Public Silence and Latent Memories

Yitzhak Rabin and the Arab-Palestinian Citizens of Israel

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ABSTRACT: This article examines how Yitzhak Rabin is remembered by Palestinian citizens of Israel by juxtaposing analysis of references to him in the Arabic press in Israel with analysis of three surveys among Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel from November 1995 until July 2008. The findings suggest the existence of a latent nostalgia for Rabin's second term as prime minister (1992–1995) as a period when being Israeli looked like a realistic option for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Paradoxically, the image of Rabin among the Arab citizens of Israel moved in opposing directions in each of the two spheres of memory examined. At the public level, the extensive and mostly sympathetic attention given by some Arab political actors before 2000 was transformed into silence in the post-2000 period. The individual-based surveys, however, showed that Rabin's image remained salient and the sympathy felt for him even increased.

KEYWORDS: collective memory, latent nostalgia, Palestinians, silence, Yitzhak Rabin

On the evening of 4 November 1995, following the end of a mass demonstration in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Israel's prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Orthodox Jewish Israeli student. Rabin's assassination resulted from and expressed fundamental differences among Jewish Israelis, not only about the future status of the territories Israel occupied in 1967, but about the very definition of Israeli identity (Peri 2000). These controversies have been reflected in a "fragmented commemoration" in terms of time, space, and content (Vinitzky-Seroussi

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2002). The Palestinian citizens of Israel were far from being neutral or indifferent to this Jewish controversy, because it had far-reaching implications on their identity as well. The collective political consciousness and behavior of the Palestinians in Israel are highly informed by their need to navigate between different expectations of non-Israeli Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The way Rabin has been commemorated and remembered by this public has been shaped by the same dynamics.

The findings I present in this article suggest the existence of a latent nostalgia for Rabin's time. This nostalgia is "latent," as it cannot be identified in the public sphere. It is derived from juxtaposing analysis of references to Rabin's assassination in the Arabic press in Israel from November 1995 to July 2008. The article also analyzes three surveys of representative samples of Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel from the same period of time. Examination of Rabin's memory by relying exclusively on materials available in the public sphere would reveal a transition from intensive and mostly sympathetic reference immediately after the assassination to an almost complete ignoring after 2000. Furthermore, at the first stage, the representation of Rabin and his assassination became a contested terrain, in which integrative aspirations among the Arab citizens were translated into attempts to join the Jewish Israeli expressions of mourning and commemoration, while concerns about Israelification were reflected in reserved attitudes or even contempt. Therefore, if we rely exclusively on public representations, the post-2000 muteness might be interpreted as a disappearance of this Arab internal controversy.

Silence, however, is not identical with forgetting (Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter 2010; Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger 2010). While studying collective memory we should take into consideration the existence of a latent layer of memory that does not have a public expression and can be revealed only by active investigation focusing on the perspectives of ordinary people who do not necessarily have access to formalized and public commemorative tools.

The examination of individual-centered surveys reveals continuity from the pre-2000 to post-2000 period, not only in the evident remembering of Rabin, but also in the association between Rabin's remembrance and certain political orientations. In other words, the association between remembering Rabin and integrative aspirations that was publicly visible from 1995 to 1999 did not disappear but became latent and can be detected only by active investigation based on interviews of individuals. Individual remembrances in 2008 correlate with certain socio-political orientations that were evident in the public sphere in the late 1990s, a finding that illustrates both the interdependence and the relative independence of these two levels of investigation.

Rabin and the Palestinian Citizens of Israel

Rabin's pre-1992 biography made him one of the least probable candidates for being remembered positively by Palestinians. In 1948 Rabin, as a young but senior officer, commanded the expulsion of tens of thousands of Palestinians from the Ramla region to the West Bank (Morris 2004: 424–476). From 1987 to 1990, as defense minister, he implemented harsh measures for oppressing the Palestinian uprising (first Intifada) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Rabin was quoted frequently as having ordered the Israeli military to "break the bones" of the Palestinian rebels. The Palestinians in Israel particularly remember this statement (regardless of its dubious historical accuracy).

After his election as prime minister in 1992, however, Rabin led three historic inter-related political processes, which were highly applauded by the Arab public in Israel. Rabin's government began the Oslo process, which included a formal recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), breaking a long-standing taboo in Israeli politics. Rabin's coalition also relied on the passive support of the Arab parties (to form a "blocking majority") as legitimate actors in Israeli politics, including a formal agreements between the Labor party and the Arab parties (Reiter 2009: 155–158), breaking a second historical taboo.

Finally, Rabin's government led the most serious attempt to diminish state discrimination against Arab citizens in various spheres. Although the new policy was not as revolutionary as some pro-integration Arab leaders presented it later (Reiter 2009), the change was tangible enough to influence the political atmosphere. Public opinion polls conducted by Sammy Smooha (1999) showed that the percentage of Arab citizens who considered the term Israeli as relevant to their identity, those who had some reservations about whether Zionism is racism, and those who accepted the "right of Israel to exist as a Jewish-Zionist state" peaked at an unprecedented high level in 1995. Similarly, anti-Arab attitudes among Jewish citizens in the same year were the lowest since similar survey was first conducted in 1980.

Under the existing socio-political circumstances, Arab citizens were considered a legitimate part of the mass pro-Oslo demonstration on 4 November 1995. The Public Committee for the Peace Demonstration that organized the event published ads in Arabic newspapers with the identical content and slogans that appeared in Hebrew newspapers, inviting the public to join the demonstration. It also organized and funded buses to bring in demonstrators from various Arab towns and cities.

This background might explain why the dominant voice among the Arab-Palestinian public in the days after the assassination was one of

shock mixed with sympathy for the assassinated leader. This sympathy was intimately related to a real hope that Rabin's policies signaled a turning point toward more inclusion and more equality. It was also related to the widespread belief that Rabin's policy was a step toward redefining the boundaries of Israeli identity, and his assassination was seen as a proof of the seriousness of his intentions (Al-Haj 2000). Therefore, all the Arab political parties and Arab municipalities published mourning notices in the newspapers and sent condolences to the government and the family. School sessions began with a discussion of the assassination and the need for tolerance and pluralism. The National Committee of Arab Mayors convened a special meeting and dispatched a large delegation to the funeral (ibid.: 167).

These sentiments were expressed as well on the popular level. Merchants in the Arab city of Nazareth set up a memorial for Rabin in the local outdoor market; some Arab schools held art exhibits in which children presented their works on the assassination; and in various Arab localities residents stood during the mourning siren that was sounded across the country to coincide with Rabin's funeral (Al-Haj 2000).

As Lev Greenberg has argued, the historic process Rabin led was one of democratization, not only of peace. In order to legitimize his policy Rabin created a new collective identity. "The new 'us' was based on Israelis and Palestinians who aspired to peace, and "they" are extremist religious Jews and Muslims who act to perpetuate the war" (Greenberg 2000). His assassination was seen by many Arab citizens as a validation of this new set of identities. Perhaps one of the most poignant expressions of this expectation was the following text, written in Hebrew by Riad Ali, an Arab journalist of the Druze religion who has worked in the Hebrew media for years, but apparently still did not feel that he was accepted as a full Israeli:

> I cried! And I wrote about it in my diary—"I was absentminded for moments. I would never be able to explain it, but my cry was mixed with a strange joy. Not a malicious joy but its opposite. It was the joy of a nomad who found his destination. The joy of a child who lost his mother for a short while, and a second after he started bitterly weeping, he noticed her appearing from beyond the corner and his face lifted up!" Two weeks later I added another comment: "Now I understand …! My latent and honest longing to be a full-fledged citizen was rising inside me …! For the first time in my life I felt Israeli …! In his death, Rabin gave me what he tried extensively in his life to keep from me … the feeling of home!" (Ali 1997: 75)

Many Arab citizens expected the Hebrew media to pay attention to Arab expressions of sorrow and mourning and were disappointed and frustrated that their painful reaction was mostly ignored (Al-Haj 2000: 172–173). This

disappointment did not deter some dominant public figures from the continuous attempt, during the first five years after the assassination, to use the memory of Rabin's assassination as a tool to promote their integrative worldview. Rabin's legacy kept the dream of equality and integration alive even after his successors reversed his policy of integration.

The operational question examined in this article is to what extent the association between remembering Rabin and an integrative orientation remained valid in the years following the assassination, years in which the relations between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel drastically deteriorated (Smooha 2010). The investigation is bi-focal: one lens focuses on public expressions in the Arabic media in Israel and the other focuses on memories of individuals as they expressed themselves in responses to a research questionnaire.

Sources and Methodology

Since the early 1980s, newspapers in Arabic have become the major element of the independent Arab public sphere in Israel (Jamal 2009). Therefore, this analysis of public memory is based on the systematic investigation of numerous Arabic newspapers and websites. I have been reading six major Arabic newspapers during the first ten days of November every year since the assassination. Three of them are the mouthpieces of political parties: *Al-Ittihad*, published by the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE),; *Fasl al-Maqal*, published by the National Democratic Assembly (NDA); and *Sawt al-Haq wal-Huria*, published by the Northern branch of the Islamic Movement; as well as three commercial, profit-driven newspapers: *Kul al-Arab*, *al-Seennara*, and *Panorama*. In addition, I searched four websites for references to Rabin. These were established only in the post-2000 period: Panet (a commercial website, the online version of Panorama), Al-Arab (a commercial website), Arab 48 (affiliated with the NDA), and Palestine 48 (affiliated with the Islamic Movement).

The examination of individuals' memories is based on three public opinion polls, carried out in 1996, 2005, and 2008. Although the questions in each survey differ in their structure and content (with partial overlap of some questions), all three can serve as indicators for the salience of Rabin's image in individuals' minds. In addition, all three databases allow for measurement of the association between Rabin's memory and certain political orientations. The first survey was carried out between 1 May and 27 May 1996.[1] It included a stratified sample of the adult (18+) population in Israel (n = 1,168 Jews, 503 Arabs). Jews and Arabs were interviewed by means of face-to-face interviews in Hebrew and Arabic, respectively.

The second survey was conducted in July 2005 by the Guttman Institute at the Israel Democracy Institute among a representative sample of Israel's adult population (18 and over), both Jews and Arabs. The sample included 1,684 Jewish and 320 Arab respondents, who were interviewed over the telephone[2] in Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian. The third survey was conducted in July and August 2008. It was based on telephone interviews with 530 Arab citizens and 515 Jewish citizens of Israel, who constituted representative samples of their respective adult populations.[3] My analysis refers mainly to the Arab sub-samples, and to specific questions from each survey. I present the findings in chronological order in order to illustrate the historical development.

Before October 2000

Analyzing the reference in the Arabic press to Rabin during the first five years after the assassination reveals a significant gap between an extremely sympathetic tone and extensive coverage in *Al-Ittihad* and the reserved tone of *Sawt al-haq* and *Fasl al-maqal*, which began to ignore Rabin even before 2000. The commercial newspapers were closer to the supportive tone of *Al-Ittihad* and covered Rabin's memorial days until 2000 to a limited extent. Some of them even complained about the exclusion of the Arabs from these ceremonies (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2009).

It is noteworthy that until the 1980s, *Al-Ittihad* was the only non-governmental Arabic newspaper in Israel. By the late 1990s, however, it already faced competition from both the commercial press (e.g., *al-Sinara* and *Kul al-'Arab*), and from newspapers owned by other political parties. Especially challenging was *Fasl al-Maqal* that targeted the same secular and politically aware audience of *Al-Ittihad* but with a clearer Arab nationalist tone, and it articulated objections to Israelification tendencies among the Palestinian citizens of Israel. In those years *Al-Ittihad* provided the most consistent support for Arab-Jewish political partnerships, and how it treated Rabin's memory was closely related to this orientation. In the mainstream Hebrew press Rabin was characterized by a mix of six "characters": the Sabra, the peacemaker, the Zionist, the Americanophile, the anti-politician, and as an empathic figure (Peri 2005: 162); *Al-Ittihad*, however, presented Rabin almost exclusively as a peacemaker, with some sporadic reference to his transformation from a hawk into a dove. Any concrete reference to the role he played in 1948 was completely absent.

Even though Arab representatives were not invited to speak at the central annual memorial rally in Tel Aviv each year, these events were highlighted by *Al-Ittihad* and celebrated as evidence of the vitality of Rabin's legacy.

Two years after the assassination, the domestic political conditions were already significantly different from those that prevailed during the period of Rabin's government. The May 1996 elections resulted in an ouster of Rabin's successor and erstwhile partner, Shimon Peres, and instead saw the rise to power of Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud Party, who promptly emptied the Oslo Accord of its reconciliatory potential. Furthermore, Netanyahu's government abolished most of the budgetary anti-discriminatory improvements introduced by the former government (Reiter 2009: 179–181).

The mass rally on the second anniversary of Rabin's assassination was an opportunity for the opposition to demonstrate its power. For *Al-Ittihad* it was an opportunity to promote an integrative agenda. It was especially important for the editors to convey the message that Netanyahu's policy had strong opposition among the Jewish public, implicitly advocating Arab-Jewish cooperation. The front page of the issue on 9 November 1997, the day after the annual commemorative rally in Tel Aviv, trumpeted "Half a million people applauded peace at Rabin square," referring to the event as "the largest rally in the history of Israel." The editorial column, entitled "A Brave Demonstration," stated:

> The brave demonstration seen yesterday, Saturday night, commemorating the second anniversary of the assassination of the former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, requires all political forces in the country, and especially the peace forces, to take a stand.
>
> There is a consensus among observers that this is the largest demonstration in the history of Israel. The number of attendees exceeded even the 400,000 participants in the demonstration against the Lebanon War and its massacres in 1982. Some estimate that half a million people attended and some estimate that even more. …
>
> Why did they come in such a magnitude? … As it is well known, by killing Rabin the assassin Amir wanted to kill the peace process. The election of Netanyahu and the actions we have witnessed during his term testify that Amir's goals have begun to be realized and the peace process is careening toward the abyss. Has the public of peace seekers in Israel regained its own senses and come in the hundreds of thousands to rescue the peace process?
>
> Anyway, this demonstration is considered a big positive sign. If it continues on the correct path, great results can be achieved, as the 1982 demonstration did which shook off Likud rule and led to the withdrawal from Lebanon.

There is certainly much exaggeration in the number of participants mentioned. The demonstration was exceptionally large but the official police estimate was only 200,000 and even the organizers, who usually tend to inflate numbers, estimated that 400,000 people attended ("Rabin's Commemorative Rally" 1998). The newspaper's emphasis on the record attendance and the repeated comparison to the mythic 1982 demonstration,

which is considered one of the zenith points of the Israeli 'Zionist Left', clearly was aimed at convincing the Arab reader of the possibility of sharing a political struggle with Jewish citizens.

Al-Ittihad maintained a similar approach the following year. On 2 November,[4] the newspaper provided extended coverage of the commemorative rally in Tel Aviv, also showing a large photo of Rabin singing the "Song of Peace" on the stage moments before his assassination. The editorial reminded its readers that "Rabin was engraved in Israeli history as the person who broke the traditional hostile attitude toward the Palestinian people and its legitimate leadership. … This was due to his realistic and correct view of global and regional developments and his conviction, as an experienced military commander, that there is no security and no peace without legitimate rights. In this, he was a courageous and wise leader." On the following day the newspapers covered a commemorative rally by Peace Now, including a photo from the demonstration in which Israeli flags were very visible. The Friday supplement also gave significant attention to Rabin's assassination. An op-ed column by Anton Shalahat argued that Rabin's assassination and anti-Arab attitudes in Israeli society have similar origins. It was an explicit attempt to demarcate the political boundaries in Israel based on moral criteria rather than the usual Arab-Jewish divide.

The commemorative events in 1999 were the last to receive significant attention by *Al-Ittihad*. On 3 November the newspaper extensively covered the commemorative ceremony in Oslo, attended by Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, Palestinian president Yasser Arafat, and US president Bill Clinton. The accompanying photo depicted Arafat delivering his speech with a picture of Rabin behind him.

Not everyone shared the enthusiastic desire to join in the commemoration of Rabin. More specifically, mourning Rabin and, later, the commemoration of his assassination, was limited to those circles who aspired to be part of an inclusive definition of Israeli citizenship and considered it a realistic option. Among the newspapers examined, expressions of sorrow and mourning immediately after the assassination were evident in the three commercial newspapers and in *Al-Ittihad*, while the Islamist *Sawt al-Haq* kept a restrained tone of coverage (the secular nationalist *Fasl al-Maqal* started appearing only in 1996).

The immediate reactions to the assassination in *Sawt al-Haq* included celebration of the failure of the Israeli Security Services,[5] alongside its protest that political assassination is only condemned selectively. A week before Rabin's assassination, Fathi Shikaki, the leader of the Islamic jihad was assassinated in Malta (Israel has never denied reports in foreign publications that this was a Mossad operation). The first editorial published after Rabin's assassination stated: "We must ask those who condemn the

assassination of Rabin the following question: Where were these voices when Dr. Fathi Shkaki was assassinated a week ago? Is it permissible [to pour out] the blood of a Muslim and the blood of others is forbidden"?

The next year, following the first anniversary of the assassination, *Sawt al-Haq* reported an incident in a high school in the Arab town Kafr Kana, where the school administration censored the speech prepared by the head of the student council for the commemorative ceremony. According to the newspaper, the student, Kamal Awawde, intended to talk not only about the assassination but also about "what Rabin did to the Arabs and the Palestinians", but was forced to deliver a truncated speech. *Sawt al-Haq* criticized the school administration for commemorating Rabin's assassination while at the same time rejecting the students' initiative to commemorate the 1956 massacre of Arab citizens of Israel at Kafr Qasim (the anniversary of which occurs a few days earlier).

Fasl al Maqal adopted a similar line. In a central article following the first anniversary, the newspaper accused Rabin of partial responsibility for his own assassination, because he tolerated violence against Arabs (Ghenayem 1996). In both 'oppositional' newspapers, the religious *Sawt al-Haq* and the secular *Fasl al-Maqal*, even this reserved reference to Rabin soon disappeared and was replaced by an almost complete silence after 1996. A rare exception was a sarcastic comment in *Fasl al-Maqal* following the commemoration ceremony in Oslo in 1999. While mocking this ceremony, Azmi Bishara (1999) mentioned that some American newspapers were trying to make Rabin "the man of the twentieth century," in another attempt to "turn Israeli legends into world legends."

Findings from Surveys before 2000

This association between sympathy to Rabin and an integrative orientation is well reflected in the survey conducted in May 1996. In this survey the interviewees were presented a list of groups and persons and a 1-to-10 scale for each one of them. The four persons mentioned by the questionnaire were Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres (then Prime Minister of Israel), and Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the opposition in the Knesset. The survey was conducted shortly before the 1996 elections, in which Peres and Netanyahu were the two major candidates.

The exact wording was: "Below is a ten-point scale expressing the measure of support and sympathy or dislike and hatred toward a group or a specific person. 1 means a strong rejection (hatred) and 10 means a strong support. The higher the grade is the higher the sympathy. Please state to what extent you support or reject each of the following groups or

persons." The findings show that a majority of the Arab citizens of Israel were much closer to the sympathetic line of *Al-Ittihad* than to the cynicism of the other two political newspapers. The average sympathy index for Rabin was 7.15 compared with 7.31 for Peres, 5.81 to Arafat, and 2.83 to Netanyahu. The high level of sympathy to Peres is probably related to his being the successor of Rabin and the candidate in the upcoming election against the right-wing candidate, Netanyahu.

In order to measure integrative tendencies, I used two variables. One of them is a dummy variable, which indicates whether the interviewee clearly intend to vote for one of the candidates for prime minister in the elections scheduled for May 29 or alternatively will not vote, will use a blank ballot, did not know yet, or refused to answer. Because voting for any of the two candidates (Peres and Netanyahu) represented an active attempt to influence the Israeli political sphere, I consider it an indicator for the interviewee's orientation toward political integration. Indeed, those who intended to vote had significantly higher sympathy to Rabin than the other interviewees (7.53 vs. 5.33, $p < 0.001$ in t-test).

A second indicator is connections with Jews, a reflection of social integration. This aspect is measured by the question: "Do you have any connections with Jews?" The optional answers included: "Not at all," "Only work relations," "Yes, a friend or two," "A lot of relationships, including friendships."

Table 1 shows that sympathy to Rabin was significantly associated with personal connections with Jews—the deeper the connection, the higher the sympathy to Rabin is (the ANOVA test is an indication to the strength of the association). Furthermore, a similar association was not found in relation to any other leader, including Prime Minister Peres. In this regard there is a complete congruence between the public references to Rabin after his assassination and personal answers in the survey. The gap between the tendency of the DFPE to connect Rabin's memory to themes of Arab-Jewish partnership as opposed to the separatist tendencies of the NDA and the

TABLE 1 Sympathy to Different Politicians and Depth of Personal Connection with Jews in May 1996

	Arafat	Netanyahu	Peres	Rabin
No connections	5.77	2.83	7.13	6.63
Business connections	6.01	2.64	7	6.89
1–2 friends	5.3	3.27	7.62	7.21
Many connections, including friends	5.82	2.84	7.48	7.51
F-value in ANOVA test	1.219	1.186	1.698	3.442*

* $p<0.05$

Islamic movement is well reflected in this survey. At this point in history public memory and individual memories displayed similar patterns.

Following October 2000

The events of October 2000 reshuffled the political cards of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. During late September and early October, with the beginning of the second Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the flames spread inside the 1967 Green Line and the country witnessed a wave of demonstrations, stone throwing, blocked roads, and police gunfire against demonstrators. Inside Israel, the police killed thirteen Arab-Palestinians (twelve of them Israeli citizens); two of the victims were killed when a frenzied Jewish mob stormed down from Upper Nazareth and attacked the eastern neighborhood of Nazareth, after which the police intervened by opening fire against the Arabs.

The frustration that spread among the Palestinian citizens of Israel was also reflected in an almost complete withdrawal from participating, even passively, in further commemorations of Yitzhak Rabin. As part of the fifth anniversary of Rabin's assassination, the Rabin Center[6] organized a conference for Arab school principals aimed at increasing their awareness of the importance of Rabin's Memorial Day. Initially, 550 principals and 70 superintendents confirmed their participation (Rotem 2000). The event took place on 5 November, only a few weeks after the eruption of the second Intifada and the October 2000 events inside the Green Line. Arab school principals are known to be one of the most conservative and 'loyal' groups among the Arabs in Israel, due to a strict selection process guided by the General Security Services. Nevertheless, only 15 principals and a similar number of superintendents attended the event.

From 2000 on, *Al-Ittihad* stopped covering the annual commemorative rally in Tel Aviv, and pictures of Rabin did not appear in the newspaper on or around 4 November, as they had since 1995. This silence is evident in other Arabic newspapers as well and in Arab schools (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2009). As a general tendency, over the past decade Rabin's name has almost disappeared from the Arabic press. The sporadic mentioning of his name since then was usually related to his pre-1992 history and was done by actors who reject 'Israelification'. For example, the website Arab 48, belonging to the secular nationalist NDA, referred to a report in the Hebrew daily *Haaretz* about a new book that discovered that Rabin had suggested in 1956 to expel the Palestinians from the West Bank (Arab 48 2005). Arab speakers were invited to and did appear at the central annual memorial rally in Tel Aviv in 2000–2002, probably as a conciliatory

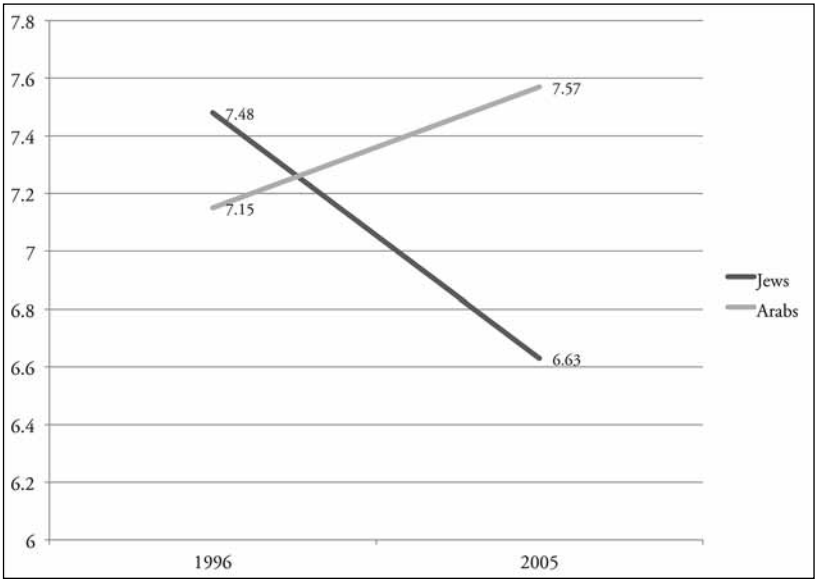
gesture by the Zionist left following October 2000, but they stopped participating soon after.

This silence stems partly from the active exclusion of the Arabs from the commemoration by the Jewish side (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2009). The Rabin Center, for example, invested much energy in projects aimed at mutual rapprochement between Jews only (Shavit 2001). However, this exclusion started immediately after the assassination, and therefore the abstention of *Al-Ittihad* from referring to Rabin can be easily linked to the frustration and anger that followed the October 2000 events.

Undercurrents of Memory

In the post-October 2000 period the compatibility of public memory and personal reference to Rabin disappeared. Rabin's absence from public discourse in Arabic, however, does not mean that Arab citizens of Israel forgot him. Public polls showed that sympathy to Rabin among Arab citizens did not vanish and even increased; at the same time it decreased among the Jewish population. The July 2005 survey replicated the sympathy index from 1996 (see Figure 1). It is noteworthy that in the 2005 survey the sympathy to Rabin among Arab citizens exceeded by far that of any other former prime minister. The second highest index was ascribed to Shimon

FIGURE 1 Sympathy to Rabin among Jews and Arabs in 1996 and in 2005



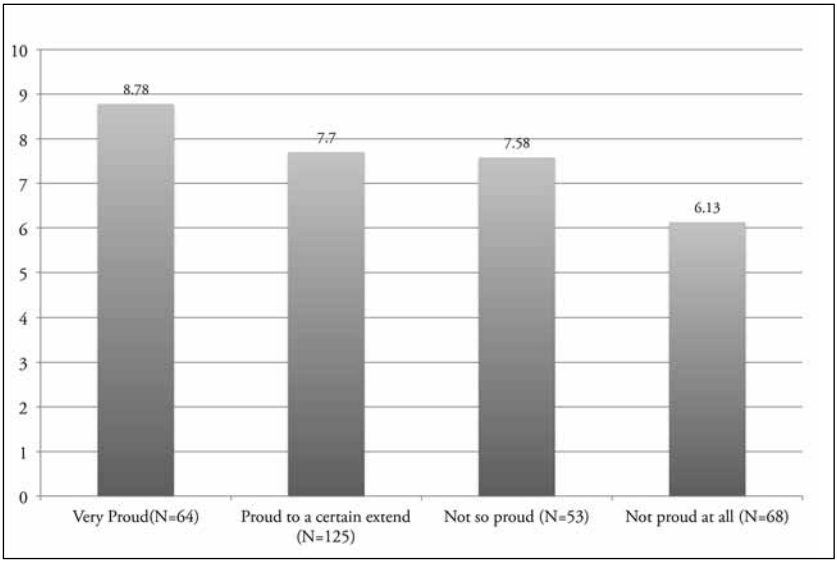
Peres and it was only 5.95, compared with 7.57 for Rabin. Among the Jewish interviewees Rabin ranked third, after David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin (Arian et al. 2005). Rabin was ranked first by Jews who stated that the definition "Israeli" suits them more than the definition "Jew" (Peri 2005: 241), so the nostalgia to Rabin is shared by Arabs and Jews who aspire to emphasize Israeli citizenship and it distinguishes both of them from Jews who prefer to emphasize Jewish identity.

In the same survey, Arab interviewees were much more likely than Jewish interviewees to think that Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir should have been sentenced to death (67.1% vs. 28.1%); and tended more to argue that his assassination was the most important event in the history of the state since its founding (47% vs. 37%) (Arian et al. 2005). Similar results were found in a survey conducted three months later by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies at Tel Aviv University. The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 585 Israeli citizens, and showed again that Rabin is remembered more positively by Arab citizens than by Jewish citizens. The interviewees were asked to choose an adjective to describe Rabin as a leader from the following: outstanding, fairly good, mediocre, fairly bad, failing. Among the Arabs 39 percent described Rabin as an outstanding leader while among the Jews only 20 percent described him as such (Ya'ar and Herman 2005).

Accordingly, among the Arab respondents there was more longing for Rabin's era. Among the Jewish sample 30 percent said that Israeli society has changed for the worse due to Rabin's assassination, while in the Arab sample, 61 percent expressed the same opinion. Although due to the small size of the Arab sub-sample in this particular survey (n=80) one should be careful with the interpretation of these results, the gap is still statistically significant and impressive in its magnitude.

The July 2005 survey with the larger sample has many indications that the association between 'Israelification' tendencies and remembering Rabin among the Arab citizens remained valid. One such indication is the answer given to the question: "Who is primarily responsible for the assassination?" Arab interviewees tended much more to accuse the "Israeli right" than did Jewish interviewees (36.6% vs. %14.7) (Arian et al. 2005). This gap echoes Greenberg's insight that Rabin tried to redesign political identities in Israel based on pro-peace and anti-peace camps (Greenberg 2000), rather than as Arabs versus Jews. The fact that more than one-third of the Arab interviewees pointed their fingers at the right suggests that a significant portion of them adopted this distinction. Another indication of the integrative orientation of Rabin's remembrance is the differential sympathy to Rabin among Arab citizens with different levels of pride in their Israeli identity (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 Sympathy to Rabin by Level of Pride in Israeli Identity, 2005



p< .001 in ANOVA test

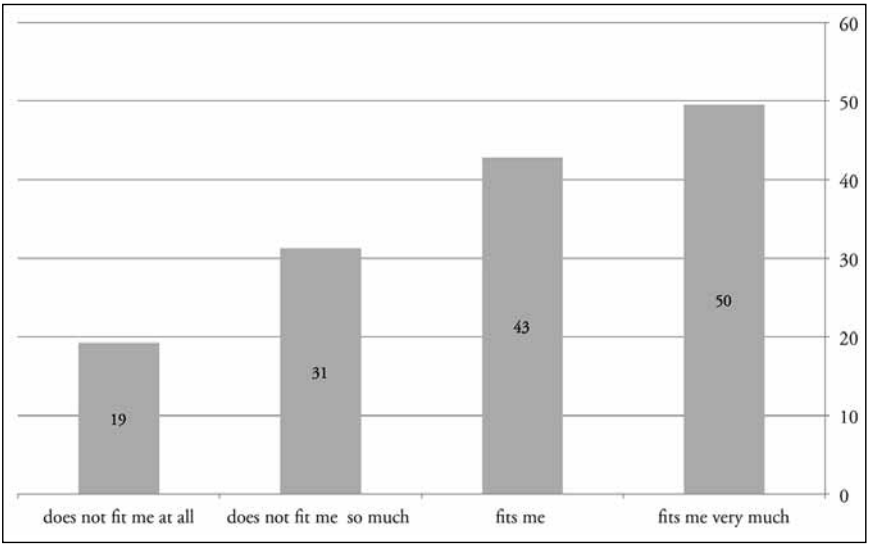
The survey I conducted in July–August 2008 showed a similar tendency and it is particularly important for validating my argument, since Rabin was not even mentioned in the questionnaire. Therefore, mention of his name by the interviewees reflects the status of Rabin in their memory much more than in the other surveys. In one central question in the survey, respondents were asked to mention up to four persons whom they consider to be the most important in the history of the country.[7] Unexpectedly, Yitzhak Rabin was the name most frequently mentioned by the Arab sample (38.6 percent), exceeding even that of the mythic Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat (31.1 percent). Among the Jewish respondents, Rabin was mentioned by only 27.4 percent, ranked fourth after Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion (74.0%), former prime minister Menachem Begin (39.4%), and the founder of political Zionism Theodor Herzl (29.4%).

Beyond the evidence for the strong presence of Rabin in the collective memory of the Arab citizens in Israel in 2008, it is also clear that the integrative orientation of this memory was maintained. The political implications of mentioning various historical figures can be traced by cross-tabulating the answers to the above-mentioned question with another open-ended question, which appeared in the questionnaire: "How do you define your identity?" The question sounds as vague in Arabic as it sounds in English,

and the aim was to avoid steering the respondent toward any particular self-definition. Based on the answers given, I distinguished in the Arab sample between those who included the word "Israeli" in their self-definition and those who did not.

It turns out that among those Arab respondents who included "Israeli" in their self-definition, 45 percent mentioned Rabin, while among the other respondents only 34 percent mentioned him ($p < 0.01$ in χ^2 test). Similarly, when I asked the respondents to describe "To what extent does the definition 'Israeli' fit you?" on a four-level scale, a clear correlation between the level of "Israeliness" and the likelihood of mentioning Rabin was revealed (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 Percentage of Respondents Who Mentioned Rabin in Answers to the Question: "To What Extent Does the Definition 'Israeli' Fit You?" (2008 survey)



The association between mentioning Rabin and self-identification as Israeli receives further validation in a multivariate analysis. Table 2 presents the odds ratios from a logistic regression in which mentioning Rabin is the dependent variable. It turns out that even if we control for religion (Muslims vs. others), ethnicity (Bedouins vs. others), academic education, and generation, that self-identification as Israeli still makes a statistically significant contribution for the prediction of mentioning Rabin. More specifically, everything else being equal, self-identification as Israeli increases the likelihood of mentioning Rabin by 49 percent.

TABLE 2 Odds Ratios from Logistic Regressions for Mentioning Rabin by Arab Respondents

Variable	Palestinian
Muslim	0.75
Bedouin	2.44**
Some college	1.64*
Old (60+)	2.24*
Young (18-29)	1.20
Self definition as Israeli	1.49*
Nagelkerke R2	0.07

*p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Conclusion

The first decade of the twenty-first century was characterized by deterioration in the relations between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. The events of October 2000, the second Intifada, the 2006 war in Lebanon and the Israeli attack on Gaza in December 2008–January 2009 had detrimental effect on these relations.[8] Several cases of localized violent clashes did not deteriorate into the gravity of those of October 2000 mainly because of a "fear balance" between the state and its Arab citizens (Smooha 2010).

Looking back from this socio-political reality, the years of Rabin's government have a special meaning. In those three years (1992–1995), the 'Zionist Left' and Palestinian citizens of Israel were as close as they have ever been to political co-operation, and optimistic predictions about the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were widespread. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that among Arabs in Israel the belief that it is possible to reconcile their Palestinian identity with their Israeli citizenship reached its zenith at the same time.

Rabin became a symbol of this hope and in the days after his assassination, many Arabs in Israel even believed that the political earthquake would leave them and the Israeli peace camp on one side of the political map while a defeated Israeli right would remain on the other side. The assassination of Rabin immediately became a symbol for the feasibility of the integrative option, and it is this meaning, which shaped the remembrance of Rabin among the Arab citizens of Israel in the ensuing period.

Paradoxically, Rabin's image among Arab citizens of Israel moved in opposing directions in each of the two spheres of memory examined. At the public level, the extensive attention given by some political actors before 2000 was transformed into silence in the post-2000 period. At the individual level, Rabin's image remained salient and the sympathy to him even increased.

How can we explain this paradox? First, the Arabic language media in Israel is a major component in the counter-hegemonic public sphere of Arabs in Israel (Jamal 2009). It is likely, therefore, that this silence is a form of protest by Arab journalists against the state authorities and the Jewish public following October 2000. If this is indeed a protest, then the importance of Rabin in the history of the country is not ignored, but rather there is a suspension of its acknowledgment. Accordingly, this protest is not activated in a personal interview because outside of the public sphere, people are not always constrained by a sense of collective responsibility and concern for the political effect of their answers.

Following this line of thought, it appears that both the journalists who are silent about Rabin in the public sphere as well as ordinary people who mention him in a survey do so because of Rabin's association with integrative tendencies. Rabin symbolizes similar themes in his appearance and in his absence. The silence could have become a form of protest only because it has a certain meaning in the public sphere.

A possible complementary explanation is that silence is needed especially for those agents of memory who led the initial public commemoration and now prefer to downplay their role out of shame, due to the failure of the integrative approach, whereas ordinary people have fewer reasons to be ashamed and do not feel they have to compensate for past mistakes by ignoring Rabin. For those among them who still aspire to be recognized as Israelis, the impasse of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict makes the reconciliation of Israeli and Palestinian identities more challenging and demanding than ever. The latent nostalgia for Rabin's time is a longing for the ephemeral period when being Israeli looked like a realistic and plausible option for Palestinian citizens of Israel.

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NOTES

1. It was directed by Asher Arian and Michal Shamir and carried out by Modi'in Ezrahi research.
2. The reliability of telephone interviews for the Arab minority in Israel has been frequently criticized. It has been argued that Arab respondents are suspicious and tend to feel threatened when being asked questions with a potentially political connotation (especially by phone), and that their answers might reflect a tendency to satisfy the authorities (Smooha 1998). As Smooha notes, however, in surveys he has taken since the mid-1970s, the high rate of support for the PLO—considered as a terrorist organization by Israeli law until 1993—and a long list of anti-establishment attitudes indicate that, collectively, the Arabs in Israel are not a frightened public.
3. The survey was carried out by the B.I. Lucille Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research at Tel Aviv University. The samples were based on proportional sampling of statistical areas within layers defined by religion, geographical region, and socio-economic status. In the second stage, numbers of households were sampled from each statistical area. In each household selected for the sample one adult of age 18 or above was interviewed. The response rate was 35 percent, which is compatible with the known response rate of phone interviews in Israel. The questions were conducted in Arabic by interviewers who are themselves Arab citizens of Israel and native Arabic speakers. The phone conversation typically lasted no more than 10 minutes. The questionnaire was part of a larger research project about memory and identity among Jews and Arabs in Israel, and this article only uses answers to specific questions from it.
4. Ironically, this is the date of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which is considered a tragedy in the Palestinian national narrative and was ignored by *Al-Ittihad* on that same day.
5. The headline in the first issue after the assassination (10 November 1995) was "Earthquake under the feet of the Israeli SHABAK," the Hebrew acronym for Israel's internal security agency, also referred to as the "Shin Bet."
6. An institute established in 1997 by the Knesset, which is "dedicated to improving the shape of Israeli society by ensuring that the legacy of Yitzhak Rabin continues to impact the youth and the people of Israel" (from the center's website, http://www.rabincenter.org.il)
7. I used the Arabic term *balad.* This can refer to a country or a certain geographical region, not necessarily a political unit. This terminological choice was made to enable respondents to bring up names from both Israeli and Palestinian histories, based on their own choice.
8. The attack on Gaza occurred after the last survey in this research was conducted, but is mentioned here since it is related to the same path of escalation.

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