Peace Index—May 2015

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This month the Peace Index survey focused on three issues: attitudes toward Jewish settlement in the territories, the diplomatic arena, and the distribution of cabinet posts in the government.

Support for separation: Over half of the Israeli Jewish public (52%) currently supports implementing a separation between Jewish and Palestinian passengers on buses in the territories, in the vein of the experiment that Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon recently announced. Conversely, 42% oppose such a separation, which would entail forbidding Arab workers from the territories to ride from or to their homes in the same buses as Jews who live in the territories. An analysis of the responses by voting for the Knesset in the latest elections (Jews) reveals that the greatest support for separation is found among Shas (93%), Jewish Home, and Likud voters (73% each), and the lowest support among Zionist Union (19%) voters. As expected, a large majority (70%) of the Arabs oppose separation in buses.

Opposition to a consumer boycott of the settlements: On the question of whether they would or would not buy goods produced in the Jewish settlements were a consumer boycott to be organized in Israel, a large majority of the Jews (79%) responded that, even if there was such a boycott, they would buy goods originating in the settlements. A segmentation by voting for the Knesset shows that only among Meretz voters does the majority (71%) say they would join a boycott of settlement products. For all the other parties, only a minority of the voters say they would support such a boycott. Similarly, a 59% majority of the Arabs responded that if a consumer boycott of settlement products were to be organized, they would buy such products.

Lack of desire to move to the territories: A clear majority (75%) of the Jews said they are sure or they think that, even if they could now receive improved housing at a low price in a Jewish settlement in the territories, they would not move there. In other words, for a large part of the Israeli Jewish public, the identification with the settlement enterprise is similar to Zionist Jews in the Diaspora who identify with Israel from afar. A segmentation of the responses by age group showed that even among the young and medium age groups, who probably are the most burdened by housing costs, the rate who would be interested in moving to the territories, even if they were offered improved housing conditions, is currently no higher than one-
quarter of the respondents. Somewhat surprisingly, income did not play a role on this question.

**Visits to Jewish settlements in the territories:** Furthermore, when asked “Have you visited one or more Jewish settlements in the territories over the past five years?” only half of the Jewish respondents answered positively while almost the same rate (48%) answered negatively. Lacking a basis for comparison, it is hard to assess whether this is a high or a low rate relative to earlier periods. It is also hard to know the reason for this distribution of responses—that is, whether the 48% who do not visit refrain from doing so on principle or for other reasons. At the same time, it is difficult to ignore the fact that, in actuality, about half of the Jewish public goes for quite a long period without visiting settlements.

**The chances of an agreement based on an evacuation of the territories:** In light of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s recently expressed position, in his meeting with the European Union foreign minister, that he is prepared to begin negotiations with the Palestinians about the borders of the settlement blocs, we asked: “In your opinion, does this statement mean that Netanyahu is prepared to consider an agreement that would entail giving up the settlements that are outside the blocs?” The majority of the Jews (53%) responded that they are sure or they think Netanyahu is not prepared for such a concession, while about one-third (36%) answered that they are sure or they think he is prepared for it.

**Israel’s relations with the world:** It appears that the Jewish public is aware of the deterioration that has occurred in Israel’s international status. This awareness seemingly stems from the intensification of voices calling to boycott Israel and its institutions. A large majority (69%) characterize Israel’s relations with the countries of the world as not good at all or not so good, with only 29% viewing these relations as moderately good or very good. A segmentation of the responses by voting for the Knesset in the latest elections reveals that the highest rates of those characterizing Israel’s relations with the world negatively are found among Yesh Atid (88%) and Meretz (83%) voters.

Among the Arab respondents, a reverse majority (58%) regards Israel’s relations with the world as very good or moderately good. This may accord with, or even stem from, the widespread view in the Palestinian street that despite the criticism of Israel, ultimately the countries of the world accept its policy as evidenced by the fact that they do not act against it even when this is possible.
The moral demands on Israel: A clear majority (71%) of the Jewish public agrees with the assertion that “The countries of the world make demands for moral behavior on Israel that they do not make on other countries that are in situations of conflict.” In other words, we again find the widespread sense in the Jewish public that “The whole world is against us.” Here we found a majority of the voters for all the parties, though it is highest among voters for Yesh Atid and Jewish Home (about 80%) and smallest among Meretz (50%) voters.

The distribution of cabinet posts in the government: Overall, a considerable majority (62%) of the Jewish public is dissatisfied with the distribution of cabinet posts in the new government (only 22% are satisfied). A segmentation of the responses by voting for the Knesset reveals a majority for the satisfied only among Torah Judaism (59%) voters. Even among Likud voters the rate of the satisfied is lower than that of the dissatisfied (36% vs. 46%).

The division of the foreign minister’s powers: The view is also negative on Netanyahu’s decision to take the foreign-minister portfolio for himself, while dividing a considerable part of the powers that previously belonged to the foreign minister among other ministers (strategic affairs, intelligence, regional cooperation, etc.). Sixty-two percent of the Jewish respondents believe this division will not improve Israel’s ability to manage its diplomatic affairs. As for the question of whether Netanyahu, with his distribution of cabinet posts, succeeded to weaken his competitors in the party if that was indeed his intention, 43% think that he did while one-third think the opposite.

Is Netanyahu waiting for Herzog? Only 37% of the Jews agree with the assertion that Netanyahu took the foreign-minister portfolio for himself so that he could eventually give it to the leader of the Zionist Union party, Isaac Herzog, if conditions emerge for its joining the coalition. A considerably higher rate of respondents (45%) think that was not the reason.

Is the Zionist Union on the way to the coalition? Regarding the chances that the Zionist Union will indeed join the Netanyahu-led coalition in the foreseeable future, the public’s position is clear-cut: 71.5% see very low or moderately low chances of this. Among the voters for Zionist Union itself, there is almost a complete consensus that at present the party is not headed toward joining the coalition (87%), though a majority of voters for other parties hold that view as well.

Negotiations index: 47.9 (Jews 45.3).
Graph of the month: If you could now receive better housing at a low price in a Jewish settlement in the territories, would you be prepared to move there?

(% who would move, Jews, by religiosity)

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 June 1-4, 2015, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population of Israel aged 18 and over. The maximum measurement error for the entire sample is ±4.1% at a confidence level of 95%. Statistical processing was done by Ms. Yasmin Alkalay. [http://www.peaceindex.org/](http://www.peaceindex.org/)