

## Peace Index - December, 2010

Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

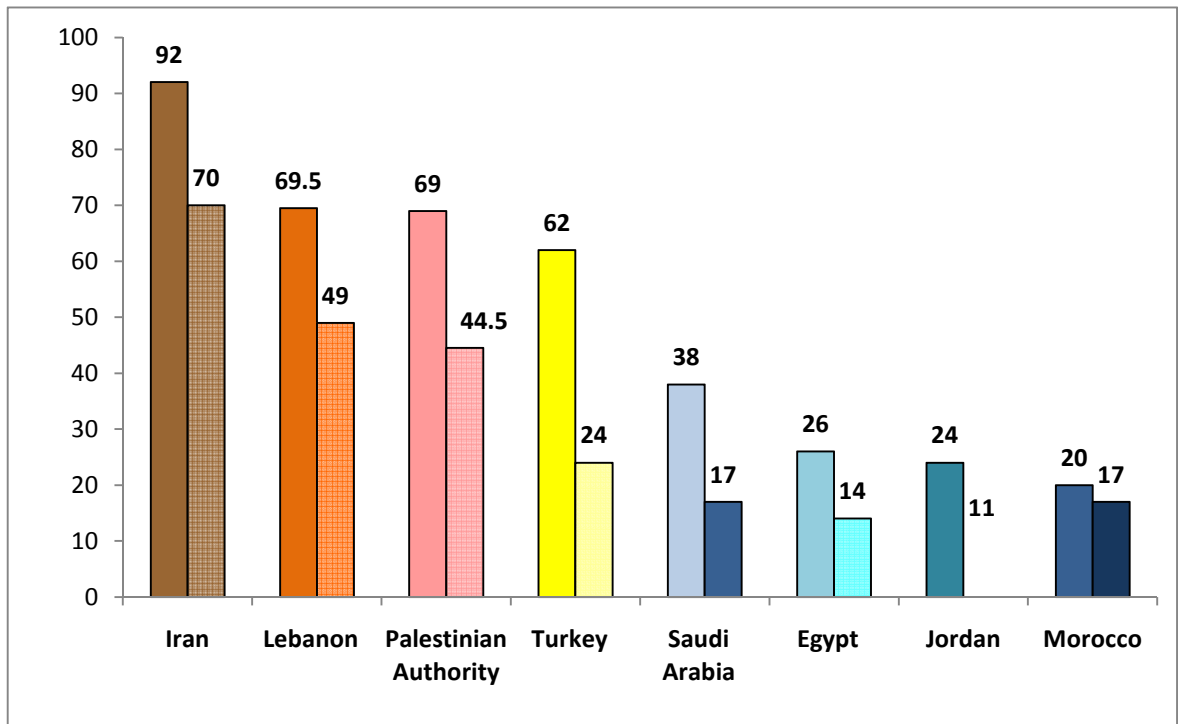
### Summary of the Findings

- **Alone in the world?** The international assistance that arrived during the Carmel fire slightly weakened the Israeli Jewish public's sense of isolation. At present 39% think Israel is isolated, compared to the one-half who thought so three months ago. Moreover, despite the recurrent tensions with the Obama administration, only 26% currently see a real danger that the United States will distance itself from Israel. This perception of the U.S.-Israeli relationship apparently underlies the view of 55% of the respondents that Israel was right to reject Washington's demand to freeze construction in the settlements .
- **Is there a connection between our actions and attitudes toward us?** Nevertheless, 61% consider that there will always be criticism of Israel in Europe and the United States, without connection to the degree of intransigence of Israel's policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the ongoing occupation. On this issue there was a significant decrease compared to the previous measurement, three months ago, in which 75% saw no connection between Israel's policy and negative international attitudes toward Israel. An identical majority think that even though the many rounds of talks with the Palestinians have not borne fruit, there is no chance that an agreement imposed by international players would yield a stable and sustainable peace .
- **A black cloud on the horizon?** The majority of Jewish Israelis do not find the warnings that if a solution is not found the Palestinian Authority will collapse and Israel will find itself ruling territories heavily populated with Palestinians who do not have rights—something that will destroy the Jewish and democratic character of the State—to be convincing: two-thirds see no such danger in the foreseeable future. And

yet a majority, albeit a small majority (51% vs. 45%), says it is appropriate at present to discuss the core issues (borders, refugees, and Jerusalem) so as to reach an agreement, as Secretary of State Clinton asserted in her recent speech .

- **And the Iranian threat?** Here it turns out that the sense of urgency and threat has led the Israeli Jewish public to a rethinking. About two-thirds believe Israel should try to forge cooperation with the Arab states that oppose Tehran's policy on the nuclear issue. To facilitate such strategic cooperation, half of the public is even prepared for Israel to soften its line on the Palestinian issue .
- **And what about the Turks?** The flotilla incident left a deep and durable impact on Israeli Jewish attitudes toward Turkey. The data show only a minimal willingness to take measures that would lead to a warming of ties and perhaps even reconciliation with Turkey. Only 20% think Israel should respond favorably to the Turkish demand to apologize for the operation conducted by the IDF when it tried to prevent the flotilla from reaching Gaza, and even fewer (16%) are in favor of Israel paying compensation to the families of those killed in the clash with IDF forces .
- **Does Esau hate Israel?** The survey data show that a perception has emerged in the Israeli Jewish public that distinguishes between the extent of hostility that characterizes the attitude of different Muslim countries in the region toward Israel. Some countries are indeed perceived as hostile or very hostile (Iran, 92%; Lebanon, 69.5%; the Palestinian Authority, 69%; Turkey, 62%) while others are not perceived as taking such a negative stance (only 38% viewed Saudi Arabia as hostile or very hostile, 26% Egypt, 24% Jordan, and 20% Morocco.

**Graph of the month: Rates of those defining the following countries as very hostile or hostile. (The Jewish percentage is represented by the left column and the Arab percentage by the right one).**



## The Findings in Detail

The international assistance that arrived during the Carmel fire from many states and entities—including the United States, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, and even Turkey and the Palestinian Authority—prompted a notable number of statements by officials who presented this as proof that the claims that Israel finds itself isolated in the international community because of its policy on the Palestinian issue, which are made mainly by left-wing groups in Israel and also by various international bodies, are mistaken. Hence, we explored the impact of the fire-fighting assistance and of these statements on the public's positions regarding the question of Israel's current international status. Thirty-nine percent of Jewish respondents" think Israel is isolated at present, compared to one-half who thought so three months ago. Here the gaps between those defining themselves as

politically right-wing and left-wing were minuscule. We found a similar trend among Arab respondents, 32% of whom saw Israel as isolated today, compared to 44% who thought so in the previous measurement .

This time we also specifically asked about the U.S.-Israeli relationship. It turns out that despite the recurrent tensions with the Obama administration, only a small minority of the Jewish public (20%) currently sees a real danger that the United States will distance itself from Israel. Here too the gaps between left and right were found to be negligible. This confidence in the stability of the U.S.-Israeli relationship apparently explains the view of 55% of the Jewish respondents that Israel was right in its action, and did not take any real risk, when it rejected Washington's demand to freeze construction in the settlements. Here the gap between the right and the left was enormous - a segmentation by self-definition revealed that among those who define themselves as politically left-wing, an unequivocal majority (87%) sees Israel as having erred, compared to 60% of those who define themselves as centrist and only 21% of those who define themselves as politically right-wing .

Overall, the Arab public's perception of the degree of friendship between the two countries is similar to that of the Jewish public, with only 17% saying there is a danger of a U.S.-Israeli rift. However, on the question of a construction freeze, the position is completely different, with 70% of Arab respondents thinking Israel erred when it refused to freeze construction for three months as the United States requested .

The above-noted decrease in the sense of international isolation apparently explains a certain change that occurred in the Jewish public's attitude toward criticism of Israel from abroad. The majority (61%) still thinks that there will always be criticism of Israel in Europe and the United States, without connection to the degree of intransigence or flexibility of Israeli policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, here too the data show a decrease compared to the previous measurement, in which 75% saw no connection between Israel's policy and negative international attitudes toward Israel. The widespread perception that criticism of Israel is built-in apparently fosters distrust of the ability of external players to contribute to bringing peace closer. Thus, almost two-thirds



of the Jewish public think that even though the many rounds of talks conducted with the Palestinians so far have not borne fruit, there is no chance that an agreement imposed on the sides by international parties would yield a stable and sustainable peace. In the Arab public, however, 49% (vs. 30% of Jewish respondents) think a change in Israel's policy would positively affect external attitudes toward Israel, and even more—55%—believe that an imposed agreement could indeed bring about a stable and sustainable peace .

The many warnings that if a solution is not found, the Palestinian Authority will collapse and Israel will find itself ruling territories heavily populated by Palestinians who lack rights—something that will destroy Israel's Jewish and democratic character—apparently do not persuade most Israeli Jews: two-thirds see no such danger in the foreseeable future. A segmentation of the positions on this question by self-definition as politically left-wing or right-wing reveals that, not surprisingly, the rate of those seeing such a danger is much higher on the left—58%—than on the right—25%, with those defining themselves as centrist situated in the middle at 35%. At the same time, a small minority (51% vs. 45%) of the Jewish public thinks now is a good time to discuss the core issues (borders, refugees, Jerusalem) so as to arrive at peace, as Secretary of State Clinton said in her recent speech. A segmentation of the positions on this issue between those who define themselves as left-wing and right-wing shows that willingness to begin discussions of the core issues is very high on the left—76%, compared to only 21% of those who define themselves as right-wing and 51% of those who define themselves as centrist .

Interestingly, in the Arab public, a plurality (47%), sees no danger that the Palestinian Authority will collapse if peace is not achieved, or that Israel will find itself in a situation that damages its democratic and Jewish character (43% think there is such danger and the rest do not know). In addition, in the Arab public, the rate of those saying the time is right to launch a discussion of the core issues is not much different than in the Jewish public—58% .

Despite the lack of a sense of urgency regarding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that emerges from these data, it turns out that the Israeli Jewish public has a high

sense of urgency and threat regarding the Iranian context that is pushing them into fresh thinking and a preference for action. About two-thirds think that Israel should try to establish cooperation with Arab countries that oppose Tehran's measures on the nuclear issue. To help generate such strategic cooperation, half of the Jewish public is even prepared for Israel to soften its positions on the Palestinian issue. In the Arab public, however, a higher rate of respondents (43% vs. 37%) thinks Israel should not establish cooperation with Arab countries that also fear Iranian nuclearization. This emerges from the fact that this public shies away from the idea of forging a strategic alliance that would position Israel and Muslim countries against another Muslim country. Yet a majority of the Arab public (67%) would favor Israel softening its position on the Palestinian issue so as to create the possibility of strategic cooperation with Arab countries against Iran. The apparent contradiction between the positions on these two questions seems to reflect the Arab public's desire for a softening of the Israeli position on the Palestinian issue at any price, whatever the motivation for this type of change.

And what about the Turks? It turns out that the flotilla incident had a deep and enduring impact on the Israeli Jewish attitude toward Turkey. The data show only minimal willingness in the Jewish public to take steps to facilitate a thaw and perhaps even a reconciliation with Turkey. Only 20% think Israel should respond positively to the Turkish demand to apologize for the actions taken by the IDF when it tried to prevent the flotilla from reaching Gaza, and even fewer (only 16%) favor Israel paying compensation to the families of those killed in the clash with IDF forces. The picture in the Arab public is exactly the opposite: 79% say Israel should agree to the Turkish demand to apologize for the flotilla incident and 72% say it should pay compensation to the relatives of those killed in the incident .

In the past, it was commonly claimed that the Israeli Jewish public views the Arab world monolithically, and that if a more nuanced perception were to develop, a door would open for improved relations with at least some of the countries in the region. Yet data from the present survey show that the Israeli Jewish public currently does distinguish between the degrees of hostility toward Israel that characterize different Muslim countries in the

region. Some countries and entities are indeed perceived as hostile or very hostile (Iran, 92%; Lebanon, 69.5%; Palestinian Authority, 69%; Turkey, 62%) while others are not perceived as taking such a negative stance toward Israel (only 38% assessed Saudi Arabia as hostile or very hostile, 26% Egypt, 24% Jordan, and 10% Morocco). The Arab public's perceptions are different. Except for Iran, which is perceived as quite hostile (70%), the majority's assessment of all the other countries is more positive than that of the Jewish public: Lebanon is considered to be very hostile or hostile by 49%; the Palestinian Authority, 44.5%; Turkey, 24%; Saudi Arabia and Morocco, 17%; Egypt, 14%; Jordan, 11%.

The Negotiations Index for December, 2010

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: 52.5; Jewish sample: 50.0**

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*The Peace Index is a project of the [Evans Program for Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University](#) and [the Israel Democracy Institute](#). This month's survey was conducted by telephone on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 14-15, 2010, by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 610 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.*