

Peace Index, June 2017

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In this month's survey we explored two main issues: (a) the chances of renewing the negotiations with the Palestinians; and (b) the likelihood of a military clash between Israel and different entities in the region, and Israel's capability to contend with those entities.

The chances of renewing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations: U.S. president Trump's repeated avowals in different forums and at different opportunities that he seeks to renew the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks have not persuaded the majority of the Israeli public that the two sides will soon return to the negotiating table: 63% of the Jewish public sees low chances of that happening. A majority (55%) of the Arab public, too, downplays the chances of resuming the talks. While a segmentation of the Jewish sample by political camps shows that, on the right, the rate of those who see low chances is indeed higher than in the center and on the left, in all the camps there is a majority that does not anticipate renewed talks in the near future (66%, 56%, and 57% respectively).

Are the sides interested in an agreement? A small majority of the Jewish public (53%) thinks or is sure that the current Israeli government is not interested in reaching a permanent settlement with the Palestinians. As for the degree of the Palestinian Authority's interest in such a settlement, a large majority (80%) thinks or is sure that it is not interested. In other words, most of the public considers that the governmental authorities on both sides are not interested in reaching a permanent peace settlement, but there is wider agreement regarding the Palestinian side. In the Arab public 60%, like the Jewish majority, view the current Israeli government as not interested in arriving at an agreement. However, unlike the Jews, a small majority (51%) regards the PA as interested in doing so. A segmentation of the Jews' responses by political camps reveals that, among those defining themselves as right-wing, 37.5% see the Israeli government as not interested in achieving an agreement, compared to a clear majority taking that view among the center and the left (70% and 91% respectively). As for the PA, a majority on the right and in the center deems it not interested in an agreement (77% and 89% respectively). On the left only 49% make that assessment; still, that rate is higher than the rate of those who do think it is interested in an agreement (40%). Even on the left, in other words, the view of the opponent's intentions is more negative than positive.

The national-security situation: To the question "How would you define Israel's security situation at present?" 66% of the Jews responded that Israel's security situation is good, and even a slightly higher rate (69%) among the Arabs saw it that way. On this question we did not find substantial gaps between the Israeli population's political camps.

The chances of an imminent war between Israel and other countries and entities in the region: Out of a list that included Iran, Syria, Hizbullah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza, it turns

out that only in the case of Hamas does a majority of the Jewish public (56%) see high chances of a war between it and Israel in the coming year. Concerning the other regional actors, only a minority sees war on the horizon: with Hizbullah in Lebanon 38%, with Syria 14%, and with Iran only 8%. These findings show that, despite the Israeli government's repeated warnings about the Iranian threat, in the Jewish public there is a wide consensus for the opinion that, at least in the near future, the chances of war with that country are low. In the Arab public, 59% foresee a war in the coming year with Hamas; the other figures are 23.5% regarding Hizbullah in Lebanon, 26% regarding Syria, and 15% regarding Iran. That is, in most of the cases we looked into (except for Hizbullah), the Arabs' fears of war are greater than those of the Jews.

A segmentation of the Jewish public's responses to the questions by political camp turned up only small disparities. Systematically, though, a slightly higher rate of those identifying themselves as right-wing saw a chance of war in the near future on each of these fronts.

The ability to trust the government and the IDF if a war breaks out: In the Jewish public, 57% trust the current government to make prudent security decisions in such a situation. As for the IDF's ability to win should a war erupt, the public's assessment is unequivocal: 88% trust the IDF. That is, while a substantial minority of the public does not trust the decisions the government would make, the Jewish public has almost no doubts about the IDF's ability to prevail in each of those possible wars. A segmentation of the answers regarding the government by political camp shows that, whereas the right has great confidence in the government's ability to make wise decisions, the center is split while the left does not trust the current government (69%, 49%, 28% respectively). In the Arab public, only 36% trust the government to make prudent decisions should a war break out between Israel and the other actors we asked about, and 40% trust the IDF to win it.

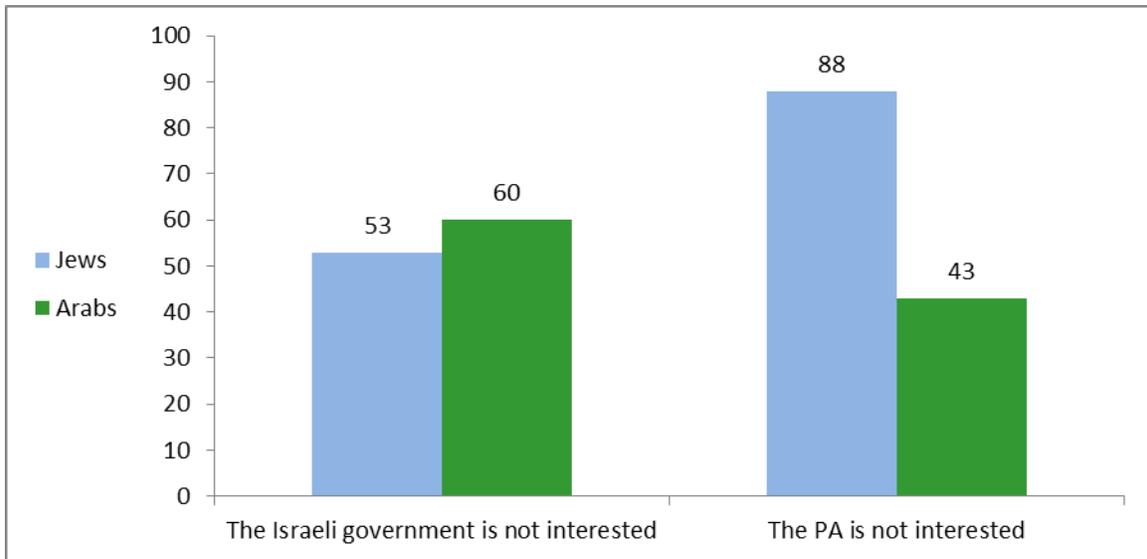
The chances of a Third Intifada and the ability to contend with it: Also regarding the chances that a Third Intifada will erupt in the coming year, we found a small majority (52%) of the Jewish public estimating the chances of it as low. Some 60% of the Arabs similarly see little likelihood that a Third Intifada is imminent.

Concerning the current government's ability to make security decisions if a Third Intifada erupts nonetheless, a small majority (52%) of the Jewish public trusts it while a large minority (44%) does not put stock in its capabilities if that happens. When it comes to the IDF's ability to contend with and stop a Third Intifada if it breaks out, again almost all of the Jewish public (82%) trusts it. In the Arab public only 41% trust the government in this context, while 51% trust the IDF to contend successfully with the challenge of a Third Intifada should it materialize.

The Israeli public's resilience: As for the Israeli public's ability to cope successfully if a war or a Third Intifada erupts, 85% of the Jewish public thinks or is sure that it can cope successfully. In other words, the public trusts its own and the IDF's capability much more than it trusts the current government's capability. In the Arab public only one-third view the Israeli public as strongly resilient under such circumstances; that is, they espouse the "spiderweb" thesis of Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

Negotiation Index: 44.8 (Jewish sample 43.7)

Graph of the month: Is the current Israeli government interested in reaching a permanent peace settlement with the Palestinians? Is the Palestinian Authority interested or not interested in reaching a permanent peace settlement with Israel? (% , Jews and Arabs)



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 in Hebrew, Arabic, and Russian from June 27 to July 2, 2017, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents (500 Jews and 100 Arabs), who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is ± 4.1