the general picture for 2007, with the exception of the Jordan Valley, there is a slight decrease in support for all the various elements (1 to 8 percent), but the relative order of the various elements in terms of the degree of support is identical with the previous years.

The fact that the relative support for the various proposals remained constant over time is quite significant. The policy implications of these findings are clear. The first three proposals enjoy a substantial degree of support among the Jewish population – indeed, in 2006, close to half of

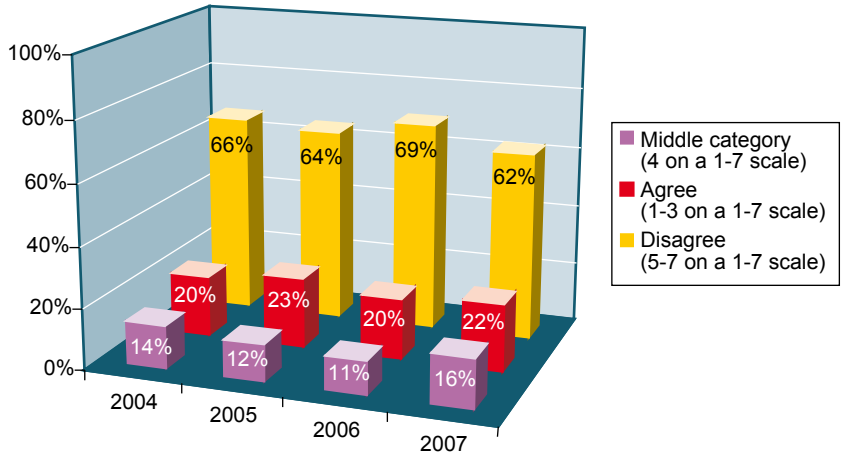


Figure 10. Support for Halting the Peace Process, 2004-2007

Table 12. Support for Various Possible Elements of a Peace Treaty with the Palestinians, 2004-2007

	2004	2005	2006	2007
1. A Palestinian state on 95% of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel retaining the large settlement blocs	43%	46%	45%	41%
2. Giving areas to the Palestinians in return for areas remaining as part of Israel	48%	50%	54%	46%
3. Transferring the Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem to the Palestinians, except for the Old City	36%	40%	45%	37%
4. The Temple Mount will be given to the Palestinians and the Wailing Wall will be retained by Israel	30%	29%	28%	27%
5. A limited number of refugees will be permitted to return to Israel	14%	20%	16%	17%
6. Israel will transfer control of the Jordan Valley within a few years	20%	24%	21%	22%

the population registered support for them. It should be remembered that we are dealing with hypothetical questions, i.e., whether one supports or opposes certain elements with the context of a peace treaty. Such a peace treaty, however, is nowhere in sight. It thus would be in order for an Israeli government to assume that if it presented the Israeli public with a signed peace treaty incorporating these proposals, i.e., establishing a Palestinian state on 95 percent of the land while retaining the large settlement blocs, undertaking an exchange of territory, and transferring the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem (excluding the Old City) to the Palestinian state, it would stand a good chance of winning a majority in support of such a treaty. On the other hand, the remaining three proposals enjoyed little support (from less than one fifth and at the most about a quarter of the sample). It would thus seem to be quite difficult if not impossible for any Israeli government – barring some dramatic change in the region – to agree to the return to Israel of even a limited number of refugees or to relinquish control of the Jordan Valley or the Temple Mount.

6

Perceptions of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

In the previous chapter, we charted the wide spectrum of approaches of the Jewish population in Israel regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and possible solutions. Specifically, we described in detail opinions relating to territories, settlements, components of a peace treaty, unilateralism, and the fence. This chapter is devoted to an attempt to understand and analyze the basic perceptions and assumptions that underlie public opinion in this crucial area of national security. We shall present data relating to the perceptions of the Israeli public regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. There is indeed a high degree of correlation between one's perceptions and assumptions and one's attitudes and opinions, although this correlation is far from perfect.

Is There a Partner?

Since the Oslo agreements of September 1993, there has been an ongoing intense debate within Israeli society whether there is a genuine partner on the Palestinian side with whom a permanent peace agreement, which would put an end to the conflict, can be reached. This is, in effect, the $64,000 question of Israeli public opinion. One can assume that the answer to this question is related to one's perception of the aspirations and intentions of the Palestinians and of the Arabs is general. One would also expect that these perceptions would show a great deal of change over time, reflecting the course of events and the changes on the ground in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Two core questions were posed to the respondents. The first question was: "Do you think it is possible to reach a peace agreement with the

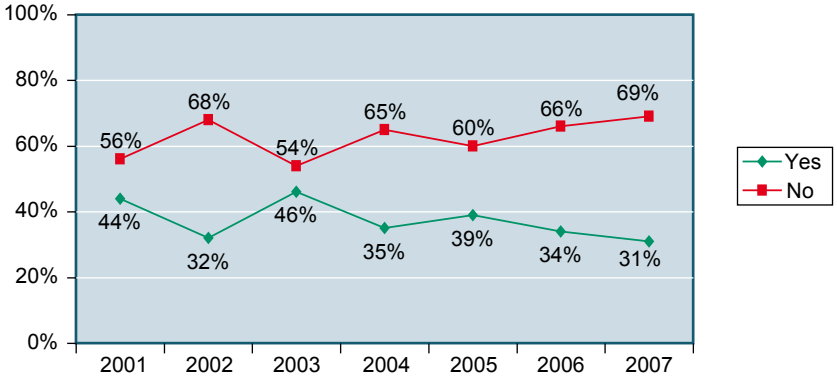


Figure 11. Possibility of Reaching a Peace Agreement with the Palestinians, 2001-2007

Palestinians?" (figure 11). The second question was: "To what degree, in your opinion, do most Palestinians want peace?" (figure 12). The data in figure 11 shows that throughout this decade and especially after the intifada, which started in late 2000 and gained momentum in 2001, a majority of Israelis did not believe in the possibility of reaching a peace treaty with the Palestinians. By 2006 and 2007, two thirds of the Jewish population thought it impossible to reach such an agreement.

The results for the second question (figure 12) show a different pattern. There is a definite discrepancy between the two perceptions. While Israelis are very pessimistic about the chances of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, they have a more favorable view as far as the desire of "most Palestinians" for peace. Until the intifada, a majority of Israelis believed that most Palestinians want peace. As a result of the intifada, those believing so decreased – though in 2005 the numbers rebounded to 56 percent. In 2006 and 2007, those believing so dropped again to 49 percent and 44 percent, respectively, in all probability, as a direct result of the events of 2005 and 2006. Thus, while during these years close to half of the Jewish population believed that most Palestinians wanted peace, only a third or so believed in the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with them. The possible explanation for this is that while many Israelis may have a fairly positive view of the average Palestinian and believe that he or she – like themselves – wants an end to the conflict, they have little faith in the Palestinian leadership. The perception held by most Israelis of a

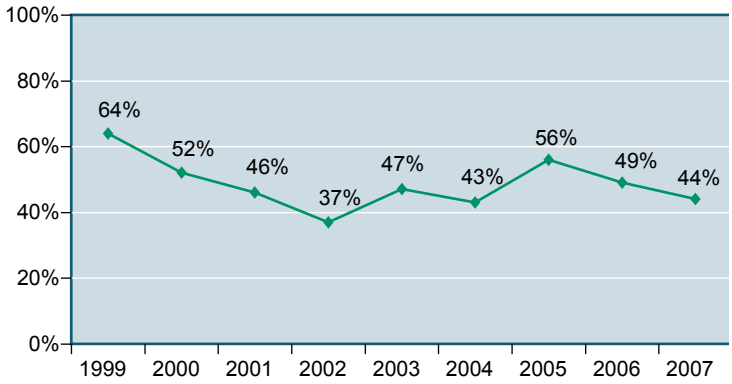


Figure 12. Percentage Believing that Most Palestinians Want Peace, 1999-2007

weak and rigid Palestinian leadership, unwilling or unable to compromise, explains why only a third of the respondents in 2006 and even slightly fewer in 2007 saw a possibility of reaching a peace agreement.

In order to examine further the reasons underlying these perceptions, a few additional questions were asked. Respondents were asked if they thought it would be possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians "if there would be genuine democratization in the Palestinian Authority" and "if the Palestinians would forego the 'right of return.'" The percentage answering the first question in the affirmative was 52 percent in 2005, 50 percent in 2006, and 40 percent in 2007. To the second question, 50 percent in 2005, 44 percent in 2006, and 44 percent in 2007 also answered in the affirmative. These numbers clearly support our hypotheses. When certain factors that are considered an obstacle to reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians are removed, e.g., lack of democratization in the PA or insistence on the "right of return," the percentage of Israelis perceiving a peace treaty with the Palestinians as something that can be achieved is about equal to the percentage of those believing that most of the Palestinians want peace. The slight difference in the results for 2007 may reflect a higher salience of the "right to return" issue as a result of the renewed Saudi initiative.

A different set of questions tried to elucidate further the perceptions of the Jewish population regarding the genuine intention of the Arabs. Two questions were asked: "In your opinion, what in the final analysis is the

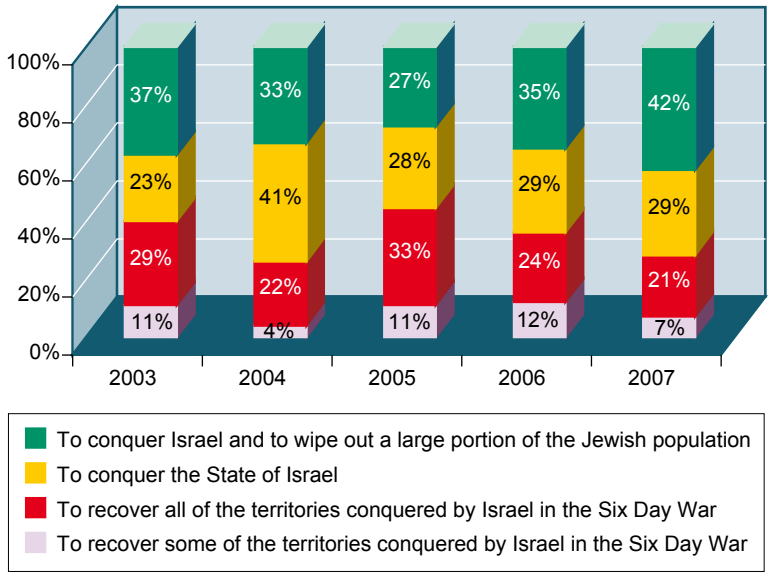


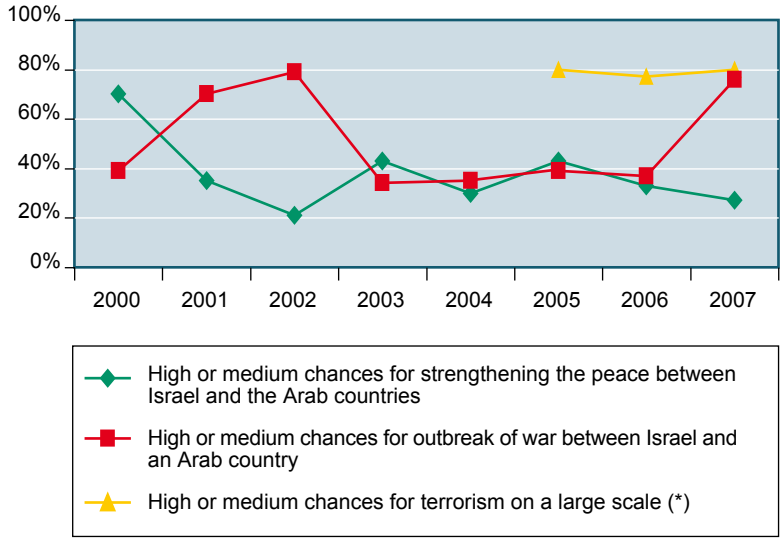
Figure 13. Perception of the Ultimate Aspirations of the Arabs, 2003-2007

aspiration of the Arabs"; and "If there would be a peace treaty with the Palestinians and the main Arab states, in your opinion, will it put an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict or not?" Figure 13 presents the results for the first question. As can be seen, the Israeli perception of the ultimate goal of the Arabs is quite negative. Although there is of course some variation from year to year, the overall picture is clear. At no time do a majority of Israelis perceive the ultimate goal of the Arabs as limited to recovering the territories conquered by Israel in 1967. Those who believe so varied from a low of 26 percent in 2004 to a high of 44 percent in 2005 (which may have represented a rise in Jewish optimism as a result of the death of Yasir Arafat in October 2004), dropping to 36 percent in 2006 and 28 percent in 2007. The majority believed that the Arabs aspire to destroy the State of Israel and over a third (up to 42 percent in 2007) were convinced that this would include the killing of a large part of the Jewish population.

The grave mistrust of the Arabs and of their ultimate intentions is borne out by the data for the second question. Starting with the Oslo agreements in 1993, a majority believed that the peace treaties would indeed translate into an end to the conflict, reaching a high of almost two thirds in 1997 (65

percent) and 1999 (67 percent). However, after the onset of the intifada in 2000, this optimism was lost to a large degree. From 2001 onward, the percentage of Jews believing that peace treaties would indeed spell an end to the conflict dropped to about a third – 30 percent in 2001, 25 percent in 2002, 35 percent in 2003, 26 percent in 2004, 38 percent in 2005, 31 percent in 2006, and back to 25 percent in 2007. When taken together, the results for these two questions reflect a deeply held fear among a majority of Israelis, namely, that in the Middle East, in the final analysis even the supposedly permanent is only temporary. It would seem that the conviction that the Arabs remain committed to the destruction of Israel in stages (the "stages plan") is deeply engrained in the Israeli psyche. The results for 2007 demonstrate that the events of 2006 (the victory of Hamas, continued rocket attacks from Gaza, Ahmadinejad, and the Second Lebanon War) have only deepened this conviction.

On a more positive note, one should observe that there is a certain discrepancy between the above results and those charted in figure 12. A possible explanation might be that some Israelis differentiate between Palestinians on a personal and individual level, who are believed to want to live in peace, and the Arab collective, which is seen as determined to destroy Israel. A further positive note is that all the pessimism and suspicion notwithstanding, Israelis still believe in negotiations (figure 10). It is also present, by and large, in the realm of perception. Respondents were asked: "What should Israel emphasize in order to prevent war between it and the Arab countries – focus on advancing negotiations for peace or increasing its military power?" From 1987 to 2006, with the exception of 1995, 2001, 2002, and 2004 (years marked by intensive Palestinian terrorism, specifically suicide bombings), a majority supported focusing on negotiations – 61 percent in 2005 and 58 percent in 2006. In 2007, reflecting the trauma of the Second Lebanon War and the increased threats against Israel from many quarters (Iran, Syria, and Hamas), the situation was reversed: only 40 percent supported focusing on negotiations while 60 percent were in favor of putting the emphasis on increasing Israel's military strength. Based on a twenty year perspective, one can conclude that in principle, most Israelis realize that the best way to prevent war is through negotiation. However, when faced with severe and more or less



(*) This item was not included in previous surveys

Figure 14. Likelihood of Peace, War, and Terrorism in the Coming Three Years, 2000-2007

immediate military threats or threats to their physical security, Israelis put their trust in the IDF and in their capability for self-defense.

War and Peace and the Fight against Terrorism

How do the Israelis view the future? How do they perceive the chances for peace or for renewed warfare, and what are their expectations with regard to the fight against terrorism? Looking three years ahead, respondents were asked what in their view are the chances "that the peace between Israel and the Arab countries will be stronger," "that war might break out between Israel and an Arab country," and "that there will be terrorism to a significant extent." Figure 14 shows the percentage of the respondents over time who estimated the likelihood of each of the three scenarios to be "high" or "medium" (vs. "low" or very low").

Predictably, perceptions regarding the probability of various scenarios are subject to extensive fluctuations over time as a consequence of events on the ground. Thus, the year 2000, which opened with expectations for a

breakthrough and a possible permanent settlement on the Palestinian front, saw 70 percent looking towards a greater likelihood for peace and only 39 percent concerned abut a possible outbreak of war. This picture was completely reversed in 2001, as a direct result of the failure and breakdown of the Camp David Summit in July 2000 and the outbreak of the intifada a few months later. By 2002, 80 percent saw the dark clouds of war, while only 21 percent who saw any hope of strengthening the peace. The four year period from 2003 to 2006 is characterized as a situation of "no peace and no war." Thus, only a little over a third of the Jewish population were concerned about an outbreak of hostilities with an Arab country; yet at the same time, only a little over a third saw any prospects of enhancing the peace.

The major concern of Israelis is terrorism, reflected clearly in the data for 2005-2006, when 80 percent of Israelis expected to see terrorism on a large scale in the coming three years. The Second Lebanon War brought about a major change in Israeli perception, reflected in the numbers for 2007. It should be noted that the wording of the question regarding the chances that war might break out was modified in 2007, by adding Hizbollah (i.e. "what is the chance that war might break out between Israel and an Arab country or Hizbollah in the next three years"). As far as chances for peace and the threat of terrorism, there was very little change – a slight decline in the perception of chances for peace (from 33 percent to 27 percent) and the same high degree of concern about terrorism (80 percent). On the other hand, perceptions of the likelihood of war between Israel and an Arab country or Hizbollah increased to 76 percent, even higher than that recorded for 2001 and equal to the very high concern for terrorism. The complacency regarding a future conflagration that characterized Israeli society prior to the war in 2006 was completely gone.

Finally, what do Israelis see as a solution? Do they believe in a military solution to the conflict? Do they believe in a political solution to the conflict? Figure 15 shows the results for both questions. Most Israelis do not believe in a military solution to the conflict. The numbers are quite constant over the four year period. Between 43 and 50 percent of the respondents agree that "there is no military solution to the conflict" while about 40 percent disagree. The picture is reversed regarding the chances of a political solution to the conflict. Approximately half of the sample (43 percent in

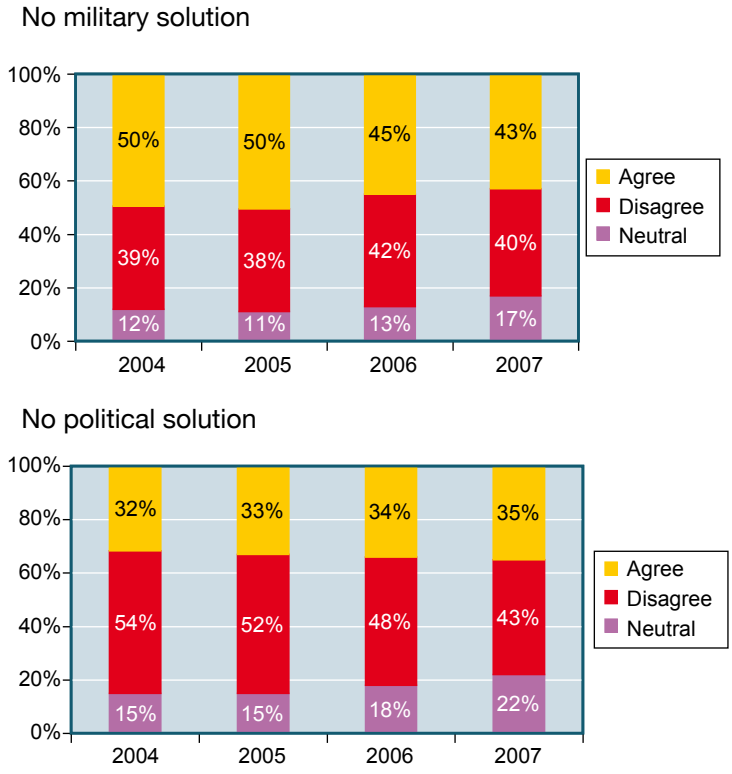


Figure 15. Support for Propositions on Solutions to the Conflict, 2004-2007

2007) disagreed with the statement that "there is no political solution to the conflict" with only one third expressing agreement. It should be noted that the results for 2007 do not differ significantly from those of the previous three years.

The reservation most Israelis have regarding a military solution to the conflict to a certain degree carries over to the fight against terrorism. When asked "whether it is possible or impossible to wipe out Palestinian terrorism by military operations alone," only 22 percent in 2005, 20 percent in 2006, and 21 percent in 2007 answered in the affirmative. At the same time, 60 percent in 2005, 62 percent in 2006, and 61 percent in 2007 answered that terrorism can be reduced, albeit not wiped out by military means. Here too, the results for 2007 are similar to those of previous years.

Consistency in Perceptions

Examination of the data points to a high degree of consistency between perceptions, although there is, as is only natural, some discrepancy. In 2005, 71 percent of the respondents who believed in the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians also perceived the ultimate goal of the Arabs as retrieving most or all of the territories conquered by Israel in 1967, and not the destruction of Israel. Of those who were certain that there was no possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, only 10 percent believed that the ultimate goal of the Arabs was the return of the territories lost in 1967; 34 percent believed that the ultimate goal was the destruction of Israel, and an additional 56 percent believed that the goal was the destruction of the State of Israel and the annihilation of a large portion of the Jewish population. These findings are corroborated by the data for 2006, where 63 percent of the respondents who believed in the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians perceived the ultimate goal of the Arabs as retrieving most or all of the territories. Of those who were certain that there was no possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, only 14 percent saw the return of the territories conquered in 1967 as the ultimate goal of the Arabs. Twenty-seven percent believed that the ultimate goal was the destruction of the State of Israel and 59 percent believed that the ultimate goal included the destruction of a large portion of the Jewish population.

In an additional cross check of the data for 2005, we found that 68 percent of those who believed in the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians disagreed with the proposition that there is no political solution to the conflict and only 19 percent agreed with the statement (14 percent were in the neutral category). Fifty-seven percent of those who were certain that there was no possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians agreed with the proposition that there is no political solution to the conflict and 31 percent disagreed (12 percent chose the neutral category). The relatively high discrepancy in this category can be explained by assuming that some of those who for a variety of reasons did not see any possibility of a peace agreement with the Palestinians have nevertheless not fully given up on the prospect of eventually arriving at some political solution to the conflict.

Here too the findings are more or less corroborated by the data for 2006. Sixty-three percent of the respondents who believed in the possibility of a peace agreement with the Palestinians disagreed with the proposition that there is no political solution to the conflict; while only 24 percent agreed with it (13 percent fell in the neutral category). Regarding those who were certain that there was no possibility of a peace agreement with the Palestinians, 44 percent agreed that there was no political solution to the conflict vs. 38 percent who disagreed, with 18 percent choosing the neutral category. It would thus seem that in early 2006, even a majority of those who did not see any prospect of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians were nevertheless unwilling to give up hope for some political solution to the conflict. This result confirms a basic conclusion emerging from much of the data reported here, namely, that most Israelis recognize that only a negotiated political settlement can put an end to the conflict – although the nature of such a settlement remains unclear and at the moment perhaps even unattainable.

7

Domestic Issues

National security is normally associated with external threats and with the areas of defense and foreign affairs. Israel does indeed face many external threats, and Israeli society is preoccupied to a large degree with issues of foreign affairs, defense, and security. At the same time, national security may also have many domestic aspects, which is certainly the case with regard to Israel. Two important domestic issues have a direct bearing on national security: relations between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, and ideological differences within the Jewish public. Also at issue is maintaining the rule of law in Israel's unique security situation. It is to these topics that we now turn our attention.

Jewish-Arab Relations

Twenty percent of Israeli citizens are Arabs. Even under normal circumstances, such a large minority – differing from the majority in language, culture, religion, and national affiliation – would pose a serious challenge in the realm of inter-group relations. Given the reality of the deadly and bloody conflict between Israel and the Arab states surrounding it, as well as the Palestinians, for close to 100 years, and given the inherent conflict of interests between the two communities, the challenge of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel is of a very grave nature with far-reaching consequences and potential repercussions for national security.

How does the Jewish majority view the Arab citizen of Israel and what are their opinions regarding the proper attitude Israel should take toward this minority? Figure 16 shows the percentage of Jews who supported a given course of action towards Israeli Arabs; a careful analysis of the findings points out the complexity, ambivalence, and confusion of Jewish

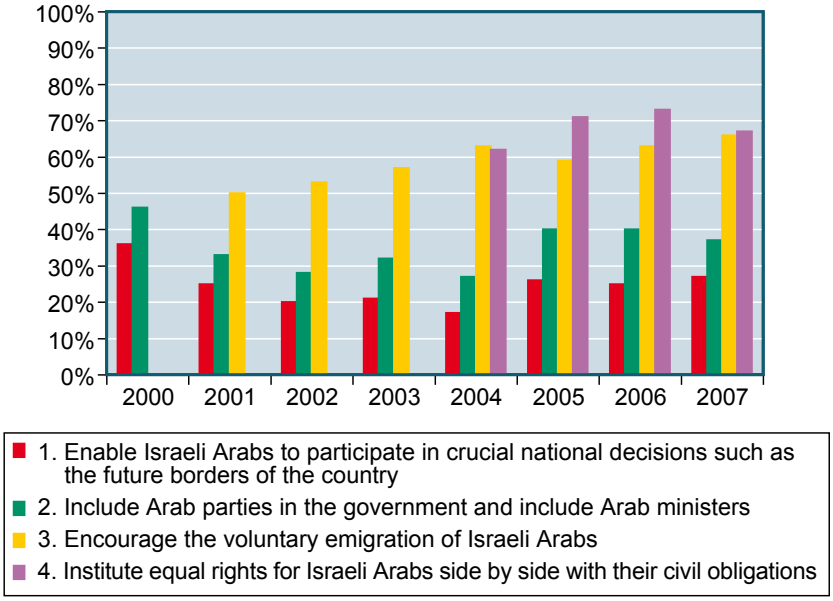


Figure 16. Support for a Given Course of Action towards Israeli Arabs, 2000-2007

attitudes toward Israeli Arabs. When faced with specific questions involving equal rights for Israeli Arabs, the response is negative. A large majority oppose enabling Israeli Arabs to participate in crucial national decisions or including Arab ministers in the cabinet. Over 80 percent in 2004 and about three quarters of the sample in 2005, 2006, and 2007 opposed the former while three quarters of the sample in 2004, 60 percent in 2005 and 2006, and 63 percent in 2007 opposed the latter. A majority of Jews were in favor of encouraging voluntary emigration of Israeli Arabs from Israel – rising from 50 percent in 2001 to 63 percent in 2006 and 66 percent in 2007. Yet when faced with a general question on equal rights for Israeli Arabs, a strong majority of Jews expressed support, reaching as high as almost three quarters of the respondents in 2006 and two thirds in 2007.

These findings reflect a great dilemma faced by many Israeli Jews in regard to their attitude towards their fellow Arab citizens. On the one hand, the majority of Israeli Jews believe in and are committed to the ideals and principles of equality and civil rights – ideals engraved in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. On the other hand, they cannot overcome their deep suspicion as to the loyalty of the Arab citizens. The suspicion

was reinforced during the Second Lebanon War, which brought about a deepening of the schism between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel. This negative effect is reflected in the slight increase for 2007 in those supporting voluntary emigration of Israeli Arabs and the slight decrease in support for equal rights.

In 2006 a question was added, which asked the respondents their opinion regarding the transfer of Arab communities in Israel, such as Umm el Fahm, to a Palestinian state that would be established in the context of a permanent settlement and exchange of land. Thirty-one percent in 2006 and 30 percent in 2007 were in favor of the transfer of as many Arab communities as possible, another 16 percent in 2006 and 17 percent in 2007 were in favor of transferring a small number of communities, 29 percent in 2006 and 27 percent in 2007 were in favor on condition that it would be undertaken with the consent of the Arab residents of those communities, and only 24 percent in 2006 and 25 percent in 2007 were opposed to the transfer of any area of Israel to a Palestinian state. The nearly identical results for 2006 and 2007 are remarkable. They confirm both the thesis regarding the stability of basic attitudes over the last three years as well as the reliability of the survey. This result also reflects the ambivalent attitude towards Israeli Arabs and a desire to find some way to minimize the challenge they present.

Finally, respondents were asked: "What do you think Israel should emphasize in its relations with its Arab citizens – equalizing their conditions with those of the citizens of the state or intensifying punitive measures for behavior that is not appropriate for Israeli citizens?" In 2002, 58 percent chose the punitive measures option, in 2003, 49 percent chose this option, and 53 percent in 2004. In 2005 and 2006 there was a dramatic change of heart on this issue – in both years 60 percent chose the improvement of life option vs. only 40 percent who chose the punitive measures option. The same picture repeated itself in 2007 – 57 percent chose the former option vs. 43 percent who chose the latter. On the basis of these results, which to some might seem slightly surprising as far as 2007 is concerned, one can conclude that the attitude of the Jewish population towards Israeli Arabs is to a large degree a function of the actual conduct of the Israeli Arab community and less so their publicly expressed opinions and positions. The emphasis on "punitive measures" in 2002, 2003, and 2004 reflects the

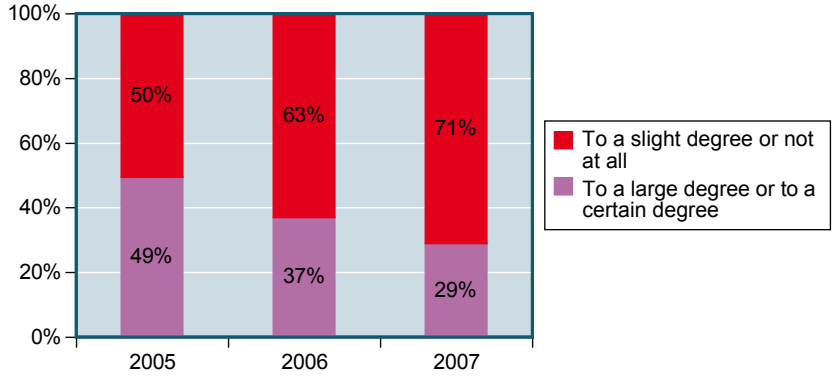
trauma of the rioting by Israeli Arabs in October 2000 (coinciding with the onset of the second intifada), which resulted in the death of thirteen Arabs from police gunfire. The trauma evidently wore off by 2005. In 2006, on the other hand, Israeli Arabs were highly critical of the actions of the Israeli government and of the IDF in the Second Lebanon War. This criticism was quite vocal and stringent, raising questions as to the loyalty of Israeli Arabs, but did not express itself in any way through disruptive behavior – and thus was, evidently, taken in stride by the Jewish community.

Ideological Tensions within the Jewish Public

A different but no less serious a challenge to Israel are the deep ideological divisions among the Jews themselves. The great national debate over the future of the territories and the settlements has a strong ideological component. For some segments of the Jewish population, namely, many of the Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria (and prior to the disengagement of August 2005 nearly all of the settlers in Gaza) and a large portion of the religious Zionist community, the issue is one of ideology and religious belief. Their support for settling the Land of Israel, maintaining Israeli control of the areas conquered in 1967, and preventing the uprooting of any Jewish settlement is based on a strong ideological commitment, nationalistic fervor, and/or deep religious conviction. Many Israelis oppose territorial withdrawal and removing settlements for pragmatic reasons – security considerations, deep suspicion of the true intentions of the Arabs, and other geo-political factors. For the ideologically and religiously motivated groups, however, such policies are not only heresy but the destruction of their life's work and dreams. The readiness of these groups to put up a tough fight was demonstrated during the disengagement from Gaza in late 2005. It took Israel 40,000 unarmed troops and policemen and months of preparation to remove fewer than 8,000 settlers.

Many Israelis are gravely concerned abut the possibility of serious clashes and great internal strife should the Israeli government decide on a major withdrawal from the West Bank. An attempt was made to gauge how serious this concern is. Respondents were asked if in their estimate a civil war could come about "as a result of agreements regarding the territories" or "as a result of further disengagement and the evacuation of

Civil war: as a result of arrangements regarding the territories



Civil war: as a result of further disengagement and evacuation of settlements (*)

(*) In 2005, the question was phrased: "as a result of the implementation of the disengagement plan."

Figure 17. Possibility of Civil War, 2005-2007

settlements in Judea and Samaria" (figure 17). The level of concern about the possibility of civil war peaked just prior to the actual implementation of the disengagement from Gaza and the four northern Samaria settlements. Thus in 2005, close to half of the Jewish population saw a possibility of civil war in both instances. This changed dramatically in 2006 and even more so in 2007. In 2007, 29 percent saw a possibility of civil war as a result of Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria in the context of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, down from 37 percent in 2006 and 49 percent in 2005. The comparable numbers in the case of further disengagement and evacuation of settlements was 33 percent, 40 percent,

and 47 percent, respectively. This finding is, in all probability, a direct result of the smooth and swift implementation of the Gaza disengagement without a single serious physical casualty and without a shot being fired. The dire predictions of violent opposition and many casualties never materialized, and this evidently had a strong effect on the perceptions and future expectations of the Jewish community.

Furthermore, in 2006 and 2007, respondents were asked whether they were "concerned or bothered by the increase of extremism among the settlers and their supporters." In 2006, 46 percent were concerned, of whom only 15 percent were very concerned, and 54 percent were not concerned, of whom 24 percent were not concerned at all. In 2007, only 30 percent were concerned, of whom only 7 percent were very concerned, and 70 percent were not concerned, of whom 41 percent were not concerned at all. Despite resonances of disillusionment with the IDF among the religious community, the Second Lebanon War demonstrated quite vividly that there was no decrease whatsoever in the willingness of even the most ardent and ideologically committed settlers or religious Zionists to serve in the IDF or to go to battle when called up. This phenomenon was internalized by Israeli society and is reflected in the results for 2007.

Closely related to the question of intra-Jewish tensions is the question of refusal by soldiers to obey orders out of ideological reasons. This issue has been a part of the Israeli scene for many years. Initially it arose with regard to soldiers who refused to serve in the occupied territories out of ideological and conscientious objection reasons. However, more recently and especially in connection with the 2005 disengagement, it became a serious issue for many religious soldiers when a number of leading rabbis called upon them to refuse to obey orders and participate in any way in the army's efforts to evacuate the settlements. It should be noted that in both cases, we are dealing with implementation by the IDF of orders given by the legitimate government, approved by the Knesset and sanctioned by Israel's Supreme Court as both legal and binding.

Respondents were asked whether a soldier is permitted to refuse to serve in the territories and whether a soldier is permitted to refuse to obey an order to evacuate settlers and settlements. A glance at the results (figure 18) immediately shows that the year 2005 deviates from the general trend. The results for 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2007 show a high degree

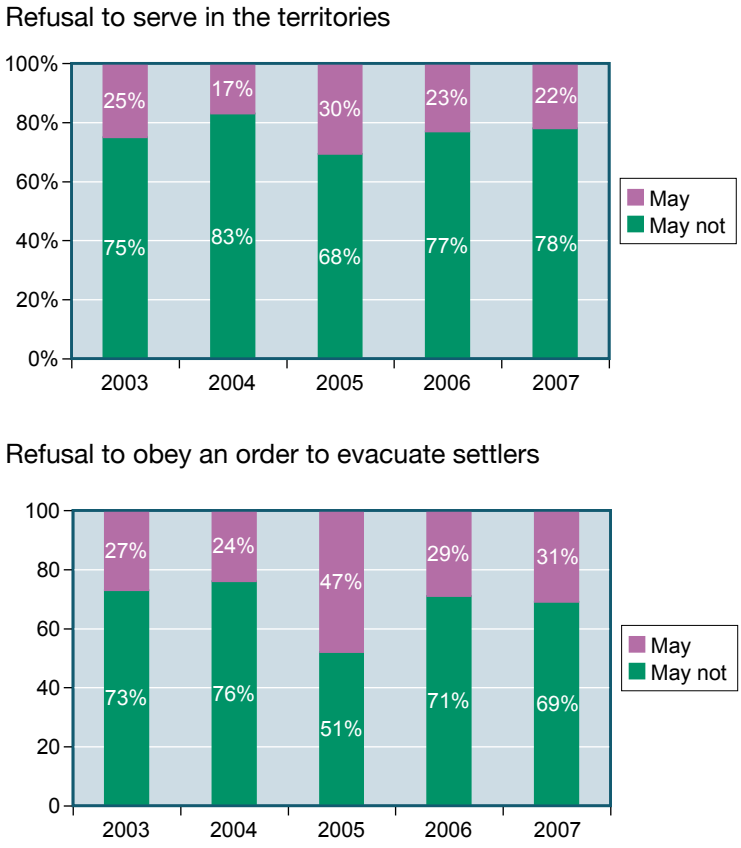


Figure 18. Attitudes Regarding Refusal by IDF Soldiers to Obey Orders, 2003-2007

of consistency. For both of these cases of insubordination, approximately three quarters of the population considered refusal illegitimate. Yet in 2005, close to half of the Jewish population was willing to accept refusal to obey an order to evacuate settlers, and 30 percent sanctioned refusal to serve in the territories. It should be remembered that the 2005 survey was conducted in the month just prior to the disengagement, i.e., during the time when the tension reached its highest point and the calls for refusal to obey orders were voiced repeatedly. During the time of the survey, there were one or two highly publicized instances of actual refusal to obey orders by a soldiers and an officer. This charged atmosphere evidently had an effect on public opinion and led to a greater readiness and willingness to condone

such insubordination. The effect carried over to a limited degree to cases of refusal of a different nature, i.e., to serve in the territories. Significantly, recovery occurred quite rapidly and by 2006, the numbers returned to the general trend, characteristic of the years prior to 2005. At the same time, sympathy for insubordination regarding orders to evacuate settlers has consistently exceeded support for refusal to serve in the territories.

Finally, respondents were asked to address the issue of the rule of law given Israel's security situation: "In case of a contradiction between preserving the principle of the rule of law and the need to protect security interests, what would be your preference" (on a 7 point scale). From 1987 to 2004, most Israelis tended towards security interests, In 2005, 46 percent leaned towards security interest, 33 percent towards the rule of law, and 21 percent chose the mid-point (4); in 2006, the comparable numbers were 48 percent, 29 percent, and 23 percent; and in 2007, 50 percent, 21 percent, and 29 percent. The findings for the three year period show a considerable degree of consistency, albeit with a slightly stronger emphasis on security interest in 2007, an expected result of the Second Lebanon War.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The purpose of this study has been to present the reader with empirical facts and to chart accurately the opinions, attitudes, feelings, and perceptions of the Jewish public in Israel on national security issues. The findings presented in this study have been collected by the use of objective scientific methodology, and in so doing they stand on safe ground. The interpretation of the findings is a different story. When researchers move from systematic and objective observation of behavior and accurate reporting of those observations into the realm of interpretation and implications, they leave the protected ground of scientific methodology and veer towards uncharted waters. Any attempt to interpret the data and extract conclusions is even more difficult as a result of the immense complexity of Israeli public opinion. If there is one overriding feature that characterizes the entire body of data, it is the complexity and in many cases seemingly contradictory responses of the respondents. One must tread very carefully when attempting to derive operational conclusions or implications from the empirical results presented in this study.

That said, and with all the requisite reservation and caution, it is possible to posit certain ideas that emerge as solid conclusions and implications based on the data presented above and that may address, at least to some degree, the question of the study's practical implications. First and foremost, the results consistently emphasize the strength and resilience of the Israeli center – what is also at times called the silent majority or middle Israel. This is manifest not only by the data and analysis presented in Chapter 2, but is substantiated by the data presented throughout this study. It is often claimed that the secret of Israel's success lies in the strength, resilience, and stability of its center – a center that even after decades of war, terror, siege, threats, and dangers has not wavered. The results of this study support and lend credence to this thesis. This conclusion is also corroborated to some

degree by Israeli voting behavior, manifest not only in the relative success of Kadima – the classic center party – in the 2006 elections, but also by the consistent poor showing of the extreme left (Meretz and left of it) and extreme right (National Union-NRP and right of it) parties.

A second and related observation is the relative stability over time of basic attitudes and opinions. As expected, positions as well as perceptions on specific issues are determined to a large degree by events on the ground. In the period under review, the sharp and dramatic decline in 2007 for support for unilateralism in general and the Gaza disengagement in particular clearly reflect the events of 2006, both in Gaza and Lebanon. Similarly, the changes in the threat perceptions of Israelis in 2007 are rooted in the Second Lebanon War and the increased threats by Iran's Ahmadinejad. At the same time, ups and downs notwithstanding, there is a considerable degree of stability in the basic and long range areas of public opinion. An example of such stability is the predominance of demography over geography. This is manifest in the consistent value judgments of the Jewish population, whereby the ideal of preserving Israel as a Jewish state, i.e., a state with a solid Jewish majority, is chosen overwhelmingly year after year as the most important value, more than democracy, peace, and Greater Israel (with the latter emerging consistently as the least important value).

The priority of demography over geography is related to another stable characteristic of Israeli public opinion, namely that Israelis are hawkish on security but dovish on political issues. This is reflected in the readiness of a majority of Israelis to evacuate some settlements in the West Bank in the context of a permanent settlement. This majority is even found in 2007, albeit slightly reduced from 2006, although the evacuation of the settlements from Gaza in 2005 is viewed by most Israelis as a dismal failure. Over the past years, a consistent majority of the population has supported the creation of a Palestinian state, and close to two thirds have supported a solution of "two states for two peoples." One should have no illusions – the respondents who answered in the affirmative regarding a Palestinian state and a two state solution do not necessarily agree on the borders of these states or on other elements of the agreement, but it does indicate a general approach and worldview, namely the need to solve the

conflict, the imperative of separation between the two populations, and the urgency of the demographic challenge.

Another case of a stable feature of public opinion is the deep mistrust of the Palestinians – not so much the individual Palestinian but rather the Palestinian and Arab collective. Most Israelis do not believe that the Palestinians want peace – the majority believe that the destruction of Israel is the true goal of the Palestinians and Arabs. Most Israelis see little chance of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, and since 2001 have evinced grave doubts whether signed peace agreements would indeed spell an end to the conflict. Many Israelis are beginning to fear that in the eyes of the Palestinians even permanent agreements are temporary. This perception is probably subject to change, but such a change would have to be a result of actions and not words.

What, then, are the long range implications for moving forward towards finding a solution to the conflict? What projections can one make on the basis of the data as to where the Israeli people will stand if and when a proposed permanent peace agreement is presented to them? This is, of course, a hypothetical question that depends on a host of factors – most of all on the parameters of the proposed agreement. No one can give a definitive answer, but we can offer some food for thought.

The stability of basic attitudes and opinions notwithstanding, there is a good deal of flexibility in Israeli opinion. Under which circumstances could this flexibility come into play? Given the present state of public opinion and the vitality and resilience of the center, we believe that two factors can play an important role in shaping future public opinion. The first is events on the ground. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem was a turning point for Israeli public opinion. To a lesser degree, the same was true for the Rabin-Arafat handshake and the Oslo agreements, although the course of events afterwards neutralized much of the effect. The intifada of 2000 and the Hamas victory of 2006 left their mark on Israeli public opinion. Yet Israelis still yearn for a solution to the conflict. A dramatic gesture by the Palestinians or by a credible Arab entity (such as the Arab League or Saudi Arabia) would likely have a significant effect on Israeli public opinion.

The second factor is charismatic political leadership. There is the age-old question of whether the leader shapes public opinion or merely reflects it. Is history determined by great leaders or are the leaders merely

agents of economic, social, and political processes? A discussion of this controversy is far beyond the scope of this paper. There is, probably, some truth in both views and the process is likely to be interactive. Ariel Sharon's disengagement proposal fell on fertile ground – many Israelis were in favor of getting out of Gaza much before Sharon, yet it is hard to conceive of the disengagement from Gaza being implemented without Sharon's leadership. The very fact that Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak proposed at Camp David in the summer of 2000 the relinquishing by Israel of the Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem – even though nothing came of it – brought about a significant and lasting change in Israeli public opinion on this issue. There is good reason to believe that a charismatic political leader, backed by a strong and united government and with the acquiescence of the security establishment, could go very far regarding a permanent agreement with the Palestinians and manage to secure the support of Israeli public opinion.

Finally, some thought must be given to the immense divide that exists between the religious and secular communities in terms of their attitudes and positions on the main political issues of the day. The data presented here highlights the wide gap in public opinion between these two sectors and implies a schism between them, which poses a grave challenge to the cohesion of Israeli society. Any serious attempt to move the peace progress forward in a significant way must inevitably grapple with this phenomenon, which if left unheeded poses a serious threat to the very stability of the social fabric. The magnitude of the challenge and its potential repercussions should not be underestimated, and Israeli society will make a grave mistake if it ignores this reality. Responsible leaders must thus find the proper mechanisms for alleviating the tensions between the different sectors of the Jewish community in order to overcome this obstacle that impacts so critically on Israeli society and national security.

Appendix I
The Sample

The sample size for each of the surveys covered in this study was set at 700 respondents. Using a stratified random sampling procedure, the questionnaire was administered by trained interviewers (from a pool of 80 trained face to face interviewers) to 704 respondents in 2005, 724 respondents in 2006, and 709 respondents in 2007, each sample representing the adult Jewish population in Israel, i.e., Jewish residents above the age of eighteen. All the interviews were conducted during the evening hours at the permanent residence of the respondents and each interview lasted approximately one hour. At each household, one adult (over the age of 18) was interviewed. The respondents in the 2005 study were drawn from 44 statistical areas, chosen randomly and located in 26 different communities. Respondents in the 2006 survey were drawn from 45 statistical areas, chosen randomly and spread over 27 different localities. In the 2007 survey, the sample included respondents from 44 statistical areas, chosen randomly from 25 different sites.

In order to check whether the sample is indeed representative of the population, the results for three key demographic indicators were compared with nationwide data reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Table 13 shows the distribution according to gender, as reported by the CBS, for the entire Jewish population fifteen years and older, and as found in the 2005, 2006, and 2007 surveys. The distribution in 2005 is identical with the overall data, in 2006 diverges by 2.5 percent, and in 2007 by 3.2 percent, all well within the margin of error.

Table 13. Population and Sample Distribution for Gender

	CBS Jewish population 15 years and older ('000)	2005 sample	2006 sample	2007 sample
Male	2,285.3 (48.6)	48.6	51.1	51.8
Female	2,419.8 (51.4)	51.4	48.9	48.2
Total	4,705.1 (100%)	100%	100%	100%

Table 14 gives the distribution for age. The CBS uses a fifteen to nineteen years age interval. Inasmuch as in the surveys here only individuals eighteen years and older were included, we extrapolated from the CBS data the national values for the eighteen to nineteen years age interval. As can be seen from table 14, the differences between the 2005 sample and the national data range from 0 percent to 2.5 percent, well below the margin of error. In the 2006 sample, with the exception of the 65+ category, the differences range from 0 percent to 3.4 percent, all within the sample error. The 65+ category shows a divergence of 4 percent, close to the maximum sample error. Regarding the 2007 sample, with the exception of the 55-64 category, the differences range from 0.3 percent to 3.4 percent. The 55-64 category shows a divergence of 5 percent, which is slightly above the margin of error.

As Chapter 3 demonstrates, the single most influential factor in determining attitudes and opinions on national security issues is religious identification. Indeed, the weight of this factor in determining one's opinions is greater than that of all other demographic variables combined. It is therefore essential to examine whether the distribution on this key variable in our sample is equivalent to the distribution for the entire population. In 2004, as part of a nationwide social survey conducted on a sample of 7,600 respondents representing the entire adult population of twenty years and older, the CBS gathered data as to one's self-categorization on religious identification. The nationwide survey was repeated in 2005 with a sample of 7,700 respondents. However, the categories as to religious identification used in all NSPOP surveys prior to 2006 were different from those used in the CBS survey. In order to enable a comparison of the data, the item on religious identification was reworded in 2006 so as to make it identical with the wording used by the CBS.

Table 14. Population and Sample Distribution for Age

CBS Jewish population 15 years and older ('000)					2005 sample	2006 sample	2007 sample
Age	Male	Female	Total	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
15-19 (18-19)	288.9	274.6	563.50	12% (4.8%)	4%	3.2%	2.7%
20-24	273.1	265.9	539.00	11%	10.5%	10%	10.3%
25-29	268.1	263	531.10	11%	11%	11.5%	11.7%
30-34	228	227.8	455.80	10%	9%	11%	12.4%
35-39	194.4	198.7	393.10	8%	9.3%	7%	7.2%
40-44	186	196.5	382.50	8%	8.4%	7.8%	6.5%
45-49	180.4	193.2	373.60	8%	10%	9.6%	7.4%
50-54	171.6	184.9	356.50	8%	10.5%	8%	8.3%
55-64	219.5	243.4	462.90	10%	12%	13.4%	15.0%
+65	275.3	371.9	647.20	14%	15%	18%	17.4%
Total population	2,285.30	2,419.80	4,705.10	100%	99.7%	99.5%	99%

Table 15 gives the distribution on religious self-identification as reported by the CBS for 2004 and 2005, and for the 2006 and 2007 samples. The table shows slight differences between the 2004 and 2005 CBS studies (0.2-1.5 percent). Differences between the samples and either of the two CBS studies range from 0.3-4.8 percent. The main differences are in the religious and non-religious groups. The 2006 sample includes 4.1 percent more religious respondents and 4.8 fewer non-religious (secular) respondents than the figures given for the population by the CBS 2004 study (3 percent more religious and 5 percent fewer religious [secular] than the results from the CBS 2005 study). The only difference between the results from the 2007 sample and the CBS 2005 study that exceeds 2 percent is in the religious group (3 percent) and the traditional-non religious group (4.1 percent). These divergences can be partially explained by the different frames of reference of the two studies and the different birthrates of the two groups. The birthrate and consequently the population growth are higher among religious Jews than among the rest of the Jewish population, and especially the secular non-religious Jews. The CBS surveys were conducted

in 2004 and 2005 and related to those age twenty years and older. The 2006 and 2007 studies, conducted two years later, included also eighteen and nineteen year old respondents. Consequently, as a natural result of demographic trends one would expect a slightly larger representation of religious respondents in our samples than that reported by the CBS. Any remaining differences are all well within the margin of error.

Table 15. CBS Surveys and 2006 and 2007 Samples on Religious Identification

Self-definition as to religious affiliation	CBS - 2004	CBS - 2005	2006 sample	2007 sample
Ultra-orthodox	8%	6.7%	8.8%	8.5%
Religious	8.7%	9.8%	12.8%	12.8%
Traditional– religious	12%	13.4%	11.6%	14.1%
Traditional – non-religious	26.5%	25%	26.8%	20.9%
Secular	44.8%	45%	40%	43.7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Appendix II
About the National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP)

Launched in 1984, the National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP) monitors Israeli public opinion on issues related to national security. Surveys undertaken and cited in the framework of this project were comprised of representative samples of the adult Jewish population of Israel.

The study above presents and analyzes the results of three surveys. The first was conducted July 5-August 11, 2005, just prior to the disengagement from Gaza. The second survey was conducted February 21-March 27, 2006, just prior to the national elections. The final survey was conducted February 25-March 25, 2007. The margin of error at the 95 percent level of the 2005 survey is ±3.76 percent, of the 2006 survey is ±3.72 percent, and of the 2007 survey is ±3.75 percent.

The dates of the project's surveys were: (1) June 1985 (2) January 1986 (3) December 9, 1987-January 4, 1988 (4) October 2-30, 1988 (5) March 5-October 27, 1990 (6) March 16-31, 1991 (7) June 1-21, 1992 (8) January 1-15, 1993 (9) January 11-February 9, 1994 (10) January 4-February 7, 1995 (11) February 1996 (12) March 1-31, 1997 (13) January 26-March 9, 1998 (14) January 25-March 7, 1999 (15) January 24-Febrary 26, 2000 (16) April 12-May 11, 2001 (17) January 30-Febrary 27, 2002 (18) April 27-May 23, 2003 (19) February 2004 (20) July 5-August 11, 2005 (21) February 21-March 27, 2006 and (22) February 25-March 25, 2007.

Sample sizes were 1,171 in 1985; 1,172 in 1986; 1,116 in 1987; 873 in 1988; 1,251 in 1990; 1,131 in 1991; 1,192 in 1992; 1,139 in 1993; 1,239 in 1994; 1,220 in 1995; 1,201 in 1996; 1,126 in 1997; 1,207 in 1998; 1,203 in

1999; 1,201 in 2000; 1,216 in 2001; 1,264 in 2002; 1,103 in 2003; 1,100 in 2004; 704 in 2005; 724 in 2006; and 709 in 2007.

The fieldwork for the surveys through 1995 was done by the Dahaf Research Institute, in 1996 by Modi'in Ezrachi, between 1997 and 2002 by the Almidan/Mahshov Research Institute, and starting in 2003 by the B. I. and Lucille Cohen Institute of Public Opinion Research at Tel Aviv University.

The Project was conceived and until 2004 directed by Professor Asher Arian, and all the surveys through that year were prepared, conducted, and analyzed by him. As of 2005, responsibility for the project was transferred to the present senior author. The three surveys described in this report were prepared, conducted, and analyzed by him, together with co-author Dafna Shaked.