



A DIFFICULT QUEST FOR PEACE



A History of Public Opinion from 1967-2017



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Jerusalem, Israel

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Contents

Introduction	4
1967 – The Six Day War and its Aftermath	4
1973 – The Yom Kippur War.....	6
1982 – First Lebanon War	8
1987-1993 – The First Intifada	10
1993-1996 – Oslo Peace Accords and the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin	12
2000-2005 – Second Intifada	14
2017 – Present Day	18
Conclusion	21

Introduction

Fifty years ago, confronted with clear evidence of an impending Egyptian-led invasion, Israel's leaders gambled its national survival by launching a pre-emptive assault. What became known as the "Six Day War" has since become a signal historical event in the nation's history, and still shapes the collective consciousness of the Israeli people. Within less than a week, the tiny country's territory tripled.

The unsought Israeli control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Desert brought urgent questions before the nation. Should Israel permanently annex one-or-more of these regions? Might they serve, instead, as critical bargaining pieces in a quest to persuade her enemies to abandon their dreams of Israel's destruction? What legal and ethical principles should guide the national debate?

Fifty years later, East Jerusalem has been integrated into Jerusalem's municipal borders. To meet critical security needs, the Golan Heights has been annexed into Israel. The Sinai Desert was returned to Egypt. Although Israel withdrew voluntarily from Gaza, the final status of Gaza and the West Bank remain undetermined. In other words, the questions posed by the miraculous outcome of the Six Day War remain unanswered.

The opinions of the Israeli people about these complex legal, ethical, political, and security issues have been measured, repeatedly, for five decades. Polling data makes up an overlooked, but vital, vector of national feedback during several crucial phases of the post-1967 era. Changing national convictions have influenced the decisions of political leaders, even as those leaders have, in turn, shaped public views.

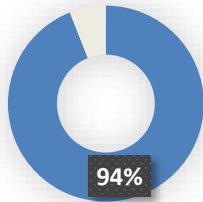
This paper tracks the public's evolving response to the continuing conflict and, especially, to the indeterminate status of the territories. We conclude that the public showed a surprisingly sophisticated, if intuitive, grasp of the substantial risks tied to the most sweeping proposals and initiatives spanning 1967 to 2017. Our analysis will help anticipate, to some extent, the pathway which still lies ahead for the nation.

1967 – The Six Day War and its Aftermath

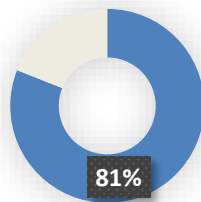
The majority of Israelis celebrated the military victory of the Six Day War as a powerful witness to Israel's strength and ability to overcome significant disadvantages. Questions regarding the future of the territory acquired in the war stemmed mainly from concerns about security and defense. A survey taken just days after the conclusion of the war revealed that 94% of Israeli respondents thought Israel should

hold onto Jerusalem's Old City, 81% felt that Israel should retain the West Bank, and 72% shared the same view about Gaza.¹

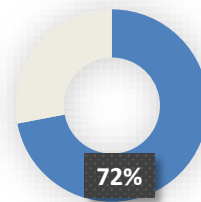
**Israel Should Hold onto
Jerusalem's Old City**



**Israel Should Hold
onto the West Bank**



**Israel Should
Hold onto Gaza**



Public support for retention of the territories acquired in the war was not accompanied by optimism about the prospects of peace. Only 46% thought Arab countries would be willing to negotiate peace with Israel.² Israelis were divided on the value of talks. 62% of Israelis surveyed were willing to offer small concessions for the sake of peace. However, a wide variance of opinion about details left concessions theoretical and subjective.³ The Old City, the West Bank and Gaza did not fall within the scope of “small concessions,” given overwhelming public support for holding these territories. Only 9% of respondents deemed a final peace worthy of making large concessions.⁴

A euphoric sentiment prevailed, even though peace did not appear imminent. Israel had triumphed against all odds, and even unexpectedly expanded her territory. With victory came new considerations regarding those Arabs who inhabited the land that was recently won.

The government's choice of the legal framework to apply to the residents of the recently acquired territories could not be separated from the public's stance towards the residents of those areas. It is telling that 58% of Israeli respondents stated that Arabs “will never reach the level of the Jews” and that 49% were unwilling to become personally friendly with an Arab.⁵ Since 40% of all respondents already favored military rule over the Arabs in the territories, the government's willingness to defer final decisions over the West Bank and Gaza to the future are readily understood.⁶ In light of non-stop Arab hostility since 1948, these numbers were remarkably positive and

¹ “Surveys: 50 Years Since the Six-Day War,” the Israel Democracy Institute, <https://en.idi.org.il/press-releases/14606>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

undoubtedly dwarfed the likely negative response of Palestinians, had the latter group been allowed to express its views. Regrettably, scant progress towards peace was made after the Six Day War.

1973 – The Yom Kippur War

The Yom Kippur War, initiated by a shocking attack on Israel on the Day of Atonement, scared and angered the Israeli public, reminding the nation of its vulnerability. Despite the IDF's relatively swift defeat of the attackers, Israeli society now realized that military attacks could be imminent at any future moment. Government leaders were blamed for having ignored warning signs of an impending attack, jeopardizing the safety of the country for political reasons.

The military victory of the IDF was a source of pride, demonstrating the nation's ability to mobilize on short notice and achieve critical objectives. Still, the war's conclusion left the nation with a prevailing sense of weakness. Indeed, barely a month after the war, 70% of individuals surveyed believed that Israel's situation had changed for the worse as a result of the Yom Kippur War.⁷ This reflected a sober realization of Israel's existential fragility more than it did a negative evaluation of the war's outcome.

Frustration with the government for its failure to prepare the nation for war was followed by uncertainty that leaders had handled the aftermath of the Six Day War properly. By a majority of 56%, citizens concluded that the government's policy on "foreign, security, and peace affairs" from the Six Day War to the Yom Kippur War had either been justified to a small extent only, or not at all.⁸ The public split evenly on whether the government had showed an appropriate readiness to compromise during the period between the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War.⁹ Respondents criticized the government for not having been more willing to work towards peace.

While the Yom Kippur War served as a reminder of the need for a peace agreement, public opinion diverged greatly on the territories. 55% of the individuals surveyed opposed a peace agreement that would return the territories.¹⁰ Still, the desire to retain the territories did not surpass the longing for peace. 69% opposed retention of the territories *if* doing so would eliminate the chance for peace.¹¹ How Israel might

⁷ Asher Arian, Zeev Ben-Sira, Ephraim Torgovnik, and Rivka Winter, "Election Study 1973, Phase 3" *The Israel National Election Studies*, http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/files/1973-3_Questionnaire_Eng.pdf.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Asher Arian, Zeev Ben-Sira, Ephraim Torgovnik, and Rivka Winter, "Election Study 1973, Phase 5" *The Israel National Election Studies*, http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/files/1973-5_Questionnaire_Eng.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

decide that holding the territories eliminated the chance for peace is unclear. Strikingly, giving back the territories was not considered synonymous with creation of an independent Palestinian state. Nearly 90% of individuals surveyed believed that a Palestinian state would be a threat to the state of Israel.¹²

This nuanced approach to compromise recalled the support offered for “small concessions” after the 1967 War. Public confidence that Israeli concessions would be met by Palestinian reciprocity was lacking. Since the other side still insisted that only Israel’s destruction could bring ‘peace’, Israeli caution was well-founded. Even so, nearly a quarter (22%) still believed in the realistic possibility of a peace agreement within the succeeding few years.¹³

An important survey conducted by the Guttman Institute for Applied Social Research uncovered striking data. In the unlikely event that a peace agreement was reached, a majority of individuals would support it, even if it did not align with their political beliefs. When presented with a potential peace agreement that included the return of most of the occupied territories, 54% said they would support the government.¹⁴ On the other hand, if the government opposed such a peace agreement, 64% would also support the government.¹⁵

How might this result be interpreted? Given the wide range of so-called ‘peace’ proposals, respondents may have been uncertain about the substance of the question. “Return”, or not, of “a majority” of the territories was not well-enough defined by national leaders, let alone by pollsters, to secure a politically meaningful response. What is most remarkable, however, is that the nation’s longing for peace trumped the public’s internal ideological divisions, as well as their varied differences with the ideology of any given ruling party.

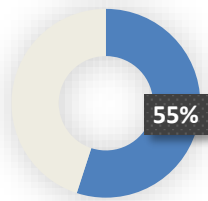
¹² Neta Oren, Daniel Bar-Tal, Tamir Magal, and Eran Halperin, “Psychological Legitimization – Views of the Israeli Occupation by Jews in Israel: Data and Implications,” in *The Impacts of Lasting Occupation: Lessons from Israeli Society*, ed. Daniel Bar-Tal and Izhak Schnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 140.

¹³ Asher Arian, Zeev Ben-Sira, Ephraim Torgovnik, and Rivka Winter, “Election Study 1973, Phase 5” *The Israel National Election Studies*, http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/files/1973-5_Questionnaire_Eng.pdf.

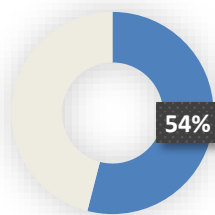
¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

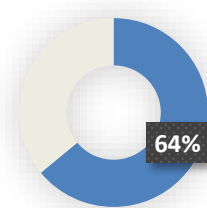
Disapproval of an Agreement that Gave Back Most of the Territories



Support of a Government that Wants to Give Back Most of the Territories



Support of a Government that Wants to Keep Most of the Territories



1982 – First Lebanon War

Provoked by attacks during the early 1980s into northern Israel by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the IDF entered Lebanon to destroy PLO forces in the region. The Israeli military became embroiled in a complicated conflict that also engaged various other paramilitary forces. This ongoing civil war fractured Lebanese society among religious and ethnic lines. Christian Maronite, Shia, and Sunni groups battled each other.

Israeli forces quickly advanced deep into the country, reaching as far as the capital city of Beirut. Civilian casualties occurred as the IDF cleared urban areas during the complicated search for PLO fighters. Eventually, Israel forced the PLO to evacuate Lebanon, aiding a pro-Israeli Christian president's rise to power. Israeli presence in Beirut, however, became unsustainable. Israeli forces gradually withdrew to the area near the border.

The Lebanon War stoked intense opposition within Israel against the government unlike anything ever seen before. Responding to revelations about the atrocities of the Sabra and Shatila massacres – with strikingly high civilian casualties caused by the Phalange Christian militia clearing a neighborhood from PLO forces on the orders of the IDF – the public demanded answers regarding the true motives and conduct of the war.

When polled during and immediately after the war, 67% concluded the war should have been conducted exactly as it happened.¹⁶ Within a year, a majority viewed the war as not having been worthwhile.¹⁷ A few years later still, in 1985, 76% of the Israeli public judged the war to have been a failure.¹⁸

¹⁶ Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion and the War in Lebanon," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies* (1985): 8, [http://www.inss.org.il/he/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/\(FILE\)1283175765.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/he/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/(FILE)1283175765.pdf).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Until the war in Lebanon, Israel's wars had been forced upon her, even when she herself had initiated hostilities. Public frustration was associated with the perception that the war had been unnecessary. 59% now thought that the war could be characterized as a "war of choice."¹⁹ The country had neither been invaded nor faced an existential threat.

Public aversion against decisions which did not seem urgent surfaced as well, regarding the dilemmas posed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 1984, shortly following the Lebanon War, when asked to choose between (1) returning most of Judea and Samaria/the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in return for a peace settlement with security arrangements acceptable to Israel; (2) annexation of Judea and Samaria/the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; (3) and the status quo, a plurality of 40.7% supported the status quo.²⁰

This evenly divided response reconfirmed the Israeli public's unwillingness to decide the fate of the territories, and reflected the persisting split about desirable outcomes. The status quo – although viewed as a "temporary" solution – did not require keeping the territories, yet it also did not require giving them up. It allowed for a continuation of settlements, ensured there would be no Palestinian state, and kept security affairs in the hands of the IDF. Significantly, a 45.3% plurality refused even to answer the question above if it did not include the "status quo" option.²¹ Not only did many view the status quo as the *only* option for the territories, 58.8% of those respondents connected this to the essential protection of civil rights for inhabitants of Judea and Samaria/the West Bank and Gaza.²²

The government's unwillingness to launch dramatic initiatives must be understood within the context of the public's desire to defer transformative decisions into the future. The status quo sufficed. No external crisis provoked urgency within Israeli society to seek an alternative arrangement or a peace deal.

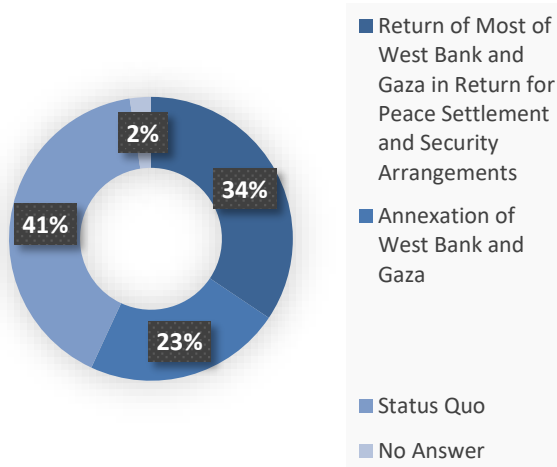
¹⁹ Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion and the War in Lebanon," 29.

²⁰ Asher Arian, "Election Study 1984," *The Israel National Election Studies*, http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/files/1984_Questionnaire_Eng.pdf.

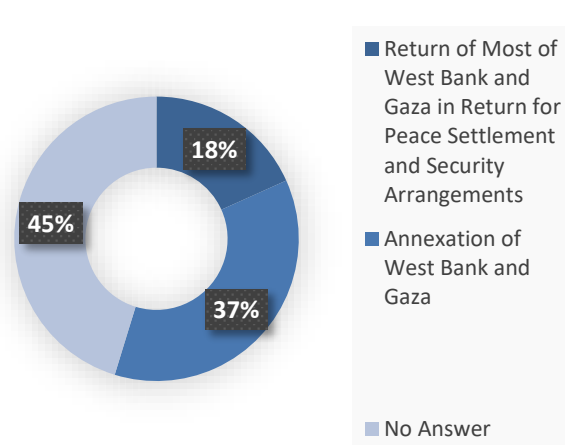
²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Agreement to Long-Term Proposals



Agreement to Long-Term Proposals



1987-1993 – The First Intifada

The costs of holding the territories acquired during the Six Day War did not fully present themselves until 1987. From the beginning of the first Intifada, grassroots opposition to Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza emerged with widespread throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at IDF soldiers and civilians. The uprising manifested itself through bottom-up resistance to Israeli forces, rather than the organized suicide bombings, shootings, or stabbings that would become more common in the future. During the heat of the Intifada in 1990, however, 62% of individuals surveyed perceived Palestinian violence as unlimited.²³ Similarly, 66% of the public believed the Intifada was directed against the existence of the State of Israel.²⁴

Public perception dictated Israel's response. 88.7% of those Jewish Israelis polled supported destruction of houses whose owners knowingly hosted terrorists, while 57.7% supported the bombing of terrorist bases, even if civilians suffered injury.²⁵ Soldiers in large numbers took action by demolishing homes, utilizing tear gas, clubs and, at times, live ammunition. By the end of the Intifada, close to 2,000 Palestinians and 300 Israelis had been killed. Large numbers of individuals on both sides had been wounded.

²³ Edy Kaufman and Yana Neumann, "Israeli Attitudes towards Palestinian Nonviolent Struggle," *The Truman Institute*, <http://mendonline.org/IsraeliAttitudes.pdf>.

²⁴ Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," in *Contending with Terrorism: Roots, Strategies, and Responses*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 156.

²⁵ Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, "Election Study 1988," *The Israel National Election Studies*, <http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/1988.html>. Data extracted using SPSS.

At the beginning of the Intifada (December, 1987), public opinion on potential courses of action mirrored the period closely following the First Lebanon war. Individuals felt safer with the status quo, and were less willing to support annexation or return of the territories.²⁶ 62.3% of Jewish Israeli respondents opposed Israeli negotiations with the PLO.²⁷ 79.5% agreed that Israel should not allow a Palestinian state to be carved out in the West Bank and Gaza.²⁸ In fact, 56.7% of the respondents would make no concessions, or only small territorial concessions, to achieve peace in the West Bank/Judea and Samaria.²⁹

Why did the public oppose surrender of the territories? A significant proportion cited the Jewish people's historic right to the land of Judea and Samaria as their primary reason. This was followed closely by concerns about the security dangers of a Palestinian state.³⁰ Given the religious convictions about land rights, territorial compromise seemed unlikely.

Nevertheless, this open-ended, five-year long conflict left a permanent impact on public opinion. The relative inability of the IDF to control the West Bank and Gaza led some to conclude that an agreement that ensured Israel's security, while returning the territories, might be optimal. By October, 1988, public opinion had shifted from a plurality that supported the status quo to a plurality willing to support a peace settlement that returned most of the West Bank/Judea and Samaria and Gaza, providing acceptable security arrangements were guaranteed for Israel.³¹ In 1992, this percentage reached 48.5%, almost constituting a majority of the public.³² Palestinian autonomy in the territories, once a radical idea, now received the support of 57.6% of the individuals surveyed.³³ This paved the way for the Oslo Accords that would come the following year.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

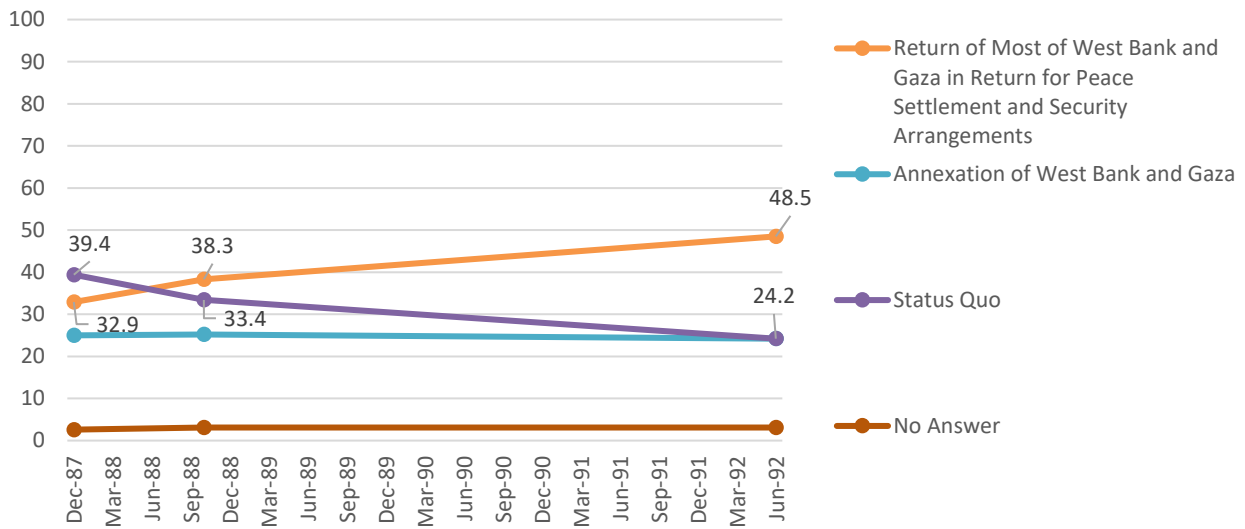
³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, "Election Study 1992," *The Israel National Election Studies*, <http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/1992.html>. Data extracted using SPSS.

³³ Ibid.

Support for Solutions to West Bank and Gaza Territories (%)



1993-1996 – Oslo Peace Accords and the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin

Spurred by the growing dovishness of the Israeli public, the Labor Party chaired by Yitzhak Rabin won the elections in 1992. Seeking to harness the growing sentiment in favor of peace arrangements, Rabin entered into secret negotiations with PLO leader Yassir Arafat. Signed in 1993, the Oslo Peace Accords created a framework for transferring authority in stages to a new Palestinian governing body (later established as the Palestinian Authority) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The IDF pledged a staged withdrawal from most urban areas of the West Bank and Gaza in favor of Palestinian autonomy. Oslo's initiation instilled hope within certain segments of the Israeli public. However, not everyone supported this vision of reconciliation. The still tepid support for "land-for-peace" exchanges in 1992 suggested ambivalence about the government's policy vision. Unlike the majority support for contrasting types of government initiatives after the Yom Kippur War, the public now examined government policies more critically. By October 1994, an early stage of the Oslo process, only 48% of those surveyed supported the Oslo accords.³⁴ Fluctuating levels of support, generally hovering around the 50% mark, exposed the polarization experienced by Israeli society.

³⁴ "The Peace Index for October 1994, *The Peace Index*, <http://www.peaceindex.org/indexMonth.aspx?num=193&monthname=%D7%90%D7%95%D7%A7%D7%98%D7%95%D7%91%D7%A8>.

Those who opposed the Oslo accords opposed it fervently, especially those living across the Green Line who believed in the religious right of Jews to settle areas in historic Judea and Samaria. Ceding Israeli sovereignty over areas that rightfully belonged to the Jewish people was anathema. Some Oslo opponents judged Rabin a traitor for making such an agreement. Protests opposing the deal took place simultaneously, and in parallel, with rallies led by its supporters.

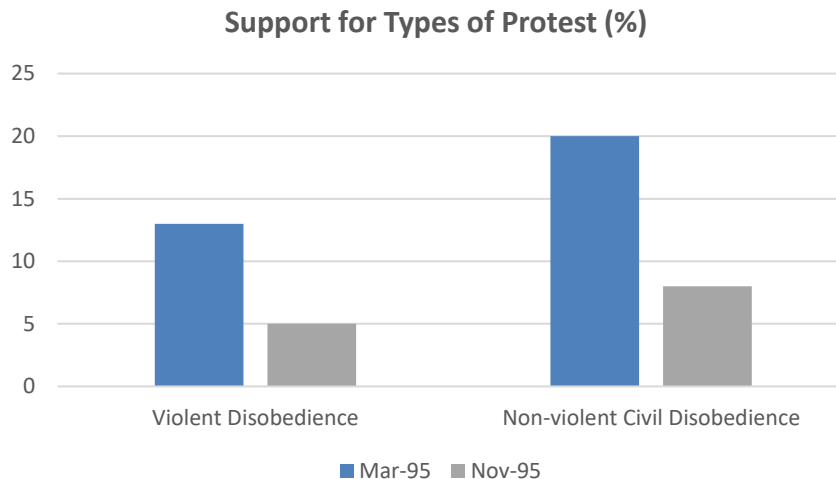
With divisions rising, tolerance dropped. In March of 1995, support for non-violent civil disobedience against the government stood at 20% of Israelis, while support for violent disobedience reached a shockingly high 13%.³⁵ This turn towards violence erupted on November 4, 1995 when Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by a right-wing critic at a rally supporting the Oslo process. The assassin, Yigal Amir, held that assassinating Rabin was a moral imperative arising from radical interpretation of the Jewish concept of *din rodef*. Though *din rodef* traditionally authorizes the killing of someone chasing another individual with an intent to murder, Yigal Amir applied this principle to Rabin. In his mind, the Prime Minister personally threatened the very physical existence of Jews living in the West Bank.

This catastrophic event hit the nation with full force. For some who had disavowed the Oslo process, the assassination revealed the dangers of extremism within Israeli society, and the necessity of re-prioritizing democratic tolerance across Israel. When asked about the importance to Israel of four somewhat clashing values – (1) a state with a Jewish majority, (2) control over the Greater Land of Israel, (3) a democratic state with equal political rights for all, and (4) a peace that greatly reduced the chance for war – the percentage of Israelis ranking democracy as their first choice doubled from 18% in January of 1995 to 36% in November of 1995.³⁶ Unconditional tolerance of right-wing groups – the perceived ideological faction who had justified Rabin’s murder – declined significantly, with 45% of individuals describing them as the group they opposed most.³⁷

³⁵ Asher Arian, Shlomit Barnea, Pazit Ben-Nun, Raphael Ventura, Michal Shamir, “Auditing Israeli Democracy 2005: A Decade after the Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin,” *The Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute* (2005): 106, <https://en.idi.org.il/media/6303/theisraelidemocracymindex2005.pdf>.

³⁶ Ibid, 95.

³⁷ Ibid, 101.



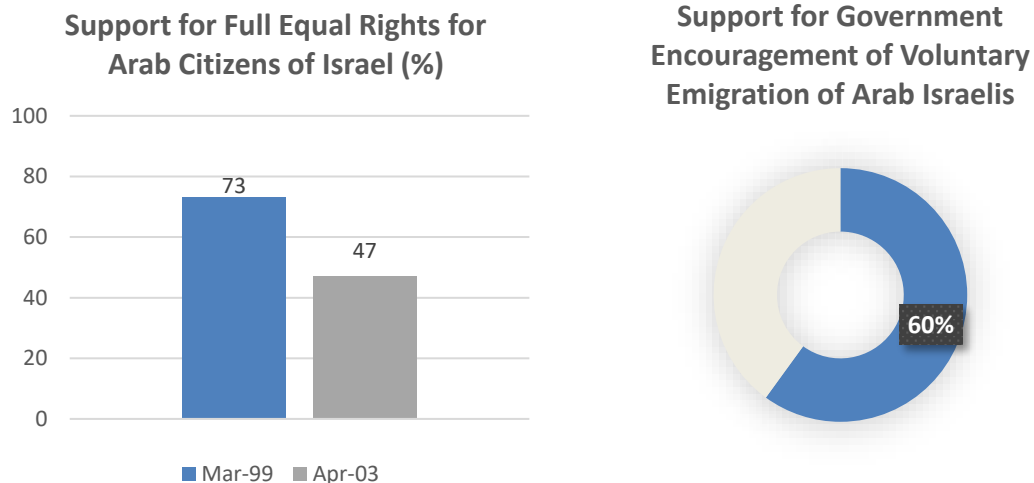
2000-2005 – Second Intifada

Attempting to build off the Oslo process and formalize a final peace agreement, Ehud Barak met with Yasser Arafat in July 2000 at Camp David. Although the most far-reaching deal to-date sat on the table, Arafat could not muster the political courage to go forward. In the wake of the failed negotiations, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli opposition leader, walked along the Temple Mount with a delegation of other Likud party members. His action precipitated massive protests and riots by Palestinians throughout the Old City and West Bank, escalating to police use of live ammunition with resulting Palestinian fatalities.

Soon thereafter, two Israeli reservists mistakenly drove into Ramallah and were detained in a police station. Gathered for the funeral of a community member killed a few days earlier, some Palestinians heard rumors that Israeli undercover agents were in the station. They invaded, and gruesomely lynched the two reservists. Palestinians escalated their violence to include stabbings, shootings, and large-scale suicide bombings. Israeli forces responded with air-strikes, ground invasions, and raids of suspected terrorist sites. The situation spiraled downward for five years amidst tragic violence and civilian deaths until the Second Intifada subsided in 2005.

Hard hit by ongoing violence that was disproportionate to any political or religious offense, Israelis focused more on efficient security than formal democratic principles. By 2002, two years into the intifada, 60% of Israeli Jews surveyed agreed with government encouragement of the voluntary emigration of Israeli Arabs, and 75% did

not believe that Israeli Arabs were loyal to Israel.³⁸ In 2003, only 47% of the Jewish population surveyed supported full equal rights for Arab citizens, a stark change from 73% in 1999.³⁹ The violence that had begun with Palestinian residents from the West Bank and Gaza now originated from Arab citizens of Israel as well. Fearing the violence, some Jewish Israelis now sought to limit the influence Israeli Arabs could exert on Israeli society.



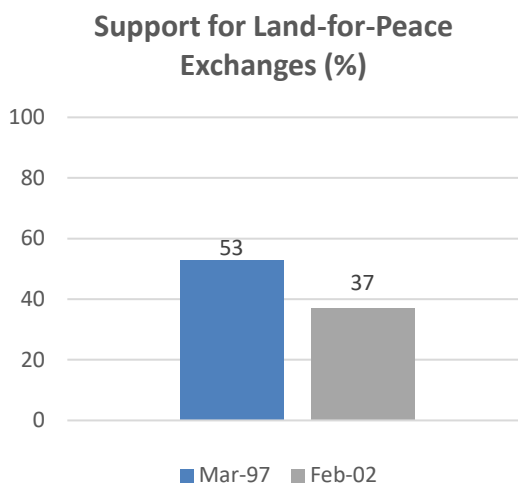
The horrific, ongoing violence also made Israelis less likely to be conciliatory regarding potential peace settlements. Two years into the intifada, only 37% of Jewish Israelis surveyed supported trading land for peace, down from 53% in 1997.⁴⁰ This deteriorating support revealed a fundamental shift in the psyche of Israeli society. The vision set forth in Oslo and continued by Ehud Barak at Camp David had mainstreamed a hope that relinquishing lands acquired in 1967 could lead to peace. The Second Intifada eroded confidence in a peaceful future. A consensus on separation from the Palestinian territories had been shaky, at best, even before the intifada. That fragile majority opinion vanished in the face of the violence. Indeed, only 26%, a mere quarter, of Jewish Israelis surveyed retained any confidence that signed treaties with the Palestinians and Arab states would end the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁴¹

³⁸ Asher Arian, "Israeli Public Opinion on Natural Security, 2002," *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies* (2002): 27, 37, <http://primage.tau.ac.il/libraries/brender/temporary/etexts%20in%20work%20process/%8E%98%8B%86%20%89%94%84/%8C%88%89%94%85%8C/memo61.pdf>.

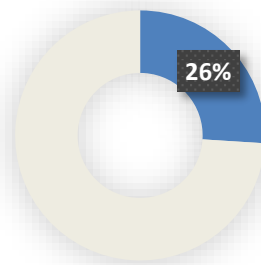
³⁹ Asher Arian, David Nachmias, Doron Navot, and Danielle Shani, "The 2003 Israeli Democracy Index," *The Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute* (2003): 23, <https://en.idi.org.il/media/6323/index2003-eng.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 13.

⁴¹ Ibid, 16.



Belief that Signing Treaties with Palestinians and Arabs States would End Arab-Israeli Conflict



Public willingness to make fresh concessions to the Palestinians also fell precipitously. 65.7% of surveyed Israelis in 2001 opposed any eventual peace agreement which included (1) the establishment of a Palestinian state on 95% of the territories (with Israel retaining settlement blocs), (2) Palestinian control of Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods, (3) concession of sovereignty on the Temple Mount (but not the Western Wall), and (4) the return to Israel of a limited number of refugees.⁴² Yet, such an agreement would have been very similar to the framework Ehud Barak had accepted in principle in 2000.

70% of individuals polled also thought that the earlier peace negotiations had failed because the Palestinians had insisted on still more concessions from Israel.⁴³ Not surprisingly, 68% of those polled wanted the government to take a tougher stance in the future.⁴⁴ Apparently, the nation no longer believed the Palestinians could possibly be viewed as sincere partners. The Palestinians had not only refused a deal that Israel already believed to be risky at best, but demanded still more, without even being willing to define what that 'more' meant. The public now expressed a determination to negotiate on terms which would be clearly beneficial for *Israel*.

Palestinians expressed a similar unwillingness to make concessions. While 46.9% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza surveyed in 2001 had supported peace negotiations with Israel, a majority of 51.2% now believed that the best path to achieve

⁴² Asher Arian and Michal Shamir, "Election Study 2001," *The Israel National Election Studies*, <http://www.ines.tau.ac.il/2001.html>. Data extracted using SPSS.

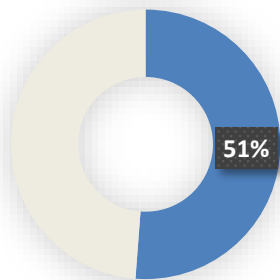
⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index for January 2001," *The Peace Index*, http://www.peaceindex.org/files/peaceindex2001_1_3.pdf.

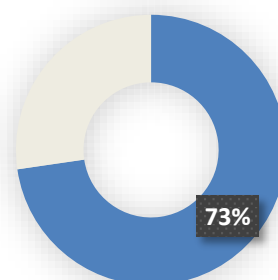
their national goals and bring an end to the occupation was by negotiations held while the intifada continued.⁴⁵ To many, the intifada appeared a more effective way to exact concessions from the Israeli side.

For a plurality of 48.6% of Palestinians surveyed, the goal of the intifada was the liberation of all of 'Palestine'.⁴⁶ Just as Israelis did not approve a peace agreement similar to the model Barak laid out, 72.7% of Palestinians opposed giving up the "1948 lands" in return for a Palestinian state confined to the West Bank and Gaza with Jerusalem as its capital.⁴⁷ With Palestinians convinced of the efficacy of the intifada, violence continued.

**Belief that Negotiations and
Continuation of the Intifada are the
Best Path to Achieve National
Goals/End Occupation**



**Opposition to Giving Up "1948
Lands" for Palestinian State in
West Bank and Gaza**



As the intifada escalated, the capacity of the government to protect Israeli settlers living in the Gaza strip eroded. Under pressure, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon devised a unilateral disengagement plan to remove Israeli forces and settlers from Gaza. On the eve of disengagement in July 2005, a majority (60%) of the public supported the plan.⁴⁸ The third of the population opposed to the plan cited security and an increase in terror as primary concerns. Their concerns were justified. Rockets continued to be fired into Israel after disengagement from Gaza.

In the immediate aftermath of the withdrawal (August, 2005), 67.1% now believed the disengagement would result in chaos and violence. 68.4% expected attacks on Israel to

⁴⁵ "Poll No. 42, September 2001," Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, <http://www.jmcc.org/documentsandmaps.aspx?id=457>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index: July 2005, the Disengagement as a Done Deal," *The Peace Index*, http://www.peaceindex.org/files/peaceindex2005_7_3.pdf.

intensify.⁴⁹ Hamas assumed control of Gaza and fulfilled both expectations. The failed evacuation became an object lesson for many Israelis - leaving the administered territories does not lead to peace. Worse still, Israeli disengagement or other apparent evidence of weakness only seemed to confirm to Palestinians that violence, indeed, worked.

2017 – Present Day

June 2017 marked the fifty-year anniversary of the Six Day War. Half a century has passed since Israel acquired the West Bank and Gaza in war, and yet no decision about the final disposition of the territories has been made. Bouts of violence have alternated with rounds of failed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the years following the Second Intifada. The impasse remains in place, and peace seems as distant as ever.

Prospects for peace may still rest with land-for-peace exchanges, based on the model of two states for two people. Still, as of summer, 2017, 52.5% of all Israelis still support a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on two states.⁵⁰ In the West Bank and Gaza, a majority of 52.5% individuals also support a two-state solution.⁵¹ On its face, this agreement by a majority of *both* Israelis and Palestinians seems encouraging, though the past five decades furnish no evidence to support that hope

This may explain the otherwise peculiar opposition from *both* Israelis and Palestinians when asked about the details of any given two-state solution. When asked about support for a Palestinian state established in the entirety of the West Bank and Gaza, excluding settlement blocs annexed to Israel in a territorial exchange, 60.8% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and 52.8% of Israelis oppose such a deal.⁵² Even if the territories Palestinians would receive in a land-swap for the settlement blocs annexed to Israel were similar in size, 65.3% of Palestinians and 51.5% of Israelis express opposition.⁵³

The settlements remain an obstacle to mutual agreement. According to 55.8% of Israeli Jews, settlements are not an obstacle to peace. 68% of Israeli's Arab citizens maintain

⁴⁹ Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index: August 2005," *The Peace Index*, http://www.peaceindex.org/files/peaceindex2005_8_3.pdf.

⁵⁰ Khalil Dhikaki, Dahlia Scheindlin, and Ephraim Lavie, "The Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll," *The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research* (2017): 2, http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Table%20of%20Findings_English%20Joint%20Poll%203%20June%202017_1.pdf.

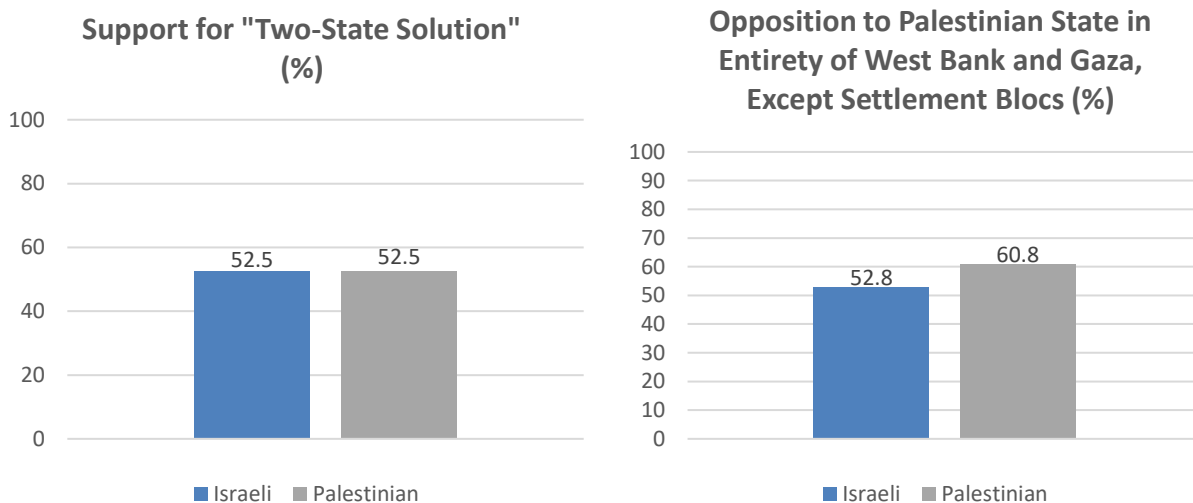
⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid, 3.

⁵³ Ibid.

an exactly opposite position.⁵⁴ Similarly, for 52.3% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, settlement expansion eliminates the viability of a two-state solution.⁵⁵ So long as one side considers settlements so grave a challenge that it makes the two-state solution impossible, while the other does not see how it impacts the possibility for peace, shared negotiations remain exceedingly improbable. Yet, this discordance over the impact of Israeli settlements on the peace process is just one of *many* issues – such as Jerusalem, refugees, and security – that overshadow negotiations.

In sum, does Palestinian opposition derive from a desire to control more land than the entirety of the West Bank and Gaza? Does Israeli opposition stem from security concerns or hopes of allowing all settlers to remain in their homes? Opinions rage, but no one can answer these questions credibly.



Aside from the daunting details that block a two-state agreement, the public in both Israel and the West Bank and Gaza do not trust their leadership to negotiate a solution in the near future. While 66.3% of the general Israeli public supports peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, 54.1% of Israelis do not think that the current Israeli government is interested in reaching a permanent peace settlement.⁵⁶ Similarly 73.9% of Israelis believe the Palestinian Authority has no interest

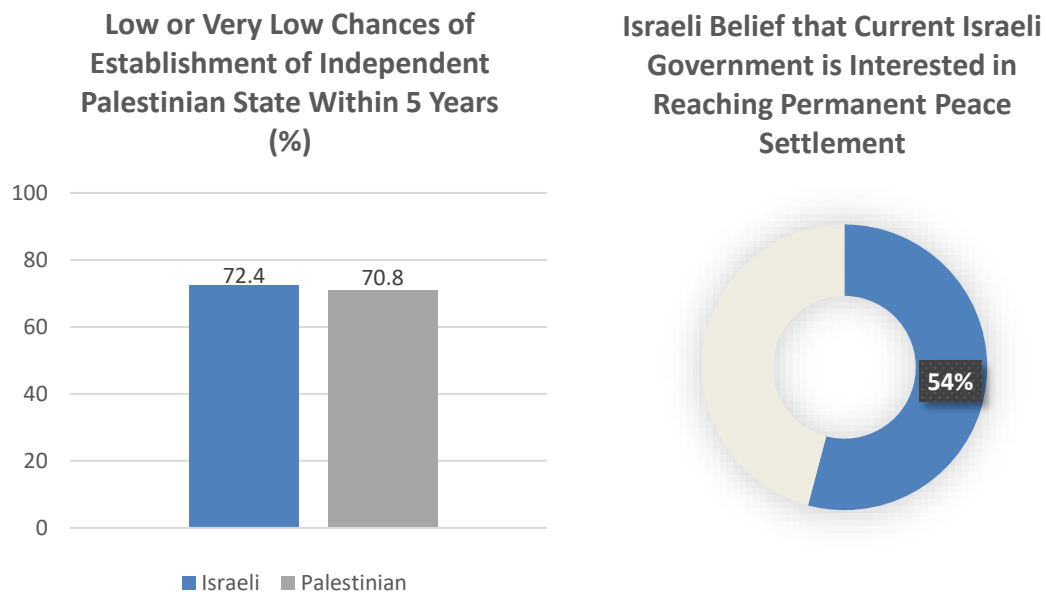
⁵⁴ Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index: May 2017," *The Peace Index*, http://www.peaceindex.org/files/Peace_Index_Data_May_2017-Eng.pdf.

⁵⁵ Dhikaki et al., "The Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll," 7.

⁵⁶ Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, "Peace Index, June 2017," *The Peace Index*, http://www.peaceindex.org/files/Peace_Index_Data_June_2017-Eng.pdf.

in reaching a peace settlement.⁵⁷ In the West Bank and Gaza, 61.7% of individuals would like Abbas to resign, implying they are dis-satisfied with his job performance and unpersuaded he can bring stability for Palestinians.⁵⁸

Unsurprisingly, 72.4% of Israelis and 70.8% of Palestinians view the chances of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the next five years as low or very low.



⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Khalil Shikaki and Walid Ladadweh, "Public Opinion Poll No. 64," *Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey* (2017): 12, http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/poll%2064%20full%20text%20June%202017_%20English_0.pdf.

Conclusion

Should the alternating cycles of action and reaction since 1967 leave us hopeful or pessimistic about the future?

Immediately following the Six Day War, large majorities of the Israeli population were unwilling to return either the West Bank or the Gaza strip. A gradual, but decided, shift of public opinion provided two decades of support for a two-state solution. A negotiated trade of land-for-peace became its center-piece.

Though a bare majority of Israelis still support this path, wide disagreements have emerged about the details, or even the workability, of a two-state solution. Palestinians also express support, again by bare majority, for a two-state solution. A similar number of radically different fissures now divide Palestinians as well. Yet, these are the groups on both sides counted as “yes” votes! Near-majorities of Israelis and Palestinians oppose a two-state solution outright.

A successful final status agreement requires confidence in the leaders and populations involved, as well as true sacrifices from both sides. Beyond large policy disagreements, Israelis and Palestinians do not trust their own governments, far less each other, to define and enforce a lasting peace deal. Unfortunately, the increasing, not decreasing, gap between Israelis and Palestinians suggests we are nearing a fixed political point beyond which Israeli and Palestinian perspectives about “land” and “peace” cannot be reconciled.

In sum, we conclude that the period between 1967-2017 must be viewed as merely the historical prelude to a second phase about to begin whose endpoint remains unknown. Decisions still to be taken and, in some cases, not yet under public debate will yield a yet-unforeseeable framework for reconciliation or terminate any possibility of a negotiated settlement, at least so far as the results of the Six Day War are concerned.

The land-for-peace formula may be losing its power, both to inspire and to effect reconciliation, but this does not exhaust the choices open in the future. The same Israeli public that has held to a sensible middle-course position since 1967 will speak its mind over the coming decades. We could do worse than continue to listen carefully to their views. Founded now on fifty years of shared experience, the nation may yet forge a consensus for peace that includes initiatives which are both realistic and achievable.



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