

# American public opposes Israel striking Iran: poll

March 13 2012

---

Only one in four Americans favors Israel conducting a military strike against Iran's nuclear program, finds a new University of Maryland poll. Nearly seven in ten (69 percent) favor the United States and other major powers continuing to pursue negotiations with Iran, a position supported by majorities of Republicans (58 percent), Democrats (79 percent) and Independents (67 percent).

Consistent with this emphasis on a diplomatic approach, three in four Americans say that the United States should primarily act through the U.N. Security Council rather than by itself in dealing with the problem of Iran's nuclear program.

The University of Maryland Sadat Chair for Peace and Development and PIPA, the University of Maryland-affiliated Program on International Policy Attitudes, conducted the study. The polling project was directed by Steven Kull, PIPA director, and Shibley Telhami, UMD Anwar Sadat Professor.

The poll of 727 Americans has a margin of error of +/-4.5% and was fielded between March 3 and 7 by [Knowledge Networks](#).

## IF ISRAEL ACTS?

If Israel goes ahead with a military strike against Iran's nuclear program and Iran retaliates - but not against American targets - only 25 percent

favor the United States providing military forces should Israel request them (though support is a bit higher among Republicans at 41 percent). Another 14 percent favors the United States providing diplomatic support only.

The most popular position is for the United States to take a neutral stance, which is supported by 49 percent. This figure includes 27 percent who would also favor active efforts to end the hostilities and 22 percent who think the United States should simply not get involved.

Asked to predict what the U.S. government would actually do if Israel strikes, a slight majority (54 percent) thinks that the United States would at least provide diplomatic support. This figure includes 32 percent who think that it would join the conflict militarily.

Only 14 percent of [respondents](#) indicate the United States should encourage Israel to strike Iran's program, but views are mixed as to whether it should openly discourage Israel or stay neutral.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF A PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE**

"One of the reasons Americans are so cool toward the idea of Israel attacking Iran's nuclear program is that most believe that it is not likely to produce much benefit," says the poll's co-director Steven Kull, who directs PIPA.

Only 18 percent believe that a military strike would delay Iran's abilities to develop a nuclear weapon for more than five years. A majority believes that a strike would delay Iran just one or two years (20 percent), will have no effect (nine percent), or will even have the effect of accelerating Iran's program (22 percent). One in five believes that it would delay Iran's program between three and five years.

"Interestingly, these results are barely different from the view of Israelis who were asked the same question in a February poll I conducted there," adds poll co-director Shibley Telhami, the UMD Sadat Chair. See Israeli poll (fielded by the Dahaf Insitute) details here: <http://ter.ps/gn>.

In the current study, less than half (42 percent) believe that a strike would weaken the Iranian government - again, Israelis were similar, with 45 percent holding this view.

Also, few Americans believe that a strike will involve a short exchange. Rather, a large majority believes an Israeli strike would lead to an armed conflict between Israel and Iran that would last months (26 percent) or even years (48 percent). A small number have the more optimistic view that it would last just weeks (12 percent) or days (9 percent).

When asked similar questions in February, Israelis were a bit more optimistic, but still only a minority believed that a conflict would last weeks (19 percent) or days (18 percent).

## **IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRESS**

Americans' reluctance to support a military strike does not appear to arise from a sanguine attitude about Iran's [nuclear program](#). Americans show substantial pessimism about Iran and its nuclear progress.

Most Americans (58 percent) believe that Iran has decided to try producing [nuclear weapons](#), and is actively working to do so. Only 30 percent agree with the view of U.S. intelligence services: "that Iran is developing some of the technical ability necessary to produce nuclear weapons, but has not decided whether to produce them." Even fewer (six percent) believe Iran's stated position that it is producing nuclear fuel strictly for its energy needs.

As for long-term prospects, nine in ten believe it at least somewhat likely that Iran will eventually develop nuclear weapons. If Iran succeeded in developing nuclear weapons, 62 percent believe it likely these would be use against Israel, while just 32 percent believe that Iran would be deterred for fear of being destroyed in a retaliatory strike.

If Iran develops nuclear weapons the largest concerns are that Iran would either use nuclear weapons (44 percent) or that Iran would feel emboldened to pursue aggressive policies toward the [United States](#) and its allies (24 percent). A lesser concern (19 percent) is that it would engender a nuclear arms race in the region.

**More information:** This study was conducted using the web-enabled KnowledgePanel, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, Knowledge Networks provides a laptop and ISP connection. Spanish only speakers are provided with Spanish questionnaires. Additional technical information is available at [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html)

Provided by University of Maryland

Citation: American public opposes Israel striking Iran: poll (2012, March 13) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-03-american-opposes-israel-iran-poll.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.