Peace Index April 2015
Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

This month’s Peace Index survey focuses on three issues: the process of forming a government, the challenges facing it in the political-security sphere, and the protest by the Ethiopian community.

**Forming the new government:** On the question of which government would better serve Israel’s interests – a strongly right-wing government or a unity government whose senior partners would be Likud and Zionist Union – the findings show that in the Jewish public at present, as before the elections, the rate of those who prefer a national unity government (42% now, 49% before the elections) exceeds the rate of those who think a strongly right-wing government will do the job better (35% at both times). This smaller gap since the elections is explained by the higher number of those who say the government’s composition makes no difference in this regard (from 9% before the elections to 15% after them). A segmentation by the voting for the Knesset in the 2015 elections shows that a substantial majority favoring a unity government exists only among Zionist Union (74%) and Yesh Atid voters (67%). In the Arab public, currently the highest rate sees no real difference between the two alternatives (38%). However, the rate for those preferring a unity government (27%) is clearly higher than for those preferring a strongly right-wing one (18%).

**The conduct of the coalition negotiations:** The Jewish public is not overly satisfied with how the negotiations have been conducted. On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), only 42% of the interviewees gave Netanyahu a grade of medium or higher (6-10) for the way in which he has negotiated with the small parties, while a small majority (51%) gave him a grade of less than medium (1-5). Furthermore, the rate of those who are unsatisfied with the awarding of senior cabinet posts among the coalition parties (55.5%) is double the rate of those who are satisfied with it (27%). Similarly, the rate of those in the Jewish public who agree that Netanyahu gave too much to the small parties he wanted to add to the coalition, at Likud’s expense (52%), is much higher than the rate of those who disagree with that claim (30%). At the same time, 42% disagree that Netanyahu gave so much to the small parties because he wanted to weaken his competitors among the Likud Knesset members, such as Gilad Erdan, while only about one-third (36%) agree. An especially high rate (22%) do not know.
Not surprisingly, in the Arab public the is also dissatisfaction with the conduct of the coalition talks; only 39% gave Netanyahu a medium grade or higher while 49% gave him a medium grade or lower. As for satisfaction with the awarding of cabinet posts so far, 46% of the Arabs are dissatisfied, double the rate of those who are satisfied (22%). For the Arabs, the segmentation of opinions on what Netanyahu gave the small parties is similar to the segmentation for the Jewish public: the highest rate (49%) agree that he gave these parties too much compared to only 25.5% who think the opposite. However, on the question of whether Netanyahu’s aim was to weaken his opponents within Likud, among the Arabs, unlike the Jewish public, the rate of those who agree (50%) is a good deal higher than the rate of those who disagree (22%).

The haredi partners: About two-thirds of the Jewish public (64%) think Netanyahu was wrong to accede to the haredi parties’ demands to revoke almost all the changes pertaining to them that were instituted by the previous government (encouraging the haredim to integrate into the IDF and the labor market, reducing yeshiva subsidies, and making conversion to Judaism easier), even though otherwise they apparently would not have joined the government. Similarly, the majority (58%) thinks Netanyahu should not have appointed Member of Knesset Litzman as deputy health minister so that Litzman could avoid swearing allegiance to the state (required of a minister but not of a deputy minister). In the Arab public the highest rate had no position on the issue of Litzman’s appointment (42%).

Kahlon’s appointment: Despite the widespread reservations in the Jewish public about Litzman’s appointment, a clear majority (65%) views Moshe Kahlon as suited to the post of finance minister. At the same time, the majority (63%) sees only low chances that he will manage to fulfill his promise about significantly changing the Israeli housing market. The gap between the assessments of Kahlon’s suitability as finance minister and of his chances of reforming the housing market probably indicates that, despite the “toolbox” at his disposal, the Jewish public tends not to believe he can overcome the resistance of various elements within and outside the government. In the Arab public, too, a majority sees Kahlon as suited to be finance minister (63%), but here a majority believes he can succeed to fulfill his promises regarding the housing market (52%).

Relations with the Palestinians: An overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (86%) sees low chances that, during the tenure of the new government, there will be a breakthrough in diplomatic negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. At the
same time, a certain majority (53%) believes that, if there is no such breakthrough, the chances of a third Palestinian intifada are high. Only among Likud (54%) and Jewish Home (50%) voters does the majority see low chances of a third intifada erupting, and this majority, too, is small as these data reveal. As for the chances that the West will, in coordinated fashion, impose severe economic and other sanctions on Israel to bring about a renewal of the peace talks, the Jewish public is evenly split (45% for each side) between those who see high chances of this happening and those who think the opposite. In the Arab public as well, the majority (54%) sees small chances of a diplomatic breakthrough during the tenure of a strongly right-wing government like the one that has been formed. However, here the rate of those who see low chances of a third Palestinian intifada (46%) is greater than the rate of those who see high chances of it (39%). In other words, the Jews anticipate a third intifada more than the Arabs do.

**Iran:** Despite the warnings sometimes voiced by government officials, a clear majority (59%) of the Jewish public does not believe that at present, after major progress has been made toward a framework agreement between Iran and the United States, a right-wing government will give a green light for an Israeli attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities. As for whether Israel should or should not attack those facilities by itself, the majority (60%) does not support such an attack. Although about one-third of the Arab public has not formed a position on the Iranian issue, the rate of those who think Israel will not attack is double the rate of those who think the opposite (48% vs. 19.5%). The same applies to the question of whether Israel should attack on its own: about a third (29%) have no opinion, but among those who do have one, the clear majority opposes an attack (50% vs. 20%).

**The Ethiopian community’s protest:** The Jewish public’s positions on the protesters’ charge that they suffer discriminatory, unjust treatment by the authorities are unequivocal: three-quarters think this charge is justified. At the same time, a clear majority (77%) agrees with the prime minister’s statement that the demonstrators’ furious behavior was inappropriate since no one can take the law into his own hands. As for who is more responsible for the violence that occurred in the demonstration at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, the opinions are divided: about one-third say the responsibility lay evenly with the police and the protesters (35%), about another third (35%) put most of the responsibility on the demonstrators, and only a minority (19%) pin the blame more on the police.
In the Arab public the segmentation of views on the first question of this issue is similar: 73% agree with the Ethiopian protesters’ charge that their treatment by the authorities is discriminatory and unjust. However, when it comes to the prime minister’s assertion, here the opinions are divided: 40% disagree with him compared to 44% who think, like Netanyahu, that before dealing with the Ethiopian protesters’ complaints it must be clear that one does not take the law into one’s own hands. And regarding the responsibility for the violence that occurred at Rabin Square, here the highest rate pins the blame on the police (30%). Almost the same rate (29%) sees both sides as equally responsible while only 14% view the protesters as responsible.

Negotiations index: 45.8 (Jewish sample 43).

Graph of the month: Who in your opinion is more responsible for the violence that occurred during the Ethiopian community’s protest in Rabin Square? (percentages)

The Peace Index is a project of the Evens Program for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Guttman Center for Surveys of the Israel Democracy Institute. This month’s survey was conducted by telephone on May 4-5, 2015, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 601 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is ±4.5% at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay.