

Divided Views on the Israel-Hamas War

As the war in Gaza continues, the political division in the United States over the Israel-Hamas conflict has manifested in polarized college campus protests last spring and in the 2024 presidential race, especially in Michigan where a sizable number of Arab, Muslim Americans (Pakistani Americans included) call home. Division over the Israel-Hamas conflict has also been evident among Asian Americans, as illustrated in two recent events reported in The New York Times and The New Yorker respectively -- the controversy over The Los Angeles Times not endorsing any presidential candidate, and tension within the Asian American Foundation.

In an October 26th news article, [Daughter of L.A. Times Owner Says Endorsement Decision Stemmed From Harris Stance on Gaza War](#), The New York Times reported that The Los Angeles Times owner Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong abruptly vetoed the editorial board's planned endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris. His decision has led to thousands of subscription cancellations, resignations of three members of the editorial board, and an open letter signed by nearly 200 staff members demanding an explanation.

In social media posts and subsequent interviews with his own news organization, Dr. Soon-Shiong framed his decision as an attempt at neutrality. However, in a statement on October 26th that was swiftly challenged by the paper, his daughter, Nika Soon-Shiong, 31, a progressive political activist who has frequently been accused of trying to meddle in the paper's news coverage, said the decision was motivated by Ms. Harris's continued support for Israel in its war in Gaza.

A feature article in the October 15, 2024 edition of The New Yorker, [The A.D.L. of Asian America](#), provides a detailed account of the growing dissent, internal as well as external, experienced by the Asian American Foundation (TAAF) early this year. TAAF is a philanthropic nonprofit founded by billionaires of Asian descent in the spring of 2021 in response to a wave of violence directed against East and Southeast Asian Americans. In a number of ways, TAAF was closely tied to and modelled on the Anti-Defamation League (A.D.L), and A.D.L.'s chief executive, [Jonathan Greenblatt](#), was the only non-Asian member of TAAF's board.

After October 7, 2023, the relationship between TAAF and the A.D.L. has become a focus of controversy. More than seventy Asian Pacific American and allied groups called on TAAF to "drop the A.D.L." based on Greenblatt's public criticism of some pro-Palestine activists and his support for Israel, whose military, using American bombs, has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians since the horrific Hamas attacks. Employees of TAAF felt that their work was being hindered by the controversy; morale collapsed. Some started looking for other jobs.

As the New Yorker writer observed, "if October 7th and the war on Gaza has sparked an ideological debate among American Jews, in all their multiplicity, a parallel fight has emerged among Asian Americans."

Several public opinion surveys shed some light on the divided opinions of the general adult population, Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in particular, about the Israel-Hamas conflict.

In a [GenForward October 2024 survey](#) of young adults ages 18-40, the war in Gaza ranks fifth by AAPI young adults as the most important problem facing the country. As for which presidential candidates they think will do the best at handling the war in Gaza, a plurality (36%) of AAPI young adults say none of them, 26% say Harris, and 23% say Trump. For a similar question about securing a cease fire in Gaza, a plurality (33%) of AAPI young adults indicates none of them, 29% say Harris, and 24% say Trump.

A July 2024 Chicago Council on Global Affairs report, [Israel's War in Gaza: Partisan, Racial, and Generational Views on the U.S. Role in the Conflict](#), provides some key findings as follows. Pluralities of Americans from different racial, ethnic, and generational backgrounds say they do not know enough or have not heard enough about the war in Gaza to provide their opinions on it. Majorities across all racial groups

prefer that the United States remains impartial in the Middle East conflict. Young Americans and Americans of color are most critical of Israel.

In the [September 2023 Chicago Council Survey](#), a bare majority of Americans supported restricting military aid to Israel “so it cannot use that aid in military operations against the Palestinians” (52%). Majorities of Democrats (64%) and Independents (52%) favored restricting military aid to Israel, while most Republicans (56%) opposed such restrictions.

With the exception of Native Americans, Americans of all different races and ethnicities favored the United States placing restrictions on its military aid to Israel so it cannot use that aid toward military operations against the Palestinians. Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (AAPI) Americans were the most likely to favor restricting military aid to Israel (59%), followed closely by Black Americans (54%). White and Hispanic Americans were more divided on whether to impose military aid restrictions on Israel, though bare majorities were in favor of restrictions (51% and 50%, respectively).

A December 2023 [AAPI Data/AP-NORC poll](#) on AAPIs’ confidence about their finances included a couple of questions concerning the United States’ role in the Israel-Hamas war. Nearly half (49%) of AAPI adults believe that the U.S. is not supportive enough of the Palestinians in the conflict with Israel, and 48% say that the U.S. is too supportive of the Israelis. In comparison, fewer U.S. adults overall think that the U.S. is not supportive enough of the Palestinians or too supportive of the Israelis, 31% and 32% respectively. Almost an equal share of AAPI adults say that the U.S. support of the Israelis or the Palestinians is about right, 35% and 31% respectively. AAPI Democrats are far more likely than AAPI Republicans to believe that the U.S. is not supportive enough of the Palestinians, 67% to 25%. Meanwhile, AAPI Democrats are 11 percentage points more likely than AAPI Republicans, 56% to 45%, to believe that the U.S. is too supportive of the Israelis. The survey did not solicit respondents’ views on Hamas’ horrific October 7 attacks of Israel, the proportionality of Israel’s military response in Gaza, or the post-October 7 explosive rise in antisemitism in the U.S.

Conducted January 4-8, 2024, the [Berkeley-IGS poll of California registered voters](#) finds that California voters divide sharply on this complex issue along age, party affiliation, and ideological grounds. Below are some key findings:

- Voters are divided about where their sympathies lie in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Republicans, conservatives, and voters ages 65 or older sympathize more with the Israelis than the Palestinians. Younger voters, liberals, and Democrats hold an opposite view, sympathizing more with the Palestinians.
- Plurality of voters describes the Israeli military response to the Hamas attack as too much, and such a view is most likely shared by Democrats, younger voters, and liberals, especially those who consider themselves as strongly liberal.
- Californians have divided views about the best course of action for Israel to take right now. Majorities of Democrats, liberals, and younger voters favor Israel agreeing to a ceasefire, while majorities of Republicans, conservatives, and older voters believe Israel should continue fighting until Hamas is no longer viable.
- Two-state solution is viewed by nearly half of California registered voters and pluralities across nearly all voter subgroups as the best long-term resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Democrats, No Party Preference voters, liberals, and older voters are most likely to back this alternative. However, a plurality of strongly conservative voters (43%) favor the creation of a single Israeli state for all the territory that is now Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.
- 55% of California voters disapprove of President Biden’s handling of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Highly negative appraisals of the President’s performance are coming from both the strongly conservative (67%) and the strongly liberal (64%).

California Registered Voters' Opinions about the Israel - Hamas Conflict in Gaza							
Jan-24							
			Total	White	Latino	API	Black
Voter sympathies in the current Israel-Palestinian conflict							
	More with Israelis		30%	38%	24%	23%	8%
	More with Palestinians		24%	19%	27%	31%	29%
	Both equally		28%	32%	23%	29%	28%
	No opinion		18%	11%	26%	17%	35%
Israeli military's response to the Hamas attack							
	Too much		44%	44%	41%	49%	41%
	About right		23%	28%	19%	20%	11%
	Too little		9%	11%	8%	8%	3%
	No opinion		24%	17%	32%	23%	45%
Best course of action for Israel to take right now							
	Agree to a ceasefire even if Hamas remains viable		41%	36%	46%	46%	42%
	Continue fighting until Hamas is no longer viable		36%	45%	25%	32%	16%
	No opinion		23%	19%	29%	22%	22%
Best long-term resolution to Israel-Palestine conflict							
	Two separate, independent states - Israel and Palestine		47%	54%	37%	49%	40%
	One single state that is neither Jewish or Palestinian		14%	13%	14%	13%	16%
	One single Israeli state for all of Israel, West Bank, Gaza		11%	14%	11%	8%	4%
	One single Palestinian state for all of Israel, West Bank, Gaza		3%	2%	4%	4%	4%
	No opinion		25%	17%	34%	26%	36%
Appraisal of the job President Biden is doing in handling the Israel-Hamas conflict							
	Approve		33%	40%	23%	32%	33%
	Disapprove		55%	51%	65%	53%	46%
	No opinion		12%	9%	12%	15%	21%
Concerns about the threat of increased hate incidents and violence against							
Jewish Americans							
	Concerned		80%	87%	76%	76%	69%
	Not concerned		12%	10%	13%	14%	19%
Muslim/Arab Americans							
	Concerned		75%	78%	73%	73%	65%
	Not concerned		17%	17%	16%	15%	16%

Source: Berkeley IGS Poll conducted January 4-8, 2024

The table above presents the views of California registered voters by race and Hispanic origin. Plurality of API registered voters sympathizes more with the Palestinians, considers Israeli military response as too much, believes that the best course of action for Israel to take is to agree to a ceasefire, and views the two-state solution as the best long-term resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. In addition, a majority (53%) of API voters disapproves of President Biden's handling of the current Israel-Hamas war.

The Berkeley-IGS poll did not provide further analysis of voters of various racial/ethnic backgrounds by age, party affiliation, and ideological grounds.