

Peace Index - November 2011

Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

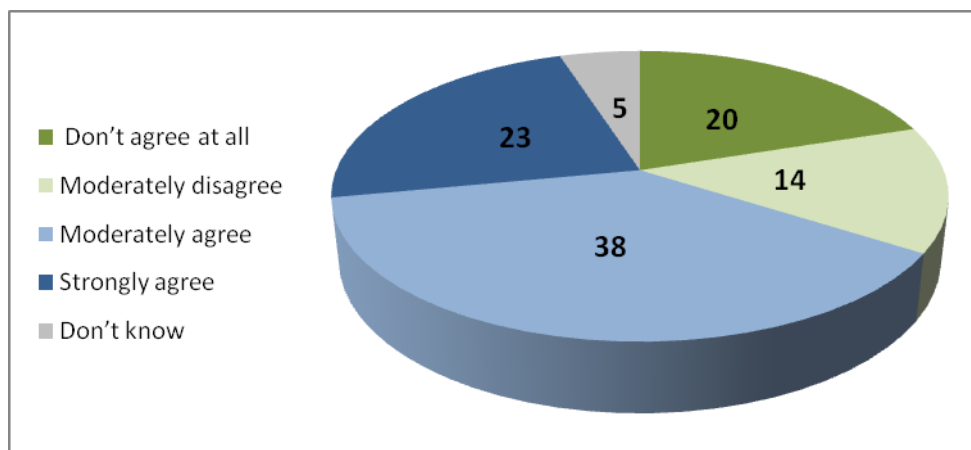
Summary of the Findings

- **What will happen in the wake of the Egyptian elections?** Only a small minority of the Jewish public (10%) thinks that the rise to power of the Islamist forces will leave the peace treaty with Israel as it is. The majority (51%) believes that the treaty will not be officially canceled but relations will suffer; the rest are divided between those who think the treaty will be officially canceled, creating a situation of “no peace” and “no war” (19%), and those who think the treaty will be canceled and Egypt will return to a state of war with Israel (15%).
- **How will the changes in the Arab world affect Israel in general?** The majority (68.5%) thinks that Israel's national security situation is worse than it was before the process of change started.
- **And what about Iran?** On the Iranian issue, too, it appears that most of the Jewish public has negative expectations. Slightly over half (52%) say that the proclaimed efforts of the Western states to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear capability are not real and genuine; a sizable majority (61%) believes Israel should come to terms with the fact that Iran will ultimately have nuclear weapons, and should develop a security strategy based on the assumption that Israel will not be the only nuclear state in the region .
- **And will a peace treaty be signed with the Palestinians?** Only about a third think such a treaty would improve the Arab world's attitudes toward Israel, with 63% saying the Arab world would remain hostile toward Israel even if a treaty were to be signed .
- **If so, what should Israel do?** Despite this pessimistic assessment, 61% think that in the present state of affairs Israel should make special efforts to renew the negotiations with the Palestinians .
- **And how should Israel go about that?** Fifty-four percent assess that the Netanyahu government is functioning moderately well (40%) or very well (14%) regarding the conduct of negotiations with the Palestinians. It makes sense, then, that the majority (58%) says opposition leader Tzipi Livni did not act properly when she recently met with Abu Mazen .
- **Do religion and democracy go together?** The prevailing view (59%) is that, in principle, a government with a majority of religious parties is not capable of ruling

democratically and safeguarding minority rights, freedom of expression, and equality between all religions, beliefs and the sexes .

- **And what about religious radicalization in Israel?** A substantial majority of the public (64.5%) is worried about this trend. In the same vein, close to half (49%) see the role of religion in running the state of Israel as too strong, 17% as too weak, and 28% view it as appropriate .

Graph of the month: Some think it will be impossible to prevent Iran from going nuclear in the long term, and therefore believe that Israel should come to terms with this reality and devise a security strategy based on the assumption that Israel is not the only nuclear state in the region. Do you agree or disagree with this approach? (% of Jewish public)



The Findings in Detail

Only a small minority of the Jewish public (10%) thinks that the rise to power of the Islamist forces in Egypt will leave the peace treaty with Israel as it is. The majority (51%) believes that the treaty will not be officially canceled, but relations between the two countries will suffer; the rest are divided between those who think the treaty will be officially canceled, creating a situation of “no peace, no war” (19%), and those who think that the treaty will be officially canceled and Egypt will return to a state of war with Israel (15%). A segmentation by support for Israel's political parties revealed that the highest rate of respondents who envision the official cancellation of the treaty and Egypt returning to a war footing against Israel are voters for the National Union party (36%). Far more of this party's voters have this expectation than voters for any of the other parties.

Nonetheless, the majority of the Jewish public perceives danger in the major political changes occurring in the Arab world, as rulers fall and new forces, including Islamist ones, rise. Sixty-eight percent regard these developments as having worsened Israel's national security. Here, it should be noted, opinions are very similar among respondents defining themselves as right, center, and left.

On the Iranian issue, too, most of the Jewish public appears to have negative expectations. Slightly more than half (52%) think the proclaimed efforts of Western countries to prevent Iran from reaching nuclear capability are not real and not sincere. In this context, a sizable majority (61%) apparently now thinks—clearly contradicting the government's position—that Israel should come to terms with the fact that Iran will ultimately have nuclear weapons and therefore should devise a security strategy based on the assumption that Israel will not be the only nuclear state in the region. This opinion is dominant among voters for all parties, with the exceptions of National Union voters, who are evenly split between those who agree that Israel should adopt such a strategy and those who disagree, and Torah Judaism voters, a majority of whom (50%) do not agree that Israel should adopt such a strategy (vs. 38% who do agree).

A perception of threat emerged in responses to other questions as well. Only about one-third of respondents believe that a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians, if one were to be signed, would improve the Arab world's attitudes toward Israel; 63% say the Arab world would remain hostile even if such a treaty were signed. On this question, we found a wide gap between voters for left-wing and centrist parties, on the one hand, and voters for right-wing and religious and haredi parties on the other. Whereas the majority of voters for Labor, Meretz, and Kadima (81%, 67%, and 58% respectively) think that signing such an agreement would improve the Arab world's attitudes toward Israel, the opposite view is held by all voters for the National Union, 90% of voters for the National Home, 89.5% of Torah Judaism voters, 87.5% of Shas voters, 86% of Yisrael Beiteinu voters, and 71% of Likud voters .

Despite that pessimistic assessment, a substantial majority (61%) affirms that, in the current state of affairs, Israel should make special efforts to renew the negotiations with the Palestinians. As expected, here too there are pronounced disparities according to Knesset voting in the latest elections. We found majority support for such efforts among voters for Labor and Meretz (92% each), Kadima (83%), Yisrael Beiteinu (69%), and the Likud (54%), while only a minority of voters for the Jewish Home (40%), the National Union and Shas (25% each), and Torah Judaism (21%) think Israel should make such efforts .

Given the above, it is especially interesting to find that today, as in the past, a majority (54%) of the Jewish public views the Netanyahu government as functioning moderately well (40%) or very well (14%) on the matter of negotiations with the Palestinians. It therefore makes sense that the majority (58%) says opposition leader Tzipi Livni did not act properly when she recently met with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas. A segmentation of the responses to these questions by voting in the last elections shows Prime Minister Netanyahu receiving a positive evaluation from voters for Torah Judaism (84%), Likud (79%), Shas (75%), Jewish Home (60%), and Yisrael Beiteinu (57%). Not surprisingly, he gets a negative rating from voters for Labor, Kadima, and Meretz. In addition, it was only among voters for these parties that a majority of respondents (55%, 63%, and 92% respectively) approve of Livni's meeting with Abbas.

In light of recent developments on the domestic front, this month we also looked into whether the Jewish public views religiosity and democracy as compatible.. The prevailing opinion (59%) is that, in principle, a government with a majority of religious parties is not capable of ruling democratically and of safeguarding minority rights, freedom of expression, and equality between all religions and beliefs and between the sexes. Naturally, a segmentation by the respondent's self-definition of degree of religiosity revealed sharp differences between the different categories. A large majority of those defining themselves as haredi or religious (81%) saw this combination as possible. Respondents who defined themselves as traditional-religious were divided between those who think like the haredi and religious respondents (48%) and those who do not think a government with a majority of religious parties would be able to rule democratically (44%). Among the traditional-secular and the secular, however, a large majority views a predominantly religious government as incapable in principle of being democratic (67% and 79% respectively.)

And what about religious radicalization in Israel? A considerable majority of the public (64.5%) is worried about this trend. In the same vein, close to half (49%) see the present role of religion in running the state of Israel as too strong, 17% as too weak, while 28% view it as appropriate. However, a segmentation by self-definition of degree of religiosity again reveals large gaps between haredi and religious respondents, on the one hand, and traditional and secular respondents on the other. Only 16% of haredi and 43% of religious respondents are worried about religious radicalization—compared to 68% of the traditional and 79% of the secular.

The Negotiations Index for November, 2011

The Peace Index project includes ongoing monitoring of the Israeli public's attitudes towards peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The monthly

Negotiation Index is comprised of two questions, one focusing on public support for peace negotiations and the other on the degree to which the public believes that such talks will actually lead to peace. The aggregated replies to these two questions are calculated, combined, and standardized on a scale of 0-100, in which 0 represents total lack of support for negotiations and lack of belief in their potential to bear fruit, and 100 represents total support for the process and belief in its potential. Each month, the Negotiations Index presents two distinct findings, one for the general Israeli population and the other for Jewish Israelis.

Negotiations Index: **General sample:** 47.0%; **Jewish sample:** 47.5%

The Peace Index is a project of the [Evens Program in Mediation and Conflict Resolution](#) at Tel Aviv University and the [Israel Democracy Institute](#). This month's survey was conducted by telephone on December 5–6 by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 616 respondents, who constitute a representative sample of the adult Jewish population of Israel. The measurement error for a sample of this size is 4.5%; statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay.