The Israeli response to extremism: the social sphere

In what follows, the focus of the analysis of the ‘defending democracy’ shifts away from the legal and judicial domains extensively discussed in the previous chapter. Here, I examine the extent to which the democracy can generate ‘antibodies’ which will help stay the expansion of political radicalism in society and, in this fashion, also reduce the mobilising potential of organisations and political parties calling for an alternative to democracy. The most promising means by which to obtain such ‘antibodies’ is the process of political socialisation. Among all the agents of socialisation to which an individual is exposed throughout his/her childhood and youth, there is one which remains entirely faithful to the goals of the state: the state-run educational system. Moreover, the official conduit for the inculcation of democratic values among schoolchildren of all ages is the civic education curriculum. Any system of governance, no matter of which type, aspires to educate its citizens in the spirit of its beliefs. According to Michael Walzer, the aim of political socialisation is to unite citizens around national symbols and key values of the state. This is a necessary condition for guaranteeing the legitimacy of the governing polity and its stability. This process of socialisation applies to totalitarian forms of government that, by means of political indoctrination, succeed in somewhat reducing the need for the coercive–violent mechanisms at their disposal. Democracies, too, are interested in inculcating and sustaining, by means of both formal and informal socialisation, the political conceptions basic to the ruling polity.

The discourse regarding education in values and democracy is fundamentally a volatile one and has been the subject of much criticism, particularly from liberal and postmodern theorists who have traditionally disapproved of state involvement in the individual’s privacy and the political sovereign body’s attempt to shape its citizens ‘in its image’. Yet as Levinson observes, in the 1990s – a decade rife with ethnic conflict – violence and political extremism had resurfaced globally and, in consequence, liberal theorists began to reveal new interest in the subject of civic education after years of disregard and neglect.
Many in this field now consider an education programme dedicated to citizenship to be a highly important factor contributing to the development of the ‘civil society’ and the preservation of the liberal state’s stability. However, conforming to a traditional liberal stance, the writings of most of these scholars evince a rather narrow approach regarding the essentials of this democratic education. The core concept conveyed by this area of education, according to the majority of the liberalist school, should be the inculcation of the basic ideal of tolerance. Others extend the programme to include education in mutual respect but, generally speaking, not too much more. Departing from this approach, Levinson proposes teaching a more comprehensive profile of civic qualities while remaining faithful to the narrow boundaries of the liberal tradition. In her view, pupils in liberal democracies should learn about fundamental democratic rights, such as the freedoms of speech, assembly and religious expression, rights attaching to ownership and property, the right to privacy and the right to engage in political action. However, pupils must also be taught civic duties in order to be exposed to the formal aspect of governmental processes, that is, the constitution and constitutional proceedings, which form the value basis of the liberal state. Furthermore, Levinson suggests, the ways and means of political exercise should be taught. To achieve this, certain skills must be cultivated that will help pupils become more aware of political issues, including casting a ballot and even taking action if necessary. Finally, according to this approach, the school civics’ curriculum should aim to generate in learners the basics of the critical assessment of political alternatives.

Research conducted in the last decade has shown that some of the ideas discussed by Levinson have already been taken up by many liberal democracies and included in their curricula. Several countries, such as the United States and, at a later stage, Denmark and Germany, have expanded the role of civic studies from a reduced procedural perspective, which considers the structures and functions of governmental institutions, while consciously avoiding more controversial issues, to the adoption of liberal and even post-materialistic values into the school curricula.

However, while liberal democracies continue to debate the acceptable degree of state intervention in the education process as well as the nature of the ideas taught and the methods of conveying them, the quandaries with which the non-liberal democracy must struggle are much more profound. As illustrated in the introductory chapter, one of the main features of the non-liberal democracy is its adherence to the more formal meaning of the democratic idea. Democratic rules of the game are maintained, including free elections and multi-party competition but, at the same time, this form of government is distinct from liberal democracy. Conceptually, this is because non-liberal democracy places the interests of one group of citizens over those of other groups, encroaches upon the social sphere and restricts civil liberties. The non-liberal
democracy is therefore laden with numerous incongruities, and these are even more prominent in its education system.

Nearly all of Levinson’s proposals regarding civic education, as well as those of many other liberalist scholars, provide a genuine challenge for the ‘non-liberal democracy’. Liberal tradition places a strong emphasis on the individual and his/her liberties and this emphasis conflicts with the collective, and often ethnic, interest of the ‘non-liberal democracy’. Consequently, the paradox – and an inherent failing – of the ‘non-liberal democracy’ acquire added meaning when applied to the provision of citizenship lessons.

Incapable of reconciling the contradiction between the polity’s democratic and non-liberal principles, the ‘non-liberal democracy’ – and especially one that must contend with extremist elements – meets head on with paradox. On the one hand, it will attempt to inculcate democratic values among its pupils, in particular the essentials it believes will prevent future citizens of the state from becoming enamoured with radical ideologies and anti-democratic ideas. It will try to direct them towards action within legal political frameworks and, in that fashion, reduce the impact of the challenges it will inevitably face and, in consequence, be able to moderate its response to these elements. On the other hand, in the paramount importance invested in the national ideal and through the mobilisation of the dominant ethnic collective in the interests of the state there is the risk that, in the very cultivation of nationalist tendencies among the majority, ethno-nationalist seeds are planted which eventually may burgeon and ironically foster these same radical elements.

In the ensuing parts of this chapter, I attempt to examine how the State of Israel has contended with these paradoxes and, by the same token, try to find an answer to the paramount questions. Has the state-run education system in Israel undergone a gradual transition towards an increased emphasis on democratic values in its school curricula, consequently leading to the reinforcement of the ‘immunisation’ of the ‘defending democracy?’ Alternatively, has the non-liberal element gained the upper hand, thus reducing the prospects for the complete abandonment of the ‘militant’ attitude in response to extremism?

**Civics education in Israel: the predominance of nationalist ideas in the first decades**

In her comprehensive review of the evolution and formation of citizenship education in Israel, Orit Ichilov distinguishes between two major periods: the years preceding the State’s establishment (pre-1948) and those following it. In the pre-State period, the predominance of nationalist particularistic values and an almost complete absence of democratic tendencies were both prominent. However, this can be attributed to the non-democratic traditions among the majority of the Jewish population in Israel at the time. Many immigrant Jews
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came from Arabian, North African and Eastern European areas and, in the main, from countries which lacked democratic distinctions. Perhaps an even more significant part was played by the Zionist ideology, revolutionary processes and massive construction enterprises in Israel, all of which demanded universal consolidation around collective myths and national ideals.

The concrete result of the subordination of civic studies to ethno-national dictates was evident in ‘the education in Zionist citizenship’, which formed an integral part of Hebrew pedagogy prior to the State’s establishment. The essentials of ‘education in Zionist citizenship’ well represented ethno-national aims. They embraced the entire fabric of the Jewish pupil’s life at school and were integrated into all class courses – particularly those subjects where it was easy to instil ideological strains, such as Moledet (geography of Israel, literally, ‘homeland’) and Bible classes – but could even be found in mathematical studies. The subject matter of such citizenship studies underscored the absolute right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, while disregarding the interests of local Arab residents or at the most revealing a patronising attitude towards them and depicting them as backward natives.

The insemination of ethno-national principles by means of the education system did not end with the Proclamation of Independence in 1948. Approximately four years later, the ethnic component attained formal status in the educational system. As part of the first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion’s vision of Mamlakhtitut (statehood), education in Israel was nationalised, a process that led to the elimination of most of the more distinctive educational orientations instituted during the pre-State era. In paragraph 2 of the Statehood Education Act of 1953, the intentions of the nascent State to subject the national education system to the interests of the nation-in-the-making were transparent. ‘The goal of Statehood education is to establish a basic education in this State upon the values of Israeli culture and scientific achievements, on the love of the homeland and loyalty to the State and Nation of Israel.’

This policy was put into practice by performing a twofold weeding-out process, in both the general education programme and, in particular, in civic courses. First civic studies was reduced to the formal procedural aspect of governmental institutions, and then the programme was marginalised in relation to other courses whose objective was, in part, to emphasise the ethnic spirit of the Israeli national ideal among Israeli students.

A review of the works of liberal scholars in a wide range of disciplines associated with civic studies reveals several subject categories. The leading category comprises the liberties espoused by democracy. The formal aspect of governmental or political proceedings and institutions comes some way down the list. The State of Israel, by its very nature a ‘non-liberal democracy’ and therefore unable to guarantee equal rights for all of its citizens, has consciously elected to avoid any debate regarding those rights or any other sensitive issue specific to
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Figure 3.1 A quantitative content analysis of the contents of Israeli civics education books

In a quantitative content analysis of textbooks, including junior high and high school civics books from the 1970s and 1980s, empirical support for the preferred status of the formal element in the school curriculum was indicated by a significant disparity in favour of the procedural component over any other. Figure 3.1 is based on Ichilov’s analysis, and demonstrates that political structures and procedures represented 31 per cent of the subject matter of these books, while the Arab–Israeli conflict took up 21.2 per cent, social problems 20 per cent and economics’ topics only 13.4 per cent. As anticipated, with regard to the subject of the ‘non-liberal democracy’, Jewish nationalist principles also permeated civic studies’ curricula and took up about 9.1 per cent of the topics appearing in the books. Another fact that comes as no surprise is the negligible status accorded to the rights of the individual in the State of Israel, discussion
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of which is likely to offer direct contradiction of the idea of the ‘non-liberal democracy’, and therefore reached a proportion of merely 0.6 per cent.\textsuperscript{19}

However, as noted earlier, it was not only textbooks that evidenced a focus on the formal aspect of Israeli politics. Bagrut (Israeli matriculation) exams on civics also reflected this tendency. A Bagrut exam from the summer of 1988, sampled for the purposes of the present study, shows that the weighting of the compulsory subject of ‘The Political System of Governance in Israel’ was 26 points. Pupils were required to answer one of these three questions:

1 The Knesset is the supreme legislative body of the State of Israel. Nevertheless, it is qualified to empower other authorities to enact subsidiary legislation. Why does the Knesset confer its legislative authorities to other authorities? What are the types of subsidiary legislation? Specify two forms of accountability for this legislation.

2 There are those who favour transferring many authorities from the central to the local government. Present two arguments in support of this position and two objections to it. Submit three examples of how the local government is accountable to the central government in Israel.

3 There is an argument positing that the national unity government in Israel in 1984 reduced the opposition’s effectiveness. Explain what is the difference between the composition of a national unity government and that of a coalition government in Israel. Describe three parliamentary implements employed by the opposition in Israel.\textsuperscript{20}

The complete reproduction of these questions is not intended to weary the reader but rather to present him or her with the picture in full. The formulation of these questions exemplifies how the compulsory element of the Bagrut exam in citizenship restricted the Israeli adolescent student to formal and, to a great degree, technical subjects found in the remote margins of Israeli political discourse. Even the third question, regarding the opposition’s standing in a democratic government, has been almost completely drained of substance and forces the student to focus mainly on the mechanical aspect of the opposition’s actions.

The precedence given to formal topics and the tendency of civic studies to avoid in-depth discussion of substantive issues were significantly sustained by the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict. The conflict was taught as an optional topic in civic studies but often from the narrow perspective of the national narrative. In fact, in the Bagrut exam noted above, alongside a topic such as Tfutzot Yisrael (Lands of the Diaspora), which primarily underscored Israel’s affinity with Jews living abroad, there was also an optional chapter on the Arab–Israeli conflict. The two questions under this heading, which, due to limited space, could not be presented here in their entirety, well reflected the traditional Israeli orientation regarding the rightness of the path chosen by the nation’s leaders and the moral superiority of the Israeli side in the conflict.

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However, the most striking example of the defusing of the highly charged issue of the relations between Israel and the Arabs was ironically found in the optional topic ‘The Arabs in the State of Israel’. The three questions encountered by the Israeli student (see below) are an indication of how the Education Ministry in Israel could exclude substantial issues from the discussion on the cleavage between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority and in their place focus on the lesser aspects of the said cleavage.

1 Since the State’s establishment, there have been far-reaching changes in the Arab educational system, however, the system must still cope with formidable problems. Describe three key changes in the Arab educational system and explain their causes. What are the problems facing the Arab educational system in the 1980s?

2 Changes in the agricultural department of the Arab sector since the State’s establishment have had a noticeable effect on Arab society in Israel. Describe three principal changes in the Arab agricultural department and explain how the changes you have presented have had an effect on Arab society in Israel.

3 Arab intellectuals in Israel have held a significant role in the progression of Arab society. What roles do Arab intellectuals fill in Arab society and how do they contribute to its advancement? Provide examples and explain three specific obstacles encountered by these intellectuals when filling these roles.21

Despite the fact that these questions reflect the conventional policy of an avoidance of the complexity of ethnic relations in Israel and, in particular, the question of the Arabs’ minority status and their rights in a democratic state, it appears that the efforts of the authors to devise questions of a neutral nature did not fare well either. An additional perusal of the questions gives the impression that they were written from a paternalistic and, to a certain degree, ethnocentric standpoint. This conclusion is reinforced by Bar-Tal’s research on the Israeli educational system’s orientation toward Arabs. Bar-Tal found that although the delegitimation of Arabs was indeed rare, textbooks presented them mostly in terms of negative stereotypes.22

Indeed, the reduction of civic studies to formal rudiments, as well as its detachment from social and political reality, considerably served the State in its attempts to instil in its future citizens the conviction that Israel is, to all intents and purposes, a democratic state. However, this policy also obscured the contradictions embedded in the political system and at the same time repressed the critical capacities of those citizens.

Although it would be going too far to claim a causal relationship between the two, a 1999 study evaluating the attitudes of Israeli citizens regarding the quality of its democratic governmental system confirms the assumption that Israelis generally find little fault with the democratic nature of their State.23 Findings show that while subjects born and educated in Israel expressed high levels of satisfaction with the degree of the State’s democracy, immigrants’ levels

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of satisfaction (particularly those from the West) were much lower. In response to more specific questions, e.g. regarding the protection of civil rights in Israel, native-born Israelis expressed very high levels of satisfaction in comparison with immigrants (75 per cent of the Israelis strongly agreed that individual rights are respected in Israel, in contrast to 50 per cent of immigrants). These findings were replicated and found even more prominence over the issue of equal rights in Israel (61 per cent of Israelis claimed there were full equal rights in Israel in comparison to 22 per cent of immigrants). The significance of these findings is that while Israelis born and educated in this country adopted reigning attitudes regarding the democratic nature of the State, immigrants from Western democracies, wielding a broader perspective of the implementation of the democratic ideal, expressed a greater degree of scepticism regarding Israel’s conformity to the liberal democratic model.

Yet, the State of Israel did not settle for the simple diminution of the contents of citizenship lessons, and another tactic was employed in the restriction and dilution of civic studies. As the next section demonstrates, the course was accorded a marginal status in comparison to other subjects, in particular those which reinforced the unity of the national identity.

The status of civic studies

Together with formal civics education, the Israeli education system made an effort to widely inculcate Zionist–Jewish values by means of subjects such as Bible studies, geography, Jewish history and Tushba (Oral Law). The first sign of the subjection of citizenship courses to national orientations was evident in the fact that the training of civics teachers was part of general academic history or the history of the Jewish people. This was because, unlike most other subjects, citizenship was not considered a discipline in itself requiring any special training. Therefore, a single teacher was responsible for subjects such as Jewish history or the history of Eretz Yisrael (‘Land of Israel’) – which reflected the ethno-national aspects of the State and served the purpose of constructing a common history and consolidation around the nation’s symbols and myths – together with subject matter that was supposed to be of a more liberal and universal nature. The findings of a survey administered to civic studies teachers indicated that despite their general willingness to teach more diverse subject matter, they themselves tended not to prefer universal values over national values. In the curricula of technical schools, the marginality of civic studies was even more pronounced. Civics was taught under the heading ‘Study of Nation and State’, or, in other words, a section of the curriculum that dealt with Jewish history.

An additional indication of the marginality of civic studies in comparison to other subjects was evident in the number of school hours accorded to this
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subject. Citizenship courses in Israel are not taught at all in elementary school (grades 1–6), the schoolchild’s first contact with the formal state education system. In junior high school (grades 7–9), few schools list the subject on their course programme, despite the fact that a special curriculum has been designed for pupils of this age. In addition to the personal preferences of school principals, a reason for the omission of this subject is rooted in its non-enforcement by the Ministry of Education. These tendencies reflected Ministry of Education policy, which has discouraged the exposure of pupils to potentially provocative and disputable issues.

Therefore, the first genuine contact of schoolchildren with civic studies subject matter has tended to take place only in their final year of high school, the grade 12. In that year, teachers are obligated to teach compulsory subjects for the matriculation exams, and, in consequence, devote all their time and energy to the instruction of the procedural aspects of the subject on which the exam has traditionally focused.28

The marginality of civic studies is additionally underscored in the Bagrut certificate for the Israeli adolescent student. Despite being an apparently compulsory subject, civic studies is equal to only one learning unit in the matriculation certificate. In comparison, subjects such as Bible studies, Hebrew, composition and literature – courses that are dependable conduits for the dissemination of national values – all benefit from a minimum weighting of two compulsory learning units. Translated into hours of instruction, this means that each of these subjects consists of a minimum of 180 class hours, in contrast to 90 hours of citizenship lessons. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education gave adolescent students the option of extending each of these subjects up to five learning units (450 class hours) for the final exam while civic studies was restricted to its original single unit.

Time and again, objections regarding the peripheral status of civic studies in Israel have been directed to the Ministry of Education. Professor Emanuel Gutmann, who was chiefly responsible for the design of the course programme in citizenship studies, appealed in the early 1990s to the Minister of Education and argued:

Citizenship courses have been assigned, according to the general school curricula, no more than 90 class hours (out of all the years of high school education). In the present programme, three subjects were taught in these 90 hours, each allotted 30 hours. ‘The Polity of the State of Israel’ was a requisite subject and this was supplemented by two additional courses out of five electives... For some years now, it has become quite clear to ministerial officials in charge of civic education that it is impossible to teach the course on Israeli polity in thirty hours and therefore, in reality, many more hours are devoted well and above this quota. The inevitable consequence was that in recent years, only two subjects in effect were taught, one requisite and one elective.29
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The test of time has shown that this complaint, like numerous others tucked away in the Ministry of Education archives, was cordially acknowledged and then discarded in its dusty files.

To sum up, the above findings confirm that for many years, the Israeli pupil has been exposed to the subject of civics for a short period of time, and then only at a relatively late stage (grade 12). Moreover, out of the whole far-reaching and complex fabric of political and social life in Israel, he or she was introduced to only those aspects which were easy for authorities to deal with and which indirectly were intended to reinforce the younger generation’s convictions about the legitimacy of nationalist ideals and the governing body. In this fashion, the education system served the State in its efforts to shape a collective consciousness based on the belief that Israel is a democratic state, in spite of the institutionalised dominance of the Jewish majority and the State’s powerful station vis-à-vis its citizens. What instruction took place was of course delivered without a discussion of the middle on grey areas which might evoke questions with regard to the essence of a polity of this type. In all, the inevitable and telling by-product of these circumstances has been the weakening of the democratic quality of the State.

Indeed, research conducted since the early 1980s demonstrated that political extremism, ethnocentrism and a regression from democratic values are deep-seated among youth and adults alike in this country.30 Most of these studies reveal significant support for undemocratic attitudes, e.g. curtailing the freedom of speech of political opponents, the exclusion of ethnic minorities from society and Israeli politics, a call for a strong leadership that can navigate the country as it sees fit and an increase in religious legislation. Comparative research further accentuates the extremist profile of certain sectors of Israeli society and reveals that adolescent Israeli students tend to score very highly on measures of ethnocentrism and authoritarianism in comparison to students abroad.31

Quandaries accompanying the efforts to reform civic studies

Three pivotal events took place in Israeli political history during the 1980s and 1990s. On the face of it, these events should have spurred the country’s leadership to adopt a more ‘immunised’ route, which should have included, inter alia, an extensive reformation of the civic studies curriculum in Israel, an expansion of its framework and the incorporation of more liberal and humanistic principles. Chronologically, the events are as follows. First, there was the penetration of the 1984 Israeli Parliament by a racist party (Kach); later, the signing of the Oslo Agreements of 1993; and, more recently, the assassination in 1995 of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

In retrospect, it appears that these events did in fact inspire planners of the...
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education system to change its traditional approach and submit an extensive and new-fashioned plan of action. The blueprint was built on shoring up democratic studies and a modification of civics course material in order to introduce the student to liberal democratic views (principally, a comprehensive schooling on the concept of democracy with an emphasis on human rights and liberties) as well as problematic and disputable issues (a broad and critical discussion of the ethnic character of the Israeli democracy and the political expressions of the cleavages that cut across it). However, the policy taken up by the State of Israel in respect of civic studies suffered from a lack of consistency. On the one hand, steps were indeed taken to bring about a broad and genuine change in civics education with the aim of strengthening a democratic liberal perspective. On the other, the non-liberal constraints on the State still prevented a smooth transition to a liberalised curriculum for civic studies and instead this process advanced quite unsteadily, punctuated by stops and starts and numerous diversions.

The inaugural efforts to liberalise civic studies can therefore be linked to the election of Rabbi Meir Kahane to the Israeli Parliament. Following Kahane’s success in parliamentary elections and the many surveys and studies which confirmed that the racist rabbi’s views had indeed begun to find a stronghold in the Israeli streets, a new sort of anxiety became apparent, both among policymakers as well as among the rank and file, regarding the future of democracy in Israel. Among the assortment of State responses, which have already been elaborated in preceding chapters, there was the undoubted influence of the Kahanist phenomenon on the chief executive body of the education system. A short while after Kahane’s election to the Knesset, the Ministry of Education decided, for the first time since the establishment of the Israeli State, that priority must be given to the democratic element over the nationalist–particularist element in civics education. If, until the 1980s, documented material regarding the education of the Israeli citizen in democratic values was infrequent or coincidental in the Ministry of Education’s archives (where the setting of goals remained abstract and the recommendation was predominantly the integration of the topic of democracy in various courses), then, after Kahane’s election to the Knesset, the tone changed, and the emphasis shifted from an ‘education in Zionist citizenship’ to ‘Democratic education’. In addition, the years 1986 and 1987 were declared years of democratic education.12

Nearly nine years after Kahane’s achievement of Knesset membership, the Oslo Agreements between Israel and the PLO were signed. This second critical turning point was supposed to have led to the reform of school curricula. The Oslo Agreements were to mark the passage from the belligerent past to a new era of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and, within this framework, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority were committed to altering their
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school curricula and removing all ethnocentric indications. The third and perhaps most traumatic event and milestone for Israeli society was the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish perpetrator, Yigal Amir, graduate of the national religious education system, explained that he committed the murder out of the belief that not even a democratically elected government had the authority to make decisions which stood in stark contrast to the Jewish Halakha or the will of a sector of the nation.

In spite of the significant public outcry that arose in the wake of these events and proclamations heralding a new direction in the curricula of civic studies, a retrospective analysis of the steps taken to translate words into action reveals many setbacks in the attempt to bring about substantial reformation in this area. Obstacles preventing the liberalisation of civic education due to the failings of the non-liberal democracy can be examined according to three principal levels of analysis: structural; policy-making; and policy implementation.

Structural level

One of the first steps taken by the Ministry of Education, in 1985, immediately subsequent to Rabbi Meir Kahane’s election to Parliament, was the establishment of a special division for the advancement of democracy and coexistence in Israel. The inherent tension between the democratic and non-liberal components of this country could already be felt in the making of this decision. The new resolution was in effect an official acknowledgement by the Israeli Ministry of Education that formal civics education in Israel – contrary to other countries where the term ‘civics education’ includes concepts which address both general democratic values as well as the country’s system of governance – had not fulfilled its role in strengthening democratic values.

The called-for step was a broad reform of the civics education programme, entailing an increase in class hours and the replacement of formal subject matter with discussion of more substantive democratic principles. However, this type of reform could be tolerated only under one condition – a change in the State’s attitude. Still loath to abandon the ethnic, anti-liberal, character of Israeli democracy, the State opted for a more innovative agenda in democratic studies. The course of formal instruction on citizenship remained in its traditional form and a complementary programme was initiated for teaching democratic values. Although the formal course of civics remained marginal in terms of class hours and resources, in relation to democratic studies it still enjoyed a clear advantage. Traditional civics studies remained an integral part of the official Israeli school curriculum, whereas democratic studies, which focused more deeply on the relations between Jews and Arabs, the idea of ‘rule of law’ and
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civil rights, received extra-curricular status, making it an optional subject for the majority of school principals. They preferred to devote all available school hours to matriculation subjects.

In addition, not only was democratic studies assigned peripheral status, but the Division for Democracy and Coexistence (DDC) itself was considered a marginal body in the Ministry of Education and therefore a pawn in the hands of policy-makers. Shortly after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, elections were held in which the right-wing bloc, under the leadership of Benyamin Netanyahu, was victorious by a small margin. Zevulun Hammer, representative of the Mafdal, was appointed to the post of minister of education. Hammer, in line with the traditional position of his party, maintained there was no justification for promoting the democratic aspects of civics education without a similar expansion of Jewish nationalist values. He therefore decided on the establishment of the Board for the Education of Values (BEV) whose objective was to be an umbrella framework for the agencies responsible for the cultivation of Jewish studies, along with the Division for Democracy and Coexistence. Once again, the quandary inherent to the non-liberal democracy reared its notorious head. A single directorate of the Ministry of Education became responsible for both reinforcing Jewish national identity as well as the assimilation of liberal values. The practical implication was that these two conflicting initiatives now operated under the same organisational framework. The Education Ministry’s budget proposal for the 1999 fiscal year illustrates this predicament. The proposal states that the Board for the Education of Values financially supports ninety voluntary organisations involved in Jewish Zionist education on one hand and ninety voluntary bodies associated with democratic education on the other. However, the Board gives priority to those institutions which combine the two fields. A close inspection of the proposal revealed that this type of body did not exist.

After Minister Hammer’s death and the appointment of Itzhak Levy, a member of the same party, to the post of minister of education, ministerial priorities were once again rewritten. Minister Levy decided to pare down the management and budget of the BEV, established by his predecessor. Levy understood the difficulty of running two segregated systems of instruction on similar subject matter, while only one of the two was anchored in the official course curriculum. According to him, the decision to cut back on the Board’s activities was the outcome of two major predicaments: first, the significant financial expense of two coexisting systems; and second, the failure of the BEV to reach its projected goals. As the minister saw it, there was no way to force teachers and pupils disinterested in the Board’s activities at their school to make the effort to teach and learn subject matter which was not an integral part of the formal school curriculum. Ultimately, a short while after left-wing Meretz member Yossi Sarid became minister of education, a final decision was issued to dis-
mantle both the BEV and the DDC. Corroboration provided by the civics education supervisor reinforces the view that the status of these two councils as extraneous to the education system minimised their effectiveness.37

In this case, despite the official intentions of the Ministry of Education to give priority to the liberal–universal aspect in relation to the non-liberal ethnic aspect, policy-makers with the final say ensured that civic studies continued in its traditional procedural form. The initiative to elevate the standing of democratic studies with the formation of the DDC appeared to be a commendable venture but, in effect, it failed from the moment of its inception. This was a consequence, first, of its peripheral status and, later, of policy-makers’ objections to the teaching of democratic values in isolation from national values.

Policy-making

The perspective of policy-making even more markedly reflects the symbiotic and inseparable connection that exists between the teaching of nationalist and democratic values in Israel. In March 1995, about one-and-a-half years after the signing of the Oslo Agreements and one year prior to Prime Minister Rabin’s assassination, Professor Amnon Rubinstein, Meretz member and minister of education at that time, appointed a committee to advance the democratic reform of state-run civics education, to be headed by Mordechai Kremnizer, a professor of law. Its aim was the ‘development of a comprehensive initiative for the inculcation of citizenship in pupils as a moral and behavioural foundation shared by all citizens of the State’.38 The panel consisted primarily of academicians and representatives of diverse ethnic, political and religious groups in Israeli society. It tried to learn the nature and roots of the problems in the civics curriculum and attempted to address the need for change in the instruction in political processes deemed responsible for instilling anti-liberal attitudes among pupils:

While the widespread public belief is that democracy is the government of the majority, the more liberal conception of democracy has not been sufficiently internalised, i.e., a political system placing at its centre the individual who has the power to shape and develop his or her personality as a human being in a society whose ultimate purpose is to defend individual rights and guarantee the protection of the rights of various groups in society. A noticeable weakness is in the lack of an internalisation of universalistic values detected, for example, in attitudes toward Arabs and ultra-orthodox, freedom of speech and the freedom of press . . . There is an aspiration toward a homogenous and harmonious society while, in actuality, it is necessary to cultivate an awareness of the diversity and pluralism of this society, the legitimacy of partaking in debate, the positive aspects of debate and the guidelines for settling conflicts based on a tolerant approach, while using peaceful and democratic ways.39
In summation, the panel presented proposals for an extensive reform of civics education while granting a clear priority to liberal perceptions and, above all, individual rights over the rights of the Jewish collectivity. On the face of it, it seemed that this committee and its clear-cut policies indicated a consensus among Israeli policy-makers regarding the genuine necessity to liberalise civics education curricula. However, reality proved otherwise.

Four years earlier, in October 1991, the minister of education at that time, Zevulun Hammer (Mafdal), had nominated a committee with an almost identical composition, although the goal of this committee was to review the status of Jewish studies in state-run education. Even though the committee’s conclusions demonstrated a relatively pluralistic tendency, the gist of its recommendations was straightforward – proposals for expanding Jewish studies and courses in the history of the Israeli people at all levels of instruction (from elementary to high school). Furthermore, the Shinhar Committee, named after Professor Aliza Shinhar who was placed in charge, reinforced the status of four Jewish subjects in the matriculation exams and also introduced new subjects.40

Once again, Ministry of Education officials were faced with the double imperative deeply embedded in the Israeli political structure: on the one hand, they were confronted with the need to bolster the State’s democratic foundations by introducing liberal values; and, on the other, they strove to maintain the unity of the dominant Jewish ethnic group with regard to its national–religious symbols. The BEV was assigned the role of applying the recommendations of both reports, a fact that only exacerbated the state of paradox characteristic of the Board. After the Board was dismantled, two supervisors from the Ministry of Education were placed in charge of implementing proposals. Today, these two share a single desk in the Ministry of Education in Jerusalem, which seems to be another symbolic illustration of the inability to distinguish between liberal and national objectives.

Policy implementation

So far, the paradoxes involved in the efforts to steer the social base of the State of Israel in a more ‘immunised’ direction by formulating certain policies and promoting democracy studies in Israel at the institutional level have been presented. In point of fact, this same paradoxical picture was similarly repeated in the efforts to bring about structural change in the formal school civic studies curriculum.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, then later on with the Kremnizer Report and the failure of the DDC, there is evidence of attempts at the revision of compulsory topics of the civic studies programme. The Ministry of Education team responsible for this programme worked vigorously in order to present study cur-
ricula that would address the essence of social and political life in the State of Israel and, by the same token, demote the formal procedural aspect from its dominant position. This approach constituted a challenge to the Ministry of Education’s official policy over the years, where controversial topics were kept out of the school classes.41

An initial perusal of *Being Citizens in Israel*, the basis of the new curriculum and approved as the core textbook for the study of civics in the year 2001, indeed presents an in-depth review of the substantial issues of the State of Israel. These include the status of the Arab population, cleavages in Israeli society, the status of civil law vis-à-vis religious law, the rule of law in a democratic state and civil rights.42 This doctrinal turnaround and, in particular, the Ministry of Education’s apparent renunciation of its commitment to national narratives in favour of liberal principles conforming with Levinson’s tenets, supposedly reflects the same transition toward liberalism which, according to Shafir and Peled,43 Israeli society is presently undergoing.

However, a second, and more informed, scrutiny of the implementation of the curricular reform reveals otherwise. Civic studies, it appears, has never been able to liberate itself from its inherent failings since the State’s establishment and, therefore, recent declarations on the liberalisation of values in Israel have turned out to be premature. A methodical survey of the programme’s core issues and the degree of significance accorded to democratic liberal values proves that the resilience of ‘Jewish ethno-nationalist tendencies’ is not to be made light of. Examples are found in the chapter introducing students to the ‘Principles of the Social Contract’. In contrast to what might be expected of a chapter with that title, much of it is devoted to the biblical pact drawn between Israel and G-d. Moreover, this text makes it quite clear that in the time of the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah the Jewish nation embraced the authority of the Oral Law as the standing constitution of the State and people of Israel.44 Therefore, despite the declared intentions of the new programme’s designers to reduce the degree of the Israeli student’s exposure to ethnic, religious and national values in the civic studies programme – values which he or she would in any case encounter in other classes – the role of the State in shaping the Jewish citizen who is above all loyal to his or her people and the Torah would not be completely abandoned.

However, this does not bring to an end the complexities of teaching civic studies in Israel in the new millennium. Apart from the difficulties created by the ideological hindrances noted above, reform also faced administrative obstacles. The new curriculum was supposed to include twice the number of civics class hours in order to provide enough time to teach all the subject matter of the programme in its new format.45 But, in reality, the number of class hours remained the same, that is, ninety class hours in the final school year. The cutback in the number of hours required screening out many topics from the
intended programme, and most of the eliminated subject matter unfortunately happened to touch upon essential concerns of the State: the cleavages of Israeli society and the status of the Arab minority; freedom of speech in a democratic society; and elections in Israel. On the other hand, the formal aspect, provided by the chapter depicting the political system and governmental institutions, still enjoyed a central role in the new curriculum.\textsuperscript{46} According to the civics education nationwide supervisor, even after the removal of some of the course matter, the number of issues was still significantly higher than the time allotted for their delivery in class. This posed a problem because civics teachers, who, over the years, became accustomed to instructing in the formal aspect of the Israeli political system, preferred to stick to the course material with which they were familiar. In fact, in many cases, they felt comfortable enough to overlook the new and thornier issues such as the debate over the extent to which the State of Israel conforms to the definition of a democratic polity.\textsuperscript{57}

There are still further problems. A new curriculum, currently under discussion by the Ministry of Education, proposes that several subjects, including civic studies, should no longer be included in the school curriculum as required subjects for the matriculation exam. According to the Ministry of Education supervisor responsible for the pedagogy of civics, this would lead to a situation where school principals would rather devote school hours to compulsory matriculation subjects than to allocate time to those subjects, such as civics, which no longer require a final exam.\textsuperscript{48} These new plans are in outright defiance of the recommendations of the Kremnizer Committee, which asserted that citizenship studies should be enhanced and taught as early as elementary school, and throughout junior high and high school, culminating in a matriculation exam equal to 3–5 learning units. Another factor weakening the effectiveness of a critical and universalistic study programme is the Ministry of Education’s decision not to include a single social science subject (sociology, political science) in the list of compulsory matriculation exams.

**Educational reform in civics education in the new millennium: a quantitative assessment**

Notwithstanding the many paradoxes shrouding civic studies in general and the new curriculum in particular, I sought to examine the degree to which, if at all, it was possible to verify the effect of civic studies on adolescent students’ attitudes. Interest centred in various topics pertaining to the wide gamut of democratic life, and whether civics courses still have the ability to help the State of Israel ‘immunise’ the social structure of the ‘defending democracy’.

However, before presenting research findings, several theoretical issues pertaining to the relationship between instruction in citizenship and the internalisation of democratic values among students should be mentioned. From the
early 1960s, beginning with an intensive research involvement in the education in democratic concepts, two main schools of thought have made their mark. The conclusions of both schools relied on empirical findings. The first, more senior, school, whose prominent representatives include Langton and Jennings as well as Niemi and Sobieszek, posited that correlations between an education in citizenship and the espousal of political knowledge and democratic attitudes are marginal. On the other hand, according to the second group of scholars, whose roots are planted in the works of much earlier researchers such as Merriam and V. O. Key (works which have, however, gained considerable reconfirmation in recent years), participation in citizenship courses, particularly in combination with additional factors such as an appropriate class atmosphere, is in fact found to be in positive correlation with the internalisation of democratic values.

Under the present circumstances, it would be pretentious to try to bring this controversy to a resolution. Rather, by relying on the most prominent approaches of the second school in the last few years, which posit that the teaching of democratic principles at school necessarily has the effect of consolidating more democratic values among pupils, this section seeks to assess the degree of influence of the new civic study programme on the attitudes of youth in Israel.

The research design devised for this purpose was based on sampling the adolescent student population and administering questionnaires to 729 students in five state-run schools in northern Israel. The sample was made up of two groups. The first group consisted of 333 grade 12 students (students in their last year at high school, aged 17–18) who studied civics in their last year of school according to the new curriculum. These students constituted 45.7 per cent of the sample population. The second group consisted of 396 grade 11 students (aged 16–17) who had not yet been exposed to civics courses at high school. These students constituted 54.3 per cent of the sample population. Questionnaires were distributed during March 2001.

The aim of the research was to examine the effects of an education in democratic principles on the complex of perceptions associated with political and democratic issues, while conducting a comparison between the two groups. In order to minimise the effect of intervening variables, particularly socio-demographic variables, an attempt was made to ensure, while selecting the sample, representation of the various population sectors. Accordingly, the sample included 285 boys (39.2 per cent) and 444 girls (60.8 per cent). In terms of parental education there was some preference for students of parents with a higher education (father’s education – 2.6 per cent elementary school, 36.9 per cent high school and 60.4 per cent higher education; mother’s education – 2.4 per cent elementary school, 32.5 per cent high school and 65.1 per cent higher education). However, with regard to students’ ethnic origin, the distribution
Jewish extremism and violence

appeared proportional and commensurate with State population figures (father’s country of birth – 45.5 per cent Israel, 14.1 per cent Europe–America, 12.1 per cent Asia–Africa, and 25.1 per cent countries of the former USSR; mother’s country of birth – 49 per cent Israel, 14.1 per cent Europe–America, 11.5 per cent Asia–Africa, and 25.4 per cent countries of the former USSR; student’s country of birth – 77.6 per cent Israel, 3.5 per cent Europe–America, 0.7 per cent Asia–Africa, and 17.2 per cent countries of the former USSR).

While this study included one independent variable (that of exposure to civic studies, which distinguished between the two groups), there were five dependent variables in this study:

• democratic orientation;
• political cynicism;
• ethnocentric attitudes toward Arabs;
• political efficacy; and
• political knowledge.54

Underlying the rationale for the inter-group comparison was an assumption relying on prior research,55 which stated that if the civic studies programme in Israel not only conveyed formal knowledge but was indeed successful in affecting students’ attitudes, then in comparison to those who did not learn this subject, students exposed to civic studies would demonstrate

1 a greater inclination toward democratic orientations in comparison to the control group;
2 lower levels of political cynicism in comparison to the control group;
3 a greater sense of political efficacy in comparison to the control group; and
4 lower levels of ethnocentric attitude toward Arabs in comparison to the control group.

And with the aid of the fifth variable, political knowledge, an attempt was made to focus the debate and examine which features of Israeli politics the Ministry of Education was successful in inculcating among its students. Was it knowledge related to the formal and technical aspects of the political system typical of past curricula, or was there also a familiarity with events in the system itself and Israeli political figures?

Results

Table 3.1 features the levels of support among civics students and non-civics students on items comprising the dependent variables, and elicits a number of findings which merit attention. With regard to all aspects of the democratic orientation items, it appears that students from both groups are inclined to express high support for the statements. However, upon closer
The social sphere

inspection. The numbers reveal two interesting findings. The first pertains to the fact that most students, both those who did and did not study civics (87 per cent and 85 per cent, respectively), perceived political action as unnecessary when decision-making is believed to be in the hands of a competent leadership. The sweeping support for this statement indicates a weakness in the internalisation of the idea of the citizen’s role in a democratic state and may be closely associated with the relatively low levels of Israeli citizen participation in ‘civil society’ organisations, a subject which will be elaborated in the next chapter. An additional important finding alludes to the significant correlation \((p = 0.008)\) between the independent variable and the statement dealing with the democratic government’s obligation to protect the rights of minorities. Granted, among both groups there was relatively high support for this statement; still, the gap in favour of those who participated in civics lessons is quite significant (89.4 per cent compared to 82.8 per cent among students that did not learn civics).

A review of the items constituting the measure of political cynicism demonstrates a reverse tendency of the above. Unexpectedly, not only did both groups express high levels of political cynicism, the level of cynicism on behalf of the civics group was consistently higher than that expressed by those who did not take the course. Although no significant correlations were found between the study of civics variable and these items, according to the descriptive data it is still possible to conclude (with some caution) that if participating in civics education has any effect on students, it only leads to an increase in cynicism with regard to the political system.

The profile emerging from the findings on students’ views about political efficacy is a little more complicated. On the one hand, many students from both groups feel that generally there is a great breach between the individual and government and that government officials are not attentive to citizens of the State (63.1 per cent among civics learners and 61.8 per cent among non-civics learners). In addition, most students affirmed that politics and governance are too complicated for them and that they have difficulties understanding the workings of political procedures (57.2 per cent among civics learners and 58.7 per cent among non-civics learners). On the other hand, the majority of students are aware that numerous avenues of political action are available to them. This conclusion is based on the relatively large support for the statement on the right to express an opinion (59 per cent among civics learners and 50.3 per cent among non-civics learners) and also from the considerable support for the statement that there are other ways to express a political attitude aside from voting (54.7 per cent among civics learners and 47.4 per cent among non-civics learners). Another interesting finding is that there is a significant correlation between the last two statements and the independent variable \((p = 0.016 \text{ and } 0.045, \text{ respectively})\). An attempt to sum up this complex picture leads me to submit
Table 3.1  Effects of an education in democratic principles: levels of support (in percentages) for different components of the dependent variables and comparison of mean grades for every one of the items among the two groups by means of t-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Supported by civic studies students (%)</th>
<th>Supported by non-civic studies students (%)</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic orientation</td>
<td>Competition among political parties makes the political system stronger</td>
<td>57.91</td>
<td>57.10</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally, a successful political leader must also make compromises with his political opponents</td>
<td>92.54</td>
<td>90.62</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>0.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government carries the responsibility for protecting the rights of the minorities</td>
<td>89.47</td>
<td>82.80</td>
<td>6.988</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any individual or organisation has the right to organise opposition or resistance to any governmental initiative</td>
<td>86.97</td>
<td>85.71</td>
<td>0.246</td>
<td>0.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizen participation or involvement is necessary even if decision-making is left in the hands of a few trusted and competent leaders</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>0.404</td>
<td>0.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political cynicism</td>
<td>Government officials are not highly competent</td>
<td>70.48</td>
<td>66.57</td>
<td>1.294</td>
<td>0.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governmental clerks and officials do not pay much attention to citizens</td>
<td>85.18</td>
<td>80.76</td>
<td>2.564</td>
<td>0.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political parties are interested only in winning the elections</td>
<td>79.15</td>
<td>73.68</td>
<td>3.062</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government officials usually do not perform effectively and legally</td>
<td>72.66</td>
<td>71.81</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Supported by civic studies students (%)</td>
<td>Supported by non-civic studies students (%)</td>
<td>t-value</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The government would function better were it not for political interests</td>
<td>81.86</td>
<td>77.84</td>
<td>1.833</td>
<td>0.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political efficacy</td>
<td>I think that public officials care about what people like me think</td>
<td>36.91</td>
<td>38.19</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting is not the only way that people like me can have a say about how the government runs things</td>
<td>54.73</td>
<td>47.38</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often, politics and government seem so complicated, however, a person like me can still understand what's going on</td>
<td>42.79</td>
<td>41.35</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Election results are not the only factor according to which the state is governed</td>
<td>35.09</td>
<td>33.53</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular people like me have the right to express an opinion about governmental initiatives</td>
<td>59.05</td>
<td>50.29</td>
<td>5.713</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenophobia</td>
<td>In the event of a nationwide referendum on the subject of the peace process, it would be better if Arabs did not take part</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>48.67</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arab complaints of discrimination are not justified</td>
<td>52.88</td>
<td>58.75</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Israeli Government should encourage Arab emigration from Israel</td>
<td>54.49</td>
<td>55.16</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabs are too demanding regarding anything to do with their rights</td>
<td>67.59</td>
<td>70.50</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that whereas students – and particularly those studying civics – are aware of other avenues of political action in a democratic state, they still show little faith in their ability to understand the political system or have an effect on policy-makers.

Oddly enough, the statements referring to xenophobic attitudes reveal a more homogenous profile. In relation to all the items comprising this variable, there were only marginal differences in the attitudes of the two groups. With regard to almost all items a similar picture emerges, according to which more than half of the students express high levels of hostility towards Arab citizens of Israel, and object to their claims for civic equality. These findings stand in contradiction to the extensive student support for the statement that government is responsible for ensuring the protection of minority rights. Although it is not possible to establish a statistical relationship between the two, the contradiction between the acknowledgement, on the one hand, that the democratic polity is committed to protect minority rights and the outstanding support for a statement such as ‘The Israeli Government must encourage Arab emigration from Israel’, on the other, is an indication of the success of the Israeli education system and its traditional civics curriculum. This may be an indication that there are also other agents of socialisation in this country that are communicating to students the distinction between taught democratic values and the place of these values in Israeli democracy.

After an initial glance at the descriptive data, we attempted to examine the effect of the State’s civic studies curriculum on the combined dependent variables featured above. For this purpose, we conducted a MANOVA procedure (see table 3.2). Analysis of the findings first show that the entire analysis is significant at a level of $p = 0.001$. As for the variables themselves, we found significant differences between the two groups ($p = 0.00$ and $0.03$, respectively) for the variables of democratic orientation and political knowledge. With respect to the variable of political efficacy, we found marginal significance ($p = 0.08$). Therefore, already at this point, it is possible to assert that regarding the variables of political cynicism and xenophobic attitudes towards Arabs, the effect of civics education on student attitudes is not significant. Furthermore, the difference between the mean grades of the two groups is very small. However, it is important to point out that regarding xenophobia towards Arabs, despite the slight difference between the means, it appears that among civic studies learners there is, paradoxically, slightly greater support for these attitudes. This finding once more demonstrates the weak effect of civic studies courses on the formation of pluralistic attitudes towards minorities in Israel.

As noted above, in order to obtain further indication regarding the subject matter that nonetheless was internalised by students in the context of the civics courses, we took advantage of the index of political knowledge. A number of interesting facts regarding this index can be found in table 3.3, and additional
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Table 3.2 Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) for the assessment of the effects of civic studies in relation to dependent variables (comparison between civics learners and non-civics learners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>ANOVA value</th>
<th>Significance ANOVA</th>
<th>Significance MANOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic orientation</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Civics learners</td>
<td>3.320</td>
<td>0.543</td>
<td>11.07</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-civics learners</td>
<td>3.179</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political cynicism</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Civics learners</td>
<td>2.077</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-civics learners</td>
<td>2.118</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political efficacy</td>
<td>0.551</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Civics learners</td>
<td>2.454</td>
<td>0.630</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-civics learners</td>
<td>2.372</td>
<td>0.632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatred of Arabs</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Civics learners</td>
<td>2.620</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-civics learners</td>
<td>2.554</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political knowledge</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Civics learners</td>
<td>5.704</td>
<td>2.245</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-civics learners</td>
<td>5.357</td>
<td>2.245</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

confirmation of the limited effect of civic courses is evident from these data. A variance analysis shows that there was a significant difference ($p = 0.00$) between civics learners and those who had not learned civics only in relation to their knowledge of institutions of the political system. In comparison, regarding the other two factors (knowledge of political figures and of political processes), apart from the absence of significance between the groups, the means of students’ knowledge were also almost identical, with only a small preference for civics learners. Therefore, it can be reasoned that while there appears to be no difference between the groups in respect of all the dynamic aspects of the political system and students’ familiarity with the processes therein, citizenship courses nevertheless do have a considerable, if anticipated, effect on the assimilation of formal knowledge of this system.
Conclusions

What conclusions can therefore be drawn from the above analysis regarding the efforts (and successes) of the ‘defending democracy’ to imbed antibodies in Israeli society, so that they might constitute a system of checks against the expansion of extremist and violent phenomena?

First, in order not to give the wrong impression, it should be noted that Israel’s nature as both a Jewish and democratic nation state engendered a paradox, or ‘inherent failing’, in the educational system in the country, and occasioned its leadership quite a lot of discomfiture. Along with the effort to inculcate a democratic political culture among citizens, there was always an aspiration to deepen and fortify the status of national, ethnic and religious values designed to strengthen the ethno-national character of the State of Israel. The cost to the State of this ‘inherent failing’ was high indeed. The consistent exposure of youth to nationalist messages conveyed via various agents of socialisation, in the absence of the moderating effect of liberal and human-
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istic principles, would see their allegiance deteriorate from a commitment to a national ethos to the adoption of ultra-national and even racist ideas. Therefore, it appears that, in terms of the ‘defending democracy’, a kind of cyclical sequence developed. The State was the factor which fostered a national identity, and when that identity spilled over into ultra-nationalist margins it was again the State that had to deal with the ensuing extremism in its multi-faceted manifestations.

In summing up the ethno-national perspective, the Israeli state-run educational system chalked up not a few successes. Most outstanding was the consolidation of the Jewish populace around national symbols and values (even at times of deep controversy), and principally the collective consensus regarding the need to preserve the ethno-national character of the State and reinforce its Jewish essence. On the other hand, efforts at evaluating achievements in the education of democratic principles must be more cautious.

The leaders of the State, who in due course became familiar with the contradiction between its ethno-national and democratic elements, chose to deal with the need for instruction in citizenship by employing different practices aimed at diluting the subject. This dilution involved both a technical aspect, i.e. the reduction of the subject matter solely to the formal elements of government, and a time-restriction aspect, i.e. limiting classes to the minimum possible of one hour per week. However, despite the dramatic events experienced by the State of Israel and the resolutions made by its leadership to grant more import to the inculcation of democratic principles, there has been no real change. For every step taken to promote the democratic fundamentals proffered by the education system, another almost immediately followed, usually offsetting it, leading either to the reinforcement of Jewish national education or, alternatively, to various administrative restrictions preventing the institutionalisation of democratic values in the education system.

Only towards the end of the year 2000 did the first reformation take place in the nature of civics education as well as in its contents with the aim of solidifying the status of the democratic element vis-à-vis the ethno-national element. However, an assessment of the effect of this reform on student attitudes in relation to the variety of qualities associated with a democratic lifestyle revealed only partial success. The majority of students who took part in this research expressed high levels of support for attitudes reflecting both political cynicism and hostility towards the Arab minority in Israel, and no significant difference was found between the group which studied the civics course and the control group in regard to these variables. A possible explanation for this finding would be that the course curriculum did not sufficiently stress the importance of the values of tolerance and trust as part of the democratic worldview.

An additional indicator of the weakness of civics education in Israel is related to the weighting among the different topics that were supposed to be pre-
sented to students. As already noted, the goal of reform was to liberate the civic studies curriculum from its technical–formal character and to introduce students to the more substantive essentials of political and social life in the State. However, the only topic where a significant preference was found in favour of students of civic studies over those who did not study this subject was that of political institutions and knowledge of formal procedures. This leads to the conclusion that, despite the declared intentions to reduce the weight of the formal element in course contents, in reality this element remained uppermost.

Nevertheless, two important findings should not be overlooked. Survey results indicate that the group of civic studies learners displayed higher and significant levels of support for issues related to democratic orientations as well as confidence in their ability to influence the political process (efficacy) than did the control group. Although differences between the group means are not dramatic, they are the first indications of the potential effect of civic studies in its new format.

The positive correlation between the reform in the civics curriculum and the internalisation of democratic orientations – despite being partial – implies a positive and untapped potential in the study of democratic values from the perspective of the ‘immunising’ of the ‘defending democracy’. This inevitably raises the question of whether civic studies in its new format will indeed sink roots and lead in the near future to the promotion of basic democratic values, a reduction in levels of political cynicism and the adoption of a multicultural and tolerant attitude towards minorities, or, alternatively, whether the ethno-national tendency will again predominate so that the future identification of the Israeli citizenry with democratic values will only be weakened.

Any attempt to provide immediate answers to this type of question will amount to conjecture. However, a number of indications suggest that there are significant obstacles to the process of completing the reformation. Among these obstacles, the education system’s organisational conservatism merits mention, as does the teachers’ difficulty in adopting new study curricula. However, at the same time, we can assume that these hindrances are less problematic and more easily resolved than are the obstacles involved in policy-making, implementation and reformation of the system of values underpinning Israeli society. This last factor has proven to be a remarkably recalcitrant and entrenched barrier to substantial change.

To elaborate: Ministry of Education policy in regard to the nature of nationwide study programmes is to a great degree subject to the strength and influence of the head of the Ministry, who has the power to allocate or withdraw resources for a particular programme. In fact, during the years in which the Ministry of Education was managed by right-wing parties, there was a discernible preference by incumbent ministers to reinforce the status of ethno-national qualities over democratic principles. Yet ministers from left-wing
parties, who were more aware of the importance of civic studies reform, likewise made insufficient effort to ensure its full implementation. So, for example, despite vouching for the implementation of reform in the 2001 school year, officials of the left-centre Ehud Barak administration were still speaking of only a partial reform during 2001, pertaining only to course topics, whereas the marginal status of the subject in terms of class hours and on the Bagrut exam was left untouched. The expansion of the course’s topics, in the absence of funding for additional instruction hours, significantly hindered reform implementation because of the need to teach such a wide variety of subjects without changing the timetable. These unfavourable circumstances led the Ministry of Education, and many teachers as well, to forego precisely those new issues in favour of older and potentially less contentious topics.

Yet, the greatest obstacle thwarting nearly every effort to elevate the status of democratic principles in the education system invariably involves public sentiment towards reform. According to the survey conducted for this study, the Jewish public in Israel is still unrelenting in its desire to reinforce the unity around Jewish national values and symbols, and to inculcate these values by means of the state-run education system. So, for example, 66.9 per cent of the respondents agreed that the education system in Israel does not place enough emphasis on national values and on the affinity of the Israeli people to their country. This orientation was displayed also in relation to the instruction of the subject in citizenship, where 64.2 per cent of the subjects agreed with the statement that ‘in civics lessons, first of all, the right of the Jewish People to Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) must be given priority and only after that there should be the discussion of universalistic democratic values such as equality among all people and freedom of expression’. Furthermore, 40.2 per cent of the participants expressed support for the immediate abrogation of the civics education reform and a return to the earlier format.

These findings are an indication of the considerable difficulties facing the ‘defending democracy’ in Israel in its attempt to take the direction of the ‘immunised’ route. If the preceding chapters presented a somewhat optimistic picture implying that the barriers erected by state institutions in the battle against political violence and extremism are, over the course of time, gradually taking form in accordance with a liberal democratic vision, then in order to build up this tendency citizens of the State of Israel must learn the importance of maintaining a democratic framework and so bolster that tendency with a stronger infrastructure. However, in the light of the attitudes of policy-makers and the public at large towards the inculcation of democratic principles, it seems that the process of liberalising the response to extremism remains for the moment the prerogative of a small circle of elites, headed by the judiciary.

The prognosis for the role of civics education in the ‘immunisation’ of the Israeli democracy can be set out under two types of perspective. A quantita-
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tive perspective proposes that if reformation is fully implemented, a window of opportunity will be made available for students of in the state-run education system to eventually adopt a democratic orientation and become members of a social structure that, to a certain degree, will be ‘immunised’ against the expansion of the plague of extremism. On the other hand, a historical perspective suggests that the numerous obstacles thwarting efforts to implement such a reform considerably reduce the likelihood that it will in fact come to fruition.

NOTES
5 Amy Gutmann, Democratic Education (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987);
Macedo, ‘Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism’.
11 Ichilov, Citizenship Education in Israel.
12 Ehud Sprinzak, Every Man Whatsoever Is Right in His Own Eyes – Illegalism in Israeli Society (Tel-Aviv: Sifriat Paalim, 1986) (Hebrew).
14 Ichilov, Citizenship Education in Israel.
15 Statehood Education Act, paragraph 2, The Book of Laws, 131 (Jerusalem, 1953).
17 Ichilov, Citizenship Education in Israel, p. 108.
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18 Evidence of this can be found in the following school textbooks: David Shachar, *The Polity of the State of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Yesod, 1986, a civic studies textbook for high school pupils); Avraham Yedidyah, *The Polity of Israel* (Herzliya: Kharuv, 1989), a civic studies textbook in question and answer format from the Bagrut – Israeli matriculation exam.

19 Ichilov, *Citizenship Education in Israel*, p. 129.


23 This study was called 'Democracy in the Eyes of the Public' and was sponsored by the Israeli Democracy Institute. Complete details of the research available online at www.idi.org.il.

24 Bar-Gal’s research clearly shows the manner in which the geographical studies course was subordinated to national interests. Geography lessons at Israeli schools were employed largely as a tool the intention of which was to foster among pupils an orientation in which the geographical space of Israel belongs to the Jewish nation. See: Yoram Bargal, ‘Boundaries as a Topic in Geographic Education – the Case of Israel’, *Political Geography*, 12:5 (1993), pp. 421–35.


26 Ichilov, *Citizenship Education in Israel*.

27 From an interview with Hannah Shafir, the chief supervisor of civic studies in the Ministry of Education (20.8.2000).


29 Correspondence from Professor Emanuel Guttman, Chairman of the Committee for Citizenship Programme, to the Minister of Education, Zevulun Hammer (15.11.1990).


32 Ichilov, *Citizenship Education in Israel*.


34 From an interview with Doron Shocat (20.8.2000).

35 Finance Ministry, Budgetary proposal for the year 1999.


37 From an interview with Ms Hannah Shafir (20.8.2000).

38 Kremnizer et al., *Being Citizens*, p. 5.
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41 Reyli Sa’ar, ‘Citizenship Studies Were Significantly Cut Back – the Chapter on the President Was Removed from the Course’, Ha’aretz, 29 August 2000.
42 H. Eden, V. Ashkenazi and B. Allferson, Being Citizens in Israel, a Jewish and Democratic State (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, the Pedagogical Board and the Division for Study Curricula, 2000).
45 Correspondence from Professor Michel Abitbul, Chair of the Pedagogical Secretariat, to Professor Emanuel Guttman (13.3.2000).
46 Correspondence, from Hannah Shafir, Ministry of Education civic studies supervisor, and Sarah Vidar, religious and state-run education history and civic studies supervisor, to civic studies teachers (12.5.2000); Ha’aretz, 29 August 2000.
47 Interview with Ms Hannah Shafir (20.8.2000).
48 Interview with Ms Hannah Shafir (20.8.2000).
53 Percentages adding up to less than 100 are a result of missing values.
54 Each of the variables examined in this study relied on validated indices which had undergone adaptation to the Israeli context.

The first variable, pro-democratic attitudes, was measured first by means of an integration of two indices, i.e. a pro-democratic approach and democratic attitudes. The range of answers for the new index was distributed along a five-degree scale (1 = completely agree, 5 = do not agree at all); the following statements were included: ‘Competition among many political parties makes the political system stronger; Any individual or organisation has the right to organise opposition or resistance to any governmental initiative: A successful political leader will often need to compromise with his political opponents; Participation of people is not necessary if decision-making is left in the hands of a few trusted competent leaders (reversed item); The government has the responsibility to see that the rights of all minorities are protected’. Source for the Index of Democ-
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ratic Values: Arthur H. Miller, Vicki L. Helsi and William M. Reisinger, 'Reassessing Mass Support for Political and Economic Change in the Former USSR', American Political Science Review, 88 (1994), pp. 399–411; Source for the Index of Pro-Democratic Orientation: Arthur H. Miller, Vicki L. Helsi and William M. Reisinger, 'Comparing Citizen and Elite Belief Systems in Post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine', Public Opinion Quarterly, 59 (1995), pp. 1–40. As a result of the low internal reliability of the new index we sought to create, we combined only the two following items into an index of democratic attitudes: A successful political leader will often need to compromise with his political opponents; The government has the responsibility to see that the rights of all minorities are protected'. The Pearson coefficient for the two items indicated a significant correlation of a medium-strong effect (r = 0.215, p = 0.000).

The second variable, xenophobia towards Arabs, was measured on the basis of the following statements: 'In the event of a nationwide referendum on the subject of the peace process, it would be better if the Arabs did not take part; Arab complaints of discrimination are not justified; The Israeli Government should encourage Arab emigration from Israel; Arabs are too demanding regarding anything to with their rights.' (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.783.) This index, which had been adapted for the Israeli context, is principally based on the Modern Racism Scale: John B. McConahay, Betty B. Hardee, and Valeri Batts, 'Has Racism Declined in America? It Depends on Who is Asking and What Is Asked’, Journal of Conflict Resolution, 25 (1981), pp. 563–79.

The index of political efficacy was built on the basis of the following statements with a scale which offered two possibilities: 0 = agree and 1 = disagree: ‘I think that public officials care about what people like me think; Voting is not the only way that people like me can have a say about how the government runs things; People like me don’t have any say about what the government does; often, politics and government seem so complicated, however, a person like me can still understand what’s going on’. (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.551.) Source for the Political Efficacy Scale: Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin and Warren E. Miller, The Voter Decides (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1954).

The variable of political cynicism was measured according to three statements. Two statements were omitted from the original scale. Answers ranged from 1 = always to 4 = never: Government officials are not highly competent; Government clerks and officials do not pay much attention to ordinary citizens?; Government officials usually do not perform effectively and according to the law (reversed item). (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.550.) Source for the Political Cynicism Scale: Enrique D. Baylora, ‘Criticism, Cynicism and Political Evaluation: A Venezuelan Example’, American Political Science Review, 72 (1979), pp. 987–1002.

The variable of political knowledge was assessed by questions relating to three main areas: familiarity with state political institutions; knowledge of prominent Israeli political figures; and knowledge of political issues and stances.

In order to evaluate the extent of the pupil’s knowledge of political figures, he/she was asked to reply to four questions regarding holders of political office in the country. Familiarity with the figure or his/her position earned the pupil one point (unawareness of the figure would give the pupil zero points). In all, the pupil would receive a sum of points ranging from 0 to 4. Familiarity with state political institutions was measured according to four questions pertaining to formal procedures regarding legislation, the roles of Knesset committees, a no-confidence motion in the government, and the functions of the Supreme Court. The questionnaire was presented to the pupil in the form of a test consisting of four answers where only one was correct. Again, the pupil could accumulate a total ranging from 0 to 4 points. Knowledge of political issues and
stances was measured using two questions addressing the attitudes of political parties in Israel on political and economic affairs. Questions were in the form of two answers, correct and incorrect, so that the total mark on this section ranged from 0 to 2 points.