

## Peace Index - February 2013

Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

The Index for this month focused on two issues: the conclusion of the coalition negotiations for forming a government and the preparations for U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Israel.

- **New politics.** The large majority of the Jewish public (73%) sees the election results as reflecting a strong desire for a “new politics” and for a new breed of politicians. An analysis based on voting in the January elections reveals that the only party in which a clear-cut majority of voters do not hold that view is Shas; in contrast, voters for all the other parties (topped by Hatnuah voters at 100% and Yesh Atid voters at 96%) think the vote did manifest a desire for a new politics. And yet, interestingly, only about half of the respondents in the Jewish public as a whole (51%) think the election results were influenced by the protest in the summer of 2011. A majority of Meretz, Yesh Atid, Hatnuah, and Labor voters think the results were influenced by the social protest (there is no such majority among Habayit Hayehudi voters). The desire for change was evident in the widespread support (69%) for a coalition that includes Yesh Atid and Habayit Hayehudi as senior partners, while leaving the Haredi parties out of the government. Here, as expected, the opponents of such a coalition are concentrated among United Torah Judaism and Shas voters, while Kadima voters were divided on the issue. In the rest of the parties, majorities of different sizes favor a coalition without the ultra-Orthodox and with Yesh Atid and Habayit Hayehudi as senior partners.
- **The coalition negotiations.** The Jewish public gives Netanyahu a lower grade for the way in which he conducted the coalition negotiations than it gives Lapid and Bennett. Only 48% think Netanyahu conducted the negotiations well or very well, whereas Lapid and Bennett get grades of 62% and 60% respectively. At the same time, a majority of voters for Netanyahu's own party, Likud Beiteinu, gave Netanyahu a grade of good or very good, and he received these grades from small majorities of Yesh Atid voters (51.5%) and Habayit Hayehudi voters (52.5%) as well—presumably because he preferred their parties to other partners. Among voters for the rest of the parties only minorities gave Netanyahu a good grade. Lapid got a particularly low grade from voters for the Haredi parties, United Torah Judaism (only 25% of whose voters rated his performance as good) and Shas (17%). Among the remaining parties, the lowest rate that assessed Lapid's conduct of the negotiations as good was found

among Likud voters (48%). An identical picture emerges for how Bennett conducted the coalition negotiations.

- **Suitability of the ministers.** In the opinion of a majority of the Jewish public (56%), Lapid is not suited to serve as finance minister. Especially surprising is the finding that even among voters for his own party, Yesh Atid, opinions are divided, with an edge for the negative assessments: 50% think he is not suited compared to 42% who think he is. As for Tzipi Livni's suitability for her designated role as coordinator of the negotiations with the Palestinians, the public is almost evenly split, again with a tilt to the negative: 46% see her as suited for the role while 50% do not. Here, unlike in Lapid's case, Livni's own voters stand behind her: 96% of them say she is suited to be in charge of the negotiations, apparently indicating why they voted for her in the first place.
- **Obama and Israel.** At present, a majority of the Jewish public (51%) views President Obama's attitude toward Israel as neutral, although there has been a certain increase in the rate of those who see him as friendly toward Israel compared to the past (from 29% in April to 36.5% today). The only two parties where a majority of voters see Obama as friendly toward Israel are Meretz (59%) and Labor (54%). The overall rate of Jewish Israelis who think Obama is more pro-Israel than pro-Palestinian also rose slightly from 14% to 18%, while the rate of those who believe he is more pro-Palestinian decreased from 31% to 23%. However, on this question as well, the most common answer, as in the past, is that Obama's stance toward the two sides is balanced (52.5% at present compared to 47% in the past). An especially large proportion of Habayit Hayehudi voters view Obama as more pro-Palestinian (46%).
- **Can Obama be trusted?** A more significant positive change has occurred in of the extent to which respondents believe that Obama can be trusted to take Israel's interests into account and to safeguard those interests. In the past, a large majority of over two-thirds thought Obama could not be trusted in this regard. Today, while 53.5% still think he cannot be trusted, 45% do rely on him to take into account and safeguard Israel's interests. A segmentation of the responses on trust in Obama by voting in the latest elections shows considerable disparities even among voters of the center-left parties, although the majority in all of those parties sees Obama as trustworthy (Meretz 86%, Labor 79%, Hatnuah 72%, Kadima 57%, Yesh Atid 53%).
- **Expectations of the visit.** A majority of the Jewish public (51% vs. 35%) thinks Obama would not have come to Israel unless it was agreed in advance that the visit would have some sort of significant result in terms of softening the positions of the

Israeli and Palestinian sides. The rate who agree with this assessment among Meretz voters—73%—is exceptionally high. Nevertheless, a large majority of the Jewish public is not optimistic about the outcome of the visit, with 62% seeing Obama as lacking the ability to bring about a real breakthrough in relations with the Palestinians. Voters for Labor (74%) and for Kadima and Hatnuah (67% each) are especially optimistic that the visit has the potential for change. Meretz voters are skeptical at 50%, while voters for Habayit Hayehudi and Shas do not believe that the visit has a chance of bearing fruit at all—with 22% and 12% respectively.

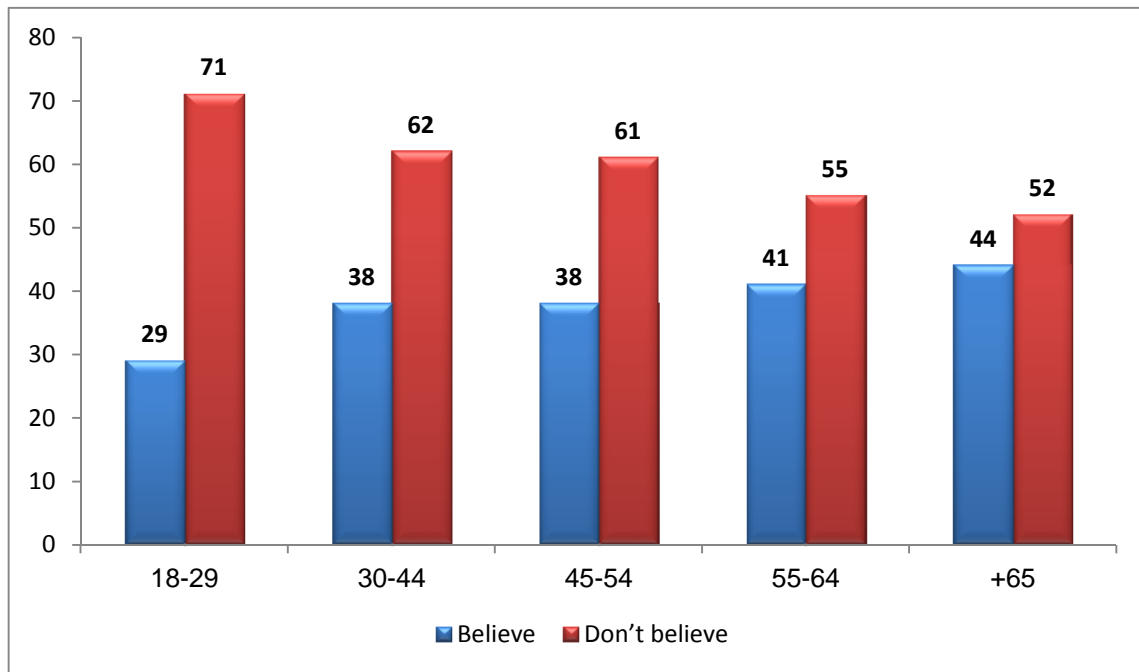
- **Should Israel be more flexible?** As for whether Israel should or should not show more flexibility than it does at present so as to help President Obama get the negotiations with the Palestinians back on track, there is an almost even split between those who favor greater flexibility (49.5%) and those who oppose it (48%). As expected, support for greater flexibility is much higher on the left and in the center than on the secular and religious right. Most supportive are Meretz voters (91%), followed by in descending order: Kadima and Labor 84%, Hatnuah 79%, Yesh Atid 73.5%, Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu 36%, Shas 28%, Habayit Hayehudi 18%, and United Torah Judaism 14%.

### **The Negotiations Index for February, 2013**

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: 52.4 (Jewish Sample: 46.4)**

**Graph of the month: Belief in President Obama's ability to bring about a real breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations**  
(%, according to age, Jewish population)



*The Peace Index is a project of the [Evans Program in Mediation and Conflict Resolution](#) at Tel Aviv University and the [Israel Democracy Institute](#). This month's survey was conducted by telephone on March 11–14, 2013, by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 600 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 was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay.*