

Peace Index - February 2011

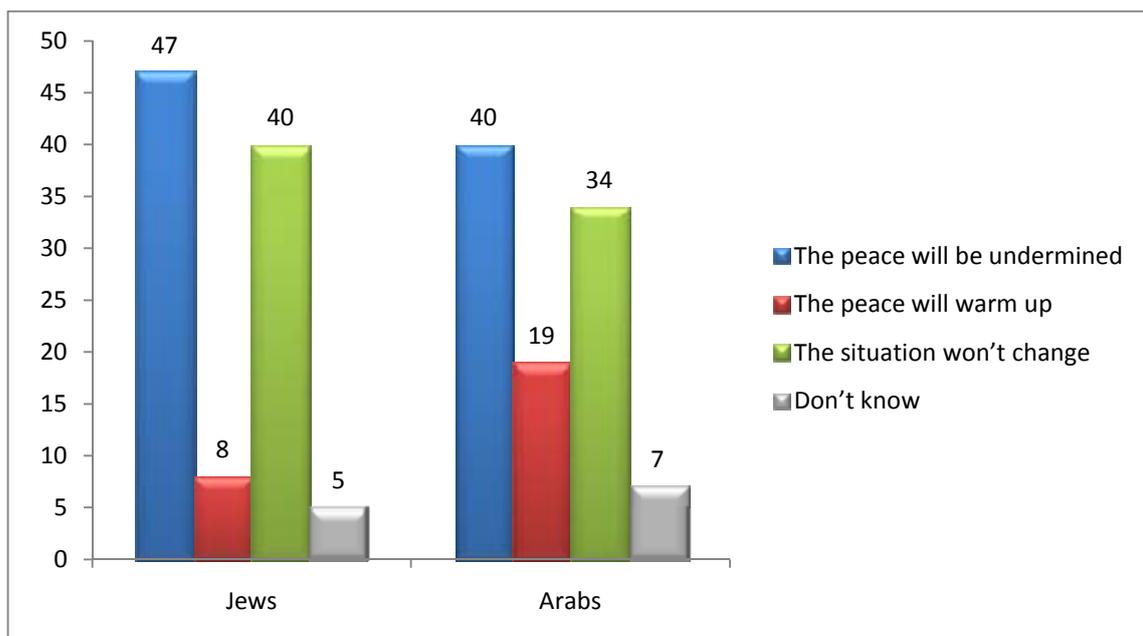
Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

Summary of the Findings

- **What will happen in Egypt?** The Jewish public is pessimistic about future developments in Egypt. A clear majority (70%) thinks the chances that a democratic regime will soon emerge in Egypt are low. As for the chances of an Iran-type, radical Islamic regime taking shape, opinions are divided: 49% see the chances of this as high, while 41% view them as low. In the Arab public, we see the reverse picture: a majority (74%) rates the chances of a democratic regime in Egypt as high, with only a minority (28%) seeing a radical Islamic regime as likely.
- **What will happen to the peace treaty with Egypt?** Forty-seven percent of Jewish respondents think that the revolution will affect the peace treaty with Egypt negatively—that is, peace will be undermined or collapse—whereas 8% think the impact will be positive and the cold peace will turn warm. Nineteen percent say the revolution won't affect relations with Israel, and the rest (27%) do not know. On this issue, the Arab public is pessimistic as well: 40% foresee a worsening of relations, 34% do not expect a change, and only 19% anticipate that the peace will “warm up” under the impact of the revolution. (The remaining 8% do not know.)
- **Will Hamas gain or lose?** In the same spirit, half of the Jewish public holds the opinion that the revolution will strengthen the status of Hamas, while only 15% expect its status to weaken. Eighteen percent think no change will occur, and about the same rate do not know. Among the Arab respondents, the highest rate (43%) think Hamas's status will remain as it was, but 39% expect it to strengthen and only 4% see it weakening. The rest have no clear opinion.
- **Is silence golden?** A wide consensus of the Jewish public (85%) views Israel's policy of silence during the revolt in Egypt as having been justified. However, over half (53%) think that the United States was wrong to support the anti-Mubarak demonstrators. In the Arab public, too, the majority (69%) thinks Israel's policy of silence was the right one. Here, though, 70% say America was right to back the demonstrators.
- **And here?** We asked: “What are the chances that in Israel, the public will also go out and demonstrate in the streets, staging a civil revolt like in Egypt and other Arab countries?” The Jewish public almost unanimously (90%) sees the chances of this as moderately low or very low.

- And why?** The prevailing explanation why Israel will not have a revolt like other Middle Eastern countries is that Israel is a democracy and the public can replace the government through elections (38%). After that, in descending order, came the following explanations: the public is too apathetic (25%), nothing will change even if the government is replaced (20%), and the overall situation in Israel is reasonably good and doesn't justify protest (11%). The Arab public (67%) also rates the chances of a revolt erupting in Israel as moderately low or very low. Here, though, there is a significantly higher preference for the explanation that Israel is a democracy and the government can be replaced through elections (47%). Fourteen percent say the public does not believe changes of government will bring real change, and only 10% ascribe the quiet to the public's apathy. Nine percent think that because the situation in Israel is reasonably good, the public has no reason to take to the streets.
- Living well?** Eighty percent of Jewish Israelis define their personal situation as moderately good or very good. The assessment of Israel's current overall situation tends to be positive as well: 54% of Jewish Israelis define it as moderately good or very good. A majority of the Arab public, too, 64.5%, defines their personal situation as moderately good or very good. Here, however, the majority—56%—defines the general situation of the country as bad or very bad.

Graph of the Month: What will happen to the Israeli-Egyptian peace in the wake of the revolution in Egypt?



The Findings in Detail

The turmoil in the Arab world in recent weeks has confronted the Israeli public, like the world in general, with a new and unclear situation. The future is not clear: will the Middle East undergo a process of democratization? Islamification? Is the process a uniform process across countries or different from state to state? And primarily, from Israel's standpoint, the question is how these upheavals will affect Israel's place in the region, the alignment of its relations with other Middle Eastern states and players, and perhaps also the domestic citizens-government relationship amid the wave of popular uprisings. According to the findings of this week's survey, the Israeli Jewish public is pessimistic about future developments in Egypt, apparently influenced not inconsiderably by the statements of Israeli leaders. A clear majority (70%) sees the chances of a democratic government soon emerging in Egypt as fairly low or very low. As for the opposite possibility—that an Iran-type, radical Islamic regime will take shape in Egypt—the views are divided: 49% see the chances of this as fairly high or very high, while 41% regard them as fairly low or very low. In the Arab public the picture is the reverse, with high democratic optimism: a majority (74%) assesses the chances of a democratic government arising in Egypt as high or very high, while only a minority (28%) perceives high or very high chances of the formation of a radical Islamic regime.

The great fear in Israel concerns the future of Egyptian-Israeli relations. The forecasts are quite gloomy: 47% of the Jews think that the Tahrir Square revolution will negatively affect these relations, meaning that the peace will be undermined or collapse, while only 8% think the effect will be positive and the cold peace will turn warm. Nineteen percent say the revolution will not affect relations with Israel, and the rest (27%) do not know. On this issue, the Arab public, too, is pessimistic: 40% foresee a worsening of relations, 34% do not anticipate a change, and only 19% think the peace will "warm up" under the revolution's impact (8% do not know).

In the same pessimistic spirit, the widespread assumption is that the developments in Egypt will not only affect Egypt's relations with Israel but also the alignment of forces on the Palestinian side. Half of the Jewish public believes the revolution will strengthen the status of Hamas, and only 15% see Hamas's status being weakened because of it. Eighteen percent think no change will occur and about the same rate do not know. Among the Israeli Arabs, the highest rate (43%) expects the status of Hamas to remain as it is, but 39% think that it will strengthen, and only 4% see it as weakening. The rest have no clear opinion.

As we know, Israel stood by and did not publicly react to the events in Egypt. A wide consensus (85%) of the Jewish public views this policy of silence as justified. A segmentation of the answers to these questions by the respondents' self-definition as politically right or left reveals no clear-cut difference in positions on this question between the political camps; in both categories the majority thinks this was the right policy. Over half (53%) see the United States as having been wrong to support the demonstrators against Mubarak. This criticism of the U.S. policy by Jewish Israelis is apparently influenced by the pessimistic assessments regarding post-revolution Egypt. For example, out of those who expect a democratic government to arise in Egypt, 61% justify America's policy. But among those who do not see a democratic government taking shape, only 30% support the U.S. position. Similarly, among those who think a radical Islamic regime will emerge in Egypt, only 27% favor the U.S. policy, whereas, among those who do not anticipate such a regime, 51% justify it.

The majority (69%) of the Arab public, too, thinks Israel's policy of silence was right, apparently for tactical and not essential reasons—since 70% of this public says the United States was right to support the demonstrators.

In light of the dramatic events in the Arab world, the question has recently been raised: what are the chances that in Israel, the public will also take to the streets and stage a civil revolt against the government? Actually, this question has mostly been asked in a tone criticizing the Israeli public for not being prepared to take to the streets. Accordingly, we asked: what are the chances of such a civil revolt erupting in Israel? The answers reveal the Jewish public as unanimous (90%) in viewing the chances of a civil revolt in Israel as fairly low or very low. Since there was such wide agreement, there was no point in segmenting the sample by variables such as voting patterns or self-placement on a political right-left spectrum.

The question asked, however, is—why? What is the main reason for the assessment that the Israeli public will not take to the streets? The survey data reveal that the Jewish public's prevailing explanation is that Israel is a democracy in which the population can replace the government in elections (38%). After that answer, in descending order, come the following explanations: the public is too apathetic (25%), nothing will change even if the government is replaced (20%), and the overall situation in Israel is reasonably good and does not justify protest (11%). In the Arab public as well, the majority (67%) views the chances of the outbreak of a civil revolt in Israel as fairly low or very low. Here, though, there is a clearer preference for the explanation that Israel is a democracy in which the government can be replaced in elections (47%). In addition, 14% of the Arab public cites the belief that changes of government will bring real change, while only 10% ascribe the quiet to the public's apathy. Nine percent say that because the situation in Israel is reasonably good, the public does not have reason to take to the streets.

The survey findings also show that an overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (85%) opposes the notion that there are situations in which there is no choice, and one must even resort to weapons to prevent the government from carrying out its policy. A segmentation of the answers to this question by the respondents' self-definition as "right" or "left" in the political-security domain reveals that the differences are insignificant: among those defining themselves as right-wing, 84% oppose the use of weapons under any circumstances, along with 89% of the centrists and 90% of those on the left. The picture in the Arab public is very similar, with a majority of 77% opposing the above statement. In other words, in both sectors, Jewish and Arab, a solid majority opposes violent protest. This datum was directly substantiated when we repeated a question that Peace Index surveys have asked since 1995, which polls respondents on the legitimacy of different kinds of protest in a situation in which the government takes action in the area of the peace-process in contravention of what the public perceives as Israel's national interest. There is a consensus (89% of the Jewish public and 84% of the Arab public) that it is permissible to protest in legal ways—for example, organizing demonstrations with a license or gathering signatures for mass petitions against the government's policy. As for illegal but nonviolent protest, such as demonstrating without a license or blocking roads, 42% of the Jewish public would permit this today, compared to only 20% of the Arab public, which was badly burned from illegal protest activity in the past. When it comes to protest that is both illegal and violent—for example, using force against the security forces—the rate of Jews who would permit this, 6%, is considerably lower than in the Arab public (10%).

To what extent is the low readiness of Israelis to take to the streets a function of public satisfaction with the current state of affairs? In fact, despite abundant criticism in the media and in expert circles, 80% of the Jewish Israelis define their personal situation as very good or fairly good. A segmentation of the answers by self-definition as politically right or left reveals an interesting picture: whereas, among right-wing, moderately right-wing, and moderately left-wing respondents the rate of those who are satisfied is 80%-84%, in the "hard-left" group the rate is substantially lower, though still constituting a majority—57%.

The public's assessment of Israel's overall situation also tends to be positive, though less so than its rating of personal satisfaction: 54% define the general situation of the country as fairly good or very good. A segmentation of the answers to this question by the respondents' self-definition as right or left reveals greater satisfaction with the situation on the right. About 60% of respondents who define themselves as right perceive the situation in Israel as fairly good or very good, compared to only 40% on the left, where the majority, about 60%, sees the overall national situation as fairly bad or very bad. A majority of the Arab public (64.5%) defines their personal situation as fairly good or very

good; however, as with the left, here the majority—56%—defines the country's general situation as fairly bad or very bad.

When looking more deeply and trying to understand in which areas the public views the country's situation as a success and in which it sees the situation as a failure, a large differential emerges. In three very significant areas, the public perceives the current situation as a success: ensuring the existence of the country from a security standpoint (70%), maintaining the democratic regime (70%), and creating a stable and modern economy (64%). In seven other areas that we checked, however, the public sees the scale as tipping to the negative side: advancing peace with the Arab world and achieving social and economic equality (85% define these as a failure), conciliation between religious and secular (80%), fighting corruption (78%), preventing crime and violence (75%), advancing the residents' standard of living (63%), and closing the ethnic gap (61%). And yet, notwithstanding the high rate of respondents that defines the country's success as very low in most of the ten areas that we presented, apparently the perception of success in the three main areas in which the general assessment is positive—security, democracy, and the economy—causes the public to feel quite satisfied and takes the wind out of any sails of protest.

The Negotiations Index for February, 2011

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: General sample: 49.0; Jewish sample: 46.3

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 February 21-22, 2011, by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 600 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.