

According to the 2015 Israeli Foreign Policy Index of the Mitvim Institute:

Only 7% of the Israeli public believes Israel's international standing is good; 60% are dissatisfied with the Israeli government's conduct on foreign policy issues; 78% believe that the weakening of Israel's Foreign Ministry harms national security; 41% believe that Israel-US relations are in a poor state.

The poll also shows that 55% of Israelis believe that improving their country's international standing is contingent upon progress in the peace process and 59% believe that regional cooperation with other Middle Eastern countries is possible. Russia is perceived as the most important country with which Israel should maintain ties after the United States (41%), and at the top of Israelis' list of foreign policy priorities are: addressing security threats (45%); promoting the ties with the US (31%); and promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (31%).

The 2015 Israeli Foreign Policy Index is based on a public opinion poll conducted for the Mitvim Institute 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%.

Key Findings:

- ***Israel's international standing is poor, and is significantly worse than it was last year. Most Israelis believe that any improvement in this regard is contingent upon progress in the peace process.***

The average score given to Israel's international standing is 3.96/10, a 23% drop compared to 2014. Only 7% of respondents believe Israel's standing to be "good" and 60% (compared to 35% in 2014) believe it to be "not good."

- ***Israelis disapprove of their government's conduct in matter of foreign policy and think it has deteriorated since 2014. Israelis also believe Prime Minister Netanyahu failed in addressing the Iranian nuclear issue.***

Only 11% of respondents were satisfied with the government's conduct on foreign policy issues while 60% are dissatisfied (compared to 34% in 2014). The average mark given to the government on this issue is 4/10, which represents a 24% drop from 2014. 58% believe that PM Netanyahu failed in his efforts to stop the Iranian nuclear project, compared to 19% who have the opposite view.

- ***Weakening the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) harms national security.***

78% of Israelis believe that scattering the MFA's responsibilities across other ministries and the absence of a full-time foreign minister are harming national security, as opposed to 13% who hold the opposite view. The public is dissatisfied (59% to 8%) with the way in which the MFA is fulfilling its mission. The average mark awarded to the MFA is 4.03, a 16% drop from 2014.

- ***Israelis want their foreign policy to prioritize addressing security threats, promoting the Israeli-US relationship and advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.***

According to the public, Israel's foreign policy priorities for the coming year should be addressing the country's security threats (mentioned by 45%), the Israeli relationship with the U.S. (mentioned by 31%) and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (mentioned by 31%). These were followed by public diplomacy and confronting the BDS campaign (26%), as well as Israel's ties with the moderate Arab states (20%).

- ***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 average mark given to Israel's ties with the US is 5.01/10, which represents an 18% drop since 2014. 41% of respondents believe these ties to be "not good," as opposed to only 17% who held the same view in 2014. Other than the US, Russia is seen as the most important country to Israel (mentioned by 41%), followed by Germany (31%), Egypt (21%), China (20%), and Britain (19%).

- ***The primary reason for Israel to improve ties with Turkey is to promote security cooperation.***

44% of the public believes that security cooperation to address the Syrian crisis and the threat of ISIS is the main reason for Israel to mend ties with Turkey. 16% mentioned the possibility of Turkey playing a supportive role in the peace process as the top reason. 10% mentioned the potential of exporting gas from Israel to Turkey, and 7% argued that increasing tourism should be the catalyst for this shift. According to 23% of those asked, Israel has no reason to improve ties with Turkey.

- ***Greater involvement of Arab countries in the peace process is viewed positively and Israelis believe that regional cooperation with Middle Eastern countries is possible.***

A majority of those asked (38% as opposed to 21%) believe that greater involvement by Arab states will help promote the peace process. Additionally, 59% of the public (as opposed to 36%) believes that cooperation between Israel and countries in the Middle East is possible (down from 69% who held this view in 2014).

- ***The potential of normalized relations with the Arab world is the greatest incentive to achieving peace. Israelis are divided as to the best response to an upcoming EU decision to label settlement products.***

27% of respondents said that the possibility of normalized relations with the Arab world is the most effective incentive to increase their support for the peace process. 15% believe that American security guarantees are the most effective incentive to achieve this, and 11% cited the possibility of a significant upgrade in Israel's relations with the EU. 20% argued that an incentive package combining all of the above would offer the best chances of promoting peace. The public is divided as to how Israel should respond if the EU decides to label products originating in the West Bank settlements. 31% of Israelis think that Israel should reduce settlement construction in response, while 28% argue that construction should be increased if the Europeans take this step.

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.”

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