

Trends in Israel's Regional Foreign Policies

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This document presents the main trends that characterized Israel's regional foreign policy and foreign relations during January–June 2026. Israel's foreign relations during this period were shaped largely by the joint Israeli–American war against Iran, which developed into a regional war, and the open fronts in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, and Lebanon. Israel entered 2026 dependent almost entirely on the United States, increasingly perceived as a pariah state by many publics in the region and around the world, and inclined to shape its strategic environment through unilateral action and force. These trends deepened during the first six months of 2026. Israel's autonomy was further eroded as Trump continued to dictate key aspects of its foreign and security policy and define the scope of its action. The “special relationship” that once characterized Israel–U.S. relations was replaced by patron-client relations, and public and political support for Israel in the United States reached a new low. Israel drifted further away from the European Union, European states, and from Western liberal publics, and responded to criticism and condemnations of its policies by severing ties with, and boycotting, international actors. Although it managed to discreetly preserve its security and strategic cooperation with Arab states in the region and to maintain especially close relations with the United Arab Emirates, it moved away from processes of regional integration. The deepening regional and global isolation did not lead Israel to change its policy on the Palestinian issue or to abandon its tendency to prefer the projection of force over cooperation. On the Palestinian front, the Israeli government advanced a process of accelerated annexation in the West Bank through legislation, construction approvals, and support for settler violence, alongside efforts to weaken the Palestinian Authority to the point of collapse, and in Gaza it sought to delay and obstruct the implementation of Trump's plan. In the regional arena, it launched a war on Iran that ultimately only strengthened Iran's regional and international standing; entered a broad military campaign in Lebanon that, at this point, ended with the signing of an agreement that appears strong “on paper” but will require considerable effort to implement; deepened the rupture and rivalry with Turkey; and froze the advancement of the security arrangement with Syria due to attention shifting to the Iranian and Lebanese arenas. At the midpoint of the year, Israel finds itself diplomatically isolated, mired in multiple military fronts, with a toxic global image, and without having achieved its security and strategic objectives in the various arenas. It is now heading toward an internal election campaign.

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1. ***Israel is more isolated and more dependent on the United States than ever before. Its decision-making autonomy has been impaired as Trump continues to determine core issues of Israeli foreign and security policy based on American interests; Israel opposes some of these decisions and tries to delay or block their implementation but is ultimately forced to accept American dictates*** - In the Palestinian arena, Trump announced the move to the second stage of his peace plan and the establishment of a technocratic government for Gaza, while Israel impeded its functioning, prevented its entry into Gaza, and delayed progress in implementing the plan. In the Iranian arena, the United States and Israel launched a joint war, but ultimately Trump chose, contrary to Israel's position, to enter negotiations with Iran from which Israel was excluded, while the United States made a point of consulting with other countries in the region. In the Lebanese arena, Trump announced a ceasefire, ordered Israel to stop bombing and to avoid jeopardizing the diplomatic channel with Iran, and led Israel and Lebanon to sign a framework agreement that included Israeli consent to withdraw, contrary to the government's declared position. In the face of Israel's delaying efforts, Trump reiterated that Netanyahu would do whatever he told him to do. To all of the above, should be added American intervention in Israel's domestic affairs, involvement in the approaching elections, and attempts to influence Netanyahu's trial and promote a pardon for him.
2. ***Israel–U.S. relations are still managed at the political level according to codes that have developed over the years, but the foundations of the “special relationship” are eroding and Israel is losing the support of the American public*** - Israel and the United States jointly launched a war against Iran, with close and unprecedented cooperation between the militaries. The United States continued to provide Israel with a diplomatic umbrella and confronted countries and international institutions that criticized Israel. Senior officials from the two countries spoke frequently and held reciprocal meetings, and the United States continued to provide Israel with security assistance. At the same time, opposition in Congress to continued military aid for Israel increased. The sense of success from the joint war was quickly replaced by a sense of failure and the perception that Israel had dragged the United States into an unnecessary war that only worsened the situation. American public support for Israel reached a low point, with a significant decline among supporters of both parties. In addition, tensions increased between Israel and the American Jewish community with Israel's promotion of the Orthodox conversion law and Ambassador Leiter's intervention in the Jewish community's affairs.
3. ***Israel is losing in the Iranian arena without achieving its objectives, without leverage, without partners, and excluded from decision-making and consultations*** - Israel and the United States prepared for war with Iran and launched a surprise attack that turned into a regional war involving all Gulf states, with the aim of bringing about regime change in Iran, removing the nuclear and missile threat, and curbing the activity of Iran's regional proxies. After about a month of intensive war and Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the United States and Iran advanced a ceasefire through Pakistani mediation. Israel's objectives remained unmet, while Iran strengthened its regional and international standing and was perceived as having won the campaign. Israel had no role in the negotiations to end the fighting and no

influence over the emerging agreement. Moreover, under American pressure, Israel was forced to accept Iran's demand and halt its fighting against Hezbollah in Lebanon as part of the agreement.

4. ***Israel is using the shift in global attention from the Palestinian arena to the Iranian arena to block progress on Trump's plan in Gaza, and to weaken the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank while advancing accelerated annexation*** - Israel insisted on the full and immediate dismantling of Hamas and the disarmament of Gaza before any progress on Trump's plan, opposed the entry of the Palestinian Authority into the Strip, and impeded the work of the technocratic government and prevented its entry into the Strip. The IDF deployed along the "yellow line," which divided the Strip between an area under Israeli control and an area under Hamas control, where the Palestinian population is concentrated. Over time, Israel gradually expanded the area under its control. The humanitarian crisis worsened as several aid organizations stopped their work in the Strip considering new Israeli demands, while global attention shifted to Iran and the Gulf. Hamas used the time and the absence of an alternative to consolidate its rule in Gaza. In the West Bank, Israel worked to weaken the Palestinian Authority to the point of collapse and continued to withhold its funds. The government advanced construction in settlements and outposts, including in the E-1 area, in the northern West Bank and even in Areas B and A, and continued to displace Palestinians in East Jerusalem, including in the Old City, for the benefit of settlers. Settler violence, including pogroms carried out in Palestinian communities across the West Bank, reached new heights; it was not addressed by the army or the police and received support and encouragement from the government. In addition, the government transferred large sums to support the settlements, granted tax benefits, and advanced legislative and regulatory changes to promote annexation. The international community condemned these moves and settler violence, and several countries responded by imposing sanctions on some violent settlers and their organizations, and even on several Israeli ministers, but without effective impact on the Israeli government policies in this regard.
5. ***International opposition to Israel's policies in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Iran is growing; global civil society is increasingly boycotting Israel and Israelis, and Israel is choosing to disengage and distance itself from the democratic-liberal world*** - Many countries criticized Israel's actions in the various arenas, and tensions emerged even with some of its closest friends, such as Germany and Italy. The level of relations with Spain and South Africa was downgraded. Proceedings against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza, advanced, and additional arrest warrants against senior Israeli officials were issued by the International Criminal Court. Israel was placed on the blacklist of parties responsible for sexual violence in conflict zones. Complaints were filed in courts around the world against IDF soldiers who participated in the war in Gaza and against senior Israeli officials who visited various countries, while various states also imposed sanctions or barred entry to senior Israeli officials. Cultural, sports, and arts figures and unions from around the world called for an arms embargo on Israel, accused Israel of genocide and systematic destruction in Gaza, canceled visits to Israel and cooperation with Israelis, and called for boycotts of Israel and Israeli artists. Researchers and academic associations severed ties with Israeli institutions and researchers, and there was a sharp decline in the receipt of grants and participation in academic research projects.

In response, Israel chose to sever ties and seek support from non-Western countries in South America and Africa and among far-right parties. It boycotted the office of the UN Secretary-General, cut off contact with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Kallas, severed ties with the Open Government Partnership, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and additional UN organizations, continued to prevent foreign journalists from entering to cover events in Gaza, and fell in the global corruption index to 35th place.

6. ***Israel entered another round of fighting against Hezbollah in Lebanon and reestablished an “(in-)security zone,” but was forced to accept American (and Iranian) dictates for a ceasefire and an end to the fighting, and ultimately signed a framework agreement with the Lebanese government under American auspices (and pressure) in an attempt to separate the Iranian and Lebanese arenas*** - Israel continued to attack Hezbollah targets despite the announcement that the previous round of fighting had ended, and used Hezbollah's response to the Israeli and American attack on Iran to reopen a broad military operation in Lebanon. Despite Trump's announcement of a ceasefire, mutual attacks between Israel and Hezbollah continued, with Hezbollah attacking northern communities and IDF forces with rockets and drones, while the IDF expanded its entry into Lebanon, evacuated and destroyed villages in the south, established itself beyond the Litani, and resumed attacks in Beirut, all within the freedom of action granted by the United States. At the same time, under American auspices and at the ambassadors lower diplomatic level, negotiations opened in Washington with the Lebanese government, which expressed support for disarming Hezbollah and a willingness to advance a diplomatic process with Israel. Due to Israel's unwillingness or inability to reach understandings directly with the Lebanese government, Israel was forced to halt its operations against Hezbollah as part of the negotiations between the United States and Iran. In an attempt to distance Lebanon from Iranian involvement, Israel ultimately signed a framework agreement with the Lebanese government whose implementation on the ground is challenging.
7. ***Israel maintained its security and strategic covert cooperation with countries in the region, but its decision to go to war with Iran and its continued policy in Gaza and the West Bank made it more isolated in the diplomatic arena and left out of regional integration processes*** - Israel continued to cooperate with Jordan and Egypt in the security and energy fields, and in managing the Gaza arena and the humanitarian effort. It continued contacts with Syria on a security arrangement, although it froze them when it shifted its focus to the war with Iran. It also maintained security cooperation with Gulf states in the context of the war and supplied them with weapons and defense systems. However, mistrust and suspicion between Israel and countries in the region deepened, as the countries of the region joined in criticizing and condemning Israel's policies in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Iran. The Jordanians rejected outright a meeting between Netanyahu and King Abdullah that Israel wanted to advance. Saudi Arabia and Qatar flatly rejected Trump's request to advance normalization with Israel as part of the arrangement ending the war with Iran, and stressed again that this would not happen without progress on the Palestinian track. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan signed a joint security agreement, with shared reference to the Palestinian issue, presenting an alternative regional cooperation frameworks to those that include Israel.

8. ***Relations with the United Arab Emirates were preserved, and security cooperation even strengthened. Publicly, however, relations became more limited and returned largely to behind the scenes*** - Against the background of the war with Iran, security cooperation between Israel and the United Arab Emirates deepened, including high-level talks, senior-level visits, and the transfer of weapons and defense systems from Israel to the UAE. Publicly, the UAE condemned Israel over attacks on energy fields in Iran, was angry at Israel for claiming that the UAE had joined the campaign, and was irritated when Israel publicly disclosed Netanyahu's visit to the country. The UAE maintained formal relations with Israel, continued to operate flights to Israel subject to the security situation, continued to support reconstruction efforts in Gaza, and even supported Israel's establishment of relations with Somaliland, contrary to the position of most regional and international actors. The UAE's importance grew in the eyes of the Israeli public.

9. ***The European Union and European countries, including Israel's closest friends such as Germany and Italy, criticized Israel's policies in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Iran, and tried to advance effective measures to pressure Israel, while Israel continued to seek European supporters at the state level*** - European states emphasized that they were not part of the Israeli-American war against Iran, refrained from taking an active part in it, and some countries even prevented the passage of American weapons and ammunition through their territory. European actors opposed the death-penalty bill targeting Arabs, called on Israel to refrain from expanding the fighting in Lebanon, criticized the extensive destruction in Lebanon, and criticized harm to Christian symbols in Lebanon and Jerusalem. Considering settler violence and accelerating annexation, European actors not only condemned and criticized, but also imposed sanctions on several settlers and their organizations and warned contractors against violating international law by participating in construction in E-1, while some countries advanced additional steps such as a ban on trade with the settlements. Many demonstrations were held against Israel, many public figures spoke out against its participation in Eurovision, and some countries even withdrew from participation in protest. While Germany continued to serve as a pillar of support for Israel, relations with Spain deteriorated, tensions with France increased, Italy joined the countries criticizing Israel, and Hungary's new government stopped serving as a shield against critical EU decisions on Israel. Israel sought to replace Hungary with Czechia, and possibly Slovenia, as an ally capable of blocking critical EU decisions, following the establishment of the new government there.

10. ***Israel and Turkey are deepening their rivalry and estrangement, while Israel is strengthening its relations with Greece and Cyprus, with an emphasis on military aspects*** - Turkey criticized Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as its conduct in the war against Iran and in Syria. Mutual rhetoric intensified, and Israel was described as exploiting the war to occupy additional territories across the Middle East. Israel recognized the Armenian genocide as another confrontational step toward the regime in Turkey. Against the background of the rising tensions with Turkey, Israel's security cooperation with Cyprus and Greece stood out, including new procurement deals, meetings between defense ministers and meetings between air force commanders, and the advancement of discussions in the energy field.