

Peace Index - July 2012

Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

With a red-hot debate on a possible Israeli attack on Iran raging on many fronts both in Israel and abroad in recent weeks, we decided to devote this month's Peace Index survey to this issue, in order to gauge where the Israeli Jewish public stands this controversial matter.

- **Israelis have more confidence in the security echelon than in the political echelon.**

The present survey's data clearly show that the public (57%) relies more on the judgment of the heads of the defense establishment, including the Chief of Staff and the heads of the Mossad and the Israel Security Agency, than on that the judgment of the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister (28%), who—according to reports—favor a military attack on Iran before Iran acquires nuclear capability. The differences of opinion on this issue based on the respondents' self-definition in the political-security sphere are huge. The right is more or less divided between 40% who have more confidence in the political leadership and 43% who have more confidence in the security elite. In the center, however, 17% have more confidence in the political echelon, while 71% put more trust in the security chiefs. On the left, only 8% of respondents trust the political echelon more, while 86% (!) have more trust in the security leadership.

- **The majority says Iran should not be attacked without U.S. cooperation.** The public's position on this question is unequivocal: 61% think Israel should not attack Iran without U.S. cooperation. On this matter, there are large gaps between the political camps: while 82% of those defining themselves as on the political-security left are opposed to Israel attacking Iran alone, 67.5% of those who define themselves as "center" are opposed to such an attack, and only 51% of those who position themselves on the right are opposed.

The explanation for this position lies, at least partially, in differing assessments of the chances of success of an attack with or without U.S. cooperation. The prevailing assessment (54.5%) sees low chances that an attack without U.S. cooperation will prevent Iran's nuclearization for a significant time. But in the case of an attack on Iran in cooperation with the United States, the public's assessment of the chances of success in stopping nuclearization skyrockets to 76%!

- **Netanyahu and Barak's statements about an attack do not reflect a real intention to act, but are meant to exert pressure on the United States.** It turns out that the public is doubtful whether these two leaders really mean what they say about the need to attack Iran: 57% think their statements about Israel attacking Iran by itself are a bluff intended to pressure the Americans to act against Iran with greater resolve, while only 30% consider these statements to reflect a real intention for Israel to attack Iran even by itself. The rate of those who see this as an attempted bluff by Barak and Netanyahu that is aimed at pressuring the Americans is especially high in the center (68%), compared to 54% on the left and 50% on the right.
- **It makes sense, then, that the majority sees the chances of an Israeli attack on Iran without the United States as low.** Taking all this into account, it is no surprise that the majority (56%) views the chances that Israel will soon launch an attack on Iran even without U.S. cooperation as low. The assessments of this matter by respondents in different political camps are somewhat different: whereas half of those identifying themselves as right-wing (51%) think the chances are low, higher rates hold that view in the center and on the left (64% and 61% respectively).
- **The West's efforts to stop Iran are not serious or sincere.** Fifty-six percent think the proclaimed efforts by the countries of the West to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons are neither serious nor sincere. Here the gaps between the political camps are very large. Whereas on the left, a majority (55%) believes the West's efforts are indeed serious and sincere, in the center and on the right only a minority sees it that way (36% and 27% respectively).
- **One cannot rely on the recent promise by U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta that Iran will not have nuclear weapons.** A large majority of the public (70%) thinks Israel cannot rely on Panetta's promise that the United States will make sure that Iran does not have nuclear weapons. The gaps on this issue between the three political camps are very large: whereas the left is split between those who would trust Panetta's promise and those who would not (46% and 47% respectively), a majority (52%) of the center would not trust it, and a huge majority (82%) of the right would not trust it.
- **A higher rate trusts Republican candidate Mitt Romney to be concerned about Israel's interests than incumbent U.S. President Barack Obama.** The attitude toward Panetta's promise is undoubtedly linked to the public's positions regarding which of the two U.S. presidential candidates is better for Israel in terms of the

importance he attributes to defending Israel's national interests. Whereas 40% of the respondents surveyed put more trust in the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, than in Barack Obama, only 19% put more trust in Obama (the rest have no definite opinion on the matter). A segmentation according to political-security camps shows that on the left, 37% see Obama as better for Israel, 17% see Romney as more concerned about Israel's interests, and 14% see no substantial differences between the two. In the center, only 20% regard Obama as more concerned about Israel's interests, 39% choose Romney, and 14.5% do not see a difference. On the right, however, 13% think Obama will be more concerned about Israel, 52% think this is true of Romney, and 8% expect both of them to be concerned about Israel to the same extent.

- **Israel has to accept the fact that apparently it will not be possible to prevent Iran from nuclearizing, and must build a strategy based on the assumption that Israel will not be the only nuclear power in the region.** What, then, can be done if Israel cannot allow itself to attack Iran alone, on the one hand, and it cannot count on the promises of other Western countries, including the United States, on the other? The conclusion of a majority of the public (60%) is that Israel should accept the fact that it apparently will be impossible to prevent Iran from nuclearizing, and accordingly, Israel should formulate a new defense strategy based on the assumption that it will not be the only nuclear power in the region. It is rather surprising to find that this assessment is common to all three political-security camps, though to different degrees: on the left, 70% agree that Israel should accept that it will not be the only nuclear power in the region and should act accordingly, as do 61.5% of those who position themselves in the center and 53% of those who place themselves on the right.

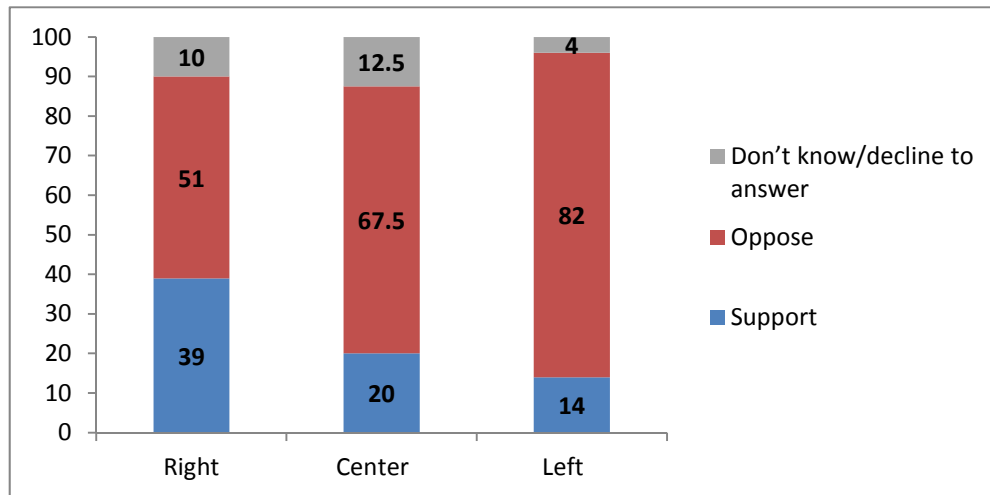
Overall, the findings indicate that the Israeli public tends to be sober about the Iranian issue and thinks Israel should calculate its steps carefully and not act precipitously.

The Negotiations Index for July, 2012

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 43.5

Graph of the month: Do you support or not support an Israeli attack on Iran without U.S. cooperation? (Percentages)



The Peace Index is a project of the [Evens Program in Mediation and Conflict Resolution](#) at Tel Aviv University and the [Israel Democracy Institute](#). This month's survey was conducted by telephone on August 7–8 by the Dahaf Institute. The survey included 516 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.