

Position Paper

The Israeli Public Supports Wars, but Is Dissatisfied with the Results

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Introduction

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and most Israeli political and security leaders have repeatedly said that they will continue to use military means to deal with what they believe to be threats to the country's security, and to prevent any possible rebuilding of the military capabilities of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran.

Many Israeli analysts have interpreted the Israeli government's actions as motivated by ideology, the political interest of the governing coalition, or Netanyahu's desire to continue the state of war to achieve personal goals and electoral gains. All these explanations are plausible. What is overlooked, however, is the attitude of the public, which generally supports Israel's security policies and wars and, indeed, provides an encouraging environment for their continuation.

This position paper examines the attitudes of the Jewish Israeli public toward the security, military, and foreign policies of their government, as reflected in the 2026 annual public opinion survey by the Mitvim Center for Regional Foreign Policy for 2026, as well as the monthly National Security Surveys undertaken by the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University since the beginning of the genocidal war on Gaza in 2023.

This paper argues that the position of the Jewish Israeli public is not very different from that of the government, as it supports current security and military policies and the continuation of wars. This support is not limited to supporters of the governing coalition but is widespread among most Israelis. The differences between government supporters and the opposition are mainly in the extent of their approval and the relative importance of coordination with the United States.

This support persists even though Israeli society is dissatisfied with the outcome of the wars so far, particularly developments after the war on Iran was resumed in March 2025, the war on Lebanon, and the subsequent ceasefire on both fronts.

The paper concludes that despite discontent with their results, public support for these wars might nevertheless encourage governments to continue these policies in the future, especially under the pretext of seeking to finish the job, in line with the governing coalition's political and electoral goals. This would suggest that the government's security and military policies largely reflect the preferences of the Israeli public and are not solely the result of the ideological convictions and political interests of the governing coalition.

Support for the Government's Foreign Policy

Last June, the Mitvim Institute, which specializes in monitoring and studying Israeli foreign policy in the region, published its annual 2026 Foreign Policy Index.¹ The report presents a composite picture of the public's attitudes toward Israel's international

position, the war on Gaza, the Palestinian issue, regional relations, and policies toward Iran, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

The results reveal a fundamental paradox. There has been an improvement in respondents' assessments of Israel's international standing compared to the previous year, together with an apparent concern about international isolation and a low overall approval of the government's foreign policy performance. The survey also shows that there are differences on several key issues between supporters of the coalition parties and supporters of the opposition.

The public approval of Israel's international standing increased from 4.39 (on a scale of 1 to 10) in 2025 to 5.18 in 2026, with nearly half of all respondents believing that it was "good" or "somewhat good". However, this did not mean satisfaction with the government's foreign policy performance, which remained relatively low at 4.72 out of 10, although it had improved from 3.93 in 2025. About 75% of the supporters of the governing coalition parties expressed satisfaction with Israel's international standing, compared to 26% of those of the opposition "Together" (Beyachad) Party headed by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, and to only 3% of those of the "Democrats" Party headed by Yair Golan.

Despite the relative improvement in the overall assessment of Israel's international standing, 66% of total respondents expressed great or very great concern that Israel is becoming a pariah state. This was higher than the previous year's 57%. This suggests that improved self-assessment of international standing does not outweigh Israel's declining standing on the world stage, especially considering the war on Gaza and the strained relations with many Western countries and international institutions. This suggests that most Israelis believe that Israel's international status has improved despite the continuation of Israel's wars in the region and the abuse meted out on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. But they also believe that there is a danger of Israel becoming a pariah state. The distinction—which originates in party affiliation and political position—revolves around how the government is conducting foreign policy to improve Israel's international standing, regardless of whether Israel should change its policy of waging wars.

The poll also shows that Israeli society is dissatisfied with US President Donald Trump's handling of regional issues, despite his considerable support for Israel and his adoption of most of its positions. After US pressure for ceasefires in Gaza, Iran, and Lebanon, 35% of Jewish respondents believed that Trump's actions had harmed Israeli interests, while 28% said that they might serve Israel in the short term but harm it in the long term. Only 14% believed that his policy served Israel's interests, while a similar percentage believed that it could be harmful in the short term but beneficial in the long term. The poll thus does not show broad support for US policy, even as the strategic alliance between the two countries deepens.

These poll results show that despite awareness of the possibility that Israel might become a pariah state and the threat to Israel's needed support from the United States and pivotal European countries, the Israeli public supports the current government's foreign and security policies. Ironically, these are the very policies that isolate Israel internationally and sometimes even lead to disagreement with the United States and several European countries.

The Palestinian Issue and the War on Gaza

The Mitvim poll shows that a plurality of Jewish Israelis, 45%, opposes an international deal that includes establishing a demilitarized Palestinian state, disarming Hamas and ending its rule in Gaza, and fully normalizing relations with Arab countries. Only 39% would support such a deal. This breakdown falls along similar lines to those of the Netanyahu government.

47% of Jewish Israelis support some form of Israeli cooperation with regional and international reconstruction efforts in Gaza. 14% said that Israel should participate directly and linked reconstruction to improving relations with the countries of the region and the Palestinians, while 33% preferred indirect involvement. In contrast, 38% disapprove of cooperating with any regional reconstruction process.

42% of Jewish Israelis oppose President Trump's 20-point plan, which includes disarming Hamas, rebuilding, deploying an international force in Gaza, and advancing toward a Palestinian state after reforms in the Palestinian Authority, with 30% in support and 28% undecided. Opposition to Trump's plan primarily comes from supporters of the governing parties, even though the plan was proposed by one of the most pro-Israel US presidents ever. Most Jewish Israelis support military solutions to defeat Hamas: 37% favor a return to fighting and the full occupation of the Gaza Strip until Hamas' capabilities are destroyed, and 17% support the continuation of the existing military, diplomatic, and economic pressure on the Strip. 23% would prefer an alternative to Hamas to run Gaza in the framework of Trump's plan and with the help of an international force, while 11% support the introduction of international intervention forces to disarm militants in the Strip in lieu of the Israeli Army.

33% of Jewish Israelis approve annexing and claiming Israeli sovereignty over Gaza and the West Bank. The two-state solution within a regional normalization agreement comes in second place, with 22%. 15% favor managing the conflict with Palestinians without a comprehensive solution. To be sure, overall, the Israeli public is not far from the position of the governing coalition when it comes to the occupation and the Palestinian question.

Regional and International Relations

The Mitvim poll showed that there is no clear and decisive Jewish Israeli public opinion on whether the Gaza war threatens Israel's relations with the Arab countries or the future of normalization. 29% of respondents believe that it does, with 26% thinking that it strengthens the prospects of normalization and 27% having no opinion.

41% of Jewish Israelis believe that the war with Iran has increased the desire of Arab countries to normalize with Israel, and 15% said it has decreased it. In other words, while the Israeli public associates the war on Gaza with a negative impact on relations with Arab states, it sees the confrontation with Iran as an element that could strengthen the Gulf states' rapprochement with Israel.

The Jewish Israeli public is divided on making concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for normalization with Saudi Arabia. 37% said they support normalization that would accompany progress toward a two-state solution or practical steps in the West Bank, such as dismantling settlement outposts, while 38% oppose any concession to the Palestinians in exchange for normalization.

The poll highlights broad hostility toward the European Union, with 72% of Jewish Israelis viewing it as hostile to Israel, while only 12% see it as friendly. 67% considered Germany friendly while 17% thought it was hostile. This reflects the public's distinction between the EU as a political institution and some European countries—notably Germany—as important bilateral partners.

Strategic Security Issues

On Iran, 36% of Jewish Israelis believe that Washington's 2018 withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was a mistake, while 34% thought that it was the right decision; about a third expressed no opinion. Moreover, there is no preference for a new negotiated deal with Tehran: 49% support a resumption of the war with Iran to topple the regime while 17% support restarting the war to reach a better deal. Only 12% of Israelis believe that Israel has exhausted its military action and that an agreement should be sought.

66% believe that the security belt in South Lebanon serves the long-term security of the residents of Israel's north. A broad segment also believes that disarming Hezbollah is a realistic goal in the near future but differs on the means: 34% favor continued Israeli military pressure, 25% support regional and international pressure led by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, and 17% prefer strengthening the Lebanese government and army with international assistance. Overall, Jewish Israeli society tends to accept military solutions in Lebanon and ranks diplomatic solutions as secondary.

Support among Jewish Israelis for the military overthrow of the Ahmed al-Sharaa regime in Syria has dropped from 20% in 2025 to just 12% in 2026. In contrast, 33% support

an interim or long-term agreement with Syria. 20% support a long-term political and economic agreement with Damascus, while 13% support an interim security arrangement that includes a withdrawal from Syrian territory in exchange for the disarmament of the border area and guarantees for the protection of the Druze community in southern Syria. However, 31% remain in favor of continuing military operations and maintaining Israel's presence inside Syrian territory.

In general, the results of the survey show that the Israeli public supports military and security-focused solutions to regional challenges. Still, the 2026 National Security Survey reveals that most Israelis believe that Israel's strategic and security situation has deteriorated in recent months because of the failure to achieve the goals of the recent wars against Iran and Hezbollah before the ceasefires sponsored by Trump.²

Strategic Pessimism

The June 2026 National Security Survey —the first to be published after the ceasefire in Lebanon and the framework agreement with the Lebanese government— showed that Israeli society is highly dissatisfied with the results of the wars on Iran and Lebanon. 81% of respondents believe that the security situation in northern Israel does not currently provide security for the population, while 57% oppose Israel's complete withdrawal from South Lebanon, even if Hezbollah adheres to the ceasefire agreement.

On Iran, 66% of respondents believe that the recent Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and the Islamic Republic is bad for Israel. 37% believe that Iran has won the war, 43% believe that the war ended without a clear winner, and only 15% believe that Israel was victorious.

Most of the public — 59% — supports military action against Hezbollah, although that could create a confrontation with President Trump, while 52% believe that additional military action against Iran is still needed.

Perception of Threats and Challenges

The poll shows that the Israeli public's assessment of the country's national security situation has deteriorated from the previous month, while the sense of personal security has remained relatively low. 42% of the public rate the national security situation as bad or very bad, 37% as moderate, and only 20% as good or very good. In May, 34% of respondents rated the situation as bad or very bad and 26% rated it as good or very good.

In June, 29% of the public reported that their sense of personal security is high or very high, 43% said it is moderate, and 28% said it is low or very low. In May, 32% said that their sense of personal security was high or very high, and 26% said it was low or very low.

Scaling Threats on Different Fronts

Lebanon and Iran remain the two areas of primary public concern in Israel, with 80% concerned about the security situation in Lebanon and 76% about that in Iran. Naturally, the West Bank and Gaza also remain important areas of concern, 61 and 57%, respectively. Concern over Syria is lower at 32% and Yemen at 30%. Compared to the April 2026 National Security Survey, there was a slight decline in the level of anxiety in all important arenas, but Lebanon and Iran remained at the forefront of security concerns.³

Overall Support for Security Policies and Military Solutions

In summary, Israeli public opinion has been concerned about international isolation and the decline of Israel's international standing since the beginning of the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, it continues to support current military and security solutions, and rejects resolving the Palestinian issue and ending the occupation. Generally, support for military solutions crosses party lines, although there are differences on certain issues between supporters of the governing coalition and opposition voters. The irony is that while the Israeli public still favors military solutions, Israelis do not believe that these policies have improved Israel's security or strategic position, as evidenced by the results of the National Security Survey.

The Israeli public's support for its government's wars and military solutions since October 2023 is not an anomaly. It is the result of militarized political socialization in Israel, and the widespread belief in a colonial society that violence is a feasible way to impose Israeli interests, goals, and policies on the Palestinians. No less important is that Israeli political parties—whether in the governing coalition or in the opposition—offer no alternative to the security and military approaches used by the government, especially after the events of October 7, 2023. None of these parties proposes any alternative political program to end the occupation, halt settlements, or end the war of extermination against the Palestinians. Across Israeli political parties, think tanks, and the media there is a consensus in favor of war.

This reality provides a supportive environment for the government in adopting military and security solutions that reflect its ideological, political, and electoral interests. In an election year, the governing coalition—which also reads public polls such as these—will continue to pursue the security measures and military solutions that it believes will improve its prospects at the ballot box.

Endnotes

1. "The Israeli Foreign Policy Index of 2026," [*Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies \(Mitvim Institute\)*](#), June 2026.
2. See: "Findings of the National Security Survey: June 2026," [*Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University*](#), June 2026 (Hebrew).
3. "Findings of the National Security Survey: April 2026," [*Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University*](#), April 2026 (Hebrew).



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