



Israel's Foreign Policy: Towards Isolation or Integration?

Highlights from the Mitvim Institute's Pre-Elections Event

Tel Aviv; February 25, 2015

MK Tzipi Livni (Zionist Union), Minister Dr. Yuval Steinitz (Likud), MK Ofer Shelah (Yesh Atid), Dr. Michael Oren (Koolanu) and Mossi Raz (Meretz) spoke at a pre-elections event on Israel's foreign policy, convened by [Mitvim – The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies](http://www.mitvim.org.il). The event took place in Tel Aviv on February 25, 2015, and was moderated by Arad Nir of Channel 2 News.

Highlights of the Event:

MK Tzipi Livni (Zionist Union): "Netanyahu is destroying our alliance with the US in pursuit of his own political aims. The way to gain US support regarding Iran does not pass through intervention in American domestic politics, blatant defiance (of norms) and a speech. A proposal to levy more sanctions on Iran was canceled in part due to Netanyahu's actions. The Zionist Union will stop the diplomatic tsunami that Israel is facing and will restore Israel's relations with the US and Europe. We are being trusted by actors in the region and in the international community, while Netanyahu is not. We will not invest in settlements which are beyond the settlements blocs."

Minister Dr. Yuval Steinitz (Likud): "It may be that John Kerry does not know everything we know about Iran. We know everything we need to know, and we have an excellent picture of the negotiations taking place between the P5+1 and Iran. Prime Minister Netanyahu has played a key role in waking the world up to the need for sanctions on Iran. He is going to Congress because of the grave threat posed to Israel. Mark my words, the crisis with the US will disappear a month after the elections. This was the case around Israel's last elections. We want peace with the Palestinians, but it is impossible to reach at present."

MK Ofer Shelah (Yesh Atid): "Israel needs to see the international community as a friend and not an enemy. We need American aid with regard to Iran, yet the prime minister prevents this by intervening in American politics. In the current situation in the Middle East, there are shared interests between Israel and some Arab countries



in light of the threat of ISIS. The Palestinian issue is key to developing closer ties with the Arab world and to fulfill the potential lying in these shared interests. The peace process should be renewed, but only through a regional framework. The bi-lateral track with the Palestinians has failed and is stuck.”

Dr. Michael Oren (Koolanu): “Without a strong economy and society, Israel cannot maintain a strong foreign policy, and vice versa. The crisis with the US is not a personal one. There are clear ideological differences between the countries. It will be possible to mend the relations after the elections, but it will take time and effort. Israel cannot continue to rule over the Palestinian people. We are ready to negotiate with them, but the term ‘peace agreement’ does not fit the Middle East. Instead, we have to reach understandings with the Palestinians. Until then, Israel should follow the framework set by George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon, and should strengthen the Palestinian economy, for example by connecting the city of Rawabi to water.”

Mossi Raz (Meretz): “In order to integrate into the region and the international community Israel must resolve the conflict with the Palestinians. This is the heart of the matter. Israel has still not had a prime minister who has offered the Palestinians an acceptable proposal to end the conflict, based on the 1967 borders, the division of Jerusalem, and one-to-one land swaps. Israel should recognize the Palestinian state and accept the Arab Peace Initiative. The continuation of Israel’s current policies will only increase its isolation in the world.”

At the event, the Mitvim Institute introduced a new Israeli foreign policy paradigm, devised by a Mitvim team of experts.

Dr. Nimrod Goren (Head of the Mitvim Institute): “Israel lacks a coherent foreign policy paradigm. This hampers its global standing and the conduct of Israeli diplomacy, which is all too often preoccupied with security concerns and public diplomacy (*hasbara*). For Israel to enjoy a fresh start among the nations, it needs to implement a foreign policy which is pro-peace, multi-regional, open to the world, modern and inclusive. Such a paradigm, which the Mitvim Institute is advancing, should be based on building relations, taking initiatives, and focusing on opportunities rather than on threats.”

Prof. Elie Podeh (The Mitvim Institute and the Hebrew University): “Israel needs to actively promote peace. Israel’s government has never offered its own peace initiative and that has contributed to our regional isolation. Israel is wrong in that it avoids discussing the Arab Peace Initiative, which is a great opportunity. Almost all of Israel’s political parties agree that the changes in the Middle East today create new opportunities. This is a discourse that the Mitvim Institute has been working to promote. Yet without progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, these opportunities will remain unfulfilled.”