

Peace Index column, March 2015

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This month the Peace Index survey focused on three issues: first, the results of the recent elections; second, Israel's relations at present with the United States and the West; and third, the outlook for the future in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

Sticking with the decision on whom to vote for: Almost all the Jewish voters (93%) think or are sure that if the elections were to be held today, they would again vote for the same party they recently voted for. A segmentation by voting for the various parties shows that all of the Torah Judaism and Meretz voters are satisfied with the electoral decision they made and would repeat it. Among Bayit Yehudi voters, however, while a clear majority would vote for the same party, this majority is the smallest among the parties (88%). Among the Arabs, too, a clear majority would vote for the same party (75%).

Satisfaction with the election results: Despite the high rates of sticking with one's electoral choice, the rate of satisfaction with the election results is at best medium; in the Jewish public the rate of those satisfied (51%) is only slightly higher than the rate of those unsatisfied (46.5%). A segmentation of the responses to this question by voting in the recent elections reveals that, as could be expected given the results of the balloting, the left and the center are less satisfied than the right. More specifically, dissatisfaction is highest for Zionist Union voters (92%) followed immediately by Yesh Atid voters (85%). Likud voters are the most satisfied with the election results (95%). Among the Arabs, the rate of the dissatisfied (54%) is more than double the rate of the satisfied (24%).

What is the preferred government?: At least a partial explanation for the relatively high rate of dissatisfaction with the election results could lie in the fact that the rate of those who think a unity government, whose senior partners would be Likud and Zionist Union, would better serve Israel's interests (49%) is clearly higher than the rate of those who, for the same reason, prefer a government based only on a coalition of the right-wing and religious parties (35%), which at the moment appears the most likely and realistic possibility. A segmentation by voting shows that the strongest support for a right-wing and religious government is found among Torah Judaism (77%) and Jewish Home voters (76%), while the highest support for a unity government is found among those who said they had voted for Yesh Atid (83%), followed by Zionist Union voters (73%). Only about one-fourth (26%) of Likud voters regard a government that includes Zionist Union as best serving Israel's interests.

“The Arabs are voting in droves”: We looked into the level of opposition or support for Prime Minister Netanyahu’s call to the Jewish population on election day to go out and vote since, with “the Arabs voting in droves,” the right was in danger of losing. The Jewish public is definitely divided on this question. Forty-eight percent think the criticism of the prime minister’s words is justified while 47% feel it is unjustified. On this issue there were no surprises: those most justifying the criticism of Netanyahu on this question are Meretz and Zionist Union voters (96% and 76% respectively). The lowest rate for justifying the criticism was found among Bayit Yehudi voters—only 1%!

As expected, in the Arab public the rate of those who think the criticism was justified is higher than the rate of those who feel the opposite.

We went on to gauge the public’s perceptions on Israel’s relations at present with the United States and the Western countries.

What are the relations at present between Israel and the United States?: The highest rate among the Jewish public (42%) assesses these relations at present as poor (grades 1-2 on an ascending scale of 1-5), a bit more than a third (37%) view them as medium (a grade of 3 on this scale), while 17% evaluate them as good or very good (grades 4-5). This could be why many would like a government that includes Zionist Union, whose leaders have better relations with the Obama administration. A segmentation by the recent voting reveals that only voters for Yisrael Beiteinu, the party of Foreign Minister Lieberman, assess Israeli-U.S. relations as very good or moderately good (60%). Among the voters for all the other parties, right, left, and center, only a minority (40% or fewer) concur with that view.

Interestingly, in the Arab public a large majority sees Israeli-U.S. relations as moderately good or very good (60% gave these relations grades of 4-5).¹

The chances of external pressure on Israel: Among the Jews a certain majority (53%) sees very high or moderately high chances that the United States and the Western countries will in the near future impose a political settlement on Israel based on the principle of two states for two peoples. In comparison, 41 % regard the chances of this as very low or moderately low (6% do not know). At the same time, an identical majority (53%) believes that if an attempt is made to impose a political settlement on Israel from outside, Israel will be able to withstand it successfully (37.5% say the opposite and 10% do not know). Belief in Israel’s ability to withstand external pressure is highest among voters for Bayit Yehudi and Yisrael Beiteinu (79%

¹ The average grade for Israeli-U.S. relations among the Jewish population is 2.59 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means very poor relations and 5 means very good relations. The average for the Arab population is 4.00.

and 71% respectively) and lowest among Meretz voters (10%). The greatest concern about Israel's ability to withstand external pressure, if exerted, was found among Yesh Atid (78%) and Meretz (72%) voters.

In the Arab public there is almost equivalency between those see high or, alternatively, low chances of external pressure on Israel (31% and 29% respectively). Here one should take account, however, of the high rate of "don't knows" (41%).

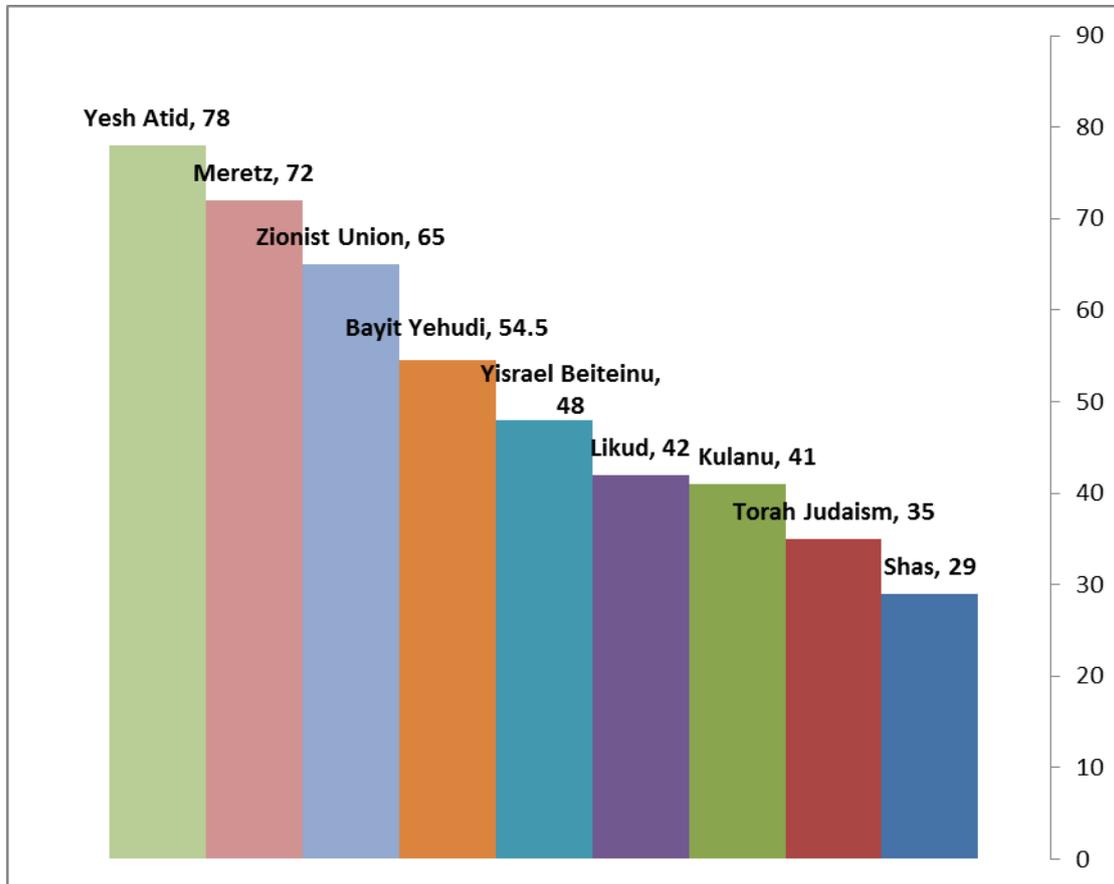
And what is anticipated in the Palestinian sphere?

A Third Intifada on the way? The findings show that the Jewish public's views on this question are not clear-cut. Whereas 49% think that, given Likud's victory in the elections and the high chances of a right-wing coalition that is not committed to seeking a peace agreement that would entail a Palestinian state, the chances of a Third Intifada are very high or moderately high, compared to 40.5% who assess the chances as very or moderately low. The expectation of a Third Intifada is especially high among Zionist Union (63%) and Yisrael Beiteinu (61%) voters. In the Arab public the distribution of views on this question is the opposite: the rate of those who think the chances of a Third Intifada are high (30%) is considerably lower than the rate of those who see them as low (48%).

Netanyahu and the two-state solution: We wanted to clarify what the public thinks about the sincerity of Netanyahu's position on the question of a two-state solution—given the fact that, whereas before the elections the prime minister said that as long as he was in office a Palestinian state would not be established, after the elections he said he was not retracting what he had stated in his Bar-Ilan address, in which he supported the two-states-for-two-peoples solution. The answers reveal that only 13% of the Jewish public thinks Netanyahu sincerely supports a two-state solution. Twenty-two percent believe that he indeed supports this solution but views it as infeasible in the near future, while the majority (52%) says that he does not sincerely support this solution. On this question no systematic disparities were found between voters for the various parties, except that in all the cases only a small majority thought Netanyahu sincerely supported the particular solution. As for the Arab interviewees' answers to this question, no clear picture emerged.

Negotiations indexes: 48.8 (Jewish sample: 45.0)

Graph of the month: What are the chances that the United States and the West will in the near future impose a political settlement on Israel? (% who assess a high probability of pressures, Jews, by voting in the 2015 elections)



The Peace Index is a project of the Evens Program for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Gutmann Center for Surveys of the Israel Democracy Institute. This month's survey was conducted by telephone on March 29-30, 2015, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population of Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is $\pm 4.1\%$ at a confidence level of 95%.