

## The Iranian Revolution: Thirty Years After

Tel Aviv Annual Iran Conference  
Tel Aviv University, May 24-25, 2009

### Public Opinion Poll

*The poll finds that while there is a significant concern of the "Iranian Threat" and whereas a majority of Israelis do not believe that diplomatic efforts will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb, almost half of them support the use of diplomacy. While a significant majority would not entertain the idea of emigrating from Israel even if Iran possesses military nuclear power, still many admit they would consider this option. (It is not clear how many would consider emigration regardless of the Iranian Bomb, because of domestic difficulties and regional tensions).*

### Main Findings

The poll, taken from a representative sample of 509 Israeli adults, reveals several illuminating facts. 81% of the Israeli public believes that Iran will attain a nuclear bomb; 70% would not consider emigrating from Israel should Iran achieve nuclear capability. And while the majority of the Israeli public (74%) does not believe that the current American policy of engagement will persuade Iran to change its course, 49% believe that Israel should wait for the results of US engagement before pursuing alternative paths. In fact, the Israeli public is split almost evenly between supporting an Israeli attack and adopting a more patient approach: 51% support an immediate Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear sites.

Israelis aged 42 and higher are significantly more concerned about Iran's potential bomb than their younger counterparts (89% and 61%, respectively). A similar difference exists between age groups with regard to possible emigration should Iran attain a nuclear bomb. 89% of Israelis aged 42 and older would not consider emigration, and 64% of Israelis younger than 42 would also not consider emigration. Israelis professing centrist political tendencies are significantly more concerned about the Iranian bomb than those leaning to the left and to the right (88% and 70% and 67% respectively). Secular Israelis are significantly more concerned than ultra-orthodox Haredis (88% against 67%).

With regard to Israeli policy, 61% of Israeli men favor attack as opposed to 47% of Israeli women. Secular Israelis are less inclined towards attack (51%) than are National-Religious and Haredi Israelis (62% and 60%, respectively). A major difference exists between right-wing and left-wing Israelis regarding the appropriate Israeli policy. 38% of those leaning to the left favor attack, as opposed to 63% of those leaning to the right.

### **CIS scholars see diverse trends reflected in the poll's findings**

Prof. David Menashri, the center's director, suggests that *"the violent language used by President Ahmadinejad and his assertion of wiping Israel from the pages of history, in addition to Iranian advancement of its nuclear and ballistic programs, has created a real concern among Israelis. The Israeli public statements and talks of "existential threat" used by Israeli leaders to alert the world of its concern, could only add to popular anxiety. Still, I think it is important to note that half of the population surveyed (49%) still believe a diplomatic venue should be used. 10% even believe that Israel itself should engage in diplomatic effort with Iran. When few years ago I suggested that it would be an Israeli interest to engage Iran, I was sharply criticized. Clearly the attitude has been changed significantly."*

Dr. Uzi Rabi, a senior research fellow at CIS, proposes that *"before Israel acts on its own with respect to Iran's nuclear program, the U.S. should put dialogue with Iran to the test. Israel should maintain a low profile and support a U.S. dialogue with Iran that is based on a realistic timetable and concrete goals. Giving dialogue a chance may clarify Iran's intentions and inform the world and the Israeli public in one way or another if there is a possibility for some kind of agreement with Iran. Israel should support dialogue and hope for its success, but it should also quietly prepare itself for the next phases of action. "*

The Survey was commissioned by the Center for Iranian Studies (CIS) at Tel Aviv University on the sideline of its Annual Tel Aviv Iran Conference, and was meant to identify Israelis' perceptions of Iran and the Iranian nuclear plan.

Tel Aviv annual Iran conference will take place on May 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>. It brings together some 40 renowned scholars from dozen countries, to examine the enduring legacy and pragmatic reality of revolutionary Iran after three decades of Islamic rule.

The survey was conducted by telephone on May 19th and 20th, 2009, using a questionnaire based on a probability model of 509 respondents (more than 18 years old). This model represents the adult Israeli population (18 and older). The maximum margin of error is 4.5 percent with respect to different estimates. The survey was conducted by Ma'agar Mochot - Interdisciplinary Research and Consulting Institute, Ltd..

#### **For further information, please contact the following:**

Center for Iranian Studies: IranCen@post.tau.ac.il

For Interviews: Prof. David Menashri: 0546615171; Dr. Uzi Rabi: 0505375486

For information regarding the poll: Ori Goldberg: 0544649400

Contact people - Rachel Kantz: 0546494898 and Brandon Friedman: 0542053473

For questions regarding the conference program – Anne Tracy: 0525167431