

# **The Israeli Public Debate on Preventing a Nuclear Iran**

Yehuda Ben Meir

Over the course of 2012, the public debate on the possibility of independent Israeli military action against Iranian nuclear installations intensified, reaching unprecedented proportions. During its sixty-four years of existence, Israel has gone to war several times and initiated quite a few military operations, some with the highest level of risk. Before a decision was made in certain cases involving wars and military operations, a difficult and incisive debate took place on whether in fact the operation should be undertaken. Sometimes, the discussion lasted for weeks, and in other cases, for many months. However, in all of these cases, the debate was conducted among a small group of senior political and military-security figures who maintained absolute secrecy, or at most, revealed minimal information to the public.

On the Iranian nuclear issue, however, the opposite is the case. On this issue a sharp public debate is underway in the media on all aspects of Israel's handling of the challenge, knowing no boundaries or limits. The participants in the discussion are the country's leaders, including the "decision makers," i.e., the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister, as well as those who formerly held senior positions in Israel's security-intelligence establishment. Commentators from a variety of fields are also participating, as well as intellectuals – including writers and academicians – and many others. The public debate is unmatched with regard to its sharpness of tone, with the exception of the discussion on the future of

the territories captured in the Six Day War and the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This article will describe how the public debate on a possible Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities developed, and then analyze its impact on Israeli public opinion. It will also explain how this issue differs qualitatively from other issues in security/operational and political terms, and why this has prompted such a heated public discussion.

### **Public Debate in Israel on Security Issues**

In the months preceding the Sinai campaign in 1956 or the planned operation in Lebanon ("Big Pines" and "Little Pines") before the outbreak of the war in 1982, the deliberations had only a faint echo in the media and among the Israeli public. There was no public discussion preceding the attack on the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq in June 1982 or the September 2007 attack on the nuclear reactor in Dir al-Azur in Syria, which according to foreign sources was carried out by Israel.

The existence of a nuclear reactor near Baghdad was known to many people. Israel protested vigorously to the French government over its agreement to build the reactor in Iraq and made it clear that the reactor would threaten Israel's security. The protest was made public. The public diplomacy campaign continued for a number of years, aimed at France, and later also at Italy, which had agreed to sell Iraq parts for a plutonium separation facility. The United States was also involved in efforts to prevent the deal from going through. Furthermore, published reports hinted that Israel had taken steps in several countries in order to delay construction of the reactor and to sabotage Iraqi attempts to activate it.<sup>1</sup>

In tandem, a heated discussion took place in Israel that divided the political and security establishment with regard to a possible Israeli attack. The debate went on for some eighteen months. The issue was brought up for initial discussion in the Ministerial Committee on Defense about a year before the attack was carried out, and the Cabinet plenum, by majority vote, approved a proposal in favor of an attack seven months before it was actually carried out.<sup>2</sup> During these months, the Deputy Prime Minister threatened to resign, which led to a postponement of the operation (though he later changed his mind on an attack), while the head of Military Intelligence,

the head of the Mossad, and the Deputy Defense Minister were steadfast in their opposition. In the month preceding the attack, another decision was approved by majority vote (six to three) in the Ministerial Committee on Defense. The attack was postponed three times at the last minute. The head of the opposition was also vehemently opposed to a military attack, and even wrote a letter to the Prime Minister demanding that he refrain from such an attack.<sup>3</sup> Despite all this activity, the possibility of an Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor was not mentioned in the Israeli media. The debate was conducted far from the public eye, and thus, just as the attack came as a surprise to Iraq, the Israeli public too was surprised when it learned of the attack and the destruction of the reactor.

Unlike the case of the Osirak reactor, the existence of a nuclear reactor in Syria was completely unknown to the Israeli public, as it was to the Syrian public. According to foreign sources, a discussion in the senior political and military echelon also took place on the possibility of attacking the Syrian reactor. Such an attack carried a not-insignificant danger of causing an all-out war between Israel and Syria. While it was later reported that for a long time the Defense Minister opposed the timing of the attack and favored its postponement, no information was leaked, and the attack and all that was connected to it remained a state secret.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Public Discussion on the Iranian Nuclear Issue**

Developments in technology and communications since the attack on the Iraqi reactor have broken the boundaries of secrecy. As a result, decision makers' ability to keep the discussion of many significant issues secret over time has also been reduced. Moreover, the Iranian nuclear issue has unique characteristics that could explain, at least partially, the nature and the depth of the public debate that has developed on the issue.

The possibility that the Iranian nuclear program will be completed and Iran will gain military nuclear capability is a threat to both the region and the entire world. Iran is aspiring to hegemony in the Middle East, and in particular, in the oil-rich Gulf area. The religious Islamic and extremist fundamentalist regime ignores basic international norms. Moreover, the Iranian regime espouses blatant anti-Semitism, including Holocaust denial.

Its spokesmen often make harsh anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish statements, the likes of which no large, strong state has made since the Six Day War.

The Iranian regime has demonstrated its determination to complete its nuclear program. Reports issued periodically by the International Atomic Energy Agency indicate that Iran's progress is continuing in spite of heavy political and economic pressures. Since the beginning of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Western states have attempted to create a front that will stop the program. On the basis of chapter 7 of the UN charter, the UN Security Council has passed four resolutions on economic sanctions against Iran that are among the strongest the international community has ever known. In spite of evidence of growing economic distress in Iran, the sanctions thus far have not succeeded in stopping the state's progress toward nuclearization.

The possibility of a military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities has been discussed openly by leaders and with detailed media coverage in Israel, the United States, and the international community, which was not the case with the Iraqi or Syrian reactors. The issue of the military option has revealed differences of opinion among the countries that have a common interest in stopping the Iranian nuclear program. In addition, public discussion of the issue has expanded, and includes assessments concerning a possible response by Iran and its allies in the Middle East to an attempt to sabotage the program by military means.

The heated discussion on Iran did not develop in a vacuum. One question, to which there is no definitive answer, is whether it is primarily the result of the willingness of those who oppose a military strike to give ongoing sharp public expression to their position, or that the source of the discussion is the firm stance displayed repeatedly by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak regarding the potential necessity of an attack and their willingness to order it. Of course, this is a chicken and egg type question, as to which influence preceded the other. Most likely, the influence was reciprocal: a statement by one side increased the willingness of the other side to step up its rhetoric.

Previous Israeli prime ministers did not hide the gravity with which they viewed the Iranian nuclear program, but they did not place the issue at the top of the agenda and rarely commented on it. Benjamin Netanyahu,

in contrast, defined the threat as existential even before his election as Prime Minister in late March 2009, and he believes that the subject heads Israel's agenda. Netanyahu even compared the current period to 1938, that is, the last minute at which the world could perhaps have stopped Hitler and thus been able to prevent the Holocaust. In 2012, on the evening of Holocaust Memorial Day, a major national event at which prime ministers traditionally speak in general terms about the horrors of the Holocaust and the dramatic, historical change in the situation of the Jewish people, which can now defend itself, Netanyahu devoted almost his entire speech to the Iranian issue, conducting a heated debate with those who minimize the gravity of the threat, emphasizing his obligation as Prime Minister to prevent the danger to the Jewish people of another Holocaust, and not leaving a great deal of doubt as to his willingness to act.<sup>5</sup>

During 2012, Ehud Barak joined those supporting a strike against Iran. His pronouncements on the subject became more frequent and more extreme, and in contrast to his position on other political-security issues, it appeared that on this he was in agreement with the Prime Minister. Barak developed the concept of an Iranian "zone of immunity," which was supposed to indicate the urgency of a military strike. At the annual "Security Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" conference of the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv in May 2012, Netanyahu and Barak spoke about the Iranian threat in a nearly identical style. Their comments had public resonance both in Israel and abroad. The Prime Minister emphasized that Israel is entitled to use the means necessary for ensuring its survival, and that he would act accordingly.<sup>6</sup> Barak made clear why Israel must seriously consider the military option, while stressing that the sword is in fact at Israel's throat and that in contrast to the American position, time is quickly running out.<sup>7</sup>

The firm stance taken by these key security figures set off warning lights among opponents of an Israeli strike against Iranian nuclear facilities, both in Israel and abroad. The heads of the US defense establishment – the Secretary of Defense and the heads of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – were quick to respond, expressing publicly their firm opinion on the grave, almost apocalyptic consequences of an Israeli strike, and on Israel's limited

capacity to thwart the Iranian military nuclear program in the long term. Their statements poured oil on the fire of the public debate.

At the same time, it is not entirely clear whether the determination evinced by the Prime Minister and the Defense Minister reflected actual readiness to bring about an independent Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. Perhaps, rather, their primary goal was to spur the international community to act with firm resolve against the Iranian program. There is no unequivocal answer to this question, and it is possible that the answer lies in a combination of both options. Yet in any case, two facts are certain: one, as of the time of this writing, Israel has not attacked Iran, and two, the international community has indeed been prompted for more decisive action against Iran.

The increasingly heated public discussion is apparently linked to the escalating statements by Israeli leaders. While the trenchant debate on the issue began long before, the turning point was on Friday, May 6, 2011, when former Mossad head Meir Dagan, speaking at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, commented on the possibility of the Israeli Air Force acting against the Iranian nuclear project. "This is the stupidest thing that I've heard," he declared. Dagan did not hide the fact that he completely rejected an Israeli strike on Iran, and clarified that in his opinion, Israel's air force is not capable of carrying out the mission to its conclusion. He added that in his view, an Israeli attack would mean war with Iran, which is liable to last for many months and see missiles launched at Israel, with Hizbollah, Hamas, and perhaps even Syria taking part in this campaign.<sup>8</sup>

Dagan's comments, which were made about six months after he completed his tenure as head of the Mossad, a post he had held for eight years, shocked the Israeli public. With Dagan opposing Netanyahu's position, his comments were interpreted as a public challenge to the Prime Minister, if not an outright vote of no confidence in Netanyahu's judgment and discretion. The statements by Dagan, who led a revolution in Mossad operations and, according to foreign reports, presided over extraordinary Mossad successes in many areas and is generally considered one of the best heads of the Mossad, were a deviation from accepted rules. Following his comments, others began to speak freely, which launched a public debate that was sharper and more vigorous than before. Dagan himself repeated

his comments with slightly different wording in the subsequent months as well. On December 19, 2011, at a round table discussion that included former heads of the defense establishment, Dagan claimed that the military option must stay on the table, but that it should be used only “as a last resort.”<sup>9</sup> He also stated that war should be waged only when a sharp sword is at your throat. In an interview with “Sixty Minutes” on CBS on March 9, 2012, Dagan repeated his call not to rush to take military action against Iran.<sup>10</sup> In the same interview he also claimed that Israel can wait another three years before a military strike, because the Iranian response to a strike will have “a devastating impact on our ability to continue with our daily life,” and after such a strike, “I think that Israel will be in a very serious situation for quite a time.”<sup>11</sup>

Dagan’s comments strengthened assessments published from time to time in the Israeli media, that the members of the leading troika among Israeli defense professionals – the IDF chief of staff, the head of the Mossad, and the head of the General Security Services (GSS) – oppose an Israeli strike against Iran. On April 27, 2012, former GSS head Yuval Diskin launched a personal attack, unprecedented in its severity, on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense. Calling Netanyahu and Barak “messianists from Caesarea and Akirov,” he made it clear that he has no confidence in them, claimed that they are misrepresenting the Iranian issue and making decisions based on “messianic feelings,” and added that they are unfit to lead the country, and certainly to lead a war against Iran. Essentially, said Diskin, in contrast to their opinion, an Israeli strike would not prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb and would only accelerate the Iranian nuclear arms race.<sup>12</sup> Diskin’s brusque, personal tirade, as well as the fact that Iran was not within his essential purview as head of the GSS, somewhat blunted the impact of his comments. However, they did reflect an escalation in the public debate. In August 2012, former chief of staff Lt. Gen. (ret.) Amnon Lipkin-Shahak also spoke out against a hasty attack before all other options were exhausted. Lipkin-Shahak stressed that Israel must not act before the US elections in November 2012.<sup>13</sup>

Not all former defense establishment officials have spoken in this way. Former chief of staff Lt. Gen. (ret.) Gabi Ashkenazi has not addressed this issue often, and when he has, it has been in general terms only. Former head

of Military Intelligence Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin (a fighter pilot who served as deputy commander of the Israel Air Force and participated in the bombing of the Osirak reactor) has on many occasions publicly expressed his belief that if the choice is between bombing Iran and an Iranian bomb, then Israel must choose the former, because a nuclear Iran would be an intolerable threat to the State of Israel. However, Yadlin has stressed that there is also a third possibility, and that there are a number of essential conditions for an Israeli military action, including international legitimacy for the operation and ensuring continuous international activity to prevent the Iranian military nuclear program from being restarted.<sup>14</sup>

The public debate heated up further between July and September 2012.<sup>15</sup> The Israeli and US media gave the impression that Netanyahu and Barak were seriously considering an independent Israeli military strike before the US presidential elections. The Prime Minister's political opponents even charged that his considerations included a desire to intervene in the US elections in favor of his longtime friend, Republican candidate Mitt Romney (this claim was not based on any evidence). The visits by several US administration officials, which were interpreted as part of an attempt to persuade decision makers not to attack Iran, reinforced this feeling.

On August 10, 2012, leading Israeli newspapers devoted extensive coverage to the issue of an attack on Iran. *Haaretz* published an interview with someone referred to as a "decision maker," though it was clear that it was Defense Minister Ehud Barak. In the interview, Barak was quoted as warning against living in the shadow of the Iranian bomb, against depending on an American strike, and against an Israel that would no longer be what it was if Iran had military nuclear capability.<sup>16</sup> In the same issue, an article appeared that accused the Prime Minister and Defense Minister of warmongering against the advice of Washington and also of endangering Dimona, that is, the nuclear capabilities attributed to Israel.<sup>17</sup> *Yediot Ahronot* published an article with an assessment that the Prime Minister and Defense Minister favored an Israeli attack before the US elections, while officials in the IDF and the intelligence community were uncompromisingly opposed to an Israeli military strike.<sup>18</sup> *Maariv* published a public opinion poll that examined the positions of the Israeli public on the issue of a nuclear Iran (its findings will be discussed below). The same



day, a paid advertisement titled “a black flag” appeared on the front page of *Haaretz*. Signed by fifty individuals, among them professors, Israel Prize winners, and public figures, the announcement stated that the order to attack Iran would be manifestly illegal and must not be obeyed, and that waging war under existing conditions would be a “reckless gamble” that could “endanger [Israel’s] very existence.” The signatories maintained that “the blackest of flags flies over a war waged under these conditions.”<sup>19</sup> Another ad explicitly called on air force pilots to refuse an order to attack Iran.<sup>20</sup>

The public debate reached its peak on August 15, 2012, when President Shimon Peres broke with custom and, in an interview on Channel 2 news, took an unequivocal position in the discussion, stating explicitly that Israel should not act alone against the Iranian nuclear program. In essence he ruled out the Israeli military option when “it is clear to us that we cannot do this alone.” Peres expressed confidence in the seriousness of US President Barack Obama’s intentions to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, and he stressed that “Obama does not say this only in order to put us at ease. There is no doubt of this.” President Peres’ firm self-positioning on the side of those who oppose a military operation was a turning point in the continuing debate. Aside from the fact that in recent years Shimon Peres has been the most popular public figure in Israel, he is considered the number one authority on the nuclear issue. The blunt criticism of Peres’ comments by the Prime Minister’s Office and the Likud immediately after the interview was broadcast showed their fear of the impact the comments would have on public opinion.<sup>21</sup>

Prime Minister Netanyahu sharpened the content and the style of his rhetoric. In a series of interviews in Israel and the United States in late August and September, Netanyahu demanded that the international community, especially the United States and President Obama, set red lines for Iran. If Iran crossed those lines, it would be a target for attack. For his part, President Obama firmly rejected the demand and stressed that he has no intention of setting red lines or escalating beyond an explicit statement that the United States will prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. This created an open conflict between Israel and the United States. It has been posited that the Prime Minister saw in the sharpened

debate and criticism an opportunity for him to harden his rhetoric, in order to intensify the pressure on the international community in general, and the United States in particular.

Whether related or not, there was then, and particularly after his visit to the United States, a noticeable change in style – specifically, a muted tone – in the Defense Minister’s statements on the issue. It was suggested that Barak’s “new” moderation did not represent an essential change in stance on his part, rather a desire to ease the friction in US-Israel relations and prevent an attack on Iran from becoming a main issue in the US elections. Be it as it may be, on September 27, 2012, Netanyahu gave a speech at the UN General Assembly that dispelled the tension that had accompanied public discussion of the issue. The reason for this was Netanyahu’s statement that from Israel’s point of view, the moment of truth will take place in the summer of 2013, which implied that Israel does not intend to attack in the near future, and certainly not before the US elections.

### **The Debate and Public Opinion**

It is difficult to point to direct, unequivocal influence that the public debate has had on Israeli public opinion, but the discourse has certainly contributed to the very charged environment. What is also clear is that the Israeli public, and especially the Jewish public, is divided on the issue of an independent Israeli military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities. As part of the National Security and Public Opinion Project at the Institute for National Security Studies, a representative sampling of the adult Jewish population was presented in May-June 2009 with the following question: “If Israel discovers that Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, should Israel: 1. Use all diplomatic means to disarm Iran but avoid a military attack? 2. Attack Iran’s nuclear facilities?” Fifty-nine percent of the respondents chose the second option, that is, they supported a military strike, while 41 percent preferred the first option, i.e., opposed a military strike.<sup>22</sup> In February-March 2012, within the framework of the same public opinion project, the question was posed more precisely: “How, in your opinion, should Israel act in the face of the danger that Iran will develop nuclear weapons: 1. Use all diplomatic means to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, to avoid a military strike? 2. Attack Iran’s

nuclear facilities?” Fifty-two percent of those questioned chose the first option, that is, they opposed a military strike, while 48 percent chose the second option, an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities.<sup>23</sup>

These findings showed a significant drop – 11 percent – in support of a military strike. The disparity should be weighed cautiously because of the amount of time that elapsed between the two polls: in 2009, an Israeli military strike was not seen as imminent, and therefore the question was considered hypothetical, whereas in 2012, the possibility of an attack on Iran was considered more realistic. In addition, the questions asked about this issue were not worded identically. However, this result, which indicates that public opinion is divided on a military strike, is supported by the findings of many public opinion polls conducted during 2012.

Why is there considerable reluctance on the part of more than half of the Israeli population to conduct an Israeli military action against Iran? There are two leading reasons for the reservations. One is the opposition of professional defense figures to an attack, as expressed in the public debate, while the other is an awareness of strong American opposition to an attack and the wish to avoid a confrontation with the United States on a security issue that is so fundamental to Israel. The findings of a poll that was conducted in early August 2012 by the Israel Democracy Institute as part of the Peace Index project showed more confidence in the judgment of the heads of the security establishment than in the judgment of the Prime Minister and Defense Minister: 57 percent for the former, vs. 28 percent for the latter. Sixty-one percent of respondents believed that Israel should not attack Iran’s nuclear facilities without cooperation from the United States. This position apparently reflects the assessment that the chances are slim that without US cooperation an Israeli attack would succeed in stopping Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons for a significant period of time (54 percent of those questioned). Seventy-six percent of respondents believed that the chances of success of an attack would be high if it were done with American cooperation. An interesting and surprising finding is that 60 percent of the respondents among Israel’s Jewish population believed that Israel must accept the fact that it is not possible to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and should prepare accordingly.<sup>24</sup>

Data from a poll published in *Maariv* on August 10, 2012 confirmed these findings.<sup>25</sup> Forty percent of the respondents stated that they trusted the judgment of the Prime Minister and Defense Minister on the Iranian issue, while 27 percent said that they did not, and 23 percent replied that they did somewhat. Forty-four percent of those surveyed believe that it would “not be legitimate from a public point of view” if the political echelon decided to attack Iran in the face of opposition by professional defense figures in Israel to an attack. Only 33 percent of respondents stated that such a decision would be legitimate, and 23 percent did not know how to answer or did not answer. As for reluctance to have Israel attack, those interviewed were asked whether, if the latest date on which Israel could inflict significant damage on the Iranian nuclear program by itself were close, it should attack by itself or “leave the work to the United States and the international community.” Thirty-five percent expressed support for an Israeli attack in such a situation, while 39 percent advocated leaving the task to the United States and the international community. Twenty-six percent of those polled did not know how to answer this question or did not answer. There were similar responses to a question that included an explicit possibility that an Israeli attack would lead to massive firing of missiles at the home front and to hundreds of people killed.

## **Conclusion**

How will the public debate in Israel on the issue of confronting a nuclear Iran evolve? On this subject, what is unknown is greater than what is known. Elections in Israel are scheduled for January 2013. At the time of this writing, it appears that Benjamin Netanyahu has a good chance of forming and heading the new government. However, it is difficult to know which political parties and which individuals will comprise the government, and especially, who will be the Defense Minister and how will he approach the Iranian nuclear issue. In June 2013, presidential elections will be held in Iran, but it is not known what the results will be, whether they will be accompanied by civil unrest, and whether a popular protest will develop into an “Iranian spring.” President Obama has been elected for a second term, which indicates the high likelihood of continuity in the foreign policy of the US administration in the coming years, and

in particular, on the Iranian issue. Obama has made a public commitment that his policy is intended to prevent Iran from acquiring military nuclear capability and that containment is not on the agenda. However, it is not clear if the negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran will be resumed, and what their results would be

The nature and the directions of the public debate in Israel in the coming period will therefore be a function of developments in the regional and international arenas. If an Israeli strike does not return to the agenda, the discussion will remain relatively dormant. If, however, an Israeli strike seems to be a practical possibility, the debate will heat up again. The nature and the content of the debate will express, inter alia, the two factors that have a significant impact on public opinion: the position of the United States on a strike against Iran, and the position of senior Israeli security professionals on this issue.

## Notes

- 1 Yehuda Ben Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 134-43.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 137-39.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 139, 142.
- 4 Amos Harel, "Code Name: Arizona," *Haaretz*, September 11, 2012.
- 5 Jonathan Lis, Nir Hasson, and Jacky Khoury, "Holocaust Memorial Day: Prime Minister Netanyahu at Yad Vashem Ceremony: We Must Stop Iran from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons," *Haaretz*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/2.444/1.1688910>.
- 6 Tal Shalev, "Is Netanyahu Hinting at Iran? 'Our Cyber Capability Improves our Defense,'" *Walla News*, May 29, 2012, <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/9/2537296>.
- 7 "Barak: Iran is Convinced That We and the United States are Incapable of Attack," <http://www.mako.co.il/news-military/Israel/article-f728d67da5c9731018.htm>.
- 8 Yossi Melman, "Former Mossad Chief Meir Dagan: Attack on Iran the Stupidest Thing I've Heard," *Haaretz*, May 7, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1173290>.
- 9 "Meir Dagan: Attack on Iran Last Option," December 19, 2011, <http://www.mako.co.il/news-military/security/Article-23f11c065965431017.htm>.
- 10 "Dagan: Instead of Attack, Encourage Regime Change in Iran," *Ynet*, March 9, 2012, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4200519,00.html>.

- 11 "Meir Dagan: Attack on Iran? It Can Wait Three More Years," *Ynet*, March 12, 2012, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4201571,00.html>.
- 12 Barak Ravid, "Diskin in Attack on Netanyahu and Barak: No Confidence in Messianists from Caesarea and Akirov," *Haaretz*, April 27, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1695185>.
- 13 Shahar Hai, "Lipkin-Shahak Opposes Attack on Iran: It isn't Correct to Hurry," *Haaretz*, August 14, 2012, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4268448,00.html>.
- 14 Amos Yadlin, "A Conceptual Framework and Decision Making Model for Israel about Iran," *Strategic Assessment* 15, no. 2 (2012): 69-73.
- 15 Amos Harel, "With Arrival of Fall, Sanctions are being Discussed Again," *Haaretz*, October 7, 2012.
- 16 Ari Shavit, "The Eastern Front: The Decision Maker," *Haaretz Magazine*, August 10, 2012.
- 17 Amir Oren, "Strike Now," *Haaretz*, August 10, 2012.
- 18 Nahum Barnea and Shimon Schiffer, "This is the Autumn with the Cloud," *Yediot Ahronot*, August 10, 2012.
- 19 *Haaretz*, August 10, 2012.
- 20 "A Call to Pilots: Our Fate is in your Hands – Don't Bomb," *Ynet*, August 16, 2012.
- 21 Barak Ravid, "Serious Conflict between Leaders; Netanyahu Associates: 'Peres Forgot What the President's Role Is,'" *Haaretz*, August 16, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/2.444/1.1803347>.
- 22 Yehuda Ben Meir and Olena Bagno-Moldavsky, *Vox Populi: Trends in Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2004-2009*, Memorandum No. 106 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2010), p. 63.
- 23 The results of a public opinion poll taken in February-March 2012 within the framework of the INSS National Security and Public Opinion Project were presented at the INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in May 2012, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfxm8LQOlKA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfxm8LQOlKA).
- 24 Ephraim Ya'ar and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index, July 2012," <http://en.idi.org.il/media/665402/The%20Peace%20Index%20Data%20-%20July%202012.pdf>.
- 25 Ofer Shelah, "They're not Afraid to Attack, They Fear a Second Holocaust," *Maariv NRG*, August 10, 2012.