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# Just 18% of Saudis see Israel as greatest threat

• By ARIEL BEN SOLOMON

Most Saudis support the Arab Peace Initiative with Israel and say their country must obtain nuclear weapons if Iran does, a survey conducted by the Institute for Policy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya shows.

Only 18 percent of Saudis see Israel as the greatest threat to their country. Iran was deemed the biggest nemesis (53%) followed by Islamic State (22%) and then Israel.

Twenty-four percent of respondents supported the notion of Saudi Arabia allying with Israel to fight Iran, the survey, conducted from the end of May and into June, found.

A majority of 53% said Saudi Arabia needs to get nuclear weapons if Iran does, and 71% see Iran as a threat to Saudi Arabian sovereignty.

An overwhelming 86% voiced support for the Saudi-initiated Arab Peace Initiative.

The poll appears to support analysts who see the Israel-Palestinian conflict as having limited importance to the region and a convergence between the foreign policies of status quo Sunni Arab states and Israel against the Shi'ite axis led by Tehran.

"The poll shows a clear shift in Saudi public opinion. Israel is not considered a major threat to Saudi Arabia anymore, and the majority of those surveyed are willing to see us live in peace under the Saudi-Arab Peace Initiative," Prof. Alex Mintz, the director of the Institute for Policy and Strategy who oversaw the poll, said.

"We certainly didn't expect 24% to say they would fight Iran alongside Israel. This is a strong indication of the shared interests of these two countries, and how tides are turning in the region," Mintz added.

The plan, which Saudi Arabia put forward at an Arab League summit in Beirut in 2002, offered full recognition of Israel, but only if it gave up all land taken in 1967 and agreed to a "just solution" for Palestinian refugees.

The Arab initiative bases its call for a solution to the refugee issue on UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948, which says that refugees should be able to choose whether to return to Israel or receive compensation.

The full results of the poll were released on Sunday, the first day of the annual Herzliya Conference.

The poll, carried out in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, randomly called landline numbers and was conducted in Arabic. It contained 10 questions and had a response rate of 22%, or 506 respondents.

*Reuters contributed to this report.*