

Peace Index—June 2015

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The government and the opposition—with which are people less satisfied? About two months after its formation, the new Likud-led government receives from the Jewish public on average a medium-low grade of 2.18 on a scale of satisfaction from 0, which means not at all satisfied, to 5, which means very satisfied. The main opposition party is doing even worse, with an average grade of just 1.78 on the same 0-5 scale. The Arab public gives both the government and the Zionist Union very low grades, but here the main opposition party gets a higher grade than the government: 1.56 vs. 1.25 (out of 5!).

If one considers the responses in terms of satisfaction rates, a segmentation of the dissatisfaction rates with the government according to voting for the Knesset in the recent elections (Jews) yields the following picture: lacking satisfaction with the government are 8% of Shas voters, 9% of Torah Judaism voters, 10% of Likud voters, 13% of Habayit Hayehudi voters, 28% of Kulanu voters, 54.5% of Yesh Atid voters, and 43% of Yisrael Beiteinu voters. Among Zionist Union voters, 72% are dissatisfied with the government; so are 90.5% of Meretz voters.

A segmentation of dissatisfaction in the Jewish public with the Zionist Union's functioning as opposition leader revealed that 14% of its voters in the recent elections are dissatisfied, and so are 24% of Meretz voters. That is also the case for 19% of Kulanu voters, 35% of Torah Judaism voters, 42% of Habayit Heyehudi voters, 44% of Yesh Atid voters, 48% of Likud voters, 52% of Shas voters, and 55% of Yisrael Beiteinu voters.

What does the public know about the main elements of the gas deal? If anyone needed proof of the public's confusion, the survey data indicate that the heated debates about the gas deal between the state and the private companies, which have invested in developing the infrastructures for gas production, are being waged against a backdrop of widespread public uncertainty about what is going on. Almost two-thirds of the Jewish public (62%) reported that the main elements of the deal are unclear to them, with only about one-fourth (27%) saying these elements were clear to them. For the Arab public the lack of clarity is even greater: 71% reported that the deal's main elements are unclear to them. In other words, whether or not it has been done intentionally, on this very important national issue the government has "succeeded" to leave large portions of the public in the dark.

Support/opposition to the gas deal: Given this befuddlement, it comes as no surprise that on the question, “Are you more inclined to support or oppose the deal?” the prevailing answer at 42% was “Don’t know” (Jews 43%, Arabs 35%). Among Jews who took a position for or against, the rate of those inclined to oppose the deal (32%) was higher than the rate of those inclined to support it (25%). Among the Arabs who were interviewed, however, for some reason the rate of supporters was much higher than the rate of opponents—47% in favor, 18% against. A distribution by voting in the recent elections shows that there is not a single party for which a majority of its voters support the deal. The highest rates of support were recorded among Likud (36%) and Habayit Hayehudi (33%) voters. In the rest of the parties the support was even lower.

Whom does Netanyahu serve? The public’s discomfort with the handling of the gas issue is apparently connected, at least in part, with its low degree of trust in the prime minister to protect the interests of the citizens as a whole. To the question, “To what extent do you trust Netanyahu that in the deal between the state and the gas companies he will properly balance between the interests of the Israeli citizens as a whole and the commitments to the private companies?” a majority (Jewish public 57.5%, Arab public 53.5%) responded that they do not trust Netanyahu to balance between the two sides.

Are the opponents of the gas deal essentially the opponents of Netanyahu? Despite the public’s suspicious attitude toward Netanyahu on the gas issue, opinions in the Jewish public are divided on whether those attacking him about the deal are concerned with the issue itself or, instead, waging a political struggle against him that is not just connected with this issue. Forty-four percent think that those who are attacking the prime minister on the gas issue are waging an overall political struggle against him, while 41% say the opposite. On this question the Arab public evinces very high uncertainty (31.5% answered “Don’t know” compared to only 15% in the Jewish sample). Here the majority (39%) agrees that the struggle against Netanyahu on the gas issue is more general than the specific question on the agenda, compared to 29% who think the opposite.

What does the public think of the policy of Culture Minister Miri Regev? The ministerial line that Culture Minister Miri Regev has taken since assuming the post wins the support of a clear majority of the Jewish public: 59% percent agree with the contours of her policy. In this vein, a small majority (51%) thinks Minister Regev was right to announce that she would deny funding to the children’s theater of the actor

Norman Issa because he had refused to perform at a settlement. A larger majority (59%) approves of her declaration that if the movie about Yigal Amir, the assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, is screened as part of the Jerusalem Film Festival, the festival will not receive state funding. In other words, at least according to these two test cases, the Jewish public supports the position that the minister responsible for state funding of cultural products has the right to include personal concerns and issues in his considerations on whether to fund or not. Apparently the agreement that the Jewish public expresses with Minister Regev's positions is at least partially connected with the majority's agreement (56%) that those attacking her on the funding question are essentially waging a political war against her that is not necessarily related to the issue itself. Note that the majority here is larger than the majority on the parallel question about the struggle against the prime minister on the gas-deal issue. A more even distribution of opinions emerges on whether Minister Regev's policy on the cultural-funding issue is itself a tool in a larger political struggle she is waging that is not necessarily related to this issue: 45% responded that they do not agree compared to 41% who agree. That is, a considerable part of the public thinks Minister Regev, too, is motivated as well by broader political considerations in her stances on the culture issue.

In the Arab public the prevailing position (41%) is one of disagreement with Minister Regev's line (exactly the same rate replied that they do not know). A slightly higher rate (48%) opposes the line she took on the (non)funding of the children's theater of the actor Norman Issa (42% responded "Don't know"). Forty percent take the opposite position of hers on not screening the movie about Yigal Amir in the Jerusalem Film Festival (43% "Don't know"). In other words, the Arab public and the Jewish public take opposite positions on the issue of Minister Regev's line and on her specific decisions.

Not "basically doing them a favor that they're sitting here": A clear majority of the Jewish public (57%) opposes the words of Deputy Interior Minister Yaron Mazuz, who recently told Arab members of Knesset in the Knesset plenum that they should give back their identity cards because "We are basically doing you a favor that you are sitting here," and supports the opposing position of Member of Knesset Benny Begin and Minister Naftali Bennett, who said that "No one is doing citizens a favor by making them citizens."

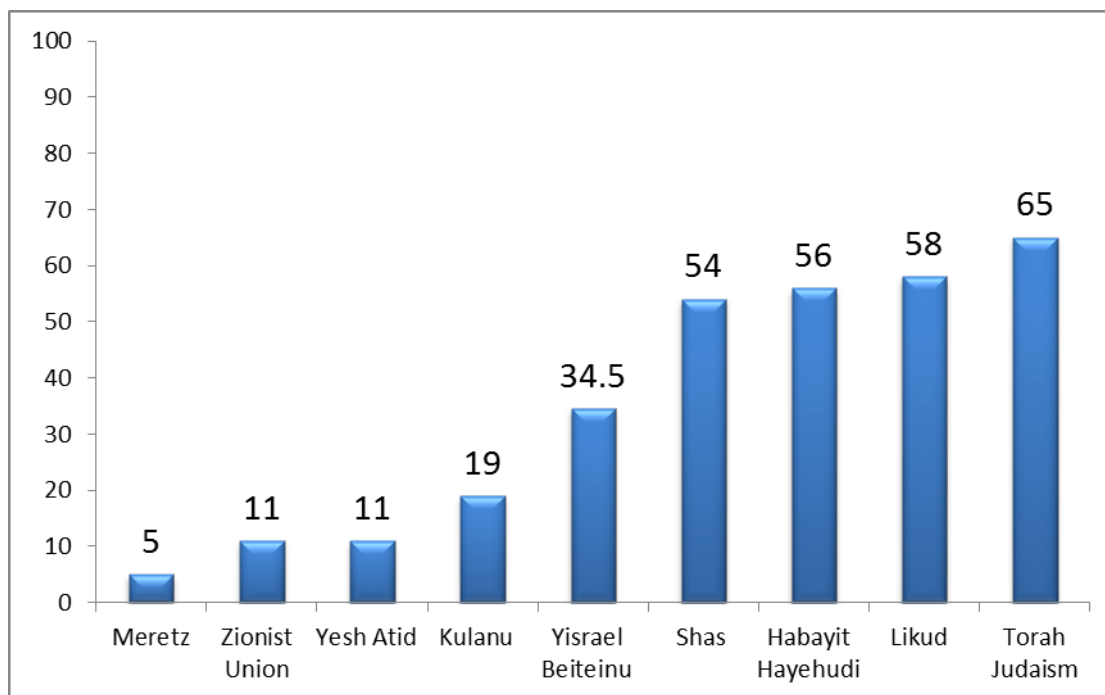
The unilateral disengagement—10 years later: About two-thirds (65%) of the Jewish public think the functioning of the governmental mechanisms during the disengagement was not good at all (43%) or not so good (22%). An even higher rate (81%) describes the functioning of the governmental mechanisms in rehabilitating the settlers as not good at all (49%) or not so good (32%).

Unlike the negative opinion on the functioning of the governmental mechanisms, the public's prevailing view (45%) is that the means of struggle used by the opponents of the evacuation were reasonable; 14% believe they were indeed too moderate, while 30.5% think these means were too extreme. As for Israeli society's attitude toward the evacuees during and after the disengagement, the rate of those who think it was supportive (47.5%) exceeded the rate of those who think the opposite (40%).

And if in the future the Israeli government were again to decide on a unilateral evacuation of Jewish settlements in the territories, what means could permissibly be used to prevent such an evacuation? The distribution of opinions on this question shows that a small though not negligible minority (14%) takes the position that any means could permissibly be used to prevent an evacuation, while about one-fourth think only nonviolent, even if illegal, means could be used. The most common view (45.5%) is that it is permissible to use only legal means; a tiny minority (7.5%) believes it is totally forbidden to oppose an evacuation should the Israeli government decide on it.

Negotiations index—43.7 (Jewish sample 41.3).

Graph of the month: To what extent do you trust Prime Minister Netanyahu that in the deal between the state and the gas companies he will properly balance between the interests of the Israeli citizens in general and the commitments to the private companies? (% , Jewish, who think he will balance properly according to voting in the 2015 elections)



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 from June 29 to July 1, 2015, by the Midgam Research Institute. The survey included 600 respondents, who constitute a representative national sample of the adult population in Israel 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. <http://www.peaceindex.org>