

Local Surveys of Attitudes About the Middle East

Preface

Over the past few years, the members of the San Francisco area Jewish community have had a dramatically persistent pattern of attitudes about the Middle East.

They have had, and continue to have, a persistent pattern of overwhelming consensus on certain issues, especially those related to American policy on the Middle East. Those consensual issues include such items as support for American aid to Israel and opposition to recognition of the PLO.

They have also had a persistent pattern of differences on other issues, especially those related to Israeli policy on Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank").

These findings, described in detail below, are the result of a series of surveys conducted in the San Francisco area since 1979, using academic and professional consultants. Only the questions on the Middle East are reflected here.

The basic purpose of the surveys has been for the public policy agencies of the Jewish community to discover what their constituencies think about the issues on which those agencies are working.

One set of the constituent Jewish publics involved were the stated "leadership," both organizational and Federation. Usually this leadership was merged; in one case it was divided between Federation Organizations.

The other "Jewish public" involved was the "connected" rank and file: all Federation contributors plus subscribers to the community Jewish newspaper, a list of about 15 thousand households, roughly half of the estimated Jewish population of the area. This is the constituency of the organized Jewish community; and also,

importantly, that segment of the Jewish population which is most actively concerned, one way or another; and involved, one way or another, in affecting public policy on the Middle East.

Typically, an entire leadership list was polled, and/or a 1000 to 2000 random sample of the connected grass-roots list. The poll was by mail, guaranteeing anonymity, apparently an important factor in surveying Jews about the Middle East. The returns have generally run about 40 per cent.

But most striking has been the consistency of the attitudinal pattern of the responses, described more fully below, even given changes in time frames, some changes in language, and different sets of random samples. Included in the tables below are also the responses made in one similar survey of leadership in Philadelphia, which again demonstrates the consistency. These surveys do reveal, at the very least, what these Jewish publics have been thinking about these issues.

But in order to de-emphasize the exact precision of the figures, and to provide sure-footed guidance to the public policy agencies, the results have generally been divided into three broad-brush *orders* of result: Consensus, which requires a ratio of at least 3 to 1, although most consensus items have a much higher ratio; Heavy Majority, which requires a ratio of at least 2 to 1, ranging up to 3 to 1; all others are called a Split, even though the majority be 65 to 35. In this way are the results most modestly interpreted.

The Results

The Summary Ranking indicates a consistent and overwhelming Consensus among these Jewish publics on basic American public policy on the Middle East: *FOR* continued American economic and military assistance to Israel (Table 1); *AGAINST* negotiation with the PLO (Table 3) and *FOR* Israeli troops to stay in Lebanon until Syrian and PLO military forces leave (Table 2).

There are more differences among these Jewish groups with respect to Israeli policy on Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). There is an overwhelming Consensus on only one item: *AGAINST* the dismantling of the old settlements (Table 10). However, there is a consistent Heavy Majority of these American Jewish groups *FOR* an Israeli policy of exchanging some of the "West Bank" for Israeli security (average ratio, 2-1; Table 7); and *AGAINST* keeping all of the "West Bank" for religious and historical reasons (average ratio, 2-1; Table 6).

There are consistent majorities *FOR* Israel suspending further settlements in the West Bank (Table 9), but the ratios are classified as "Split" because they are closer (average ratio, 1.7-1), and the minorities more substantial than in the above questions. It should be recalled that these groups all registered an overwhelming consensus against dismantling old settlements.

On one question, obviously related to the "West Bank," but having to do directly with American policy as well as Israeli policy, a consistent majority of these Jewish groups are *AGAINST* the idea that Reagan's peace plan provides a good framework for peace -- but again the classification is "Split" (average ratio, 1.7-1, Table 14).

Finally, there is a more general question about the Begin government which obviously has some relationship to the above questions. While most groups are, by simple

majority, *FOR* the judgement that the Begin government is "too inflexible" (Table 12), there was one group dissent, and there were substantial minorities (average ratio, 1.5-1).

It should be noted again that, despite the less than consensual reactions of American Jews to Israeli policies on the West Bank, these same Jewish groups were in overwhelming Consensus *FOR* American economic and military aid; indeed, *FOR* increased financial aid to Israel by American Jews (Table 13C). In other words, even those opposed to Israeli policy on the "West Bank" *do not link* that opposition to questions of basic support for Israel. Perhaps the resistance to such linkage, as an excessive remedy, is related to the fact that in the August 1981 survey, 90 per cent of the Jews expressed the belief that "without the United States, Israel would not survive."

It should also be noted that there was an overwhelming Consensus *FOR* the idea that Israel was right to move into Lebanon (Table 4); although there was a clear drop-off in the size of the majority who felt that Israel was right to move further north to West Beirut (Table 5). And, finally, while an overwhelming Consensus expressed themselves *AGAINST* negotiations with the PLO, majorities expressing themselves *FOR* recognizing the PLO if the PLO was to recognize Israel, were classified as Split (Ratio, 1.7-1, Table 8).

There were a few questions, not related to public policy, which involved only two instances: the San Francisco area leadership in August, '82 and the Philadelphia leadership in January, '83. In both instances, there was a heavy Consensus *FOR* American Jews more often discussing among themselves their disagreements about Israeli policy (Table 13A). And in both instances, there was a Heavy Majority *AGAINST* American Jews publicly expressing their disagreements about Israeli policy (Table 13B).

Consistency and Variations

It is notable that, despite some time differences, and some small differences in language, the nature of the consensual responses was so uniform. On Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10, every group ended up in the Consensus category.

The San Francisco area leaders and the Philadelphia leaders had virtually the same response in 12 out of 15 questions on which they can be compared, although there were slight differences in a couple of those cases.

There were only three cases where the differences seemed significant. On the question of dealing with the PLO, the Philadelphia leaders were at least 18 points more negative, although all groups were consensually negative. On the propriety of Israel moving further north to Beirut during the Lebanon campaign, the Philadelphia leaders were at least 21 points more negative, although it should be noted that their response was five months later. And on a question as to whether American media are, generally speaking, pro-Arab and anti-Israel, the responses were radically different, a Heavy Majority of the Philadelphia leaders agreeing, while San Francisco leaders were virtually split. There is no evidence to indicate whether that sharp difference is a function of differences in local media or other factors.

As for the San Francisco area groups, there was a slight tendency for both Federation and organizational leaders to be more "hard-line" on a couple of matters (Tables 3 and 10). And there was a tendency for the Federation leaders to be less "hard-line" than either organizational leadership or grassroots on several matters. (Tables 6, 9, 12, 14). However, the *order* of all the responses was typically similar.

In a few cases, the results of several available national surveys (Yankelovich, Harris, Newsweek) were comparable because of the questions used. In all cases (Tables 1, 3,

11 and 12) the responses were generally of the same order as the regional responses.

TABLES

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
1. U.S. should continue economic and military assistance to Israel.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	99	0	1
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	98	2	0
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	98	1	1
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	99	0	1
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	99	1	0
Aug. '82, S.F. JCF grassroots	99	1	0
(July '81, national)	93	2	5
2. Israeli troops should stay in Lebanon until Syrian and PLO troops leave.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	77	14	9
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	77	12	11
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	72	21	7
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	82	15	3
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	95	4	1
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	93	5	2
3. U.S. should negotiate with PLO.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	8	81	11
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	11	78	11
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	22	72	6
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	1	99	0
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	4	86	10
Aug. '82, JCF grassroots	10	80	10
'81 national	18	74	9
4. Israel was right to move into Lebanon.			
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	95	4	1
Aug. '82, S.F. JCF leaders	97	2	1
Aug. '82, S.F. JCF grassroots	94	4	2
5. Israel was right to move further north to West Beirut			
Aug. '82, S.F. JCF leaders	91	5	4
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	82	9	9
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	69	30	1
6. Israel should never withdraw from any of West Bank; that territory belongs to Israel for religious and historical reasons.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	8	74	18
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	25	60	15
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	29	59	12
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	36	61	3
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	30	59	11
7. Israel should exchange much of West Bank for security.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	74	11	15
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	67	23	10
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	64	27	9
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	80	19	2
Feb. '81, S.F. leaders	65	35	
Feb. '81, S.F. grassroots	64	36	
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	71	13	18
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	62	28	10
1979, S.F. total	63	37	

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
8. Israel should recognize PLO if PLO recognizes Israel.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	59	23	18
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	58	25	17
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	66	26	8
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	53	44	3
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	47	30	23
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	43	34	23
Feb. '81, S.F. leaders	51	49	
Feb. '81, S.F. grassroots	59	41	
Sep. '81, national	69	23	
9. Israel should suspend further settlements in West Bank.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	70	26	4
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	59	34	7
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots	56	38	6
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	67	32	2
10. Israel should dismantle all its old settlements.			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders	7	83	10
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders	6	85	9
Jan. '83, S.F. grassroots	16	73	11
11. Israel should annex the West Bank.			
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	20		
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	30		
Sep. '81, national	29		
12. Begin government "too inflexible."			
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders*	66	21	13
Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders*	49	33	18
Jan. '83, S.F. JCF grassroots*	58	32	10
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	36	47	17
Aug. '82, S.F. grassroots	54	35	11
Sep. '81, national ("Begin's policies are hurting support for Israel in U.S.")	53	34	13
*Question specifically applies to West Bank.			
13. Comparisons, S.F. and Philadelphia leaders -- other questions			
A. American Jews should more often discuss among themselves their disagreements about Israeli policy.			
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	83	7	10
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	87	12	2
B. American Jews should publicly express disagreements about Israeli policy.			
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	21	62	17
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	31	67	1
C. American Jews should now increase their financial support for Israel.			
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	73	11	16
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	86	10	5
D. American media are, generally speaking, pro-Arab and anti-Israel.			
Aug. '82, S.F. leaders	45	52	14
Jan. '83, Phila. leaders	72	27	1

14. Reagan's peace plan provides a good framework for settling Arab-Israeli conflict.

Jan. '83, S.F. JCF leaders*

33

42

25

Jan. '83, S.F. org. leaders*

19

53

28

Jan. '83, S.F. grassroots*

22

44

34

Jan. '83, Phila. leaders

41

55

4

*Question specifically applies to West Bank.