

War and Peace Index
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Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

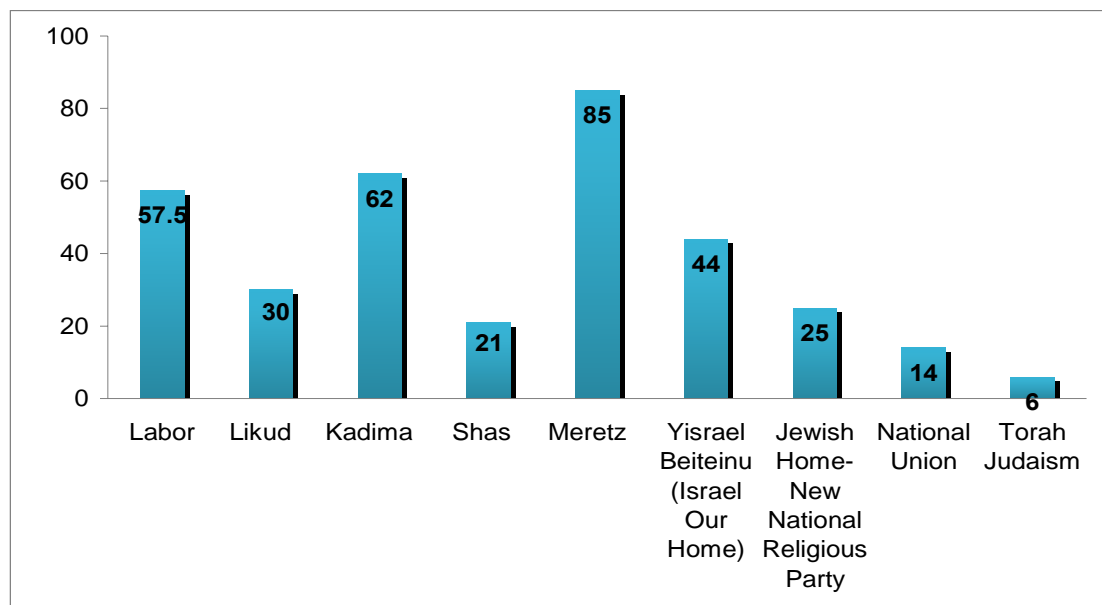
Amid the recent mounting tensions in U.S.-Israeli tensions over the settlement-freeze issue, this month's survey focused on this issue in light of the latest events and the basic questions. Regarding the events, a large majority (62%) of the Jewish public does not "buy" the notion that the prime minister, Bibi Netanyahu, did not know beforehand about the authorization to build 1600 new apartments in Ramat Shlomo in northeastern Jerusalem, as he claimed in his apology to visiting U.S. vice-president Joe Biden. The majority (54% vs. 38%) also considers that the Israeli government should take into account the U.S. position on the settlements issue, including with regard to their expansion for demographic growth. Hence a majority (58% vs. 39%) thinks Netanyahu indeed needed to apologize to Biden. At the same time, only about one-fourth hold the opinion that the authorization for the new construction was a mistake, while 41% think only the timing was mistaken and 15% say neither the decision nor the timing was. In other words, the rate of supporters of construction in Ramat Shlomo is double and more the rate of opponents.

On the background of what appears to be a crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations, we asked: "Do you prefer that the government should continue to exist in its current composition or that a new government be set up on the basis of a coalition between Likud, Kadima, and Labor?" About one-third (34%) answered that they prefer the current government while 40% would prefer a Likud-Kadima-Labor one. The rest do not have a clear opinion on the matter. It may be interesting to note that among the voters for Likud, which is the axial party in both cases, there is a majority—56%—in favor of the current government. But among the voters for Labor, which also is "inside" in both cases, those preferring a Likud-Labor-Kadima government are in a majority of 57.5%.

On a more basic level, this time we checked the Jewish public's positions on different questions regarding settlement evacuation. It is interesting in this context that among the interviewees who were included in this representative national sample, only about 6% said that they live or have lived at some time in settlements and only about one-quarter reported having relatives or friends who live in one, pointing to the possibility that the settler community is a kind of "enclave" within the Israeli Jewish sector as a whole.

We asked: "If the settlements were the last obstacle to reaching a full peace agreement with the Palestinians and the agreement of all the Arab states to an end of their conflict with Israel, would you then support an evacuation of all of the settlements?" It turns out the public is almost evenly split on this matter: 42% responded positively

and 47.5% negatively. A segmentation of the positions on this question by voting for the Knesset in 2009 reveals extreme gaps between the voters for the different parties. Only among Meretz, Labor, and Kadima voters is there a majority that accepts a full evacuation, though in Yisrael Beiteinu there is also a not inconsiderable minority (44%) that would support one as well:

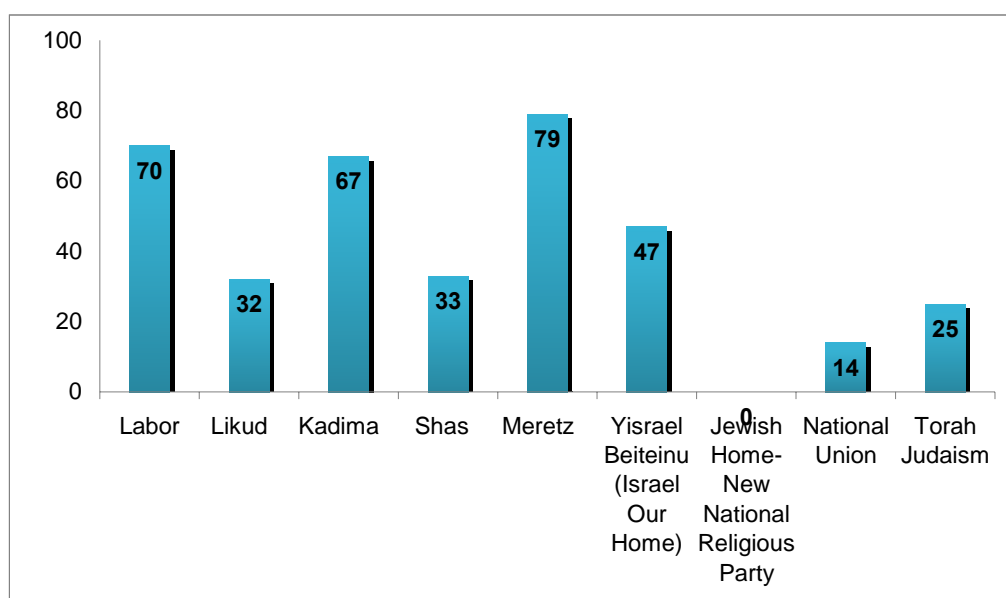


Sharp gaps also emerged when segmenting the answers by respondents' degree of support or opposition to negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Among those favoring negotiations the gap is relatively small: 48% are prepared for a full evacuation in return for a full peace and the end of the conflict, while 40% are against it. However, among those who oppose negotiations only 21% favor a full evacuation compared to 75% who oppose it.

Presenting the same question with regard to evacuation of a substantial portion of the settlements (and not all of them) in return for a peace agreement and the end of the conflict, a considerable majority of supporters, 58%, emerged versus 29% for opponents. These findings are consistent with the erosion in the settlements' status that has occurred among the Jewish public over time. To the question "When you think today about the establishment of the settlements in the West Bank/Judea and Samaria, in your opinion was it right or not right for Israeli governments to enable their construction?"—47% answered that it was right and 40% said it was not. When the same question was presented a decade ago (June 2001), 63% answered that it was right to build the settlements and 28% that it was not. In this period, then, there was a decline of 16% for those who think it was right to build the settlements.

Furthermore, when we asked "Do you support or oppose the idea that the government should already, today, offer those living in the settlements appropriate financial

compensation to leave them now and go live within the state of Israel?"—it emerged that the rate of those who support such an offer already at this time—49%—exceeds the rate of those who oppose it—42%. On this question too we found very extreme gaps between voters for the different parties in the 2009 elections. Again, voters for Meretz, Labor, and Kadima took a similar stance—in favor of offering compensation today—while the reverse was true for the rest of the parties:



To see whether there is a change in the Israeli Jewish public's preferences regarding the future political solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we presented the interviewees with two possibilities: the establishment of a binational state in all of the western Land of Israel without dividing it, in which all of the rights of Jews and Palestinians would be equal, or alternatively a solution of two states for two peoples, that is, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, with the necessary security adjustments and the leaving of the large settlement blocs in place. The answers that were received again testify to the broad support for a two-state solution (66%). Fourteen percent support the solution of a binational state, and the rest have no clear position.

Interestingly, the support for a binational-state solution is not concentrated on either side of the political map. Indeed, its rate among those defining themselves as right-wing (15%) is only slightly lower than among those defining themselves as left-wing (18%), while among centrists the rate stands at 9%.

The War and Peace Index is written by Prof. Tamar Hermann and Prof. Ephraim Yaar, and funded by the Evens Program for Conflict Resolution Research of Tel Aviv University and The Israel Democracy Institute. The telephone interviews were conducted by the B. I. Cohen Institute of Tel Aviv University on 15-16-17 March 2010, and included 505 interviewees who represent the adult population of Israel (including the territories and the kibbutzim). The sampling error for a sample of this size is 4.5%.