

New Poll in West Bank Shows Shift from Maximalist Views of 2020

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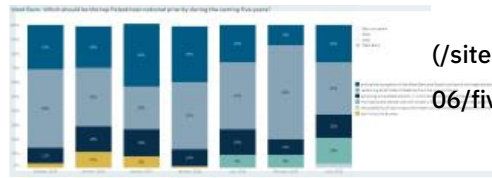
Brief Analysis

A new poll gauging popular opinion in the West Bank shows support for a two state solution remains in the minority, but meaningful shifts have occurred in attitudes over the past two years.

Biden's upcoming arrival in the West Bank aims, U.S. officials say, to "[reiterate strong support for a two-state solution \(https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/14/statement-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-on-president-bidens-travel-to-israel-the-west-bank-and-saudi-arabia/\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/14/statement-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-on-president-bidens-travel-to-israel-the-west-bank-and-saudi-arabia/)" and develop a "[new and reinvigorated dialogue \(https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2022/06/14/background-press-call-by-a-senior-administration-official-on-the-presidents-trip-to-the-middle-east/\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2022/06/14/background-press-call-by-a-senior-administration-official-on-the-presidents-trip-to-the-middle-east/)" between the United States and the PA. A new poll gauging popular opinion in the West Bank shows support for a two state solution remains in the minority. Nevertheless, meaningful moderate shifts have occurred in attitudes since 2020. Meanwhile, outside involvement in the conflict—whether from the U.S., Arab countries, or other international actors—has growing support. In contrast, frustration with PA governance in the West Bank remains high.

A reversal in perspective from 2020 is most evident in attitudes towards the top Palestinian national priority in the next five years. Opinion has moved away from large majority support for "regaining historical Palestine, from the river to the sea," dropping sharply from 66% in 2020 to just 37%.

Some of this shift reflects the quarter of respondents who now prefer a two-state solution. However, responses also demonstrate an unexpected and growing preference for alternative outcomes. "Moving towards shared rule with Jordan or Egypt, including Palestinian self-government" garners a surprisingly high 18% support. Still in last place, again contrary to common misconception, "is achieving a one state solution, in which Jews and Arabs would have equal rights." That option gets just 16% support.



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To explore this data and more, access TWI's interactive public opinion poll database [here](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/twi-interactive-polling-platform) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/twi-interactive-polling-platform>).

Looking much further ahead, when asked how the conflict will ultimately end, half of West Bankers continue to believe that “eventually, Palestinians will control almost all of Palestine, because God is on their side.” But this represents a 13 point decrease from 2020, and parallels an 11 point increase in those who believe that Israel and the Palestinians will reach a “political compromise, to divide the land and live side by side.”

More West Bankers (44%) now also believe that Israelis would indeed accept a two-state solution for permanent peace, a twelve point increase from 2020. Even more (about half) believe that resumed negotiations with the new Israeli government were at least fairly likely—though that government’s subsequent fall has made any new shifts on this front improbable at present.

Preference for armed struggle over alternatives is also somewhat reduced. 61% of West Bankers do agree at least somewhat with the proposal that Palestinians should move to a new intifada. Yet fewer agree “strongly” with this assertion—down from 27% in 2019 and 2020 to 18% in 2022. And despite repeated Israeli military operations in Jenin in the past few months, opinion is now split as to whether “the PA should stop security coordination with Israel, no matter what happens.”



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Rise in Support for Practical Steps, Even Without Diplomatic Progress

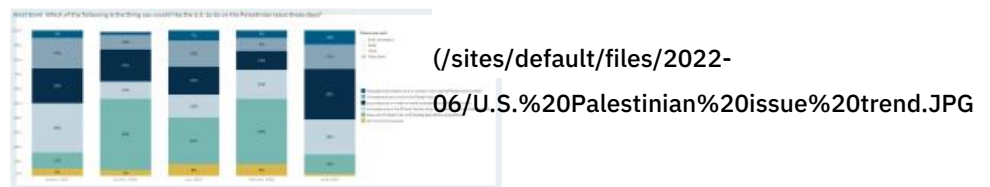
Asked whether “Palestinians should focus on practical matters like jobs [and] healthcare...not on big political plans or resistance options,” 59% of West Bankers now agree. There is also a growing minority interest in Israeli involvement. Today, 25% of West Bankers would now choose to be a “citizen of Israel” were there an agreement for a two state solution, up from 9% in 2020. Interest in Israeli companies offering jobs in the West Bank and Gaza has also increased over the past two years, from 11% to 28%.

A similar minority (29%) believes that “it would be better for us if we were part of Israel than in PA or Hamas ruled lands.” This number, however, has actually decreased from 36% in 2020. Longer-term trends highlight that current views represent an overall loss of optimism and willingness to compromise, compared with five years ago .

Desire for U.S. to Pressure Both Israel and PA, with Skepticism on Biden’s Approach

Regarding external actors to the conflicts, attitudes towards the United States have improved since the Trump era, while remaining skeptical. Back in 2020, a large plurality (45%) wanted the United States to “stay out of Palestinian and Middle East affairs altogether.” Now, only 13% express the same view. Instead, 35% are most interested in the United States pressuring Israel to make concessions.” A further 24% are most keen for U.S. pressure on the PA and Hamas to be “more democratic and less corrupt” while 10% prioritize getting Arab states more involved in solving the Palestinian problem.

Still, the overall view of the Biden administration's approach to the conflict is narrowly (57%) negative so far.



Comparing the U.S. with other great powers, West Bankers are divided down the middle as to this statement: “we cannot count on the U.S. these days, so we should look more to Russia or China as partners.” Meanwhile, 69% now believe that Palestinians should concentrate on getting different international mediators “such as Russia, Europe, and the UN” involved in the conflict, an almost 20 percent increase from prior years. Yet popular opinion regarding the importance of relations with these powers shows a virtual tie. Two-thirds (69%) of West Bankers believe that maintaining good relations with Russia as at least somewhat important. This is compared to 64% who say the same about the United States, and 68% about China.

Involvement of Arab Countries Increasingly Popular—Including on Jerusalem

Support is also rising in the West Bank for further involvement of Arab countries in mediation. A majority want Arab governments to play a more active role in peacemaking and offer “incentives to both sides to take more moderate positions”—up slightly from 2020. Two-thirds of West Bankers assert that “Arab governments must be pressured by the Palestinians to support our full rights, and then they will mostly do that.”

The Abraham Accords are not popular in the West Bank—only a quarter see them in even a somewhat positive light. But this is a larger percentage than in Jordan, Egypt, or Kuwait. West Bankers (along with other Palestinians) are actually the Arab populations polled by TWI *least* likely to view the Abraham Accords in a ‘very negative’ light—even when compared to Bahrainis or Emiratis.

Another unexpected finding is the marked and growing support in the West Bank for Arab involvement in the future of the key contested site of Jerusalem—at the expense of sole Palestinian leadership. Remarkably, 67% of West Bankers believe that Jordan should play a major role in the future of Jerusalem. A significant 25 point jump from 2020, this percentage is now on par with support for major involvement of the PA (65%), and more than Hamas (61%). Likewise, over 70% of West Bankers now believe that Saudi Arabia should play at least a minor role in Jerusalem's future—again, up from 48% in 2020. In contrast, support for a major role for the PA or Hamas has actually declined by about 20 percentage points since 2020.

Governance and Elections Still Key Issues for West Bankers

When it comes to internal Palestinian affairs, both TWI and [recent PSR polling \(https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/910\)](https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/910) demonstrate that the PA is deeply unpopular at present. These domestic issues hold weight: West Bankers are split as to whether “internal political and economic reform is more important for us than any foreign policy issue.” Likewise, about 40% agree with the statement that “Palestinians should stay calm and turn our main efforts towards building our own economy and institutions, until the Israeli or international political situation improves.”

Indeed, a significant minority see domestic governance issues as the most pressing matter facing Palestinians. When asked to focus on the current highest priority Palestinian national goal, 36% of respondents chose “holding new elections” or making “the PA and Hamas more effective, non-corrupt governments” over priorities related to ending the occupation or gaining international recognition of Palestinian statehood.

Corruption is clearly of particular concern. A solid majority (63%) of West Bankers concur that Palestinians should “push harder” to replace current Palestinian political leadership with “more effective and less corrupt” options. A similar number (65%) support the assertion that “Hamas and the PA should allow free and fair Palestinian elections.” Recent PSR

