

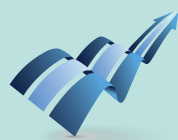


# The 2015 Israeli Foreign Policy Index

Findings of the Mitvim Institute Poll

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October 2015



**MITVIM**  
The Israeli Institute for  
Regional Foreign Policies

**FRIEDRICH  
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# The 2015 Israeli Foreign Policy Index

## Findings of the Mitvim Institute Poll

Since 2013, **Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies** publishes an annual index covering a variety of issues related to Israel's foreign policy.

The 2015 Israeli Foreign Policy Index of the Mitvim Institute is based on a public opinion poll conducted in mid-October 2015 by the Rafi Smith Institute and in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. It sampled 600 men and women, as a representative sample of the Israeli adult population (Jewish and Arab sectors aged 18 and older) and has a margin of error of 4%.

### **The main poll findings are:**

- Israel's international standing is poor, and is significantly worse than it was last year. Most Israelis believe that improvement in this regard is contingent upon progress in the peace process.
- Israelis disapprove of their government's conduct in matters of foreign policy and think it has deteriorated since 2014. Israelis also believe Prime Minister Netanyahu failed in addressing the Iranian nuclear issue.
- Israelis believe the weakening of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) harms their country's national security.
- Israelis want their foreign policy to prioritize addressing security threats, promoting the Israeli-US relationship, and advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.
- The state of Israel's relations with the US is viewed as mediocre, and has deteriorated in the past year. Other than the US, Russia is seen as the most important country to Israel in the world.
- The primary reason for Israel to improve ties with Turkey is considered to be the option of promoting security cooperation between the two countries.
- Greater involvement of Arab countries in the peace process is viewed positively and Israelis believe that regional cooperation with Middle Eastern countries is possible.
- The potential of normalized relations with the Arab world is the greatest incentive to achieving peace.

**This report includes the detailed poll findings grouped under eight categories:** Israel's global standing; the Israeli government's foreign policy; the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomacy; the political sphere; foreign policy priorities; Israel's relations with the US and other countries; international involvement in the peace process; and regional cooperation and belonging.

**According to Dr. Nimrod Goren, Head of the Mitvim Institute:** "The findings show that the public is losing faith in the government's foreign policy. We see this in the failure attributed to Netanyahu in his efforts to stop the Iranian nuclear project, in the feeling that Israel's standing in the world and relations with the US are in a sharp decline, and in the concern about the ramifications of weakening the Foreign Ministry. These are all dangerous trends and to reverse them Israel requires a new foreign policy paradigm, one that will respond to ongoing security threats through regional and international cooperation, as well as the promotion of Israeli-Palestinian peace."

## Key Findings

**Israel's global standing:** A majority of the Israeli public believes Israel's global standing is not good. Indeed, they believe it to have deteriorated in comparison to 2014. According to the public, progress on the peace process is required to remedy this situation. However, somewhat paradoxically, the public sees better public diplomacy rather than changes in policies regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the more effective way to improve the country's standing.

**The Israeli government's foreign policy:** The Israeli public is dissatisfied with the government's handling of foreign policy, and thinks it has gotten significantly worse in comparison to last year. The public also thinks Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed in his efforts to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

**The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomacy:** The public is concerned by recent measures that have weakened the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A majority of the public thinks the Foreign Ministry is not fulfilling its mission, and that the dispersal of the ministry's powers as well as the absence of a full-time foreign minister are detrimental to Israel's national security. Most Israelis believe that the country's foreign policy should be based on diplomacy, rather than on the use of force.

**The political sphere:** About half of the Israeli public does not identify any prominent Members of Knesset (MKs) in the area of foreign policy. Despite this, noteworthy MKs in this regard are Benjamin Netanyahu, who topped the list, as well as Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Lieberman. As to the major Opposition parties - the Zionist Union and Yesh Atid - only about half the public think they differ from the government on foreign policy matters, and about a quarter do not have an opinion on the subject whatsoever. In this regard, the public's perception of the two parties is rather similar.

**Foreign policy priorities:** Israelis think Israel's foreign policy should prioritize addressing the country's security threats. Ranked second are both the promotion of Israel's ties with the US and advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In general, most of the public thinks Israel should prioritize solving its own internal problems rather than taking a more active role in global affairs.

**Israel's relations with the US and other countries:** Israelis believe their country's relations with the US are mediocre at present, and that they have deteriorated since last year. According to the public, the country with highest importance to Israel, besides the US, is Russia, followed by Germany, and then Egypt, China, and Great Britain (with similar percentages). When asked about relations with Turkey, Israelis find security cooperation regarding Syria and ISIS as the main reason for improving ties with Ankara.

**International involvement in the peace process:** Most Israelis think that allowing Arab countries to play a more significant role in the process will help promote peace. They see the possibility of normalized relations with the Arab world as the primary incentive for increasing their support for the peace process. The public is divided on the question of how Israel should respond to an EU decision regarding labeling settlement products.

**Regional cooperation and belonging:** Most of the Israeli public still believes that regional cooperation between Israel and other Middle Eastern countries is possible, albeit in lower percentages than in 2014. Similarly to the findings of the previous two years, Israelis are still divided in their perception of Israel's regional belonging. They are unsure as to whether Israel belongs in Europe, in the Middle East, or equally in both regions.

### General comparison between assessments:

	2015	2014	% of change
Israel's global standing	3.96	5.12	-23%
The government's performance on foreign policy	4.00	5.29	-24%
The MFA's fulfillment of its mission	4.03	4.80	-16%
The current level of Israel-US relations	5.01	6.09	-18%

## The Sample Breakdown

Gender: 50% Male; 50% Female

Nationality: 83% Jews; 17% Arabs

Russian Immigrants: 14% (within the Jewish sample)

Age	Jews	Arabs
18-29	22%	26%
30-49	40%	41%
50+	38%	33%

Level of Religiosity (within the Jewish sample)	Total
Religious	21%
Traditional	30%
Secular	49%

Political Point of View (within the Jewish sample)	Total
Far Right & Right	36%
Center-Right	26%
Center	19%
Center-Left	10%
Left & Far Left	9%

Level of Education	Jews	Arabs
High School or below	23%	48%
High School Graduate	23%	15%
Academic Degree	54%	37%

Level of Income	Jews (89%)*	Arabs (97%)*
Below Average	33%	39%
Average	23%	32%
Above Average	44%	30%

\*The percentage of respondents who provided information

## A. Israel's Global Standing

### 1. What is your general feeling about Israel's standing in the world today?

	Total
1 - Bad	18%
2	12%
3	17%
4	13%
5	14%
6	11%
7	8%
8	4%
9	1%
10 - Very Good	2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.96</b>
Opinion holders	99%

Groupings: 1-4 = 60%, 5-7 = 19%, 8-10 = 7%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Not Good (1-4)	<b>60%</b>	63%	42%	35%
Mediocre (5)	<b>14%</b>	11%	29%	23%
Reasonable (6-7)	<b>19%</b>	20%	17%	29%
Good (8-10)	<b>7%</b>	6%	12%	13%
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.96</b>	3.87	4.55	5.12

### 2. Do you agree or disagree with the view that: "The improving of Israel's foreign relations depends on making progress on the peace process?"

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Strongly + Somewhat agree	<b>55%</b>	48%	97%	61%
Strongly + Somewhat disagree	<b>42%</b>	48%	3%	37%
No Opinion	<b>3%</b>	4%	-	2%

### 3. What will contribute to a greater degree to the improvement of Israel's standing in the world: Better public diplomacy or a change in policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Better public diplomacy	<b>36%</b>	40%	12%
Change in policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians	<b>27%</b>	19%	71%
Both equally	<b>28%</b>	30%	13%
Neither / Nothing will help achieve this	<b>9%</b>	11%	4%

## B. The Israeli government’s foreign policy

4. To what extent are you satisfied with the Israeli government’s conduct in the realm of foreign policy?

	Total
1 - Not at all satisfied	22%
2	11%
3	16%
4	11%
5	11%
6	10%
7	8%
8	6%
9	3%
10 - Very satisfied	2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.0</b>
Opinion holders	99%

Groupings: 1-4 = 60%, 6-7 = 18%, 8-10 = 11%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Not satisfied (1-4)	<b>60%</b>	62%	51%	34%
Mediocre (5)	<b>11%</b>	9%	21%	16%
Reasonably satisfied (6-7)	<b>18%</b>	19%	14%	30%
Satisfied (8-10)	<b>11%</b>	10%	14%	20%
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.0</b>	3.96	4.24	5.29

5. Do you believe that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu succeeded or failed with the steps he took to stop the Iranian nuclear program in recent years?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Succeeded	<b>19%</b>	19%	17%
Failed	<b>58%</b>	55%	80%
No Opinion	<b>23%</b>	26%	3%

## C. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs

6. According to its mission statement, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for formulating, implementing and explaining the foreign policy of the Government of Israel. To what extent are you satisfied with the way in which the Foreign Ministry is currently fulfilling its mission?

	Total	
1 - Not at all satisfied	18%	} 59%
2	12%	
3	16%	
4	13%	
5	14%	} 19%
6	10%	
7	9%	} 8%
8	4%	
9	2%	
10 - Very satisfied	2%	
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.03</b>	
Opinion holders	95%	

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Not satisfied (1-4)	<b>59%</b>	62%	41%	42%
Mediocre (5)	<b>14%</b>	13%	20%	10%
Reasonably satisfied (6-7)	<b>19%</b>	19%	22%	31%
Satisfied (8-10)	<b>8%</b>	6%	17%	17%
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.03</b>	3.89	4.88	5.02

7. Israel does not have a full-time foreign minister and the ministry's authorities have been spread across various government ministries. Do you believe that this reality harms or does not harm the national security of the State of Israel?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Harms the national security	<b>78%</b>	78%	81%
Does not harm the national security	<b>13%</b>	13%	14%
No opinion	<b>9%</b>	9%	5%

8. As a matter of principle, should Israeli foreign policy be based more on the use of force or on diplomatic means?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
More on the use of force	<b>19%</b>	22%	7%
More on diplomatic means	<b>45%</b>	38%	85%
Equally on force and diplomacy	<b>31%</b>	35%	7%
No opinion	<b>5%</b>	5%	1%

## D. The political sphere

9. In your opinion, who are the most prominent Members of Knesset on matters of Israeli foreign policy? (Respondents could mention up to three names. This is why the columns exceed 100%).

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Benjamin Netanyahu	<b>21%</b>	23%	14%
Naftali Bennett	<b>17%</b>	20%	-
Avigdor Lieberman	<b>17%</b>	17%	17%
Yair Lapid	<b>12%</b>	13%	7%
Tzipi Livni	<b>5%</b>	6%	3%
Isaac Herzog	<b>5%</b>	5%	5%
Tzipi Hotovely	<b>4%</b>	6%	-
Silvan Shalom	<b>4%</b>	3%	7%
Gilad Erdan	<b>3%</b>	3%	-
Zehava Galon	<b>2%</b>	1%	5%
Miri Regev	<b>2%</b>	2%	-
Danny Danon	<b>2%</b>	2%	-
Yuval Steinitz	<b>2%</b>	2%	-
Ayelet Shaked	<b>2%</b>	2%	-
Moshe Ya'alon	<b>1%</b>	1%	-
Ofir Akunis	<b>1%</b>	1%	-
Ze'ev Elkin	<b>1%</b>	1%	-
Ayman Odeh	<b>0%</b>	-	2%
Other	<b>2%</b>	2%	1%
No opinion / No one	<b>47%</b>	46%	59%



10. Are the current positions of the Zionist Union and Yesh Atid [both opposition parties] on foreign policy issues different or similar to those of the Israeli government?

The Zionist Union:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
The Zionist Union's positions are generally different from those of the government.	<b>49%</b>	50%	44%
The Zionist Union's positions are generally the same as those of the government	<b>23%</b>	20%	41%
No opinion	<b>28%</b>	30%	15%

Yesh Atid

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Yesh Atid's positions are generally different from those of the government.	<b>45%</b>	46%	39%
Yesh Atid's positions are generally the same as those of the government	<b>29%</b>	26%	47%
No opinion	<b>26%</b>	28%	14%

## E. Foreign policy priorities

11. Which of the following foreign policy issues should the State of Israel prioritize in the coming year? (Respondents were allowed to provide two answers. This is why the columns exceed 100%)

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Addressing security threats	<b>45%</b>	51%	7%
The Israeli-Palestinian peace process	<b>31%</b>	24%	76%
Relations with the US	<b>31%</b>	34%	15%
Public Diplomacy and combatting the BDS movement	<b>26%</b>	30%	2%
Relations with the moderate Arab countries	<b>20%</b>	17%	37%
Relations with the European Union	<b>7%</b>	8%	5%
Relations with Asian countries	<b>6%</b>	6%	3%
Relations with Russia	<b>5%</b>	6%	2%
Other	<b>1%</b>	2%	0%
None of the above / No opinion	<b>3%</b>	3%	3%

12. Generally, do you believe that Israel should:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Play a more active role in solving global issues	19%	19%	15%
Focus on solving Israel's own problems	66%	64%	78%
No opinion	15%	17%	7%

F. Israel's relations with the US and other countries

13. What is your assessment of the current state of relations between Israel and the United States?

	Total	
1 - Bad	7%	} 41%
2	6%	
3	13%	
4	15%	
5	17%	} 29%
6	16%	
7	13%	} 13%
8	8%	
9	2%	
10 - Very Good	3%	
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.01</b>	
Opinion holders	99%	

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Not Good (1-4)	41%	44%	24%	9%
Mediocre (5)	17%	15%	24%	22%
Reasonable (6-7)	29%	31%	23%	25%
Good (8-10)	13%	10%	29%	44%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.01</b>	4.86	6.00	6.76

14. The relationships with which 3 countries (except for the United States) are the most important to Israel today? (Respondents could mention up to three countries. This is why the columns exceed 100%)

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Russia	<b>41%</b>	44%	34%	33%
Germany	<b>31%</b>	33%	27%	32%
Egypt	<b>21%</b>	21%	25%	27%
China	<b>20%</b>	22%	8%	20%
Britain	<b>19%</b>	19%	27%	27%
France	<b>14%</b>	14%	22%	16%
Jordan	<b>10%</b>	9%	17%	3%
India	<b>5%</b>	5%	0%	2%
Saudi Arabia / Moderate Arab States	<b>5%</b>	4%	19%	-
Canada	<b>4%</b>	5%	2%	2%
Countries of the European Union	<b>4%</b>	4%	7%	-
Turkey	<b>3%</b>	2%	15%	2%
Iran	<b>2%</b>	2%	3%	-
The Palestinian Authority	<b>2%</b>	1%	5%	4%
Japan	<b>1%</b>	1%	0%	4%
Other	<b>1%</b>	1%	1%	5%
No opinion / No country	<b>25%</b>	27%	19%	2%

15. Recently it was reported that progress had been made in the talks between Israel and Turkey to reach an agreement that will mend relations between the countries. What do you believe is the most important reason for Israel to mend its ties with Turkey?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Exporting natural gas from Israel to Turkey	<b>10%</b>	11%	3%
Security cooperation between the countries regarding Syria and ISIS	<b>44%</b>	47%	21%
Turkish assistance to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process	<b>16%</b>	11%	51%
Increasing tourism between Israel and Turkey	<b>7%</b>	6%	16%
There is no reason to mend ties with Turkey	<b>23%</b>	25%	9%

## G. International involvement in the peace process

16. In a recent meeting held by the Quartet, the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia decided to allow Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Arab League to play a greater role in the international efforts to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Do you believe that a greater involvement of these Arab actors will:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Contribute to the peace process	<b>38%</b>	35%	61%
Have no impact on the peace process	<b>29%</b>	31%	17%
Disrupt the peace process	<b>21%</b>	22%	20%
No Opinion	<b>12%</b>	12%	2%
The gap between “contribute” and “disrupt”	<b>17%+</b>	13%+	41%+

17. In recent years Israel has been offered various incentives to move the peace process forward. Which of the following will most significantly increase your support for the peace process? Which is your second priority? (Each respondent was allowed to provide two answers. This is why the columns exceed 100%)

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Establishing normal relations with the Arab world, which include open diplomatic and commercial ties	<b>35%</b>	32%	48%
Receiving security guarantees and weapons from the United States	<b>23%</b>	24%	8%
An upgrade of relations with the European Union to the closest possible level to full EU membership	<b>19%</b>	19%	17%
An incentive package that includes all of the above	<b>20%</b>	20%	20%
None of the above	<b>20%</b>	20%	2%
No opinion	<b>9%</b>	9%	6%

The Incentive ranked as 1st Priority:

	Total
Establishing normal relations with the Arab world, which include open diplomatic and commercial ties	<b>27%</b>
Receiving security guarantees and weapons from the United States	<b>15%</b>
An upgrade of relations with the European Union to the closest possible level to full EU membership	<b>11%</b>
An incentive package that includes all of the above	<b>20%</b>
None of the above	<b>18%</b>
No opinion	<b>9%</b>

18. The European Union is expected to announce shortly that it will require the marking of products that originate in Israeli settlements. In light of this decision, do you think Israel should:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Decrease settlement development and construction	<b>31%</b>	23%	76%
Continue its current settlement policy	<b>27%</b>	30%	10%
Increase settlement development and construction	<b>28%</b>	31%	9%
No opinion	<b>14%</b>	16%	5%

## H. Regional cooperation and belonging

19. Do you believe that regional cooperation between Israel and other countries in the Middle East is possible?

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014
Possible	<b>59%</b>	54%	90%	69%
Impossible	<b>36%</b>	40%	8%	28%
No opinion	<b>5%</b>	6%	2%	3%

20. Where do you think Israel belongs? More in the Middle East, more in Europe, equally in both Europe and the Middle East, or neither in Europe nor the Middle East?

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2014	2013
More in the Middle East	<b>27%</b>	26%	32%	28%	23%
More in Europe	<b>31%</b>	32%	27%	25%	23%
Equally in both Europe and the Middle East	<b>26%</b>	26%	24%	28%	27%
Neither in Europe nor in the Middle East	<b>10%</b>	9%	14%	16%	16%
No opinion	<b>6%</b>	7%	3%	3%	11%

### For Further Information:

Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies

11 Tuval St., Ramat Gan 5252226 | [info@mitvim.org.il](mailto:info@mitvim.org.il) | [www.mitvim.org.il](http://www.mitvim.org.il)

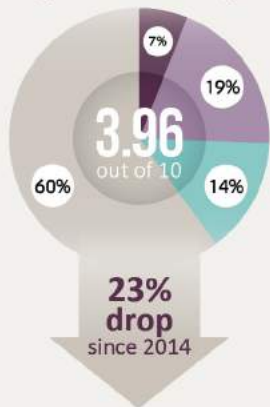
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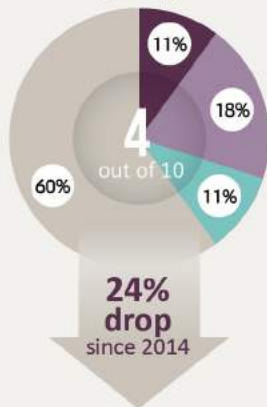
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# The 2015 Israeli Foreign Policy Index - Key Findings

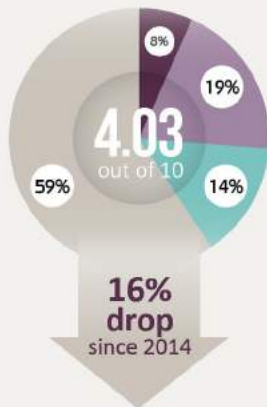
## Israel's global standing



## The government's handling of foreign policy

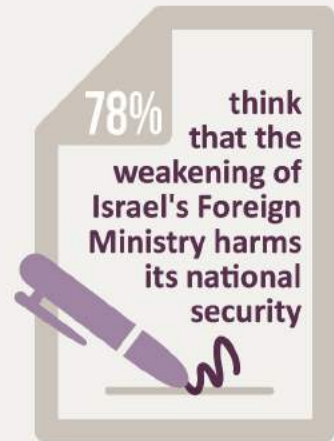
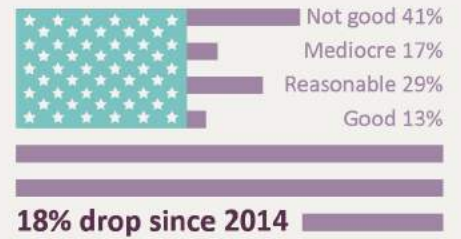


## The MFA's ability to fulfill its mission



■ Good ■ Reasonable ■ Mediocre ■ Not Good

## The current level of Israel-US relations is: 5.01 out of 10



## Israel's top foreign policy priorities are:

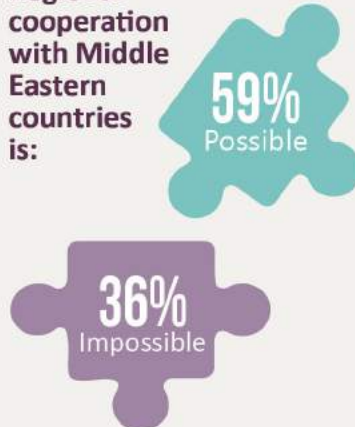
- Addressing security threats
- Promoting the ties with the US
- Promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process

45%  
31%  
31%

## Did Prime Minister Netanyahu SUCCEED OR FAIL in stopping Iran's nuclear program?



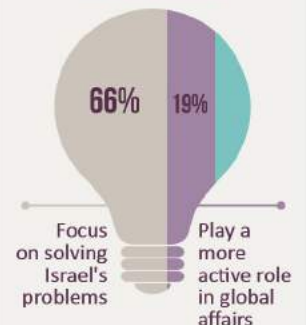
## Regional cooperation with Middle Eastern countries is:



## Improving Israel's foreign relations depends on progress in the peace process



## Israel should:



## Where does Israel belong?



## The most important countries for Israel in the world (except for the US):



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