

The 2017 Israeli Foreign Policy Index Key Findings

The annual public opinion poll of the [Mitvim Institute](#) on Israel's foreign policy was conducted, for the fifth consecutive year, by the Rafi Smith Institute and in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The poll was carried out in mid-September 2017 among a representative sample of Israel's adult population (600 men and women, Jews and Arabs). The poll's margin of error is 4%. This report presents the poll's key findings, grouped under five categories: The state of Israel's foreign policy, Israel among the nations, foreign policy priorities and bilateral relations, regional cooperation, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

A. The State of Israel's Foreign Policy

- The Israeli public thinks that the **government's handling of foreign policy** is mediocre (5.05 out of 10). 20% describe it as good.
- The preferred candidate for the **position of Foreign Minister** is Yair Lapid, followed by Tzipi Livni, Benjamin Netanyahu, Avigdor Lieberman and Naftali Bennett.
- The public is not very satisfied with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) fulfillment of its mission** (4.81 out of 10). Only 13% describe it as good.
- The public believes that in order to **strengthen the MFA**, there is a need to formulate a coherent foreign policy approach (ranked first), and to appoint a full-time Foreign Minister/restore authority to the ministry (ranked second).
- Half of the public (50% vs. 39%) thinks that Israel should take into account, to a moderate or large extent, the implications of its policies on **Diaspora Jews**.

B. Israel among the Nations

- The public thinks that **Israel's global standing** is mediocre (5.49 out of 10). 17% describe it as good.
- The public is divided as to whether **Israel belongs more** to Europe (28%), the Middle East (26%), or equally to both (25%).
- A majority thinks that **international criticism against Israel** stems from a basic hostility towards Israel (59%), and not from disagreement with its policies (34%).
- Most Israelis (55% vs. 31%) think that advancing **laws perceived as weakening Israeli democracy** undermines Israel's global standing to a large or moderate extent.
- The Israeli public is **interested in knowing more** about (in descending order): Israel's cooperation with Arab states, the activities of the MFA, cooperation in the Mediterranean region, international peace initiatives, and Israel-EU relations.

C. Policy Priorities and Bilateral Relations

- Israelis think that their country's foreign policy should prioritize improving **relations with moderate Arab states**, followed by advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and struggling against the BDS movement.

- A majority (52%) thinks that the **nuclear deal with Iran** did not affect the level of Iranian nuclear threat to Israel. However, more respondents think that the threat has increased following the agreement (28%) than decreased (10%).
- The Israeli public is moderately satisfied by the **state of relations between Israel and the US** (6.88 out of 10). 41% describe the relations as good.
- According to the Israeli public, **the country with highest importance** to Israel, besides the US, is Russia, followed by Germany, Great Britain, China, France, and Egypt.
- A majority thinks that **Russian President Vladimir Putin** (52%) has a bigger influence on events in the Middle East than US President Donald Trump (15%).
- The Israeli public is divided as to whether it is better for Israel that the **EU becomes stronger (38%) or weaker (37%)**.

D. Regional Cooperation

- A vast majority (70% vs. 23%; larger than in previous polls) thinks that **regional cooperation** between Israel and Middle Eastern countries is possible.
- 48% of the public think that Israel can achieve a **breakthrough with Arab states** even without progress in the peace process with Palestinians. 39% think that such a breakthrough will be possible only after progress is made with the Palestinians.
- The Israeli public believes that **cooperation with Middle Eastern countries** can benefit Israel the most in the fields of security and economy.
- A plurality (46% vs. 39%) thinks that Israel should seek coordination with neighboring Arab states before taking steps related to the **Temple Mount/AI-Aqsa Mosque**.
- A majority (61%) thinks that **Israel-Turkey relations** have remained unchanged since the two countries signed the reconciliation agreement in June 2016.

E. The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

- A majority of the public (58% vs. 10%) thinks that the current Israeli government is distancing **the two-state solution**, rather than bringing it closer to fruition.
- An **international incentive package for peace** that includes normalized relations with the Arab world, security guarantees from the US, and an upgrade of ties with the EU is considered to be the most effective incentive for peace. Among the package's components, normalized relations with the Arab world are viewed as the most attractive.
- A majority of the public (50% vs. 24%) thinks that the continued **internal Palestinian split** between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is preferable to a renewed political unification between the two.
- A majority of the public (59% vs. 26%) agrees that **Arab citizens of Israel** should play a more central role in efforts to advance peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

General comparisons between assessments

Average ratings on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

	2017	2016	2015	2014
Israel's global standing	5.49	5.01	3.96	5.12
The government's performance on foreign policy	5.05	4.55	4.00	5.29
The MFA's fulfillment of its mission	4.81	4.31	4.03	4.80
The current state of Israel-US relations	6.88	5.56	5.01	6.09