

International Poll: Most Publics--including Americans--Oppose Taking Sides in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

July 1, 2008

Israeli, Palestinian, American and Arab Leaders All Get Low Marks On Efforts to Resolve Conflict

Most Favor UN Playing Robust Role in Peace Enforcement

[Country-by-Country Summaries \(PDF\)](#)

[Questionnaire/methodology \(PDF\)](#)

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A new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 18 countries finds that in 14 of them people mostly say their government should not take sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Just three countries favor taking the Palestinian side (Egypt, Iran, and Turkey) and one is divided (India). No country favors taking Israel's side, including the United States, where 71 percent favor taking neither side.

A UN convoy approaches an Israeli checkpoint outside of Gaza City in June 2003 (UNRWA photo)

Asked to evaluate how well a number of key actors are doing their part to resolve the conflict, none of them get good grades, including Israel, the Palestinians, the United States, and the Arab countries. On average across all the countries polled, none of the actors receives good grades from more than 3 in 10. Interestingly, Americans are divided as to whether the United States is doing its part.

Publics in most countries favor the United Nations offering to play a robust role in support of a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nearly all publics would favor the UN saying that, if the parties come to a peace agreement, the UN would send a peacekeeping force to enforce it. Most publics would also favor the UN offering to provide security guarantees to both Israel and the Arab countries should a peace agreement be reached.

"Publics around the world are not cheering for either side and want their governments to take an even-handed approach," said Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org. "All of the key actors are seen as failing to do their part to break the impasse and most want the UN Security Council to step in and offer peacekeeping forces and even security guarantees to help resolve the conflict."

The poll of 18,792 respondents was conducted between January 10 and May 6, 2008 by WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative research project involving research centers from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. Margins of error range from +/-2 to 4 percent.

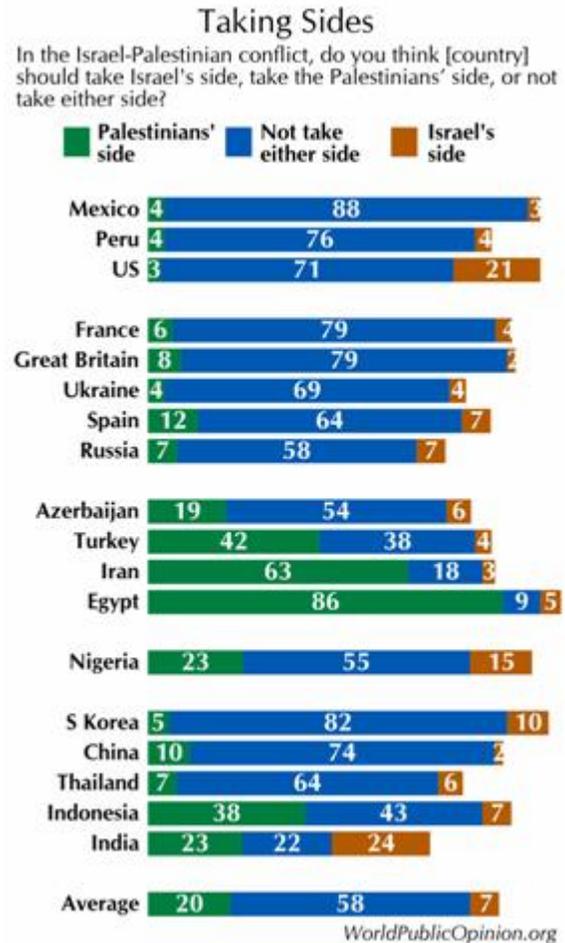
Interviews were conducted in 18 countries, including most of the largest nations -China, India the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia-- as well as Mexico, Peru, Britain, France, Spain, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Thailand and South Korea. Not all questions were asked in all countries. In addition, most of the questions were asked in the Palestinian Territories. The nations included represent 60 percent of the world population.

Publics Support Even-Handed Approach to Conflict

Asked how their country should approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 14 out of 18 publics preferred taking neither side. On average, 58 percent say that their country should not take either side, while just 20 percent favor siding with the Palestinians and 7 percent say that their country should take Israel's side.

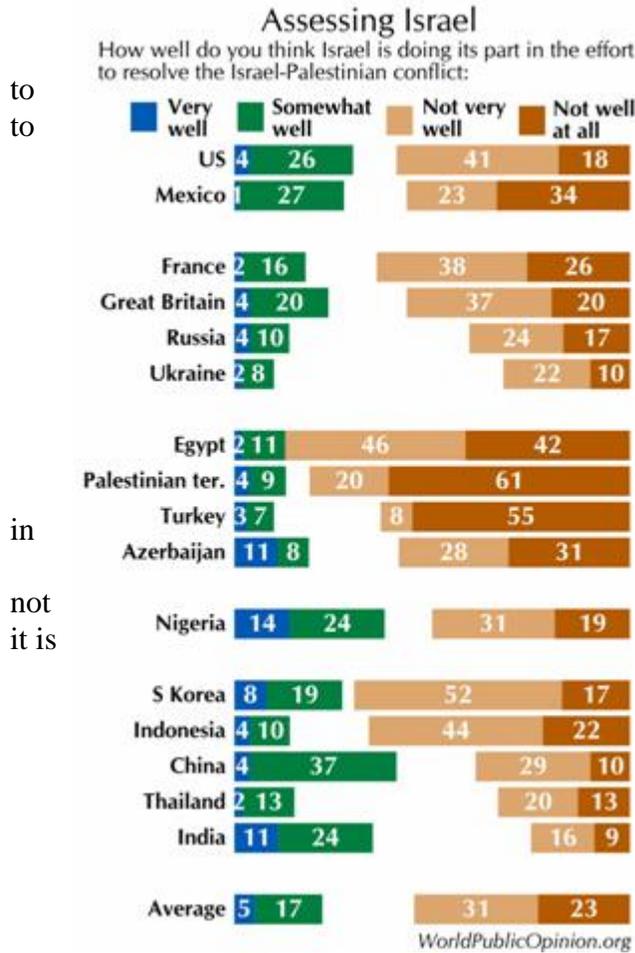
In eight of the countries this was a large majority--seven in 10 or more--including Mexicans (88%), South Koreans (82%), Britons (79%), the French (79%), Peruvians (76%), the Chinese (74%), Americans (71%), and Ukrainians (69%).

Only in a few predominantly Muslim countries do most favor taking the side of the Palestinians. Robust majorities take this position in Egypt (86%) and Iran (63%), as does a modest plurality in Turkey (42% Palestinians' side, 38% neither side). However two other predominantly Muslim countries primarily favor taking neither side--Azerbaijan (54%) and Indonesia (43%).



In no country does a majority favor taking Israel's side. The largest percentages favoring taking Israel's side are Indians (24%), Americans (21%), and Nigerians (15%).

Negative Reviews of Israel, Palestinians, US, Arab Countries, Quartet



World publics give low marks to all the various parties who play a major role in trying to resolve the conflict. Respondents were asked to evaluate how well each party is "doing its part," in "the effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." In nearly all cases publics give poor grades to Israel, the Palestinians, the United States, or the Arab countries.

Israel

Israel receives the worst ratings, with most saying they are not doing their part very well 13 out of 15 countries asked. On average, 54 percent say it is not doing its part well (31% very, 23% not at all) while just 22 percent say (5% very, 17% somewhat).

Negative ratings of Israel are not confined to predominantly Muslim publics--the largest majorities saying Israel is not doing its part well include Egypt (88%), South Korea (69%), Indonesia (66%), France (64%), the United States (59%), Azerbaijan (59%), Mexico (57%), and Great Britain (57%).

Only in India do more say that Israel is doing its part than do not (35% to 25%), while the Chinese are divided (41% to 39%).

In addition, the Palestinians were asked to evaluate Israel (though they are not included in the averages). Not surprisingly, 81 percent say that Israel is not doing its part well (61%, not at all well). Just 13 percent say that it is (4% very well).

Palestinians

Ratings of the Palestinians are not much better than those of Israel. In ten out of 15 countries most say they are not doing their part well to resolve the conflict. An average of 47 percent says they are not doing their part well, while just 28 percent say they are.

The largest majorities critical of Palestinian efforts are Americans (75%), South Koreans (74%), the French (66%), Mexicans (61%) and British (57%). Pluralities in Turkey (42%) and Azerbaijan (50%) also rate the Palestinians' efforts poorly, as do pluralities of Russians (41%), Ukrainians (34%), and Thais (33%), though many decline to offer an opinion.

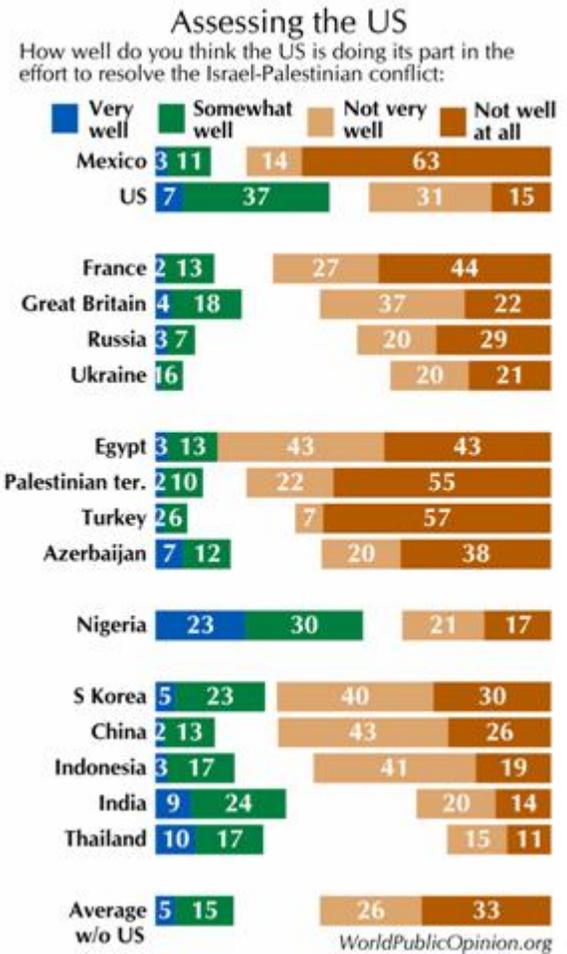
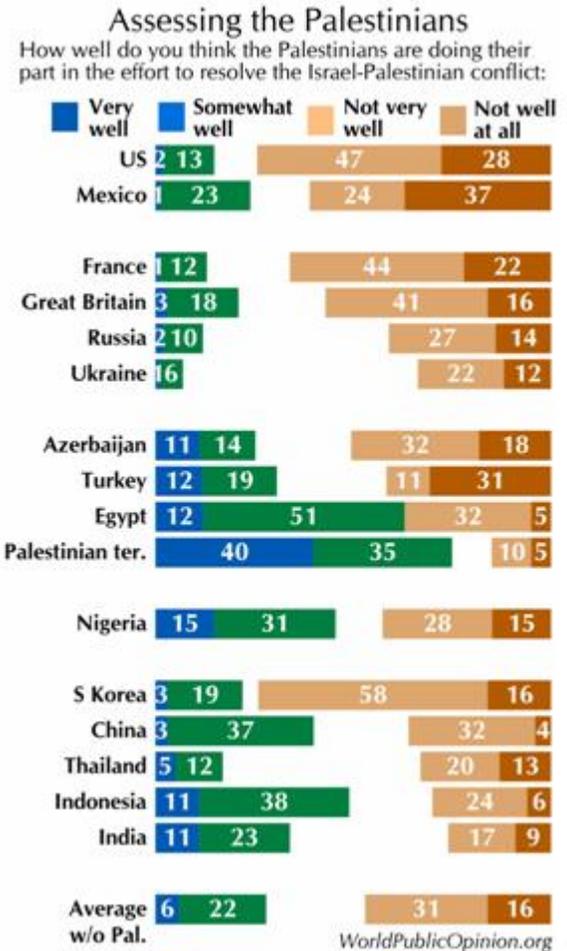
Palestinians receive the most positive ratings from Egyptians (63%) and Nigerians (46%), though a significant number of Nigerians is also critical (43%) making the overall public divided. Pluralities in Indonesia (49%), China (40%), and India (34%) all say the Palestinians are doing their part at least somewhat well.

The Palestinians give themselves quite good ratings (again, they were excluded from the averages). Seventy-five percent say they are doing their part well (40%, very). However, 15 percent give them poor ratings (5%, not well at all).

United States

Asked to rate how well the United States is doing its part to resolve the conflict, 12 out of 15 nations say the United States is not doing its part well (excluding Americans but including Palestinians). On average, 59 percent rate US efforts poorly, while just 20 percent give positive ratings.

US efforts receive the most negative evaluations from Egyptians (86%), Mexicans (77%), the Palestinians (77%), the French (71%), South Koreans (70%), the Chinese (69%), and Turks (64%).



A majority of Nigerians (53%) says that the US is doing its part at least somewhat well. Indians are divided (33% well, 34% not well), as are Thais (27% well, 26% not well).

Interestingly, Americans themselves are divided. Only 44 percent say the United States is doing its part well (7%, very), while 46 percent say it is not (15%, not at all).

Arab Countries

Evaluations of the Arab countries are somewhat less negative than those of Israel or the US, with most in 11 out of 15 publics rating their efforts negatively (excluding the Egyptians). On average, a plurality among the nations polled (48%) says they are not doing their part well, while just 23 percent say they are.

Americans (78%) and South Koreans (76%) rate the Arab countries most negatively, followed by the French (69%). Majorities of the Palestinians (57%) and Turks (58%) also rate them negatively.

In just two countries a plurality gives a positive rating--Indonesia (50%) and China (40%). Two publics are divided: Nigeria and India.

The one Arab nation (other than the Palestinians) polled--Egypt--gives the Arab countries a positive evaluation. Seventy-one percent say the Arab countries are doing their part well (9%, very well), while just 29 percent say they are not.

The Quartet

The countries that are part of the "Quartet" were also polled on the performance of their country and of the European Union. The Quartet consists of the US, Russia, the UN, and the European Union.

The European Union's efforts were evaluated by France and Britain. The EU receives negative ratings from pluralities in both countries (France 48%, Britain 45%), and in both countries those giving positive ratings does not exceed one third (France 33%, Britain 31%).

The British also give their own country poor ratings. A plurality of 47 percent gives their government an unfavorable review while 33 percent give a positive review.

Russians are a bit more upbeat about their country's performance. While many do not provide an answer, a plurality of 36 percent give a positive evaluation while 17 percent give a negative one.

Widespread Support for Robust UN Role

Overall, there is strong support for the United Nations playing a robust role in the effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Very large numbers favor the United Nations contributing a peacekeeping force to enforce a peace agreement and substantial numbers favor the UN Security Council offering to provide security guarantees to Israel and the Arab countries.

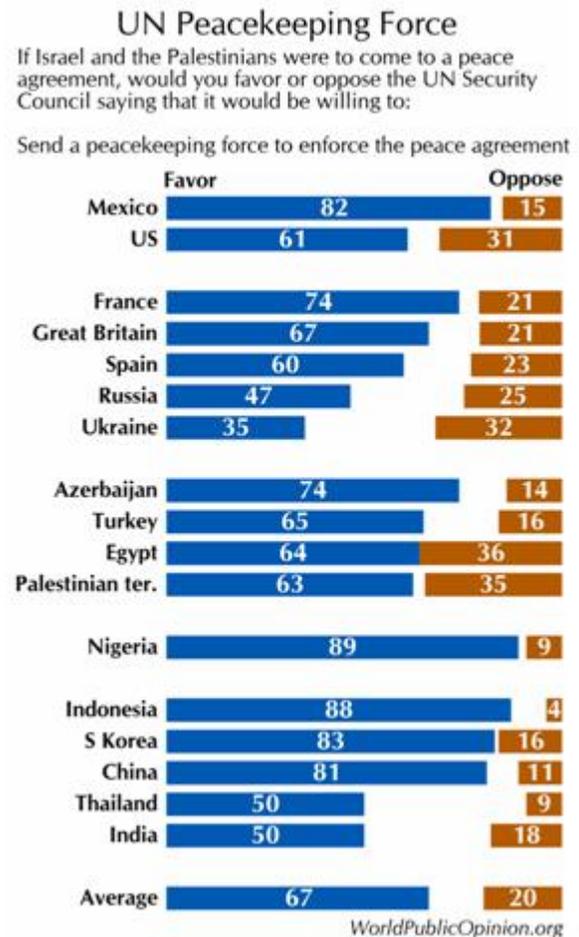
Enforcement of Peace Agreement

In 16 of 17 countries polled, majorities or pluralities favor the UN Security Council offering--if Israel and the Palestinians come to a peace agreement--to send a peacekeeping force to enforce the agreement. On average, 67 percent favor such an approach, while just 20 percent oppose the idea.

Among all of the permanent members of the UN Security Council publics are supportive. In four countries this is by a robust majority--China (81%), France (74%), Great Britain (67%), and the United States (61%). Only in Russia is support limited to a plurality (47%), though few are opposed (25%).

Palestinians are strongly in favor of such an idea (63%), as are those in other predominantly Muslim countries--Turkey (65%), and Egypt (64%).

In addition, large majorities also favor this idea in Nigeria (89%), Indonesia (88%), South Korea (83%), Mexico (82%), and Azerbaijan (74%). Only Ukrainians are not in favor, but rather are divided (35% favor, 32% oppose) with a large number uncertain.

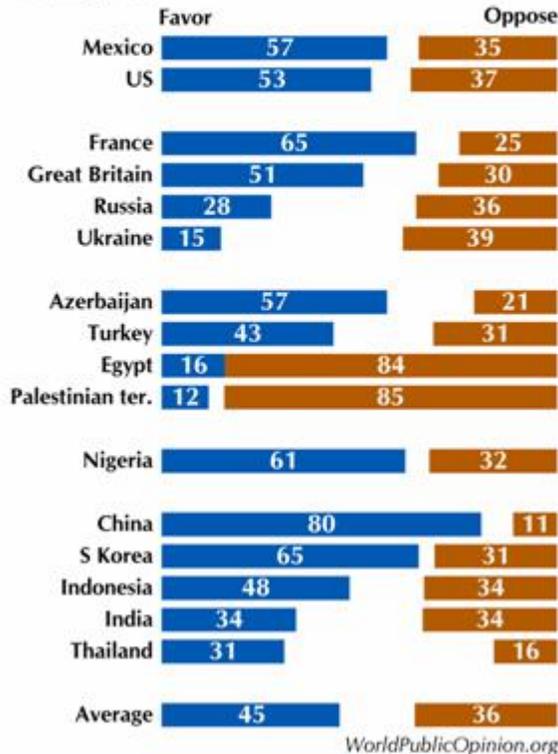


Providing Security Guarantees

Security Guarantee for Israel

If Israel and the Palestinians were to come to a peace agreement, would you favor or oppose the UN Security Council saying that it would be willing to:

Make a commitment to protect Israel if it is attacked by its Arab neighbors



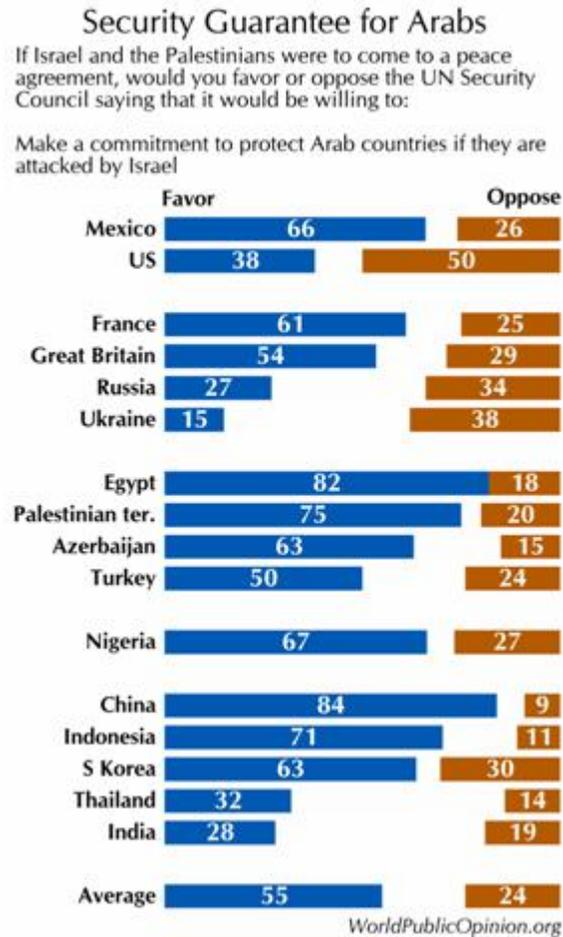
Respondents were also asked about a much stronger possible commitment by the UN Security Council in the event of a peace agreement--committing to protect Israel if attacked by its Arab neighbors, and to protect Arab countries if attacked by Israel. Though such a commitment could prove costly, support was surprisingly high. Out of 16 nations, 11 favor such a UNSC commitment to protect Israel and 13 favor a commitment to protect Arab countries.

On average, 45 percent favor providing security guarantees to Israel (36% opposed), while 55 percent favor providing guarantees to Arab countries (24% opposed).

Ten countries favor the UN Security Council providing security guarantees to both Arab countries and Israel. This includes three of the permanent members of the Security Council. Very large majorities are supportive in China (84% for Arab countries, 80% for Israel), with more modest majorities in France (61% for Arab countries, 65% for Israel) and Great Britain (54% for Arab countries, 51% for Israel).

Other countries include Mexico (66% for Arab countries, 57% for Israel), Nigeria (67% for Arab countries, 61% for Israel), Azerbaijan (63% for Arab countries, 57% for Israel), and Turkey (50% for Arab countries, 43% for Israel). South Koreans support both proposed commitments equally (63% for the Arab countries, 65% for Israel), Indonesia has a large majority favoring

protection of the Arab countries (71%), while a much smaller plurality (48%) favors the UNSC protecting Israel as well. Pluralities in Thailand are also favorable, though many appear to have an unformed opinion on the issue (for Arab countries 32% favor, 14% oppose; for Israel 31% favor, 16% oppose).



The other two permanent members of the UN Security Council--the United States and Russia--have less robust public support. A majority of Americans favor making a commitment to protect Israel (53% favor), but a plurality opposes protecting Arab countries (38% favor, 50% oppose). Russians oppose protecting Israel from an attack by its Arab neighbors by a slight margin (36% oppose, 28% favor) while a similar number oppose protecting Israel (34% to 27%). But large numbers of Russians do not take a position.

Only two publics where a majority favors protection of Arab countries do not also favor protecting Israel: Egyptians (82% Arab countries, 16% Israel) and the Palestinians themselves (75% Arab countries, 12% Israel).

Among Indians, a plurality favors protecting Arab countries (28% favor, 19% oppose), but they are divided on whether Israel should also receive protection from the UNSC (34% favor, 34% oppose).

Ukrainians, like Russians, have pluralities opposed to protecting Israel (39% oppose, 15% favor) and Arab countries (38% to 15%), with large numbers undecided.