

# Palestinians More Positive on Abraham Accords and Open to Vying Powers Than Arab Neighbors

by [Frances McDonough \(/experts/frances-mcdonough\)](/experts/frances-mcdonough)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Frances McDonough \(/experts/frances-mcdonough\)](/experts/frances-mcdonough)

Frances McDonough is a research assistant with The Washington Institute's Project Fikra.



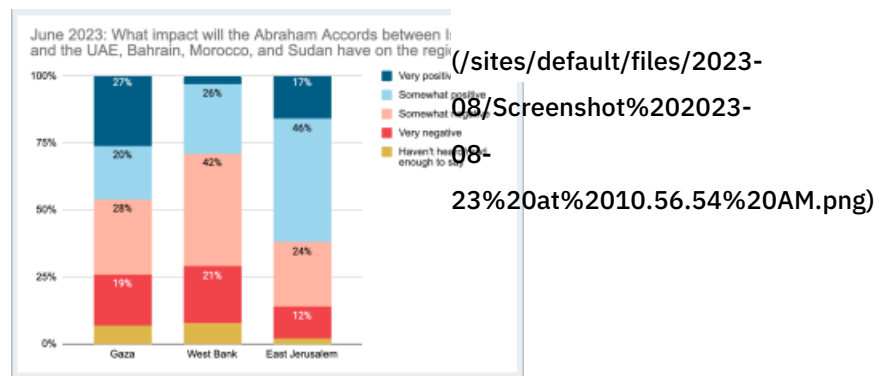
Brief Analysis

**Results from a new public opinion poll conducted in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem show key differences between Palestinian attitudes and those of respondents elsewhere in the Arab world when it comes to relations with Israel and the roles of the United States, China, Russia, and other regional powers.**

Commissioned by The Washington Institute and conducted in July 2023 by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, this poll assessed Palestinian perceptions on topics ranging from the war in Ukraine to internal political divisions to the viability of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Paired with polling earlier in April 2023 from seven Arab countries, comparing responses has exposed subtle yet meaningful contrast between Palestinians' viewpoints and those other Arab countries—as well as differences among Palestinians themselves living in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

## **Almost Half of Palestinians View Abraham Accords Positively, Though Majorities Feel Neglected by Arab Governments Making Peace**

When compared to the average 16% of other Arab publics in the April 2023 poll who viewed the Abraham Accords as “somewhat” or “very” positive for the region, attitudes in Gaza and East Jerusalem are starkly different. Notably, 47% in Gaza and 63% in East Jerusalem express a positive view of the regional impact of the Accords. And while the percentage of those who held this opinion shrinks in the West Bank, it is a similar proportion to the UAE, which had the most positive response in April 2023 at 27%.



That said, a solid majority in all three locations—58% in Gaza, 61% in the West Bank, and 64% in East Jerusalem—agree with the following statement: “Arab governments are neglecting the Palestinians and starting to make friends with Israel, because they think the Palestinians should be more willing to compromise.” And, as discussed in a separate article, a significant number of Gazans and some West Bankers agree that Palestinian leadership should normalize with Israel were Saudi Arabia to do so.

Another issue on which Palestinians diverge from other Arab publics was the prospect of receiving aid from Israel in the wake of a natural disaster. Whereas at least two thirds of other Arab publics (and an almost unanimous 98% in Lebanon) agreed with the statement: “In the case of an earthquake or other natural disaster, as we just saw in Syria and Turkey, Arab countries should refuse humanitarian aid from Israel,” this percentage dips to 50% in Gaza, 58% in the West Bank, and 59% in East Jerusalem.

Still, Palestinian opinions largely aligned with those of Arab countries on other topics related to Israel. Regarding the regional impact of Hamas firing missiles from Gaza into Israel—another round of which occurred between the periods that the Arab regional and Palestinian polls were fielded—respondents in the West Bank and East Jerusalem remained in the middle of the pack, with 41% saying the development would have a somewhat or positive effect. Gaza residents had the most positive response (58%) to the missiles of all Palestinians polled—trailing behind only Lebanon (62%) and Jordan (60%) region-wide.

Regarding the maritime boundary agreement between Lebanon and Israel, Palestinians were again relatively split, much like their Arab neighbors. 44% in both Gaza and the West Bank thought the agreement would have a somewhat or very positive effect on the region, while 48% and 47%, respectively, thought it would have negative effects. In East Jerusalem, a majority (64%) said the agreement would have a positive impact, and only 33% said it would be negative.

On the recent mass protests in Israel against the Netanyahu administration, Palestinian responses varied by area. In Gaza, 57% of respondents said the protests would have a somewhat or positive effect, while 61% said the same in the West Bank and 74% said the same in East Jerusalem. Still, this variation corresponds with results from the April 2023 poll, where the percentages who felt positively about the protests ranged from 65% in Kuwait and the UAE to 74% in Lebanon.

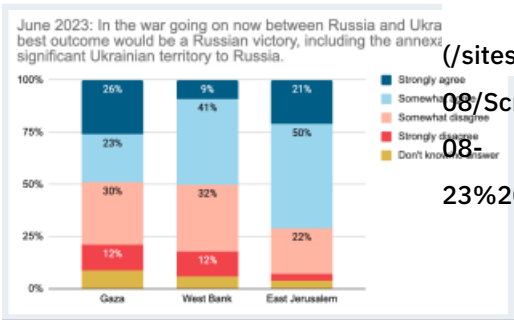
### **Palestinians Place More Value on Relations with Global Powers, Differ in Their Perspectives on U.S. and Iranian Partnerships**

When asked to rate the importance of relations with China, Russia, the United States, and Iran, Palestinians in all three regions had more solid majorities who viewed these relations as “somewhat” or “very” important than other Arab publics. Regarding China, for example, 76% of respondents in the West Bank view these relations as important. That percentage slightly decreases in East Jerusalem (73%) and Gaza (72%), but even these majorities equal or

outweigh those of other Arab countries. In November 2022, when this question was last asked in a regional poll, Lebanon had the highest percentage of citizens who viewed Chinese relations as important (72%), but all other countries had between half and 60% who expressed this view.

On Russia, a solid majority in Gaza (64%), the West Bank (63%), and East Jerusalem (77%) likewise labeled good relations with Moscow as at least somewhat important. Compared to the 58% in Lebanon who characterized Russian relations as important in November 2022—the highest of all countries polled at the time—these findings reveal a key attitudinal difference between the Palestinian territories and their neighbors.

However, this valuing of relations with Russia does not necessarily translate into support for Russia’s actions in Ukraine. In fact, relatively small percentages in Gaza (49%) and the West Bank (50%) agreed with the following statement: “In the war going on now between Russia and Ukraine, the best outcome would be a Russian victory, including the annexation of significant Ukrainian territory to Russia.” In the earlier Arab poll, over 70% of respondents in every country except for Lebanon agreed at least somewhat with that statement. In this case, residents of East Jerusalem, at 71% support, align with the latter group. Though Arab media has frequently criticized the international support for Ukraine relative to that for the Palestinians, more Palestinians may be sympathetic to Ukraine’s efforts to retain statehood given their own ongoing fight for sovereignty and threats of annexation.



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Palestinians appeared to be more likely to value relations with the United States as well. Though 80% of respondents in East Jerusalem agreed at least somewhat that they “cannot count on the United States these days” and “should look more toward Russia or China as partners—a relatively significant majority compared to the 61% who said the same in Saudi Arabia in November 2022, the highest at the time—solid majorities in Gaza (65%) and East Jerusalem (59%) still viewed good relations with the United States as somewhat or very important. In the West Bank, 51% said the same. When compared to the November 2022 region-wide results, the East Jerusalem and Gaza polls had the largest percentages of all populations polled who labeled U.S. relations as important. Similar numbers expressed this view in Egypt at 57%, but smaller proportions did in the UAE (44%), Saudi Arabia (41%), and Lebanon (41%).

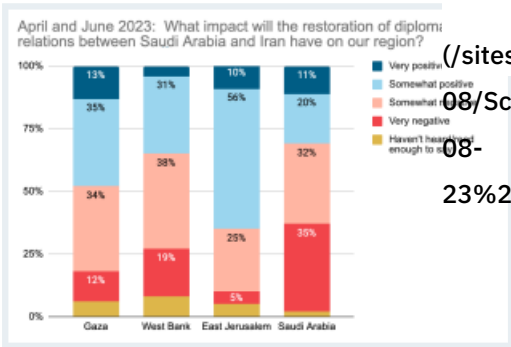
Nevertheless, Palestinian respondents hold different opinions when it comes to characterizing the United States’ role in their region. Very small percentages of respondents in Gaza (13%), the West Bank (3%), and East Jerusalem (8%) label the United States as a “friend,” whereas 39%, 46%, and 32%, respectively, label the United States as a “competitor” or “enemy” instead. Compared to regional results, the percentage of West Bank respondents who view the United States as a competitor or enemy comes second only to Lebanon (56%).

Relatively large percentages of Palestinians in Gaza (29%), the West Bank (32%), and East Jerusalem (18%) likewise view Russia as either a competitor or enemy. In all other countries except for Lebanon—where 53% said Russia was a competitor or enemy—this percentage ranged from only 2-4% in April 2023. On China, Palestinian attitudes largely aligned with that of their Arab neighbors, though far fewer in each territory—30% in Gaza, 35% in the West Bank, and 46% in East Jerusalem—labeled China an “economic partner” compared to the 60% or more who said the same in every country except for Lebanon.

When it came to their assessments of Iran, more Palestinians appeared receptive to good relations and security or

economic partnerships than residents of most other Arab countries. In fact, 65% of Gazan respondents, 51% of West Bank respondents, and 63% of East Jerusalem respondents said good relations with Iran were somewhat or very important. These percentages all outweigh that of even the Lebanese poll in November 2022 (44%), though among Lebanese Shia, this number jumps to 88 percent.

The Palestinian polls also had the highest percentages of respondents who labeled Iran a “security partner”—28% in Gaza, 22% in the West Bank, and 41% in East Jerusalem compared to just 19% in Bahrain in April 2023, the highest of all countries polled at the time. Accordingly, relatively low percentages in Gaza (7%), the West Bank (13%), and East Jerusalem (14%) labeled Iran an enemy. Over 40% said the same in Jordan, Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon in the April poll. Regarding the recent restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, a solid majority of East Jerusalem respondents (66%) viewed the detente at least somewhat positively—the second highest percentage of all countries polled behind only Lebanon (83%). Even though this percentage was lower in Gaza (48%) and the West Bank (35%), both territories had a higher percentage of positive responses to the reconciliation than in Saudi Arabia itself, where only 31% said the same.



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Methodology

This analysis is based on a face-to-face survey conducted July 8-27, 2023, with a true random geographical probability sample of 1,572 Palestinian adult (age 18+) residents of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The authors personally reviewed the questionnaire’s translation, sampling procedures, quality controls, assurances of confidentiality, and other fieldwork protocols with the entire Palestinian professional team based in Beit Sahour in the West Bank. The statistical margin of error for a sample of this size and nature is approximately 4% per area sub-sample, at the 95% confidence level. Additional methodological details, including full responses to all questions in the survey, are available upon request or on The Washington Institute’s new [interactive polling data platform](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/twi-interactive-polling-platform) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/twi-interactive-polling-platform>). ❖

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