

## War and Peace Index

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The last few weeks have been marked by tensions between Israel and many countries of the world, some of them hostile for years and some more or less friendly. This is indeed because of the flotilla incident in particular, but also part of a wider context of growing criticism of Israel's policy regarding the occupation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The campaign in the sphere of international public opinion, together with the domestic criticism of the functioning of the country's decision-makers, sparked an upsurge in indicators of patriotism, the superficial impression being that the Jewish public is united in perceiving that "the whole world is against us." The present survey looks into this phenomenon. The conclusion is that, while most of the Jewish public indeed supports a tough policy toward the Palestinians, not inconsiderable parts of it are aware—more than appears at first glance—of a connection between Israel's behavior and its deteriorating image in international public opinion.

We asked: "Some claim that despite the international criticism, Israel should continue the blockade of Gaza and only allow the entry of the most essential items so as to keep the pressure on Hamas and prevent attacks from there on Israel. Others claim that the price Israel is paying for the blockade in world public opinion is higher than the risks of removing it. With which opinion do you agree more?" A sweeping majority of the Jewish public—78%—sided with the first claim, voiced repeatedly in the past by decision-makers, that the blockade should be continued so as to pressure Hamas and prevent attacks. Only a minority—17%—thought the price in terms of international public opinion was too high (note that the survey was done before Prime Minister Netanyahu's announcement on canceling the limitations Israel had imposed in the past on the entry of goods into Gaza). In the Arab public the picture is indeed the reverse: only a minority—23%—agreed with the first, security-oriented claim, while the overwhelming majority—71%—agreed that the price of the blockade for Israel's international image is too steep.

A segmentation of the Jewish public's answers to this question by voting in the latest Knesset elections shows that among voters for all the parties a solid majority favors the first claim—with the exception of Meretz voters, where a majority (81%) sides with the second claim.

A segmentation of the answers by degree of belief or lack of belief in the possibility that negotiations with the Palestinian Authority will ultimately lead to peace, revealed that in both groups, the believers and the nonbelievers, a majority favors continuing the blockade of Gaza, but at different rates: 62% of the believers in the possibility of peace as an outcome of negotiations versus 83% of those who do not believe in this.

A segmentation of the answers to this question by self-ranking as secular, traditional, religious, or haredi found that here, too, in all the groups a majority favored the first view. The majority grows, however, in direct connection to degree of religiosity: 70% of the secular, 81% of the traditional, 90% of the religious, and 93.5% of the haredi.

In addition, we asked: "Recently Israel's status in the international community has fallen, and more and more voices even question its right to exist. Do you think there is or is not a connection between this trend and the policy of the current Israeli government?" Here the picture is more balanced—that is, the Jewish public is split down the middle. Whereas 48% see no connection between Israel's policy and its declining international status, the exact same rate of 48% consider that there is some connection, or even a strong one, between the trend in world public opinion and Israel's policy. The picture in the Arab sector is more clear-cut: only 30% see no connection while 69% see some, or a strong, connection between Israel's policy and its international status.

A segmentation of the answers to this question in the Jewish sector by voting in the latest Knesset elections shows that among voters for most of the parties a majority sees no connection, but among voters for Kadima, Labor, Hadash and Meretz only a minority of varying size (37%, 44%, 39%, and 9%, respectively) concurs whereas the majority claims some or a strong connection.

A segmentation of the answers to this question by degree of belief or disbelief in the possibility that negotiations with the Palestinian Authority will eventually produce peace, revealed that among those who believe in the possibility of peace only a minority—32%—think there is no connection between Israel's policy and its deteriorating international status, while among those who do not believe in it a majority of 55% sees no connection between policy and image and says Israel's right to exist will be questioned no matter what it does.

On this question, too, a direct connection emerged between self-definition on degree of religiosity and opinion as to whether there is or is not a connection between Israel's policy and its image in the world: whereas among the haredi and the religious a majority sees no connection and thinks the world is against us in any case (71% and 59%, respectively), among the traditional and the secular a minority, albeit large, holds this view (49% and 42%, respectively). These findings reconfirm the close connection we have found over the years between degree of religiosity and degree of rigidity on issues of Israeli foreign and defense policy.

Negotiation index:

Jewish sector: 46.0; overall public: 46.3

The War and Peace Index is written by Prof. Tamar Hermann and Prof. Ephraim Yaar under the auspices of the Evans Program for Conflict Resolution of Tel Aviv University and the Israel Democracy Institute. The telephone interviews were conducted by the Dahaf Institute from June 7-9, 2010, and included 603 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%.