

Peace Index, October 2017

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The October Peace Index focused on three issues: the attempts at legislation in tandem with the current investigations of the prime minister, the order of priority for the issues that need to be addressed so as to ensure Israel's future, and the image and role of the IDF in the eyes of the public.

The attempts at legislation in tandem with the investigations of the prime minister:

Recently some Likud members of Knesset have tried to advance a law (the "French law") stipulating that a serving prime minister cannot be investigated as long as he is in his post, except in cases of suspicion of very grave crimes. The law's supporters claim that investigations of a prime minister who is still serving prevent him from concentrating on his very important and demanding national role. The opponents maintain that the prime minister is like any other citizen, and if, in the opinion of the bodies responsible for maintaining law and order in the country, there are grounded suspicions against him, he should be investigated like anyone else. It turns out that the Israeli public has been more persuaded by the opponents of the proposed law than by its supporters. To the question, "What is your opinion of the proposed law?" 66% of the Jewish interviewees and 86% of the Arab ones responded that they oppose the French law. That is, a clear majority thinks investigations should be pursued even while the prime minister is serving in his post. As for a question on agreeing or disagreeing with the prime minister's claim that the investigations of him by the police and the state attorney stem from his political opponents' desire to oust him, 58% of the Jewish interviewees and 68% of the Arab ones disagree with the claim about a "political connection."

We segmented the Jewish sample's answers to these questions by voting in the 2015 Knesset elections. Except for the two haredi parties, in which only a minority opposed the French law, in all the parties- including the Likud, the prime minister's party- a majority opposed the law. A similar pattern, though with a smaller majority, emerged when we used the same variable to analyze the responses to the question of whether the investigations are part of a political effort to oust Netanyahu: here a majority of the voters for the Zionist Union, Meretz, Kulanu, and Yesh

Atid disagreed with the claim that this is indeed the motive behind the investigations, while voters for the rest of the parties agreed with the claim.

Aside from immediate issues, this time we looked into what the public sees as the national order of priority, or what the country should be concentrating on. We asked:

What is most important for ensuring Israel's future? The interviewees were asked to choose, from a list of six issues- improving the education system, reducing the tensions between the different sectors of Israeli society, developing the economy, strengthening the IDF, enhancing the bond between the leadership and the people, and signing a peace agreement with the Palestinians- what they saw as the first and second most important issues. It should be noted that the issues were read in alternating order so as not to create a bias of the interviewees in one direction or another. Among the Jewish interviewees, the highest rate put reducing the tensions in Israeli society in first place (26.5%), followed by improving the education system (22.6%). At the bottom of the ladder were signing a peace agreement with the Palestinians (11.5%) and enhancing the bond between the leaders and the people (6%). When we combined the first and the second place, the top rankings among the Jewish interviewees were reversed: first came improving the education system and then came overcoming the rifts in the society. The bottom level, however, remained the same. Among the Arab interviewees, in first place was the issue of improving the education system (31%), while signing a peace agreement with the Palestinians took second place (28%). At the bottom were enhancing the bond between the people and the leaders (5%) and strengthening the IDF (3%).

The ranking that emerged shows that all the issues appearing in the top trio are of a social or economic nature, while the issues that concern the security and diplomatic sphere are ranked after them. The bottom ranking for “enhancing the bond between the leaders and the people” apparently indicates that the public, Jewish and Arab alike, does not pin great hopes on its leaders and does not see enhancing the bond with them as something of overriding national importance.

Against the backdrop of assertions that the Israeli leadership and public in Israel are compulsive on the security issue, it was surprising to find that only 16% of the Jewish sample saw

strengthening the IDF as the first goal in importance for Israel's future. This could stem from the feeling that the IDF is sufficiently strong, or from the fact that currently the public does not have a strong sense of a military threat to Israel. Whatever the case, this finding led us to devote some questions in this survey to the public's assessment of the IDF in various regards.

People's army or professional army? First, we wanted to know to what extent the IDF is still perceived today as "the people's army," despite the fact that the rate of recruitment to the IDF is not high and there are whole groups that have no presence in the organization. It turned out that a clear majority of the Jewish public (69%) agreed that the IDF is indeed, at present, the people's army (compared to 24% of the Arab interviewees). This finding may perhaps explain a further finding: 59% of the Jewish respondents rejected the proposal, heard repeatedly in recent years, to put an end to compulsory recruitment and turn the IDF into a professional army, with those serving in it viewing the service as their professional choice for their lives and being compensated accordingly (among the Arab interviewees 71% favored this proposal).

Recruitment for all? Against the backdrop of the recent riots over the recruitment of haredim, we wanted to gauge the rate of support for drafting haredi young people. In the Jewish public we found a majority (69%) in support of it (in the Arab public 42% supported it). And what about recruiting Arab young people into the IDF? About one-third of the Jewish public (32%) and only 9% of the Arab public are in favor of applying compulsory recruitment to Arab young people as well. We segmented the question of IDF recruitment for haredi young people by religiosity of the Jewish respondents. Among the secular, 81% favor drafting haredi young people into the IDF; among the different types of traditional Jews, 73% support it; and among those who defined themselves as religious, support comes to 51%. As for the haredi interviewees, 19.5% were in favor of drafting haredim.

The image and performance of the IDF: We asked: What grade would you give the IDF on each of the following issues on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning insufficient and 5 meaning excellent? Among the Jewish interviewees, the average grades in descending order were: moral conduct during operational activity - 4.27, operational battle preparedness - 4.25, obedience to the elected political leadership of the country - 3.90, equality between men and women - 3.47,

treatment of soldiers and of their personal problems - 3.13, and economic-budgetary conduct - 2.97. Among the Arab interviewees, the order was very different: the highest average went to the IDF's operational battle preparedness - 3.64. After that, in descending order: equality between men and women- 3.52, obedience to the elected political leadership - 3.36, treatment of soldiers - 3.32, budgetary conduct - 3.30, and at the bottom- moral conduct during operational activity, with an average of only 2.53.

In the Jewish public, then, the two issues that received the highest average grades, without a significant difference between them, were moral conduct and operational preparedness. In other words, in the opinion of the interviewees, the IDF excels at its military role and in upholding morality in time of battle. The issue of obedience to the political leadership lags somewhat behind those two, suggesting that part of the public (to be exact, 26.5%) thinks the IDF does not always act according to the political echelon's directives. On the issue of equality between men and women, the ranking is in the fourth place; a large minority (44.5%) does not see the IDF as ensuring gender equality. The IDF was given a low grade on the treatment of soldiers and of their personal problems, with 59% viewing its performance on this issue as medium or lower. Finally, the fact that the IDF's economic and budgetary conduct received the lowest ranking indicates that the public is aware of the reports about inefficiency, carelessness in safeguarding equipment, and cases of corruption among senior officers in the IDF and in the defense establishment. In other words, despite the high assessment of military performance and battlefield morality, the Jewish public is not prepared to give the IDF unlimited credit on certain issues, particularly those concerning its treatment of soldiers and its economic conduct. The Arab public, for which some of the questions are not at the top of its concerns, shares with the Jewish public the criticism of the IDF's financial behavior but differs sharply from it in its low assessment of the IDF's moral conduct during operational activity.

