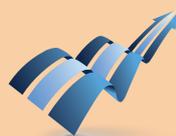


# The 2016 Israeli Foreign Policy Index of the Mitvim Institute

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September 2016



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

**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG**

# The 2016 Israeli Foreign Policy Index

## Findings of the Mitvim Institute Poll

The annual public opinion of the Mitvim Institute on Israel's foreign policy was conducted, for the fourth consecutive year in late August- early September 2016. It was carried out by the Rafi Smith Institute, and in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, among a representative sample of Israel's adult population (600 men and women, Jews and Arabs, aged 18 and above). The poll's margin of error is 4%. This report includes the poll findings, grouped under five categories: Israel among the nations, the state of Israel's foreign policy, foreign policy priorities and bi-lateral relations, regional belonging and cooperation, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

### Key Findings

#### A. Israel among the Nations

- The vast majority of the Israeli public is **interested in issues** related to Israel's foreign policy (75%).
- The Israeli public believes **Israel's global standing** is mediocre (average: 5.01 out of 10). Only 10% describe it as good.
- The Israeli public does not agree with the popular claim that **"the entire world is against us [Israel]"** (51% vs. 39%). Among Jewish respondents this gap is small, and among Arab respondents this gap is larger.
- A large majority of Israelis think that their country is a **regional superpower** (66% vs. 20%).

#### B. The State of Israel's Foreign Policy

- The Israeli public is dissatisfied with the **government's handling of foreign policy** (4.55 out of 10). Only 10% describe it as good.
- Two-thirds of Israelis believe that the **lack of a full-time foreign minister** and the weakening of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) powers harm Israel's national security (66% vs. 19%).
- The Israeli public is dissatisfied with the **MFA's ability to fulfill its mission** (average 4.31 out of 10).
- A large majority of Israelis think that Israel does not conduct its foreign policy with a clearly defined **set of principles** (60% vs. 25%).
- The Israeli public is divided regarding the role of Israel's **security apparatus in foreign policy decision-making**. The leading position is that its role is appropriate (44%).
- The Israeli public would like **greater female involvement** in issues related to Israel's foreign policy, followed by (in descending order) the ultra-Orthodox community, new immigrants, and Arab citizens of Israel.

#### C. Foreign Policy Priorities and Bi-Lateral Relations

- Israelis think that their country's foreign policy should prioritize the **strengthening of ties with the US**, followed by advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and improving relations with moderate Arab states.
- Israelis believe that **relations with the US** at present are mediocre (5.56 out of 10). Only 16% think relations are good.
- According to the Israeli public, **the country with highest importance** to Israel, besides the US, is Russia, followed by Germany, and then Great Britain, France, China, and Egypt.

- Israelis are divided on whether their government should prioritize building relations with democratic countries (48%) or should not consider **regime type as a factor when building relations** with other countries (52%).
- The Israeli public is divided on whether, in light of the recent **challenges the EU is facing**, it is better for Israel that the EU becomes stronger (41%) or weaker (34%).

#### D. Regional Belonging and Cooperation

- Similar to previous years, the Israeli public is still divided in its perception of **Israel's regional belonging**. Israelis are unsure as to whether Israel belongs more in Europe, more in the Middle East, or equally in both.
- A large majority – larger than in 2015- thinks that **regional cooperation** between Israel and other Middle Eastern countries is possible (66% vs. 24%).
- A majority of Israel's Jewish public believes that **improving ties between Israel and other Arab states** will help advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. A majority of Israel's Arab population sees the sequence differently and believes that progress in the peace process is needed in order to advance ties with Arab states.
- A large majority of Israelis want **Israel's Arab citizens** to play a more central role in improving Israel's relations with Arab states (64% vs. 24%).
- A large majority of Israelis see benefit for Israel in the recent signing of a **reconciliation agreement with Turkey**, especially in the area of security cooperation (26%) and the possible export of Israeli natural gas to Turkey (22%).

#### E. The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

- A majority of Israelis think that improving Israel's foreign relations depends on making **progress on the peace process** (58% vs. 37%).
- A majority of Israelis think that in the coming months Israel **should offer its own diplomatic initiative** to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (55% vs. 30%).
- A majority of Israelis believe that if US President Obama decides to issue **parameters for an Israeli-Palestinian final-status** agreement before leaving the White House it will not have an impact on the peace process (54%). Only 17% think that such a move will help advance peace.
- A plurality of Israelis think that the **Palestinian leader who follows President Abbas** will not be a better or worse partner for Israel, but rather a similar one (49%). Only 9% think that the next Palestinian leader will be a better partner than Abbas.
- The Israeli public sees the option of a package including normalized relations with the Arab world, US security guarantees, and an upgrade of ties with the EU as the **most effective incentive** to increase support for the peace process. Among the package's components, normalized relations with the Arab world are seen as the most attractive of the three incentives, but less than it was in the 2015 poll.

### General comparisons between assessments

Average from 1 (low) to 10 (high)

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

## Sample Breakdown

### General:

50% **Male**; 50% **Female**

83% **Jews**; 17% **Arabs**

14% **Russian immigrants** (within the Jewish sample)

Age	Jews	Arabs
18-29	23%	28%
30-49	38%	42%
50+	39%	30%

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

Political Point of View (within the Jewish sample)	Total
Right & Far Right	38%
Center-Right	24%
Center	19%
Center-Left	11%
Left & Far Left	8%

Level of Education	Jews	Arabs
High school or below	24%	39%
High school graduate	24%	16%
Academic degree	52%	45%

Level of Income	Jews (88% responded)	Arabs (97% responded)
Below average	35%	55%
Average	23%	24%
Above average	42%	21%

## A. Israel among the Nations

### 1. To what extent are you interested in issues related to Israel's foreign relations?

	Total	
Very interested	24%	75%
Somewhat interested	51%	
Not very interested	21%	25%
Not interested	4%	

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Very interested + Somewhat interested	<b>75%</b>	78%	67%
Not very interested + Not interested	<b>25%</b>	22%	33%

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

(Please rate on a scale of 1-10, 1 is bad, 10 is very good)

	Total
1 – Bad	6%
2	5%
3	12%
4	19%
5	17%
6	16%
7	15%
8	6%
9	2%
10 – Very good	2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.01</b>
Percentage of those who responded	98%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Not good (1-4)	<b>42%</b>	40%	49%	60%	35%
Mediocre (5)	<b>17%</b>	17%	19%	14%	23%
Reasonable (6-7)	<b>31%</b>	32%	24%	19%	29%
Good (8-10)	<b>10%</b>	11%	8%	7%	13%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.01</b>	5.07	4.73	3.96	5.12

**3. Do you agree or disagree with the claim that “the entire world is against us [Israel]”?**

	<b>Total</b>	Jews	Arabs
Agree	<b>39%</b>	44%	16%
Disagree	<b>51%</b>	48%	67%
No opinion	<b>10%</b>	8%	17%
Gap between “agree” and “disagree”	<b>-12%</b>	-4%	-51%

**4. Do you agree or disagree with the opinion that “Israel is a regional superpower”?**

	<b>Total</b>	Jews	Arabs
Agree	<b>66%</b>	68%	57%
Disagree	<b>20%</b>	20%	19%
No opinion	<b>14%</b>	12%	24%
The gap between “agree” and “disagree”	<b>+46%</b>	+48%	+38%

## B. The State of Israel’s Foreign Policy

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

(Please rate on a scale of 1-10, 1 is not at all satisfied, 10 is very satisfied)

	Total
1 – Not at all satisfied	13%
2	9%
3	12%
4	15%
5	17%
6	13%
7	11%
8	6%
9	3%
10 – Very satisfied	1%
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.55</b>
Percentage of those who responded	94%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Not satisfied (1-4)	<b>49%</b>	47%	51%	60%	34%
Mediocre (5)	<b>17%</b>	17%	20%	11%	16%
Reasonable (6-7)	<b>24%</b>	25%	20%	18%	30%
Satisfied (8-10)	<b>10%</b>	11%	9%	11%	20%
Average	<b>4.55</b>	4.58	4.40	4.00	5.29

### 6. 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	2015
Harms national security	<b>66%</b>	68%	56%	78%
Does not harm national security	<b>19%</b>	18%	24%	13%
No opinion	<b>15%</b>	14%	20%	9%
The gap between “harms” and “does not harm”	<b>+47%</b>	+50%	+32%	+55%

**7. 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?**

(Please rate on a scale of 1-10, 1 is not at all satisfied, 10 is very satisfied)

	Total
1 – Not at all satisfied	14%
2	9%
3	15%
4	14%
5	18%
6	14%
7	8%
8	4%
9	2%
10 – Very satisfied	2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.31</b>
Percentage of those who responded	90%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Not satisfied (1-4)	<b>52%</b>	52%	57%	59%	41%
Mediocre (5)	<b>18%</b>	17%	20%	14%	20%
Reasonable (6-7)	<b>22%</b>	22%	22%	19%	27%
Satisfied (8-10)	<b>8%</b>	9%	1%	8%	12%
Average	<b>4.31</b>	4.35	4.07	4.03	4.80

**8. Do you think that the role of Israel’s security apparatus in foreign policy decision making is:**

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Too high	<b>26%</b>	23%	41%
Too low	<b>30%</b>	30%	28%
Appropriate	<b>44%</b>	47%	31%
The gap between “high” and “low”	<b>-4%</b>	-7%	+13%

**9. In your opinion, does Israel conduct its foreign policy with a clearly defined set of principles?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2013
Yes	<b>25%</b>	23%	33%	31%
No	<b>60%</b>	63%	42%	47%
No opinion	<b>15%</b>	14%	25%	22%
The gap between “yes” and “no”	<b>-35%</b>	-40%	-9%	-16%

**10. Which of the following groups in Israeli society would you like to have more involved than they are today in issues related to Israeli foreign policy?**

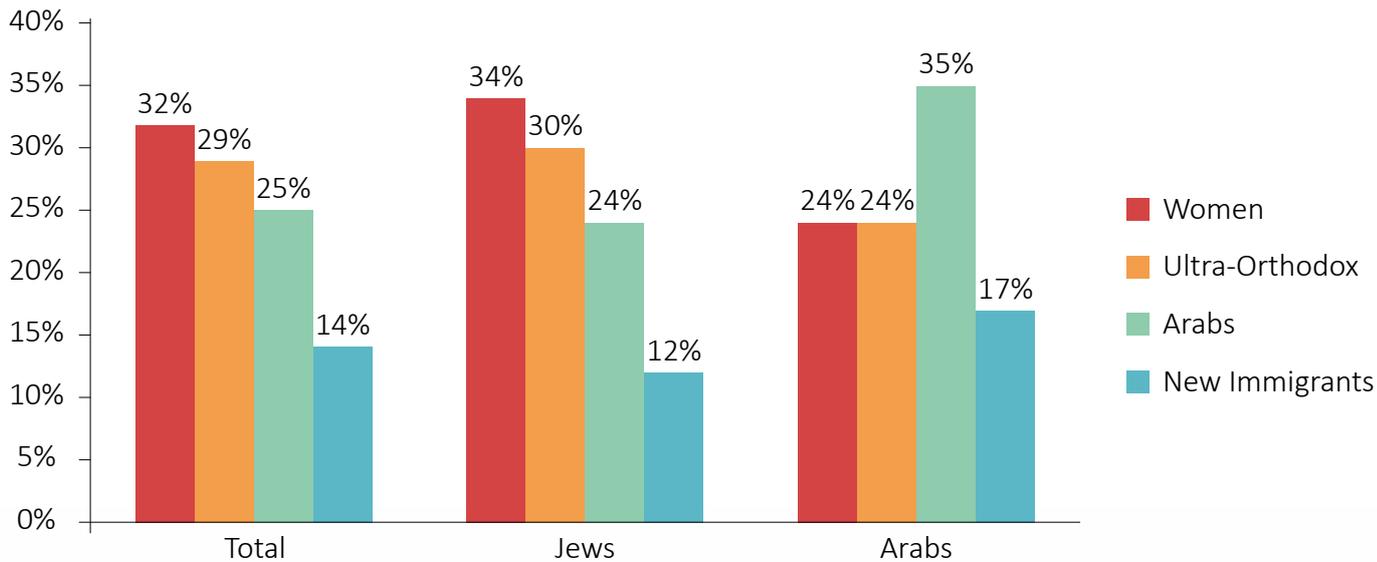
(Respondents were asked to rank between 1 – most important, and 4 – least important)

		Women	Ultra-Orthodox	Arabs	New Immigrants
All	Ranked 1	32%	25%	29%	14%
	Ranked 2	22%	25%	17%	36%
	Ranked 3	18%	29%	18%	35%
	Ranked 4	28%	21%	36%	15%
	<b>Average</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>2.51</b>
Jews	Ranked 1	34%	24%	30%	12%
	Ranked 2	20%	26%	17%	37%
	Ranked 3	17%	32%	15%	36%
	Ranked 4	29%	18%	38%	14%
	<b>Average</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>2.51</b>
Arabs	Ranked 1	24%	35%	24%	17%
	Ranked 2	32%	17%	17%	34%
	Ranked 3	24%	15%	31%	31%
	Ranked 4	20%	33%	28%	18%
	<b>Average</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.50</b>

\* A lower average means there was higher interest in the group’s involvement.

**The group which was ranked as top-priority:**

	<b>Total</b>	Jews	Arabs
Women	<b>32%</b>	34%	24%
Arabs	<b>29%</b>	30%	24%
Ultra-Orthodox	<b>25%</b>	24%	35%
New Immigrants	<b>14%</b>	12%	17%



## C. Foreign Policy Priorities and Bi-Lateral Relations

### 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
Relations with the US	37%	41%	23%
The Israeli-Palestinian peace process	31%	26%	55%
Relations with the moderate Arab countries, such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia	31%	32%	27%
Public diplomacy and combatting the BDS movement	22%	25%	7%
Relations with the EU	22%	20%	30%
Relations with Asian countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, India	14%	14%	11%
Relations with Russia	14%	14%	14%
Dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat	12%	14%	5%
Relations with African countries	3%	3%	2%
None of the above / No opinion	6%	5%	13%

### 12. What is your assessment of the current relations between Israel and the US?

(Please rate on a scale of 1-10, 1 is bad, 10 is very good)

	Total
1 – Bad	3%
2	3%
3	11%
4	12%
5	20%
6	19%
7	16%
8	8%
9	5%
10 – Very good	3%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.56</b>
Percentage of those who responded	97%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Not good (1-4)	29%	32%	17%	41%	17%
Mediocre (5)	20%	18%	24%	17%	20%
Reasonable (6-7)	35%	35%	35%	29%	39%
Good (8-10)	16%	15%	24%	13%	24%
<b>Average</b>	<b>5.56</b>	5.43	6.15	5.01	6.09

### 13. The relationships with which three countries (except for the US) are the most important to Israel today?

(Respondents could mention up to three countries. This is why the columns exceed 100%; the table only includes countries receiving 5% and more)

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Russia	45%	46%	42%	41%	33%
Germany	32%	34%	23%	31%	32%
Britain	30%	30%	30%	19%	27%
France	25%	25%	22%	14%	16%
China	21%	23%	10%	20%	20%
Egypt	18%	20%	13%	21%	27%
Turkey	8%	8%	8%	3%	2%
Jordan	5%	4%	10%	10%	3%
Canada	5%	5%	1%	4%	2%

Regarding the Palestinian Authority there was a large gap between Jews and Arabs:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Palestinian Authority	1%	0%	6%

### 14. With which of the following statements do you most agree:

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Israel should prioritize building relations with democratic countries	48%	48%	51%
Israel should not consider regime type as a factor when building its foreign relations	52%	52%	49%

### 15. In light of the recent challenges that the EU is facing, including the refugee wave, terror attacks, and the British decision to leave the EU, what in your opinion will better serve the interests of Israel?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
That the EU becomes stronger	41%	39%	50%
That the EU becomes weaker	34%	37%	20%
That there will be no change in the power of the EU	25%	24%	30%
The gap between “stronger” and “weaker”	+7%	+2%	+30%

## D. Regional Belonging and Cooperation

### 16. Where do you think Israel belongs?

	Total	Jews	Arabs
More in the Middle East	<b>29%</b>	30%	24%
More in Europe	<b>26%</b>	26%	25%
Equally in both Europe and the Middle East	<b>23%</b>	23%	23%
Neither in Europe nor in the Middle East	<b>15%</b>	15%	14%
No opinion	<b>7%</b>	6%	14%

Comparison between years:

	2016	2015	2014	2013
More in the Middle East	<b>29%</b>	27%	28%	23%
More in Europe	<b>26%</b>	31%	25%	23%
Equally in both Europe and the Middle East	<b>23%</b>	26%	28%	27%
Neither in Europe nor in the Middle East	<b>15%</b>	10%	16%	16%
No opinion	<b>7%</b>	6%	3%	11%

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

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Yes, it is possible	<b>64%</b>	64%	64%	59%	69%
No, it is not possible	<b>26%</b>	28%	18%	36%	28%
No opinion	<b>10%</b>	8%	18%	5%	3%

### 18. With whom in the Arab world is it most important for Israel to try and advance cooperation?

(Respondents were asked to rank between 1 – most important, and 5 – least important)

	Egypt	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Palestinian Authority	Morocco
Ranked 1 <sup>st</sup>	37%	12%	16%	26%	9%
Ranked 2 <sup>nd</sup>	31%	32%	19%	8%	10%
Ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup>	15%	35%	23%	12%	14%
Ranked 4 <sup>th</sup>	10%	17%	30%	15%	28%
Ranked 5 <sup>th</sup>	7%	4%	12%	39%	38%
<b>Average ranking</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> place</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> place</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> place</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> place</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> place</b>
	Average:	Average:	Average:	Average:	Average:
	2.20	2.69	3.04	3.32	3.77

\* A lower average means there was higher importance attributed to the country.

\*\* This question was asked in a separate poll, carried out on 13 July 2016, towards a conference at the Knesset on the topic of Israeli-Arab regional cooperation.

**19. Which of the following sentences better reflects your opinion?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Progress in relations between Israel and Arab countries will assist efforts to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process	<b>45%</b>	50%	22%
Progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will assist efforts to promote cooperation between Israel and Arab countries	<b>34%</b>	27%	65%
No opinion	<b>21%</b>	23%	13%

**20. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The Arabs citizens of Israel should have a more central role in improving Israel's relations with the countries of the Middle East"?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2013
Agree	<b>64%</b>	64%	65%	59%
Disagree	<b>24%</b>	26%	18%	27%
No opinion	<b>12%</b>	10%	17%	14%

**21. Israel and Turkey recently signed an agreement to mend their relations. In your opinion, what will be the most significant benefit for Israel?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015*
Security cooperation between the countries	<b>26%</b>	27%	20%	44%
Export of natural gas from Israel to Turkey	<b>22%</b>	24%	11%	10%
Increased tourism from Israel to Turkey	<b>16%</b>	13%	26%	7%
Turkish assistance in improving ties between Israelis and Palestinians	<b>10%</b>	8%	23%	16%
There will be no benefit for Israel	<b>26%</b>	28%	20%	23%

\* In 2015, the question was phrased: "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?"

## E. The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

**22. Do you agree or disagree with the view that: “Improving Israel’s foreign relations depends on making progress on the peace process?”**

	Total	
Strongly agree	23%	58%
Somewhat agree	35%	
Somewhat disagree	20%	37%
Disagree	17%	
No opinion	5%	5%

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015	2014
Strongly + Somewhat agree	<b>58%</b>	54%	75%	55%	61%
Strongly + Somewhat disagree	<b>37%</b>	42%	15%	42%	37%
No opinion	<b>5%</b>	4%	10%	3%	2%

**23. In recent months, several countries have introduced their own initiatives to promote the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In your opinion, should or shouldn’t Israel offer in the coming months a diplomatic initiative of its own to promote Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Israel should offer an initiative of its own	<b>55%</b>	53%	67%
Israel should not offer an initiative of its own	<b>30%</b>	34%	10%
No opinion	<b>15%</b>	13%	23%

**24. Before leaving the White House, US President Barack Obama may issue parameters for an Israeli-Palestinian final-status agreement, as was done in 2000 by President Bill Clinton. In your opinion, will such a move by President Obama:**

	Total	Jews	Arabs
Help advance the peace process	<b>17%</b>	14%	32%
Not affect the peace process	<b>54%</b>	54%	57%
Hinder the advancement of the peace process	<b>29%</b>	32%	11%
The gap between “help” and “hinder”	<b>-12%</b>	-18%	+21%

**25. In your opinion, will the next Palestinian leader after Mahmoud Abbas be a better or a worse partner for Israel to advance a diplomatic process with?**

	Total	Jews	Arabs
A better partner	9%	8%	14%
A worse partner	12%	9%	25%
Similar to Mahmoud Abbas	49%	53%	28%
No opinion	30%	30%	33%
The gap between “better” and “worse”	-3%	-1%	-11%

**26. 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?**

(Respondents could mention two answers. This is why the columns exceed 100%)

	Total	Jews	Arabs	2015
Normal relations with the Arab world, which include open diplomatic and commercial ties	25%	20%	50%	35%
Security guarantees and weapons from the US	19%	21%	7%	23%
Upgrading relations with the EU to the closest possible level to full EU membership	18%	18%	20%	19%
An incentive package including all of the above	42%	46%	21%	20%
None of the above	18%	21%	3%	20%
No opinion	6%	5%	8%	9%

The incentive which was ranked as 1<sup>st</sup> priority:

	Total	2015
Normal relations with the Arab world, which include open diplomatic and commercial ties	22%	27%
Security guarantees and weapons from the US	5%	25%
Upgrading relations with the EU to the closest possible level to full EU membership	8%	11%
An incentive package that includes all of the above	42%	20%
None of the above	18%	18%
No opinion	5%	9%

**For Further Information:**

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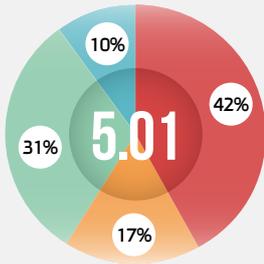
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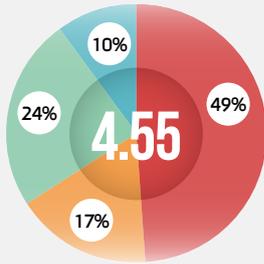
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# The 2016 Israeli Foreign Policy Index - Key Findings

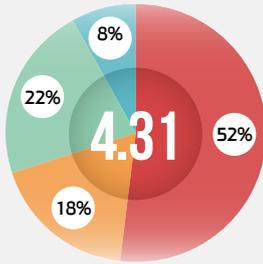
## Israel's global standing\*



## The government's handling of foreign policy\*

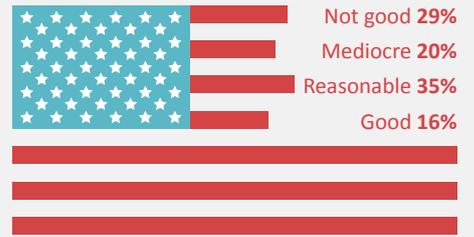


## The MFA's ability to fulfill its mission\*

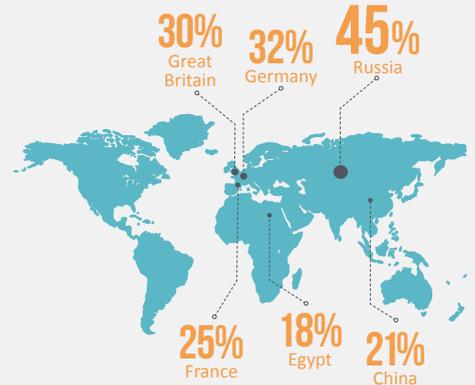


■ Good ■ Reasonable ■ Mediocre ■ Not Good \*Out of 10

## The current state of Israel-US relations: 5.56 out of 10



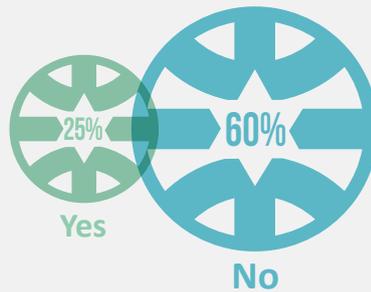
## The most important countries for Israel in the world (except for the US)



## Israel's top foreign policy priorities



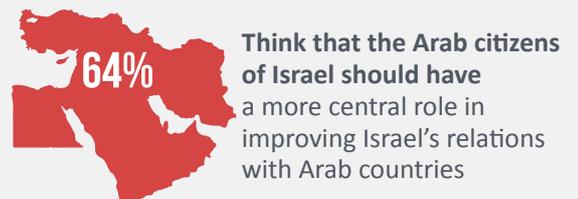
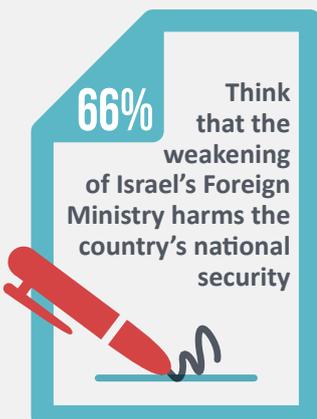
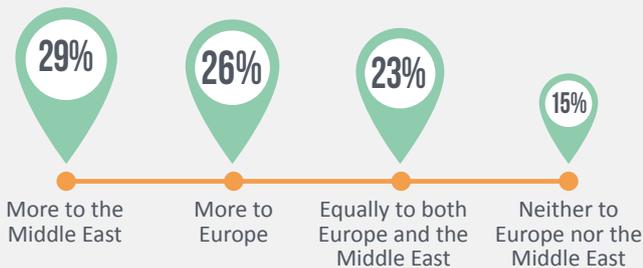
## Is Israel's foreign policy based on clearly defined principles?



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



## Where does Israel belong?



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