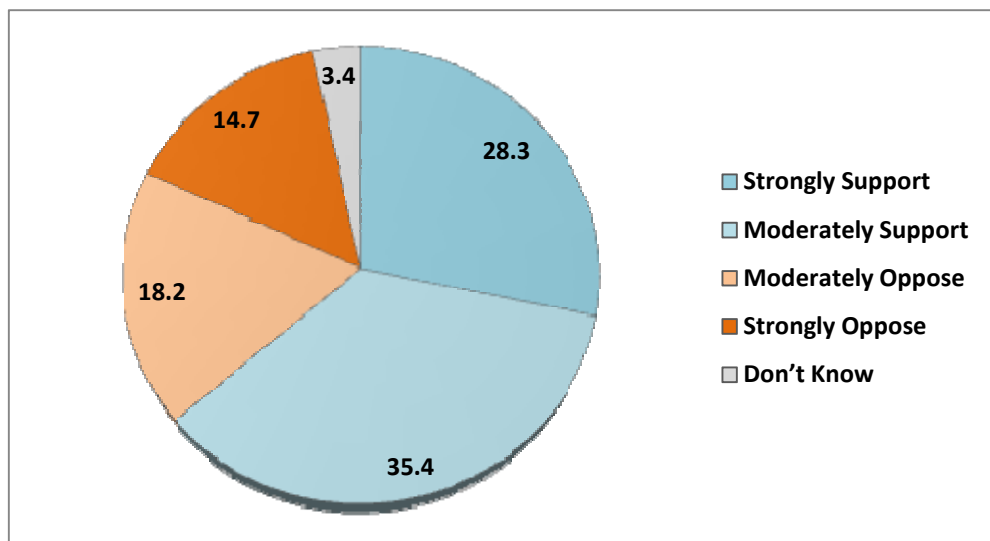


**Peace Index - November, 2010**  
**Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann**

**Summary of the Findings**

**Graph of the Month: For or Against a Temporary Construction Freeze in  
Return for American Incentives?**



- For or against a "deal" with the Americans?** Sixty-four percent of the Jewish public (the Israeli Arab public was not sampled this month because of Eid al-Adha) support the arrangement by which Israel will freeze construction in the settlements (not including Jerusalem) for three months to enable the beginning of negotiations with the Palestinians, in return for state-of-the-art warplanes and a commitment that the United States will veto any United Nations resolutions to impose an agreement on Israel. Thirty-three percent oppose this arrangement. However, when it comes to a long-term freeze, the public is split, even if in return Israel would receive a U.S. commitment to pressure Iran heavily so as to prevent it from attaining nuclear weapons.
- Is it right to criticize Obama on the Iranian issue?** An overwhelming majority (74%) thinks Netanyahu acted correctly when, during his visit to the United States, he

publicly criticized President Obama for not doing enough to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear bomb.

- **Building in the settlements or the Iranian bomb?** The public is split over whether Israel should agree to a long-term construction freeze in the settlements in return for greater American pressure on Iran: 48% favor this and about the same number oppose it.
- **To attack or not to attack Iran?** The public is also divided on whether Israel should attack Iran's nuclear facilities by itself to prevent Iran from nuclearizing, in the event that economic sanctions imposed by Western countries fail and those countries opt not to use force: 49.5% think Israel should do so and 43% say it should not. At the same time, a majority of the public (66%) thinks Israel should not heed American opposition to attacking if an Israeli decision deems an attack necessary.
- **Ambiguity – yes or no?** The public is almost unanimous (90%) that Israel should stick to its policy of ambiguity on whether or not it has nuclear weapons. There is also a similar degree of consensus (84%) against the claim, heard in the international arena, that if Israel is allowed to have nuclear weapons then Iran should be too, or alternatively, that only if Israel undergoes nuclear disarmament can the same be demanded of Iran.
- **When is it appropriate to use nuclear weapons?** The public displays great caution when it comes to the conditions that would justify Israel's use of nuclear weapons. Eighty-two percent oppose using nuclear weapons to prevent the outbreak of a conventional war, and 75% oppose using them to win such a war if it has already begun. Fifty percent support using nuclear weapons if Israel is facing defeat in a conventional war, while 42.5% oppose this. However, the picture is reversed in the case of nonconventional weapons. In response to a biological or chemical attack, a

majority of respondents (66%) supports using nuclear weapons, and the rate of support jumps to 89% in response to a nuclear attack.

- **How is the government functioning?** Only in regard to two areas – security and economic growth – does the percentage of those who think the government’s policy is advancing Israel’s national interests exceed the percentage of those who think it is harming them, and here too the supporters do not constitute a majority but only a plurality. Areas in which the assessments are most negative are: reducing the gaps between rich and poor, creating the right balance between the rights and obligations of the haredi and nonharedi sectors, and improving relations between Jewish and Arab citizens.

## The Findings in Detail

Given the fierce disagreements within the government concerning the American proposal that Israel extend the construction freeze in the settlements (not including Jerusalem) for three months to enable launching negotiations with the Palestinians, in return for state-of-the-art warplanes and a U.S. commitment to veto any UN imposed agreement on Israel, and in light of Netanyahu’s readiness to respond positively to this proposal, we checked where the Israeli public stands on this question. It turns out that a clear majority (64%) supports Netanyahu’s position and only 33% oppose it. A segmentation by voting for the Knesset in 2009 reveals a majority of **supporters** among voters for Labor (91%), Meretz (87%), Kadima (81%), Likud (61.5%), and Yisrael Beiteinu (51% vs. 41% against), and a majority of **opponents** among voters for the National Union (100%), Jewish Home (77.8%), Shas (76.5%), and Torah Judaism (50% vs. 41% in support).

All this pertains to a three-month freeze with a considerable compensation. When it comes to a long-term freeze, however, even if the compensation is a U.S. commitment to pressure Iran heavily so as to prevent it from attaining nuclear weapons, the public is quite divided: 48% think Israel should agree to this while just about the same rate opposes it.

Further regarding the United States and Iran, an overwhelming majority (74%) thinks that even with the ongoing tension between Jerusalem and Washington, Netanyahu acted correctly when, in his speech to the conference of Jewish organizations in Atlanta, he criticized U.S. president Obama for not doing enough to prevent Iran from reaching a military nuclear capability. Only among Meretz voters does a majority (68%) think Netanyahu was wrong to publicly criticize Obama.

The public's cautious attitude toward the Iranian issue emerges on the question of whether Israel should attack Iran by itself to stop it from producing nuclear weapons, in the event that economic sanctions imposed by Western countries fail and those countries opt not to use force to prevent Iranian nuclearization. Under these circumstances a high rate, though not quite a majority (49.5%), thinks Israel should attack Iran by itself, with a very large minority (43%) saying it should not do so. A segmentation of responses by respondents' self-definition as politically left-wing or right-wing shows that a clear majority of respondents who identify with the right favors an attack (57% in favor vs. 35% opposed), while opponents outnumber supporters among respondents who identify as politically centrist and left-wing; in the center, 50% oppose such an attack and 43% support it, while on the left, 49% oppose such an attack and 40% percent support it.

At the same time, apparently in line with the Israeli Jewish public's considerable mistrust of the Obama administration's intentions, which we found in previous surveys, the majority (66%) does not think the Israeli decision regarding whether or not to attack in such a situation should be dependent on the U.S. position; that is, they believe Israel should attack even if the United States is against it.

While on the subject of nuclear weapons, in light of the disagreements among experts on whether or not Israel should stick to its traditional policy of ambiguity as to whether or not it has nuclear weapons, we looked into the public's stand on the matter. It turns out there is almost total unanimity (90%) that the ambiguity policy should continue. A consensus of similar extent (84%) opposes the claim, which is sometimes heard internationally, that if Israel is allowed to have nuclear weapons then Iran should be allowed the same, or alternatively, that only if Israel undergoes nuclear disarmament a

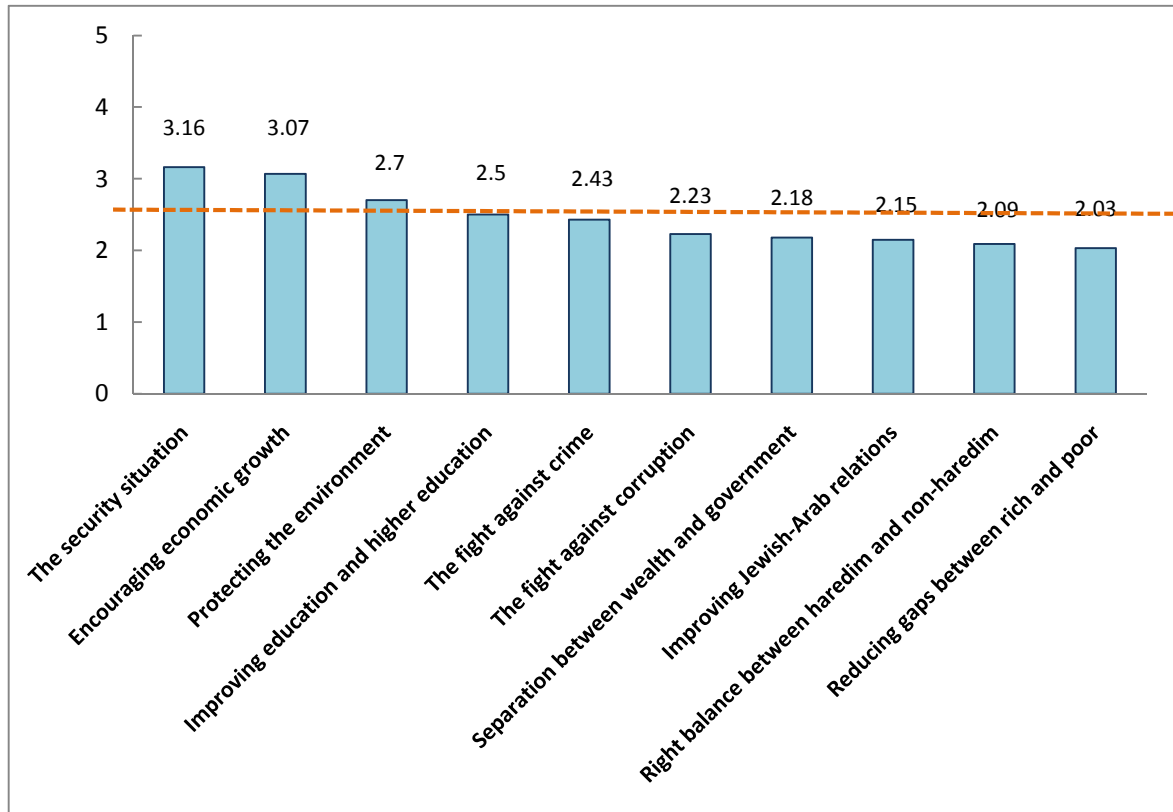
similar move can be demanded of Iran. This all-embracing agreement shows that at least on these questions, there are no significant disparities in the Israeli public between those defining themselves as left-wing or right-wing.

Along with the public's broad support for Israel's right to have nuclear weapons, it shows great caution regarding the conditions that would justify using them. Eighty-two percent oppose using these weapons to prevent the outbreak of a conventional war, and 75% are against using them to win such a war after it has already started. And what should Israel do if it is facing defeat in a conventional war? In that situation, 50% support using nuclear weapons and 42.5% oppose it (the rest have no clear opinion). In other words, even in the face of an existential danger, so long as it is a conventional war there is a very large minority against using nuclear weapons. However, when it comes to a nonconventional attack, the public's positions are unequivocally in the other direction: in case of a biological or chemical attack, 66% support using nuclear weapons, and if it is a nuclear attack the rate jumps to 89%.

Seeking to gauge how the public evaluates the government's performance, we presented respondents with ten areas and asked whether the government's policy in each area is beneficial or harmful to Israel's national interests. (Respondents were asked to rank the government's policy in each area on a scale from 1, "very harmful," to 5, "very beneficial," with the middle score of 3 meaning "not harmful and not beneficial") Not surprisingly, the picture is quite gloomy. Only for two areas – Israel's security situation and encouraging economic growth – does only a plurality, not a majority, see the government's policy as more beneficial than harmful. The three areas where the assessments are the most negative are: reducing gaps between rich and poor, balancing the rights and duties of haredim and non-haredim, and improving relations between Jews and Arabs. Note that When the assessments of all the areas were averaged, the scales tip to the negative for the voters for all the parties, including Likud voters.

**Graph: The Extent to Which the Government's Policy is Harmful or beneficial by Issues** (An average score above 3 indicates that the government's policy is beneficial to

Israel's national interests and a score below 3 indicates that the government's policy is harmful to Israel's interests)



### The Negotiations Index for November, 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.



## **Negotiation Index - Jewish Sample: 47.2**

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*The Peace Index is conducted under the auspices of the Evens Program for Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Israel Democracy Institute. The survey was carried out by telephone from Monday and Tuesday, 15-16 November, 2010, by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 510 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: Ms. Yasmin Alkalay. An overview of the findings of the survey was published in Yediot Aharonot on November 29, 2010.*