



BESA Center/ADL Survey

Israeli Views of President Obama and US-Israel Relations

**Prepared for
THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
and the
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE**

**CONDUCTED BY:
BRAINS' TRUST INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND
CONSULTING INSTITUTE LTD. ("MAAGAR MOCHOT")**

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A. Introduction

At your request, we have conducted an opinion poll among the Jewish public in Israel, in order to gauge its views on the United States of America, the U.S. President, U.S.-Israeli relations, U.S. foreign policy and U.S. Jewry. The current survey was conducted as Barack Obama assumed office as the new president, whereas the previous survey on the same subject, dated May 2007, was conducted during the presidency of George W. Bush (Jr.).

B. Methodology

The poll was conducted as a telephone survey, between 23-26 April 2009, at different hours, using a structured questionnaire among a random, proportional sample of 610 respondents (aged 18 and higher) constituting a representative sample of the **adult Jewish population** (aged 18 and higher) in Israel. The maximum sampling error for the various estimates was 4.5%.

The findings of the current survey (the 2009 survey) are presented, wherever possible, in comparison to those of the previous survey, conducted for BESA on the same subject, in May 2007.

C. The Survey Team

The survey was conducted by Brains' Trust (Maagar Mochot) – Interdisciplinary Research and Consulting Institute Ltd., managed by Prof. Yitzhak Katz – CEO, Prof. Baruch Mevorach – Scientific Manager and Dr. Amir Horkin – Research Manager.

The poll was directed by Professors Eytan Gilboa and Efraim Inbar of the BESA Center.

D. Findings

1. Overall, 610 respondents were interviewed, half of them men and half women. In terms of religion, 58% of the respondents were secular, 27% traditional, 6% national-religious, and 9% ultra-orthodox Jews. In terms of education, 42% had an academic education, 37% a high-school education, 4% primary-school education, and 17% had post-secondary education. The average age of the respondents was 42 years.

A. Israel-U.S. Relations

2. Do you agree or disagree with the proposition that the United States is a loyal ally of Israel?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE			
	2009 Survey (current)		2007 Survey	
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Percentages	Aggregate percentages
1. Totally disagree	2%	10%	4%	11%
2. Disagree	8%		7%	
3. Somewhere in between	18%	18%	23%	23%
4. Agree	58%	68%	41%	65%
5. Totally agree	10%		24%	
6. Don't know and other answers	4%	4%	1%	1%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100% (N=505)	100%

A large majority of respondents (68%) agree/d or totally agree with the statement that the US is a loyal ally of Israel. The rate of agreement with this statement remained stable and without significant changes compared to the 2007 Survey.

3. What is your attitude, as an Israeli, towards the U.S. on a scale of 1-5, where 5 = very positive, and 1 = very negative?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE			
	2009 Survey (current)		2007 Survey	
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Percentages	Aggregate percentages
1. Very negative	1%	3%	3%	8%
2. Negative	2%		5%	
3. Somewhere in between	24%	24%	27%	27%
4. Positive	46%	72%	37%	64%
5. Very positive	26%		27%	
6. Don't know and other answers	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100% (N=505)	100%

A large majority of respondents (72%) described their attitude as Israelis towards the U.S. as positive or very positive. Their percentage increased by 8% compared to the 2007 Survey (from 64% to 72%).

4. **In your opinion, if and when Israel is faced with a serious crisis involving a threat to its very existence, a so-called ‘moment of truth,’ would the U.S. help Israel or not in such a case?**

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE	
	2009 Survey (current)	2007 Survey
1. It would not help	8%	10%
2. It would help	76%	80%
3. Don’t know and other answers	16%	10%
Total	100% (N=610)	100% (N=505)

The absolute majority of respondents (76%) believed that if and when Israel were faced with a serious crisis threatening its existence (the ‘moment of truth’), the U.S. **would help** Israel. The percentage of those who believed that the U.S. would help Israel remained stable and without significant changes compared to the 2007 Survey.

5. **What do you consider to be the main reason for the U.S. having so far developed close relations with Israel?**

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE	
	2009 Survey (current)	2007 Survey*
1. The democratic tradition and the values shared by the two countries	15%	17%
2. The political power of American Jewry	26%	30%
3. Israel’s vital role as strategic partner	49%	48%
4. Don’t know and other answers	10%	5%
Total	100% (N=610)	100% (N=505)

* The question was worded differently in this survey: ‘What do you consider to be the main reason that the U.S. will continue to maintain its close ties with Israel in the future as well?’

Almost half of the respondents (49%) thought that the main reason why the U.S. had so far developed close relations with Israel was **Israel’s vital role as strategic partner**. Approximately a quarter of the respondents felt that the main reason for this was **the political power of American Jewry**. The findings resemble the 2007 findings despite the differences in wording (past tense versus future tense) between the questions.

6. Are close relations with the U.S. vital or not to Israel's security?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE	
	2009 Survey (current)	2007 Survey
1. Not vital	4%	8%
2. Vital	91%	91%
3. Don't know and other answers	5%	1%
Total	100% (N=610)	100% (N=505)

The absolute majority of respondents (91%) thought that close relations between Israel and the U.S. were **vital** to Israel's national security. Their percentage remained stable/constant and unchanged compared to the 2007 survey.

B. The Presidency

7. How would you describe U.S. President Barack Obama's attitude towards Israel?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE		
	2009 Survey (current)		2007 Survey*
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	
1. Very unfriendly	1%	8%	3%
2. Unfriendly	7%		
3. Neutral	33%	33%	23%
4. Friendly	32%	38%	73%
5. Very friendly	6%		
6. Don't know and other answers	21%	21%	1%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100% (N=505)

* The question in this survey referred to President Bush: 'How would you describe U.S. President George Bush's attitude towards Israel: friendly, unfriendly or neutral?' Respondents were offered a choice of three possible answers only: 3. friendly, 1 = unfriendly or 2 = neutral.

More than a third of the respondents (38%) felt that U.S. President Barack Obama was friendly or very friendly towards Israel, which is approximately half the equivalent percentage/figure associated with the previous [who thought the same of] President, George Bush, in 2007 (73%). One third of the respondents (33%) thought that U.S. President **Barack Obama's** attitude towards Israel was neutral, while a tenth considered his attitude unfriendly.

8. Will the Obama administration and Netanyahu's government be able to maintain the friendly ties between the U.S. and Israel, or will U.S.-Israel relations deteriorate and become fraught with tensions during their incumbencies?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE
1. Relations will deteriorate and become fraught with tensions	26%
2. Friendly relations will be maintained.	48%
3. Don't know and other answers	26%

Total	100% (N=610)
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Close to half of the respondents (48%) believed that the Obama administration and Netanyahu's government would be able **to maintain the friendly ties** between the U.S. and Israel, roughly double the percentage of those who thought that relations would deteriorate and become strained during their incumbencies (26%).

9. Do you approve or disapprove of President Obama's policy toward Israel?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE		
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Opinion-Holders*
1. Strongly disapprove	2%	21%	40%
2. Disapprove	19%		
3. Approve	28%	32%	60%
4. Strongly approve	4%		
5. Don't know and other answers	47%	47%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100%

10. President Obama has said he plans to devote major attention to helping end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. How much confidence do you have in his judgment to make the right decisions about this difficult conflict?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE		
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Opinion-Holders*
1. Very little confidence	5%	37%	50%
2. Little confidence	32%		
3. Some confidence	32%	37%	50%
4. Great deal of confidence	5%		
5. Don't know and other answers	26%	26%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100%

11. How would you define your opinion of President Obama: favorable or unfavorable?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE		
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Opinion-Holders*
1. Very unfavorable	2%	14%	19%
2. Somewhat unfavorable	12%		
3. Somewhat favorable	54%	60%	81%
4. Very favorable	6%		
5. Don't know and other answers	26%	26%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100%

- (a) Confidence in Obama's judgment to make the right decisions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by the respondents' opinion of Obama:

Opinion of Obama (Q11: How would you define your opinion of President Obama: favorable or unfavorable?)	Confidence in Obama's judgment to make the right decisions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Q10: President Obama has said he plans to devote major attention to helping end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. How much confidence do you have in his judgment to make the right decisions about this difficult conflict?)			
	No confidence³	Somewhat confident⁴	Don't know and other answers	Total
1. Unfavorable¹	33%	39%	28%	100%
2. Favorable²	3%	88%	9%	100%
3. Don't know and other answers	1%	50%	49%	100%

1. 'Very unfavorable' + 'unfavorable'
2. 'Very favorable' + 'somewhat favorable'
3. 'Very little confidence' + 'little confidence'
4. 'Great deal of confidence' + 'some confidence'

Chi-square=206.9, d.f.=4 P=0.0001, N=610 Spearman's rho=0.62 p=0.0001

C. Questions on the Middle East Policy, the Conflict and the Nuclear Issue

12. In your opinion, are the Middle-East interests of the U.S. and Israel different, complementary or similar?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE	
	2009 Survey (current)	2007 Survey*
1. Different interests	23%	36%
2. Complementary interests	32%	-
3. Similar interests	39%	60%
4. Don't know and other answers	9%	4%
Total	100% (N=610)	100% (N=505)

* In this survey, the question was: 'In your opinion, are the Middle-East interests of the U.S. and Israel similar or different?' Only two possible answers were offered: similar or different. The category 'complementary interests' appeared only in the 2009 survey.

13. Obama has declared his intention of bringing about reconciliation with the Muslim and Arab worlds in order to improve the United State's position and reputation. Do you believe or not that such reconciliation will be at Israel's expense?

Answers	2009 Survey (current)	
	Total Sample	Opinion-Holders
1. It will not come at Israel's expense	16%	20%
2. It will come at Israel's expense	63%	80%
3. Don't know and other answers	21%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

14. Which of the following is closest to your view?

Answers	2009 Survey (current)	
	Total Sample	Opinion-Holders
1. The U.S. should enter into direct talks with Iran with no preconditions	32%	39%
2. The U.S. should not negotiate with Iran	51%	61%
3. Don't know and other answers	17%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

15. Suppose all diplomatic and economic efforts fail to convince Iran to shut down its uranium enrichment plant. If that happens, would you support or oppose Israeli military action aimed at destroying the Iranian nuclear facilities?

Answers	2009 Survey (current)	
	Total Sample	Opinion-Holders
1. Oppose	15%	19%
2. Support	66%	81%
3. Don't know and other answers	19%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

Supporters of Israeli military action against Iran were asked Question 16 hereunder (in the event that diplomatic and economic efforts failed to convince Iran to shut down its uranium enrichment plant):

16. Would you still support Israel taking military action if the Obama administration opposed Israel taking action?

Answers	2009 Survey (current)	
	Proponents of Israeli military action against Iran	Opinion-holders among the proponents of Israeli military action against Iran
1. Oppose	15%	17%
2. Support	75%	83%
3. Don't know and other answers	10%	-
Total	100% (N=404)	100%

D. Information and Communication

17. To what extent do you follow coverage of American affairs in the Israeli media?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE			
	2009 Survey (current)		2007 Survey	
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Percentages	Aggregate percentages
1. Not at all	7%	21%	11%	26%
2. To a small extent	14%		15%	
3. To a moderate extent	43%	43%	43%	43%
4. To a large extent	23%	33%	20%	30%
5. To a great extent	10%		10%	
6. Other answers	3%	3%	1%	1%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100% (N=505)	100%

18. What is usually your primary source of information on American affairs?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE			
	2009 Survey (current)		2007 Survey	
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Percentages	Aggregate percentages
1. Israeli television channels	44%	90%	44%	90%
2. Israeli press	14%		16%	
3. Israeli radio channels	9%		9%	
4. Magazines/periodicals in Israel	2%		1%	
5. Internet	14%		16%	
6. Word of mouth (through friends, family, etc.)	3%		4%	
7. Foreign media channels on cable television (CNN, FOX, etc.)	5%	5%	7%	7%
8. I take no interest in the U.S., I have no primary source of information, and other answers	5%	5%	3%	3%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100% (N=505)	100%

E. U.S. Jews

19. In your opinion, is the current level of support for Israel by American Jews too little, too much or about right?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE	
	2009 Survey (current)	2007 Survey
1. Too little	28%	33%
2. Too much	42%	52%
3. About right	9%	5%

3. Don't know and other answers	21%	10%
Total	100% (N=610)	100% (N=505)

20. Should American Jews feel free to publicly criticize the Israeli government and its policy?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE			
	2009 Survey (current)		2007 Survey	
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages	Percentages	Aggregate percentages
1. Certainly not	11%	52%	15%	36%
2. No	41%		21%	
3. Yes	28%	35%	38%	62%
4. Certainly yes	7%		24%	
6. Don't know and other answers	13%	13%	2%	2%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%	100% (N=505)	100%

21. Do you feel that American Jews continue to be close to Israel, or are they drifting away from it?

Answers	2009 Survey (current)	
	Total Sample	Opinion-Holders
1. They are drifting away	29%	39%
2. They continue to be close	45%	61%
3. Don't know and other answers	26%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

F. Socio-demographic Descriptors

22. How do you define yourself in terms of religion?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE
1. Secular	57%
2. Traditional	26%
3. National religious	6%
4. Ultra-orthodox	9%
5. Other answers	2%
Total	100% (N=610)

23. If the average gross income in Israel is NIS7,500 per month, how would you define your income level?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE	
	Percentages	Aggregate percentages
1. Far below average	14%	37%
2. Below average	23%	
3. Same as average	26%	26%
4. Above average	16%	17%
5. Far above average	1%	
6. Refuse to answer and other answers	20%	20%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

24. How do you define your political and ideological outlook?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE
1. Right-wing	28%
2. Rightward tendency	24%
3. Center	36%
4. Leftward tendency	7%
5. Left-wing	4%
6. Refuse to answer and other answers	1%
Total	100% (N=610)

25. What is your education?

Answers	TOTAL SAMPLE
1. Primary school	4%
2. High school	35%
3. Post-secondary (including High Yeshiva, practical engineer, etc.)	17%
4. Academic	39%
5. Other answers	5%
Total	100% (N=610)

26. One last question: What party did you vote for in the last elections for the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), held in February 2009?

Answers	Total Sample	Among opinion-Holders*
1. Kadima	29%	31%
2. Likud	26%	28%
3. Labor	9%	9.5%
4. Habait Hayehudi-MAFDAL	1%	1%
5. Shas	9%	9.5%
6. Yisrael Beitenu	12%	13%
7. Meretz	3%	3%
8. Yahadut Hatorah	3%	3%
9. Arab parties	0%	0%

10. Haichud Haleumi	2%	2%
11. I did not vote, other parties and answers	6%	-
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

27. Mark: sex

Sex	Total Sample	Actual figures*
1. Men	50%	49%
2. Women	50%	51%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%

28. Age (in years) (Question 1)

Age group	Total Sample	Actual figures*
18-24	18%	18%
25-34	22%	21%
35-44	18%	17%
45-54	15%	17%
55-64	14%	12%
65+	13%	15%
Total	100% (N=610)	100%