

# The Voice of the People: Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2012

Yehuda Ben Meir  
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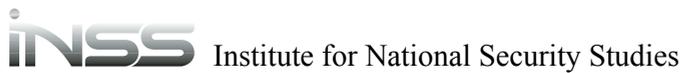


Memorandum **126**



**The Voice of the People:**  
Israeli Public Opinion on National Security  
2012

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Yehuda Ben Meir  
Olena Bagno-Moldavsky

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April 2013

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**דעת קהל בסוגיות הביטחון הלאומי**  
**2012**

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יהודה בן מאיר ואולנה בגנו־מולדבסקי

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## Executive Summary

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Although the Israeli public views the Iranian nuclear threat as the most serious national security issue confronting the country, it does not consider it an existential threat. Most Israelis do not believe Iran would attack Israel with nuclear weapons, and most likewise have a high degree of confidence in Israel's deterrent capability. However, as the possibility of a military strike against Iran looms increasingly as a less theoretical and more viable option, a growing number of Israelis oppose a military strike against Iranian nuclear installations. In addition, there is an increase in support of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, although a definite majority remain opposed.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, support for a two-state solution remains high among the Israeli public and has even increased in recent years, despite the pervasive skepticism that there is a Palestinian partner and the growing conviction – a trend evident since 2005 – that it is impossible to reach a permanent agreement with the Palestinians. New questions introduced in the current study polled potential support for a referendum on a permanent agreement approved by the government. While the percentage of those in favor varies depending on the particular stipulations of the agreement, support remains markedly higher than opposition. As such, it seems certain that a “package deal” on a complete and permanent agreement with the Palestinians presented by the government would be approved in a public referendum.

These are among the principal findings of the 2012 survey of the National Security and Public Opinion Project of the Institute for National Security Studies, conducted between late February and mid April of 2012. The memorandum presents the results of the project's most recent public opinion survey and compares the data with findings from previous surveys, in order

to identify long term trends and public opinion patterns among the Israeli body politic.

One of the key questions posed by political pundits and observers of Israeli public opinion concerns the public's political leanings, and specifically, if the public is increasingly oriented to left wing or right wing positions. The current study confirms a trend noted in previous years regarding the strength of the Israeli center: half of the Jewish population in Israel continues to belong to the political center. Of the remaining half, the right remains far stronger, outnumbering the left by more than two to one. At the same time, the slow but steady shift of recent years to the right was arrested, and to some degree even reversed. Whether the 2013 elections results specifically reflect this political shift is subject to debate, but the trend invites scrutiny as to where on the political spectrum Israeli public opinion is headed.

As in previous years, of all the demographic factors examined (gender, age, country of origin, education, and socio-economic status), the factor with the strongest influence on the attitudes and opinions of the respondents is self-defined religious identity: the ultra-Orthodox and the religious are the most hawkish, and the secular population embraces the most moderate positions. Significantly, the ultra-Orthodox and the religious, while representing different sectors driven by different national ideals, are alike in being almost totally absent from the left.

Among the other major findings of the survey:

- The number of those believing it would be possible to reach an agreement with the Palestinians rises dramatically if the Palestinians recognize the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.
- Support for the Arab Peace Initiative, though increased in recent years, remains limited. As for Hamas, few Israelis believe that the organization will follow the example of the PLO and recognize Israel.
- Few Israelis believe that the major changes in the Middle East caused by the "Arab Spring" will undermine the peace treaties Israel has with Egypt and Jordan.
- In the realm of basic political values, support for a Jewish majority in the State of Israel increased significantly over the past few years, while support for the ideal of Greater Israel as a leading value dropped.
- Willingness among Israelis to evacuate outlying settlements and unauthorized outposts remains high. In contrast, there is little support for evacuation of the Golan Heights.

- A majority continue to view refusal by a soldier to obey an order to evacuate settlements as illegitimate.
- Concern about possible civil strife as a result of a political settlement with the Palestinians involving territorial withdrawal and evacuation of settlements increased dramatically, even exceeding the level of concern immediately prior to the 2005 disengagement.
- Attitudes by Israeli Jews toward the Arab citizens of Israel appear less negative than in the past, reversing a trend evident in recent surveys.

The data of 2012 confirms a basic consistency among Israeli public opinion, particularly the strength of the Israeli center, sometimes known as “middle Israel.” In general, there remains a good deal of flexibility in Israeli public opinion, which under certain circumstances – especially strong and charismatic political leadership, backed by a vibrant and united government – allows considerable room for creative measures. This may be most relevant for an Israeli government that seeks an agreement with the Palestinians.



## Introduction

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Throughout the history of the State of Israel, national security issues have dominated the Israeli political reality, and the past few years have continued this pattern. Over the past four years, the threat from Iran has become more acute, Israel has fought two small scale wars with Hamas in Gaza, the dispute with the international community over settlement activity in the West Bank has intensified, and the potential consequences of the “Arab Spring” loom large on the horizon. Perhaps above all, the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts figure as intractable as ever. It is not surprising, therefore, that notwithstanding the centrality of economic and social issues on the public agenda in recent years, national security persists as a – if not the – primary concern of the Israeli public.

The new Israeli government, formed on March 18, 2013 following the January 2013 national elections for the Knesset, will face many national security challenges and will need to take crucial decisions on these matters. Public opinion on national security issues will inevitably have a substantial impact on those decisions. True, government policy in Israel is determined to a large degree by coalition and internal party considerations. Nevertheless, policies and decisions of any Israeli government on key national security issues are to a large degree constrained by the pressures of public opinion. Indeed, those dealing with national security issues and specifically with the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts should not make the mistake of failing to give sufficient weight to Israeli public opinion. No Israeli government can ignore the exigencies of public opinion, certainly when national security decisions are seen to have an almost existential nature. National leaders and governments can influence, shape, and at times even radically change public opinion, but there are limits to the ability of governments to shape public opinion and forge a majority in support of their

policies. And without such support it is very difficult for any government to implement key and far reaching national security decisions.

There have of course been instances in Israel's history where strong leadership and a dramatic turn of events have turned public opinion upside down. Menahem Begin's decision to withdraw fully from the entire Sinai Desert, including Sharm a-Sheikh, and Yitzhak Rabin's decision to recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people are two such examples. Both instances featured two highly prestigious leaders who responded boldly to formative events – Anwar Sadat's dramatic visit to Jerusalem in the former case, and Yasir Arafat's letter to Rabin recognizing Israel's right to live in security and peace and renouncing terror in the latter case. These instances confirm that the adage "in politics never say never" holds true for public opinion as well, and highlight the potential influence of strong political leadership. Nevertheless, these instances are few and far between.

Over the past 27 years the National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP) has dealt with Israeli public opinion on national security issues, the evolution of public opinion on these issues, and policy implications. The aim of the NSPOP is to measure, describe, and analyze the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of the Jewish population in Israel on all issues of national security. From June 1985 until April 2012, 24 representative surveys of the adult Jewish population of Israel were conducted. Each survey included between 600 and 1200 respondents. All the interviews were administered on a face to face basis at the home of the respondents.

The Israeli body politic is composed of Jews and Arabs. The breakdown between the two groups for the overall Israeli population is approximately 79 percent Jewish and 21 percent Arab. However, due to the higher birthrate among the Arabs (most of whom are Muslims), when speaking of the "Israeli voting age population," i.e., those eighteen and older, the breakdown for the two groups is approximately 85 percent Jewish and 15 percent Arab. From its inception, the NSPOP has surveyed the Jewish population of Israel. There was a twofold rationale behind this methodological choice. Given Israel's history and national character, decision makers are more sensitive to and influenced by trends in Jewish public opinion. Second, inasmuch as public opinion in the Arab sector on key national security issues differs – in many instances, radically – from Israeli Jewish public opinion, calculating the Arab data together with the Jewish data confuses the true picture and

in some instances may be no more than a statistical artifact. At the same time, since the Jewish population is predominant, overall Israeli public opinion on the vast majority of issues does not vary from that of the Jewish population by more than 5 percent. Thus, when this study refers to “Israeli public opinion” or “Israelis,” it refers to the public opinion of the Jewish population in Israel, although in most instances it also largely reflects Israeli public opinion overall.

The NSPOP longitudinal data is gathered on the basis of a questionnaire developed specifically for the project. The questionnaire comprises over 100 questions on a wide range of national security issues. Many questions have remained unchanged throughout the years; they constitute the core of the survey and allow valid comparisons over time. The second set of survey items is designed to reflect public opinion on foremost national security issues of the day, issues that naturally may vary from year to year. Questions related to the Iranian nuclear program, for example, were more prominent both in the 2009 study and the 2012 study. Topics covered in the questionnaires include, inter alia, perceptions of the Iranian nuclear threat; perceptions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts; opinions on possible solutions regarding the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: territories, settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem; the national mood, including feelings of security and insecurity, threat perception, and overall optimism and pessimism; attitudes regarding the Arab minority in Israel, the IDF, and the rule of law; and key national values. Demographic indicators include gender, age, country of origin, education, socio-economic status, level of religious identification, and military service.

Contributing to the value of the survey as a significant measurement is that the questionnaire has retained core questions over the years. Indeed, the original intent was to maintain the exact wording of most items, thus enabling the analyst to chart and plot developments and changes in Israeli public opinion over time. As the years progressed, however, some questions became outdated and new issues arose, and in some cases, the exact wording of certain items had to be modified. Nonetheless, the questionnaire includes numerous questions posed consistently for over two decades. As a result, over a 27 year period the NSPOP has amassed a reservoir of critical data that paints the changing face of Israeli public opinion on vital national security issues.

This study presents the data and analysis for the 2012 study. The data from this survey, conducted in 2012 during the last week of February and the first three weeks of March (with minor supplements in the third week of April), is compared with data from previous surveys, focusing mainly on years 2006-2009, thus giving a picture of key trends in Israeli public opinion over a six year period. It is important to emphasize that this study is not a public opinion survey, in the common sense of the term and is not intended to give a pollster's answer as to a given position of the Israeli public at a given point in time. Rather, in the tradition of applied basic research, it is an in-depth, attitudinal, longitudinal study of how Israeli society views, over time, key national security issues. Its emphasis is on consistency, stability, and fluctuations over time in the attitudes and opinions of the Jewish population in Israel on these issues as well as the implications and ramifications of these patterns for Israeli decision makers.

The study begins with the presentation of main findings related to public opinion of the Israeli Jewish population. The second chapter charts the profile of the current Israeli body politic. The third chapter presents an analysis of key factors in the formation of Israeli public opinion, specifically an individual's value system and religious identification. The next two chapters describe the principal threats perceived by the Israeli Jewish public and devote particular attention to the threat of a nuclear Iran. The following chapter accounts for attitudes related to various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as respondents' perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general. The last chapter to present findings from the survey is devoted to domestic issues, and in particular, Jewish-Arab relations and ideological tensions within the Jewish public. The monograph concludes with a summary of the survey's results and an assessment of both the policy implications of these results and potential developments in Israeli Jewish public opinion.

## Chapter 1

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### ***Main Findings***

An oft-posed question to students and observers of Israeli public opinion is whether one can identify a clear shift to the right or left in Israeli public opinion. The overall picture emerging from the current study is one of consistency rather than change, accompanied by a definite shift of a few percentage points to the left on most issues, although for a number of items there is a shift to the right.

At first glance, it would seem that this picture is in line with the results of the general elections in January 2013, which resulted in a slight shift from the center-right to the center-left. Yet while the election results ostensibly confirm much of the data and conclusions reported in this study, a more careful analysis indicates a need for caution in interpreting the election results. From the perspective of this study, two caveats are in order. First, domestic and socio-economic issues and considerations apparently played a far greater role in determining the vote than in previous elections. Second, the breakdown of the electorate into two competing blocs – right-center and left-center – may no longer hold true. There are indications that in these elections the boundaries between the two blocs were less defined than in the past. Consequently, it is difficult to read conclusions into election results with regard to right vs. left on the political-ideological continuum.

As in the past years, the Israeli center – sometimes known as the silent majority – has remained strong and steady. Half of the Jewish population in Israel continues to belong to the center. Over the past six years, the percentage of the Jewish population falling in the center has barely fluctuated, ranging from 45 percent to 50 percent – the percentage in 2012 is 49 percent, identical to that in 2009.

As far as the remaining half of the Jewish population is concerned, the right remains far stronger, outnumbering the left by better than two to one. At the same time, the slow but steady shift from left to right, evident from 2006 to 2009, was arrested and to some degree even reversed. In 2012, 35 percent of the population belonged to the right, down from 41 percent in 2009; those among the left rose from 10 percent in 2009 to 16 percent in 2012.

The perspective of “left” versus “right” has a broad, dialectical interpretation that covers political, social, security, economic, and cultural issues, and the left-right dichotomy is a common tool to classify political stances along a one-dimensional political spectrum. Similar to the left-right terminology, the dove-hawk division is also of a dialectical nature. In this memorandum, left and right are defined exclusively on the basis of positions on key national security issues, primarily the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “Left,” or “dove,” is defined as a respondent who in contrast to “right” or “hawk” manifests a greater readiness for political compromise and more substantial concessions in pursuit of a resolution to conflicts and is less willing to use military power.

One consistent conclusion from the studies conducted over the years is the predominant effect of religious identification on one’s political opinions. Likewise in the current survey, of all the demographic factors examined (gender, age, country of origin, education, and socio-economic status), the factor with the strongest influence on the attitudes and opinions of the respondents is self-definition of religious identity. The ultra-Orthodox and the religious are the most hawkish, the secular population have the most moderate positions, and the traditionalists are in the middle. Significantly, the ultra-Orthodox and the religious, while representing different sectors driven by different national ideals, are alike in being almost totally absent from the left.

### **The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Support for the establishment of a Palestinian state within the context of a permanent agreement was 59 percent, versus 53 percent in 2009 and 55 percent in 2007. Support for the “two states for two peoples” solution was 69 percent, versus 64 percent in 2009. The results for 2012 have, in effect, returned to the high level of support for both items registered in 2006 – 61 percent and 70 percent, respectively. In line with previous results, support

for the two-state solution is greater than support specifically for a Palestinian state – the difference of 10 percent is consistent over time.

A new perspective was introduced in the current study, namely, how one would vote in a referendum on a permanent agreement with the Palestinians approved by the government. Two different questions were presented to the respondents, first, how one would vote if the government approved a permanent agreement with the Palestinians based on two states for two peoples and that agreement is put to the people in a national referendum. Fifty-one percent answered that they would vote in favor, 27 percent would vote against, and 22 percent were undecided. The second item posed the same question, except that here the key parameters of the agreement approved by the government were specified. These included: a Palestinian state on 93 percent of the West Bank and the entire Gaza Strip, including the Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem; Israel would be recognized as the nation state of the Jewish people and would retain the settlement blocs, including the Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem and the Old City, and maintain a military presence along the Jordan River; the Palestinians would declare an end to all claims and an end to the conflict; the refugees would be eligible to return only to the Palestinian state; and the Temple Mount would be “under God’s sovereignty.” In this case, 46 percent answered that they would vote in favor, 34 percent would vote against, and 20 percent were undecided.

In other words, when specific parameters are stipulated, some of which are difficult for Israeli public opinion to accept, support for a government-approved agreement drops. Nevertheless those willing to vote in favor still significantly outnumber those intending to vote against. Given these numbers, it seems certain that a government presenting such an agreement to the people would win in a referendum. Also significant is that when some of the parameters are presented as individual terms, the majority of the respondents are opposed. It is only when presented as a package deal arrived at and supported by the government that there is a readiness to accept it.

Israelis are quite pessimistic regarding the Palestinian partner, yet they remain committed to seek a solution to the conflict. Support for halting the peace process has been persistently low. In 2009, 19 percent agreed with the proposition that the peace process should be suspended, versus 59 percent who disagreed (22 percent were in the middle of a 1-7 scale). The comparable numbers for the current study were 23 percent, 61 percent, and 16 percent. On the other hand, less than one third believed in the possibility of reaching

a peace agreement with the Palestinians – a result that has remained the same over the past five years. When asked about the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians “if they would recognize the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people,” those believing that it was possible rose from 29 percent to 43 percent. Results from hypothetical questions should always be seen as tenuous, but the dramatic positive difference indicates that the acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state resonates among the Israeli public. It should also be noted that 46 percent believed that “most Palestinians” want peace, a result that in effect echoes results of previous years.

When asked what is the major reason for an impasse in the Palestinian issue, 36 percent answered “the recalcitrance of the Palestinian authority,” 11 percent answered “the lack of flexibility of the Israeli government,” and 46 percent answered “the gap between the parties is too large” (7 percent cited a combination of causes). The fact that close to half of the population views the impasse as stemming essentially from objective factors, i.e., the wide gap between the two sides, can explain why there is limited enthusiasm for various peace initiatives. Support for the Arab Peace Initiative, even in principle, remained limited, although it did increase significantly from 2009 (in previous studies the term used was the “Saudi Initiative”). In the current study, 29 percent supported a positive Israeli response to the initiative, versus 52 percent who were opposed (19 percent were in the middle of a 1-7 scale); in 2009 only 19 percent supported a positive Israeli response, versus 60 percent who opposed it (21 percent were in the middle). The level of support in 2012 has returned to the level of 2007: 27 percent in favor, 49 percent against, and 24 percent in the middle.

Similarly, Israelis remain quite pessimistic about Hamas. When asked whether there was any chance that Hamas would choose the course of the PLO and recognize Israel, 40 percent responded “no chance,” and 45 percent said “very little chance.” Only 11 percent said that there was “a fairly good chance,” and 4 percent responded “a very good chance.” The results were quite similar in 2009 – the comparable numbers were, respectively, 44, 45, 7, and 4 percent. Twenty percent supported negotiating with Hamas, up from 14 percent in 2009, versus 67 percent who were against, down from 74 percent in 2009 (13 percent were in the middle). At the same time, Israelis have not completely given up on a political solution. On the contrary, 36 percent agreed with the statement that “there is no political solution to the

conflict,” versus 50 percent who disagreed with the statement and 14 percent who were in the middle.

### **Political Values**

In the realm of basic political values, demography continues to supersede geography. Respondents were asked to rank four key values in order of importance: a country with a Jewish majority; Greater Israel; democracy; and a state of peace.

For most of the past decade, the value ranked as the most important has been a Jewish majority. In the current study, 47 percent listed it as the most important value, up from 38 percent in 2009. These figures are in stark contrast to the 8 percent (10 percent in 2009) who chose Greater Israel as the preeminent value. When looking at those choosing each value as “the most important” or “the second most important,” the results are equally impressive. Sixty-nine percent named a Jewish majority as one of their two leading values, versus 29 percent who chose Greater Israel as a leading value. Support in 2012 for the Jewish majority value is almost identical with that of 2009 (71 percent). The percentage of those choosing Greater Israel as one of their two leading values decreased from a high in 2009 of 36 percent and reverted to the level of the 2005-2007 period.

The prioritization of demography over geography does not necessarily lead to the adoption of a dovish position. There are those on the right who accept the primacy of preserving a Jewish majority, yet believe that this can be achieved by other means rather than by withdrawal from large parts of the West Bank. Still, there is good reason to believe that the strong support for the “two states for two peoples” solution is grounded primarily in the prioritization of demography over geography. In the same vein, this prioritization is also, most probably, manifest in the readiness to evacuate certain settlements in the West Bank in the context of a permanent agreement. Support for removal of all the settlements, including the large settlement blocs, remains quite low at 14 percent, unchanged from 2007. However, 49 percent, up from 43 percent in 2009, supported the removal of the small and isolated settlements. Taken together, 63 percent were ready to evacuate certain settlements in the West Bank in the context of a permanent settlement – 37 percent were opposed to the evacuation of any settlements. The picture is, however, different with regard to evacuating settlements in the context of a partial agreement or a unilateral realignment of the settlement map by Israel.

In these instances, 54 percent opposed the evacuation of any settlement. Interestingly, the public is evenly split with regard to an Israeli declaration under certain conditions that the security fence is Israel's permanent eastern border, which mandates a relocation of all Israelis residing east of the fence – 50 percent agreed, up from 43 percent in 2009 and similar to the result in 2007, while 50 percent disagreed.

### **Iran, External Threats, and the National Mood**

In 2012 the hottest national security issue was undoubtedly the question of a nuclear Iran, and close analysis of the data gives a clear picture of the Israeli public stance on the Iranian nuclear threat. The Israeli public does indeed view this threat as the most serious threat facing the country, but does not view it as an existential one. Respondents were presented with a list of twelve scenarios that might be considered dangerous and were asked to rate each one as to “the degree to which it poses a threat” on a 1-7 scale. Nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran received an average score of 6.1 – the highest score and the only threat to receive a score above 6. Two thirds of the respondents gave this threat a score of 7, i.e., the highest score on the scale. The only other threat that came close to it was “chemical and biological weapons in the hands of an enemy state,” with an average score of 5.9. The results are almost identical with those reported in 2007 and 2009, indicating a consistent perception over time.

When asked, however, how Iran would likely behave if it acquired nuclear weapons, only 18 percent answered that it would attack Israel with nuclear weapons in order to destroy it. Another 32 percent said that Iran would threaten Israel with a nuclear attack but would not actually attack, for fear of Israel's response. The remaining 50 percent predicted that Iran would engage in less aggressive behavior. Clearly, the vast majority of the Israeli public has a high degree of confidence in Israel's deterrent capability. That position is probably influenced by the fact that 90 percent of the public believes that Israel has nuclear weapons (62 percent are positive of this).

The year preceding the current study saw the development of an intense debate in Israel regarding the possibility of an independent Israeli military strike against Iranian nuclear sites. This debate evidently has had an effect on Israeli public opinion. In 2009, respondents were asked what Israel's response should be if it learned that Iran possesses nuclear weapons. Fifty-nine percent supported a military strike against Iran's nuclear installations,

while 41 percent were opposed. In the present study, the question was reformulated and presented in a more precise context. Respondents were asked how Israel should act against the threat of Iran developing nuclear weapons. Forty-eight percent responded that Israel should attack the nuclear installations in Iran, while 52 percent responded that Israel should use all the political resources at its disposal to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons but should refrain from a military attack. The Israeli public is thus evenly split as far as the exercise of a military option with regard to Iran.

Another area where public opinion may have been influenced by the salience of the Iranian nuclear threat is the question of a Middle East nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ). This question was not addressed directly in previous studies. However, in 2009, when asked what is preferable, assuming that Israel possesses nuclear weapons, only 1 percent suggested that Israel should give up the nuclear arsenal attributed to it, 19 percent favored Israel going public and confirming the existence of a nuclear arsenal to deter its enemies, and 80 percent supported the continuation of Israel's policy of ambiguity. In the current study, the question was posed in a different context; respondents were asked what Israel should do if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. In this scenario, quite a different picture emerged: 10 percent were in favor of Israel acting in order to turn the Middle East, including Israel, into a nuclear free zone, 33 percent favored Israel adopting a policy of public nuclear deterrence, i.e., to announce that Israel has nuclear weapons, and 57 percent were in favor of maintaining the present policy of ambiguity.

It is thus clear that the threat of a nuclear Iran has a profound influence on public opinion with regard to Israel's nuclear stance. In 2009, there was massive support – in effect a national consensus – for maintaining Israel's policy of ambiguity, with no support at all for a NWFZ. However, this sentiment changed by 2012, as Israel faced the possible reality of a nuclear Iran. Close to half of the population was in favor of abandoning the policy of ambiguity; one third favored a policy of public nuclear deterrence, and 10 percent favored a NWFZ.

In order to better understand the people's attitude toward the idea of a Middle East NWFZ, two new questions were introduced in the current study. In the first item, respondents were asked: "Assuming that Israel possesses nuclear weapons and Iran achieves a military nuclear capability, what is the correct policy for Israel," and were asked to choose one of two options. Seventy-eight percent answered that Israel should maintain its

nuclear arsenal even at the price of nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran, while 22 percent answered that both Israel and Iran should give up their nuclear arsenal. A clear gender difference was found – 15 percent of the men supported the option of mutual nuclear disarmament versus 28 percent of the women, almost double. The second item was a direct question regarding a proposal to declare the Middle East an area free of all weapons of mass destruction (MEWMDZF), where all the countries, including Israel, would give up their nuclear weapons. Thirty-eight percent supported the proposal, versus 62 percent who opposed. On this question too a marked gender difference was found – slightly over one quarter (29 percent) of the male respondents were in favor of a MEWMDZF, while almost half (47 percent) of the female respondents favored the proposal. By all indications, this is a dramatic change from the past. Contrary to reports in the foreign press, the majority of Israelis do not support a MEWMDZF, although it does enjoy the support of a sizable and significant minority.

In the event of a nuclear Iran, Israelis are divided between those who favor putting the major emphasis on strengthening Israel's deterrent capability (35 percent) versus those who would put the major emphasis on strengthening Israel's active defense capabilities, such as the Arrow anti-missile defense system (42 percent); 17 percent favored building nuclear shelters, and the remaining 6 percent chose various combinations of the different options. The results are almost identical with those found in 2009. Half of the respondents (53 percent) said that Israel can depend on American security guarantees if and when Iran acquires nuclear weapons.

On the personal level, Israelis do not seem consumed by the Iranian nuclear threat. When asked how their personal lives might be affected by Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, 87 percent – up from 80 percent in 2009 – stated that their lives would not change. Hypothetical questions do not yield binding results, yet the data nevertheless appears to signify a high degree of steadfastness among the Israeli population.

The threat perception of Israelis remained essentially unchanged from 2009 – a mean score of 5.3, on a 1-7 point scale (for 12 items), compared with a mean score of 5.4 (for 9 items) in 2009, although this is somewhat higher than the average threat score for the years 2004-2006 – 4.9. As discussed above, nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran were viewed as the most serious threat facing Israel: 6.1 on the 1-7 point scale, the same as in 2009. Next in line were chemical and biological weapons in the hands of an enemy state

(5.9), followed by “rockets fired on Israel” and an undemocratic regime in Israel (5.6 each). Close behind these threats were a deep socio-economic crisis in Israel, corruption in the public system, and renewal of terrorism on a large scale (5.5 each). As can be seen, both external and internal threats weigh heavy on the mind of the Israeli public. Least threatening were the establishment of a Palestinian state (4.4) and return of territories for peace (4.2).

A significant majority of the Jewish public remains confident that Israel can cope successfully with any conceivable threat. The percentage ranged from 63 percent with regard to “potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with nuclear weapons,” to 69 percent with regard to “all out war with all the Arab countries,” to 94 percent regarding “war launched by Syria against Israel.”

As in previous studies, there was a distinct difference between a respondent’s assessments of the overall state of the country and his/her own personal condition, with the perception of the latter remaining much higher. The state of the country was rated as being 5.1 on a 1-9 scale, essentially the same as in 2009 (5.2) but significantly higher than the ratings for the 2004-2007 period (4.1-4.8). At the same time, however, there was a dramatic improvement in the assessment of one’s personal state, rising to a high of 6.6 – by far the highest rating over the past five years (the previous highs were 6 in 2005, and 6.2 in 2009).

## **Current Political Issues**

The major national security event in the year preceding the current study was, no doubt, the so-called “Arab Spring” and the seismic changes it generated in the Middle East. Of special interest to Israel was the revolution in Egypt, with which Israel has a peace treaty, and the rise to power in Cairo of the Muslim Brotherhood. In order to gauge the reaction of Israeli public opinion to these events, a number of new questions were introduced. The results indicate that overall, most Israelis took these changes in stride and maintained a positive and optimistic approach. When asked what their conclusions were from the events of the “Arab Spring,” 52 percent responded that regardless of the “Arab Spring,” the peace agreements were holding up, 22 percent responded that the existing peace treaties help Israel cope with the results of the “Arab Spring,” and only one quarter (26 percent) concluded that “there is no value to peace treaties.” When asked what they projected would

happen as a result of “the new situation in Egypt,” close to three quarters (72 percent) responded that Egypt would abide by the peace treaty with Israel; 11 percent believed that Egypt would abrogate the peace treaty, 13 percent believed that Egypt might “be dragged into a war with Israel,” and 3 percent believed that Egypt would actually initiate a war with Israel.

Previous studies indicated that there was little if any readiness among the Israeli public for a withdrawal from the Golan Heights. In the current study, the question was reworded and presented in the context of the events of the “Arab Spring” in Syria. Respondents were asked about their position regarding the Golan Heights if as a result of the events in Syria a democratic regime emerged that was willing to make peace with Israel. The data showed almost no change on this issue. A mere 3 percent were willing to return the entire Golan area, with another 5 percent willing to do so on condition that the border were distanced from the Sea of Galilee; 16 percent were willing to return part of the Golan, and 10 percent were willing to return the Golan to Syrian sovereignty but retain the Israeli settlements on the Golan (such as by granting Israel a 100 year lease on the settlements land). However, fully two thirds (66 percent) remained opposed to any withdrawal whatsoever from the Golan. The question is highly hypothetical and it very well may be that few respondents took it seriously. Nevertheless, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the attachment of the Israeli public to the Golan Heights runs very deep and any government wishing to make major concessions on the Golan would face a herculean task.

A number of topics of current interest were examined. When asked about the unauthorized outposts, 36 percent responded that they should be dismantled, 26 percent said that the government should try to reach an agreement regarding their dismantlement with the settlers but in the absence of such agreement they should be dismantled by force, 15 percent stated that they should be dismantled only by agreement with the settlers, and 23 percent favored leaving the outposts alone (16 percent of those supported the legalization of the outposts). These results are quite similar to those of 2009 (31 percent, 25 percent, 18 percent, and 25 percent, respectively). Clearly, the unauthorized outposts do not enjoy substantive public support – 62 percent favor their dismantling, and the government would not face serious public disapproval should it decide to remove them. Although not directly related, it is interesting to note that over three quarters of the respondents (82 percent versus 77 percent in 2009) supported an “evacuation-compensation law,”

whereby residents of the territories who want to leave voluntarily would receive full compensation for their property.

### **Domestic Issues**

There is a certain degree of ambivalence in the attitude of Israeli Jews toward Israeli Arabs. Over two thirds of the Jewish population support equal rights for Israeli Arabs (69 percent), equal to the numbers in 2007 and significantly higher than the 55 percent registered in 2009. When asked what Israel should emphasize in its relations with its Arab citizens, 57 percent chose the option of “equalizing their conditions with those of the other citizens of the state” over “intensifying punitive measures for behavior inappropriate for Israeli citizens.” This is a reversal of the results in 2009, when only 45 percent supported the former, versus 55 percent supporting the latter. At the same time, certain Jewish attitudes toward Arab citizens of Israel remain quite negative. A large majority opposed allowing Israeli Arabs to participate in crucial national decisions (73 percent, slightly down from 77 percent in 2009) or including Arab ministers in the cabinet (73 percent, slightly up from 70 percent in 2009), and supported the voluntary emigration of Israeli Arabs from Israel (63 percent in 2006, 66 percent in 2007, 72 percent in 2009, and 70 percent in 2012). The year 2009 represented a low point in Jewish-Arab relations, at least as far as public opinion is concerned. In 2012, one can see a definite improvement, with the picture being similar to that of 2006 and 2007.

Concern about possible civil strife as a result of a political settlement with the Palestinians involving territorial withdrawal and evacuation of settlements increased dramatically from 2009; 60 percent saw a possibility of civil war as a result of Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria in the context of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, up from 39 percent in 2009 and even higher than the level of concern that prevailed in 2005, just prior to the disengagement (50 percent). A majority of the Jewish population continued to view refusal by a soldier to obey an order to evacuate settlements as illegitimate – 63 percent, the same as in 2009 (62 percent). Regarding refusal to serve in the territories, sentiments also remained fairly constant, with 78 percent of the respondents viewing it as illegitimate, slightly up from 73 percent in 2009.

Overall, then, there appears a relative stability in public opinion among Israeli Jews concerning the major issues pertaining to national security. The following chapters provide a detailed account of these and related issues.

## Chapter 2

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### ***The Profile of the Israeli Body Politic***

The general elections in 2013, which saw the weakening of the right wing bloc and resulted in Benjamin Netanyahu's formation of a government more politically centrist than the preceding government, suggest a strengthening of centrist tendencies in Israeli society. Do these electoral results reflect the actual tenor of public opinion in terms of attitudes toward the Iranian nuclear threat and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Or do national security issues, long thought to dominate voting results, now share center stage – at least in the polling booth – with socio-domestic issues, particularly in the wake of the social protests of the summer of 2011?

This chapter paints a detailed picture of the current ideological profile of the Israeli Jewish public from the perspective of national security issues. It explores the nature of right, left, and center and shows the breakdown of the Jewish population in these ideological classifications. The three categories are constructed on the basis of opinion questions measuring one's opinion on specific issues, a methodology preferred over abstract categorization based on a single question related to one's ideology and one that can yield an authentic ideological profile of the Israeli public. In addition, a comparative perspective adopted in this chapter allows the reader to see the dynamic of ideological change over time within the Israeli public.

The political profile was constructed on the basis of the responses by each individual to the key questions relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and territorial concessions. The 2012 questionnaire included 15 such items that allow categorization of individuals as hawks and doves based on their responses (table 1). The individual response pattern allowed each respondent to be assigned to a continuum of categories ranging from an extreme left

(dovish) to extreme right (hawkish). Thus each respondent was assigned a profile depending on the answers that he/she provided to the questions.

**Table 1. Questions and responses used in the profile analysis, 2012**

Items included in the analysis	Left	Right
Territories should be returned for peace – 1-7 scale (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree)	Agree (5-7)	Disagree (1-3)
No military solution to the conflict (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree)	Agree (5-7)	Disagree (1-3)
No political solution to the conflict (1-strongly disagree; 7-strongly agree)	Disagree (1-3)	Agree (5-7)
Solution of two states for two peoples	Support (1,2)	Oppose (3,4)
Declaration by Israel that the fence is its permanent border and it will remove all settlements east of the fence	Agree (3,4)	Disagree (1,2)
A Palestinian state on 95 percent of the West Bank and Gaza, with Israel retaining the large settlement blocs	Support (3,4)	Oppose (1,2)
Transfer of Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem – except for the Old City – to the Palestinians	Support (3,4)	Oppose (1,2)
Establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza	Support (1,2)	Oppose (3,4)
Evacuation of Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria in the context of a permanent settlement	Accept removal of all settlements (3)	Oppose removal of any settlements (1)
Return or retain isolated settlements on mountain ridge of eastern Samaria	Return (1)	Retain (2)
The “most important” value	Peace (4)	Greater Israel (2)
Temple Mount will be given to the Palestinians and Wailing Wall retained by Israel	Support (3,4)	Oppose (1,2)
A limited number of refugees will be permitted to return to Israel	Support (3,4)	Oppose (1,2)
Ready to return or retain Gush Etzion (the Etzion bloc)	Return (1)	Retain (2)
Ready to return or retain the Jordan Valley	Return (1)	Retain (2)

Tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of the sample with regard to responses to the 15 items on the scale. Note that for the first three items, the middle response, i.e., 4 on the 1-7 scale, was not coded as a “left” or

“right” response – it represents the genuine center; on item 11 only the two values that can be clearly identified as “left” or “right” were coded, and therefore “democracy” and “a Jewish majority” were not coded as either “left” or “right.” Table 2 presents the distribution for all the respondents in terms of the number of “left responses” given by each individual (for example, it shows that 4 percent of the public did not return a single “left” response, while 10 percent gave one “left” response out of 15). Table 3 shows the distribution of the sample in terms of the number of “right responses” given by each individual.

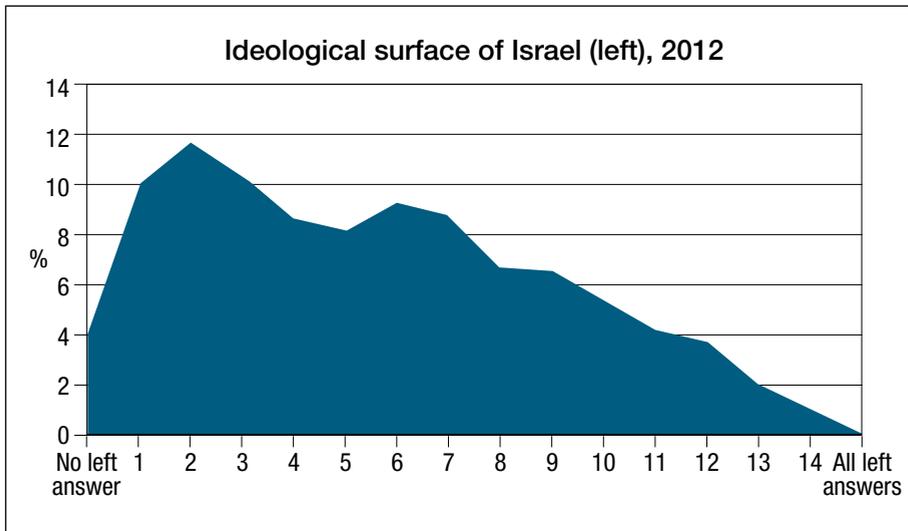
**Table 2. Distribution of “left” responses to the 15-item list**

Number of items answered with “left” responses	Frequency	Percent
0	25	4.0
1	63	10.0
2	74	11.7
3	65	10.3
4	54	8.5
5	51	8.1
6	58	9.2
7	55	8.7
8	42	6.6
9	41	6.5
10	35	5.5
11	26	4.1
12	23	3.6
13	12	1.9
14	7	1.1
15	1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3. Distribution of “right” responses to the 15-item list**

Number of items answered with “right” responses	Frequency	Percent
0	7	1.1
1	21	3.3
2	33	5.2
3	45	7.1
4	49	7.8
5	66	10.4
6	49	7.8
7	48	7.6
8	49	7.8
9	46	7.3
10	45	7.1
11	57	9.0
12	61	9.7
13	36	5.7
14	14	2.2
15	6	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>100</b>

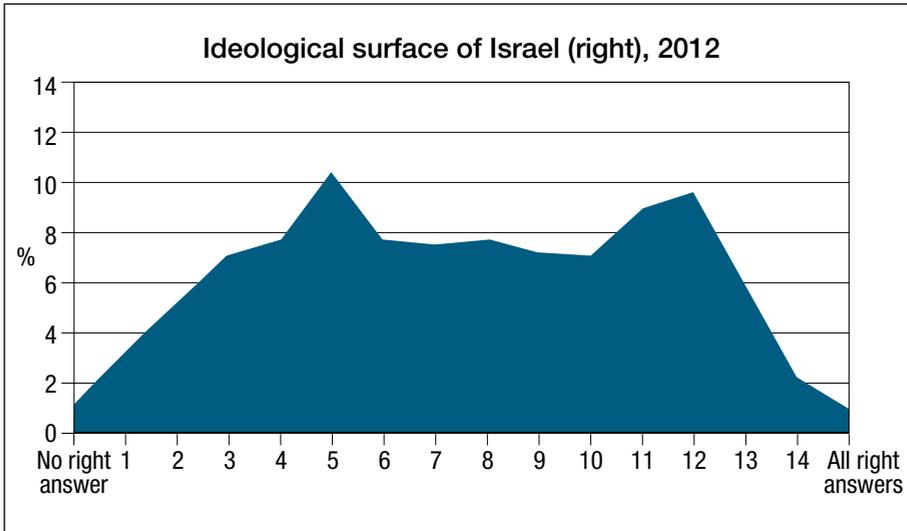
Figures 1-2 present the data in graphic form, and demonstrate a veering toward right wing ideology among the Israeli public. The correlation between the scales is very strong and negative  $-.91$  ( $p=.000$ ), which means that they are almost orthogonal and reflect opposing political worldviews.



**Figure 1. Distribution of the public by “left” responses, 2012**

The graph in Figure 1 is skewed, i.e., a large number of respondents chose a limited number of “left” responses, with fewer individuals giving a higher number of “left” responses. In contrast, the graph on Figure 2 has a bimodal distribution (with two peaks), suggesting a small number of respondents who chose very few “right” responses with larger numbers giving five responses, petering off in the middle range categories and reaching another high point at 12 responses. The pure right group that comprises those individuals who chose the hawkish response to the entire battery of questions is negligible (6 individuals, i.e., 1 percent). The same holds true for the dovish side of the political continuum: one individual (0.2 percent) chose the “left” response to the entire battery.

At the same time, the graphs do imply that the general public supports a right wing ideology. Seventeen percent of the public chose at least 10 dovish responses (two thirds of the battery). The parallel cutoff point on the other side, i.e., two thirds of hawkish responses to the battery, places 34 percent of the public in the right camp. Another way to look at the continuum is to focus on the median respondent (50<sup>th</sup> percentile), who picks 7 hawkish responses and between 4 to 5 dovish responses from the battery of 15 items, i.e., the statistical average individual chooses close to half of the “right” responses and slightly less than one third of the “left” responses. What does this mean? This suggests that the Israeli public is more susceptible to



**Figure 2. Distribution of the public by “right” responses, 2012**

appeals from the right than from the left ideological camps, although a large proportion is clustered around the center.

Previous studies of the National Security and Public Opinion Project presented a profile analysis based on five categories: the extreme left, the moderate left, the center, the moderate right, and the extreme right. The profile construction was based on the same questions noted here, but the methodology of categorization differed somewhat. The groups were formed on the basis of cutoff points that reflected the accumulated responses that determined a respondent’s profile. In other words, the groups were formed on the basis of the determination that respondents choosing the majority or at least no less than half of the responses that were defined as characteristic for each specific group should be assigned to the respective group.

This study applies a slightly different logic of index construction and composes a scale using the cutoff point in a manner described in table 4. The ideological category to which respondents were assigned was determined by the overall number of “right” and “left” responses to the 15-item battery. The cutoff points are somewhat arbitrary, but they were informed by the logic of a classical normal distribution that accounts for most societal phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

1 The Gaussian distribution suggests that the ideological preferences are distributed in a way that 65 percent of the public is located not further than one standard deviation from the center (and 95 percent not further than two standard deviations from the center).

The empirical data in table 4 suggests that the rightward tendency manifested in recent years remains largely unchanged and that Israeli society is not drastically polarized with regard to issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In order to compare the current picture with that of the previous years, we applied the methodology used in the current study to the data in three previous studies. The results are shown in table 5.

**Table 4. Cutoff points for the ideological profile, 2012**

	Percent	Explanation for 2012 cutoff
Extreme right	8.9	13 to 15 hawkish responses out of 15 (more than 86 percent of the answers to the entire set of questions)
Moderate right	25.8	10 to 12 hawkish responses out of 15 (more than 66 percent of the answers to the entire set of questions)
Center	48.8	Middle categories that compose the center (individuals not falling into either of the other four categories)
Moderate left	13.3	10 to 12 dovish responses out of 15 (more than 66 percent of the answers to the entire set of questions)
Extreme left	3.2	13 to 15 dovish responses out of 15 (more than 86 percent of the answers to the entire set of questions)
Total (N)	100	632 respondents

**Table 5. Breakdown of the Israeli Jewish public into right, left, and center, 2006-2012 (percent; new methodology applied)**

	2006	2007	2009	2012
Extreme right	9.9	11.7	15.1	8.9
Moderate right	21.4	28.5	26.3	25.8
Center	50.3	44.7	48.9	48.8
Moderate left	15.6	13.1	8.1	13.3
Extreme left	2.8	2.0	1.6	3.2
Total (N)	724	709	616	632

The correlation between the old and the new scales for 2009 and 2012 reached in both cases is .76 ( $p=.000$ ), which indicates that these indices basically measure the same thing, i.e., one's ideological profile. However, this study prefers the new method of analysis for two reasons. First, it takes into account all 15 opinion items. Thus, the role of the researcher in a decision on which items to include and on where to draw the cutoff points is reduced, and consequently, the subjectivity bias is reduced. Second, the

relationship between the new profile scale and the reported vote of the respondents in the previous Knesset elections is stronger than with the previous scale (in 2009 for the old scale it was .44 ( $p=.000$ ) and for the new scale .53 ( $p=.000$ ); in 2012, it was .43 and .48 ( $p=.000$ ) for the old and the new scales, respectively. The relationship between the future vote item (“how would you vote if the elections were held today”) and the 5-category ideology profile stands at .50 ( $p=.000$ ); when the full 15-item battery is used, the correlation stands at .60 ( $p=.000$ ). Furthermore, the new methodology allows building detailed ideological pictures (figures 1 and 2) that can be compared. In addition, the preferences of the median voter can now be identified with greater precision than allowed by the previous method, thus making this reading of the ideological landscape more accurate.

The findings accumulated in tables 4 and 5 suggest certain trends. The main finding of the previous studies, namely, the strength and stability of the Israeli center, is clearly confirmed in the current study. Half of the Jewish population does not embrace an unequivocal hawkish or dovish point of view regarding the crucial issues pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its solution: the center category comprises between 45 and 50 percent.

Concomitantly, the clear shift to the right manifested from 2006 – the height of the dovish trend (just prior to the Second Lebanon War) – to 2009 has been arrested, and to a certain degree even reversed. Thus, while the right group (extreme and moderate) increased from 31 percent in 2006 to 40-41 percent in 2007 and 2009, in 2012 it comprised 35 percent. In parallel, the left group (extreme and moderate) decreased from 18 percent in 2006 to 15 percent in 2007 to only 10 percent in 2009, but has since risen nearly (though not completely) to the 2006 level, comprising 16 percent in 2012. In 2006, the median respondent picked between 6 to 7 items from the right and between 5 to 6 items from the left; in 2012, the corresponding numbers are 7 on the right and between 4 to 5 on the left.

One should not lend too much weight to the slight shift to the left in 2012. As in previous years, the left remained without support of the general public in 2012 and is basically outside the national consensus. The slight movement from the right to the center and from the center to the left may reflect a reaction to the strongly hawkish policies of the right wing government and the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It may be that the policies of the center-left government of 2006-2009 invigorated the right, while the policies of the right wing Netanyahu government established in 2009 had

the opposite effect. Another possible explanation is that the increase in the left group is a reflection of the social protests of the summer of 2011. In the final analysis, the center and right account for 84 percent of the population – a clear national consensus. At the same time, the center and left can muster close to two thirds of the Israeli public.

The profiles formed on the basis of the 2012 sample were correlated with all demographic variables and voting preferences available in the survey. The results are presented in table 6.

**Table 6. Demographic characteristics, electoral choice, and respondent profile (0-extreme right, 4-extreme left)**

Sample 2012	Coefficients of association*	Asymptotic significance
Gender (female more dovish)	.112	p<.005
Age (older more dovish)	.160	p<.000
Origin (European origin more dovish)	.113	p<.004
Religiosity (non-religious more dovish)	.473	p<.000
Education (years) (more years more dovish)	.094	p<.018
Academic degree (BA holders more dovish)	.129	p<.001
Monthly expenditures (more affluent more dovish)	.134	p<.001
Army service ( these who served more dovish)	.192	p<.000
Reported voting in the 2009 elections (0 – voted for the left wing party to 4 – voted for the right wing party)	-.48	p<.000
Intended voting in the next elections (0 – intend to vote for a left wing party to 4 – intend to vote for a right wing party)	-.60	p<.000
Total respondents	632	

\* More appropriate coefficients (e.g., Phi, Cramer-V, Somers'd, Eta) if used, depending on the variables' characteristics, will return stronger associations. The Pearson correlation coefficient is shown in the table because the characteristics are tested with the OLS regression. All coefficients of association can be interpreted as showing the strongest relationship between a profile variable and each characteristic when the absolute value of a coefficient tends to 1, and no relationship when it approximates 0.

The analysis of the correlation between the various demographic factors and an individual's particular profile suggests that respondents who originate

from Europe and America are the most dovish, while immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) and respondents born in Israel are the most hawkish. The latter two categories are overrepresented in the center of the political continuum, while the rest of the respondents in this group figure almost entirely in the right. Academically educated and wealthier respondents as well as those who served in the army are found among the center and left groups in higher frequencies. Religious identification and one's actual vote in 2009 have the strongest relationship with respondent profiles, far exceeding that of any of the other demographic factors.

With religious identification dramatically correlated with respondent profile, table 7 shows the distribution of the five profile categories for each of the four religiosity groups. The ultra-Orthodox and religious sectors emerged as much more right wing and hawkish than the rest of the population, and this correlation is statistically significant at the .0001 level (i.e., there is only one chance in 10,000 that this correlation between religious identification and opinion profile is not found in the Jewish population as a whole). Nevertheless, there is quite a difference between the two groups. Less than one fifth of the ultra-Orthodox are situated in the center. The ultra-Orthodox community is by far the most right wing sector of Israeli society and remained so in 2012. On the other hand, in line with the overall sample, i.e., Israeli society as a whole, the religious Jews are represented in significant numbers at the center (more than double that of the ultra-Orthodox).

The data in table 7 illustrates the schism in Israeli society between the ultra-Orthodox and religious segments of the population and the non-religious or secular segment. The left does not exist at all among the former: the ultra-Orthodox are almost exclusively in the right (80 percent in 2012); among the religious, a clear majority has a right profile, although a very significant minority (one third in 2009 and 40 percent in 2012) are in the center, albeit with a tendency to the right. Over half of the secular Jews are in the center, with the remainder almost evenly divided between the right and left in 2009, while in 2012, the left outnumbers the right by 7 percent.

The results of the regression analysis (OLS model) suggest that only three socio-demographic traits are important for explaining the ideological stance on territories and relations with the Palestinians: religiosity, years of education, and age (table 8). The combination of these traits explains about a quarter of the variance in ideological stance ( $R^2=.26$ ).

**Table 7. Distribution of profile categories for each religiosity group in 2009 and 2012\* (percent in a group; new methodology applied)**

	Ultra-Orthodox	Religious	Traditional	Non-religious
Extreme left 2009	0	0	0.5	3.2
Extreme left 2012	3.5	0	0	6.2
Moderate left 2009	1.4	1.4	5.1	13.6
Moderate left 2012	0	1.2	10.0	21.7
Center 2009	9.9	33.3	53.1	59.6
Center 2012	17.5	40.2	56.2	52.8
Moderate right 2009	31.0	39.1	30.6	18.9
Moderate right 2012	47.4	37.8	26.9	17.2
Extreme right 2009	57.7	26.1	10.7	4.7
Extreme right 2012	31.6	20.7	7.0	2.1
Total 2009, percent (Number of respondents)	100 (71)	100 (69)	100 (196)	100 (280)
Total 2012, percent (Number of respondents)	100 (57)	100 (82)	100 (201)	100 (290)

\* All the groups were formed on the basis of respondents' self-definition.

**Table 8. Regression model (Ordinary Least Squares) for the ideological profile**

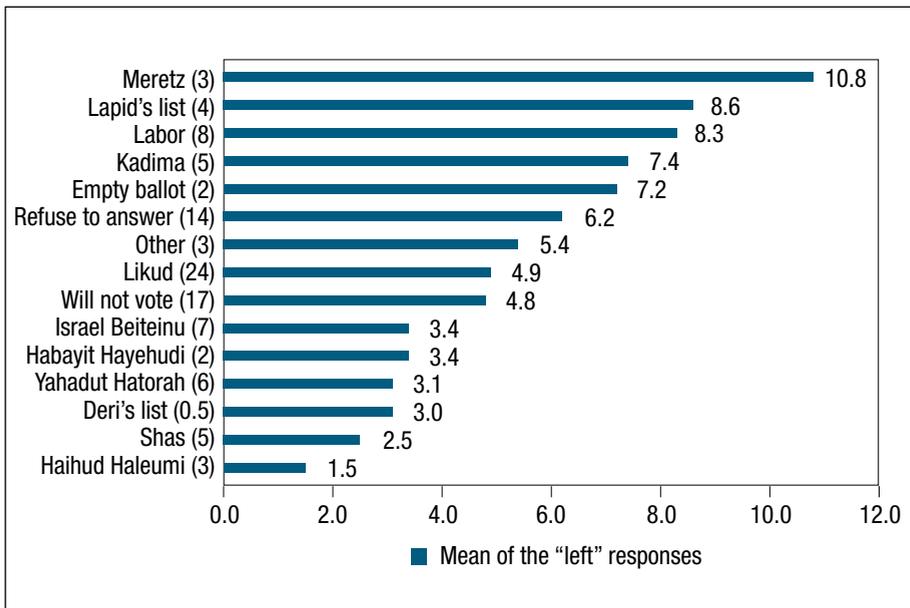
Sample 2012, Dependent variable ideological profile (0-right, 4-left)	B(SE)	Asymptotic significance
Gender	n.s.	
Age	.391(.085)	p<.000
Origin	n.s.	
Religiosity (0-ultra-Orthodox; 4-non-religious/ secular)	1.266 (.108)	p<.000
Education (years)	.128 (.038)	p<.001
Academic degree	n.s.	
Monthly expenditures	n.s.	
Army service	n.s.	
Constant (intercept)	-1.340 (.841)	p<.000
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.26	
Total respondents	632	

B – unstandardized coefficient SE-standard errors. n.s. – insignificant relationship

The constant represents the Y-intercept, the height of the regression line (expected mean of a response variable) when it crosses the Y axis. In our case, it is the predicted mean value of the ideological scale for each respondent in the sample, based solely on the profile distribution, i.e., when all other information about the respondent is unknown (that is, independent predictors are not included in the equation). The intercept value of -1.34 suggests that an average respondent in 2012 is inclined toward a right political ideology and starts leaning toward the left the more he or she is older, more educated, and less religious.

The unstandardized coefficients (B) reflect the expected change in the dependent variable (ideological profile) for every 1 unit change in the associated explanatory variable, holding all other variables constant (e.g., a .128 increase in dovish ideological orientation is expected for each additional year of education, holding all other explanatory variables constant, or 1.266 increase in dovish orientations when the respondent moves from the category of traditional religious to traditional non-religious).

Ideological profile is related to electoral choices, and the relationship between the two is moderated by one's religious preferences. Figure 3



**Figure 3. Mean "left" responses by intended vote ("if elections were held today"; numbers in parentheses are percent of those intending to support the party)**

**Table 9. Regression model of electoral preferences in 2012 (OLS model)**

Sample 2012, dependent variable electoral choice (min-left, max-right)	B(SE)	Asymptotic significance
Gender (male-1 choose right; 0-female)	.239(.093)	p<.011
Age (older choose left)	-.058(.025)	p<.020
Origin	n.s.	
Religiosity (religious choose right)	-.274(.038)	p<.000
Education (years)	n.s.	
Academic degree	n.s.	
Monthly expenditures	n.s.	
Army service (those who didn't serve choose right)	-.343(.104)	p<.000
Ideological profile ("hawks" choose right)	-0.109(.014)	p<.000
Constant (intercept)	4.520(.147)	p<.000
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.48	
Total respondents	632	

B – unstandardized coefficient SE-standard errors. n.s. – insignificant relationship

provides an illustrative picture of the relationship between one's profile and one's hypothetical vote, based on the potential parties at the time the survey was conducted (varying slightly from the actual list in the 2013 elections). It shows the average number of dovish responses chosen by the respondents who also indicated their electoral preference in a way reflected by the graph.

To estimate the effect of socio-demographic traits and the ideological profile on the voting preferences in the next Knesset another model was analyzed, when the dependent variable was composed on the basis of respondents' hypothetical electoral choices: 0-Meretz; 1-Labor, Lapid's list; 2-Kadima, 4-Likud, Israel Beiteinu, "Other party," 5-Deri's list, Yahadut Hatorah, Habayit Hayehudi (formerly the National Religious Party), Shas, Haihud Haleumi). The results are presented in table 9. The most important conclusion to be drawn from the analysis is that in Israel electoral preferences are chiefly conditioned by one's belonging to a particular religious segment of the society.

The model predicts electoral choice of the respondents by means of ideological profile and socio-demographic traits and accounts for almost half of the variance in the dependent variable ( $R^2$  adjusted = .48). Religiosity alone accounts for about 36 percent of the variance, while another 10 percent

is explained by the ideology profile, and relevant socio-demographic characteristics account for the remaining 2 percent of the variance in the dependent variable (electoral choice).

The next chapter provides a more detailed account of characteristics, primarily demographic variables that influence perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of the Israeli public on national security issues.



## Chapter 3

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### ***Key Factors in the Formation of Israeli Public Opinion***

Army service, education, religiosity, income, ethnic origin, and gender are factors related to the range in attitudes among the Jewish population. Along with a handful of situational factors (such as media campaigns, political marketing, or security events) socio-demographic characteristics lie behind individual differences and determine specific opinions and attitudes. At the same time, to a large degree specific opinions and attitudes reflect the underlying value system of the individual. This chapter examines two sets of critical factors that along with events on the ground have an impact on the formation of public opinion in Israel: the value system and demographic characteristics.

#### **The Value System**

Political values are criteria people use to select and justify actions, and to evaluate both the behavior of other people and the importance of political and security events in one's lifetime. Students of political psychology consider values to be the enduring beliefs that certain behaviors and modes of living are personally and socially preferred. In contrast to specific political opinions, values are relatively few and more central to one's world view. Thus, political values provide the basis for formation of political orientations and evaluation of informational tokens, and drive individuals' behavior. The professional literature suggests that individual value system ordering is affected and transformed by changing circumstances and dramatic formative

events,<sup>2</sup> and that an individual can have multiple value systems associated with different issues.<sup>3</sup>

Competing values underlie most policy controversies, and therefore a person who values democracy (equal rights for all), peace, and the maintenance of a Jewish majority in Israel equally will have a hard time forming a coherent and consistent position on issues such as voluntary emigration of Arabs from Israel: on the one hand, the principle of the equality of rights implies a negative attitude toward this policy, while on the other hand, the Jewish majority principle makes this policy highly desirable. Values change over time, while fluctuations in value hierarchies are conditioned by the impact of political or security events and long term shifts in the structure of the society (e.g., increasing proportion of the religious population). Fluctuations in value hierarchy among the Jewish public can be indicative of two phenomena. They may be a reaction to contextual changes, such as social protests, an election campaign, or military operations in the Gaza Strip and in Lebanon. Conversely, they may reflect deep structural changes in values of the Israeli public, such as when democratic values that secure equal political rights for all become less popular and nationalistic values gain support.

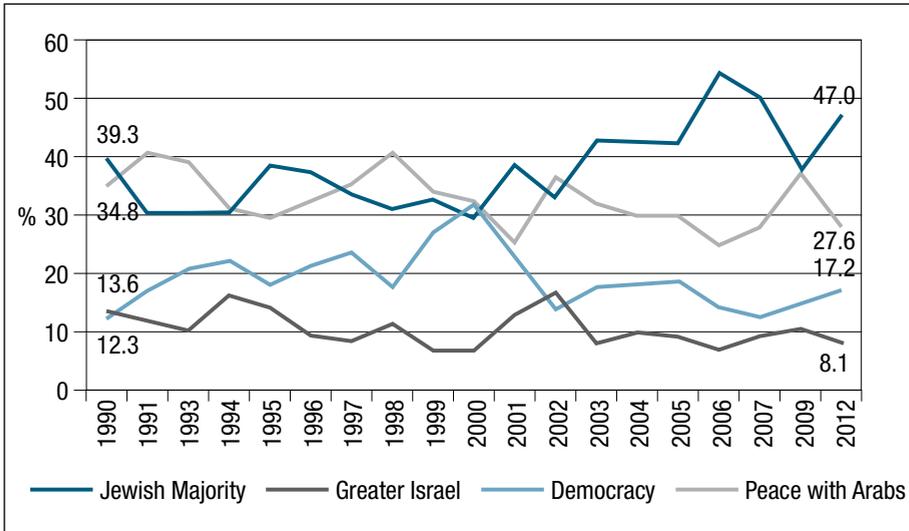
For more than two decades, starting in 1990, four political values have been charted by this public opinion project: “a country with a Jewish majority”; “Greater Israel”; “democracy” (equal political rights for all); and “a state of peace.” These values correspond to ideals that may conflict with one another (e.g., Greater Israel and a state of peace) but can be equally important to the Jewish citizens of Israel. Respondents were asked to rank the four values in their order of importance. Regarding the four values, figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents who chose a specific value as “the most important value” in each time point over a twenty year period.

The overall dynamic of the findings suggests that certain values remain relatively stable over time, while others experience greater fluctuations. For example, support for Greater Israel fluctuated in a 10 percent range in these two decades – reaching a high point of 18 percent at the height of the second

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2 M. Shamir and J. Shamir, *The Anatomy of Public Opinion* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2000).

3 C. Seligman and A. Katz, “The Dynamics of Value Systems,” in *The Psychology of Values: Ontario Symposium*, Volume 8, eds. C. Seligman, J. M. Olson, and M. P. Zanna (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1996), pp. 53-75.



**Figure 4. Support for political values, 1990-2012 (most important value, percent)**

intifada and dropping to 8 percent in the current study; a Jewish majority became more important for the general public over time and over the last decade has become the dominant value. An opposite trend is recorded for the value of democracy, which was on the rise in 1990-2000 but has declined since then. The popularity of the “peace” value has fluctuated over the years (28 percent in the current study).

To examine further the evolution among support for political values, the first and second choices of the respondents were merged to create three groups: (1) respondents who chose both a Jewish majority and Greater Israel as their first or second most important value; (2) respondents who chose democracy (equal political rights for all) and the state of peace as their first or second most important value; and (3) respondents who had a different combination of these values, i.e., mixed value types. The respondents from the first group can be tentatively presented as adherents of a political regime based on the principle of ethnocentrism, while the second group comprises respondents whose political worldview leans toward egalitarian democratic governance. Figure 5 demonstrates that the proportion of those regarding democracy and peace as their guiding political values has decreased over the last decade, and despite the rise in the current study (from 17 percent in 2009 to 26 percent in 2012), the overall linear trend remains negative. The

dotted black line that crosses the lighter blue line indicates that based on the available information, which reflects the dynamic of change over time, the predicted number of respondents who value peace and democracy is likely to decline in the future; since 2002 the percent of respondents who chose this combination has been lower than the 22 year average of 30.7 percent.

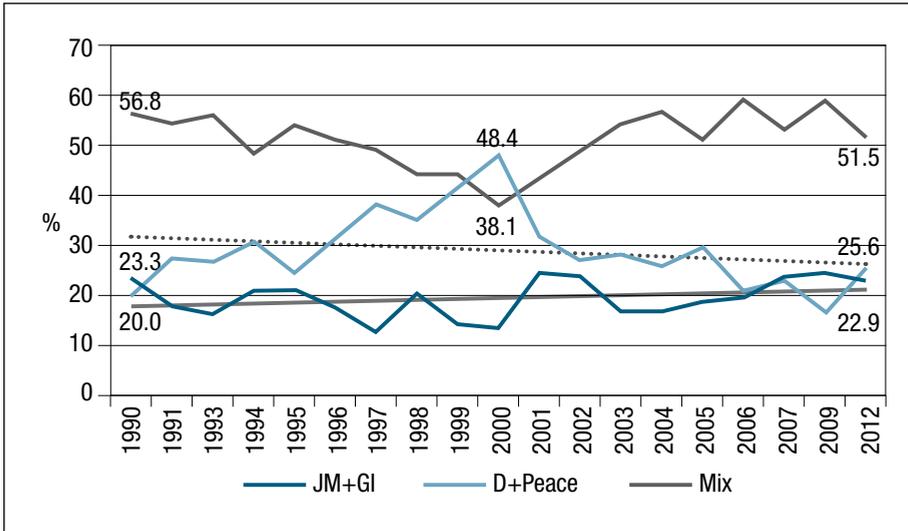


Figure 5. "Democrats" and "ethnocentrists," 1990-2012

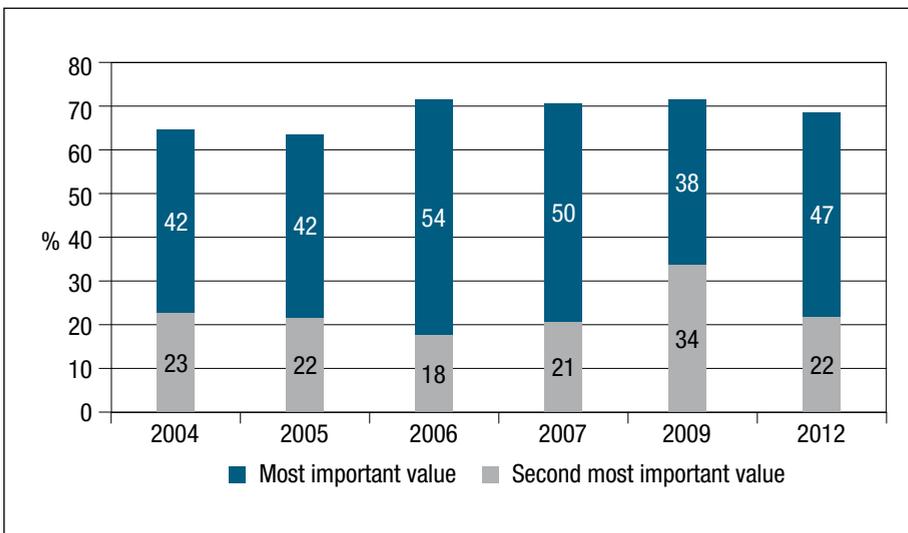


Figure 6. Percentage prioritizing Jewish majority value, 2004-2012

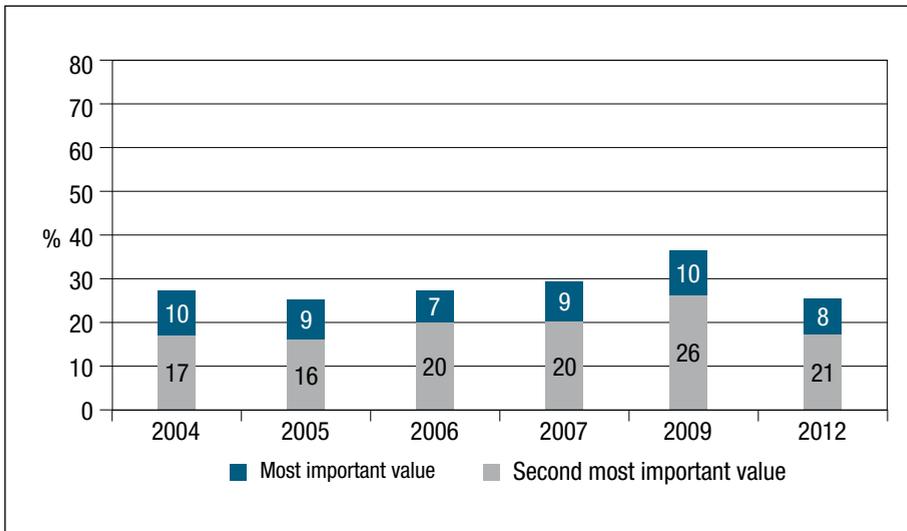
The number of respondents holding ethnocentric political values did not change much over time (in 1990, 23 percent of the public were in this group, the same number as in 2012). However, the linear trend has risen over the twenty year period (indicated by a solid black line that crosses the darker blue line), specifically since 2000. Two conclusions can be drawn from the graph. First, the number of respondents with ethnocentric views is slowly growing, and these respondents are less susceptible to situational changes (the fluctuations are minor). Second, the support for “democracy” is more fluid, as it responds to external security and political events by losing or acquiring adherents from the mixed group.

Figure 6 demonstrates that in recent years a Jewish majority was supported by two thirds or more of the public as the “most important” or the “second most important” value. The percentage of respondents choosing a Jewish majority as the “most important” or “second most important value” was 65 percent in 2004, rising to 70 percent in 2006 and remaining at that level through 2012. The support for the Jewish majority is undoubtedly a most important value for most of the segments of the public. In 2012 it was the most important value for 58 percent of the ultra-Orthodox, 60 percent of the religious, 63 percent of traditional religious, 50 percent of traditional non-religious, and 36 percent of the non-religious. Similarly, a Jewish majority is the first or the second most important value for 84 percent of the ultra-Orthodox sector, 85 percent of the religious population, 84 percent of traditional religious Jews, 74 percent of traditional non-religious, and 53 percent of the non-religious public.

As in previous years, in 2012 only about 10 percent of the population chose Greater Israel as the most important value, and for 29 percent of the Jewish population it was the most or the second most important value (figure 7).

For 34 percent of non-religious Jewish Israelis, the state of peace was the most important value, and for another 25 percent the leading value was democracy with equal political rights for all. Democracy constituted the most important value for 11 percent of the religious public, 7 percent of the traditional religious public, and 16 percent of traditional non-religious; it was not specified as the most important value by any ultra-Orthodox respondent (0 percent).

There were significant gender differences in value preferences, and thus 43 percent of women (compared to 52 percent of men) chose a Jewish



**Figure 7. Percentage prioritizing Greater Israel value, 2004-2012**

majority as their most important value. Greater Israel was the most important value for 12 percent of women compared to 5 percent of men. Democracy was prioritized by 19 percent of men and 16 percent of women, while peace was chosen by 25 percent of men and 30 percent of women. Those who served in the army valued a Jewish majority less, compared to those who did not serve (45 and 50 percent, respectively). Twelve percent of those who did not serve prioritized Greater Israel, compared to 7 percent of those who served. The opposite is true for the support for democracy (11 percent of those who did not serve marked it as the most important value, compared to 20 percent of those who served). About 3 percent of respondents of European or North American origin supported Greater Israel, compared to 11 percent of the rest of the public. Those of European origin were also slightly more supportive of democracy and peace (19 percent for democracy, 30 percent for peace) compared to the rest of the respondents in the sample (16 percent for democracy and 27 percent for peace).

Contrary to the conventional theory of socialization, age has had no significant influence on the value hierarchy of Israel's Jewish public (i.e., younger people do not seem more democratic or older people more conservative as is usually the case in Western democratic states). Higher education played a weak role in Jewish respondents' values hierarchy. Individuals with academic degrees were equally supportive of the Jewish

majority value (46 percent) as people without a higher education (48 percent). Peace was prioritized by 26 percent of academically educated Jews and by 28 percent of those without an academic degree. In 2009, there was a 20 percent difference, where respondents without degrees were more supportive of peace (43 percent). That was attributed to the contextual influences, as the majority of the non-academically educated public is concentrated in the periphery that was badly affected during the military operations in Gaza and the Second Lebanon War. Since this trend reverted in 2012, the gap recorded three years earlier is to be seen as a situational (or seasonal) fluctuation caused by the proximity of security events whose influence ebbed relatively quickly. Democracy is the only value priority that was supported by the academically educated slightly more (21 percent) compared to the rest of the public (16 percent).

### **Demography and Religious Identification**

Demographic characteristics are relatively stable personal factors that may have an effect on public opinion. Data was collected for all respondents as to the following demographic characteristics: gender, age, country of origin, religious identification, education (measured by academic degree and years of education), economic status (measured by monthly expenditures compared with the national average), and military service (whether or not one served in the IDF). Country of origin was classified in two ways: as accepted by the Central Bureau of Statistics, and separately as a dichotomous variable that allowed comparing the respondents of European origin with the rest of the Israeli Jewish public.

The ties between demographic traits and each of the 110 opinion questions in the 2012 survey were examined. Table 10 presents the number of significant relationships found for each demographic indicator (“total” column); and the strength or predictive value of the significant relationships reported between the demographic characteristics and all opinion questions that were offered to the respondents in 2012. A statistically significant result (charted in “total” column) means that (95 times out of 100) there is, for the entire population, a degree of relationship between the specific indicator and responses on the specific question. The strength of the relationships, i.e., the actual correlation coefficient, is reported separately in columns 1 to 4.

**Table 10. Number and strength of statistically significant relationships between demographic characteristics and 110 political opinion questions (at the .05 level)**

2012	< .19  (1)	< .29  (2)	< .39  (3)	< .49  (4)	Total
Gender	39	2			41
Age	43	3			46
Origin CBS	16				16
Origin European (dichotomy)	52				52
Religiosity	33	24	23	3	83
Education (years)	35				35
Academic degree	34				34
Monthly expenditures	20				20
Army service	43	2			45

Examination of the correlation coefficients for each demographic characteristic highlights the overwhelming influence of religious identification versus the relatively limited effect of all the other demographic factors. A correlation coefficient of less than .19 means that ignoring all the intervening influences, i.e., in a best case scenario, less than 4 percent of the variance in the responses to any given question can be explained by that demographic variable. A correlation coefficient of less than .29 signifies that less than 10 percent of the variance can be explained by the demographic variable. Not only is religious identification the only variable that correlates with approximately 80 percent of items in 2012, but the strength of the relationship between religiosity and one's political attitudes is of a different magnitude than that for all the other demographic characteristics. Only religion can account for more than 10 percent of the variance in the political opinions of the respondents. This point is illustrated with a number of examples from the 2012 study.

The respondents were asked to express their opinion on the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Five percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 14 percent of the religious respondents believe that there is some possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, compared to 20 percent of the traditional religious, 25 percent of the traditional non-religious, and 42 percent of the non-religious respondents.

Regarding a preference for an agreement involving major territorial concessions, a partial agreement with fewer territorial concessions, unilateral disengagement with less territorial concession, or neither, 67 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 65 percent of the religious chose “neither,” compared to 43 percent of the traditional religious, 33 percent of traditional non-religious, and 28 percent of the non-religious publics. Thirty-four percent of non-religious respondents were in favor of major territorial concessions, but this solution was much less popular among the other groups (6 percent of ultra-Orthodox and religious, 19 percent of traditional religious, and 16 percent of traditional non-religious respondents supported this option). This is in effect a mirror image of two very different sub-populations.

On the question introduced in this study about a referendum (“If the government of Israel holds a referendum on the question of signing a permanent agreement with the Palestinians based on the principle of two states for two peoples, will you vote in favor or against this initiative?”), 11 percent of the ultra-Orthodox and 28 percent of the religious expressed support for the plan, compared to 65 percent of the non-religious, and around half of the traditionalists. Fifty-six percent of the ultra-Orthodox opposed the idea (compared to 15 percent of non-religious, 26 percent of traditional non-religious, 35 percent of traditional religious, and 45 percent of religious respondents).

The differences in attitudes toward resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict recur in attitudes toward Arab citizens of Israel. One question asked was, “What policy do you think Israel should advance in relation to Arabs citizens of Israel: should it act to match their standards of living with those of the rest of the citizens, or should it emphasize punitive means to punish behavior that deviates from the norms accepted for the citizens of Israel?” Seventy-eight percent of ultra-Orthodox and about half of religious (50 percent) and traditionalist (48-52 percent) respondents were in favor of punitive measures, compared to 27 percent of non-religious respondents.

The question whether Israel should agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state offers another illustration of the divide between the ultra-Orthodox and religious sectors and the non-religious sector. Nineteen percent of ultra-Orthodox and 37 percent of religious respondents supported the idea, compared to 75 percent of the non-religious, 61 percent of the traditional non-religious, and 43 percent of the traditional religious sectors.

Demographic traits shape public opinion on national security issues in Israel to a certain degree, but are less important than might be expected on the basis of studies from other Western democracies and when compared to other Western democracies. With the exception of the overwhelming influence of religious identification, which divides the nation into quite distinct groups, most demographic variables exert very little influence on political attitudes. Previous NSPOP studies have already noted the declining importance of country of origin as a predictor of political attitudes. Origin used to be the fault line of Israeli society, when Jews of Afro-Asian origin were considered to be systematically more hawkish than those of European and Anglo-Saxon origin. The data of the current study indicates that country of origin was related to less than half of the questions (47 percent of the questions), while religiosity was related to close to 80 percent of questions. Moreover, for no item (out of 110 political opinion items) was the magnitude of the relationship with country of origin stronger than a correlation of 0.19, i.e., this characteristic did not account for more than 4 percent of the variance.

Overall, religiosity remains the most powerful element that defines the political climate in Israel. In this sense Israel is different from other Western democracies where income, education, and age are traditional predictors of political mood.

## Chapter 4

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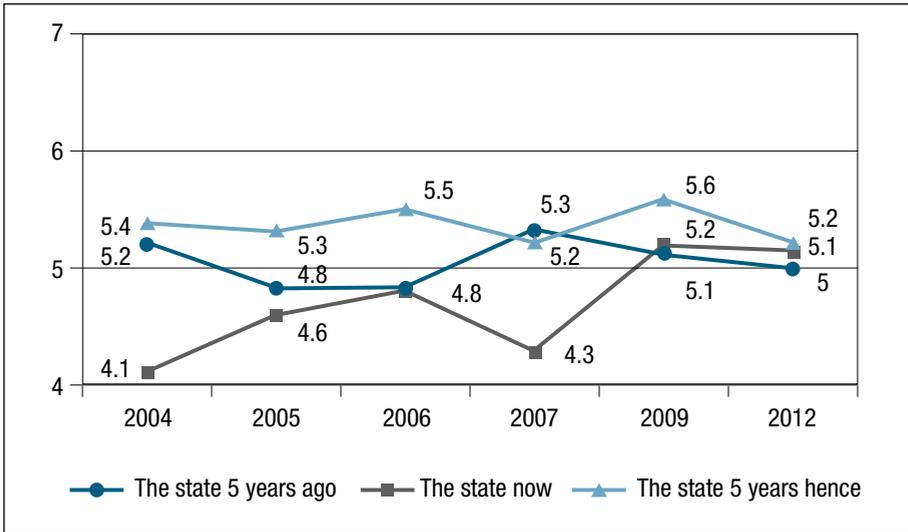
### ***The National Mood and Threat Perceptions***

#### **The Mood**

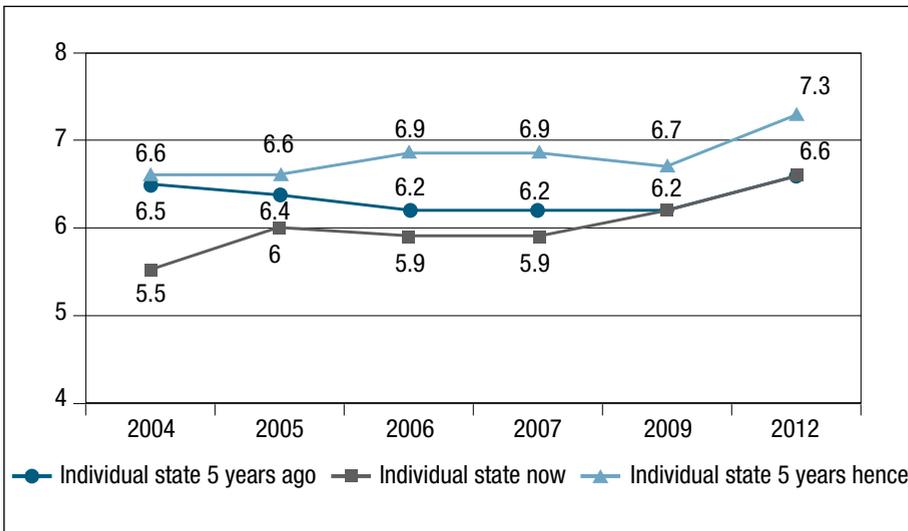
Perceptions of the general public influence people's individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about issues related to national security. These perceptions comprise subjective feelings about the level of individual and societal threat. The national mood is defined as a prevailing psychological state of the citizens in a country vis-à-vis political social, economic, cultural, and other national issues. The atmosphere in the country conditioned on the threat perceptions and on socio-demographic and economic factors shapes at least in part conventional political behavior, electoral choices, and the reaction of the public on policy initiatives launched by the government. Societal mood has a distinct nature compared to the individual psychological state of mind, but both share the property of fluidity, i.e., they are susceptible to external influences.

Figure 8 shows the average score (here and throughout this section, items are measured on a 1-9 point scale) for respondents' perception of "the state of the country from the national security perspective" at three different points in time. Figure 9 shows the average score for the personal state of the respondents for the same time periods. The data in figures 8 and 9 demonstrates that the Israeli Jewish public is optimistic when it envisions the future on an individual level. Based on the data, it appears that over the years the public in Israel has maintained an optimistic outlook for one's future personal situation (scores are always above the mid-point of 5.00). On the other hand, the public is less optimistic when the subject is the future of the country as a whole. The distance between the lines charting "the state today" and "the state five years hence" may constitute a measure

of optimism. The data indicates that there is a feeling that the situation will remain unchanged for the country in the next five years (the differences in the means for “the state now” and “the state 5 years hence” is insignificant) In contrast, in 2012 the average respondent believed that his or her individual situation will improve significantly in the next five years.



**Figure 8. Assessment of the state of the country from the national security perspective, 2004-2012 (mean score on a 1-9 scale)**



**Figure 9. Assessment of the individual's personal state, 2004-2012 (mean score on a 1-9 scale)**

On the individual level, one's mood is a function of a feeling of personal security and safety in everyday life as well as one's economic situation and standard of living. As in previous years, the assessment of one's individual situation – in the present, past, and future – is on the average 1.5 points higher than the assessment related to the national security of the country. The difference between the two levels of optimism reflects a tendency to view the state of the country more negatively than would seem justified based on respondents' accounts of their personal situation. There is consistent improvement over the years in the subjective assessment of the current individual situation of Israelis, reaching a high point, for the eight year period, of 6.6 in 2012. The same holds true for the assessment of the personal future – Israelis were more optimistic in 2012 than at other times in the past eight years, reaching an unprecedented high point of 7.3.

### **Threat and Security Perceptions**

The threat perceptions of the Israeli public are traditionally surveyed with two sets of questions. The first set consists of twelve scenarios that might be considered dangerous in the public eye (table 11). The respondent was asked to rate each situation as to “the degree to which it posed a threat” (on a 1-7 scale). The second set probes respondents' confidence in the ability of the state to cope with another set of hazards (table 12). The respondents were asked “whether the State of Israel could or could not cope successfully with each of them.”

Table 11 shows that the level of the different threats as perceived by the public has remained relatively unchanged over the years. The rank order of the threats was almost identical for all six years. A return of territories for peace, the establishment of a Palestinian state, and war with Syria were viewed as least threatening. Nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in the hands of an enemy state were viewed as the most serious threats. Internal issues – social and economic crises, the undermining of Israel's democratic character, and corruption in the public system, as well as rockets aimed at Israel – scored as medium threat levels.

In order to assess the average level of threat, all threat perceptions for 2012 were totaled in an index that ranges from 12 – not threatened at all by any of the scenarios, to 84 – threatened to the highest degree by each and every scenario (to simplify the presentation, 12 points were subtracted from each individual's score). Figure 10 shows the results. The black vertical

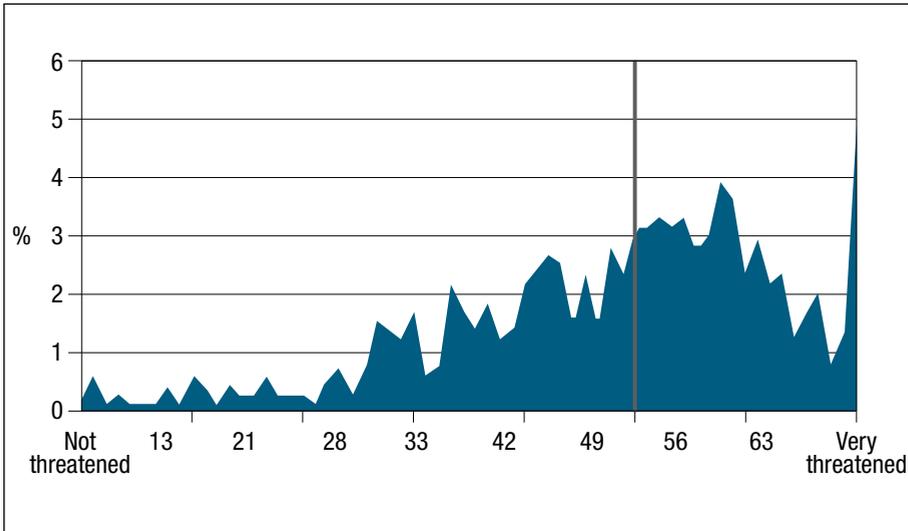
**Table 11. Threat perception for a variety of situations, 2004-2012 (mean score on a 1-7 point scale, 1-least threatening)**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2012
Return of territories for peace	4.1	3.6	3.7	4.2	4.4	4.2
Hamas control of the PA	-	-	5.1	4.0	-	-
Chemical and biological weapons in the hands of an enemy state	5.9	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.9	5.9
Non-democratic regime in Israel	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.6
Unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians	3.6	3.7	4.0	4.5	-	-
Nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran	6.1	6.0	5.8	6.2	6.2	6.1
Establishment of a Palestinian state	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.4
Renewal of terrorism on a large scale	5.1	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.5
War with Syria	4.5	4.5	4.5	5.3	5.2	5.0
A deep social and economic crisis in Israel	-	5.6	5.5	5.6	5.6	5.5
Corruption in the public system	-	-	-	5.7	5.4	5.5
Rockets fired on Israel						5.6
Breach of peace agreements with Jordan and Egypt						5.3
Hamas control of Judea and Samaria						5.4
Average Threat Score	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.4	5.3

line shows a median respondent whose threat score is 52 out of 72, which means, in effect, that on the whole, the average Israeli feels more threatened than less threatened.

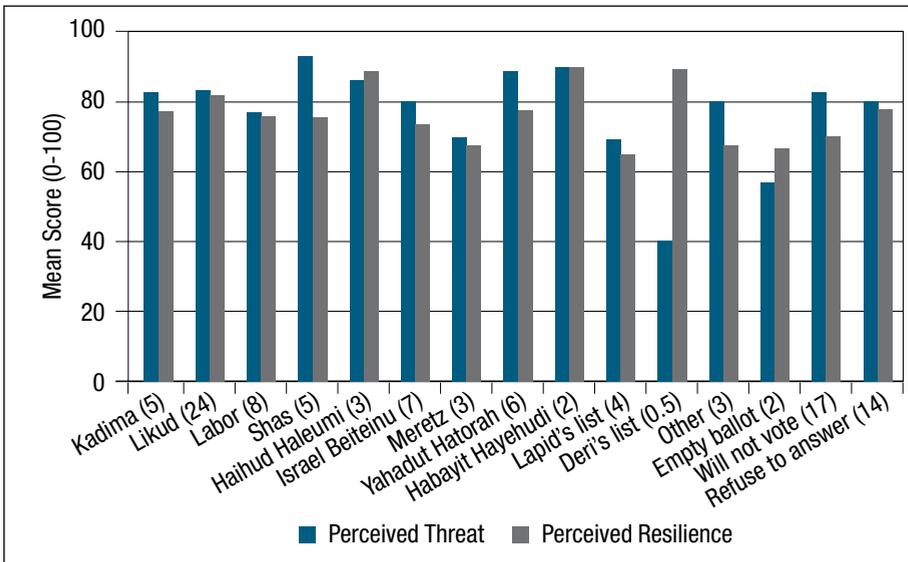
Table 12 illustrates the level of confidence that Israelis have in the country and its leadership. As in previous years, most Israelis feel fairly confident in the ability of the state to cope with external and internal hazards. The median respondent feels that Israel can cope with 7 to 8 threats out of 10 that were raised in the survey.

In order to compare the perceptions of threat and confidence by a respondent's intended vote, we created two indices based on the two sets



**Figure 10. Index of threat perceptions of the general public, 2012**

of questions. The indices have a distribution from 0 to 100, when 0 means no threat and total inability to cope with the threat, while 100 means highest threat and maximum ability to cope. The results, presented in figure 11, suggest two conclusions. First, respondents who intended to support parties with a right wing agenda had higher levels of perceived threat and were



**Figure 11. Indices of threat perceptions and level of resilience by intended vote, 2012**

**Table 12. Ability of Israel to cope successfully with a variety of threats, 2004-2012 (percent answering in affirmative)**

Items	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2012
All-out war with all the Arab countries	67	72	76	64	75	69
War launched by Syria against Israel	96	96	96	90	97	94
Potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with chemical and biological weapons	70	78	79	74	76	75
Potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with nuclear weapons	52	65	66	55	67	63
Continuous and significant terrorist activity	84	87	88	86	89	86
A revolt by Israeli Arabs	52	88	89	90	91	88
Internal dissent with regard to the territories and peace	85	86	91	89	91	84
A threat of surface-to-surface missile attacks on Israel	86	92	93	90	92	87
Social and religious cleavages	72	78	83	86	89	79
US will reduce its support for Israel	53	38	62	62	78	62

slightly more confident in the ability of the state to cope with these threats. Second, in the majority of instances (except for the supporters of Aryeh Deri's list, who amounted to a negligible number) the level of perceived threats was proportional to the perceived ability of the country to cope with them. In other words, supporters of Habayit Hayehudi and Haihud Haleumi perceived that the level of threats is high, but at the same time, their confidence in the ability of Israel to cope with these threats was also high. In a similar vein, supporters of Meretz and Lapid's list appeared less concerned, but their level of confidence was also lower.

Table 13 presents the results of the OLS regression when the dependent variables (1-index of threat and 2-index of resilience) are regressed on the major socio-demographic characteristics. In both cases the models predict

**Table 13. Regression model (OLS) of perceived threat and resilience by socio-demographic characteristics, 2012 sample**

Dependent variables, perceived threat and resilience (0-min, 100-max)	Threat B(SE)	Sig.	Resilience B(SE)	Sig.
Gender (men less threatened, and more confident; men-1, women-0)	-4.24(1.41)	p<.005	7.34(2.04)	p<.000
Age	n.s.		1.757(.540)	p<.002
Origin (European origin less threatened; 1-European, 0-other)	-3.476(1.560)	p<.026	n.s.	
Religiosity (0-ultra-Orthodox; 4- non-religious/ secular)	n.s.		-2.35(.884)	p<.008
Education (years)	n.s.		n.s.	
Academic degree	n.s.		n.s.	
Monthly expenditures	n.s.		n.s.	
Army service	n.s.		n.s.	
North (1-live in the north; 0-elsewhere)	n.s.		-10.655(2.77)	p<.000
Ideological profile (left-max)	-1.083(.226)	p<.000	-.727(.309)	p<.019
Constant (intercept)	90.8 (4.69)	p<.000	82.9(6.44)	
R <sup>2</sup> (adjusted)	.10		.09	
Total respondents	632			

B – unstandardized coefficient SE-standard errors. n.s.- insignificant relationship

about 10 percent of variance in the phenomena. However, the relative importance of the predictors differs.

The constants (90.8 and 82.9) represent expected means of threat and response capability as predicted based on the distribution of indices when no information about an average respondent is available. The predicted mean values of threat and resilience suggest that an average respondent is concerned with security hazards, but is also confident in the ability of the state to neutralize them. The unstandardized coefficients (B) reflect the expected change in the dependent variables (threat and resilience) for every 1 unit change in the associated explanatory variable, holding all other variables constant. For example, an average woman is 4 points more threatened (scale of 0-100) than an average man (when all other factors are

the same); in a similar manner, an average man is 7 points more confident in the country's ability to cope with hazards compared to a woman with the same characteristics. Religiosity is not related to the level of perceived threat, although it does have an effect on the feeling of confidence (more religious groups have stronger confidence, when the confidence rises by 2 points when moving between the groups, i.e., traditional religious are on average 2 points more confident than traditional non-religious). Respondents living in the north are on average ten points less confident in the ability of Israel to cope with the threats compared to identical groups of people living elsewhere in the country. However, northerners do not report higher levels of perceived threat (the predictor is insignificant).

Overall, the Israeli public expresses a level of concern that is balanced by the public's confidence in Israel's ability to cope with these hazards. The trends recorded in 2012 suggest an improvement in the sense of perceived personal situation and a slight decrease (from 5.6 to 5.1) in the level of confidence about the future of the country as a whole.

The following chapter examines public perceptions related to a specific threat that has come to dominate the public discourse in Israel, namely, the threat of a military nuclear Iran.

## Chapter 5

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### ***The Iranian Nuclear Threat***

The Iranian nuclear issue has assumed center stage in Israeli national security discourse. To be sure, the efforts by Iran to achieve a military nuclear capability are not new and have been a subject of deep concern in Israel for many years. Already in the 2009 study, a number of questions dealing specifically with various aspects of this issue were introduced, in addition to a general question regarding the threat of nuclear weapons in the possession of an enemy state (in 2007 and 2009, the term “enemy state” was replaced with “Iran”) and the questions dealing with chemical and biological weapons in both sets of items measuring threat perception (tables 11 and 12). However, in 2011, a vibrant public debate arose regarding the possibility of an independent Israeli military strike against Iran’s nuclear installations. In essence, the debate pitted the Prime Minister and Defense Minister, both of whom emphasized the severity of the threat and the importance of a viable military option, against former very senior officials of the defense establishment and other voices who warned against unilateral military action by Israel. This debate heightened the urgency of the issue and had the potential to influence public opinion significantly. In order to assess the effects on public opinion, a number of questions from the 2009 study were reworded and two new items were introduced. Significant shifts in public opinion on certain aspects of the issue were indeed found.

#### **Evaluation of the Threat and Possible Responses**

Nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran are consistently viewed by the Israeli Jewish public as the most serious threat facing the country, although a strong majority of Israelis are increasingly confident that Israel can cope with this threat. The data presented in table 11 shows that over the years, the only

threat that received an average score of 6 or above (on an ascending 1-7 scale evaluating the severity of the threat) was nuclear weapons in enemy (from 2007: Iranian) hands.

In the current study, 66 percent of the respondents ranked the nuclear threat level as 7, i.e., the highest level possible. The threat of chemical or biological weapons in enemy hands (the next most severe threat) was given a rank of 7 by 57 percent of the respondents. At the same time, Israelis have become more and more confident of their ability to cope with the potential nuclear threat. Table 14 presents, for a twelve year period, the percentage of respondents believing that Israel can cope successfully with five strategic threats.

**Table 14. Ability of Israel to cope successfully with a variety of threats, 2000-2012 (percent answering in affirmative)**

Items	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2012
1. All-out war with all the Arab countries	48	58	67	72	76	64	75	69
2. Potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with chemical and biological weapons	53	68	70	78	79	74	76	75
3. Potential for an enemy state to attack Israel with nuclear weapons	48	51	52	65	66	55	67	63
<b>Δ rows 2 and 3</b>	<b>[5]</b>	<b>[17]</b>	<b>[18]</b>	<b>[13]</b>	<b>[13]</b>	<b>[19]</b>	<b>[9]</b>	<b>[12]</b>
4. A threat of surface to surface missile attacks on Israel	80	85	86	92	93	90	92	87
5. US will reduce its support for Israel	61	51	53	38	62	62	78	62

With the exception of 2007, the trend is clear. During the first part of the decade, barely half of the respondents believed that Israel could cope successfully with this threat; in the latter part, the percentage rose to two thirds (the discrepancy in 2007 probably reflects the general despondency characteristic of Israeli public opinion in the months following the Second Lebanon War), with a slight drop in 2012. In 2012, the gap between the perception of Israel's ability to cope with nuclear weapons versus chemical and biological weapons remained relatively narrow at 12 percentage points, up 3 points from 2009 but still lower than for most of the decade. The

differences between 2012 and 2009 may simply be due to the sampling error, or they may reflect a slightly higher degree of concern as a result of the increased salience of the issue during the three year period.

However, with regard to the possible responses to the Iranian nuclear threat as well as to Israel's nuclear posture, the results of the current study clearly indicate a significant shift in public opinion. It appears that as the possibility of an Israeli attack against Iran's nuclear sites and facilities becomes more real, support for such an attack decreases – support declined 11 percent between 2009 and 2012. It should be noted that the actual wording of the question differed slightly in the two studies. In 2009, respondents were asked “what Israel's response should be if it learned that Iran has nuclear weapons,” while in 2012, respondents were asked “how should Israel act in face of the danger of Iran developing nuclear weapons.” In 2012, not only was a possible Israeli military attack more imminent, but it also became eminently clear that the United States was adamantly opposed to such an attack. These factors perhaps explain, at least partially, the sharp decrease in support for military action; nevertheless the numbers speak for themselves. In 2009, 59 percent supported a military attack on Iran's nuclear installations while 41 percent opposed a military strike. In 2012, 48 percent were in favor of attacking Iran's nuclear installations versus 52 percent who were in favor of exercising all possible political and diplomatic means to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons but refraining from a military attack.

A possible explanation for these results might be that while Israelis view the Iranian nuclear threat as a grave threat to their national security, many do not view it as an existential threat. Respondents were asked how they believe Iran would behave if it acquired nuclear weapons. Only 18 percent believed that Iran would attack Israel with nuclear weapons in order to destroy it, while another 32 percent believed that Iran would threaten Israel with nuclear weapons but would refrain from actually attacking Israel for fear of Israeli retaliation. Six percent believed that Iran would act cautiously and in a pragmatic manner; the remainder (42 percent) believed that Iran would encourage Hizbollah and Hamas to act against Israel or would try to pressure and blackmail Israel and other countries to achieve its goals, or both. These results are quite similar to those in 2009 (21 percent, 35 percent, 4 percent, and 39 percent, respectively).

Respondents were fairly confident that Israel can cope with the threat of a nuclear Iran. It is reasonable to assume that this confidence is primarily

grounded in the strong conviction as to Israel's deterrent capability. However, when respondents were asked how Israel should invest most of its resources in meeting the threat in the event that Iran does indeed acquire nuclear weapons, opinion was divided almost equally between two of three options: 35 percent were in favor of Israel "strengthening its deterrent capability," while 42 percent were in favor of strengthening its defensive capability against missiles through "active defense systems such as the Arrow anti-ballistic missile system." Seventeen percent were in favor of passive defense, i.e., "building nuclear shelters for the population," and 6 percent chose various combinations. Interestingly, the results are almost identical with those of 2009 (39 percent, 42 percent, 17 percent, and 1 percent, respectively). Israeli public opinion by and large is aware of the futility of passive defense against nuclear weapons. At the same time, it seems to give equal weight to Israel's deterrent capability and active defense – anti-ballistic missile systems. This runs contrary to accepted strategic thought in Israel, which views deterrence as the only substantive answer to the nuclear threat. The high percentage emphasizing active defense systems is probably due to the extensive coverage during the past few years in the Israeli media of the development of such systems by Israel and the excellent performance of the Iron Dome anti-rocket system. One could speculate that had the study been conducted in December 2012, after Operation Pillar of Defense, there might have been even more support for active defense systems.

Respondents were asked to what degree Israel could depend on American guarantees if Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons. A majority answered positively: 15 percent believed that Israel could depend on such guarantees "to a very large degree," and 38 percent "to a large degree." Thirty-five percent believed that Israel could depend on such guarantees only "to a small degree," while 12 percent were of the view that "not at all." The results are not significantly different from those for 2009 (9 percent, 49 percent, 30 percent, and 12 percent, respectively).

### **Israel's Nuclear Posture**

A key factor in the evaluation of the Iranian nuclear threat is the public's perception of Israel's nuclear capability. The Israeli public is predominantly convinced that Israel is a nuclear power; 62 percent are positive that Israel has nuclear weapons while another 28 percent believe so. Only 2 percent believe that Israel does not have nuclear weapons and 1 percent is positive

of this; 6 percent are uncertain. The main question, however, is what nuclear posture should Israel adopt in the future and to what degree is public opinion on this question influenced by the increased salience of the Iranian nuclear threat and the growing possibility that Iran may indeed acquire a military nuclear capability. Comparative results from previous studies and the current study point to a possible shift in public opinion, especially with regard to the possibility of nuclear disarmament.

In the past, the policy of ambiguity regarding Israel's nuclear capability, adopted and followed by all Israeli governments over the past 50 years, enjoyed massive public support and there was little if any support for unilateral nuclear disarmament. In previous studies, respondents were asked as to their preferences on Israel's nuclear policy, assuming that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. Table 15 shows the results over the past decade.

**Table 15. Public opinion with regard to Israel's nuclear policy, 1999-2009 (percent answering in affirmative)**

Options	1999	2002	2003	2009
1. Give up nuclear arsenal attributed to Israel	-	4	5	1
2. Maintain secrecy with regard to Israel's nuclear capabilities and continue the policy of ambiguity	73	62	72	80
3. Go public and confirm the existence of a nuclear arsenal to deter the enemy	27	32	21	19

In the current study, a similar question was asked but in a different context. Respondents were asked what Israel should do if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. Table 16 shows that in such a scenario, support for the policy of ambiguity decreased sharply – slightly over half of the respondents supported it – and there was some support for a nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ). It would thus seem clear that the possibility of a nuclear Iran does indeed have a significant influence on Israeli public opinion.

In order to better understand the influence of the Iranian nuclear threat on this issue, two new items were introduced in the 2012 survey, both of which were direct questions with only two possible answers. Respondents were asked as to their opinion regarding the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East, and in the event that Iran acquired nuclear weapons, would it be better for Israel if neither country had such weapons or if Israel nevertheless retained nuclear weapons.

**Table 16. Public preferences on nuclear policy assuming that Iran acquires nuclear weapons, 2012 (percent answering in affirmative)**

Items	
1. Launch a campaign to turn the Middle East, including Israel, into a nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ)	10
2. Maintain the present policy of ambiguity	57
3. Adopt a policy of public nuclear deterrence, i.e., announce that Israel has nuclear weapons	33

**Table 17. Policies related to the development of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, 2012**

	Support	Oppose
Do you support or oppose a proposal for a Middle East nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ) by which all countries in the area, including Israel, will give up nuclear weapons?	38	62
Assuming that Israel has nuclear weapons and Iran will develop nuclear weapons, what is the correct policy for Israel?	Both Israel and Iran should give up nuclear weapons (no one will have nuclear weapons)	Israel should retain its nuclear capabilities even at the expense of nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran
	22	78

The results charted in table 17 suggest that the Israeli public manifests slight (though growing) support for the idea that Israel should become proactive in a campaign that will turn the Middle East in a nuclear weapons-free zone. When presented with an ideal and highly unlikely scenario of all Middle East countries, including Israel, abiding by a NWFZ agreement, 38 percent of the population indicated their support. If both Israel and Iran were to have nuclear weapons, the vast majority of the public preferred preserving this situation, with all its dangers (78 percent would want Israel to retain its nuclear capabilities even at the expense of Iran having these capabilities), although a not insignificant minority (22 percent) would opt for mutual nuclear disarmament.

What does all this mean? In 2012 Israel faced an objective reality that did not exist when the previous surveys were made, namely, Iran's coming very close to attainment of nuclear weapons. Given this reality, about 10 percent (significantly more women than men) of the public said that Israel should

actively promote a NWFZ in the Middle East, while another 28 percent (once again significantly more women than men) supported a NWFZ in the Middle East, at least in principle. Nevertheless, when forced to make a choice, the vast majority (78 percent) would prefer a situation where both Israel and Iran have nuclear weapons rather than opting for both countries giving up nuclear weapons, although a significant minority preferred the opposite.

### **On the Personal Level**

In the 2009 study, an attempt was made for the first time to assess the potential effects on rank and file Israelis of a nuclear Iran. Respondents were asked how they thought a nuclear Iran would affect their lives. The results were unequivocal: at the personal level, Israelis then seemed relatively relaxed regarding the Iranian nuclear threat, the impression being that they could learn to live with the threat. Eighty percent of the respondents stated that “they do not expect their life to change,” whereas only 3 percent said that they would leave the country; 9 percent stated that they “would consider moving to another community,” and the remaining 8 percent said that “they would consider moving to another country, for instance, by acquiring a foreign passport.”

One would have reason to believe that by 2012, given the increased salience of the threat, the situation would have changed for the worse. This, however, is not the case at all – if anything, the opposite occurred. On the personal level, Israelis remained complacent regarding the threat. Eighty-seven percent stated that they do not expect their lives to change, only 3 percent said that they would leave the country, 4 percent stated that they would consider moving to another community, and the remaining 6 percent said that “they would consider moving to another country, for instance, by acquiring a foreign passport.”

The results are indeed dramatic, but a caveat is in order. The question presented to the respondents in 2009 was highly hypothetical in nature and remained so even in 2012, and as such the responses should be taken with caution. It is highly problematic to extrapolate from these results what would actually happen in reality. Also, this should not be construed as in any way minimizing the severity of the threat in the minds of the Israeli public due to a different psychological nature of personal and societal fears.



## Chapter 6

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### ***The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict***

Although largely dormant for the past four years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a central national security issue in Israel. Since 1967, the public has deliberated the direct and indirect consequences of the ongoing conflict and engaged in an intensive debate regarding various formulae for its solution. Any meaningful discussion of this issue must take into account the immense complexity of public opinion with regard to the entire Israeli-Palestinian problem. It is the very complexity that perhaps best accounts for the critical importance of the exact wording of each question. Stating a basically similar question in alternative terms can paint a contrasting picture and lead to a different conclusion.

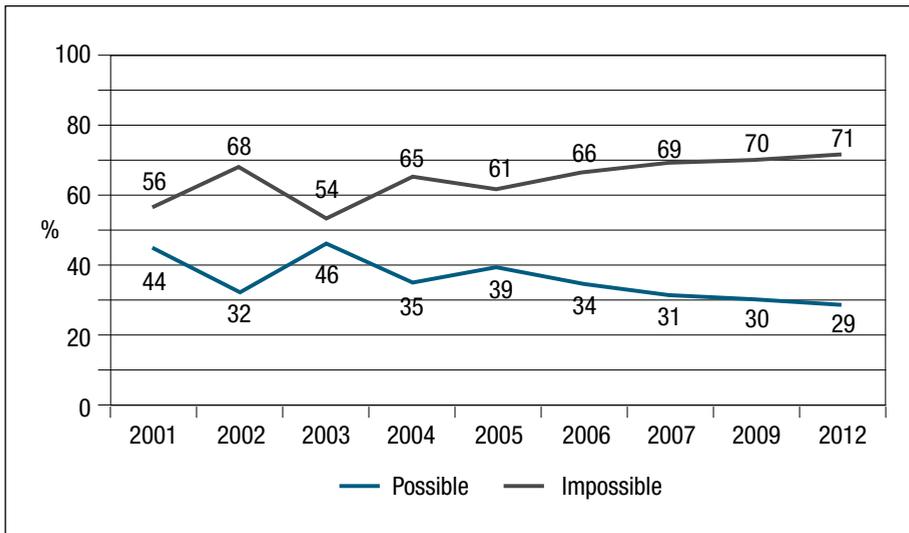
Similarly, juxtaposition of similar questions reveals ostensibly contradictory results that make little sense to the uninformed and non-professional observer. However, the seemingly tangled and sometimes incongruous results merely demonstrate the complexity of public opinion in Israel on issues of national security in general, and with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. It is for this reason that any genuine attempt to understand public opinion, and even more so, to fathom its implications for policy decisions, cannot be based on a limited number of questions. Rather, such an attempt must include a wide range of items that incorporates different wording and divergent approaches. Only by considering the various responses and examining the results in the context of the overall data can one arrive at a comprehensive and accurate picture of Israeli public opinion.

The first section of this chapter will deal with the Israeli public's basic perceptions of the Palestinians and of the conflict in general, what is known in Israel as the all important question "is there a partner." The second section will deal with the opinions and positions of the Israeli public on

what is known in diplomatic parlance as the core issues: “two states for two peoples” and the establishment of a Palestinian state, borders and territories, settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem. The third section will deal with policy implications for an Israeli government.

### Is There a Partner?

An intense debate has long been underway within Israeli society regarding whether there is a genuine Palestinian partner with whom a permanent peace agreement that would put an end to the conflict can be reached. This is, in effect, the critical question of Israeli public opinion. Presumably, one’s opinion regarding many key issues in the Israeli-Palestinian realm reflects at least to some degree his/her position on this key question. One would also expect these perceptions to fluctuate over time, reflecting the course of events and the changes in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Respondents were asked: “Do you think it is possible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians?” Figure 12 presents the results.



**Figure 12. Possibility of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, 2001-2012 (percent)**

The data indicates a degree of fluctuation over the past decade, probably reflecting the flow and ebb of the second intifada. However, from 2005, there is a steady decline in the public’s view of prospects for an agreement with the Palestinians, and for the past five years it is more or less fixed at

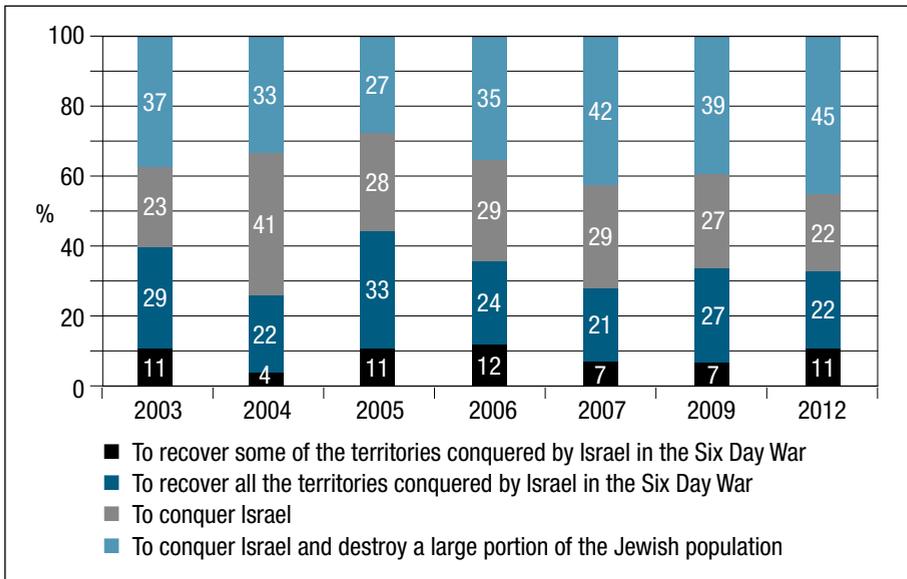
around 30 percent. The most probable reason for the pessimism is likely the fact that this period has seen little if any progress toward a solution of the conflict. The question then arises as to what is the fundamental cause for the stalemate that leads to such pessimism, and are there ways by which it could be ameliorated.

Toward this end, a new item was introduced in the current study, whereby respondents were asked what in their opinion is the main reason for the stalemate. Thirty-six percent blamed the “recalcitrance of the Palestinian Authority” and 11 percent blamed the “lack of flexibility on behalf of the Israeli government,” while almost half (46 percent) claimed that “the gap between the two parties is too large” (6 percent gave other answers). Referring back to chapter 2, the 36 percent blaming the Palestinians are equal in number to the 35 percent of the Jewish population categorized as “right,” the 11 percent blaming the Israeli government are close to the 16 percent categorized as “left,” while the 46 percent who attribute the stalemate to objective causes represent the “center” – 49 percent (see table 4).

Given that half of the population blamed the stalemate on the gap between the parties, respondents were asked whether it is possible to reach an agreement “if the Palestinians would recognize the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people,” i.e., if one of the reasons for the gap would be removed. Forty-three percent answered in the affirmative – a highly significant and perhaps even dramatic improvement over the 29 percent who answered in the affirmative on the general question. The question was a hypothetical one and thus the responses are far from binding. Nevertheless, taken together, these results suggest that the Israeli public is susceptible to changing its negative opinion of the possibility of reaching an agreement in response to changes in the Palestinian positions.

Another possible deep-seated cause for pessimism regarding the possibility of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians could be the perceptions of the Jewish population regarding the genuine intentions of the Arabs. Respondents were asked: “In your opinion, what in the end of the day is the aspiration of the Arabs?”

Figure 13 demonstrates that the Israeli perception of the ultimate goal of the Arabs is quite negative. Although there has been some variation over the years, the overall picture is largely stable and quite pessimistic. At no time have most Israelis perceived the ultimate goal of the Arabs as limited to recovering the territories conquered by Israel in 1967. The results in the



**Figure 13. Perception of the ultimate aspirations of the Arabs, 2003-2012 (percent)**

current study are almost identical with those in 2009. The majority believed that the Arabs aspire to destroy the State of Israel (67 percent in 2012, and 66 percent in 2009), and more than one third of the respondents (45 percent in 2012, and 39 percent in 2009) were convinced that this would include killing a large part of the Jewish population. It seems that the conviction that the Arabs remain committed to the destruction of Israel in stages (the so-called “phases” plan whereby the Palestinians would employ a “step by step” approach to reach their ultimate goal) is deeply ingrained in the Israeli psyche.

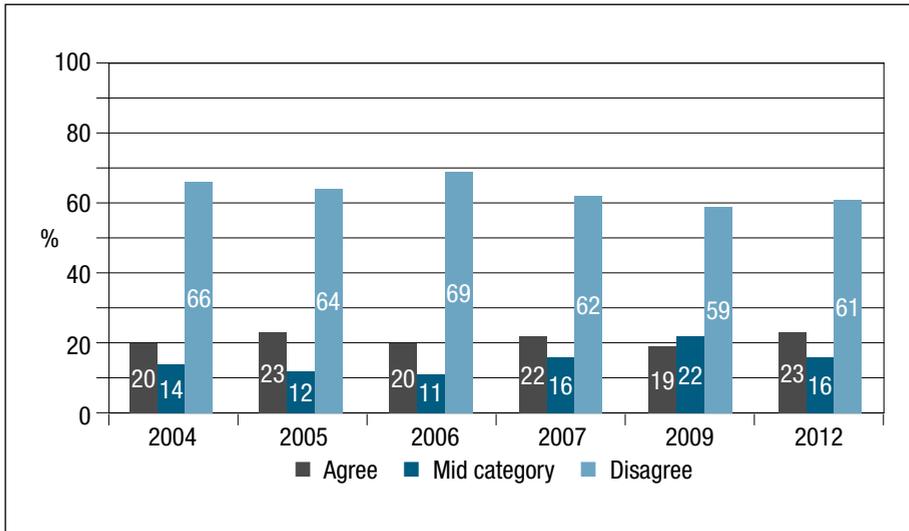
Evidence of the above can be found in the results for a number of additional questions. Respondents were asked whether in their opinion there was a chance that Hamas would go the way of Fatah and eventually recognize Israel’s right to exist. Forty percent said there “was no chance” and another 45 percent said there “was very little chance”; 11 percent said there “was a good chance” and 4 percent said there “was a very good chance.” The results are almost identical with those in 2009 (44 percent, 45 percent, 7 percent, and 4 percent, respectively). Not surprisingly and in line with these results, 67 percent of the respondents were against negotiating with Hamas (down from a high of 74 percent in 2009), versus 21 percent who

were in favor, with 12 percent in the middle. Further evidence for the high levels of suspicion and doubt that Israelis harbor as to the true intentions of the Arabs can be found in their reaction to the Arab Peace Initiative, although on this question there was a significant shift in public opinion from 2009. Twenty-nine percent were in favor of Israel responding favorably “in principle” to the Arab Peace Initiative, up from only 19 percent in 2009, 52 percent were against, versus 60 percent in 2009, and 19 percent were in the middle, compared with 21 percent in 2009. It is impossible to know which element or elements of the plan, or perhaps the fact that this proposal originated with the Arabs, is responsible for the limited support.

There are, however, a number of indicators that seem to mitigate the negative picture regarding the basic mistrust of the Palestinians among Israeli public opinion. The answers to the question on Palestinians as potential partners for a peace agreement differ from respondents’ perceptions regarding the aspirations of the rank and file Palestinian. The pessimism about the chances of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians notwithstanding, Israelis have a more favorable view as far as the desire of “most Palestinians” for peace. Until the intifada, a majority of Israelis believed that most Palestinians want peace. As a result of the intifada, this percentage decreased, dropping to between 40 and 50 percent. In 2009, the number of Israelis who believed that most Palestinians want peace stood at 44 percent and rose in the current study to 46 percent. Thus while during these years close to half of the Jewish population believed that “most Palestinians” wanted peace, only a third or less believed in the possibility of reaching a peace agreement with them. A possible explanation for this seeming discrepancy is that while many Israelis may have a fairly positive view of the average Palestinian, they have little faith in the Palestinian leadership. Evidently, some Israelis differentiate between individual Palestinians, who are believed to want to live in peace, and the Arab collective or its political leadership, which is seen as determined to destroy Israel.

A further positive note is that despite the pessimism and suspicion, Israelis still believe in negotiations and are against halting the peace process. Even after the dramatic changes, disappointments, disillusionments, terrorism, and bloodshed, Israeli public opinion has remained committed to the search for a solution. Respondents were asked over many years to express their agreement or disagreement with the proposition that “the peace process should be brought to a halt, even if it entails the risk of another war.” The

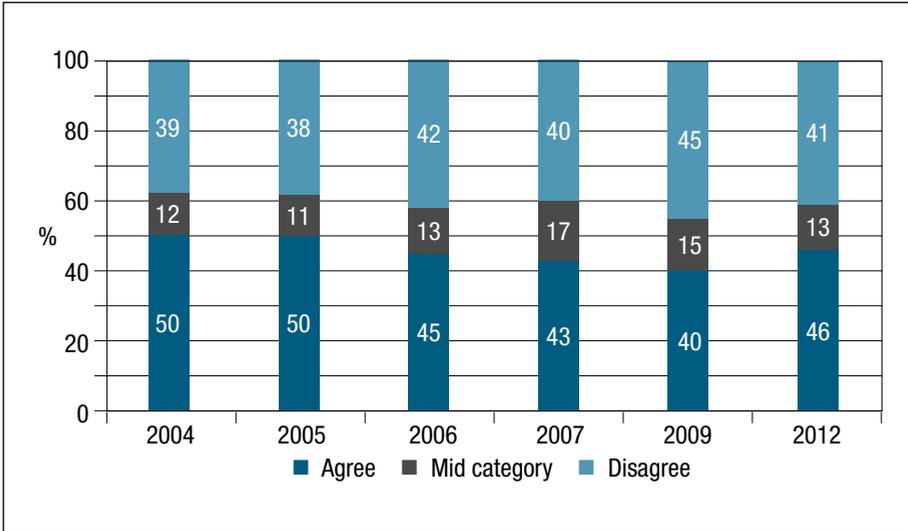
results for 2004 through 2012, charted in figure 14, are relatively stable throughout the entire period, especially over the last five years, and suggest that there is little support for stopping the peace process – less than one quarter of the respondents agree with the proposition that it should be halted. A clear majority (60 percent) of the Jewish population opposed discontinuing the peace process if that could lead to war.



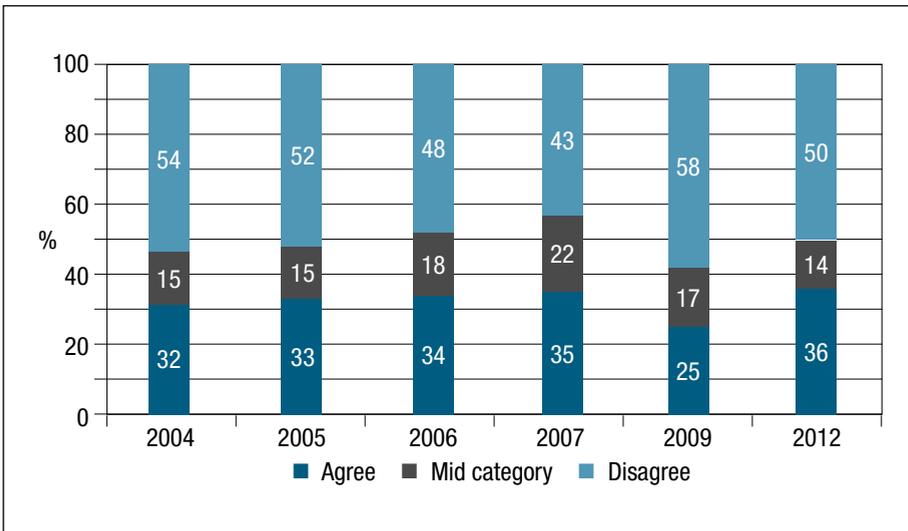
**Figure 14. Agreement with halting the peace process, 2004-2012**

Finally, not only is public opinion against freezing the peace process, but by and large Israelis do not believe in a military solution to the conflict and have not given up on a political solution. Respondents were asked on a 1-7 point scale whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “there is no military solution to the conflict,” and with the statement that “there is no political solution to the conflict.” Figures 15 and 16 summarize the findings. In the current study, 46 percent agreed with the proposition that there is no military solution to the conflict versus 41 percent who disagreed; only one third (36 percent) believed that there is no political solution to the conflict, i.e., it is hopeless, while half of the respondents disagreed. When comparing the results with those of 2009, one can see the complexity of public opinion on the conflict and why it is so difficult to identify a shift to the right or to the left. As far as a military solution is concerned, there is a significant increase in 2012 in those who agreed that there is, indeed, no military solution to the conflict (46 percent versus 40 percent). On the

other hand, in 2012 there is a sharp rise in the number of Israelis who have given up on a political solution (over one third versus only one quarter in 2009), albeit they remain a minority. Looking at the data in its entirety, one can conclude that in 2012 Israeli public opinion is not willing to give up on a political solution, even though it hardly sees one on the horizon. This underscores that the majority of the Israeli public is disenchanted with the



**Figure 15. No military solution to the conflict, 2004-2012**



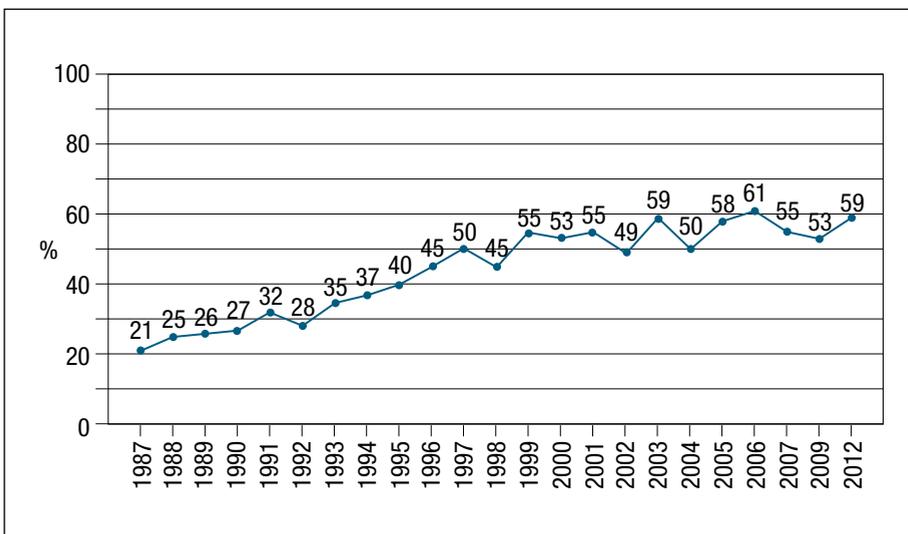
**Figure 16. No political solution to the conflict, 2004-2012**

Palestinians as political partners but simultaneously does not see any solution other than a political solution in the long term.

Further evidence that Israeli public opinion is aware of the limitations of military power can be found in the data regarding the fight against terrorism. Respondents were asked if in their opinion it is possible to eliminate Palestinian terrorism by military operations alone. Only 21 percent answered in the affirmative. Fifty-six percent answered that terrorism can be reduced but not eliminated by military means, 9 percent were of the opinion that military operations alone have no influence on the extent of terror, and 14 percent believed that they would only lead to an increase in terrorism.

### Core Issues

There are a number of core issues that must be resolved in order to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. The discourse and national debate in Israel over the past few years has centered on the “two states for two peoples” solution and its corollary, namely, the establishment of a Palestinian state. Where does the public currently stand on these issues? Support for both two states for two peoples and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the context of a permanent settlement of the conflict remains strong and has even increased from 2009. One can say with a great degree of confidence that Israelis are committed to a two-state solution. Figure 17 charts the evolution



**Figure 17. Support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, 1987- 2012 (percent)**

of Israeli public opinion regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state from 1987 to the current study. Support for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza in the framework of a permanent settlement rose from 21 percent in 1987 to 61 percent in 2006, dropped to 53 percent in 2009, and then rose again in 2012 to 59 percent – very close to the high level of 2006.

Although a majority supports the establishment of a Palestinian state in the context of a permanent settlement, there is much skepticism whether a Palestinian state will indeed be established within the next five years. Forty-five percent believe that this will happen, up from 34 percent in 2009, while 55 percent do not believe that it will happen. The divide between the West Bank, controlled by Fatah, and Gaza, controlled by Hamas, is clearly reflected in the results for this question. Twenty-one percent believe that a Palestinian state will be established in the West Bank and Gaza, 6 percent that it will be established only in the West Bank, and 18 percent that it would be established only in Gaza (in 2009, 14 percent, 10 percent, and 10 percent, respectively). The skepticism regarding the chances of a Palestinian state coming into being within the next five years probably reflects the deep skepticism as to the chances of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians in the future (see figure 12).

Support for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza should theoretically match the support for the “two states for two peoples” solution. Both items have the same underlying logic. One cannot support a “two states for two peoples” solution without agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and vice versa. Nevertheless, since the formulations are not identical, it was decided in 2006 to introduce a separate item, specifically asking the respondents “whether they support or oppose the solution of two states for two peoples.” The results clearly demonstrate the crucial importance of the exact wording of a question. In each study, from 2006 to the current study, the percentage of the respondents supporting the two-state solution was about ten percent higher than the percentage in favor of a Palestinian state; in the current study 69 percent supported the former versus 59 percent who were in favor of the latter (the comparable numbers for 2009 were 64 percent and 53 percent, respectively). In both studies the 10 percent difference was present and support for both propositions increased in 2012 by 5-6 percent.

A possible explanation for the divergence in the results may be that the term “Palestinian state” still has a negative connotation for many Israelis. For many years after the Six Day War, the entire mainstream Israeli political establishment, including key Labor Party leaders such as Rabin, Peres, and arch-dove Abba Eban were unequivocally and vehemently opposed to a Palestinian state. For many years opposition to a Palestinian state was a national consensus in Israel. It thus should come as no surprise that for many Israelis, who have reconciled with the principle of a two-state solution, the term Palestinian state still elicits a negative emotional reaction.

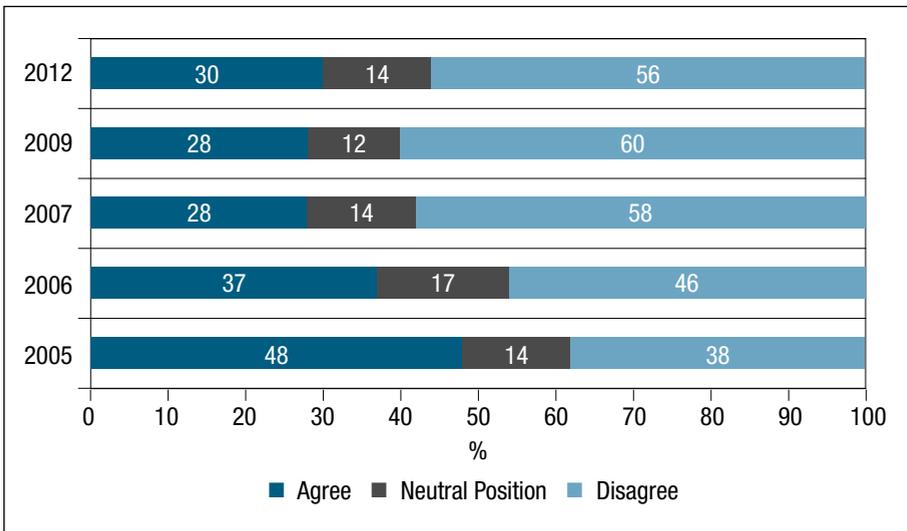
In order to investigate this possibility, the two questions were juxtaposed. Table 18 shows the combined results for both questions for 2009 and 2012. In 2009, 77 percent of the respondents answered in a “logical” way and fell in the two expected diagonals. Slightly over 20 percent answered in a seemingly contradictory way. However, in accordance with our hypothesis, the vast majority of these respondents – close to three quarters of those answering in an “illogical” way – fell in square 2, i.e., opposed a “Palestinian state” but supported the “two-state solution.” Only 6 percent of the entire sample opposed a two-state solution and at the same time agreed to a Palestinian state. In 2012, the numbers are almost identical: 77 percent of the respondents answered in a “logical” way and fell in the two expected diagonals; of the remaining 23 percent who answered in a seemingly contradictory way, slightly less than three quarters fell in square 2, i.e., opposed a “Palestinian state” but supported the “two-state solution,” and only 7 percent of the entire sample opposed a two-state solution and at the same time agreed to a Palestinian state.

**Table 18. Contingency table of public opinion on establishment of Palestinian state and two-state solution, 2009-2012 (percent)**

Two-State Solution						
Establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza	2009	Support	Oppose	2012	Support	Oppose
	Support	48	6	Support	53	7
	Oppose	<b>17</b>	29	Oppose	<b>16</b>	24

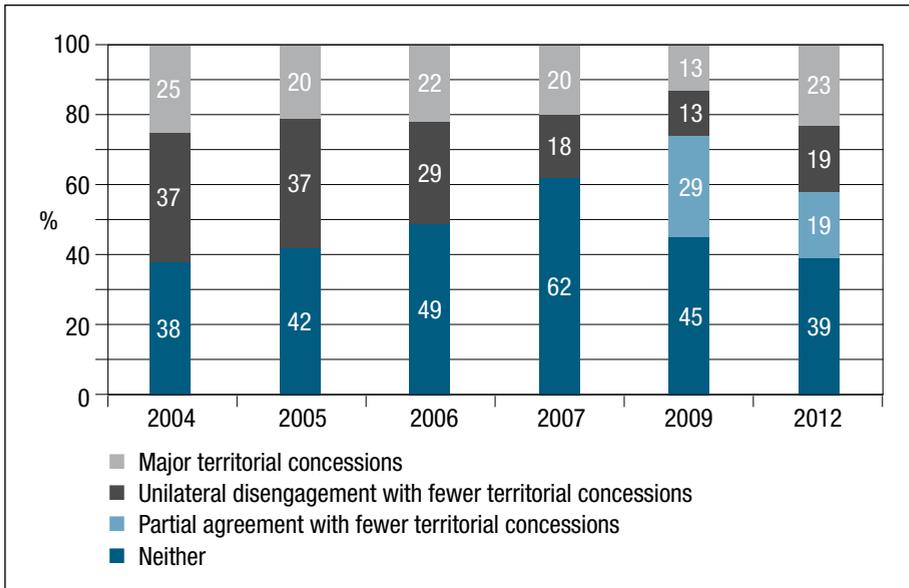
Acceptance of the “two-state solution” in and of itself does not of course guarantee a solution to the conflict. There are many issues that still must be resolved, among them borders, the future of the settlements, Jerusalem, and refugees. Data from the current study indicates a high degree of consistency over time on most of these issues, although relative to 2009, there is a shift to a more dovish position. The shift is statistically significant, i.e., it exceeds the sampling error, but in most cases it is not dramatic and does not change the basic picture.

A major core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that of permanent borders and the future of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 – primarily Judea and Samaria, otherwise known as the West Bank – and the future of the Jewish settlements established in these areas. Is Israeli public opinion willing, in the context of a permanent two-state solution, to support an Israeli withdrawal from major parts of the West Bank? The answer depends to a large degree on how the question is framed. A frequent expression in the past in Israeli and international discourse was “land for peace.” Figure 18 shows a sharp drop in support for the concept of land for peace – down from close to half of the respondents in 2005 to a little more than a quarter in 2009; results from the current study are not much different from those of 2009, and the idea is still rejected by a majority of the respondents. The sharp decline in support from 2005 onward was most likely due to a



**Figure 18. Support for the principle of land for peace, 2005-2012 (percent)**

growing conviction among many Israelis that territorial concessions to the Palestinians in particular and to the Arabs in general do not lead to peace but only to more terrorism and hostility, a conviction probably caused by the overall disillusionment with the withdrawal from Gaza as well as the Second Lebanon War, the Hamas takeover in Gaza, and other events. It therefore comes as no surprise that supporters of territorial concessions by Israel have abandoned the phrase “land for peace” and prefer to speak about “the two-state solution.”



**Figure 19. Support for territorial alternatives for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, 2004-2012 (percent)**

However, when one is faced with the need to choose from a set of alternatives for territorial withdrawals, a different picture emerges. In earlier studies, respondents were asked: “What do you prefer: an agreement involving major territorial concessions, a unilateral disengagement with fewer territorial concessions, or neither.” In order to get a better picture of the full range of opinions on this key issue, starting from 2009, an additional option was introduced, namely “a partial agreement with fewer territorial concessions” – an option raised and much debated in current discourse. Figure 19 shows the results for this question for the years 2004-2012.

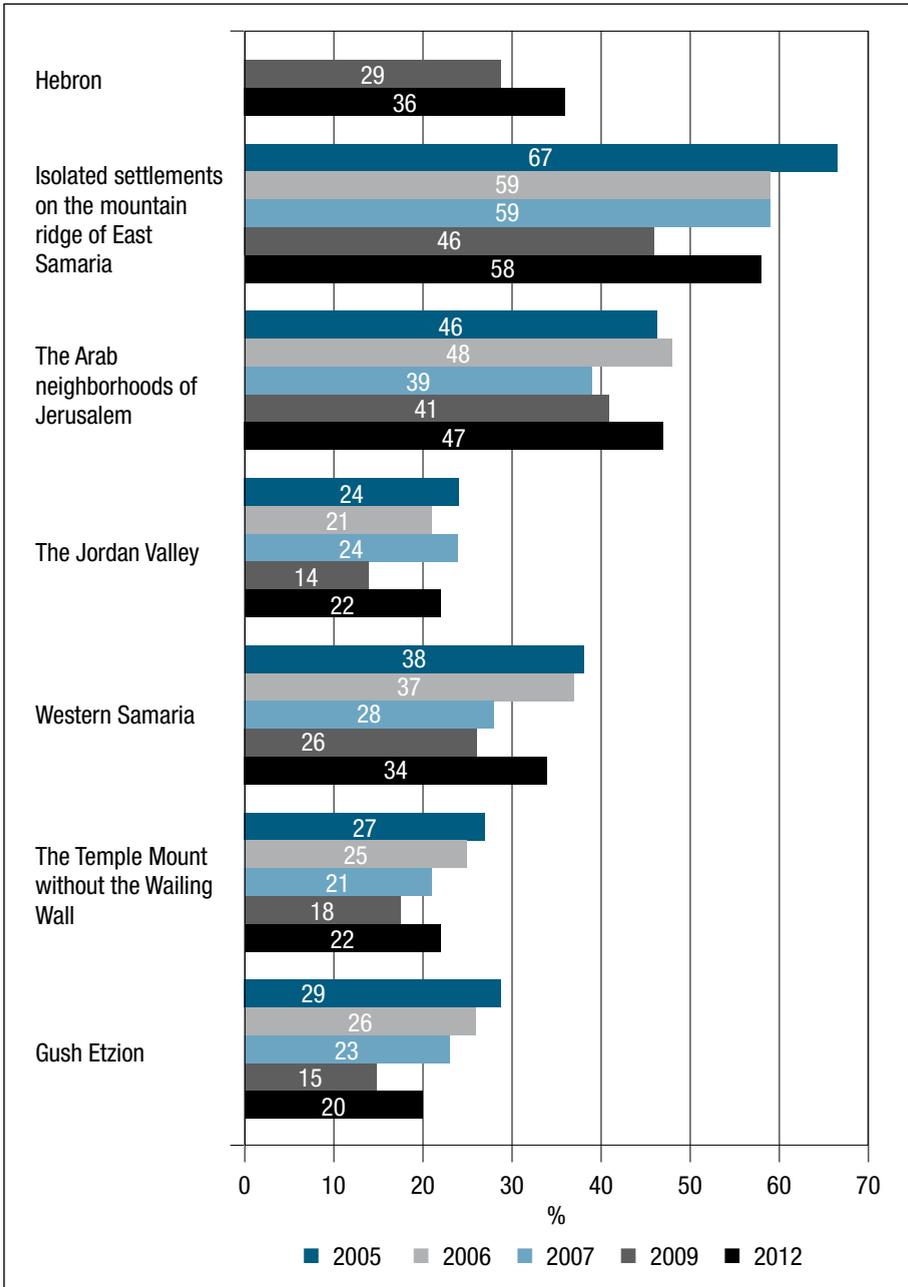
The fluctuations and changes from 2004 onward are in line with the data presented in Figure 18, but the overall picture is quite different. From 2004

to 2007 one sees a sharp decline in the readiness for territorial concessions – down from about 60 percent in 2004 and 2005 to just one half in 2006 and to less than 40 percent in 2007. In 2007, probably as a result of the Second Lebanon War and the negative consequences of the Gaza disengagement, a clear majority rejected any form of territorial concessions. Starting in 2009, however, the trend is reversed – 55 percent supported some form of territorial concessions, rising to 61 percent in the current study and returning to the high point of 2004. At the same time, one should note the significant difference from 2009 to 2012 regarding the preference for various alternative options of territorial concessions. In 2009, the option of a partial agreement with fewer territorial concessions was clearly the favored option among the three options involving territorial concessions – chosen by two to one over each of the other two options. In 2012, however, the preference for each of the three options was more or less equally divided among the 60 percent expressing willingness for some form of territorial concession; support for major territorial concessions as part of a permanent agreement increased by 10 percent, almost double that of 2009.

A full understanding of the implications of these results includes awareness of the complexity of Israeli public opinion on the issue of territorial concessions. Territorial concession is not the preferred option for most Israelis; indeed they view it with much trepidation and wariness. At the same time, however, as was demonstrated above, the Israeli public is acutely aware of the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the need to find some solution – a solution that most Israelis believe cannot be found without some form of territorial concession.

This effect becomes evident when the question of territorial concession is posed in the context of a permanent settlement and specified in more detail. Respondents were asked “whether in the context of a permanent settlement that would terminate the conflict with the Palestinians, Israel should be ready to return any of a list of specific areas, or continue to retain them even at the cost of avoiding a permanent settlement.” The results are presented in figure 20.

Clearly there is a range in the attitude of the Israeli public to different areas in the West Bank as well as a great deal of consistency over time with regard to each specific area. In 2009, readiness to transfer various areas to the Palestinians ranges from a mere 14 percent (the Jordan Valley) to almost 50 percent (isolated settlements on the mountain ridge of east Samaria).



**Figure 20. Support for returning specific areas of the West Bank, 2005-2012 (percent)**

In 2012, one can clearly see a definite shift to the left, i.e., a more dovish position on all of the areas, ranging from 4 percent (the Temple Mount) to 12 percent (isolated settlements). Although the actual percentage may vary from year to year, the order remains more or less constant. Presumably the various attitudes reflect the emotional attachment Israelis have for specific areas, i.e., the religious, historical, or emotional significance of specific areas, as well as their security value. On the basis of the results for the current study, one can classify the various areas into three groups:

- a. Gush Etzion, the Jordan Valley, and the Temple Mount (excluding the Western Wall) – less than one quarter of the population was willing to return any of these areas (20 percent, 22 percent, and 22 percent respectively). There was an increase in those willing to return each of these areas in 2012, but given the low percentage even in 2012, the shift has little if any political significance.
- b. Western Samaria and Hebron – approximately one third was willing to return these areas (34 and 36 percent, respectively), up from about one quarter (26 and 29 percent, respectively) in 2009. Regarding these two areas, the shift to the left in 2012 may be a little more significant.
- c. The Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem and isolated settlements on the mountain ridge of eastern Samaria – close to half of the respondents (47 percent) were willing to return the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, and a decided majority (58 percent) were willing to return the isolated settlements of eastern Samaria. The shift to the left in 2012 regarding the isolated settlements is highly significant; the increase of 12 percent is the highest for any area and brings it back to the level of 2006 and 2007 (though still below that of 2005), and there is a clear majority supporting the return of this area.

The core issue of territories is deeply intertwined with the core issue of settlements. Over 350,000 Jews live in more than 100 communities throughout the West Bank. When one talks of withdrawing from Judea and Samaria or returning certain areas, this has a direct bearing on the future of the communities and their residents. Does Israeli public opinion support the removal of settlements? The answer depends on two factors: the context of the evacuation and which settlements. There is minimal support – less than one fifth (14 percent) – in any context for a complete evacuation of all the settlements including the large settlement blocs. In the context of a permanent agreement, half of the respondents (49 percent) were in favor

of removing the small and isolated settlements, which are viewed by many Israelis as “political settlements”; a little over a third (37 percent) of the respondents were opposed to the removal of any settlements, under any circumstances.

Removal of settlements is a critical litmus test of the right, left, and center in Israeli society. The data on this question reflects almost exactly the profile of the Israeli body politic (see chapter 2 and table 4); the left (16 percent) were willing to remove all the settlements for a permanent agreement, the right (35 percent) were opposed to the removal of any settlements, and the center (49 percent) were ready, in the context of a permanent settlement, to remove many but not all of the settlements.

The picture presented in table 19, which shows the results over a period of eight years, is in line with the data presented in figures 18-20. Support for some settlement evacuation reached a high point in 2004-2005 (72-73 percent), declining steadily from 2006 to 2009 (59 percent in 2007 and 58 percent in 2009), although still supported by a solid majority. The decline is probably due to the continued deterioration of the situation in Gaza, with the disengagement as well as the Second Lebanon War viewed by most Israelis as a failure. In 2012, the trend was reversed and, in line with the overall shift to the left, support for settlement evacuation rose by 5 percent, reverting to the level of 2006, albeit still 10 percent lower than the 2004-2005 level.

**Table 19. Support for evacuation of Jewish settlements as part of a permanent agreement, 2004-2012 (percent)**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2012
No removal of the settlements under any circumstances	27	28	36	41	42	37
Removal of the small and isolated settlements	57	52	46	45	43	49
Removal of all settlements, including the large settlement blocs	16	20	18	14	15	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The willingness of close to two thirds of the respondents to evacuate many settlements was limited to the context of a permanent settlement. When asked the same question with the same options in the context of a “partial agreement” or a “unilateral realignment of the settlements in Judea and Samaria,” a majority – 54 percent and 53 percent, respectively – were

opposed to the removal of any settlements under any circumstances; 39 percent supported evacuation of isolated settlements, and only 7 percent supported the evacuation of all settlements. These results reflect the sharp decline in support for unilateralism over the past six years, again likely as a result of the Second Lebanon War and the disengagement from Gaza.

The data presented above regarding territories (or borders) and settlements – two key core issues – reflects the immense complexity of public opinion as well as a measure of ambivalence regarding these issues. On the one hand, a majority reject the concept of “land for peace” and the evacuation of any settlements in the context of a unilateral Israeli retrenchment or a partial agreement. However, when presented with the hypothetical question “if after the fence is completed there is no possibility of any progress with the Palestinians and the terror in the territories resumes, do you agree or disagree that Israel should declare the fence as its permanent border and move the settlers who live outside (i.e., east of) the fence to Israeli territory?” the population was split down the middle: 50 percent agreed (up from 43 percent in 2009) and 50 percent disagreed. Note that most Israelis have probably never actually seen the fence and are quite unaware of its exact route, and at issue is a hypothetical situation based on two hypothetical conditions – a diplomatic stalemate and a surge in terrorism – and consequently, the results should be viewed with much caution. Still, the very fact that notwithstanding the disenchantment with disengagement and unilateralism half of the Jewish population does not reject this option is quite notable. The results suggest that many Israelis have internalized the idea that the fence is more than just a security barrier and represents features of an eventual permanent boundary.

In order to examine opinions on other core issues, respondents were presented with six possible elements of a peace treaty with the Palestinians and were asked whether they supported or opposed each proposal in the context of a peace treaty. Table 20 displays the results for 2004 to 2012. The fluctuations over the years are in line with the results presented in this section; there is a clear shift to the left from 2009 to 2012, ranging from 3 percent (permitting a limited number of refugees to return) to 15 percent (retaining only a military presence in the Jordan valley). The relative order, however, of the various elements in terms of the degree of support is almost identical with the previous years. Thus, the first three and especially the first two proposals enjoy a wide degree of support, close to a majority, while the last three proposals seem to lie outside of the consensus.

**Table 20. Support for elements of a peace treaty with the Palestinians, 2004-2012 (percent of respondents who express strong support or support for an element)**

Items	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2012
A Palestinian state on 93 percent of the West Bank and Gaza, with Israel retaining the large settlement blocs	43	46	45	41	41	49
Giving areas to the Palestinians in return for areas remaining as part of Israel	48	50	54	46	41	52
Transferring the Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem to the Palestinians, except for the Old City	36	40	45	37	32	37
The Temple Mount will be given to the Palestinians and the Wailing Wall will be retained by Israel	30	29	28	27	17	25
A limited number of refugees will be permitted to return to Israel	14	20	16	17	11	14
Israel will transfer control of the Jordan Valley and retain its military presence for a long period	20	24	21	22	14	29

The fact that the relative support for the various proposals remained steady over time has clear policy implications with regard to these core issues. Regarding the issue of refugees or what is also called “the right of return,” there is little if any room for flexibility. This is the number one issue on which there is a definite consensus; public opinion, as well as the entire political establishment, is strongly opposed to the return of any Palestinian refugees to Israel. This is also the only issue for which there was no significant change in 2012; the shift of 3 percent is within the sampling error. The issue of Jerusalem was dealt with by two items, with different results. Support for giving the Temple Mount to the Palestinians is minimal – only one quarter of the respondents were in favor in 2012, although there was a significant increase over 2009. On the other hand, regarding the transfer of Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem to the Palestinians (a key feature of the Clinton parameters), the public is more forthcoming – over one third (37 percent) were in favor. It should be noted that when the issue of the Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem was posed in a different context, namely as a deal breaker, support for their transfer to the Palestinians was considerably higher – 47 percent (See figure 20).

The remaining three elements all deal basically with the core issue of borders. The Clinton parameters, as well as former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's proposal and the declared position of President Obama, all speak of a Palestinian state on approximately 93 percent of the West Bank and Gaza, with Israel retaining the large settlement blocs and engaging in a land swap with the Palestinians. As can be seen in table 20, in the current study these positions were supported by half of the Jewish Israeli population, up by nearly 10 percent from 2009. The most interesting result is regarding the Jordan Valley. Traditionally the Jordan Valley was the area that enjoyed the strongest support for remaining in Israeli hands (see table 20 and figure 20). Unlike other areas, the strong attachment of Israelis to the Jordan Valley is not based on emotional, religious, or nationalistic grounds but on the perception that it is a vital security asset for the defense of the state. In the current study, there was a dramatic and highly significant change regarding this issue; support for relinquishing the Jordan Valley and sufficing with a long term military presence doubled, rising from a mere 14 percent in 2009 to 29 percent in 2012. The explanation for this probably lies in the fact that in number of appearances, Prime Minister Netanyahu has spoken, in the context of a permanent agreement, of "a military presence in the Jordan Valley."

### **The Bottom Line: Policy Implications**

What are the implications for future policies of Israeli governments? What does the extensive data presented above suggest about the chances of advancing toward a solution to the conflict? Judging by the positions and opinions of the Israeli public on some key core issues of the conflict, it appears there is little chance of reaching a permanent agreement with the Palestinians. However, one should bear in mind that in the final analysis the Israeli public does not decide on each specific issue alone. Rather, if an agreement were reached, it would be presented to the Israeli public (as well as to the Palestinians) as a complete package. One would imagine that such a package would contain both elements that were more and elements that were less palatable to the Israeli public, which would eventually have to pass judgment on the package as a whole.

Furthermore, people do not negotiate – leaders negotiate; people do not sign agreements – governments sign agreements. But Israel is a democracy, and as such, the government governs by virtue of the consent of the governed. Therefore, any Israeli government would only sign an agreement

if it believed that it would enjoy the support of a majority of the electorate. Depending on the agreement and other circumstances, it may well be that a final status agreement with the Palestinians would, under Israeli law, need to be approved by a national referendum. However, even if not mandated by law, there is a widespread belief that implementing an agreement that in all probability would involve major territorial concessions and the evacuation of many settlements could only be accomplished if it is approved by a vote of the people. Thus, the ultimate question is what agreement stands a good chance of being approved by the people in a referendum.

In order to answer this question, two new items representing a different perspective were introduced in the current study, one of a general nature and one of a very specific nature. Respondents were asked: “If the Israeli government approves a permanent agreement with the Palestinians based on two states for two peoples and the agreement is brought to a decision of the people in a referendum, how would you vote?” The result was conclusive and unequivocal – 51 percent would vote in favor, 27 percent against, and 22 percent were uncertain or didn’t know. The fact that such an agreement would be supported by a margin of 2 to 1 is not surprising, inasmuch as 69 percent of the respondents supported the principle of two states for two peoples (see table 18). Perhaps the fact that no details were given as to the specifics of the agreement other than that it would be based on “two states for two peoples” explains the high percentage of those who were undecided.

In order to better understand where the public stood regarding a detailed final status agreement, respondents were asked: “If the Israeli government approves a permanent agreement with the Palestinians whereby a Palestinian state will be established on 93 percent of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip, including the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, and Israel, which would be recognized as the nation state of the Jewish people, would retain the settlement blocs, including the Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem and the Old City and a military presence along the Jordan River, and the Palestinians would declare the end of the conflict and an end to all claims, the refugees would return only to the Palestinian state, the Temple Mount will be under God’s sovereignty, and the agreement is brought to a decision of the people in a referendum, how would you vote?” This type of agreement reflects the Clinton parameters and to a large degree the proposal put forth by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. It contains elements that are positive from the perspective of the Israeli public as well as elements that would

be very difficult for Israelis to accept. The results, although predictably not as one-sided and far reaching as for the general question, were still clear and conclusive – 46 percent said that they would vote in favor, 34 percent opposed, and 20 percent were undecided or didn't know. Compared with the general question, the differences are not at all dramatic: those in favor fell by 5 percent while those against rose by 7 percent (those undecided dropped by 2 percent). And while conclusions based on answers to a hypothetical question must be made with great caution, nevertheless on the basis of the data one can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that if an Israeli government would bring such an agreement to the people in a referendum, it would receive a majority (the data relates to the Jewish population; it would be fair to assume that support among Israel's Arab citizens would be even higher).

One final note. Both questions were presented in the form of a split ballot; half of the respondents were presented with the questions as described above and for the other half, a slight change in the wording was introduced in both questions by adding the words: "headed by Benjamin Netanyahu" after the opening phrase "If the Israeli government." The aim of the split ballot was to learn whether the fact that the agreement was proposed by a government headed by Netanyahu, the recognized leader of the Israeli right wing and so-called "national camp," would have an impact on the decision of the respondents, i.e., would increase their willingness to vote in favor of such an agreement – in line with theory that only the right can make peace and only the left can make war. The data does not support the theory at all; there was no significant difference in the results for the two versions of the questions. On the first question, 53 percent of those presented with the Netanyahu version voted in favor versus 49 percent of those with the non-Netanyahu version; those opposed were 27 percent for both versions. On the second question, the difference for those voting in favor was less than 1 percent (46 percent in both versions), while 36 percent of those presented with the Netanyahu version voted against, versus 32 percent of those with the non-Netanyahu version (a difference of 4 percent, which is within the sampling error).

There can be two explanations for what may seem to many as a surprising result. It could be that the respondents were relating to the government in power at the time of the study, a government headed by Netanyahu. Thus, the non-Netanyahu version was read by the respondents as if it was written

“headed by Benjamin Netanyahu,” i.e., the Netanyahu version. A second explanation could be that it doesn’t make a substantial difference which government proposes the agreement; the Israeli public would not easily reject an agreement reached by its government that likely enjoys massive international and American support. The truth probably lies somewhere in between the two possible explanations, and in any case, the current government is also headed by Mr. Netanyahu. Thus on the basis of the data, it seems that Netanyahu could win a referendum for almost any peace agreement he would reach with the Palestinians.

## Chapter 7

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### ***Domestic Issues***

In 2012 Israeli society faced numerous endogenous challenges posed by the heterogeneity of the Israeli Jewish public as well as by the presence of a minority group of Israeli Arabs who may be identified in the eyes of some with the external forces that constitute territorial and existential threats to Israel, be those threats real or perceived. Previous chapters described trends in public opinion that reflect challenges to national security in the sphere of foreign affairs and military defense. This chapter examines the home front and deals with two domestic issues that bear directly on national security: relations between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, and differences within the Jewish public.

#### **Jewish-Arab Relations**

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2012 there were more than 7.9 million citizens in Israel, among them more than 1.6 million Arabs. Arab Christians constitute a relatively small group (approximately 8 percent of all Arabs), with the overwhelming majority of this population Muslim. The growth rate of the Muslim population constitutes 2.7 percent annually, while the numbers of Jews and others grow at a lower rate (1.7 percent<sup>4</sup>). Any nation state that comprises such a large and distinct minority

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4 The Israeli Jewish population has different fertility rates depending on the level of religiosity of the group members. For example, ultra-Orthodox Jewish women have the highest fertility rates, while the non-religious public has the lowest rates. Among Arabs the reproduction rates had a negative dynamic in the 2000s (the fertility rate was 4.6 children per woman in 2000 and 3.8 in 2010), while among the Jews they are increasing (2.7 in 2000 and 3.0 in 2010). Source: [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_barrier\\_report\\_july\\_2009\\_english\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_barrier_report_july_2009_english_low_res.pdf).

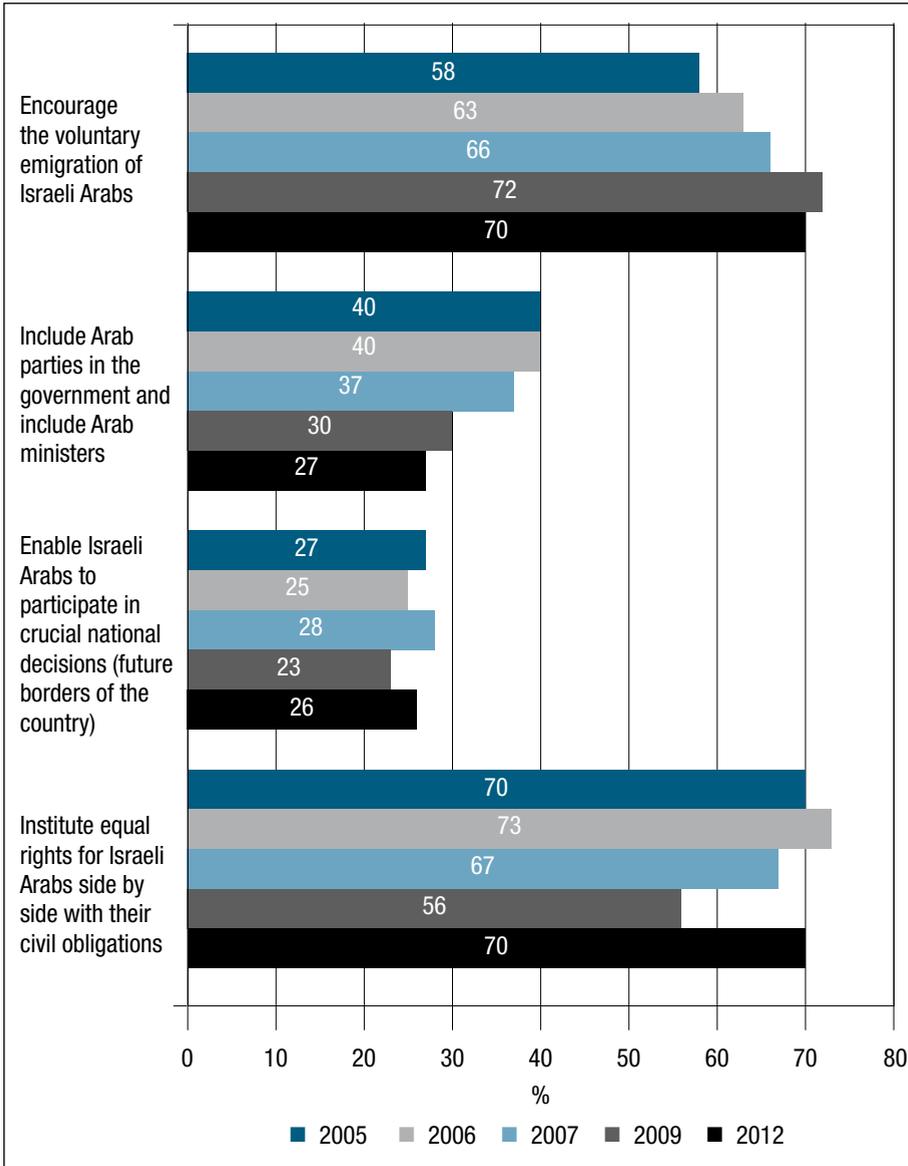
– differing from the majority in language, culture, religion, and national affiliation – faces a serious challenge in the realm of inter-group relations. The ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arab states as well as the Palestinians, and inherent clash of political values embraced by the two communities (Israeli Jews highly espouse the value of a Jewish majority, while Israeli Arabs vehemently oppose it) produces the complex reality that has repercussions for national security.

How does the Jewish majority view the Arab citizens of Israel, and how in its view should Israel relate to this minority? Figure 21 shows the views of Jews regarding several distinct approaches toward Israeli Arabs. A large majority opposed allowing Israeli Arabs to participate in crucial national decisions or including Arab ministers in the cabinet. In 2005-2012 about a quarter of Israeli Jews supported the idea that Israeli Arabs should participate in crucial national decisions such as the future borders of the country. Similar results emerged on the suggestion of including Arab parties in the government and Arab ministers in the cabinet: 40 percent in 2005 and 27 percent in 2012 supported the idea. A majority of Jews were in favor of encouraging voluntary emigration of Israeli Arabs from Israel – rising from 58 percent in 2005 to 72 percent in 2009 and holding at 70 percent in 2012. At the same time, when faced with a general question on equal rights for Israeli Arabs subject to fulfillment of their civil obligations, a majority of Jews expressed support; after a significant drop in 2009 (56 percent), the percentage supporting this view reverted to the level of previous years (70 percent).

As might be expected, both religiosity and ideology play a significant role in determining attitudes toward Israeli Arabs. Right wing respondents and those belonging to non-secular groups are less willing to grant equal rights to Arabs and are more supportive of voluntary Arab emigration. Demographic trends quoted above suggest an increase in the representation of these groups. Hence, one can ostensibly expect that negative tendencies toward Israeli Arabs will intensify over time, though recent scholarship finds an equivocal relationship between religiosity and intolerance toward the out-groups,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that intolerance of the masses is conditioned by the rhetoric of

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5 A. Malka, Y. Lelkes, S. Srivastava, A. B. Cohen, and D. T. Miller, “The Association of Religiosity and Political Conservatism: The Role of Political Engagement,” *Political Psychology* 33 (2012): 275-99.



**Figure 21. Support for approaches toward Israeli Arabs, 2005-2012 (percent)**

political elites rather than a natural predisposition of the religious public to intolerance. Future research will clarify this.

The suspicion toward the Arab minority is reinforced each time major security events shake a fragile societal balance. This happened during the intifada; the Second Lebanon War – which brought about a deepening of

the schism between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel; and Operation Cast Lead. An additional exacerbating factor is perhaps the strong support – in rhetoric and deed – of key Israeli Arab politicians and other leading personalities for Hamas and Hizbollah. Others may claim that a key factor behind the data is a deficiency in the Jewish educational system regarding the need for tolerance of the other. In the absence of peace, the perception of the Israeli Arab not only as “the other” but also as a potential enemy may also be a major factor.

In 2006 a question was added on the possible transfer of Arab towns in Israel such as Umm el-Fahm to a Palestinian state that would be established in the context of a permanent settlement and a land swap. In 2006-2012 approximately 30 percent (31 percent in 2006, 30 percent in 2007, 26 percent in 2009, and 29 percent in 2012) were in favor of the transfer of as many Arab towns as possible; about 15 percent (16 percent in 2006, 17 percent in 2007, 14 in 2009, and 13 in 2012) were in favor of transferring a small number of localities. On the other hand, around 30 percent (29, 27, 29, and 30 percent in 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2012, respectively) were in favor of transferring Arab towns to a Palestinian state only on condition that it was with the consent of the Arab residents of those communities. Slightly more than one quarter (24 percent in 2006, 25 percent in 2007, 31 percent in 2009, and 28 percent in 2012) were against the transfer of territories to a Palestinian state under any circumstances. Overall, the results throughout the 2006-2012 years reflect a desire to find a way to minimize the challenge that the out-group of Israeli Arabs presents to the Jewish nation state.

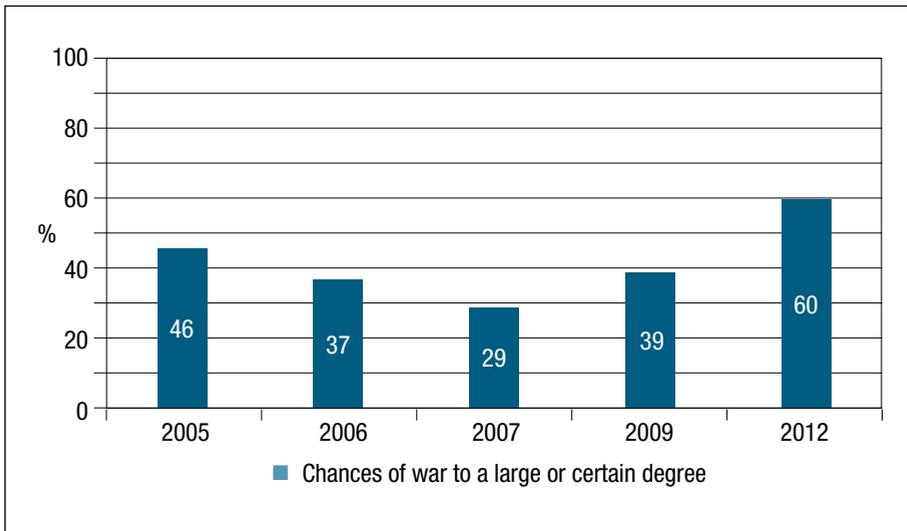
Finally, respondents were asked their preference regarding measures that should be emphasized by Israel in its treatment of Israeli Arabs – equalizing their conditions with those of other citizens of the state or intensifying punitive measures for behavior that is not appropriate for Israeli citizens. In 2002, 58 percent chose the punitive measures option, in 2003, 49 percent chose this option, and 53 percent in 2004. In 2005-2007 there was a dramatic change of heart on this issue – the majority (60 percent in 2006 and 57 percent in 2007) chose the equality of conditions option. Opinion reverted again in 2009, when 55 percent of the Jewish population preferred to put emphasis on punitive measures, and in 2012 it returned again to the level of 2007 (57 percent choose the equality of conditions). On the basis of these results, one can conclude that the attitude of the Jewish population toward Israeli Arabs is to a large degree a function of the actual conduct of

the Israeli Arab community and its leadership, as well as the salience of the issue in the public debate. The emphasis on “punitive measures” in 2002, 2003, and 2004 likely reflects the trauma of the rioting by Israeli Arabs in October 2000. The trauma wore off by 2005. In 2006, on the other hand, Israeli Arabs were highly critical of the Israeli government and the IDF in the Second Lebanon War. This criticism was quite strident, raising questions as to the loyalty of Israeli Arabs, but did not express itself in any way through disruptive behavior – and thus was, evidently, taken in stride by the Jewish community. In 2009 the issue of loyalty of Israeli Arabs arose again with a public campaign led by Israeli Arab politicians during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. In 2012 the topic of Israeli Arabs and their loyalty may have ceded to other domestic issues such as social justice or mobilization of the ultra-Orthodox Jews in the IDF.

### **Ideological Tensions in the Jewish Public**

The Jewish public in Israel is divided with regard to the ultimate status of the West Bank, occupied by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. The national debate over the future of the settlements in the West Bank and the territory itself has a strong ideological component. For some segments of the Jewish population, support for settling the Land of Israel, maintaining Israeli control of the areas conquered in 1967, and preventing the uprooting of any Jewish settlement is based on a strong ideological commitment, nationalistic fervor, and deep religious conviction. Many Israelis oppose territorial withdrawal and removal of settlements for pragmatic reasons – security considerations, deep suspicion of the true intentions of the Arabs, and other geo-political considerations. For the religiously motivated groups, however, such policies are not only anathema but the destruction of their life’s work and basic values. The readiness of these groups to put up a tough fight was demonstrated during the disengagement from Gaza in mid 2005.

Many Israelis are highly concerned about the possibility of serious clashes and great internal strife should the Israeli government decide on a major withdrawal from the West Bank. An attempt was made to gauge how serious is this concern. In 2005-2007 respondents were asked if in their estimate a civil war could ensue “as a result of agreements regarding the territories” or “as a result of further disengagement and the evacuation of settlements in Judea and Samaria.” In 2009, both questions were combined into one item: respondents were asked to provide their assessment of a possibility



**Figure 22. Possibility of civil war as a result of further disengagement and evacuation of settlements, 2005-2012 (percent)**

of civil war as a result of evacuation of settlements in Judea and Samaria in the context of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians. Results are presented in figure 22. In previous years, the level of concern about the possibility of civil war peaked just prior to the actual implementation of the disengagement from Gaza. Thus in 2005, close to half of the Jewish population saw a possibility of civil war in both instances. This changed in 2006, after the successful and relatively peaceful implementation of the disengagement. From 2006 onward, only a minority of respondents, albeit a significant one, were seriously concerned about the prospect of civil war. The percentage manifesting this concern dropped even further in 2007, while in 2009 the trend reverted to the level of 2006. In 2012, there was a sharp increase in the number of people concerned about the possibility of civil war, reaching an unprecedented 60 percent mark. It is difficult to provide an unequivocal explanation for the occurrence of this sharp rise, and further studies will show whether this finding is a temporary artifact or it represents a genuine change in perception.

Respondents also assessed Israel's ability to cope with a possible disintegration of society along religious and social lines. In 2012 about 76 percent of the public believed that internal social and economic crises constitute a serious threat. On the other hand, an overwhelming majority

of the Israeli Jewish public (79 percent) still believed that Israel could successfully cope with this threat, but there was a 10 percentage point drop in the number of respondents who shared this feeling compared to 2009 (89 percent).

The tension was further intensified over the issue of equality of rights and obligations related to drafting the ultra-Orthodox into the IDF. The Tal Law, passed in 2002, dealt with the special exemption from mandatory military service in the IDF for ultra-Orthodox Jews and for the Arab population. Prior to its expiration in August 2012, the law spurred a heated public debate over the mandatory mobilization of the ultra-Orthodox. Since this community is the fastest growing community in Israel, the issue of its incorporation in society becomes more urgent in the eyes of the general public. The IDF is considered to possess an established socialization mechanism that traditionally helps new immigrants and other weak socio-economic groups get a fair start in life. On the other hand, the demands of the ultra-Orthodox community cannot be easily accommodated by the IDF and many in the public doubt the usefulness of this task beyond the symbolic issue of “equality.”

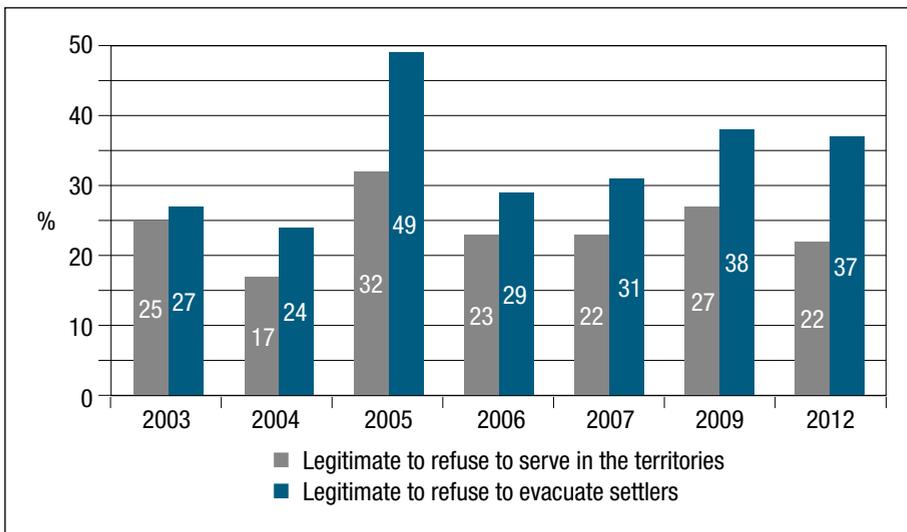
To look into this issue we aggregated the data from the 2006-2012 surveys (ultra-Orthodox constitute about 10 percent of the population and to get a statistically sound sample the data had to be aggregated) to examine if indeed the military service has any impact on the ultra-Orthodox Jews. As a result, a sample of 250 respondents who self-identified as ultra-Orthodox was created. Twenty-six percent of them indicated that they served in the army in either military or alternative civilian service; among these who served, women constituted slightly more than 30 percent. Those who served were compared with the other ultra-Orthodox who did not serve across 51 demographic and security questions. Among these who served, more say that their expenses approximate the expenses of the middle class (i.e., they are financially better off than the rest of the ultra-Orthodox). About 45 percent of ultra-Orthodox who did not serve were identified as poor, compared to around 20 percent of ultra-Orthodox who served in the army.

There was no difference in the opinions on the issues related to national security except for the feeling of personal threat. Those who served expressed higher levels of concern. In addition, they ranked a Jewish majority as the most important value (81 percent), more than their fellow group members. There was no difference in the groups in terms of their lack of appreciation

for democracy (1.5 percent placed democracy as their most important value, and over 55 percent in both groups placed it as the least important value). Based on this analysis, one could infer that the army might provide a moderate economic socialization for the group members but did not seem to have any impact on their political outlook.

The next set of items that examines intra-Jewish tensions includes the question of potential refusal by soldiers to obey orders for ideological reasons. This issue initially arose with regard to soldiers who out of ideological reasons refused to serve in the territories. However, more recently and especially in connection with the 2005 disengagement, it became a serious issue for soldiers when leading religious leaders called upon them to refuse to obey orders and participate in the evacuation of settlements. Both cases deal with implementation by the IDF of orders given by the legitimate government, approved by the Knesset and sanctioned by Israel's Supreme Court as both legal and binding.

Respondents were asked whether a soldier is permitted to refuse to serve in the territories and whether a soldier is permitted to refuse to obey an order to evacuate settlement residents. Figure 23 shows that 2005 was an exceptional year, diverging from the general trend. In both cases of insubordination, between two thirds and three quarters of the population considered refusal illegitimate, yet in 2005, close to half of the Jewish



**Figure 23. Attitudes on refusal by IDF soldiers to obey orders, 2003-2012 (percent)**

population was willing to accept refusal to obey an order to evacuate settlers, and 30 percent sanctioned refusal to serve in the territories. The 2005 survey was conducted in the month just prior to the disengagement, i.e., when the tension reached its highest point and calls for refusal to obey orders were voiced repeatedly. During the time of the survey, there were one or two highly publicized instances of actual refusal to obey orders by soldiers and an officer. This charged atmosphere evidently had an effect on public opinion and led to a greater willingness to condone such insubordination. Reversal of the trend occurred quite rapidly, and by 2006 the numbers returned to the previous trend. At the same time, sympathy for insubordination regarding orders to evacuate settlers has always exceeded support for refusal to serve in the territories. It should also be noted that despite a slight increase in the number of respondents supporting the left, political legitimization for refusal to obey orders to serve in the territories decreased in 2012 while legitimization for refusal to obey orders to evacuate settlers remained at the same level. In both cases, however, legitimization remains below the level of 2005 when the ideological divide over the issue of disengagement was most evident.

In sum, the two major divides in Israeli society, between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority and within the Jewish public, continue to be relevant in 2012. Both cleavages have in common a lack of sufficient tolerance toward the out-group, but the minority-majority confrontation is nationalist in character and is embedded in the history of the region and complexity of relations between Israel and external forces (states, international organizations, non-state actors). This strife is nurtured, *inter alia*, by the standstill of the political process in the region and is very sensitive to the shifts in Israeli foreign policy in general and relations with the Palestinians in particular.



## Chapter 8

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### ***Assessments and Ramifications***

The data for this memorandum was compiled by utilizing contemporary methodological approaches and analytical techniques. The task of interpreting the findings and assessing their meaning and ramifications, however, is a more demanding task. When researchers move from systematic and objective observation of behavior into the realm of interpretation and implications, they leave the safe ground of scientific methodology and veer toward uncharted waters. One must be very cautious when deriving operational conclusions from the empirical realm, including the seeming contradictions embedded in many cases in the results presented in this study. Nevertheless, the study is not complete without an attempt, undertaken with the requisite reservation and caution, to identify a number of conclusions that address at least to some degree the study's practical implications. Most of these conclusions have been identified and presented alongside the data. This final chapter will summarize some of the main conclusions and insights from the study.

The results from the current study reflect and confirm the essential nature of Israeli public opinion, namely highly complex with some contradictions, yet characterized by a high degree of consistency tempered by fluctuations over time. By and large Israeli public opinion is informed, deeply grounded in reality, and thus not subject to major upheavals. The major parameters of public opinion on the Palestinian issue remain essentially unchanged. Within the context of a permanent agreement with the Palestinians, a definite majority support the establishment of a Palestinian state, the "two states for two peoples" solution (over two thirds), and the evacuation of the small and isolated settlements, but not the settlement blocs. A clear majority: are not willing to suspend negotiations with the Palestinians, do not believe in a military solution to the conflict, and have not permanently given up

on a political solution. Furthermore, the dominance of demography over geography remains a basic feature of the Israeli value system; there exists a relatively optimistic view of the “Arab Spring” and a firm belief that the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan will be maintained; and the majority in principle support equal rights for the Arab citizens of Israel. All the above would seem to indicate that any Israeli government enjoys a great deal of flexibility in dealing with the Palestinian issue.

At the same time, a strong majority: do not believe that a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian can be achieved in the near future, seriously doubt whether the Palestinians are a real partner, and harbor much suspicion as to the Palestinians’ ultimate goal. They express a variety of negative attitudes toward Arab citizens of Israel and reject the concept of “land for peace.”

Consistency, however, does not mean stagnation. Public opinion is not static; it fluctuates over time, primarily as a result of events on the ground. Even if not signaling major upheavals, changes over time must be monitored, as these changes may help us understand how public opinion is shaped by events. At the same time, these fluctuations, sometimes reflecting a shift to the right and at other times to the left, do not dramatically change the overall picture. Thus, the Israeli center remains strong and stable, comprising at any given point in time approximately half of the population. In 2012, the extreme right and extreme left together comprise only 12 percent of the population. Inasmuch as in this data the moderate right and moderate left are not that far from the center, this means that there is a significant degree of flexibility in Israeli public opinion. The strength, resilience, and stability of its center or what is otherwise known as “middle Israel” or the “silent majority” is considered by many to be one of Israel’s major assets. At the same time, the size of the right and left groups varies from time to time, though the right steadily remains larger than the left – at times by a ratio as high as four to one and at times, as in the current study, by a ratio of two to one.

Analyzing Israeli public opinion over the past 27 years, one can clearly see a progressive moderation in the attitude of the Israeli public with regard to a possible political solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Few observers or students of Israeli public opinion would argue with this conclusion. Thus while Israelis remain hawkish on security, over the past two and a half decades they have become more and more dovish on political issues. This is reflected in figure 17, which shows that support for the establishment of

a Palestinian state tripled during this period, rising from 21 percent in 1987 to 61 percent in 2006 and 59 percent in 2012; 69 percent supported the “two states for two peoples” solution.

This long term trend to the left was arrested in 2006 and gave way to a shift to the right, manifest in the results for 2007 and 2009. The shift to the right from 2006 (the 2006 study was conducted in February and March of that year, prior to the events that seem to be the root of the change in the trend) to 2009 reflects, in all probability, the events of those years. These events include the Second Lebanon War and the perceived disastrous failure of the unilateral disengagement from Gaza. For the average Israeli, whether rightly or wrongly, the Second Lebanon War raised serious questions as to the wisdom of Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. Israelis supported the disengagement from Gaza and the removal of any Jewish presence from the area largely because they believed that it would remove a major point of confrontation and would lead to a respite from terror and relative quiet. Instead, Hamas took over Gaza, first by elections and then by a bloody coup, and turned it into a heavily armed base for continuous terror against Israel. It comes as no surprise that many Israelis were swayed by the rallying cry of the right that withdrawal from territories does not bring peace, rather terror and war.

The current study clearly shows that in 2012, the shift to the right has been arrested and even reversed. For almost all questions, the results for 2012 show a significant – albeit in most cases not overly dramatic – shift to the left. The shift to the left in 2012 is explicitly manifest with regard to the profile of the Jewish public. Thus as the analysis in chapter 2 demonstrates, while the center has remained stable from 2009 to 2012 and encompasses half of the population, the center in 2012 is not the same as the center in 2009. During this period, the population (6 percent) has moved from the right to the center and from the center to the left. Once again, one probable explanation for the shift to the left, which represents a reversal of the previous trend, lies in the events, or more accurately, the non-events of those years. The three year period between the last study, conducted in mid 2009, and the current study was characterized by relative tranquility on the security-military front and very little terrorism. The West Bank was quiet and the Palestinian security forces functioned effectively, maintaining law and order and doing sound work in preventing terrorism. The positive atmosphere on the ground could have had a salutary and calming effect on

Israeli public opinion (especially in comparison with the turbulent events of 2006-2009) resulting in a moderation of positions regarding possible solutions to the conflict.

Another explanation may be that the shifts represent a certain “boomerang” effect to the ruling government of the time. A right wing government brings about serious opposition and criticism on the left, and many of the government’s failures are attributed, rightly or wrongly, to its ideological approach. The opposite holds true for a center-left government. This may have a cumulative effect on public opinion. This would explain why the center-left Olmert government in 2006-2009 resulted in a shift to the right, while the right wing Netanyahu government in 2009-2012 had the opposite effect. This is an interesting hypothesis, which as of now remains speculative; its veracity can only be tested over time.

Are public opinion and especially changes in public opinion reflected in the political arena, i.e., in the voting behavior of the Israeli electorate? Election results are of course determined by many factors aside from the positions and attitudes of the electorate on the key issues of the day, including, inter alia, personal, historical, socio-economic, and ethnic factors. Nevertheless, one would expect some degree of correlation between the positions and attitudes of the electorate and elections results. Careful examination of the last few national elections indicate that the overall picture of Israeli public opinion was reflected in the results of those elections. In the elections held in March 2006, Kadima, established by Ariel Sharon and headed by his deputy, Ehud Olmert – the party behind the unilateral disengagement from Gaza – won the election and the center-left bloc achieved its best result (56 percent of the vote) in over two decades.

The shift in public opinion from 2006 to 2009 was reflected in the results of the national elections for the Knesset held in February 2009. Although no single party came out a clear winner, the right-center bloc received 54 percent of the vote, enabling the Likud under Benjamin Netanyahu to form a government. Thus the shift in the vote between the two competing blocs from 2006 to 2009 of 10 percent (5 percent is usually enough to bring about a change of government) probably reflects a constellation of factors, including the change in public opinion. In the elections held on January 22, 2013, the right lost its majority, with each of the two competing blocs receiving 50 percent of the vote, in effect resulting in a tie. This is in line with the shift to the left from 2009 to 2012. There were many pundits, especially in the

foreign press, who prior to the 2013 elections predicted a “lurch to the right.” Based on INSS data, it was clear that no such lurch was in the cards, and indeed, it never materialized. The balance between the two blocs includes the significant Arab representation in the Knesset (approximately 10 percent), although the Arab population is not represented in this study. Nevertheless, since the Arab representation has remained more or less constant over the last three elections, it is fair to say that any changes between the blocs are due to changes among the Jewish electorate. At the same time, the reservations posited in chapter 1 with regard to interpreting the results of the 2013 elections in terms of a right-left ideological continuum remain.

Are the results of a study conducted in 2012 relevant today? The aim of National Security and Public Opinion Project is not to supply information on the public stand on any given issue at any given moment. Rather, its purpose is to examine trends in Israeli public opinion on national security issues over time. As stated in the Introduction, this study is an in-depth, attitudinal, longitudinal study of how over time Israeli society views key national security issues. Its emphasis is on consistency, stability, and fluctuations in the attitudes and opinions of the Jewish population in Israel on these issues as well as the implications and ramifications of such for Israeli decision makers. This data complements reports of ongoing public opinion surveys, almost all of which are based on telephone surveys. The results of these surveys, when compared with results for specific items in this study, by and large confirm the results presented here and certainly do not point to any dramatic changes from those reported in this study.

What is the bottom line? What conclusions can be derived from the data, as far as the chances for advancing toward a solution to the conflict? On the one hand, Israelis are highly preoccupied with their security, deeply mistrustful of the Palestinian and Arab collective, and see little chance of reaching a peace agreement. At the same time, they are deeply desirous of peace, believe – at least in principle – in a political solution, are adamant that negotiations continue, and perceive demography, i.e., preserving Israel as a Jewish state, as more important than geography and overriding the importance of preserving Greater Israel. The majority of Israelis support the solution of “two states for two peoples,” but the results clearly indicate that the perception of many as far as the borders and parameters of these two states is quite far from that of the Palestinians.

The impressive results for the two items introduced in this study regarding a national referendum on a hypothetical permanent agreement clearly indicate that a solution is definitely not beyond reach, at least from Israel's perspective. The close to two to one margin supporting an agreement based on two states for two peoples and a 12 percent majority in favor of a detailed agreement – in both cases very close to a plurality – speak for themselves. The Israeli public does not support all of the elements of the detailed agreement presented in the study and would probably find it quite difficult to sign such an agreement, but would likely be ready to accept it if someone else makes the difficult decisions for it, i.e., the Israeli government. The question whether the respondents related to the phrase “if the Israeli government” as referring, indeed, to any Israeli government or to the government in power at the time, namely a government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, remains unanswered. However, inasmuch as the new Israeli government formed in March 2013 is indeed headed by Netanyahu, the question is moot. One can conclude from that data, with a high degree of certainty, that Mr. Netanyahu is politically able to negotiate a far reaching agreement with the Palestinians.

The results of this study reinforce the assessment of previous years, namely that the issue will likely be decided by two factors: events on the ground, specifically confidence building measures, and charismatic leadership. There is no substitute for strong leadership. There is good reason to believe that a charismatic political leader, backed by a strong and united government and with support of the defense establishment, could go very far regarding a permanent settlement with the Palestinians that would enjoy, albeit begrudgingly, approval of the Israeli public.

## Appendix A

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### ***The Sample***

The study described in this publication was based on a representative sample of the adult (eighteen years and above) Jewish population of Israel. The sample size of the survey was set at 600 respondents. Using a stratified random sampling procedure, the questionnaire was administered by trained interviewers (from a pool of 80 trained face to face interviewers) to 632 respondents in the early months of 2012 (from late February to mid April). The interviews were conducted at the permanent residence of the respondents and each interview lasted approximately one hour. Each household was visited at least three times to increase the response rate and decrease the number of refusals. At each household, one adult (over the age of eighteen) was interviewed. All told, 1238 households were selected. The overall response rate was thus 51 percent (632 out of 1238). However, of the 1238 households, 27 were unpopulated/offices and 105 were made up of people who could not communicate in Hebrew. Subtracting these households, which are irrelevant for the study population, the response rate is 57 percent (632 out of 1106). Of the 1106 relevant households, 90 were either empty (on all three visits), or were households where the respondent was ill or abroad. Thus, of the 1016 households that were visited, 632 participated in the study while 384 refused to participate. The effective response rate is, therefore, 62 percent and the refusal rate is 38 percent. This is far better than telephone surveys, where the response rate in many cases is less than 50 percent and in some surveys the refusal rate is over two thirds. Our research design, based on face to face interviews, minimized the self-selection bias that stems from possible differences between those willing and those refusing to participate in the study.

Units of analysis (households) were chosen by a two-stage random sampling procedure that included the stratification of geographic areas and a construction of representative statistical areas. The households were drawn from 58 statistical areas, chosen randomly and spread over 38 different localities – 26 cities and large towns and 12 kibbutzim and other smaller communities. Each statistical area was constructed as a representative segment of the overall socio-demographic composition typical for that area. The sampling error is 4 percent.

In order to check whether the sample is indeed representative of the adult Israeli Jewish population, the results for several demographic indicators were compared with nationwide data reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Table A1 shows the distribution according to gender, as reported by the CBS, for the entire Jewish population eighteen years and older, and as found in the 2012 sample. The distribution for 2012 is similar to the data provided by the CBS for 2010; the differences are small and all well within the sampling error.

**Table A1. CBS Jewish population in 2010 and INSS survey distribution by gender**

Gender	CBS data, 2010 %	Sample, 2012 %
Men	49.2	48.4
Women	50.8	51.6
Total	100	100

Table A2 presents the distribution for age. As can be seen there is a clear similarity between the 2012 sample and the CBS data. For seven of the nine age groups, differences are minimal, if they exist at all, and are all well within the sampling error. In two instances only, namely the age groups of 20-24 and 65-74, is there a meaningful discrepancy; the 20-24 age group is underrepresented in the INSS survey by 4 percent and the 65-74 age group is overrepresented in the INSS survey by 5 percent (only slightly above the sampling error). Increasing the number of categories within a given variable increases the sensitivity of a variable but also raises the probability of a sampling error for any given category. Thus, if age were divided into three categories (instead of nine), namely young (18-29), adult (30-64), and senior

citizens (65 and above), the differences between the CBS data and that of the sample (1-3 percent) would all be within the sampling error.

**Table A2. CBS Jewish population in 2010 and INSS survey distribution by age groups**

Age groups	CBS data, 2010 %	Sample, 2012 %
18-19	4	4
20-24	11	7
25-29	11	13
30-34	10	10
35-44	17	17
45-54	16	14
55-64	15	16
65-74	8	13
75+	8	6
Total	100	100

Tables A3 and A4 present the distribution for two key demographic variables: education measured in years of schooling and country of origin.

**Table A3. CBS Jewish population in 2010 and INSS survey distribution by education**

Years of Schooling	CBS data, 2010 %	Sample, 2012 %
0	2	1
1-4	1	1
5-8	5	5
9-10	6	3
11-12	35	38
13-15	26.	23
16+	25	29
Total	100	100

**Table A4. CBS Jewish population in 2010 and INSS survey distribution by geographic origin**

Origin	CBS data, 2010 %	Sample, 2012 %
Father born in Israel, respondent born in Israel	22	25
Respondent born in Europe, US (Western, Central, Eastern, USSR)	26	23
Respondent born in Asia and Africa (including USSR)	13	13
Respondent born in Israel, father born in Asia and Africa	24	24
Respondent born in Israel, father born Europe, US	15	15
Total	100	100

Comparison of the sample with the CBS data suggests that overall the sample is representative of the general adult Jewish population. Regarding education, all the discrepancies are within the sampling error, with the only meaningful discrepancy in the 16+ category. Here too, if we divide education into three categories (instead of seven), namely less than high school, high school, and post-high school education (for the most part academic), the differences are 0-1 percent, in effect nonexistent. Regarding the country of origin of the respondents, there is almost perfect similarity between the INSS sample and the CBS data. For three of the groups, the numbers are identical, and for the remaining two groups the discrepancy for each group is 3 percent, i.e., within the sampling error.

As demonstrated throughout this monograph, religious identification is the single most influential factor in determining attitudes and opinions on national security issues. Indeed, the weight of this factor in determining one's opinions is equal or even greater than that of all other demographic variables combined. It is therefore essential to examine whether the distribution on this key variable in our sample is equivalent to the distribution for the entire population. In 2010, as part of a nationwide social survey conducted by the CBS on a sample of 7,000 respondents representing the entire adult population of twenty years and older, the CBS gathered data as to one's religious self-identification. Table A5 presents the distribution on religious self-identification as reported by the CBS in 2010 and responses to an identical question for the sample.

**Table A5. CBS Jewish population in 2010 and INSS survey distribution by religious self-identification**

Religious affiliation	CBS data, 2010 %	Sample, 2012 %
Ultra-Orthodox	9	9
Religious	10	13
Traditional	38.	32
Secular	43	46
Total	100	100

The main difference is in the traditional group. This group is underrepresented by 6 percent, which is evenly divided between the religious group, which is overrepresented by 3 percent and the secular group which is also overrepresented by 3 percent. The difference for these two groups is within the sampling error; the representation of the ultra-Orthodox is identical with that reported by the CBS. For most items, the traditional group is in the middle; the religious group is to the right and the secular group to the left. Thus, the fact that the religious group and the secular group are each overrepresented by 3 percent balances each other and neutralizes the underrepresentation of the traditional group.

Taken as a whole, the sample of the Jewish adult population of Israel drawn for the INSS survey in 2012 constitutes a representative sample of the population and the analysis of the sample data can be safely used to infer conclusions about this population.



## Appendix B

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### ***The National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP)***

Launched in 1984, the National Security and Public Opinion Project (NSPOP) monitors Israeli public opinion on issues related to national security. Surveys undertaken and cited in the framework of this project were based on representative samples of the adult Jewish population of Israel. The project was conceived and until 2004 directed by the late Professor Asher Arian, and all the surveys through that year were prepared, conducted, and analyzed by him. As of 2005, responsibility for the project was transferred to Dr. Yehuda Ben Meir.

The current survey was conducted from February to April 2012. The sampling error at the 95 percent level is  $\pm 3.76$  percent.

The dates of the project's surveys were: (1) June 1985 (2) January 1986 (3) December 9, 1987-January 4, 1988 (4) October 2-30, 1988 (5) March 5-October 27, 1990 (6) March 16-31, 1991 (7) June 1-21, 1992 (8) January 1-15, 1993 (9) January 11-February 9, 1994 (10) January 4-February 7, 1995 (11) February 1996 (12) March 1-31, 1997 (13) January 26-March 9, 1998 (14) January 25-March 7, 1999 (15) January 24-February 26, 2000 (16) April 12-May 11, 2001 (17) January 30-February 27, 2002 (18) April 27-May 23, 2003 (19) February 2004 (20) July 5-August 11, 2005 (21) February 21-March 27, 2006 (22) February 25-March 25, 2007 (23) May-June, 2009 (24) February-April 2012.

Sample sizes were 1,171 in 1985; 1,172 in 1986; 1,116 in 1987; 873 in 1988; 1,251 in 1990; 1,131 in 1991; 1,192 in 1992; 1,139 in 1993; 1,239 in 1994; 1,220 in 1995; 1,201 in 1996; 1,126 in 1997; 1,207 in 1998; 1,203 in

1999; 1,201 in 2000; 1,216 in 2001; 1,264 in 2002; 1,103 in 2003; 1,100 in 2004; 704 in 2005; 724 in 2006; 709 in 2007; 616 in 2009; and 632 in 2012.

The fieldwork for the surveys through 1995 was done by the Dahaf Research Institute, in 1996 by Modi'in Ezrachi, between 1997 and 2002 by the Almidan/Mahshov Research Institute, and starting in 2003 by the B. I. and Lucille Cohen Institute of Public Opinion Research at Tel Aviv University.

## INSS Memoranda 2012 – Present

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- No. 126, April 2013, Yehuda Ben Meir and Olena Bagno-Moldavsky, *The Voice of the People: Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2012*.
- No. 125, March 2013, Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov, *Regime Stability in the Middle East: An Analytical Model to Assess the Possibility of Governmental Change* [Hebrew].
- No. 124, December 2012, Shlomo Brom, ed. *In the Aftermath of Operation Pillar of Defense: The Gaza Strip, November 2012*.
- No. 123, December 2012, Shlomo Brom, ed. *In the Aftermath of Operation Pillar of Defense: The Gaza Strip, November 2012* [Hebrew].
- No. 122, September 2012, Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz, eds., *Arms Control Dilemmas: Focus on the Middle East*.
- No. 121, July 2012, Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz, eds., *Arms Control Dilemmas: Selected Issues* [Hebrew].
- No. 120, July 2012, Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler, eds., *The Complex Mosaic of the Civilian Front in Israel* [Hebrew].
- No. 119, June 2012, Meir Elran and Yehuda Ben Meir, eds., *Drafting the Ultra-Orthodox into the IDF: Renewal of the Tal Law* [Hebrew].
- No. 118, June 2012, Zvi Magen, *Russia in the Middle East: Policy Challenges* [Hebrew].
- No. 117, May 2012, Shmuel Even and David Siman-Tov, *Cyber Warfare: Concepts and Strategic Trends*.
- No. 116, April 2012, Yoel Guzansky, *The Gulf States in a Changing Strategic Environment* [Hebrew].
- No. 115, March 2012, Emily B. Landau, *Decade of Diplomacy: Negotiations with Iran and North Korea and the Future of Nuclear Non-proliferation*.
- No. 114, March 2012, Yoel Guzansky and Mark A. Heller, eds., *One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications* [Hebrew].
- No. 113, March 2012, Yoel Guzansky and Mark A. Heller, eds., *One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications*.
- No. 112, February 2012, Uzi Rabi and Yoel Guzansky, eds., *The Gulf States: Between Iran and the West* [Hebrew].

