

Peace Index - October, 2010

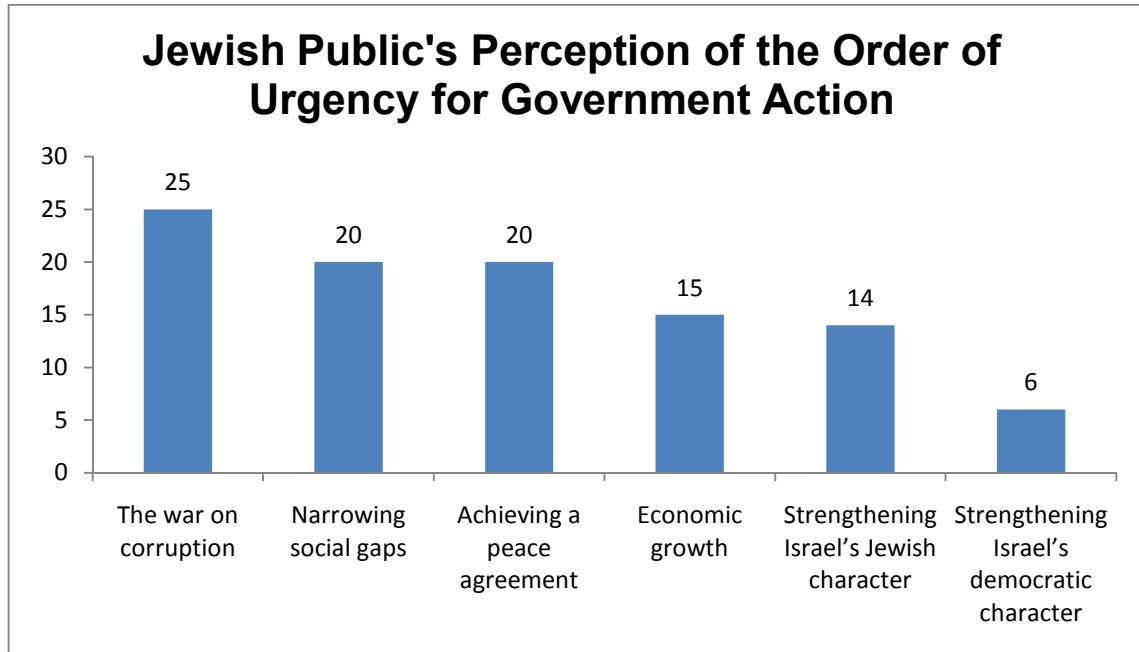
Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

Summary of the Findings

- **The right time for negotiations?** A clear majority (64%) of the Jewish public thinks now is the right time to return to negotiations with the Palestinian Authority under U.S. patronage. A larger majority (72%) favors such negotiations, but only 33% think they are likely to bear fruit.
- **Is there a price for extending the construction freeze?** A clear majority (74%) supports Netanyahu's demand that the Palestinian leadership recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people as a condition for extending the building freeze in the settlements. An overwhelming majority of the Arab public (79%) opposes this demand.
- **Is there a price for peace?** In return for a permanent peace with the Palestinians backed by the United States, half of the Jewish public are willing to evacuate settlements that lie beyond the large settlement blocs (a minority of 43% oppose this). However, only a minority (28%) thinks Israel should sign such an agreement and pay for it by evacuating all of the settlements in the territories (a majority of 65% oppose such an evacuation). In the Arab public there is sweeping support (80%) for a full evacuation in return for a permanent peace.
- **And settlers who would want to remain?** The Jewish public is evenly split on the question of whether to enable the settlers to remain in their homes after an evacuation and the transfer of the territories to the Palestinian Authority – 47% favor providing such a possibility and 48% oppose it. The majority of the Arab public (56%) is against it.

- **Will the goods be delivered?** A large majority (73%) thinks that if an agreement is signed, the leadership of the Palestinian Authority will not be able to uphold its commitments because of the opposition of Hamas and other groups. However, a similar majority (70%) believes that if the Israeli government signs a peace agreement, it will be able to honor the commitments it has undertaken despite the opposition of various domestic elements.
- **And if one thinks otherwise?** A majority (51% vs. 43%) says Lieberman should be left in place as foreign minister despite the fact that in a variety of major forums, he has presented views about the renewal of peace talks that contradict those of Prime Minister Netanyahu. An identical majority thinks Netanyahu should not dissolve his coalition with Yisrael Beiteinu on this basis and form a new coalition with Kadima because of Lieberman's positions.
- **What do the Palestinians really want?** Today, too, an overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (80%) thinks that the Palestinians have not come to terms with Israel's existence and would destroy Israel if they could. Moreover, 74% think there will be no change in this position even if a peace agreement is signed.
- **And what is most urgent?** In response to the question of what is the most urgent issue the government needs to deal with, Jewish respondents ranked the war on corruption and establishment of clean governance (25%) as most urgent, followed by the following, in descending order: closing the socioeconomic gaps and achieving peace with the Palestinians (20% in both cases), promoting economic growth and the standard of living (15%), strengthening the Jewish character of the country (14%), and strengthening the country's democratic character (6%). At the top of the Arab public's order of urgency are a obtaining a peace agreement (38%), promoting economic growth and the standard of living (31%), and strengthening the country's democratic character (14%).

Graph of the month:



The Findings in Detail

One of the claims of those opposing the renewal of the political negotiations is that the idea is good but the timing is poor. Hence, we looked into what the public thinks about this question. It turns out that a clear majority (64%) of the Jewish public believes that now is a fitting time to return to the negotiations with the Palestinian Authority under U.S. patronage. That view has a majority in the Arab public as well, though slightly smaller (59%). A segmentation of the answers by the respondents' self-definition of their degree of religiosity reveals sharp differences: whereas only one-third of ultra-Orthodox and religious respondents think the present time is right for negotiations, among traditional and secular respondents a majority (69% and 74%, respectively) favors the present time as appropriate for negotiations.

It should be noted, however, that today, as in the past, a large majority of the Jewish public (72%) favors negotiations, while only 33% believe the negotiations will bear fruit. The tendency in the Arab public is similar, although the gap between support and belief is

smaller. Here the rate of support for negotiations is 58% while the rate of confidence in the results is 38%. In other words, the smaller gap mainly reflects the lower rate of support in the Arab public.

The Palestinians are currently demanding a freeze on settlement construction as a condition for renewing talks, while Israel is demanding a payback for a construction freeze: recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people. A large majority of the Jewish public (74%) supports Netanyahu's demand for recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people as a condition for extending the construction freeze in the settlements. Note that no significant differences were found in the majority that supports Netanyahu's position when Jewish respondents were segmented into groups based on their degree of religiosity. A segmentation by voting patterns shows that those who reject Netanyahu's demand only have a majority among Meretz voters. Not surprisingly, an overwhelming majority of the Arab public (79%) opposes the demand that Israel be recognized as the state of the Jewish people, since in their view, such recognition would perpetuate and aggravate their status as a national minority.

If the two sides were to sit at the table and ultimately come to an agreement, the question is asked what price the Israelis are prepared to pay for peace. It emerges that in return for permanent peace with the Palestinians backed by the United States, half of the Jewish public is ready to evacuate settlements beyond the large settlement blocs (a large minority of 43% opposes this). However, only a minority (28%) thinks Israel should sign such an agreement and evacuate all of the settlements in the territories (a majority of 65% oppose such an evacuation). When the Jewish public's answers to the question of a full evacuation for a permanent peace agreement are segmented by the parties responded voted for in the 2009 Knesset elections, only among Meretz voters is there unequivocal support for a total evacuation. Labor voters are evenly split on the issue, and a large minority (47%) of Kadima voters favors such a tradeoff. In the Arab public, there is sweeping support (80%) for a full evacuation in return for a permanent agreement. As for the possibility of leaving Jewish settlers who want to remain where they are under Palestinian rule following a peace settlement, the Jewish public is evenly split on whether

to enable settlers to remain in their homes after an evacuation and transfer of the territories to the Palestinian Authority: 47% support such a possibility while 48% oppose it. A segmentation of the Jewish respondents by voting shows that among Kadima, Labor, and Meretz voters, a majority favors providing settlers with this type of option, while among voters for the rest of the parties, minorities of different sizes support it. A majority of the Arab public, though not large (56%), opposes giving Jewish settlers the option of living under Palestinian rule.

As for the chances that a peace agreement will actually be implemented, a large majority of the Jewish public (73%) thinks that if an agreement is signed, the leadership of the Palestinian Authority will not be able to uphold its commitments because of opposition from Hamas and other groups. A similar majority (70%), however, believes that if a peace agreement is signed, the Israeli government will be able to meet the obligations it undertakes despite the opposition of various elements. In the Arab public, however, there is greater balance between the sides: a majority (59%) is sure or thinks that the Palestinian Authority will be able to uphold the commitments it undertakes, and a similar majority (53%) thinks the Israeli government will be able to honor its obligations.

Shortly after Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed his support for renewing the negotiations, Foreign Minister Lieberman presented a very different position in his speech to the UN General Assembly and his subsequent meetings with the foreign ministers of France and Spain. We asked whether in light of this, Foreign Minister Lieberman should remain in his post. A slim majority of the Jewish public (51% vs. 43%) thinks Lieberman should be left in his post as foreign minister despite the fact that he has publicly presented views that contradict those of Prime Minister Netanyahu. An identical majority thinks that Netanyahu should not dissolve his coalition with Yisrael Beiteinu because of Lieberman's positions and form a new coalition with Kadima. In the Arab public, however, a large majority (67%) thinks Lieberman should be removed from his post, and a majority (62%) thinks Netanyahu should replace the alliance with Yisrael Beiteinu with a coalitional partnership with the Kadima Party.

A considerable part of the answers to the questions above apparently derive from an overall worldview regarding the intentions of the Palestinians. Hence, we again asked a question that we have asked many times in the past. It turns out that today, as in the past, an overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (80%) believes the Palestinians have not come to terms with Israel's existence and would destroy it if they could. Moreover, 74% think no change will occur in this position even if a peace agreement is signed with the Palestinians. Among Arab respondents a majority of about 70% rejected these notions; the majority of Arab respondents think the Palestinians have accepted Israel's existence and do not want to destroy it now or after a peace agreement is signed.

When asked to indicate the most urgent issue for the government to deal with today, Jewish respondents ranked the war on corruption and the establishment of clean government (25%) highest. After that, in descending order, their answers included: closing the socioeconomic gaps and reaching peace with the Palestinians (20% each), promoting economic growth and the standard of living (15%), strengthening the Jewish character of the state (14%), and strengthening Israel's democratic character (6%). At the top of the Arab public's order of urgency are the following: reaching peace with the Palestinians (38%), promoting economic growth and the standard of living (31%), and strengthening the democratic character of Israel (14%).

A segmentation of the Jewish respondents' answers to the questions above by the respondents' self-definition as politically left or right revealed that, as expected, for those who define themselves as left or moderately left (only 15% of the entire sample), the issue of highest priority is reaching a peace agreement (46%), with the next priority being narrowing social gaps (27%). Among respondents who defined themselves as center (about one-third of the sample), the highest priority is the war on corruption (26%), which is immediately followed by achieving a peace agreement. Among those defining themselves as right or moderately right (46% of the entire Jewish sample), the war on corruption is in first place (26%), immediately followed by strengthening Israel's Jewish character (22%).

The Negotiations Index for October, 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.

General Israeli Population: 52.5

Jewish Israelis: 50.0

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 to Wednesday, 18-20 October, 2010, by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 601 respondents, who constitute a representative sample of the adult 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 October 28th, 2010.