

Germany and Israel Today

United by the Past, Divided by the Present?



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With a commentary

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Preface



Liz Mohn
Vice-chair of the
Bertelsmann Stiftung
Executive Board

Because of its national history, Germany bears a special responsibility towards the Jewish people and the state of Israel. Ever since the inception of the Bertelsmann Stiftung almost forty years ago, my husband and I have been committed to fostering reconciliation between Germans and Israelis. On our many visits to Israel, we have always been moved by the open and welcoming attitudes of its people, many of whom have become good friends of ours. Personalities like Shimon Peres, Teddy Kollek, and Dov Judkowski helped us to realize important projects such as developing a German-Israeli Young Leaders Exchange Program, fostering an institute for teaching democratic values, equality, and acceptance, and founding the first school of journalism in Israel.

Germany and Israel have drawn closer together in the past decades, maintaining close relations on all levels and across a broad spectrum of fields, largely thanks to the efforts of the generations who experienced the horrors of the Nazi past at first hand. These people understood the importance of working for reconciliation and paving the way towards a shared future.

In both countries, however, many young people too are keenly interested in each other and are committed to a future together. One important goal is to learn from one another, for without such learning, we cannot succeed in making our world a more equitable and more peaceful place.

In order to continue the serious, open dialog between our peoples, it is important to be aware of differences in perception and changes in the way we view each other over time. Israel is located in a political environment in which it is necessary to reflect on individual perspectives – which makes it all the more important to be aware of the hopes and fears of the population. The present study aims to contribute to this awareness. It is based on a recent survey in which over 2,000 people in Germany and Israel were interviewed about their personal attitudes and convictions.

The findings of this survey can help us to understand and respect each other not only in our similarities, but also – and perhaps especially – in our diversity. This understanding is of crucial importance in our globalized world. Additionally, discovering common ground is dependent on personal encounters and open dialog based on genuine interest in one another. It is familiarity that breeds understanding, and understanding is the foundation on which we can build trust and friendship.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lior Wokar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Introduction

May 2015 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of German-Israeli diplomatic relations. During these fifty years, the two countries have intensified their political and economic ties and drawn closer together in a wide variety of social spheres. They have also launched a number of joint projects such as cooperative business and research endeavors, joint cultural initiatives, and numerous encounter programs for young people from both countries. All these efforts attest to the special significance of the bilateral relations between Israel and Germany, which also shows in the annual consultations between the two governments, which began in 2008 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel.

As a consequence of Germany's responsibility for the Holocaust, the country's commitment to Israel's right to existence and to bearing joint responsibility for its security ranks among the seemingly unshakable cornerstones of German foreign policy. Leading political figures have reaffirmed this commitment on numerous occasions. However, the relationship between the two countries cannot by any stretch be described as normal; it remains colored by the past and its fragility is evident in many of the controversies that have arisen in recent years – such as that surrounding Günter Grass's poem "What must be said." Similarly,

the most recent escalation in the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the summer of 2014 brought deep-rooted emotions to the surface. The war in the Middle East triggered an increase in anti-Semitic activity in Germany that even included acts of physical violence against Jews. The criticism leveled at the Israeli government in public discourse was often based on anti-Semitic stereotypes, while the policies of the Israeli government were compared with those of the Nazis.

Thus it seems appropriate to examine the exact nature of the relationship between the Germans and the Jewish population of Israel. What do the people of each country think about each other, what importance do they place on the remembrance of Nazi crimes, and what do they think about German and Israeli policies? And finally, how have these perceptions and attitudes changed in recent years?

A clear understanding of the ways in which Germany and Israel perceive each other is crucial for the future of their bilateral relations, since the attitudes underlying these perceptions may serve as indicators for potential future crises and challenges and thus provide early warning signs for the benefit of those dedicated to fostering dialog and understanding between the two nations.

This is the reasoning behind the Bertelsmann Stiftung's decision to reprise its 2007 demoscopic study and commission a new survey, for which approximately 1,000 people over the age of 18 were interviewed in each of the two countries in 2013. Because of the nature of the inquiry, the Israeli part of the survey was limited to Jewish citizens. Most, though not all, of the questions were identical in both representative studies. Also available were the data from a 1991 survey commissioned by the magazine *Der Spiegel* which, like the Bertelsmann Stiftung's surveys, sought to analyze and compare the attitudes and perceptions of Germans and Israelis. For some of the questions, therefore, comparisons over a longer time frame were possible.

In order to verify whether attitudes in the German population had changed appreciably since the beginning of 2013, mainly due to the Gaza war in the summer of 2014, seven of the questions were asked again in a representative survey in Germany in October 2014. The results show that many attitudes remain relatively stable over time. However, the German population had a significantly lower opinion of Israel in October 2014 than at the time of the 2013 survey and seems to be increasingly frustrated and perplexed by the issue of whether to support Israel or the Palestinians.

Our thanks go first of all to the authors Roby Nathanson and Steffen Hagemann for their analysis and evaluation of the survey data. Additionally, special thanks are also due to Dan Diner for his commentary and review of the findings. We would also like to thank Roland Imhoff and Stephan Stetter for their support in the development and evaluation of the questionnaire as well as TNS Emnid in Germany and TNS Teleseker in Israel for conducting the surveys.

Stephan Vopel
Director
Living Values Program

Method

The data were collected through telephone interviews, using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system, according to the following parameters:

Country	Population	Sample Size	Dates of Fielding
Germany	18+	1,000	7-19/1/2013
Israel (Jews)	18+	1,001	7-10/1/2013

Similar surveys were conducted in Israel and Germany in both 1991 and 2007 in cooperation with local partners TNS Teleseker; some of the questions were repeated here for tracking purposes (comparing data over time), while others were original. The German data were collected by TNS Emnid. Data collection in Germany began with a pilot study that was used to determine the proper proportions of landlines and mobile phones, and then a dual-frame method was used to reach samples of both landlines and mobile users.

The survey results have a 90-percent confidence rate and the margin of error is +/- 3 percent for n = 1,000.

With reference to the Israeli data, it should be noted that Arab citizens of Israel were not surveyed. The Israeli sample included in this survey was limited to Jewish respondents, since the results regarding the relationship between the two countries are directly related to ethnicity.

1. The state and national identity

The memory of the Holocaust has greatly affected the political culture of German and Israeli society since World War II. Narratives of national identity had to relate to the persecution of the Jewish people in one way or another. History therefore not only continues to shape self-awareness and constructions of collective identity, but also remains a negative reference point in bilateral relations. After World War II, German society experienced a rupture of identity: The Holocaust made it difficult to identify with the nation in an unambiguously positive way. The consciousness of complete defeat and collective catastrophe weakened a nationalism that had previously flourished. In the first decade after World War II, this crisis of identity was overcome by disregarding or even suppressing the memory of the Holocaust. It was not until later that the commemoration of the persecution of the Jews gained relevance and importance for the German collective memory. Since then, criticism of any form of national belonging and universal values and norms have become constitutive factors in the reshaping of German identity. But at the same time, traditions of an ethnic understanding of German nationalism remain anchored in German political culture.

“The memory of the Holocaust has greatly affected the political culture of German and Israeli society.”

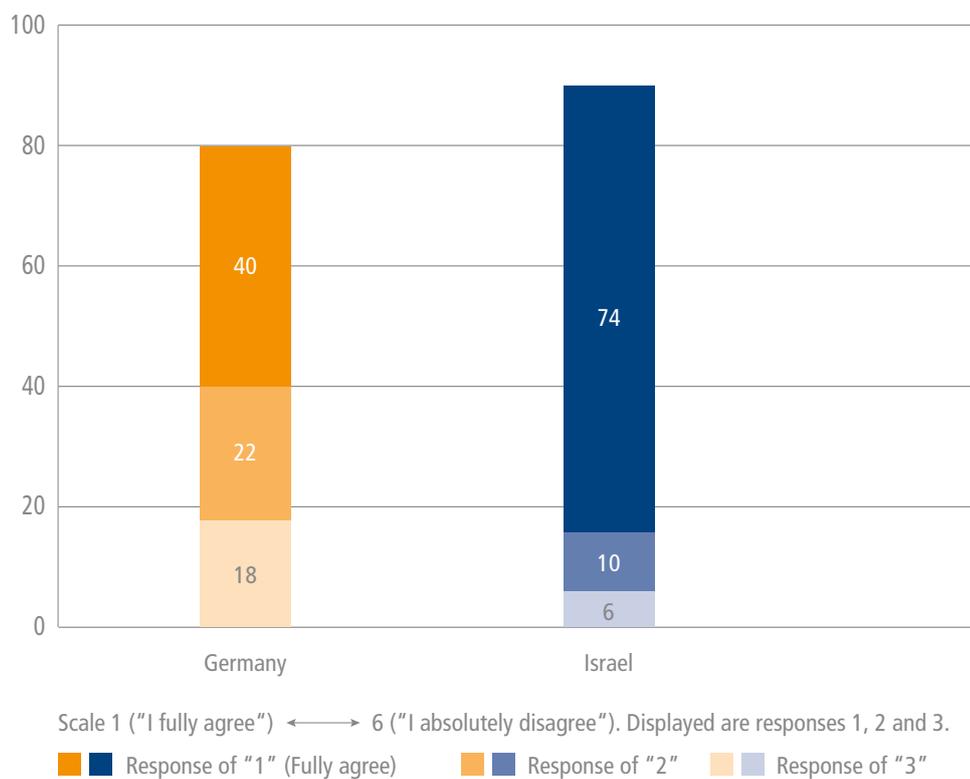
In Israel, the history of the Holocaust constituted an important narrative of justification for the founding of the state in that, according to the Zionist leadership, the destruction of Europe’s Jewry was the ultimate proof of the necessity of a Jewish State. This self-conception of Israel shapes its national identity to this day. Moreover, narratives of justification retain a high relevance in the Israeli discourse, since the state-building enterprise is an unfinished project which is challenged from both the inside and the outside. In the following chapter we will discuss the effects of these different political cultures on national identification and collective identity formation.

Nation and identity

In total, 80 percent of Germans agree with the statement that being German is an important part of their identity, but less than half (40 percent) of them feel strong agreement (see figure 1). In Israel, an overwhelming majority of 90 percent agrees that being Israeli is important, with 74 percent having a strong national attachment.



Figure 1: Identification with own country (%)



Agreement with the statement: "Being German/Israeli is an important part of my identity."

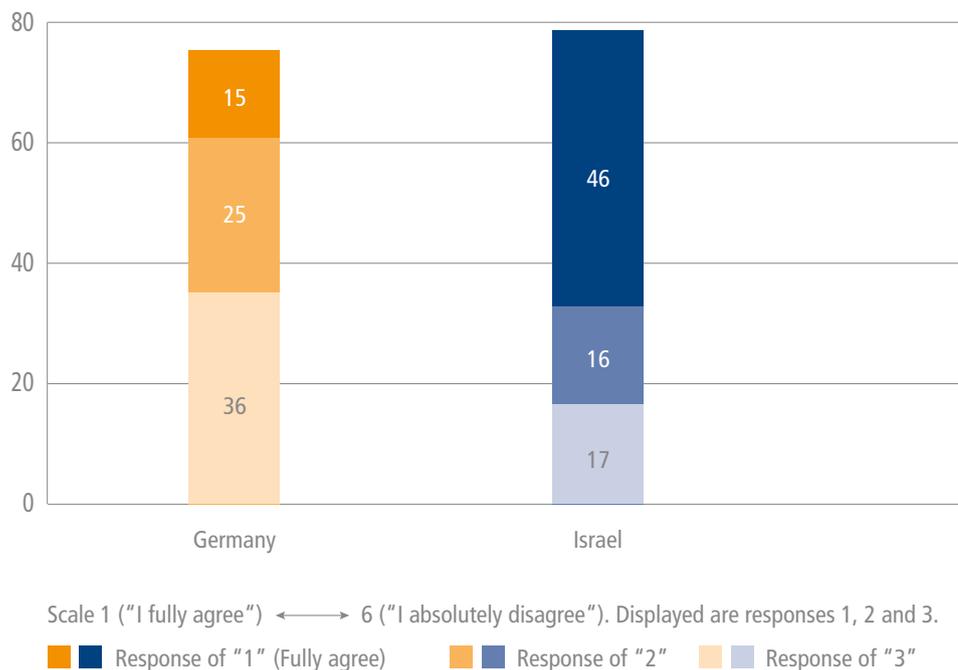
Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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A similar pattern emerges on the question of the moral superiority of the respective nation: 40 percent of Germans agree somewhat strongly with the statement that their country is very moral compared to other countries – far fewer than in Israel, where

the agreement rate is 62 percent (see figure 2). Nearly 80 percent agree that Israel is very moral compared to other nations, and nearly half completely agree (three times more than the Germans who completely agree with a similar statement about their

Figure 2: Attitudes towards morality of own country (%)



Agreement with the statement: "Compared to other nations Germany/Israel is a very moral nation."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

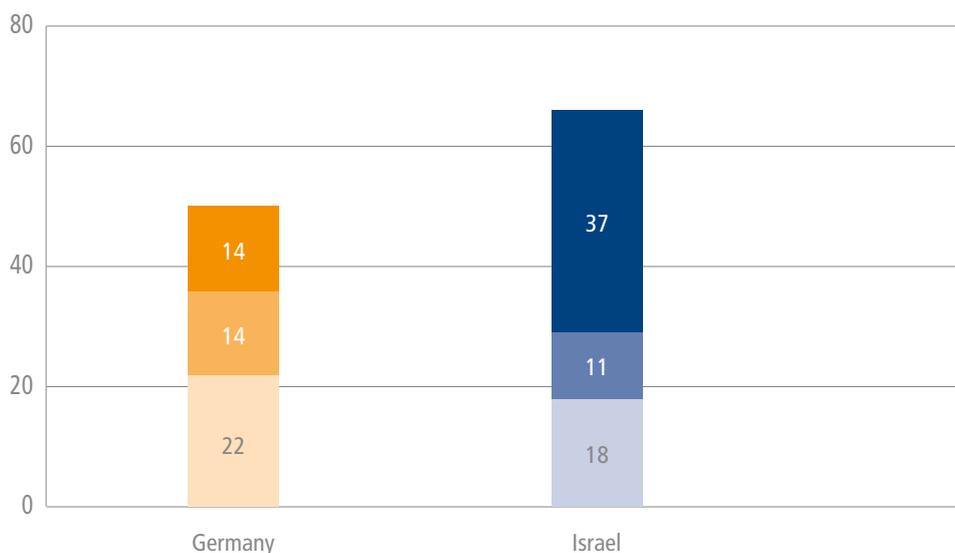
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country - the total agreement is similar in both communities, but Germans take a much more qualified stance). The fact that, despite the Holocaust, 76 percent of Germans consider Germany (to varying degrees) to be a very moral nation compared to other nations might be connected to the commemoration or *Aufarbeitung* of the Holocaust in Germany and the country's resultant self-image of a "mature nation" that has learned the lessons of the past.

These data reveal a dichotomy that is typical of German feelings today: While the national and cultural identity is clearly important, it is considered wrong or even dangerous in the post-war environment to be too openly demonstrative about national pride for fear of cultivating nationalism. German national attachment therefore remains strong but more qualified than in Israel.

Our findings reveal that 14 percent firmly believe that it is disloyal for Germans to criticize Germany (a total of half agree at some level), and roughly half do not agree - while two-thirds of Israelis view criticism as disloyalty. We will discuss this in more detail below.

Figure 3: Attitudes towards criticism of own country (%)



Scale 1 ("I fully agree") ← → 6 ("I absolutely disagree"). Displayed are responses 1, 2 and 3.

■ Response of "1" (Fully agree) ■ Response of "2" ■ Response of "3"

Agreement with the statement: "It is disloyal when Germans criticize Germany / when Israelis criticize Israel."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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We have seen that national pride runs high among the Israeli Jews sampled here. This has been the case in the past as well: In the late 1990s through the mid-2000s, when Jewish Israelis were asked whether they were proud to be Israeli, roughly 90 percent expressed pride (Arian, Barnea and Ben-Nun 2004). There was a slight decline in the level of pride as measured by this question in 2004, by a few percentage points, but in recent years Jewish Israelis have expressed similar levels of pride (see the time series in Israeli Democracy Index surveys, 2003–2012). Given intensifying international criticism of Israel's policies and the fact that Israelis are increasingly aware of such external criticism, the current high levels of patriotism in the Israeli self-image may be fuelled partly by defensiveness and even by the fear that the legitimacy of Israel is in question, and in the face of these concerns, respondents may even be willing to sacrifice critical thinking about the country in order to protect the

state. Certainly the strength of the sentiments expressed by Israeli respondents contrasts with the more cautious and restrained German sense of identity.

On the subject of national identity, we have already seen that two-thirds of Israeli respondents believe that it is disloyal for Israelis to criticize Israel. This contrasts with certain periods in Israel's past when clear distinctions were drawn between acceptable criticism and activities hostile to the state. For example, the first Lebanon War in 1982 ushered in a period in which Israelis could criticize state policy without accusations of being disloyal to the state. This era drew to a close somewhere in the mid-1990s, when the country responded with anger to a wave of terrorist strikes and came to view left-wing critique as siding with the enemy – and therefore as inherently hostile to the state.

More than twice as many Israelis say they “fully agree” that criticism is disloyal as among the German sample, and precisely twice as many agree as disagree. The reason for this discrepancy is probably that, in Germany, there are clearer definitions of citizenship and of what it means to be German. The clearly demarcated lines of belonging in the German polity make society less defensive about the state, since criticism does not appear to threaten the identity of the country.

“In Germany, criticism does not appear to threaten the identity of the country.”

This is not yet the case in Israel, which has yet to define conclusively who belongs and does not belong to the body politic.

There is very little demographic variation in these feelings, save for one: Secular people are less likely to believe criticism is disloyal. Just over half (58 percent) of non-religious Israelis hold this view, while religious people are significantly more likely to do so – three-quarters of religious Israelis regard criticism as disloyal. The attitudes of respondents who describe themselves as traditional are closer to religious people’s: 70 percent view such self-criticism as disloyal.

Shared society, lessons from the past, and the Other

While a majority of Israelis believe that their society shares clear attitudes, traditions and values, a lower proportion of Israelis than Germans holds this belief (74 percent compared to 82 percent, figure 4), and nearly half (43 percent) give only cautious agreement. In light of class differences and the deep divisions in Israeli society between Jewish and Arab, religious and secular, immigrant and “veteran” people, it is not surprising that Israelis lack confidence in a collective identity. In fact, the uncertainty about whether Israelis

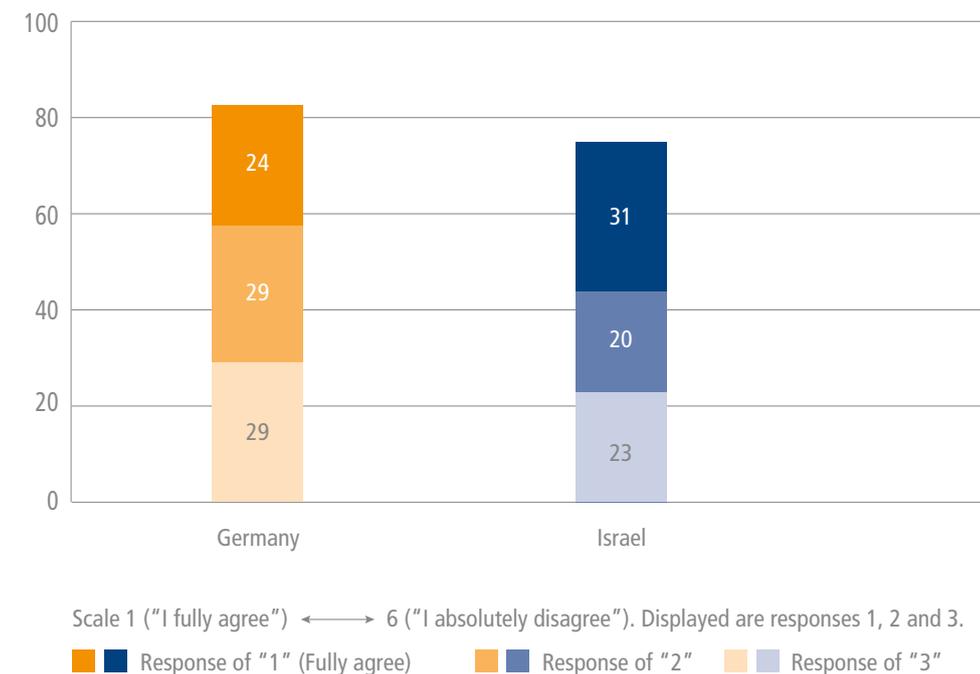
are capable of sharing values in any permanent way has permeated Israeli political life from the beginning of statehood: The first election created a Constitutional Assembly, but although this body was charged with writing a constitution, it failed to do so. The Assembly transformed itself into the first Knesset, but Israel remains without a formal written constitution to this day, a marker of the country’s inability to reconcile its distinct and different social components.

In Germany, the social contract is somewhat stronger. German society is believed to consist of a fairly clearly defined and unified people with a common cultural identity. Despite many challenges and upheavals at the level of the state, the German people have historically been rather clearly delineated and not widely dispersed either geographically or culturally, so that they have had enough similar experiences to generate a sense of shared community. Modern Germany has made strenuous efforts to hammer out shared social norms and values that break from its past – indeed, with the express objective of breaking from its past – and this is one of the reasons for its stronger sense of social solidarity.

“Modern Germany’s express objective of breaking from its past is one of the reasons for its sense of social solidarity.”

At the same time, as will be discussed in greater detail below, 58 percent of Germans consider strong growth among the country’s cultural or religious minorities to be menacing to some degree. The positive self-image of Germans seems to be increasingly challenged by the growing ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity in Germany. In debates about how to redefine German identity, such as the *Leitkultur* (leading culture) discussion,

Figure 4: Persistence of national character (%)



Agreement with the statement: "You will always be able to describe Germans/Israelis on the basis of certain traditions and beliefs."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

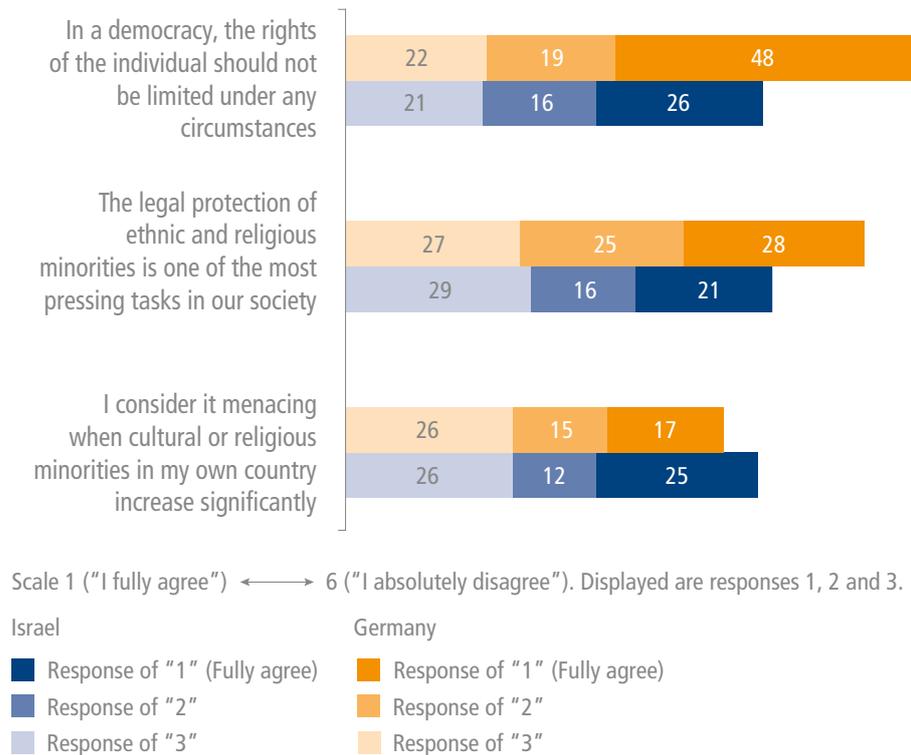
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Muslim immigrants have increasingly assumed the function of the Other: Survey data show that Germans tend to hold negative attitudes towards Muslims, with only about a third reporting "positive feelings" (Pollack et al. 2010). In the public discourse, proponents of cultural nationalism define the German nation in a way that excludes Muslim immigrants from in-group membership. Although the adherents of a more liberal, inclusive approach to German national identity based on egalitarianism, tolerance, and the protection of minorities do extend the promise of membership to Muslim immigrants, even liberal nationalism demands that immigrants become culturally assimilated to some degree. For example, some federal states have laws that forbid public school teachers from wearing the Muslim headscarf, and foreign nationals seeking German citizenship are required to take a naturalization test.

"Social surveys have repeatedly shown that Israelis view the Jewish-Arab divide as the deepest division in Israeli society."

In the Israeli context, Jews would primarily associate the concept of the Other with Arabs. Social surveys have repeatedly shown that Israelis view the Jewish-Arab divide as the deepest division in Israeli society, and if anything the perception of Jewish-Arab relations may have deepened over the last decade. Among young people, for example, a study conducted in 1998 showed that the top-ranked social schism was between religious and secular, but in two subsequent tracking surveys from 2004 onward, the Jewish-Arab divide was ranked highest (Hexel and Nathanson 2010). In considering Israeli attitudes towards the Other, it

Figure 5: Lessons from history: Attitudes and values (%)



Agreement with the above statements.

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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is worth noting that the Arab community in Israel is itself diverse even when viewed from the perspective of Israeli Jews. Druze Arabs and some Bedouins, for example, even serve in the Israeli army, but they are still commonly lumped together as an out-group. Therefore, the findings indicate that when Israeli Jews ask themselves how Arabs think and feel, they probably rely on one-dimensional, negative cultural stereotypes. Since Arab citizens are obviously associated with the community viewed as the enemy (the Palestinians), the respondents also are less enthusiastic than Germans about advancing legal protections for “ethnic and religious minorities” (a term which most Israelis will associate with Arabs) as a pressing need. Two-thirds support this statement, but this is significantly fewer than among German respondents (80 percent; see figure 5).

These differences between Germany and Israel can be explained by the lessons of World War II and by the historical and political contexts of both countries. The Holocaust is regarded by Germans as an event which negatively constitutes their national identity, which underwent highly contested, ambivalent and contradictory processes of transformation in order to replace old traditions and collectivist ideologies with universalistic values and norms. The survey shows that this universalism, understood as a lesson of World War II and the Holocaust, has become a constitutive factor in German national identity: 89 percent of Germans affirm the absolute primacy of individual rights which should not be limited under any circumstances, while 80 percent agree that the legal protection of ethnic and religious minorities is one of the most pressing tasks in society. Both individual rights and the protection of

minorities can be considered shared values. But, unlike in Israel, these liberal commitments have hardly been put to the test in Germany, which has a physically safe geographical location within Europe and a more homogeneous population than that of Israel, where a national minority accounts for more than a fifth of the population. The fear of growing ethnic and religious minorities in Germany among 58 percent of the population is a warning sign that, in times of crisis, liberal values cannot be taken for granted.

“Unlike in Israel,
liberal commitments
have hardly been put to the
test in Germany.”

Israelis do share the commitment to democratic principles, but in a more qualified way which reflects their different post-war experiences and the country’s intractable conflicts. Nearly twice as many Israelis agree than disagree that individual freedoms should never be limited. However, there is much less agreement with that statement among Israelis than among Germans, who display a far greater commitment to freedom of the individual. The response to this question highlights the self-perception among Israelis that they embrace democratic norms; yet the open acknowledgment of over one-third that they disagree with an injunction against limiting individual rights quite certainly reflects the basic understanding, shared by many Israelis, that the constant danger to Israel’s security – which, in the eyes of Israelis, threatens the country’s very existence – warrants the overriding of personal rights. This is a stark contrast to Germany, which, as noted above, does not perceive itself to be under existential and security threats, so that respondents here see no need to override individual rights. In Israel, those who agree fully with this principle do so far less strongly than their German counterparts (26

percent compared to 48 percent). Further, not all groups are equally convinced that personal rights trump all: Just over half of religious respondents in Israel (54 percent) agree compared to two-thirds of non-religious respondents. Those with lower levels of education are evenly divided.

“Germany does not have
the same sense of
uncertainty and
impermanence about its existence.”

These figures substantiate the fact that Germany and Israeli have very different experiences of the present, and this is reflected in their attitudes towards national identity and democratic values. Israel is living with the constant possibility of attack and defeat on both the military and the political front. Germany, with all its internal complexities related to identity, including the question of minority rights and inclusion in society, does not have the same sense of uncertainty and impermanence about its existence (this is especially true after the fall of the Berlin Wall). In the case of Israel, in contrast, the deep underlying threat creates an impediment to fully embracing liberal democratic values even though the majority of the population would prefer to do so.

2. History and the Holocaust

Commemorating the past is closely related to the construction and legitimization of national identities. Thus the interpretation of the past is always influenced by the needs of the present and by changing historical and societal conditions. In this sense, the Holocaust and National Socialism remain highly relevant and continue to influence self-perception, national narratives and the perception of the Other, albeit in dynamic and contested processes.

“Each society has its own understanding and perceptions of the present-day relevance of history.”

The following chapter will discuss the ways in which Germans and Israelis relate to the Holocaust cognitively and emotionally. As we saw in the preceding chapter, the two societies have some characteristics in common, but each also has its own understanding and perceptions of the present-day relevance of history in general and the Holocaust in particular.

Continued relevance of the Holocaust or call for closure?

After 1945, it was no longer politically feasible to promote an unambiguously positive national identity in Germany. The Holocaust acted as a negative reference point for any reconstruction of collective narratives and identifications. With generational change and the passage of almost 70 years now causing the events of World War II to recede in the public memory, there is little question that Germans desire to move away from their past. A large majority of 77 percent agrees in a general sense that it is time to leave the past behind and to focus on the problems of the present and future.

A slightly higher proportion of respondents supports this in the specific case of the history of German persecution of the Jews, as figure 7 shows: 81 percent of the German sample prefer to put the history of the Holocaust behind them, and 37 percent support that statement strongly. Even though this group is smaller than the combined groups whose approval is more qualified, a majority of Germans is in favour of explicit closure and no longer wishes to talk so much about the persecution of Jews.

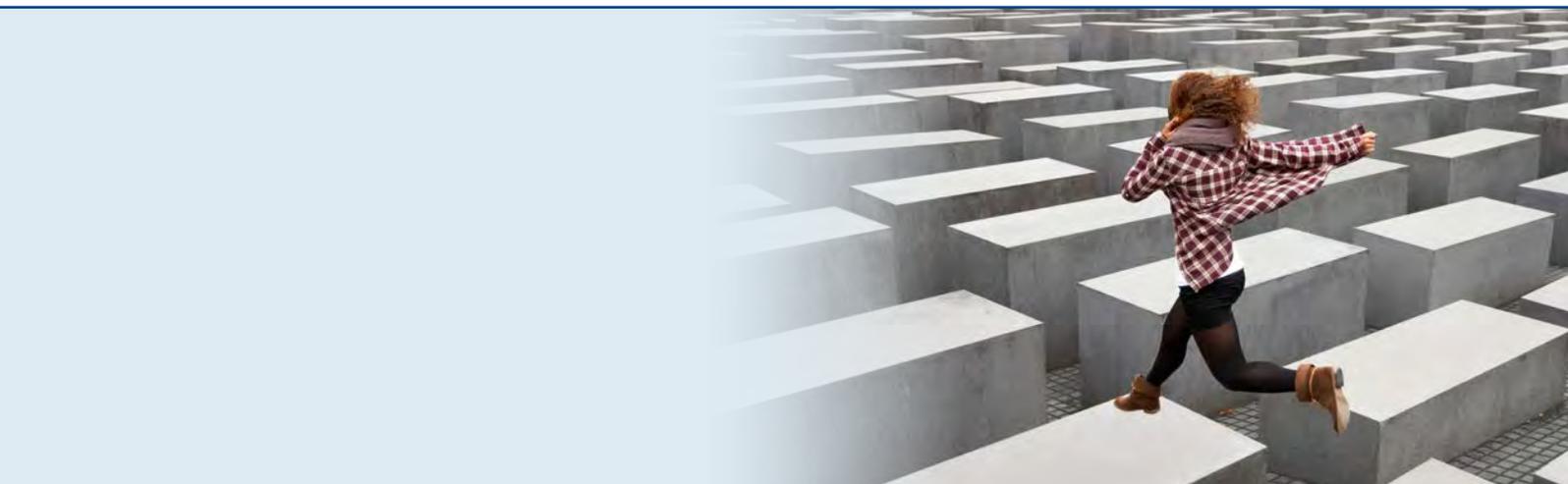
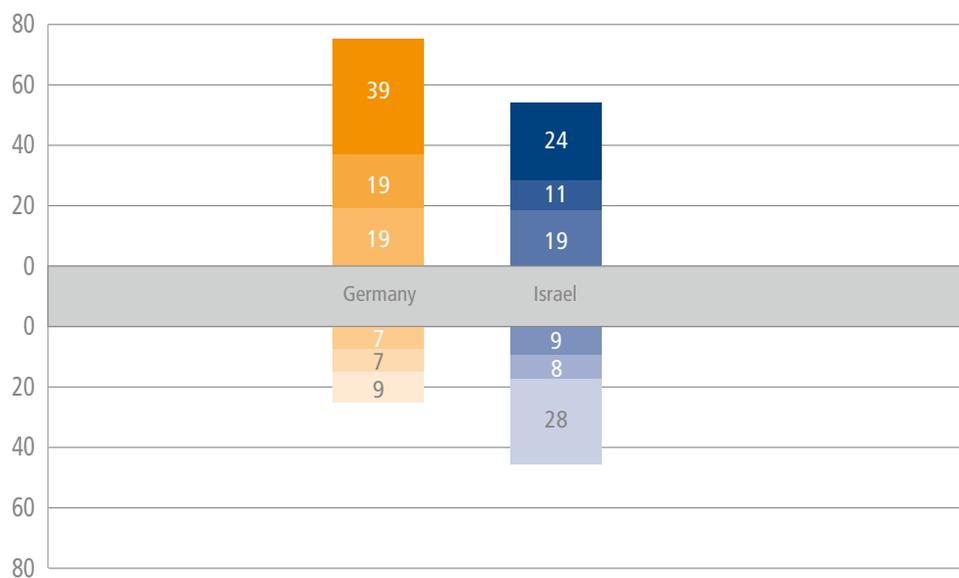


Figure 6: Leaving the past behind (%)



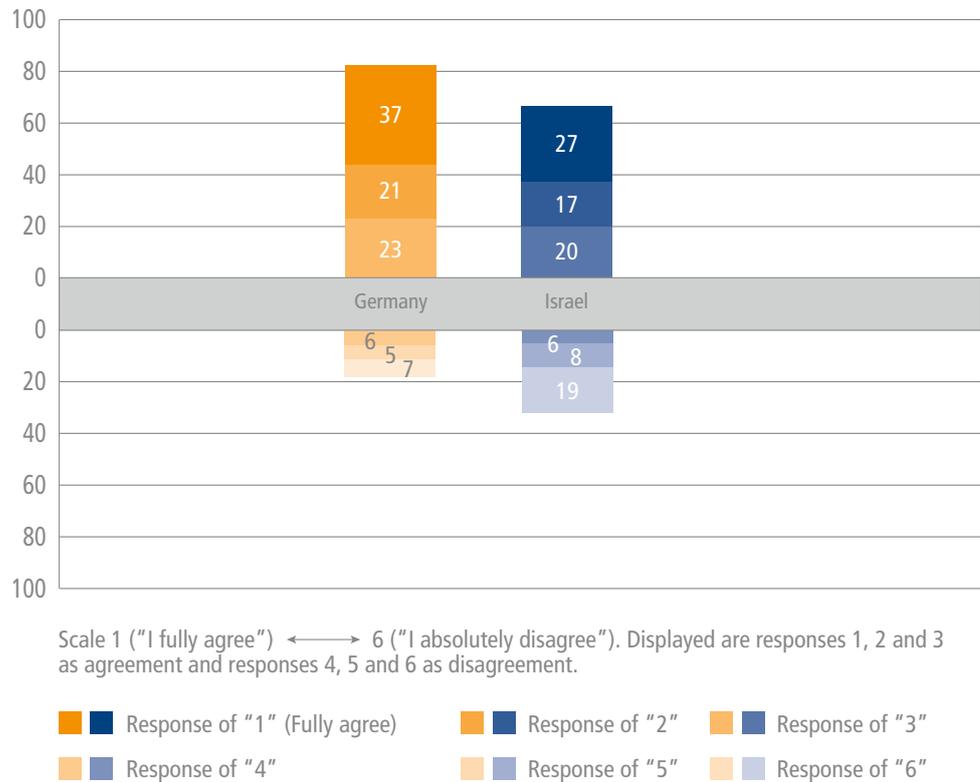
Scale 1 ("I fully agree") ←→ 6 ("I absolutely disagree"). Displayed are responses 1, 2 and 3 as agreement and responses 4, 5 and 6 as disagreement.

-
-

Agreement with the statement: "We should put the history behind us and focus more on current or future problems."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

Figure 7: Focus on current problems (%)



Agreement with the statement: "We should focus on current problems rather than on the crimes committed by the Germans against the Jews more than 60 years ago." Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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In Germany the persecution of Jews is viewed as a dark chapter in German history, but not as an essential part of its identity; quite the opposite. Germans would prefer to view it as an anomaly. While there is no desire to deny history, the German public is clearly committed to cultivating a positive German identity based on other aspects of its culture, not this particular ignominious chapter of its past.

As a matter of fact, figure 8 shows that more than half (55 percent) agree with the statement that "Today, almost 70 years after the end of World War II, we should no longer talk so much about the persecution of the Jews, but finally put the past behind us." However, over the last two decades, the percentage of Germans who disagree with the need to

move away from the focus on the history of Jewish persecution is rising steadily: from one-fifth (20 percent) in 1991 who disagreed with the statement above, to just over one-third (37 percent) in 2007, to nearly half (42 percent) in the most recent survey, which dates from 2013.

The survey reveals a significant ageing effect which could not yet be discerned in 2007. Whereas 67 percent of the younger respondents below age 40 are in favor of closure, only 51 percent of the older respondents agree with that position. The call for closure is supported by the majority of the generation born after 1970, whose parents were often not directly involved in the crimes of the National Socialist regime. The growing historical distance seems to correlate with

Figure 8: "Putting the past behind us" (%)



Question: "Today, almost 70 years after the end of the Second World War, we should no longer talk so much about the persecution of the Jews, but finally put the past behind us. Do you think this statement is right or wrong?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 1991, 2007, 2013

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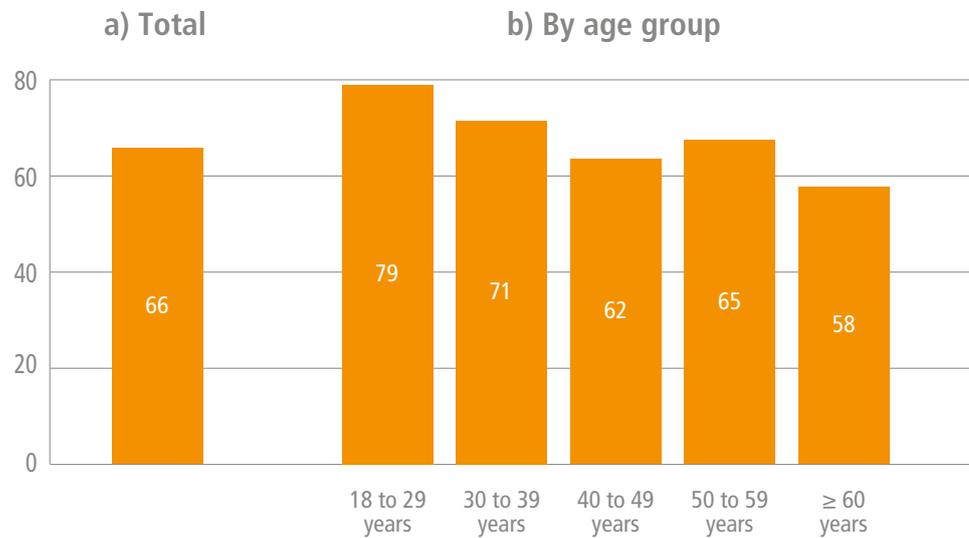
a desire to reconstruct a more positive and future-oriented national identity, a development which indicates an important challenge for collective memory in Germany as the history of the Holocaust becomes more and more disconnected from familial experiences and oral histories.

Moreover, emotions run high on this topic, especially among the younger generation. Many Germans feel angry that they are still being blamed for the crimes of Germany against the Jews: 66 percent agree with a statement to this effect, while one-third disagree. The younger the respondents, the more likely they are to feel outright anger: Almost 80 percent of the youngest age group (18–29) are angry, compared to 58 percent of the oldest (60 and over), which still constitutes a strong majority. Among the younger respondents in this survey, there seems to be a yearning for "being German" to be regarded as something "normal" (see figure 9).

Israeli respondents, unlike Germans, have remained fairly consistent over time in their attitudes towards history. The sample is divided regarding history in a general sense, but there is a clear and strong majority in favor of active remembrance of the Holocaust. The statement that it is not necessary to talk so much about the persecution of Jews anymore, but to think more about the future instead, is considered wrong by fully 77 percent of Israeli respondents. The portion of Jewish Israelis who disagree that 70 years after World War II the persecution of the Jews should be consigned to the past has even risen by a few percentage points since 1991 (74 percent) (see figure 8).

Referring to a related question, whether it is time to leave the past behind in general and concentrate on contemporary and future issues, a small majority of 54 percent agrees (including one-quarter who fully agree), and almost half the respondents (45 percent)

Figure 9: Anger that crimes against Jews are still held against Germans (%)



Displayed are figures for "I fully agree" + "I tend to agree"

Agreement with the statement: "It makes me angry when the crimes committed against Jews are still held against Germans today." Respondents ranked their opinion as "I fully agree," "I tend to agree," "I tend not to agree" or "I absolutely disagree." The question was not posed in Israel.

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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disagree. Those who disagree with the need to leave history in general behind probably reflect the strong majority in the question about the need to remember the events of World War II (see figure 6).

In general, there is a strong emphasis in Israeli society on the 20th-century persecution of the Jews that preceded and contributed to the founding of the Jewish state, which is viewed as a historical inevitability, and the state is deemed the only possible means of guaranteeing survival. This was one of the primary findings of a survey by Nathanson and Tzameret (2000). Furthermore, in Israel today, modern threats against Israel, such as Iran or the enmity with the Palestinians, are commonly conflated with or at least viewed as a historical continuation of the anti-Semitic persecutions not only of the 19th and 20th centuries, but of earlier periods as well. Both Iran and the Palestinians have contributed to

these dynamics through their incendiary rhetoric against Israel. Iran under former President Ahmadinejad provided ample fodder by reiterating the goal of destroying Israel; this rhetoric was exploited and emphasized constantly by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to drive home the fear of existential threats.

Still, the majority prefers to leave the past behind. Since this was asked in a general part of the survey, respondents may have interpreted the question fairly broadly. For many, "the past" probably means the persecutions of the 20th century and the accompanying stereotype of the weak and victimized European Jew.

“In the early years of its statehood, Israel consciously sought to cultivate a **national identity** based on the archetype of a **strong, assertive, and powerful Israeli Jew.**”

In the early years of its statehood, Israel consciously sought to leave this image behind in order to cultivate a national identity based on the archetype of a strong, assertive, and powerful Israeli Jew. On the other hand, the preceding questions about Israelis who criticize the country and the rights of minorities and their growing presence in society may have caused some respondents to call to mind the current conflict and its ramifications. If respondents were thinking of the narrative of Palestinian suffering at the hands of Jews, including the events surrounding the founding of the state, some may have stated a preference for leaving the past behind in order to avoid addressing these issues.

Historical representations of the Holocaust

The desire for closure and the willingness to leave the past behind might also be related to different explanations of the Holocaust among German and Israeli respondents.

“If the **Nazi era** is considered an anomaly and a phenomenon **unconnected** with the **‘German character,’** it becomes easier to develop a **positive** national identity.”

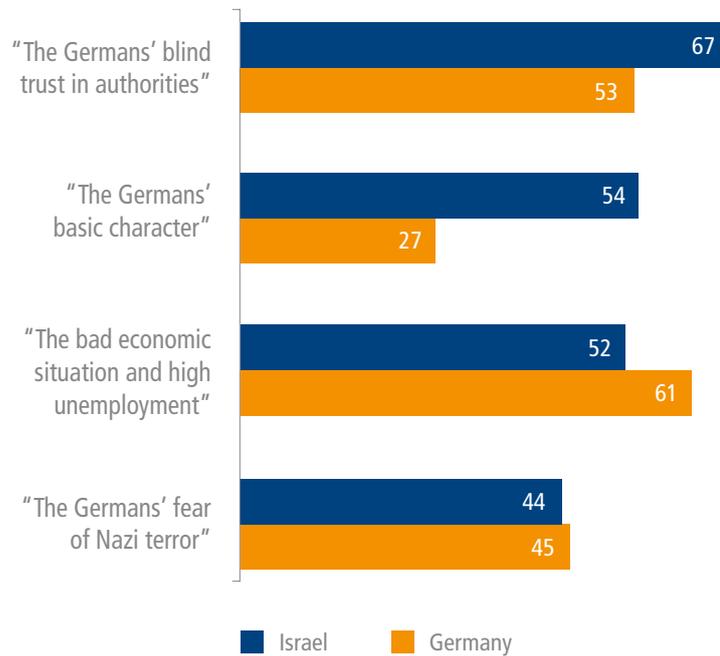
If the Nazi era is considered an anomaly and a phenomenon unconnected with a specific “German character,” it becomes easier to develop a positive national identity. It is therefore no surprise that German respondents identified external factors as the main driving force behind the rise of the Nazis: 61 percent believe that poor economic conditions and high unemployment helped National Socialism come to power. In contrast, the top reason given by Israelis was a character trait of the Germans, namely their tendency to follow orders. Over half, 54 percent, view the “German character” as a reason (twice as many as the German respondents who agree with this). Despite these differences, it is quite surprising that respondents from both countries gave rather similar answers concerning the German tendency to follow orders, their fear of Nazi terror, and the economic crisis as contributing factors. Israelis and Germans agree that both external circumstances and the obedience to authority of many Germans caused the Holocaust (see figure 10).

Regret, guilt, responsibility? Memory and emotions

Commemorating the past is not only a cognitive process, but also an emotional one.

“**Memory evokes emotions,** which should not be construed as individual but as **group-based and social.**”

Figure 10: Presumed causes of National Socialism and the Holocaust (%)



Question: "What were the causes of National Socialism and the Holocaust in Germany? Please use a scale of 1 to 5 when rating each of the following answers. The cause was...?" Scale: 1 ("I fully agree") to 5 ("I absolutely disagree"). Depicted responses: "1" + "2."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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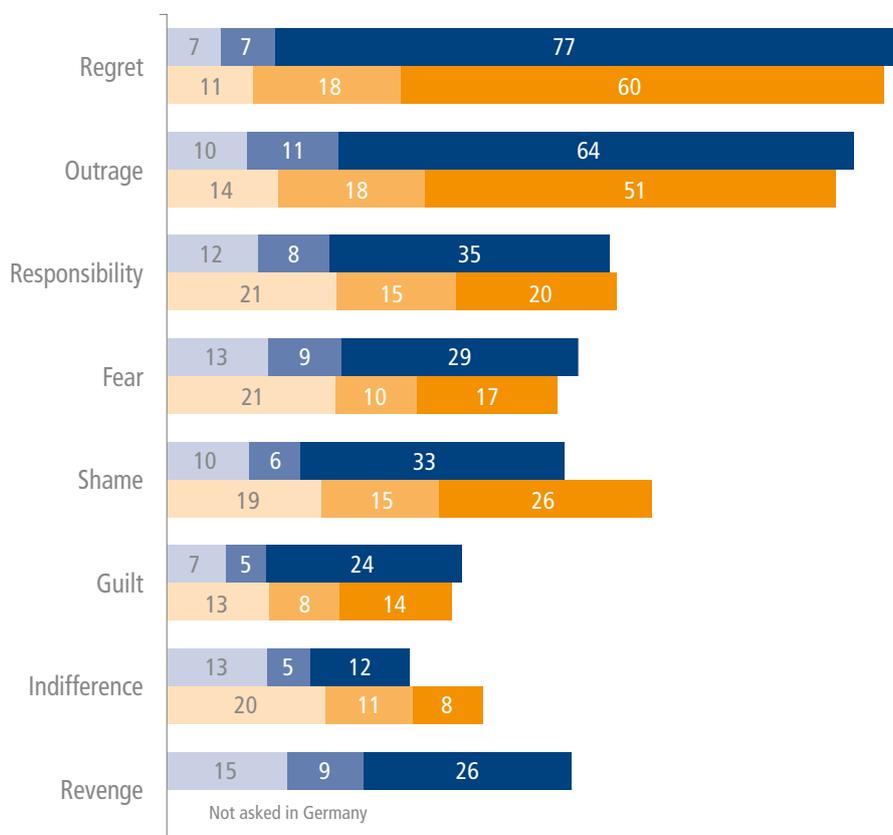
Memory evokes emotions, which should not be construed as individual but as group-based and social. Emotions can be felt as part of a group, such as shame or pride for actions committed by other members of the group, while society simultaneously provides its members with guidelines for what to feel. Moreover, emotional intensity indicates the salience and relevance of a topic for individuals and groups. It is therefore of prime importance to assess the nature and intensity of the emotions which the commemoration of the persecution of the Jews elicits among Germans and Israelis.

Of particular interest are the uncanny similarities between German and Israeli feelings about the Holocaust at the present time. In both countries, roughly 90 percent feel regret and over 80 percent are outraged; half of the Jews and 60 percent of Germans feel shame, while half of each group feel fear.

Perhaps most remarkably, similar numbers of Germans and Israelis – just over one-third in each case – feel guilty and almost the same number – 56 percent and 55 percent among Germans and Israelis, respectively – feel responsible (see figure 11).

The data about guilt indicate that a majority of Germans – the two-thirds who did not say they feel "guilty" – feel removed enough from the war generation to move beyond personal guilt, while the fact that over half the German respondents (56 percent) feel responsible shows that responsibility is a more widely acknowledged theme than personal guilt. With the growing historical distance, it seems that less intensive emotions and feelings such as responsibility and regret increase (though 83 percent also feel outrage). However, 39 percent declare that they feel indifferent to the persecution of Jews under Hitler.

Figure 11: Emotions when respondents think of the persecution of the Jews (%)



Scale 1 ("very strongly") ← → 6 ("not at all"). Displayed are responses 1, 2 and 3.

Israel	Germany
■ Response of "1" (Very strongly)	■ Response of "1" (Very strongly)
■ Response of "2"	■ Response of "2"
■ Response of "3"	■ Response of "3"

Question: "When you think of the persecution of Jews under Hitler, how strongly do you experience the following emotions ..."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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Among Israelis, the one-third who express guilt most likely indicates a feeling that the Jews themselves did not take action to protect themselves sufficiently or in time. Most likely, this feeling is accompanied by the sense that the state of Israel provides the framework for Jews to meet any such threat swiftly and powerfully in the future or to pre-empt it. In the latter context, it is notable that half of the Israeli sample says that for them, the Holocaust raises feelings of vengeance – but given the prevalence of

relatively healthy attitudes towards Germany (as will be seen below), it is not clear who would be the target of any active feelings of vengeance.

3. Israeli-German relations today

History shapes not only the self-awareness and collective identity of Germans and Israelis and the way they define otherness, but also bilateral relations. Bilateral relations remain marked by the trauma of the Holocaust and are therefore perceived as special – despite growing indifference and calls for the normalization of relations.

“Bilateral relations remain marked and are therefore perceived as special despite growing indifference and calls for the normalization of relations.”

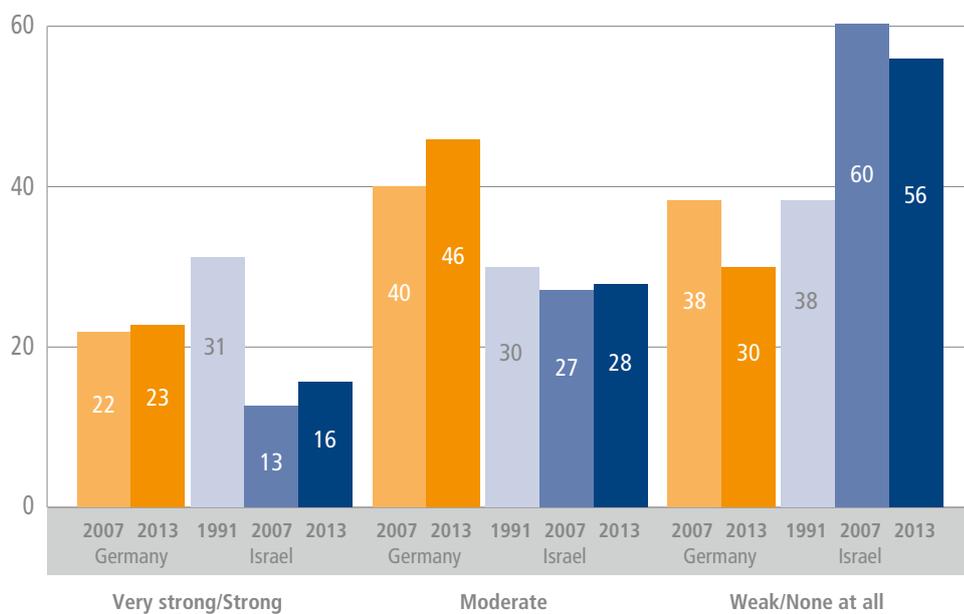
Israelis are aware that the history of the Holocaust colors their views today – over three-quarters say that this history has a negative impact on their feelings about contemporary Germany. However, negative feelings linked to the past do not sour relations with the modern state of Germany and at present manifest themselves mainly in the form of indifference: Only 16 percent say that they express much interest in Germany today, and this figure is almost identical to that of 2007 (see figure 12).

Yet, it needs to be borne in mind that an interest in finding out more about what is happening in other countries is always linked to the turn of current events. This fact may help to explain the high proportions (31 percent) which were registered in 1991 among the population of Israel with regard to interest in information about Germany. At the time the arson attacks against immigrants and refugees became a source of concern throughout the world, and for this reason the Israeli desire for information about what was happening in Germany briefly shot up. Thus it does not come as a surprise that the current interest in information about Germany is at a much lower level than in 1991.

Germans tend to underestimate the enduring influence of the Holocaust on the perception and image of Germany among Jewish Israelis: 43 percent of German respondents think that the past hardly constitutes a burden to present relations compared to only 21 percent in Israel (see figure 13).



Figure 12: Interest in information about the other country (%)

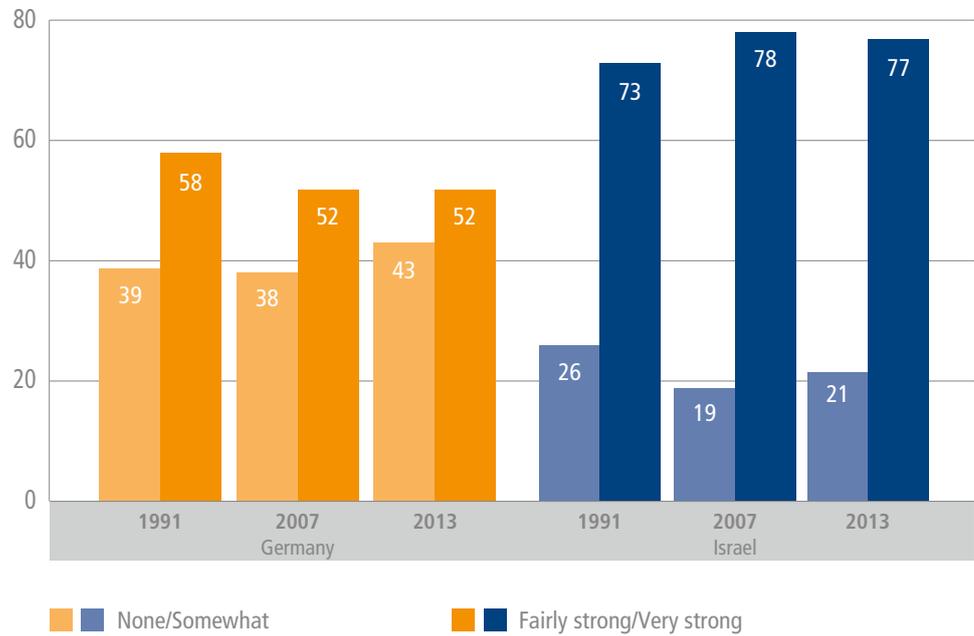


Question: "How would you describe your level of interest in information about present-day Germany/Israel. Very strong, strong, moderate, weak, none at all?" Not included: "Don't know, no response." This question was not posed in Germany in 1991.

Source: TNS Emnid 1991, 2007, 2013

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Figure 13: Influence of the persecution of the Jews on Israeli attitudes towards Germans (%)



Question: "Does the persecution of the Jews under Hitler still affect the attitude of the Israelis towards the Germans? Is its influence very strong, fairly strong, somewhat present, or is there no influence at all?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 1991, 2007, 2013

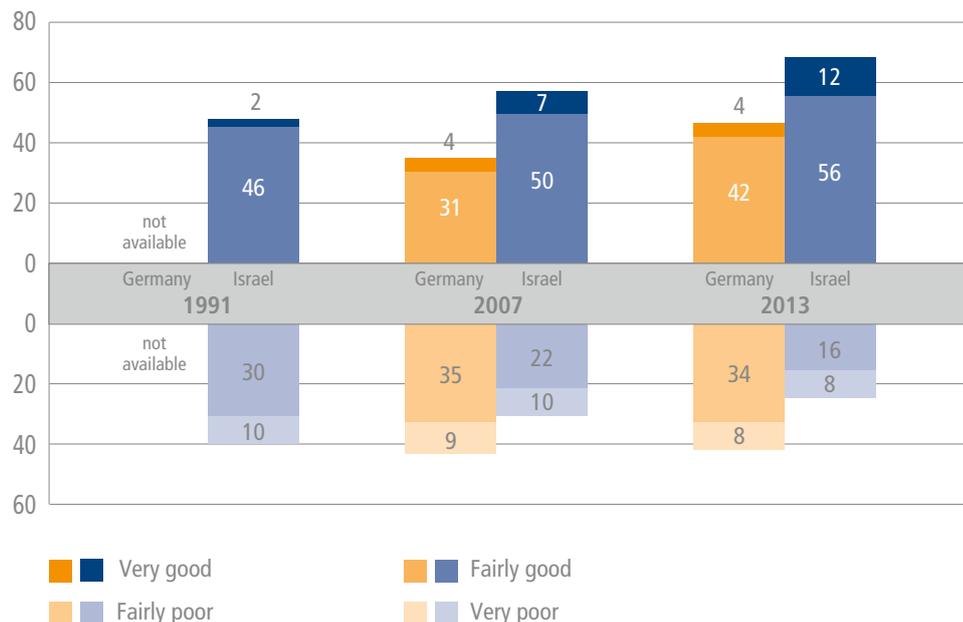
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Interest in and perception of the Other

Despite the fact that some predominantly young, secular Israelis are relocating to the German capital, and despite a modest increase of interest in the Other, the majority of Israelis have only a lukewarm interest or no interest at all in present-day Germany. Germans seem to be more interested in Israel, with nearly a quarter expressing very strong or strong interest. This disparity can probably be explained (at least partly) by the disproportionate media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict leading to high awareness of current events among the German public. Moreover, interest in information about the Other should not be confused with a positive attitude towards the Other.

German respondents in this survey are divided equally between favorable and unfavorable views of Israel: 46 percent vs. 42 percent. Very few – only 4 percent – say that their view is strongly favorable, while twice as many express strong negative feelings. By contrast, Israelis feel notably more positive about Germans: 12 percent express strongly positive feelings about Germany – three times as many as the Germans who feel this way about Israel. However, there has been some improvement in attitudes towards Israel compared to 2007 (see figure 14).

Figure 14: Opinions about the other country (%)



Question: "In general, what do you think about Germany/Israel today? Do you have a very good, fairly good, fairly poor, or very poor opinion of Germany/Israel?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 1991, 2007, 2013

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Although Jewish Israelis express strong feelings about keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust and the ongoing sense of Jewish persecution today, it is notable that these feelings are in some ways disconnected from actual relations with Germany today. A strong 68 percent majority of Jewish Israelis expresses positive feelings about Germany overall (although a large majority of these respondents gives a moderate response of "fairly good").

"A strong majority of Jewish Israelis expresses positive feelings about Germany overall."

Notably, a larger proportion of Israeli Jews views Germany favorably today than in 2007 (57 percent) and 1991 (48 percent, see figure 14). Similarly, 63 percent of Israelis also feel positive about the government of

Germany (see figure 15). In the case of both questions, the data show that more highly educated Israelis are somewhat more likely to have a favorable opinion of Germany: Almost three-quarters of Israelis with the highest levels of education have a positive opinion, compared to 59 percent of those with the lowest educational levels. Similar discrepancies emerge in assessments of the German government – slightly less than half of Israelis with the lowest educational levels have a favorable opinion compared to two-thirds of those with the highest levels of education.

The negative images arising from the past contrast with these favorable perceptions of modern political relations. Yet this is not necessarily a contradiction, since it indicates that the interpretations of Nazism and the Holocaust relate mainly to the Germany of the past rather than to the contemporary state. We cannot say whether Israelis still

believe the negative stereotypes of the German character to which they attribute the Holocaust, but if the negative feelings have any effect at all, they merely weaken rather than actually damage the positive feelings evoked by the strong political relations between the two countries. In general, the mainstream Israeli narrative tends to paint foreign relations in broad strokes: The USA is understood to be for Israel, Europe is understood to be against it, and Germany is generally viewed as a stalwart ally and thus the exception to the European rule.

“The USA is understood to be for Israel, Europe is understood to be against it, and Germany is generally viewed as a stalwart ally and thus the exception to the European rule.”

At the same time, there is a notable difference in attitudes towards Germany and the German government among younger and religious respondents – a profile that is typically associated with right-leaning, hard-line attitudes. Younger and religious respondents consistently view both Germany and the government more negatively by a significant margin.

Among respondents up to 29 years old, 53 percent view Germany favorably – the lowest percentage of all the age groups, and a definite contrast to the more than 80 percent of respondents aged 60 and up who take a favorable view of Germany. The figures are much more extreme among religious respondents, only 37 percent of whom harbor favorable feelings towards Germany, compared to fully 84 percent of secular Israelis (among those who consider themselves “traditional,” two-thirds are favourable). The situation is almost identical with regard to attitudes towards the German government among these population groups.

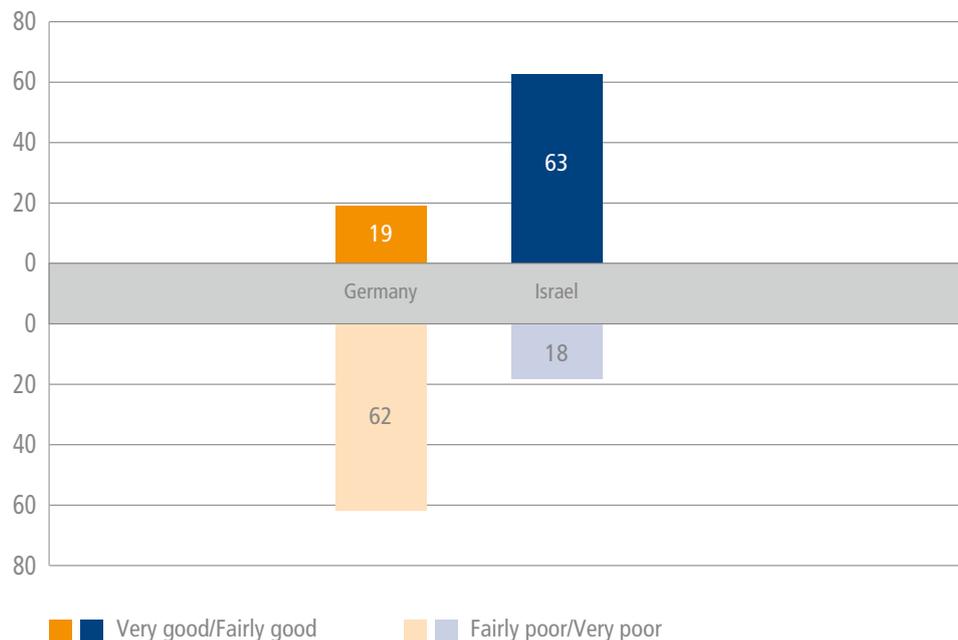
Further, the demographic variations imply that the narrative of right-leaning demographic groups emphasizes Germany’s historical role in perpetrating crimes against Jews – most likely as a means of justifying the Israeli national narrative – which may indicate that Germany is still perceived as anti-Semitic or as a threat to the Jewish people today. The trend is confirmed by the youth survey from 2010, which showed that over time, secular young people are less and less likely to believe that a Nazi regime could arise in Germany today, while roughly half the religious youth and fully 60 percent of the ultra-orthodox believe that it could (Hexel and Nathanson 2010: 29). This is problematic because the younger generation contains a higher and growing portion of religious, ultra-orthodox, and largely right-leaning people, which indicates a possible trend in the attitudes of future generations.

“The younger generation in Israel contains a higher and growing portion of religious, ultra-orthodox, and largely right-leaning people.”

It is, however, worth noting that almost two-thirds of all the Jews in the youth sample do not agree with a statement that Germany is the same as it was during the war and that a Nazi regime could arise there again (Hexel and Nathanson 2010: 103).

Germans take a measured approach that distinguishes clearly between the policies of the state of Israel and the Jewish people – at least in theory and in rhetoric: 46 percent of Germans have a rather good or very good view of Israel in general (see figure 14), whereas 62 percent have a fairly poor or very poor opinion about the government of Israel (see figure 15). The findings in figure 18 indicate a serious basis of criticism and outright hostility towards Israeli policy at

Figure 15: Opinions about the other country's government (%)



Question: "In general, what do you think about the German/Israeli government? Do you have a very good, fairly good, fairly poor, or very poor opinion of the German/Israeli government today?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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present, with almost half the respondents comparing Israeli policy towards the Palestinians with the behavior of the Nazis towards Jews. Despite attempts to distinguish between people and government, the data indicate that the harsh criticism of the Israeli government also affects the perception of the Other in general, which would explain the less favorable views of Germans about Israel.

"The findings indicate a degree of disconnect between the way in which Germany and Israeli-German relations are perceived by Israelis and the way Israel is perceived by Germans."

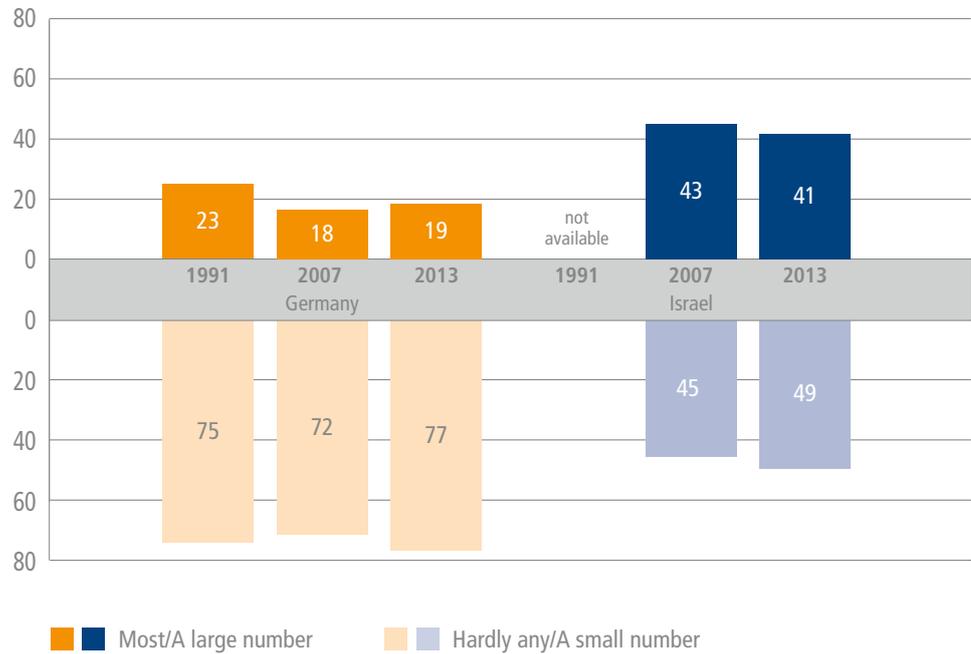
All in all, the findings indicate a degree of disconnect between the way in which

Germany and Israeli-German relations are perceived by Israelis and the way Israel is perceived by Germans. Among five major countries who were polled about Israel in a 2013 Pew Global Attitudes survey, German respondents gave the highest "unfavourable" rating (62 percent) compared to the US, Russia, France and Britain. While the present survey shows a more even division, it is clear that Germans are not as positive about Israel as Israelis are about Germany. Israelis may in fact take German political support for granted without understanding the shifting public environment and zeitgeist in Germany today.

Anti-Semitism today

The Gaza war in 2014 has again borne out the observation that criticism of the government of Israel and its policies can turn into criticism of Jews as a collective, thereby crossing the boundary between legitimate

Figure 16: Assessment of anti-Semitism in Germany (%)



Question: "How do you view the general attitude of Germans towards Jews? Do most, a large number, a small number, or hardly any have a negative attitude towards Jews?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 1991, 2007, 2013

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criticism and anti-Semitism. The survey therefore also included questions on different expressions of anti-Semitism.

The general attitude towards Jews in Germany is assessed quite differently in Germany than in Israel. Germans have a rather positive self-perception: A large majority of 77 percent believes that few or no Germans have negative attitudes towards Jews. The data from the Israeli sample reveal skepticism regarding this assessment. While a slight majority assumes that most Germans today do not have negative feelings about Jews (49 percent saying either "a small number" or "hardly any"), 41 percent still suspect that many or most Germans continue to harbor negative attitudes. This skepticism is shared by 19 percent of German respondents.

The more positive assessment by German respondents can be related to Germany's post-war political culture, which treated

the communication of traditional forms of anti-Semitism and religious anti-Judaism as taboo. The concept of communicative latency assumes that pressure applied by political and societal elites has led to a situation where anti-Semitic sentiments are publicly sanctioned and therefore not communicated in public.

"Traditional anti-Semitism continues to exist in latent form and comes to the surface from time to time."

Nevertheless, traditional anti-Semitism continues to exist in latent form and comes to the surface from time to time. The predominant form of this kind of anti-Semitism in the present is the assumption of a Jewish conspiracy, i.e. that the Jews are in control of what is happening in the world. The survey

Figure 17: Anti-Semitism in Germany (%)



Agreement with the statements: "Jews have too much influence in the world," "I find the Jews increasingly less likeable because of Israel's policies," "What the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians today is essentially the same thing as what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich." Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

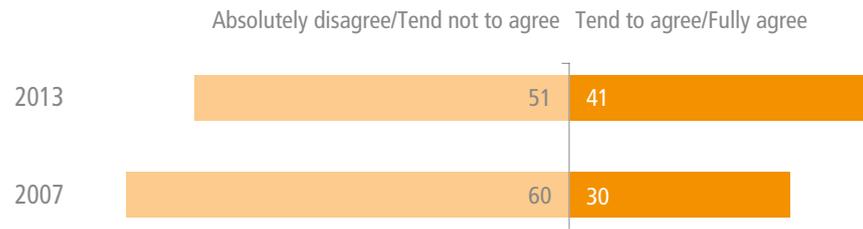
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reveals that over one-quarter of German respondents (28 percent) agree with the statement that Jews have too much power in the world. This is an alarmingly high number compared to other surveys, where only between 11.6 percent (Decker, Kiess and Brähler 2014) and 16.4 percent (Heitmeyer 2010) of the respondents affirmed this stereotype (see figure 17).

There is also another distinct form of anti-Semitism that has high social relevance in Germany. Secondary anti-Semitism can be viewed as a reaction to the Holocaust that manifests itself in the relativization, minimization or denial of guilt, the accusation that Jews exploit German guilt over the Holocaust, and the reversal of the roles of victim and

perpetrator. Moreover, secondary anti-Semitism has in recent years been increasingly focused on the state of Israel, whose policies provide an opportunity for perpetrator-victim denial. By comparing Israeli policies with the crimes perpetrated against the Jews, their post-Holocaust status as victims is questioned and German guilt and responsibility is minimized or even denied entirely: 41 percent of German respondents view Israel's policy towards the Palestinians as practically the same as the Nazi treatment of the Jews. These findings show a steep increase from 30 percent in 2007 (see figure 18).

Figure 18: Comparison of Israeli policies with Nazi crimes (%)



Agreement with the statement: "What the state of Israeli is doing to the Palestinians today is essentially the same thing as what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich." Not included: "Don't know, no response." Question not posed in Israel.

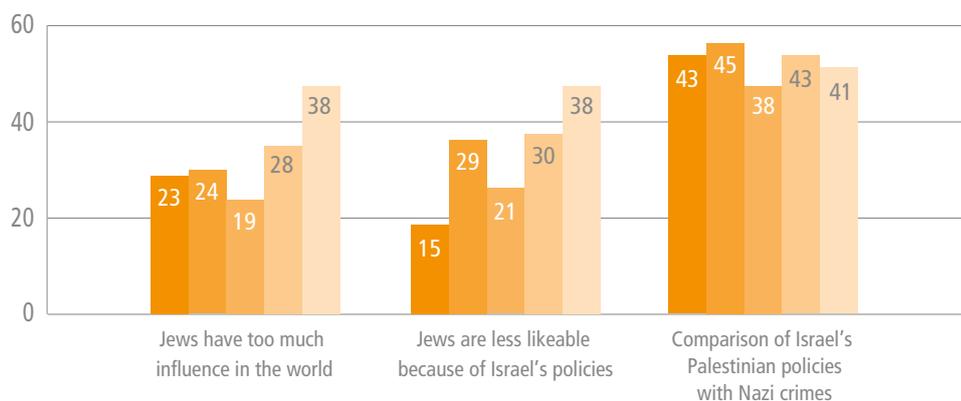
Source: TNS Emnid 2007, 2013

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Additionally, criticism of Israel becomes problematic when Jews are assigned collective responsibility and when the distinction between Jews in general and the Israeli government is blurred. While a large two-thirds majority of German respondents rejects the statement that "the policies of the Israeli government make me less sympathetic towards Jews," over one-quarter (28 percent) agree with it. Thus nearly one in three Germans subscribes to a negative stereotype about Jews.

The data reveal a generational shift. The oldest respondents in the survey (60 years and older) show higher rates of agreement with two negative statements: Almost four in ten (38 percent) admit to believing that Jews have too much influence in the world (compared to one-quarter of the youngest respondents), and the same number (38 percent) say they find Jews less sympathetic because of Israel's policies, compared to just 15 percent of the youngest respondents (see figure 19). However, anti-Semitism focusing on the state of Israel appears relatively evenly distributed among all age groups.

Figure 19: Anti-Semitism in Germany by age group (%)



Displayed are figures for "I fully agree" + "I tend to agree"

■ 18 to 29 years
 ■ 30 to 39 years
 ■ 40 to 49 years
■ 50 to 59 years
 ■ ≥ 60 years

Agreement with the statements: "Jews have too much influence in the world," "I find Jews increasingly less likeable because of Israel's policies," "What the state of Israeli is doing to the Palestinians today is essentially the same thing as what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich." Respondents could rank their agreement from "I fully agree," "I tend to agree," "I tend not to agree," or "I absolutely disagree." Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

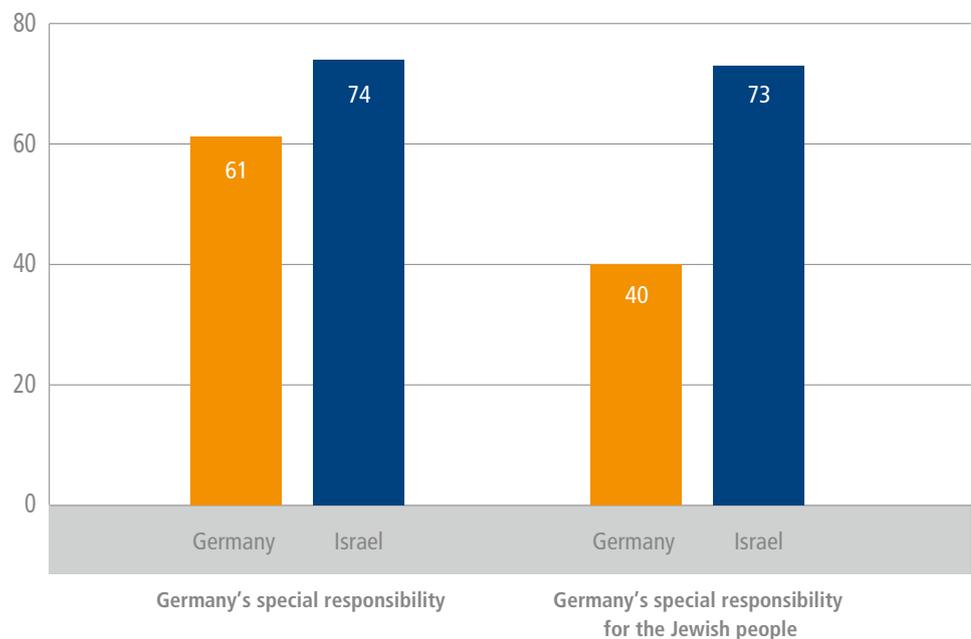
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4. Special relationship and responsibility

What are the implications of the special relationship between Germany and Israel today? Do Germans have a special responsibility because of the country's Nazi past? The answer to these questions in Israel is unequivocal: Jewish Israelis largely believe that Germany has a special responsibility in general as well

as responsibility towards Jews in particular. Although these two issues were addressed in the survey by separate questions, the results among Israelis were almost identical, with three-quarters of respondents indicating agreement (see figure 20).

Figure 20: Germany's special responsibility (%)



Scale 1 ("I fully agree") ← → 5 ("I absolutely disagree"). Displayed are responses 1 and 2.

Agreement with the statements: "Against the background of the history of National Socialism, today's Germany bears a special responsibility" and "Against the background of the history of National Socialism, today's Germany bears a special responsibility for the Jewish people."



Responsibility for whom?

Similarly, in the discourse of the German political elite, entrenching the continuing responsibility of Germany for the Jewish people in public policy remains a bipartisan commitment and is repeatedly affirmed in speeches and commemorative events. However, the findings of the survey reveal more complex and differentiated attitudes among the German respondents. While a majority of Germans (61 percent) acknowledges that Germany bears a special responsibility, the object and substance of this responsibility is less clear. Only 40 percent believe that Germany has a special responsibility for the Jewish people (see figure 20).

As discussed above, Germany's "never again" rests upon the basic idea of the universality of individual human rights and the protection of minorities. Moreover, the lessons of World War II involve a tendency to oppose war as an instrument of politics under all circumstances. Despite controversies about the participation of the German army in international missions, this peaceful mindset remains dominant in German political culture and implies a rejection of some aspects of Israel's policies.

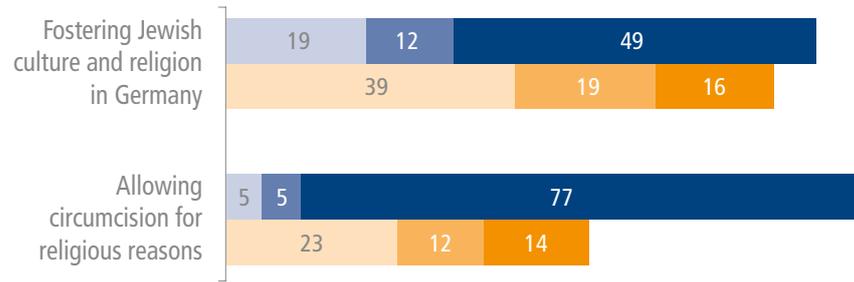
"The different ideas about the precise implications of **responsibility** and the **expectations** that follow from these ideas can trigger **controversies and conflicts.**"

Responsibility is therefore often defined in universalistic terms rather than as solidarity with Israel. Israelis, in contrast, expect Germany to support Israel and its policies even in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and against regional threats such as that emanating from Iran. The different ideas about the precise implications of responsibility and the expectations that follow from these ideas can trigger controversies and conflicts, as will be discussed below.

Responsibility for Jewish life in Germany

While German respondents do not necessarily interpret responsibility for the Jewish people as support for and solidarity with Israel, a majority of 74 percent believes that Germany has a responsibility to foster Jewish religion and culture in Germany. Among Israeli respondents, 80 percent agree with this statement.

Figure 21: Jewish culture and religion in Germany (%)



Scale 1 ("I fully agree") ← → 6 ("I absolutely disagree"). Displayed are responses 1, 2 and 3.

<p>Israel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response of "1" (Fully agree) Response of "2" Response of "3" 	<p>Germany</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response of "1" (Fully agree) Response of "2" Response of "3"
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Agreement with the statement above. Respondents used a scale from 1 to 6 to state their opinion, with 1 meaning "I fully agree" and 6 meaning "I absolutely disagree."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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“On the one hand, it is desired to restore the Jewish community in Germany but, on the other hand, there is a rather low willingness to accept circumcision as a ritual practice.”

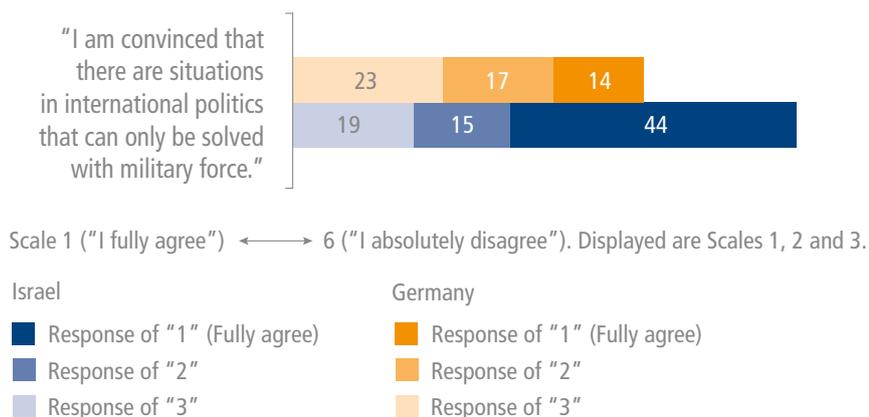
The data in figure 21 indicate a desire to restore the Jewish community in Germany. At the same time, the survey reveals a discrepancy between respect for Jewish religion and culture on the one hand and a rather low willingness to accept circumcision as a ritual practice in Germany on the other. Only 14 percent of German respondents fully agree that the German government should allow circumcision for religious reasons (among a total of 49 percent who agree), compared to 77 percent among Jewish Israelis (among a total of 87 percent who agree). The question of circumcision became the focus of a public controversy in Germany after a court declared circumcision for religious reasons illegal in 2012. The court argued that the child’s right to bodily integrity and self-determina-

tion takes precedence over the parent’s right to perform a religious ritual. Representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities criticized this ruling as an attack on freedom of religious expression, arguing that the prohibition of circumcision as a fundamental religious practice would constitute a threat to Jewish and Muslim life in Germany.

“The German public seems to be highly critical of special rights for religious minorities, which are expected to become assimilated into mainstream culture.”

The majority of the participants in the public debate have failed to grasp the meaning of circumcision for religious and secular Jews alike as a constitutive symbol of belonging to the Jewish people. The present survey shows a high level of support for circumcision among religious (93 percent) and secular Jews (84 percent). The public discourse on

Figure 22: Use of military force in international politics (%)



Agreement with the statement above. Respondents used a scale from 1 to 6 to state their opinion, with 1 meaning "I fully agree" and 6 meaning "I absolutely disagree."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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circumcision went as far as voicing anti-Semitic remarks based on traditional and anti-Judaistic stereotypes. In the end, however, the German parliament passed a law which permitted circumcision for religious reasons in Germany. But the dispute goes beyond circumcision; it demonstrates discomfort among the German population over the growing public visibility of minority religious practices. The German public seems to be highly critical of special rights for religious minorities, which are expected to become assimilated into mainstream culture.

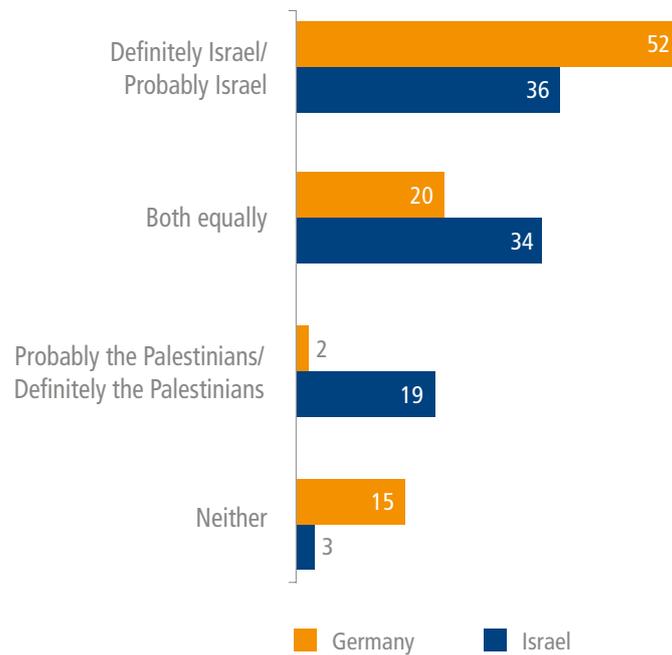
Responsibility and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Responsibility too takes on specific meaning in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. How do responsibility and remembrance of the past translate into concrete policies? How do the lessons learned affect international politics and bilateral relations? How do German and Israeli perceptions of international conflicts and their resolution differ?

"While Germans and Israelis share a commitment to democratic principles, one important difference relates to the use of military force in international conflicts."

Since the end of World War II, there has been an overriding principle within German political life that political problems are not to be solved by military action. Although Germany has taken part in military operations in partnership with other countries since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has generally done so in a limited and highly coordinated way. The fact is that the normative public environment still holds that military measures are not appropriate solutions to political problems. Israeli attitudes to the use of force are very different: For Jewish Israelis, the lesson of the Holocaust implied the need to create a strong and independent state capable of defending the lives and safety of the Jewish people. This belief was further strengthened by the experiences of wars and intractable conflict. Accordingly, 44 percent of Israeli respondents fully agree that some issues in international relations can only be solved

Figure 23: Whom does the German government support? (%)



Question: "In your opinion, which side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does the German government support?"
 Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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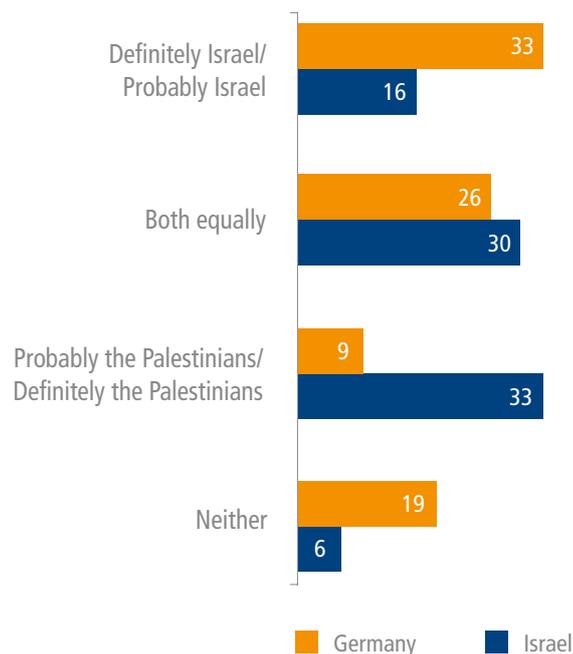
by military force, while only 14 percent of German respondents express full agreement with this premise. Taking all levels of approval together, more than three-quarters of Israeli respondents (78 percent) support the use of force under certain conditions, while the German sample is almost equally divided (54 percent agree with the statement, see figure 22). These differences can also be detected in attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian and the Middle Eastern conflict, as will be discussed below.

Angela Merkel reconfirmed Germany's commitment to and responsibility for Israel in her speech before the Israeli parliament on March 18, 2008. She concluded: "Here of all places I want to explicitly stress that every German government and every German chancellor before me has shouldered Germany's special historical responsibility for Israel's security. This historical responsibility is part of my country's *raison d'être*.

For me as German chancellor, therefore, Israel's security will never be open to negotiation" (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 2008). The current coalition government (consisting of the Christian Democratic Union, the Christian Social Union, and the Social Democratic Party) has included this commitment to Israel's security in its coalition agreement and, with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reaffirmed the position that only a two-state solution can provide security and peace for Israelis and Palestinians (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 2013).

However, there is clearly disagreement about which side has the support of the government and the German population: 52 percent are convinced that the German government tends to side with Israel (figure 23). One-fifth believe that the government supports both sides, and just 2 percent believe it supports the Palestinians. In contrast, only one-third

Figure 24: Whom does the German public support? (%)



Question: "In your opinion, which side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does the German public support?"
 Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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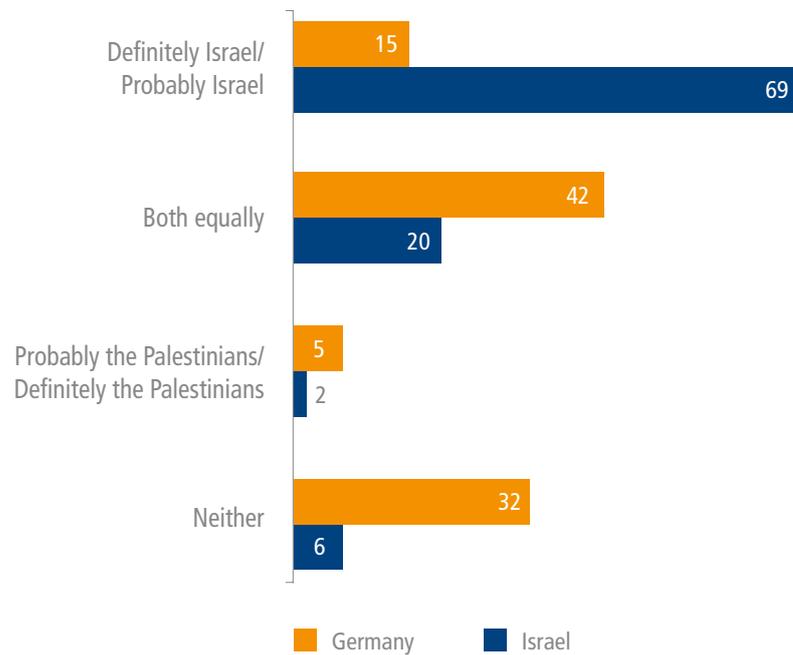
of German respondents believe that the German population favors Israel. Moreover, 9 percent say the Germans support the Palestinians, while one-quarter believe the population sides with both parties equally and 19 percent with none (see figure 24).

These differences point to a growing discrepancy between the government and the population in regard to Israel-related policy. And indeed, a majority of German respondents do not want the German government to take sides in the Israeli Palestinian conflict – only 15 percent demand support for the Israeli side and 5 percent for the Palestinians, while the majority prefers either to support both sides equally (42 percent) or to remain neutral (32 percent, see figure 25).

**"The younger generation
in Germany has an attitude of
increasing detachment and criticism
towards Israel."**

The desire for the German government to support Israel is especially low among the younger respondents aged under 30, only 8 percent of whom are in favor. These findings reveal that the younger generation has an attitude of increasing detachment and criticism towards Israel.

Figure 25: Whom should the German government support? (%)



Question: "If you could decide, whom should the German government support?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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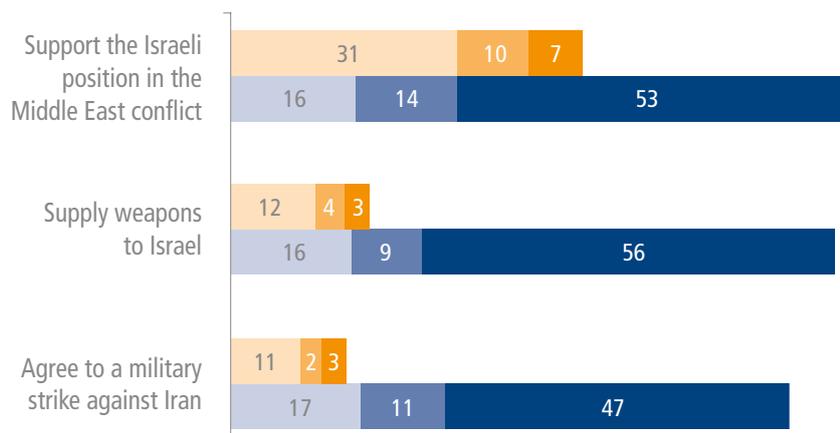
Israeli respondents have different perceptions of the position of the German public and the German government regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One-third (33 percent) of the Israeli respondents believe the German people side with the Palestinians, but only 16 percent think the German people side with Israel, as figure 24 shows – this is perhaps the only indication that Israelis have some awareness of the negative attitudes in Germany towards Israel today. The remainder believe that the German people side with both equally. Roughly one-third of the Israeli respondents believe that both the people and the government side with both Israelis and Palestinians equally. This indicates once again that Israelis have less trust in the German population, but believe that the German government is committed to supporting Israel politically – even if it also seeks to take an impartial stance (see figures 23 and 24). Thus the proportion of respondents who believe that the German government supports Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict is almost twice as high (36 percent) as that of respondents who think that it supports the Palestinians (19 percent); the remainder view Germany's government as supporting both sides equally. These figures were recorded after a period in which German Chancellor Angela Merkel took steps to criticize Israeli policy, such as abstaining in the November 2012 UN vote on Palestinian statehood (as opposed to voting against it) and openly disagreeing with settlement expansion in December 2012, just before the survey went into the field.

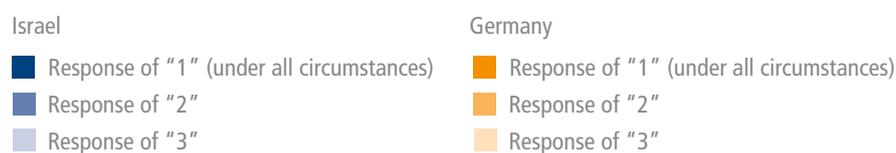
"Israelis have less trust in the German population, but believe that the German government is committed to supporting Israel politically."

It is obvious that Israelis would expect Germany to support Israel, but this is most

Figure 26: What should the German government do? (%)



Scale 1 ("under all circumstances") ← → 6 ("under no circumstances"). Displayed are responses 1, 2 and 3.



Agreement with the statement above. Respondents used a scale from 1 to 6 to state their opinion, with 1 meaning "under all circumstances" and 6 meaning "under no circumstances."

Source: TNS Emnid 2013

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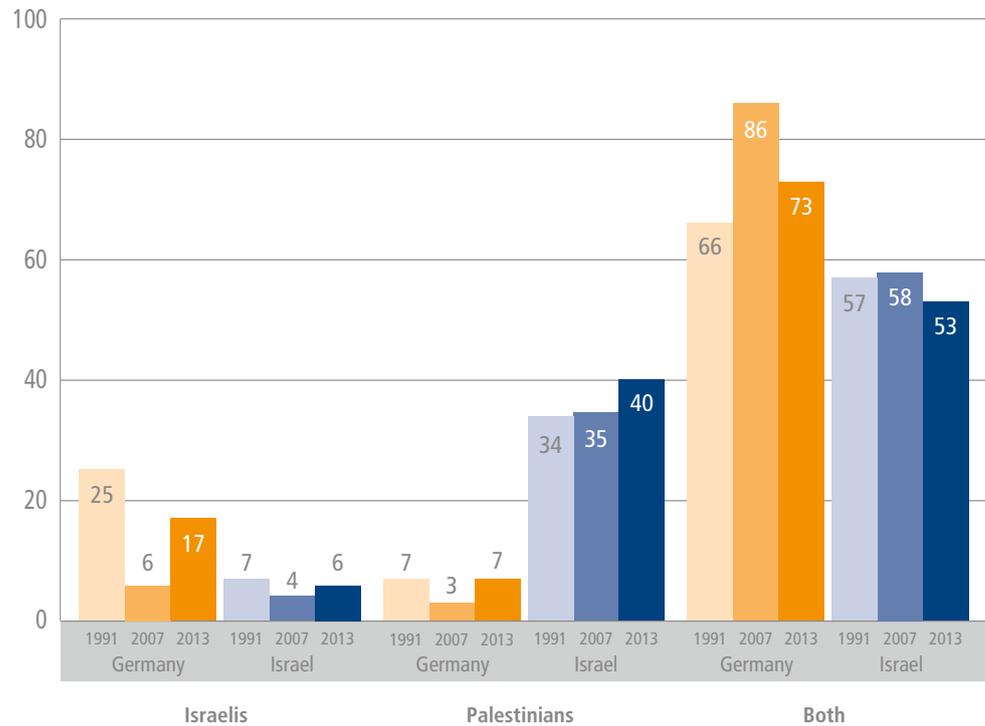
likely only partly for historical reasons and mainly because Israelis would prefer that outsiders in general, especially Western European democracies, take their side. Recall the chapter on identity showing that Israelis largely believe that their country is morally in the right. Given that nearly 70 percent of respondents say they would prefer the German government to take their side, the only surprising thing about these findings is that 20 percent would prefer Germany to support both sides equally.

The basic finding that a strong majority would like the German government's support is borne out by the responses to another question asking whether the German government should support the Israeli position on the conflict. Figure 26 shows that 83 percent of Jewish Israelis say yes, over half of them agreeing completely. Moreover, Israelis also expect concrete support in defending the country by military means: 81 percent

say that Germany should support Israel by supplying weapons and 75 percent want the German government to support a military strike against Iran. German respondents clearly oppose both a military solution to the conflict and government consent to such policies. Less than one-fifth support the delivery of arms and only 16 percent want the German government to approve a military strike against Iran.

With regard to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a large majority of German respondents think that both sides are required to make concessions. However, more Germans believe that Israel is the party that ought to strike a compromise in the conflict than that the Palestinians should (17 percent, compared to 7 percent, see figure 27). With minor variations, the breakdown of responses to this question has not changed dramatically over the last few surveys.

Figure 27: Who should make concessions in the Middle East conflict? (%)



Question: "In your opinion, who should make concessions in the Middle East conflict: the Israelis, the Palestinians, or both?"
 Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 1991, 2007, 2013

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Unsurprisingly, there is a wide margin between Israelis who think the Palestinians should do the compromising (40 percent) and those who think Israel must compromise more (6 percent). This tiny minority is even smaller than the portion of Israelis who describe themselves as "left-wing," which generally runs between 18–20 percent of Israeli Jews.

"It is important to realize that both Germany and Israel have a clear majority that believes in the need for both sides to make concessions."

Yet, as shown in figure 27, over half the Israelis (53 percent) also believe that both sides must compromise, which means that they tend to have a fairly balanced view of the conflict and its potential solution. This figure has remained quite stable since the first survey in 1991, and although a higher portion of Germans cite both sides as needing to compromise, it is important to realize that both Germany and Israel have a clear majority that believes in the need for both sides to make concessions.

Figure 28: Threat to Israel by Iran's nuclear program (%)



Question: "Do you think that Israel's existence is threatened by Iran's nuclear program?" Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2007, 2013

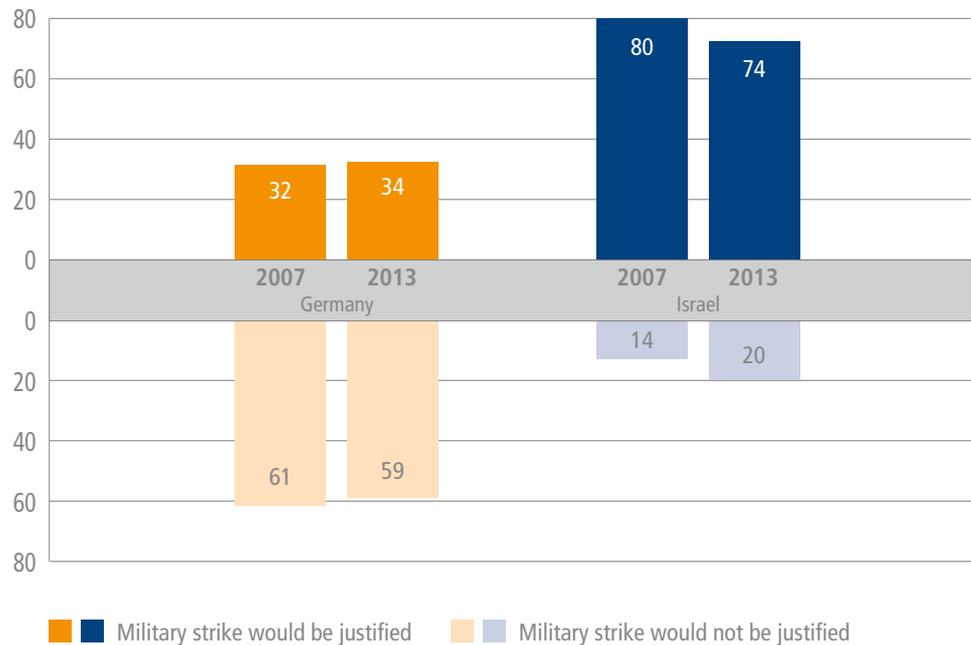
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Responsibility and policy towards Iran

Like the Israelis, a majority of Germans believe that Israel faces an existential threat from the Iranian nuclear program, with nearly 60 percent agreeing that this is the case (see figure 28). However, Germans are much more cautious and restrained about the wisdom of a military strike; just one-third believe that a military strike against Iran is justified if sanctions are ineffective. This data has not changed since 2007. This might be explained by the fact that most Germans do not perceive the Iranian nuclear program as a direct threat to themselves. Furthermore, there is a general fear in Germany that a military attack on Iran could escalate into a regional and even global conflict. The potential political and economic consequences for Germany are a further deterrent to support for military action in Iran.

Almost two-thirds of Israelis (62 percent) view the Iranian nuclear program as an existential threat to Israel. It is notable that over one-third (35 percent) do not share this view and that the number of those who do agree has dropped from 75 percent in 2007. Yet the latter finding is overshadowed by the fact that fully three-quarters would find a military strike justified in the event that Iran proceeds with its nuclear development program despite the diplomatic sanctions. However, this percentage has decreased slightly from 2007, when fully 80 percent responded affirmatively to the same question (see figure 29).

Figure 29: Legitimacy of a military strike against Iran (%)



Question: "Would a military strike against Iran be justified if Iran builds a nuclear bomb in spite of extensive negotiations?"
 Not included: "Don't know, no response."

Source: TNS Emnid 2007, 2013

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While the sense of an existential threat is fairly consistent across demographic groups, support for a military strike is consistently higher among religious respondents and younger people. Two-thirds of secular Israelis say that a strike would be justified in the event that diplomatic measures fail, but among religious respondents the agreement rate is almost 90 percent; similarly, 62 percent of respondents over 60 support a military strike compared to 84 percent of young people up to the age of 29. These findings are very consistent with trends throughout Israeli history showing that the more religiously observant members of society are more hard-line in various ways. Because these communities have high birth rates, this correlation has contributed to right-leaning and hard-line trends among the younger age groups in Israel.

"Germany has higher credibility in Israel at the political level than any other European country."

The consistently high marks Israelis give to Germany mean that it has higher credibility in Israel at the political level than any other European country. The support Germany has provided over the years in international institutions has certainly contributed to this credibility. The fact that Israelis and Germans also view the goal of Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution through the same broad lens of symmetry – which is to say that majorities in both countries believe that both sides (Israelis and Palestinians) should make concessions – reveals a measure of alignment on a highly sensitive issue.

However, despite the ongoing and bipartisan commitment of the German political elite to the state of Israel, the survey indicates that the attitudes of the German public are more complex: Whereas Israeli respondents assume that Germany has a responsibility towards the Jewish people, Germans are less likely to do so and more likely to define responsibility in terms of universalistic concepts such as the promotion of individual human rights or the protection of minorities. Consequently, a majority of respondents is rather critical of the assumed government support of Israel and does not want Germany to take sides in the conflict.

These differences also become apparent in the attitudes of the two societies to the use of military force and to policy options regarding Iran's nuclear program.

The discrepancy is rooted both in the central concerns of each country and their political cultures: Israel fears for its security and its very existence (with a majority, albeit a smaller one than in the past, still perceiving Iran as an existential threat) and is thus significantly more likely to justify a military approach. Germany does not perceive itself to be under an existential threat, but acknowledges that Iran poses such a threat to Israel. However, in accordance with its post-war principles, it tends to dismiss the idea that military measures will contribute to solving the problems or ameliorating this threat.

5. Conclusion

The present study offers a nuanced overview of the current state of German-Israeli relations. One of its core findings is that these relations are anything but “normal,” since they remain colored by the events of history. As a crucial factor shaping the identity and the national self-image of both countries, the Holocaust remains a negative point of reference, and for Jewish Israelis, the past is closely linked with the perceived necessity for a Jewish state. A clear majority is in favor of preserving the memory of the Holocaust in the future and believes that the past remains relevant to the present day and to Israel’s relations with Germany. In contrast, German respondents tend to underestimate the extent to which the Holocaust continues to shape Israel’s perception of Germany even today. Germans are more likely to focus their attention on present-day issues and put the past – explicitly including the Holocaust – behind them. In this context, the study shows that younger respondents in Germany are much more likely to endorse calls for closure.

One crucial question addressed by the survey concerns the perception and interpretation of the special responsibility which is often ascribed to Germany because of its history. While Germans and Israelis both share the opinion that Germany bears such a special responsibility, they have different views about the implications, expectations, and conclusions that arise from it. Israelis expect Germany

not only to support the Jewish people, but also to side with the state of Israel in current conflicts. Germans, in contrast, believe that their responsibility is of a more abstract nature, which is expressed in support for the rights of the individual and for liberal democratic principles. Since they are also fundamentally skeptical about the use of military force in political conflicts, they do not necessarily hold that their country’s responsibility (which they acknowledge) implies an obligation to provide political support for Israel, much less military assistance. These discrepancies are intensified by the challenges which both countries must face in the present and the future. The Israelis, who live in an environment of constantly simmering conflicts that could break out into open violence at any time, are more likely to favor military measures and, under certain conditions, even the limitation of civil rights. The Germans, who are not exposed to comparable existential threats, are much more hesitant to condone the use of military force.

Despite the events of the past, Israelis have a more positive view of the German government and the German state than the Germans have of Israel and its administration. Most Israelis believe that today’s Germany is not only a friendly nation, but also an ally of Israel, and the number of people who share this positive perception has increased significantly and steadily over the past decades. However, younger Israelis are noticeably more critical of

Germany and its government than their older compatriots.

In contrast, the German public has a considerably more ambivalent perception of Israel and is almost equally divided between positive and negative attitudes to the country. In fact, the majority of German respondents have a negative view of the Israeli government, and this assessment may have a detrimental effect on their overall perception of Israel. The study shows that the attitudes of most Germans are not exclusively shaped by the past. They are also influenced and colored by perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, resulting in a critical and partially negative assessment of Israel that is particularly prevalent among younger Germans.

The survey results thus indicate an increasing discrepancy between Germany's political leadership and the German population, in that one in two respondents does not want the German government to provide even political support for Israel in the Middle East conflict; arms deliveries are rejected by a large majority of 80 percent of all Germans.

Agreement with various forms of anti-Semitism is alarmingly high. Over one-quarter of respondents, predominantly among the older age cohorts, endorsed traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes, which appear to be fairly consistent, stable, and resistant to change. The

survey results also reveal a worrying increase in Israel-specific anti-Semitism in recent years. Combating various forms of anti-Semitism thus remains an important ongoing challenge for German society.

What is the significance of these findings for German-Israeli relations half a century after the start of bilateral diplomatic relations?

A variety of mechanisms for encounter and exchange between Germany and Israel have been created in recent decades. However, successful dialog is contingent upon certain prerequisites, one of which is a basis of shared experiences in the past and/or the present; another is a shared lifeworld shaped by similar values, basic principles, interests, and identities. The data from the present survey show that conditions in Germany and Israel do not always meet these prerequisites.

It will therefore be an important task in the future to create forms of exchange and dialog that enable each side to understand the similarities and differences of the other. This discourse must be nuanced and multi-layered in order to do justice to the different political and cultural contexts and security situations that prevail in each country and thus to avoid misunderstandings and distorted perceptions. If this succeeds, dialog and exchange can help each side to learn from the other and can create a basis of trust for strengthening and deepening bilateral relations in the future.

Continuity in spite of change?

Thoughts on the relationship between Germany and Israeli Jews

by Dan Diner¹

The current survey on the relationship between Germans and Israeli Jews reveals no significant deviations from the findings of its predecessor in the year 2007. The answers have remained largely the same, and since they are borne out by surveys from earlier years as well, it is possible to identify a kind of structural consistency. But does this mean that there is nothing new to say about the relationship between Germany/the Germans and Israel/the Israeli Jews?

“On closer examination, the empirically identifiable consistency turns out to be highly ambivalent.”

On closer examination, the empirically identifiable consistency turns out to be highly ambivalent, and the ambivalence is clearly apparent whenever sporadically occurring controversies become the subject of public debate. One recent example is the outrage about Israel that was kindled in the Middle East during the survey period, while other controversies – such as the now-forgotten Günter Grass affair and the debate about circumcision – centered around the Jewish community in Germany. Günter Grass, argu-

ably the most important living German writer and a winner of the Nobel Prize, wrote a polemical poem in which he presented Israel as a chronic enemy of world peace and alleged that the Jewish state was planning a nuclear strike against Iran. The circumcision debate, which affects Jews and Muslims alike, is a more complex matter, since it created the impression of a conflict between improved child protection and an archaic, outdated ritual resulting in bodily harm. This implied conflict, however, was fraught with texts and subtexts that pointed to deeper levels of discourse: levels with a theological character, albeit one in secular clothing.

“The relationship between Germans and Israeli Jews is prone to massive disruption despite the impression of stability.”

The emotions that come to the surface in the context of these kinds of controversies show that the relationship between Germans and Israeli Jews is prone to massive disruption despite the impression of stability created

¹ This text was written in spring 2013.

by the survey data. Disruption is particularly likely when the issue concerns the core elements of each culture's self-image: the questions of peace (which is interpreted differently based on each culture's historical experience) and of physical markers of membership which have their roots in religion. The image invoked by Grass in his poem – of a Jewish community suspected of wantonly plotting a global conflagration, even though the actual danger in the face-off between Israel and Iran emanates from the other side – runs deep. Even the words he chose for describing the circumstances of its composition resonate with the authority of an author's last will and testament: "Last ink" – in other words, the last word. This, clearly, is how Grass wishes to be remembered by posterity. It might seem surprising that someone like Grass, whose track record as a champion of the Federal Republic's enlightened body politic since the early 1960s is second to none, would adopt so theological – albeit crypto-theological – a tone in his latter years. It seems as though the modern Jewish state is being burdened with much of what the Christian tradition associates with the Biblical significance of Israel: deep-seated associations that can be invoked time and time again without the speakers even becoming aware of them. It is no surprise that these deep levels should make themselves felt in the circumcision debate, since this issue could hardly have acquired the status of an

unconditional imperative were it not for its theological significance.

Changing parameters

In the decades-long chronicle of the German-Israeli relationship, the poem by Grass and the circumcision debate are milestones conspicuous for their shock value. Their true significance arises from the history of a relationship which, today, is characterized by a high degree of calmness and normality. As such, they point towards a complex which can only be described as exceedingly ambivalent. Ultimately, the relationship between Germany and Israel's Jews is one of paradox.

"The Arab-Israeli conflict appears to be losing its priority status amid the upheavals in the region."

The political discourse is dominated by the situation in the Near and Middle East, especially by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whose historical course exhibits a peculiarly repetitive character which shows that the odds of a resolution being found are not good. But although no end appears to be in

sight, the situation is not a static one, even though the changes pertain to the region in general rather than to the intermittently resurgent conflict itself. Between the 2007 survey on the German-Jewish/Israeli relations and the present one, the situation in the region underwent a fundamental change. The revolts that were originally billed as an “Arab Spring” have had a different impact on every country, but they have drastically rearranged the political topography of the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict. More than two years after the start of the upheavals, the Arab world is in the grip of a Sunnite revolution. Syria has been particularly severely affected – to put it mildly – but this does not exonerate the Assad regime of responsibility. The regional balance of power has shifted dramatically and the possibilities for achieving peace are now subject to entirely different influences than before – if they have not receded beyond the horizon. This does not mean that a two-state solution for achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians is now a dead letter. On the contrary, such a peace – if it can be brought about – would contribute to defusing the situation. But the likelihood of such a solution significantly improving stability in the region is steadily decreasing. In more dramatic terms, the Arab-Israeli conflict appears to be losing its priority status amid the upheavals in the region. The social protests of the past and the results of the last Israeli elections have shown that the Israeli people are turning inward and that the solution of the Palestinian conflict is losing its urgency, and indeed that the relative importance of a peaceful solution is waning in the face of the upheavals in the region. Social questions, the issue of distributive justice, and good governance appear to have become more relevant than the existential issue of war and peace.

“In Europe, too, the familiar parameters are changing.”

In Europe, too, the familiar parameters are changing. To date, the universally accepted narrative has been that the process of European unification is geared towards an ever-increasing integration. During the debt crisis, however, the currency union and the goal of shared standards have caused existing habitual differences in administrative and economic practices to emerge more strongly and have accentuated the different national characteristics of the various European countries. None of these factors are directly related to the German-Israeli relationship, although they have tended to spotlight questions of collective belonging – in other words, of the increasing support for Eurosceptical and anti-European parties and movements. It was the years and even decades of unbroken progress towards Europeanization that helped to neutralize national differences and historical fault lines in the relationship between the European countries, and Europe’s Jews, especially the Jews in Germany, were among the beneficiaries of these processes of neutralization and growing integration.

Another factor that adds a new dimension to the relationship between Germany and Israeli Jews is the presence of Islam in Europe in general and Germany in particular. Ritually speaking, Judaism and Islam are closer to each other than to Christianity both in terms of dietary rules and, above all, in stipulating circumcision. As long as the dietary rules – especially those concerning kosher (or, in the case of Islam, halal) slaughter – are not associated with the circumcision of male infants, the lurking theological undertones are unlikely to place an undue burden on the circumcision debate. However, should this change and should such demands emanate from sources not well-disposed towards

Muslims, then the German/Christian-Jewish relationship too might be adversely affected.

“The relationship between Jews and Muslims in Germany is under strain as well.”

The relationship between Jews and Muslims in Germany is under strain as well. Representatives of Germany’s Jewish community have openly declared that they intend to speak only for themselves in the circumcision debate and that they do not intend to work together with the Muslims in this regard. What separates the two faith communities is the vexing Palestinian question. Even more so than in Germany, this prolonged conflict has caused Jews and Muslims to become estranged from each other in France, with its complex colonial history and its laicist republican self-image. Germany’s traditional confessionalism and state-church law offer much better possibilities for integration.

Against the background of the broader political and social context, let us now examine the survey results in greater detail. In view of the contextual changes described above, the stability of the survey results over time should be re-examined for subtle shifts that might conceivably indicate a degree of change.

The existence of the state: Assured or contested?

In this section, we will highlight certain conspicuous aspects of the current survey results in order to identify the recurrent features of the relationship between Germany and Israeli Jews. These aspects include elements which are connected both with the past (i.e. the Nazi era and the Holocaust) and with the Middle East conflict and which involve such antithetical parameters as the

assured, tranquil existence of the German state and the chronic insecurity that characterizes the state of Israel. The common features, differences, and contrasts that emerge from the survey are largely rooted in these existential conditions, which could hardly be more dissimilar.

To see this dissimilarity, one need look no further than the question about the value of collective or national belonging. To ask this question in Germany and Israel is to invite the expression of widely diverging opinions, since the two states are in diametrical opposition to each other on this issue. Unlike Germany, Israel is a very young and not fully consolidated state which does not yet regard its nation-building project as complete even though it was founded over a generation ago. Thus it is no surprise that 90 percent of Israeli respondents regard their nationality as an important component of their self-image. What could come as a surprise is that almost 80 percent of German respondents feel the same. This suggests that collective belonging has a higher value in Germany than one might assume, given that the public discourse in Germany is dominated by a pro-European thrust on the one hand and a post-national one on the other. The debate is more dramatic in Israel, since it takes place against the background of perennial conflict and must therefore always address the question of the state’s legitimacy. This issue always causes emotions to run high.

The question about national belonging or identification with the collective was followed up in both countries by an exploration of respondents’ attitudes to the protection of individual rights and the acceptance of nationally and culturally diverse minorities. The responses clearly show that there is a greater readiness to protect minority and individual rights in Germany than in Israel. There are two reasons for this difference: First, that civil society in Germany has a more pronounced desire to limit the powers of the state (protection of individual rights)

and is more willing to accept cultural differences (minority rights). This would indicate that liberal attitudes are entrenched in the country's political thought. Second, that attitudes in Israel are conditioned by the Arab-Palestinian conflict, which is ultimately demographical in character and which raises the population's willingness to prioritize security considerations over human rights and liberal issues. Thus the Arab minority in Israel – that is, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship – are collectively suspected of aloofness or even outright hostility towards the Israeli state, an attitude rooted both in the conflict situation as a whole and in the fact that Israel is explicitly defined as a Jewish state. It must therefore be borne in mind that the Arab minority in Israel is juxtaposed with a Jewish majority which, in turn, represents a minority within the Arab Muslim majority population of the Middle East as a whole. This paradoxical inversion lies at the core of the conflict. Democracy in Israel is therefore under siege on two fronts: that of demographics (majority vs. minority), through which ethnic and national affiliation implies a political bonus or penalty, and that of the ever-present possibility of the inversion of the majority/minority status. The demographically driven conflict between the distrusted Arab minority in Israel and the Israeli Jews as a minority in a predominantly Arab Muslim region is distinct from the hostility which other ethnicities, such as black African refugees, encounter in Israel. This hostility is rooted not in any demographic conflict, but in xenophobia; the refugees, whose status implies a relative lack of rights, are branded by their ethnic visibility and collectively associated with certain social attributes, such as delinquency.

In the eyes of the Other

With respect to the relationship between the Germans and Israeli Jews, it is notable that the data indicate a mutual lack of interest. Considering the events of the past that continue to burden the relationship between

Germans and Jews, this is not so much unfortunate as an expression of normality; it could suggest that the past is being superseded by an open focus on the present and the future as the dominant element in German-Israeli Jewish relations. In the world of the future, the Other is not necessarily ubiquitous as a constituent factor for the construction of one's identity. In other words, Germans and Jews no longer define themselves in terms of their historical relationship to each other. In contrast, during the first decades after the Holocaust, the Other was a constant presence. However, the survey shows that there is also a tendency that runs counter to this trend, albeit to a limited extent: The Israeli public is divided in its attitudes to Germany, although the majority has a fairly good opinion about the country. This attitude changes when controversial events in Germany or the Middle East recall the familiar images from the past, causing the structural ambivalence of the relationship to manifest itself.

The fact that Germany is increasingly viewed in a positive light in Israel may be related to generational change. Paradoxically, however, this does not mean that younger people in Israel generally have a positive attitude towards Germany while the older generation does not. Rather, Israelis aged over 60 have a more favorable view of Germany than the youngest respondents. The reason is not that older people have a greater affinity towards the past, but that they tend to act more prudently and circumspectly than adolescents, who generally prefer clear-cut distinctions and tend to think in stereotypical categories.

“It should be noted that, in Germany, there is a massive difference between opinions about Israel in general and about the Israeli government and its policies.”

It should be noted that, in Germany, there is a massive difference between opinions about Israel in general and about the Israeli government and its policies. This kind of discrepancy is usually observed in assessments of countries under authoritarian or dictatorial rule, where the state power and the population are in opposition to each other. Israel, however, is a democracy whose government reflects the opinions of the majority. Government policy and the body politic are not in a state of arbitrary divergence. The striking difference in attitudes to the Israeli people and their government appears to indicate that the opinions of the Germans about Israel are significantly less positive than the survey data would suggest. The data may reflect statements that owe more to the influence of history than to the actual feelings of the respondents making them. The very negative attitude of the Germans to the Israeli government and its policies may to a large extent reflect their attitudes to Israel as a whole, and this is attributable to the influence of the Palestinian conflict. The relatively large proportion of German respondents who compare or equate Israel's policies towards the Palestinians with the treatment of the Jews by the Nazis should be cause for concern, since it suggests that attitudes are being shaped not only by the complex parameters of the conflict, but by deeper motivations. The majority of German respondents say that their attitude to Israel is influenced by their country's Nazi past. Thus their reservations about Israel may be primarily attributable to Germany's history rather than to their attitudes to the Middle East conflict.

The extent to which the two political cultures differ on issues such as conflict, military force, and the use of violence can be seen in their willingness or unwillingness to support Israel in the event of a conflict. This willingness is determined primarily by physical distance from the conflict; while it would surely not be wrong to assume that other underlying factors are at work as well, they play a

subordinate role. The effects of physical distance, incidentally, can be discerned in all the survey data concerning the conflict, even in the stance on the Iranian nuclear program.

Ambivalent signals for Jewish culture in Germany

A similar picture emerges from the survey data about fostering Jewish culture in Germany. Approval for such support appears to be driven largely by a sense of obligation to atone for the past – though it may also be expressed in lieu of a political opinion, which many people prefer to keep to themselves. A similar attitude emerges with respect to Israel. Germans began to develop an increased interest in Israeli literature at exactly the point when their political interest in Israel was, for obvious reasons, fading. Opinions about circumcision are more or less equally divided, although it is interesting to note that one-third of German respondents oppose circumcision “under any circumstances.” This would seem to represent something of a qualified majority, even though circumcision is a religious obligation and therefore one of the non-negotiable core elements of Judaism.

“One-third of German respondents oppose circumcision ‘under any circumstances.’”

The consistently positive attitude of Israelis towards the promotion of Jewish culture in Germany appears to be a new phenomenon. It is not clear, however, whether Israeli respondents took this to mean fostering the culture of the Jewish community or the preservation of the Jewish heritage as though in a museum. What is notable is that, unlike in the first decades of Israel's existence, the presence of Jews in Germany is no longer perceived in Israel as a sacrilege: On the contrary, it is not only accepted matter-of-factly,

but actively endorsed by fairly large sections of the population. The survey does not offer information about the extent to which this may be due to generational preferences or other factors of the present-day lifeworld that result from the Israelization of Israeli Jews.

Dealing with tensions

When it comes to the Nazi persecution of the Jews and related events, responses in Germany are remarkably consistent. The survey shows that the Germans have accepted their trans-generational responsibility for the Nazi past, even if this acceptance can take a wide range of different forms. Calls for closure are heard at irregular intervals, and the protest they elicit results in a renewed focus on the Nazi era and the Holocaust as its central phenomenon. In this sense, the efforts by successive generations to come to terms with the Nazi period can be regarded as a core element of Germany's political culture. This does not mean, however, that Germans and Israelis draw the same conclusions from their engagement with the issue. Rather, it is a reference point which may give rise to contradicting inferences – not only because of cultural or religious differences, but primarily because of the political circumstances of the two states, foremost among which is the relatively safe situation of Germany in the heart of Europe and the insecure location of the Jewish state in the Middle East. Thus the two cultures have different and even contradictory parameters for assessing and evaluating the past. Any identifiable common ground exists despite rather than because of the prevailing circumstances in the two countries and may arise from ideological convictions or superordinated interests – but not from each society's existential experiences. As these experiences are the primary driving force behind each country's social reality, the political and cultural regulation of hidden, "objective" tensions must always begin anew in order to channel them into manageable paths. That this process of regulation is fundamentally a project for

the elites who understand the differences is confirmed by the 2013 survey. Notwithstanding the structural differences between the two communities, the survey is also, to some extent, an expression of the stability and continuity of the political cultures of the two countries, Germany and Israel, which are linked together in so remarkable a fashion.

“The efforts by successive generations to come to terms with the Nazi period can be regarded as a core element of Germany's political culture.”

Comparison of Trends 2013 – 2014

by Steffen Hagemann

Methodology

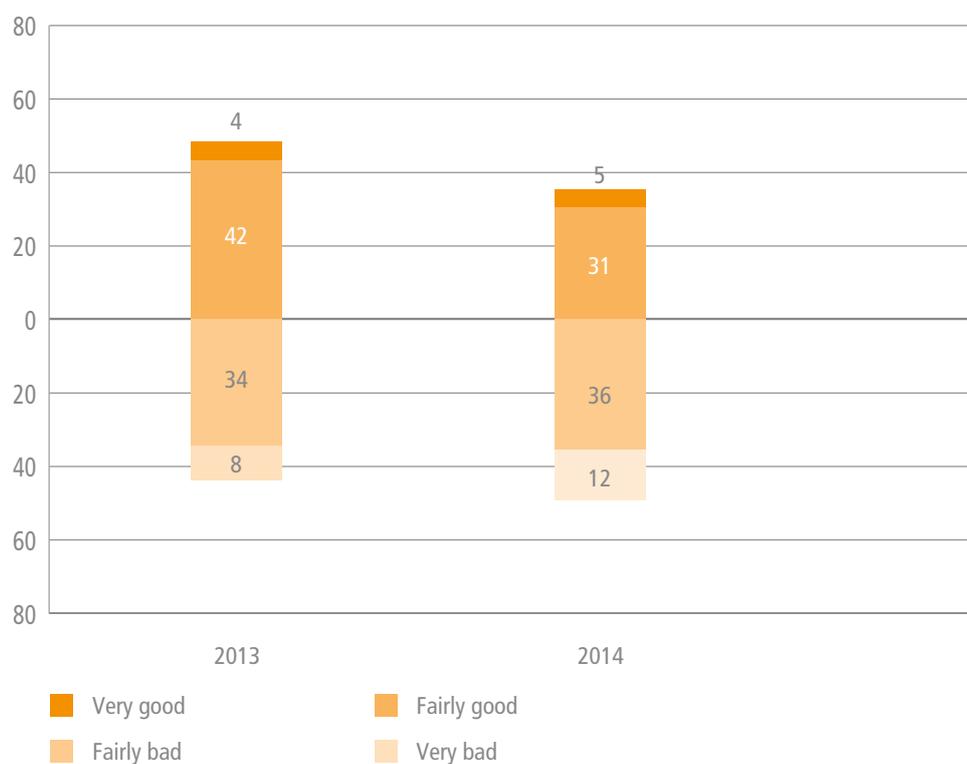
To identify possible attitude shifts in the German population, seven questions from the 2013 survey were reused in a snap survey carried out by the opinion research institute TNS Emnid. The data were gathered using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing tools and were based on the following parameters:

- Sample size: 946
- Population: German-speaking population aged 18 and over and resident in private homes in the Federal Republic of Germany
- Dates of Fielding: 10/10/2014 to 10/11/2014.
- The margin of error is +/- 3 percent with a confidence rate of 90 percent and a sample size of n = 946.

Opinions about Israel

The 2014 snap survey shows that opinions about Israel have deteriorated significantly. While 46 percent of respondents had expressed a good or fairly good opinion of Israel in 2013, this figure dropped to 36 percent in 2014. At the same time, the number of respondents expressing a fairly bad or very bad opinion of Israel rose from 42 percent to 48 percent. In addition, 16 percent (compared to 12 percent in 2013) gave no response. The 2013 survey suggested a connection between the responses to this question and respondents' poor opinions of the Israeli government, which would indicate that Israel is being equated with Israeli government policies. If this is the case, it would explain the deterioration in the snap survey as well, since the Israeli government's policies in the 2014 Gaza conflict came under heavy criticism in the German media because of the high civilian casualties on the Palestinian side.

Figure 1: Opinion about Israel (%)



Answers to the question: "In general, what do you think about Israel today? Do you have a very good, fairly good, fairly bad, very bad opinion of Israel?" (Difference from 100% = "don't know, no response")

Source: TNS Emnid 2013, 2014

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What should the German government do?

There has been virtually no change in the answers to the question whether the German government should support the Israeli position in the Middle East conflict. Opinions in Germany seem to be largely fixed on this fundamental issue, so that events like the Gaza conflict have little impact on attitudes. Respondents are almost equally divided on this question, with 45 percent favoring and 50 percent opposing support for Israel. However, an examination of the highest and lowest answers only (the top two and bottom two boxes) shows that the proportion of respondents who emphatically reject support for Israel is almost twice as high (at 32 percent) as the proportion of respondents who are strongly in favor (17 percent).

It is interesting to note that there has been an increase in support for arms supplies to Israel, although overall approval remains at a comparatively low level: 29 percent of respondents are (to varying degrees) in favor of arms supplies, an increase of 10 percent compared to 2013. However, a clear majority of 68 percent (compared to 80 percent in 2013) continues to reject them. The changes may indicate that the use of missiles against Israel by Hamas has slightly increased the public's awareness of the necessity of military measures, even if approval for such measures remains qualified and tentative.

Figure 2: What should the German government do? (%)



Scale 1 ("Under all circumstances") ←→ 6 ("Under no circumstances"). Agreement with the statement: "In your opinion, should the German government ...?" (Difference from 100% = "don't know, no response")

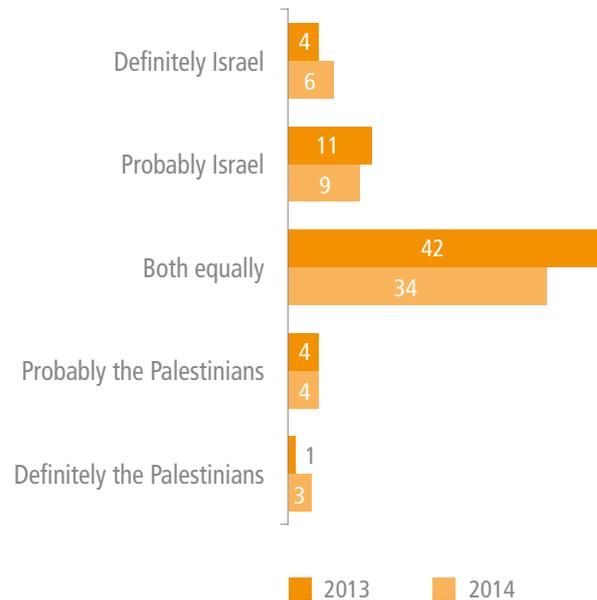
Source: TNS Emnid 2013, 2014

Whom should the German government support?

The data gathered after the Gaza war show that only a small number of respondents identifies with one of the sides of the conflict. These potentials have remained almost completely unchanged, with 15 percent of respondents saying that the government should definitely or probably support Israel (compared to 15 percent in 2013) and 7 percent in favor of support for the Palestinians (compared to 5 percent in 2013). Thus political support for the Palestinians has not increased even though the images of destruction in the Gaza Strip published by the media have had a potent emotional impact.

The data also reveal increasing frustration and perplexity among the German public. Whereas 42 percent of respondents were in favor of supporting both sides in 2013, only 34 percent still held this view in 2014. What has increased, however, is the rate of agreement with a comparatively more detached and passive position that does not support either party in the conflict: 38 percent of respondents (up from 32 percent in 2013) agreed with the “neither” option.

Figure 3: Whom should the German government support? (%)



Answers to the question: “If you could decide, whom should the German government support in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?” (Difference from 100% = “neither”; “don’t know, no response”)

Source: TNS Emnid 2013, 2014

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Closure

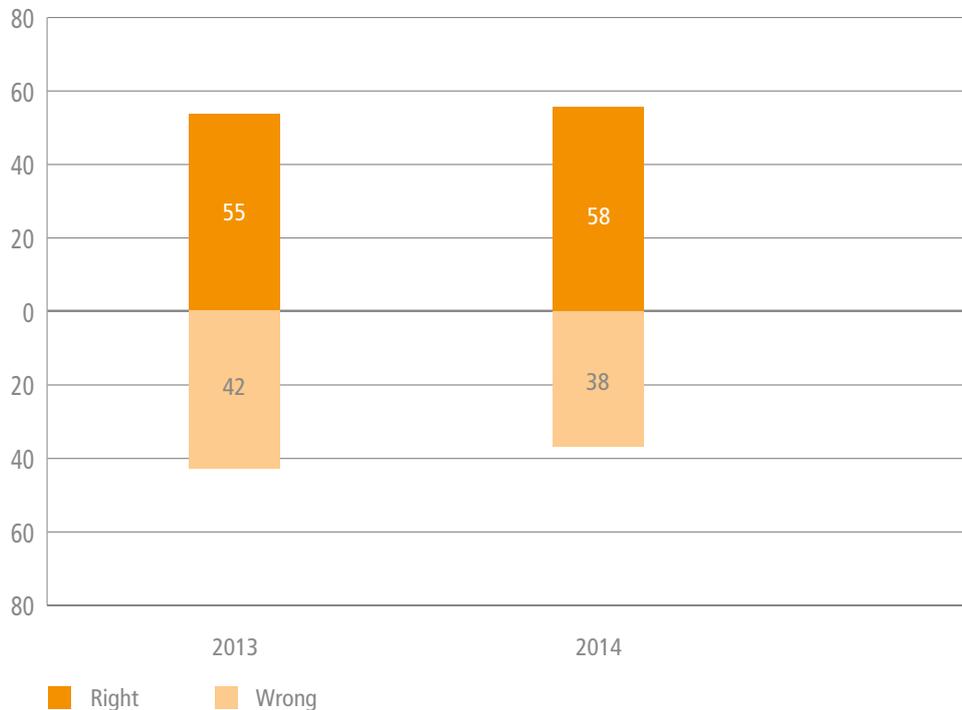
Confirming the data gathered in 2013, the 2014 snap survey found that a clear and slightly larger majority of 58 percent (compared to 55 percent in 2013) agrees with the statement “Almost 70 years after the end of the Second World War, we should no longer talk so much about the persecution of the Jews, but finally put the past behind us.”

Education has a powerful effect on attitudes towards this issue. Support for closure decreases sharply among those with higher qualifications, so that a majority of 55 percent of respondents with a high school diploma or a university degree rejects the call for closure. In contrast, an extraordinarily high proportion of 71 percent of respondents

with lower educational levels (primary school or secondary school) is in favor of closure, along with a large majority (75 percent) of secondary school students. These findings underscore the importance of educational projects and indicate that teaching and remembrance of history must be critically examined and reevaluated against the background of the increasing remoteness of the younger generations from the historical period in question.

The 2007 study found that there was a 10-percent discrepancy between agreement rates in western and eastern Germany (60 percent and 50 percent, respectively). This gap has narrowed in the interim, and agreement rates are now 60 percent in the west and 56 percent in the east.

Figure 4: Putting the past behind us (%)



Answers to the question: “Today, almost 70 years after the end of the Second World War, we should no longer talk so much about the persecution of the Jews but finally put the past behind us.” Do you think this statement is right or wrong? (Difference from 100%: “undecided”; “don’t know, no response”)

Source: TNS Emnid 2013, 2014

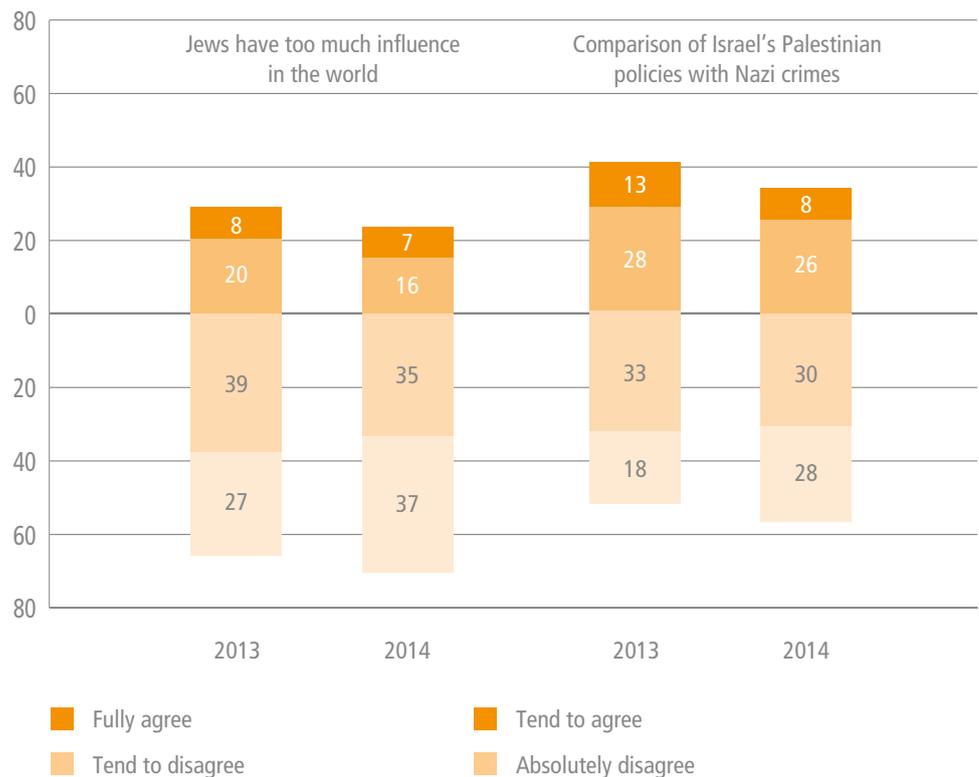
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Anti-Semitism in Germany

The statement that “Jews have too much influence in the world” is a classical indicator of traditional anti-Semitism. Agreement with this statement has decreased slightly from 28 percent in 2013 to 23 percent in 2014 and almost three-quarters of respondents reject it. The relative consistency of traditional anti-Semitism and its stability and resistance to change have been confirmed by other studies as well. Although this anti-Semitism is not necessarily expressed on a regular basis, it can be activated in times of political crisis. The snap survey results show that traditional

anti-Semitism is found more frequently among older respondents: 33 percent of respondents aged 60 and older agreed with this statement compared to only 7 percent of those aged under 29. Education too has an impact on attitudes to this question in that approval decreases as the educational levels of respondents rise.

Figure 5: Anti-Semitism in Germany (%)



Agreement with the statements: “Jews have too much influence in the world”; “What the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians today is essentially the same thing as what the Nazis did to the Jews during the Third Reich.” (Difference from 100%: “don’t know”, no response”)

Source: TNS Emnid 2013, 2014

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The findings are somewhat different in the case of criticisms of Israel that invoke the Nazis' treatment of the Jews. The statement "What the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians today is essentially the same thing as what the Nazis did to the Jews during the Third Reich" serves as an indicator for anti-Semitism directed at the state of Israel. Approval of this statement remains fairly high, although it has dropped from 41 percent to 34 percent and the agreement rate is gradually returning to the levels recorded in the 2007 survey. Unlike traditional anti-Semitism, this form of anti-Semitism has above-average support (40 percent) among

the youngest respondents aged up to 29 years. Once again, agreement decreases with rising levels of education. It should be noted once more that approval of this statement does not necessarily correlate with constant verbalizations of anti-Semitic sentiments, but that anti-Semitism directed at Israel can be activated by political events in the Middle East. Despite a slight drop in the figures, it is possible that the frequency of anti-Semitic utterances increased significantly in the course of the Gaza conflict.

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