

Peace Index column, February 2017

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This month the Peace Index survey focused on the following issues: President Trump and Israel; possible solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the performance of top Israeli officials; and Israel's situation two years after the most recent elections. We also looked into the public's positions on Elor Azaria's sentence and the possibility of a pardon.

The Trump-Netanyahu meeting: After the first official meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu, we asked: "How would you describe the meeting from Israel's standpoint?" A clear majority of the Jewish public (62%) thinks the meeting was successful. A segmentation of the Jewish interviewees' responses by self-affiliation with the right-wing, centrist, or left-wing camp revealed large differences: on the right 72% described the meeting as successful from Israel's standpoint, in the center 58%, and on the left only 38%. Among the Arab interviewees, too, a majority (64%) described the meeting as successful.

The (non)centrality of the conflict to Trump's agenda: At the same time, an overwhelming majority of the Jewish public (79%) thinks that, at present, solving

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a central issue on the U.S. president's agenda. A majority takes that view in each of the political camps: right—75%, center—83%, left—90%. The same holds true for the Arab public, in which 69% take that view.

The chances of an imposed solution: And if at some stage President Trump were to decide to focus on solving the conflict, the majority (61%) of the Jewish public regards the chances that he would try to impose a solution on Israel that goes against the government's position as low. While on this issue, too, the political camps are unanimous, on the right the rate of those relying on Trump not to impose an unwanted settlement is clearly higher than in the center and on the left: right—69%, center—51%, left—54%. The rate of Arab respondents who do not see Trump imposing an unwanted settlement on Israel is huge—87%.

Building new settlements: A majority (55%) of the Jewish public believes Trump will allow the Israeli government to build new settlements. However, on this question there are gaps between the political camps. On the right about two-thirds (64%) think Trump will allow the building of new settlements; the center is split (46%—will allow, 44%—will not allow); on the left the rate who think Trump will not allow the building of new settlements (48.5%) is slightly higher than the rate who think the opposite (44%). A majority of the Arab interviewees (77%) expect the U.S. president to allow the building of new settlements.

To sum up this aspect of the survey, a majority of both the Jews (except for the left) and the Arabs see Trump as a good ally of the Israeli government.

Kerry's proposal at the Aqaba summit: It was recently revealed in the media that in a summit last spring in Aqaba, Jordan, in which the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, and Israel participated, then-U.S. secretary of state John Kerry proposed an agreement to Netanyahu whereby Arab states would recognize Israel as a Jewish state in return for renewing the diplomatic negotiations on establishing a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with territorial swaps. To the question "In your opinion, did Netanyahu act rightly or not rightly when he rejected this proposal?" a majority of the Jewish interviewees (57%) responded that he acted rightly. Here too the disparities between the political camps are large, even dramatic. On the right 77% favored Netanyahu's position of rejecting the proposal; the center is divided, with a slightly higher rate for those who oppose rejecting the proposal (49% vs. 42% who supported the rejection); on the left a huge majority says Netanyahu was not right to reject Kerry's proposal (83%). Among the Arab interviewees a majority (54%) thinks Netanyahu was not right to reject it.

A unilateral move? Recently some in Israel have been arguing that, with no chance of an agreed solution on the horizon, Israel should make a unilateral move whereby it would keep holding the large settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria, the Jordan Valley, and Jerusalem but would evacuate the other parts of the West Bank

and hence scale back the occupation to a large extent. To the question “Are you for or against such a unilateral Israeli move?” a majority (54%) of the Jewish interviewees responded negatively. An analysis by political camps reveals that, somewhat paradoxically, there is a majority of opponents of a unilateral move both in the right-wing camp (66%) and in the left-wing camp (52%). Among the Arab interviewees a majority (54%) opposed such a unilateral move.

The quality of the performance of top officials: A full two years after the 2015 elections, we asked the interviewees to evaluate the performance of certain officials in the security domain. It should be taken into account that part of the survey was conducted on the day before the state comptroller’s report on Operation Protective Edge was published, and part of it on the evening after it was published. In any case, among the Jewish interviewees Chief of Staff Eizenkot was the most highly esteemed, with a clear majority (64%) evaluating his performance as very good or moderately good. After him in the ranking is Defense Minister Lieberman; a majority (51%) views his actions, too, as very good or moderately good. As for the prime minister, the majority (52%) evaluates his performance as not very good or not good at all. For Police Commissioner Alsheikh, a slightly higher rate (44%) saw his performance as moderately good or very good, but a very similar rate (41%) thought the opposite. Here about 15% chose the answer “Don’t know” or refused to answer, suggesting that the picture regarding the police commissioner is

not completely clear. As for Internal Security Minister Erdan, the rate of those assessing his performance as not very good or not good at all (40%) is lower than the rate who thinks the opposite (45%); in this case, too, 15% did not know.

The general picture that emerges from these findings is not very encouraging; apart from the chief of staff, the Jewish public's evaluations of all the other security officials are medium or lower. Among the Arab interviewees the rate of those answering "Don't know" was too high to draw conclusions from their responses.

Israel's situation: We gauged how the public evaluates Israel's situation in six key areas: security, economy, foreign relations, education, health, and social responsibility and caring for the less fortunate. The Jewish public's assessment of the country's situation in three areas—security, economy, and health—is positive (the "very good" and "moderately good" grades are, respectively: 63%, 59%, 58%). However, in the three other areas—social responsibility, education, and foreign relations—the evaluations are negative (the "not so good" and "not good at all" grades were, respectively: 79.5%, 68%, 60%). The Arab interviewees' assessments all tended to the positive side; however, we are not sure that the measurement here was valid. A segmentation of the Jewish interviewees' responses by political camps showed that in the areas of security, economy, and health, only on the left is there a majority that assesses the country's situation negatively, while on the right and in the center a majority takes the opposite view.

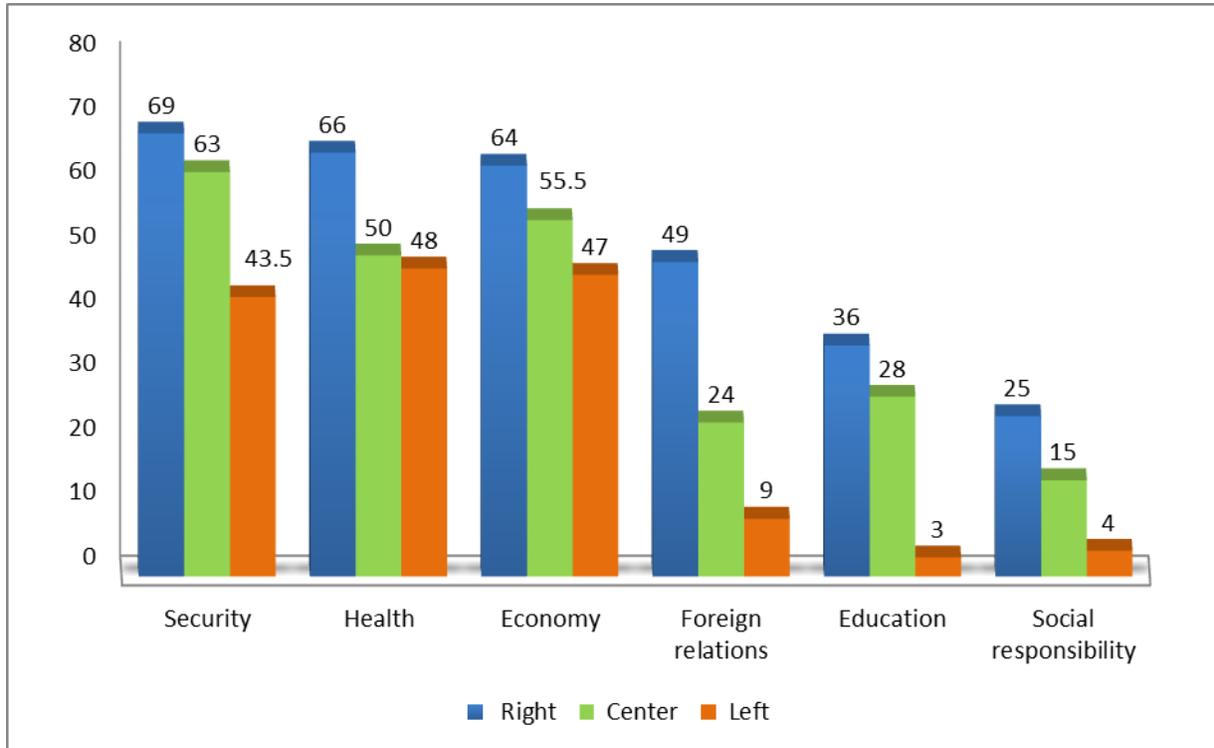
In the areas of foreign relations, education, and social responsibility, however, a majority of all the political camps evaluates the country's situation negatively.

Elor Azaria's sentence: Only a minority (26%) of the Jewish public sees the punishment that the military court recently meted out to Azaria as fitting. The rest are divided between those who think the sentence was too heavy (33.5%), too light (15%), or that the trial should not have been held in the first place (18%). A segmentation by political camps revealed that only in the center is there a numerical advantage for those who think the sentence was appropriate (42%, compared to 17.5% who think it was too light and 21% who think it was too heavy). On the right the scale tips toward those who see the sentence as too heavy (48%) compared to 18% who view it as fitting and only 4% who say it was too light. On the left a majority (54%) regards the sentence as too light (30% think it was appropriate and 7% see it as too heavy).

On the question of a pardon: A clearer picture emerges regarding the possibility of a pardon for Azaria. A decisive majority of the Jewish public (68%) supports such a measure. In other words, the public distinguishes between the sentence and the question of a pardon. On the right an overwhelming majority (85%) thinks Azaria should be pardoned. In the center a majority, though less large (59%), believes so as well, while on the left a clear-cut majority (71%) opposes a pardon.

Negotiations Index: 45.3 (Jews—43.9).

Diagram of the month: And how would you define Israel's situation at present in these domains: security, economy, foreign relations, education, health, social responsibility (Jewish public, %, moderately good or very good, by political camps).



The Peace Index is a project of the Evens Program for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at Tel Aviv University and the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute. This month's survey was conducted by telephone and on the internet on February 26-27, 2017, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is $\pm 4.1\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay.

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