



US Public Divides along Party Lines on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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In the past year, the Trump administration has moved the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, [recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital](#), ended [aid to the United Nation agency supporting Palestinian refugees](#), and announced the [closure of Palestine Liberation Organization \(PLO\) office](#) in Washington, DC. These actions, [heavily criticized](#) by the international community, are a dramatic shift from past US policy. The 2018 Chicago Council Survey, conducted after the US embassy move to Jerusalem but before the other actions,¹ finds that the American public has generally not formed an opinion about the embassy relocation and would prefer that the US not take a side in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. A just completed Chicago Council-University of Texas survey of foreign policy opinion leaders shows that leaders have stronger views. Republican opinion leaders approve of the embassy relocation, while solid majorities of Democratic and Independent leaders disapprove.²

Key Findings:

- Majorities of Americans across partisan lines describe the US-Israel relationship as important to US security (78%) and the US economy (72%).
- A slim majority of Americans have not heard enough to voice an opinion on the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem closely; the rest are evenly divided with 24 percent in favor and 23 percent opposed to the move. Among foreign policy opinion leaders, 58 percent of Republican leaders approve of the move versus 89 percent of Democrats who disapprove.
- A majority of Americans (62%) continue to say that the US should not take sides in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Republicans (59%) say the US should

¹ The June 12-31 survey was conducted after the US embassy move to Jerusalem but prior to the closing of PLO offices in Washington and the cancellation of US aid to UN agencies supporting Palestinian refugees.

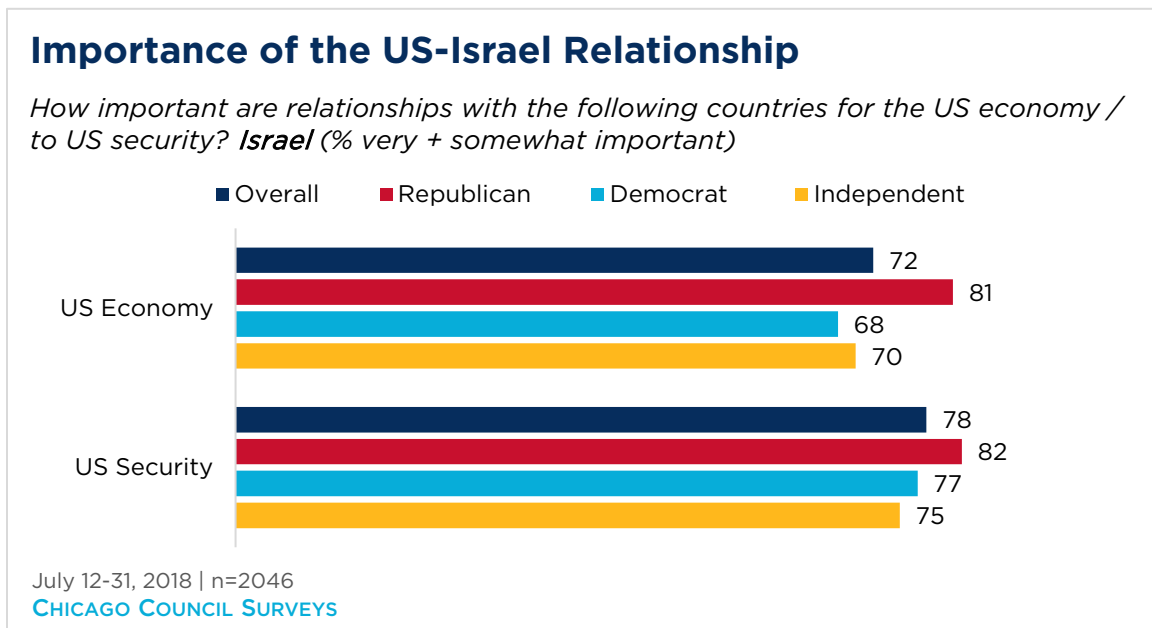
² Preliminary data from the 2018 opinion leaders survey is included in this report. Only two of the questions on this topic overlap in both the public and opinion leader questionnaires; comparative results are noted when relevant.

take Israel's side, while majorities of Democrats (75%) and Independents (68%) say the US should not take either side.

- While support for establishing an independent Palestinian state is at its highest level in Chicago Council polling since 1994, there are sharp divisions between Democrats who favor it (62%) and Republicans opposed (59%).

Most Americans Think a Relationship with Israel Is Important

Solid majorities of the American public, across party lines, say that relations between the United States and Israel are important for the US economy (72% important) and for US security (78%). However, in comparison to other countries around the world, Americans see Israel as less important to the US economy than China (92% important), Canada (90%), and Mexico (83%). Similarly, other countries are seen as more important for US security, including allies Canada (84%), Great Britain (83% important), and South Korea (82%), though Israel comes ahead of India (62%) and France (71%).

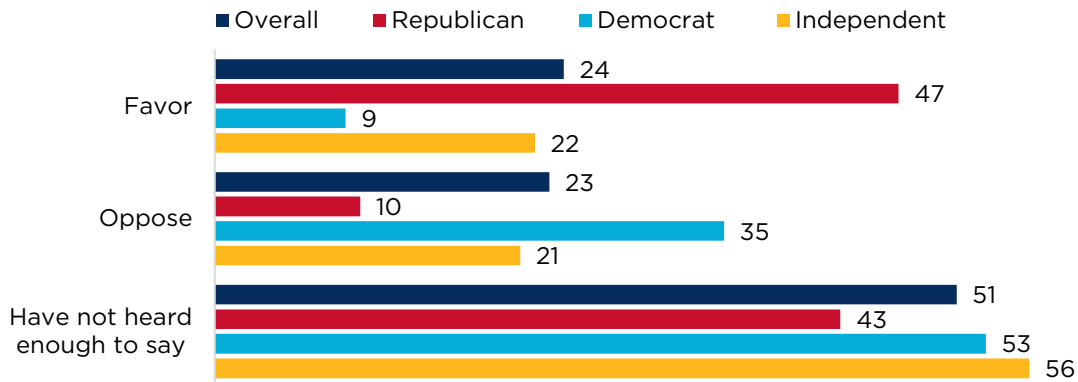


Americans Divided over Jerusalem Embassy Relocation

On December 6, 2017, President Donald Trump announced the [recognition of Jerusalem](#) as Israel's capital, with the US officially opening an embassy in Jerusalem on May 14, 2018. The majority of Americans (51%) say that they have not heard enough to decisively favor or oppose the relocation (with 24% favoring and 23% opposing). Of those expressing a view, Republicans are much more inclined to favor the relocation of the US embassy than Democrats and Independents.

Relocation of US Embassy to Jerusalem

Do you favor or oppose the relocation of the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, or have you not heard enough to say? (%)



July 12-31, 2018 | n=1020
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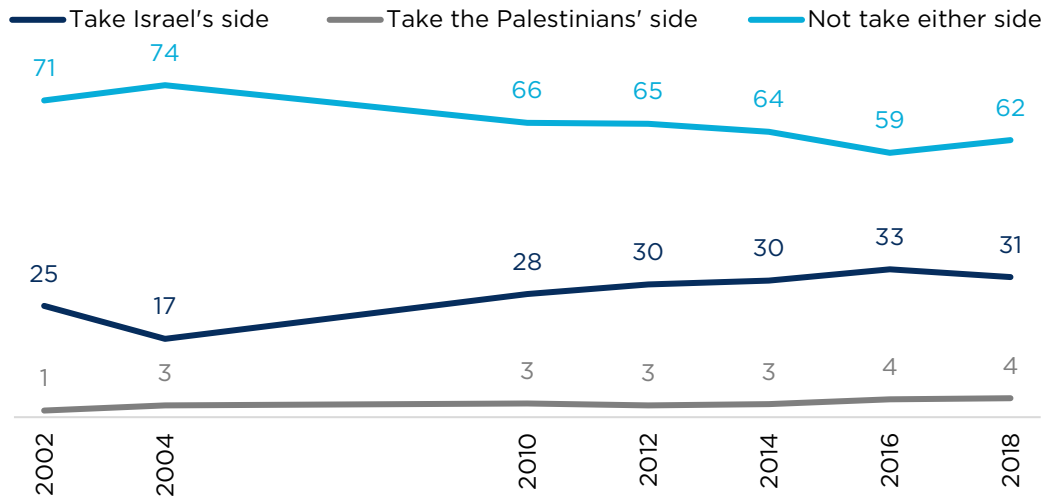
A just completed Chicago Council-University of Texas survey of nearly 600 foreign policy opinion leaders shows that they have stronger views on this issue than the public. A solid majority of Republican opinion leaders favor the embassy relocation (58%). By contrast, clear majorities of Democratic and Independent leaders oppose the relocation of the embassy to Jerusalem (89% Democrat, 67% Independent).

Majority Oppose Taking Sides in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Despite the recent controversial actions taken by the US government, a majority of Americans (62%) continue to think that the United States should not take either side, similar to views since 2010. Three in ten (31%) say the US should take Israel's side, a view that has gained traction since the early 2000s. Few Americans (4%) say the US should take the Palestinians' side.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should: (%)



July 12-31, 2018 | n=2046

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

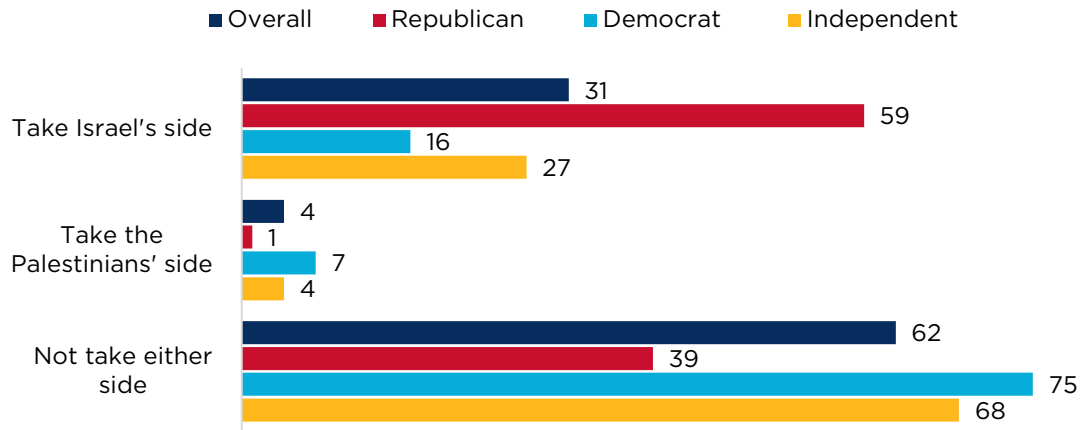
However, these views split sharply along partisan lines. Six in ten Republicans (59%) believe that the United States should take Israel's side, an all-time high in Republican views in Council surveys. Few Democrats (16%) or Independents (27%) share this view, however. Instead, majorities of Democrats (75%) and Independents (68%) believe that the United States should not take either side. There is not much support for taking the Palestinians' side among any partisan group.

In addition to divisions between Republicans and Democrats, there are also notable divisions within the Republican party between those Republicans with a very favorable view of President Trump ("Trump Republicans") and all other Republicans ("non-Trump Republicans"): Trump Republicans are far more likely to say the US should take Israel's side (69%, vs. 46% non-Trump Republicans).³

³ Trump Republicans are also less likely to support an independent Palestinian state (31%, vs. 43% non-Trump Republicans), and more likely to support the US embassy relocation (65%, vs. 25% non-Trump Republicans). See methodology for more details.

Partisan Views on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should: (%)

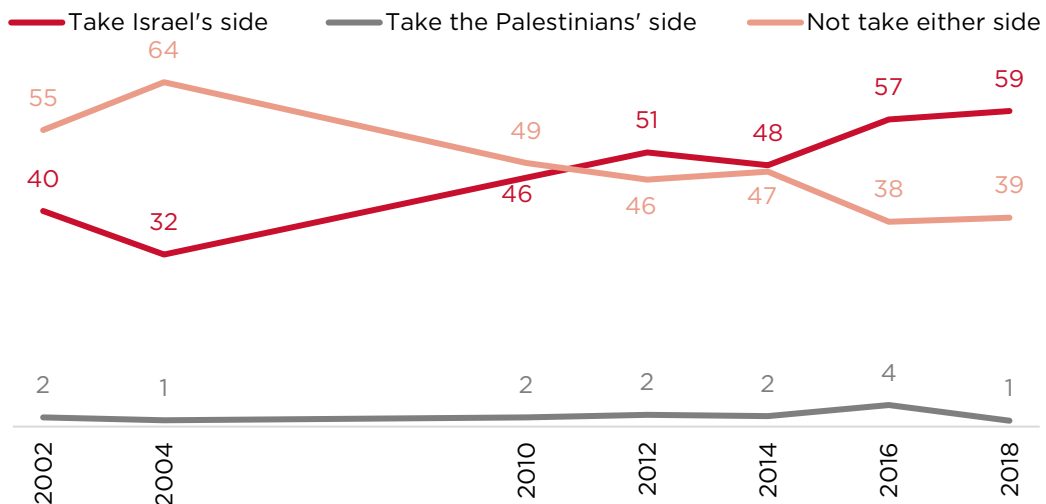


July 12-31, 2018 | n=2046
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

While Democrats' views on the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have remained largely unchanged over the past sixteen years of Chicago Council Surveys, Republican attitudes have shifted notably. In 2004, two-thirds of Republicans (64%) said the US should not take either side in the conflict. Six years later, in 2010, Republicans were divided; by 2016, a majority of Republicans (57%) favored taking Israel's side.

Republicans on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should: (% among Republicans)

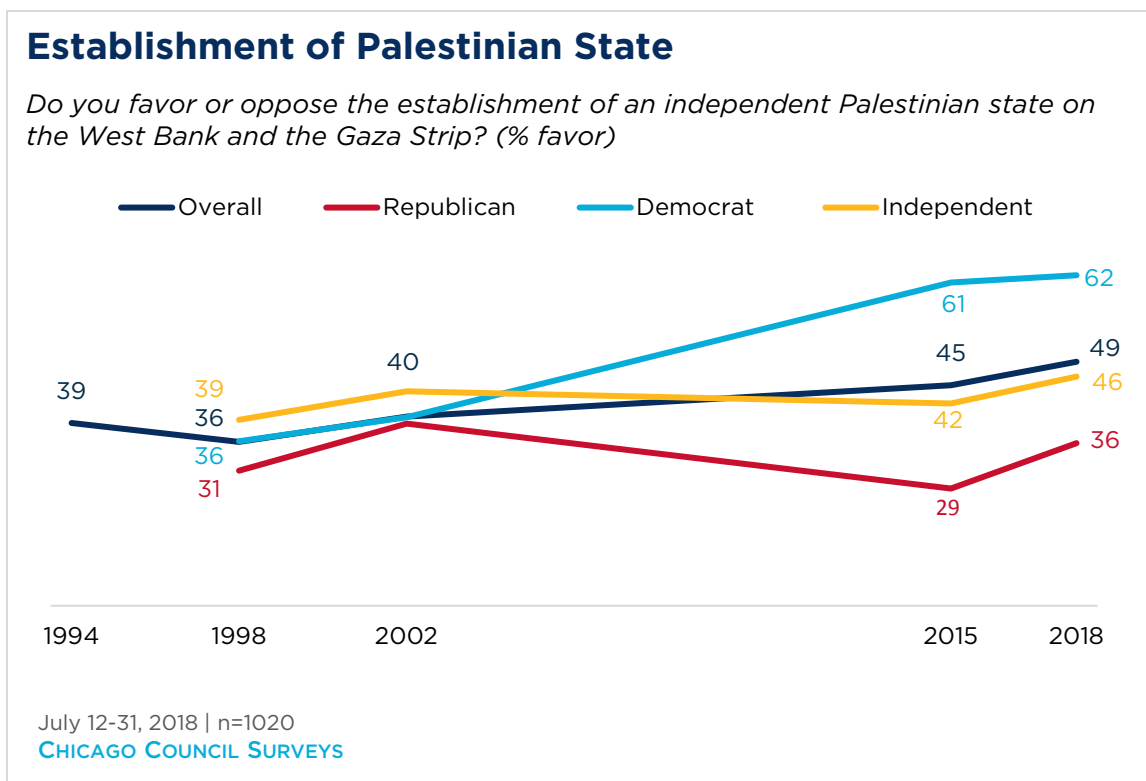


July 12-31, 2018 | n=2046
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Besides partisanship, age is also a factor on this question. Older Americans are more likely to say the United States should take Israel's side, while younger Americans are more likely to say the US should not take either side. This has different effects among Republicans and Democrats. Younger Republicans are less likely than older Republicans to say the US should take Israel's side, with support for taking Israel's side increasing among each successively older age group. Among Democrats, by contrast, there is less of a distinction by age, with most Democrats across age groups saying the United States should not take either side in the conflict.

Record Support for the Establishment of a Palestinian State

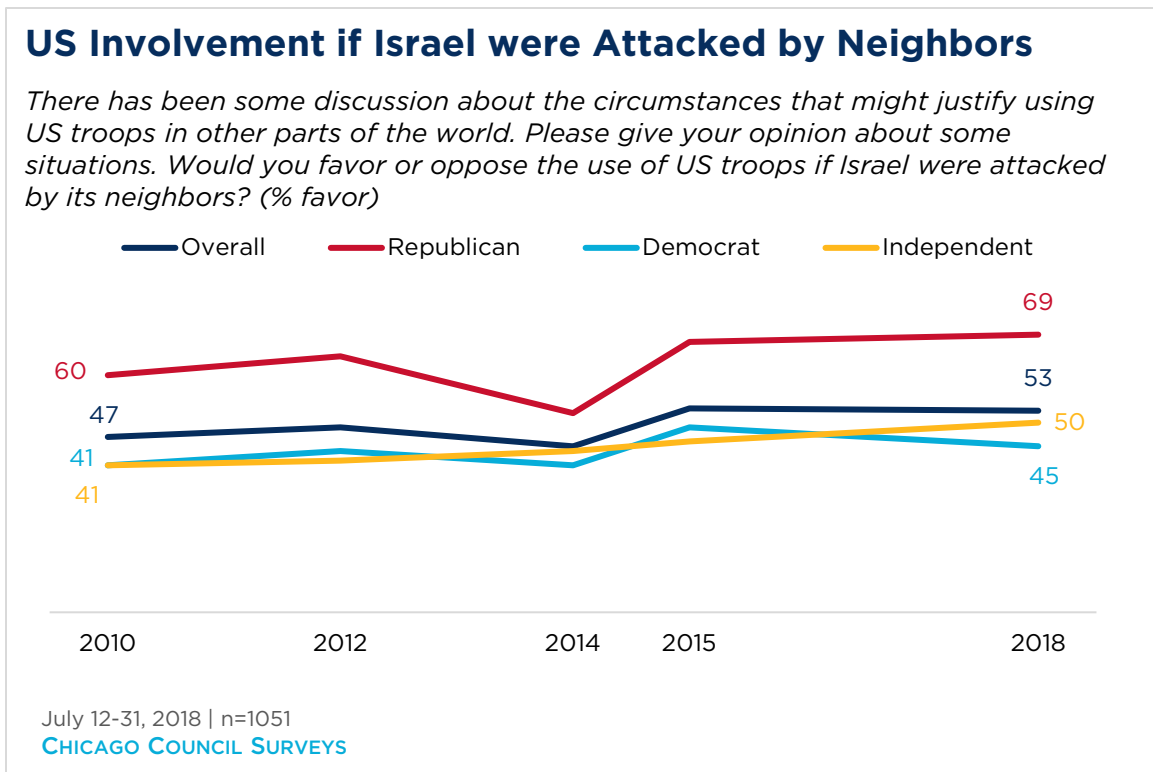
Among the American public, support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is at its highest level since the question was first asked in 1994, with half of Americans (49%) in favor. Democrats (62%) are far more likely than Independents (46%) or Republicans (36%) to say they favor establishing an independent Palestinian state, and it is among Democrats that the greatest shifts on this issue have occurred over the past two decades.



Diverging Views on US Troop Involvement

A narrow majority of the overall US public (53%) say they favor the use of US troops if Israel were attacked by its neighbors, similar to support when last asked in 2015 and an uptick from earlier years. While there is a bipartisan consensus for the importance of US-Israel relations, Republicans (69%) are far more likely than Democrats (45%) to support sending US troops to defend Israel if it were attacked

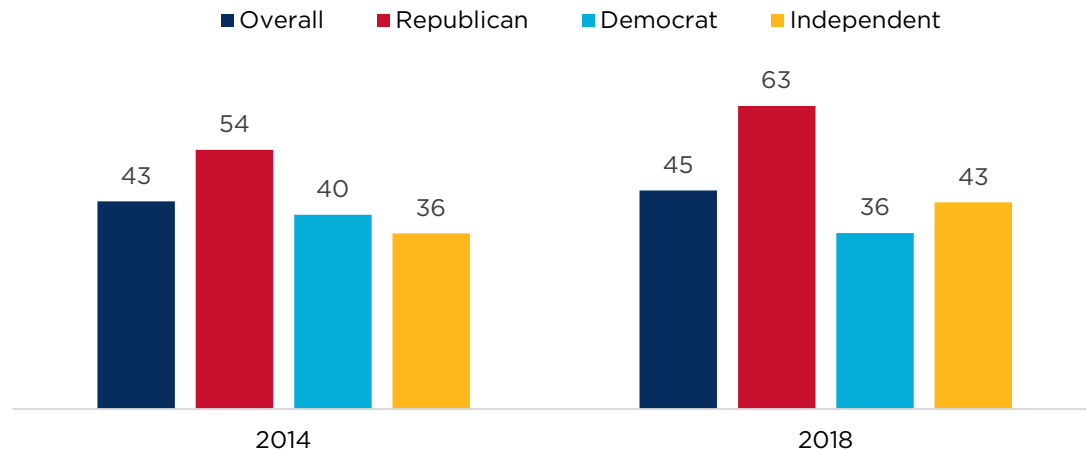
by its neighbors. Independents are divided. This gap between parties has existed since the Council began asking this question in 2010. The gap is even larger among foreign policy opinion leaders: while 82 percent of Republican opinion leaders support sending US troops to intervene if Israel is attacked, only 50 percent of Democratic leaders agree (56% among Independent opinion leaders).



However, if Israel bombs Iran’s nuclear facilities, and Iran were to retaliate against Israel, the American public is less inclined to get involved. Overall, 45 percent of Americans favor using US troops in this scenario, while half (51%) oppose doing so. Republicans are far more likely to support the use of US troops (63% favor, 35% oppose), while Democrats and Independents are opposed (61% and 53%, respectively). Over the past four years, Republicans have become more likely to support US involvement in a conflict between Israel and Iran. In 2014, when the question was first asked, a narrow majority of Republicans (54%) favored US involvement; now, 63 percent say the same.

US Involvement in Iran-Israel Conflict

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops: If Israel bombs Iran's nuclear facilities, and Iran were to retaliate against Israel (% favor)



July 12-31, 2018 | n=1051
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2018 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2018 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel July 12-31, 2018 among a weighted national sample of 2,046 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ± 2.37 , including a design effect of 1.1954. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

In the overall survey sample, 27 percent self-identified as a Republican in the question above. Slightly more Republicans are defined as Trump Republicans than non-Trump Republicans. Specifically, 15 percent of the overall sample self-identified as Republicans *and* answered "very favorable" to the question: "Do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable view of the following world leaders: US President Donald Trump?" Non-Trump Republicans, 12 percent of the overall sample, self-identified as Republican *and* said they have "somewhat favorable", "somewhat unfavorable," or "very unfavorable" of President Trump. Among all self-identified Republicans, 55 percent are "Trump Republicans" and 44 percent are "non-Trump Republicans."

Additional results come from the 2018 Chicago Council-University of Texas Opinion Leaders Survey. The leadership survey was conducted August 2 to October 16, 2018 among 588 foreign policy opinion leaders from executive branch agencies, Congress, academia, think tanks, the media, interest groups and NGOs, religious institutions, labor unions and business. To more closely reflect the composition of previous Chicago Council opinion leader surveys, these data have been weighted by target sample group to reflect the proportional representation of leader groupings within previous leader samples. More results, and details on the survey, will be forthcoming.

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About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at thechicagocouncil.org and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

Appendix

Q450B: How important are relationships with the countries listed below to the US economy?

450B/6 Israel

	Very important (%)	Somewhat important (%)	Not very important (%)	Not at all important (%)	Refused (%)
2018					
<u>Overall</u>	32	41	20	6	1
Republican	39	42	15	3	1
Democrat	27	41	24	7	1
Independent	31	39	21	8	2

Q450c: How important are relationships with the countries listed below for US security?

450C/6 Israel

	Very important (%)	Somewhat important (%)	Not very important (%)	Not at all important (%)	Refused (%)
2018					
<u>Overall</u>	42	36	16	5	2
Republican	49	33	14	3	2
Democrat	40	37	15	6	2
Independent	39	36	17	6	2

Q30: There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops:

30/8. If Israel were attacked by its neighbors

	Favor (%)	Oppose (%)	Refused (%)
2018			
<u>Overall</u>	53	45	3
Republican	69	30	2
Democrat	45	53	2
Independent	50	47	3

30/10. If Israel bombs Iran's nuclear facilities, and Iran were to retaliate against Israel

	Favor (%)	Oppose (%)	Refused (%)
2018			
<u>Overall</u>	45	51	3

Republican	63	35	2
Democrat	36	61	2
Independent	43	53	4

Q230: In the Middle East conflict, do you think the United States should:

	Take Israel's side (%)	Take the Palestinians' side (%)	Not take either side (%)	Refused (%)
2018				
<u>Overall</u>	31	4	62	3
Republican	59	1	39	2
Democrat	16	7	75	3
Independent	27	4	68	1

Q700A: Do you favor or oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip?

	Favor (%)	Oppose (%)	Refused (%)
2018			
<u>Overall</u>	49	41	11
Republican	36	59	5
Democrat	62	27	11
Independent	46	42	11

Q700B: Do you favor or oppose the relocation of the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, or have you not heard enough to say?

	Favor (%)	Oppose (%)	Have not heard enough to say (%)	Refused (%)
2018				
<u>Overall</u>	24	23	51	2
Republican	47	10	43	1
Democrat	9	35	53	2
Independent	22	21	56	1