



PUBLIC SENTIMENT ON THE IRAN–ISRAEL–US CONFLICT

A Comparative Global Polling Analysis

March 2026



Compiled and Analyzed from Major International Survey Organizations

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Publisher

Fake News Watchdog (FNW)

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Fake News Watchdog (FNW) is a global initiative dedicated to identifying, analyzing, and countering the spread of misinformation and disinformation in today's digital world. We stand at the forefront of the fight for truth, empowering individuals, media professionals, academic institutions, and civil society to navigate the increasingly complex information landscape with confidence and clarity.

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Abstract

As military operations between the United States, Israel, and Iran intensified through late 2025 and into 2026, a growing and often striking divergence emerged between state level decision making and publicly expressed opinion. This report synthesizes findings from over fifteen major polling organizations across the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific to map the global contours of public sentiment regarding the Iran–Israel–US conflict. Through content analysis of survey data published between mid 2025 and March 2026, the report presents a multi layered picture of how ordinary citizens across different geopolitical, cultural, and religious contexts perceive the conflict, its causes, and its consequences.

In the United States, polling data from Reuters/Ipsos, Quinnipiac University, NPR/PBS/Marist, AP-NORC, CNN/SSRS, Harvard CAPS/Harris, and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs reveals a broadly cautious public. A majority of Americans ranging from 43% to 60% depending on poll framing oppose or express discomfort with military strikes on Iran. The most consistent concern is not ideological but practical, fear of prolonged military entanglement reminiscent of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with anxiety over domestic economic consequences including fuel prices. An important exception is offered by the Harvard CAPS/Harris poll, in which framing around nuclear threats and Israeli alliance generates comparatively higher support, underscoring how question construction can meaningfully shift apparent public opinion.

In Europe, polling from Spain, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom reveals categorical opposition to the military intervention with rejection figures ranging from 49% in the UK to 68% in Spain. German respondents recorded historically low levels of trust in the United States, with 85% subscribing to the view that current global politics is governed by a 'might is right' logic. Italian and Spanish publics overwhelmingly favor diplomatic neutrality and oppose the use of their nations' military infrastructure in support of US and Israeli operations.

Across the Arab world, surveys by the Arab Barometer, Arab Opinion Index, and Zogby Research Services consistently reveal that Arab publics identify Israel and the United States not Iran as the primary security threats to regional stability. With over 84% of Arabs regarding Israeli policies as a threat and fewer than 6% identifying Iran as a primary concern, these findings challenge the dominant Western media narrative of a Sunni Arab bloc aligned against Iranian influence. Support for normalization with Israel remains below 11%.

In the Asia Pacific region, surveys from Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan reflect a consistent preference for diplomatic resolution, United Nations mediation, and conflict deescalation, shaped primarily by concerns about energy security, global trade disruption, and humanitarian consequences. Strikingly, the Israeli public stands as the only surveyed population where a majority

81% explicitly supports the military campaign, a figure that reflects the existential security frame through which the conflict is perceived domestically.

Together, these findings illustrate that the Iran–Israel–US conflict has generated a rare convergence of international public opposition to military escalation across ideologically diverse societies. The consistent divergence between this public sentiment and the actions of certain governments raises fundamental questions about accountability, democratic legitimacy, and the growing gap between citizens and the foreign policy establishments that claim to represent them.

Keywords: *public opinion, Iran–Israel conflict, US foreign policy, polling data, global sentiment, content analysis, Middle East, military escalation*

Methodology

This report adopts a qualitative content analysis methodology to examine and synthesize publicly available survey data pertaining to global public opinion on the Iran–Israel–US conflict. Data was collected from seventeen polling organizations operating across the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific region, encompassing surveys conducted between June 2025 and March 2026. Sources include nationally representative telephone and online surveys, longitudinal tracking polls, and regional public opinion indices published by organizations such as Reuters/Ipsos, Quinnipiac University, AP-NORC, the Institute for National Security Studies, the Arab Barometer, Arab Opinion Index, Zogby Research Services, and Pew Research Center, among others.

Content analysis was applied to the original published findings including press releases, topline reports, and data tables without conducting primary fieldwork. Survey questions, sample sizes, fieldwork dates, and demographic breakdowns were examined where available and disclosed. The author has not altered or reinterpreted individual data points; rather, findings are presented as reported by source organizations, with analytical commentary provided where relevant to contextualize cross regional patterns. Limitations include variation in question framing across surveys, differences in sample representativeness, and the impossibility of direct comparison across methodologically distinct instruments. These limitations are acknowledged throughout the report where they bear on interpretation.

Introduction

When governments go to war, they rarely do so in a vacuum of public opinion. They commission polls, study focus groups, and monitor approval ratings. Yet the historical record from Vietnam to Iraq to Libya is replete with examples of military action pursued in the face of, or with studied indifference to, public opposition. The conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States that escalated through 2025 and 2026 represents one of the most extensively polled military confrontations in recent history, with dozens of surveys conducted across multiple continents capturing public sentiment in near real time.

This report does not try to judge if the war is a good strategy or if it follows international laws. Instead, it has a simpler and more democratic goal: to show what ordinary people in the United States, Europe, the Arab world, and Asia actually said when they were asked for their opinions. In gathering these results, the author has made a real effort to be fair. This means not just picking the surveys that support one specific point of view. When polls show confusing or different results, they are still included in this report. For example, one poll from Harvard shows that more Americans might support military strikes if the questions are specifically about stopping nuclear weapons or defending Israel. This is a helpful example that shows how the way a question is asked can change the answer.

When you look at all the data together, a very clear and consistent picture emerges. Across many different countries and cultures on several continents, most people or at least very large groups of them are against making the military conflict bigger. They do not fully trust the reasons given for starting a war, and they would much rather see the problems solved through diplomatic talks and peaceful agreements. The most important exception to this trend is the public in Israel. This serves as a reminder that when people live very close to a direct threat to their lives, they think about politics and war in a completely different way.

Section I: United States Public Opinion

American public opinion on the conflict with Iran is internally diverse, depending on partisanship, affiliation, question wording, and the particular moment of the survey. Based on most major polls, the dominant sentiment emerges as one of caution, skepticism, and reluctance, which is the product of war weariness stemming from a two decade long entanglement in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

1.1 Reuters/Ipsos Poll



● 43% Disapprove ● 27% Approve ○ 30% Unsure

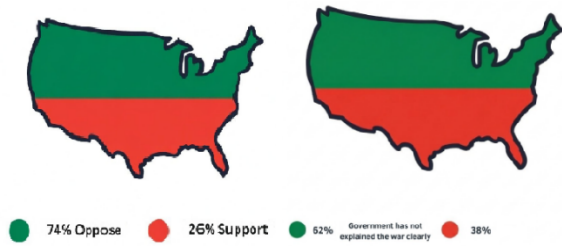
Key Findings

- 43% of Americans disapprove of US strikes on Iran
- 27% approve of US military action
- 30% are unsure or have no opinion

The Reuters/Ipsos survey is one of the first available measures of American opinion after the start of strikes against Iran. The results of the survey show a significant plurality of disapproval, with 43% opposed to a low level of approval, at just 27%, with almost a third of the public unsure. This is important because it suggests that the administration's message, at least through the time period of the survey, has not succeeded in building broad public support for military action.

The public's concerns, as revealed by the additional questions, are less about geopolitical goals or military doctrine than about the impact of the strikes, particularly the rising fuel costs, and the prospect of a long military campaign. The public often uses the examples of Iraq and Afghanistan, showing the lingering impact of these conflicts on American public perceptions of threats. As Reuters/Ipsos reported, "43% of Americans disapprove of the US military strikes against Iran, while 27% approve, with about three in ten unsure." (ipsos.com, 2026).

1.2 Quinnipiac University National Poll



Key Findings

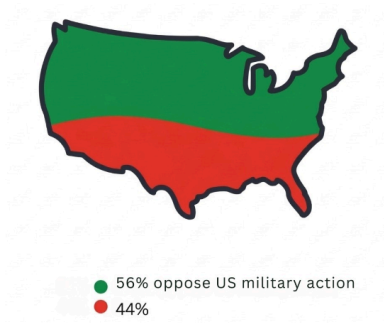
- 53% of Americans oppose the war; 40% support it
- 74% oppose sending US ground troops to Iran
- 62% say the government has not clearly explained the war's rationale
- 89% of Democrats and 60% of independents oppose military action; 85% of Republicans support it

The Quinnipiac University poll offers the most granular picture of partisan polarization on the Iran conflict. The headline finding 53% opposition to the war, overall masks a deeply divided electorate, but the granular data reveals important patterns of consensus across party lines, the categorical rejection of ground troop deployment by 74% of respondents represents one of the few areas of broad agreement.

The finding that 62% of Americans believe the government has failed to explain the conflict's strategic rationale adequately is particularly notable. It suggests not merely a gap between public and government on policy preference, but a more fundamental breakdown in the communicative relationship between the state and the citizenry on matters of war and peace. Voters were split 53% to 40% against the war overall, while some 74% opposed sending U.S. ground troops to fight in Iran compared with 20% who supported such a deployment (Quinnipiac University Poll, 2026, as cited in ctinsider.com, 2026).

The partisan split is clear with 89% of Democrats and 60% of independents oppose U.S. military action, while 85% of Republicans support it. This mirrors long standing patterns in American foreign policy opinion where partisanship substantially predicts attitudes toward presidential use of force, but the scale of opposition among independents is noteworthy, given their electoral significance (Quinnipiac University Poll, 2026).

1.3 NPR / PBS / Marist College Poll



Key Findings

- 56% of Americans oppose US military action against Iran
- 44% support US military action

Conducted by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion in partnership with PBS NewsHour and NPR between 2–4 March 2026, this survey provides a contemporaneous reading of public opinion at a moment of active military engagement. The 56% to 44% split in favor of opposition is consistent with findings from Reuters/Ipsos and Quinnipiac, reinforcing the pattern of majority or plurality disapproval.

The results suggest a war exhausted public shaped by decades of Middle Eastern interventions, an electorate that, even in the face of credible security concerns about Iran's nuclear program, does not automatically translate threat perception into support for military action. This distinction between acknowledging a threat and endorsing a military response is methodologically important and will be revisited in the comparative analysis (PBS NewsHour/NPR/Marist College, 2026, pbs.org).

1.4 AP- NORC Poll (Associated Press / University of Chicago)



- 60% of Americans oppose US involvement in the Iran Israel conflict
- 16% support military intervention

Key Findings

- 60% of Americans oppose US involvement in the Iran Israel conflict
- Only 16% support military intervention
- 56% have little or no trust in President Trump's judgment on the use of military force overseas
- 80% remain at least moderately concerned about Iran's nuclear program as a direct threat to the US

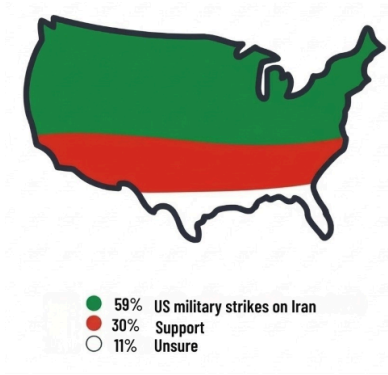
The AP-NORC survey, conducted by the Associated Press in partnership with the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Chicago, presents what may be the starkest divergence in the American polling data, only 16% supporting military intervention against 60% opposed. Equally significant is the trust dimension: 56% of the American public reports little or no confidence in the President's judgment on overseas military force, a profound indicator of democratic legitimacy deficit in wartime.

The survey exposes the complexity of public opinion. Despite overwhelming opposition to military engagement, 80% of respondents continue to express at least moderate concern about the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. This apparent paradox recognizing a threat while opposing the military response to it is consistent across multiple surveys and suggests that the public favors alternative instruments, diplomacy, sanctions, multilateral pressure. It also underscores the degree to which the stated justification for military action did not persuade a majority of Americans (AP-NORC, 2026).

The revelation that, only one month before the attack, the Trump administration privately told several Middle Eastern and Western allies that it did not plan to get actively involved in a war between Israel and Iran unless Iran targeted Americans adds significant context. It suggests a gap not only between public and government, but between government communications with allies and

the eventual course of action raising questions about strategic transparency and democratic accountability.

1.5 CNN / SSRS National Poll

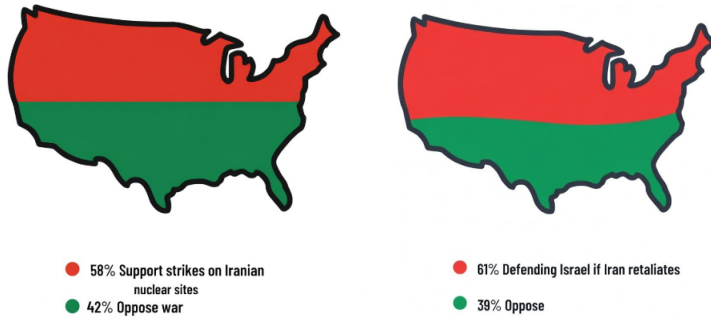


Key Findings

- 59% of Americans disapprove of US military strikes on Iran
- Majority anticipate the conflict will become a prolonged war

The CNN/SSRS poll corroborates the pattern of majority disapproval, with 59% expressing opposition to military strikes. The survey's second key finding that a majority of respondents expect the conflict to become a long-term engagement is particularly significant, as it suggests that public opposition is not merely reactive but anticipatory. Americans appear to be projecting current military action onto a future of sustained conflict, and they are indicating, in advance, that they do not endorse that trajectory. Such sentiment has historically influenced congressional debates over war powers and military funding, though its capacity to alter executive decisions in the short term remains limited. The polling data from CNN/SSRS suggests that disapproval significantly exceeds approval and that public concern about conflict duration represents a distinct — and potentially politically consequential — dimension of opinion (CNN/SSRS, 2026).

1.6 Harvard CAPS / Harris Poll



Key Findings

- 58% support strikes on Iranian nuclear sites
- 61% support defending Israel if Iran retaliates against it

The Harvard Center for American Political Studies, Harris poll represents the most significant outlier in the American survey landscape and deserves careful methodological consideration. Where other polls show majority opposition, the Harvard/Harris survey finds majority support for strikes on Iranian nuclear sites (58%) and for defending Israel in the event of Iranian retaliation (61%).

This divergence is not evidence of error or partisan bias in either direction. Rather, it illustrates a fundamental feature of survey research question framing shapes responses. When the action is framed as targeted strikes on nuclear facilities, rather than open ended military action and when the purpose is framed as defending an ally rather than initiating conflict, public support increases. This finding is important for understanding how political elites and media can, through selective framing, construct public support for policies that appear less popular under neutral questioning. The Harvard/Harris results demonstrate that security threats and alliance commitments tend to generate more support than open ended war scenarios, and that the language through which conflict is presented to the public is not a neutral variable (Harvard CAPS/Harris Poll, 2026, harvardharrispoll.com).

Americans are divided along party lines on U.S. military action against Iran, according to polls conducted since the war began, with most polls showing opposition is higher than support. Polls suggest that many Americans are worried the military action is making the U.S. “less safe,” even as they see Iran as a threat to U.S. security. A recent Fox News poll found opinions more evenly divided: Half of registered voters approved of the U.S. military action, while half disapproved. A new Fox News national survey finds 61% think Iran poses “a real national security threat” to the United States. That view is similar to most previous Fox News surveys since 2006. The notable exception was when concern hit 73% last June, right before the U.S. military mission against Iranian nuclear facilities called Operation Midnight Hammer.

1.7 Chicago Council on Global Affairs / Ipsos



- 74% President Trump was constitutionally required to obtain Congressional authorization before launching strikes
- 26% Not necessary

Key Findings

- A majority of Americans view Middle East escalation as a major global threat
- High levels of concern about regional war spreading beyond Iran and Israel
- Majority hold that the President requires congressional approval before striking Iran

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, partnering with Ipsos to conduct regular polling on key foreign policy issues, provides important complementary data on threat perception and constitutional attitudes. The finding that a majority of Americans view Middle Eastern escalation as a major global threat confirms that the public is neither uninformed nor indifferent to the stakes of the conflict, it is not apathy that drives opposition, but a considered skepticism about military solutions.

Particularly noteworthy is the finding that a majority of Americans believe congressional approval is required for US strikes against Iran. This constitutional preference is consistent with longstanding public ambivalence about executive war powers in the post Vietnam era and suggests that opposition to the Iran strikes is, for many Americans, not simply a policy disagreement but a concern about democratic process and the rule of law (Chicago Council on Global Affairs / Ipsos, 2026).

Section II: Israeli Public Opinion

2.1 Institute for National Security Studies (Tel Aviv University) Survey



Key Findings

- 81% of Israelis support the Israeli–US attack on Iran (Operation Roaring Lion), up from 71% in June 2025
- 19% oppose the military campaign
- 63% believe the campaign should continue until the fall of the Iranian regime
- 69% assess the campaign will significantly harm the Iranian regime; 22% believe the regime may completely collapse
- 62% are willing to live in a state of war for up to one month at most
- Public trust in the security establishment has strengthened since mid 2025

The Institute for National Security Studies survey presents data that stands in marked contrast to the polling landscape in Western democracies. With 81% of the Israeli public supporting Operation Roaring Lion, the data reveals a society that perceives itself in an existential confrontation and whose political and public opinion reflect that perception with a degree of unanimity found nowhere else in the surveyed landscape.

The increase from 71% in June 2025 to 81% in early 2026 suggests that public support for the military campaign has not eroded under the pressure of ongoing operations; if anything, it has consolidated. Public trust in the security establishment has strengthened. This pattern of initial support hardening into conviction under conditions of perceived existential threat is consistent with research on wartime public opinion in societies that experience direct attack or proximity to military

conflict. Even within the Israeli consensus, nuance is present. The finding that 62% of respondents are only willing to sustain a war for up to one month signals a conditional, time limited mandate rather than unconditional support for indefinite conflict. The desire for swift and decisive resolution rather than protracted engagement suggests that Israeli public opinion, while overwhelmingly supportive of the military action, is not blank cheque. Long-term occupation or entanglement would test public patience. The survey also reflects increased trust in political leadership, a contrast to US surveys in which trust in presidential judgment is explicitly majority negative (Institute for National Security Studies, 2026).

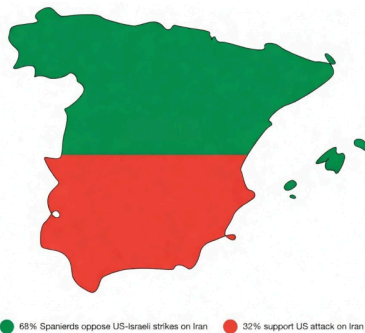
Section III: European Public Opinion

European public opinion on the Iran–Israel–US conflict reflects a region that is geographically adjacent to the theatre of conflict, economically exposed to its consequences, and politically divided between governments that have offered varying degrees of rhetorical support to the US-led campaign and publics that have registered broad opposition to military escalation.

3.1 40dB Research (Spain, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom)

Recent polling conducted by Madrid based research organization, 40dB Research across Spain, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom reveals a significant rejection of US and Israeli military intervention against Iran. Following the airstrikes that killed senior Iranian officials and hundreds of civilians, European citizens broadly advocate for neutrality and express deep concern about regional escalation (40dB Research, 2026).

Spain

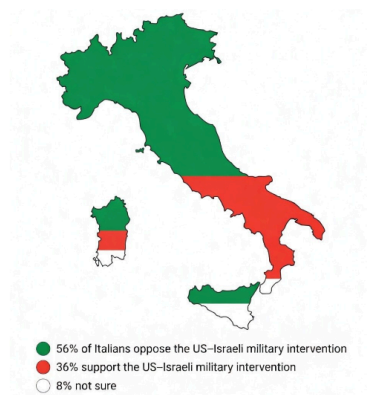


Key Findings

- 68% of Spaniards reject the US–Israeli airstrikes against Iran
- 57% support the government's decision to withhold military aid
- 53% oppose the use of Spanish military bases for these operations

Spain records the highest level of opposition among the four European nations surveyed, with more than two thirds of the population rejecting the military strikes. Support for the government's decision to withhold military assistance and opposition to basing rights indicate that Spanish public opinion is not merely rhetorical but translates into concrete policy preferences. These findings place the Spanish government in a position where public sentiment and NATO alliance pressures may create significant domestic political tension (40dB Research, 2026).

Italy



Key Findings

- 56% of Italians oppose the US–Israeli military intervention
- 48% believe Italy should act as a neutral mediator between the parties
- 29% demand an immediate ceasefire

While Italian public opinion reflects greater internal division than in Spain with center right voters showing more support for intervention, a decisive majority remains opposed. This preference for mediation over military alignment aligns with Italy’s post war foreign policy identity and its strategic Mediterranean positioning. As a frontline state, Italy prioritizes regional stability to mitigate the direct socioeconomic consequences of nearby conflict. Consequently, public sentiment favors diplomatic deescalation over kinetic involvement, reflecting a long standing national interest in maintaining Mediterranean security (40dB Research, 2026).

Germany



Key Findings

- 58% of Germans view the war as unjustified
- Only 15% trust the United States, the lowest recorded level in 20 years
- 85% of Germans believe global politics is now dominated by 'might is right'

Germany's data is among the most striking in the entire dataset. The collapse of trust in the United States to a 20 year low is an extraordinary geopolitical signal from one of Washington's most important European allies. The figure of 85% of Germans subscribing to a 'might is right' characterization of current global politics reflects a profound disillusionment not merely with a specific policy, but with the normative foundations of the post 1945 international order as currently practiced. These findings have implications far beyond the Iran conflict itself, they signal a crisis of legitimacy in the transatlantic relationship that preceded this conflict and has been deepened by it (40dB Research, 2026).

United Kingdom



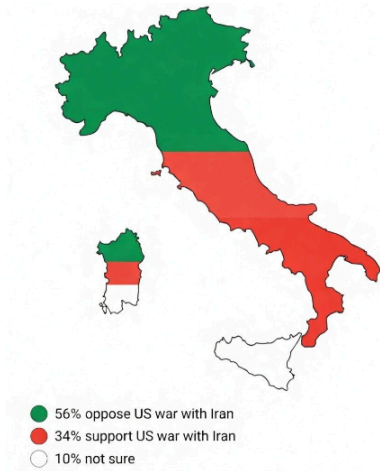
Key Findings

- 49% of Britons oppose the strikes; 28% support them
- 50% oppose the use of UK bases even for limited strikes against missile targets
- 47% believe Prime Minister Keir Starmer has handled the crisis poorly

According to 40dB Research (2026), British public opinion reveals deep skepticism regarding military involvement. A near majority of the population opposes recent strikes (49%) and rejects the use of domestic bases for operations (50%). Additionally found, most citizens are critical of the Prime Minister’s management of the crisis.

This data suggests that while the British public is engaged with the conflict, there is a profound lack of confidence in both current policy and political leadership. This widespread anti interventionist sentiment across different political parties is likely shaped by the legacy of the Iraq War. The historical "toxicity" of that intervention remains a significant factor in how the public views modern military commitments. Consequently, the UK findings reflect a cautious society that prioritizes diplomatic restraint over kinetic alignment, driven by a collective memory of past strategic failures and a desire for greater accountability in foreign policy.

3.2 YouTrend Poll, Italy (Sky TG24)



Key Findings

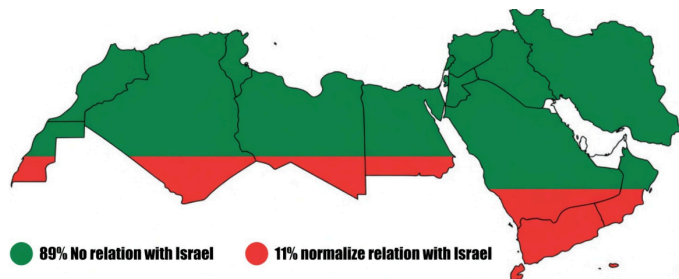
- 56% of Italians oppose US–Israeli military intervention against Iran
- 48% say Italy should maintain neutrality and act as mediator
- 29% say Italy should condemn the attacks and call for an immediate ceasefire

The YouTrend poll for Sky TG24 verifies the 40dB findings for Italy, adding geographic and attitudinal specificity. The consistent preference for neutrality and mediation across both surveys indicates a stable underlying preference in Italian public opinion rather than survey noise. Italy's exposure to migration flows from conflict zones and its historical ties to North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean help explain the heightened public sensitivity to escalation risks in the region (YouTrend/Sky TG24, 2026).

Section IV: Arab World and Middle East Public Opinion

Arab public opinion on the Iran–Israel–US conflict is neither monolithic nor simply explicable by reference to religious solidarity or ideological alignment. The data from three major regional survey instruments presents a nuanced, empirically grounded picture of how citizens across the Middle East and North Africa perceive threat, security, and legitimacy.

4.1 Arab Barometer Survey (Middle East and North Africa)



Key Findings

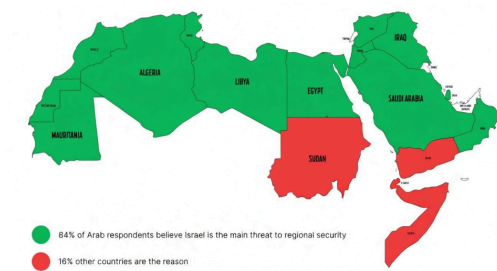
- Support for Iran in the Arab world remains relatively low, approximately 20% favorable
- Support for normalization with Israel is even lower, below 11%
- Many respondents oppose both Iranian regional influence and Israeli military actions

The Arab Barometer, a regional network of surveys now in its seventh wave, offers longitudinal data on Arab public attitudes across multiple countries. Its findings on the Iran conflict challenge both Western and regional elite narratives. Arab public opinion is neither instinctively pro Iranian nor amenable to the normalization framework promoted by the Abraham Accords.

Data from the Arab Barometer (2026) indicates a complex political landscape that deviates from the strategic goals of both regional and global powers. With public support for Iran at approximately 20% and favorability toward normalization with Israel below 11%, it is evident that Arab citizens are not fully aligned with either the Iranian led "Axis of Resistance" or the U.S. backed normalization framework.

This dual skepticism creates a significant "political geometry" that limits the maneuverability of regional governments. While state leaders may seek strategic partnerships, they face substantial domestic constraints and public pressure. The findings suggest that any military or diplomatic campaign involving Israel lacks a popular mandate, as the majority of the population remains wary of both Iranian expansionism and Israeli security policies. Ultimately, these domestic sentiments force Arab administrations to navigate a cautious middle ground to maintain internal stability while managing external geopolitical pressures.

4.2 Arab Opinion Index (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies)



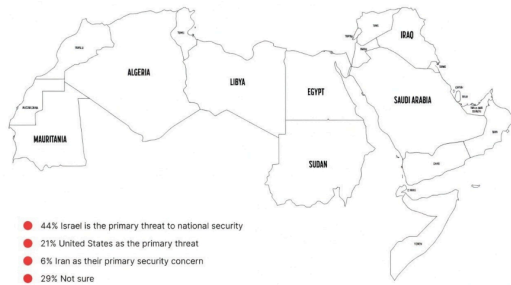
Key Findings

- 84% of Arab respondents believe Israeli policies represent the primary threat to regional security
- 77% believe US policies represent a major threat to regional stability

The Arab Opinion Index (2026), the largest study of its kind, reveals a significant gap between Western diplomatic narratives and the reality of Arab public sentiment. While many international policymakers describe a unified "Sunni Arab bloc" that stands with the U.S. and Israel against Iran, the data tells a different story.

In reality, overwhelming majorities across diverse Arab societies identify Israel and the United States as the primary threats to regional stability. This perception is consistent regardless of a country's geography or political leanings. Contrary to the idea of a shared anti Iranian military front, these findings show that most citizens prioritize a diplomatic resolution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict as the only true path to peace. Because of these views, regional governments face intense public resistance when considering military escalation against Iran or entering strategic alliances with Israel. Ultimately, the survey suggests that for the Arab public, regional security is not about countering one specific nation, but about ending Western led interventions and addressing long standing local grievances.

4.3 Zogby Research Services (Arab Public Opinion Poll)



Key Findings

- 44% of Arab respondents identify Israel as the primary threat to national security
- 21% identify the United States as the primary threat
- Only 6% identify Iran as their primary security concern
- Support for the Abraham Accords remains below the threshold of social legitimacy

The Zogby Research Services longitudinal data drawing on thousands of interviews across diverse Arab nations provides perhaps the most precise threat hierarchy available in the regional dataset. The finding that only 6% of Arab respondents identify Iran as their primary security concern, compared with 44% for Israel and 21% for the United States, represents a profound empirical counter narrative to the 'Iranian hegemony' framing that has dominated Western strategic discourse.

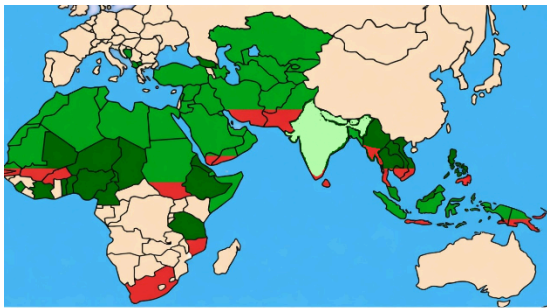
As Zogby's analysis underscores, the Abraham Accords, despite being framed by Washington and participating governments as a foundation for regional peace, suffer from a significant deficit of social legitimacy. If nearly half of the Arab public identifies Israel as a primary security threat, then the normalization agreements signed between Arab governments and the Israeli administration represent top down executive decisions that lack the foundational public support necessary for long-term strategic durability (Zogby Research Services, 2026).

The data further suggests that media driven anti Iranian rhetoric has not succeeded in shifting the Arab public's primary political concern away from the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Palestinian rights continue to function as the central axis of political legitimacy in the Arab world, constraining elite options even as governments pursue realpolitik accommodation with Israel and the United States.

Section V: Asia-Pacific Public Opinion

Across the Asia Pacific region, public opinion on the Iran–Israel–US conflict is shaped less by ideological alignment than by pragmatic concerns about economic stability, energy security, and the reliability of international institutions. The dominant preference across Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea is for diplomatic resolution and UN mediated deescalation.

5.1 Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Survey (Muslim Majority Countries)



● 88% against Abraham accords ● less than 12% support the Abraham Accords

Key Findings

- Widespread negative views of US foreign policy across Muslim majority countries
- Public opinion toward Iran varies significantly across the Muslim world along sectarian and political lines

The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project provides a wide angle view of opinion across Muslim majority societies. Its data confirms that distrust of US foreign policy is deep and structurally persistent across these societies, not a reactive response to any single intervention. At the same time, the survey cautions against assuming a homogeneous 'Muslim world' response to the Iran conflict: views toward Iran vary widely, shaped by sectarian identity, historical memory, and proximity to Iranian regional influence (Pew Research Center, 2026).

5.2 Indonesian Survey Institute



Key Findings

- Majority of Indonesians support Palestinian causes and oppose Israeli military actions
- Strong public preference for diplomatic rather than military solutions
- Significant support for UN-led international mediation

Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim majority democracy, represents a crucial data point in mapping global opinion. The Indonesian Survey Institute's findings indicate that Indonesian public opinion is driven primarily by humanitarian concerns and solidarity with Muslim communities, particularly Palestinians. The preference for diplomatic and humanitarian responses over military alignment or escalation is consistent across surveys and reflects the government's long standing foreign policy emphasis on multilateral diplomacy and non interference.

Given Indonesia's demographic scale with over 270 million citizens and its role as a significant emerging economy, public opinion here has strategic weight for the broader global south's orientation toward the conflict (Indonesian Survey Institute, 2026). A June Pew research 2025 poll found that 80 percent of Indonesians hold unfavorable views of Israel.

5.3 Malaysian Merdeka Center Survey



Key Findings

- Large majority of Malaysians oppose Israeli military operations in the region
- Strong public preference for international mediation and humanitarian assistance
- Public opinion reinforces Malaysia's foreign policy posture of multilateral diplomacy

The Merdeka Center surveys consistently demonstrate that Malaysian citizens hold strong views regarding conflicts involving Israel and Muslim majority countries. Support for Palestinian rights represents a mainstream political consensus across all major Malaysian parties and civil society organizations, making it a defining feature of the country's foreign policy environment. Survey findings indicate that many Malaysians are concerned that a wider regional war could destabilize global markets and intensify humanitarian crises (Merdeka Center, 2026).

5.4 NHK / Cabinet Office of Japan (Public Opinion Survey)



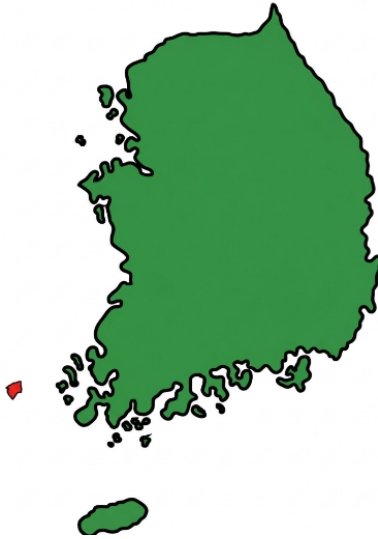
Key Findings

- Majority of Japanese respondents oppose military escalation in the Middle East
- Strong preference for diplomacy and UN-led conflict resolution
- Significant concern about the impact of conflict on global energy security and trade routes

Japanese public opinion on Middle Eastern conflicts is profoundly shaped by the country's post war constitutional pacifism, which continues to structure domestic political culture and public attitudes toward international military engagement. Surveys conducted by NHK and the Cabinet Office reveal that most Japanese respondents oppose military escalation and strongly favor peaceful negotiations and UN mediated resolution.

Japan's dependence on Middle Eastern oil, transported through the Strait of Hormuz makes regional instability a matter of direct economic national interest, and survey data confirms that energy security concerns are prominent among respondents stated motivations for favoring deescalation. This convergence of ideological pacifism and pragmatic energy interest reinforces Japan's strong public preference for diplomatic engagement (NHK / Cabinet Office of Japan, 2026).

5.5 Asan Institute for Policy Studies (South Korean Public Opinion Poll)



Key Findings

- Majority of South Koreans express concern about the impact of Middle East conflict on global energy markets
- Public support for military intervention in the region remains low
- Preference for diplomatic engagement and multilateral conflict resolution mechanisms

The Asan Institute's polling data indicates that South Koreans view the Iran–Israel–US conflict primarily through the lens of economic security. As a heavily industrialized, energy import dependent economy with significant exposure to Persian Gulf shipping routes, South Korea has strong material reasons to favor conflict deescalation and public opinion reflects this. Support for military intervention is low; preference for multilateral diplomacy and international mediation is high. The survey findings are consistent with South Korea's broader foreign policy posture of economic engagement and diplomatic balance (Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2026).

Section VI: The Democratic Deficit (Polls, Policy, and the Gap Between Publics and Governments)

6.1 The Democratic Case for Public Opinion in Foreign Policy

In democratic theory, the role of public opinion is of prime importance. The government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed, and nowhere is that consent more morally weighty than in matters of war and peace. The decision to use military force to send citizens' children to fight, to spend the public treasure, to take the moral burden of killing is perhaps the gravest act a democratic government can undertake. It is precisely this importance that makes the scientific polling of public opinion on military action not merely an interesting exercise in data analysis but a democratic commitment.

The surveys compiled in this report collectively suggest that, across the United States, Europe, the Arab world, and Asia, majorities or substantial pluralities of ordinary citizens oppose military escalation against Iran, distrust the stated justifications for conflict, and favor diplomatic alternatives. This is not a marginal or easily dismissible finding. It represents, in aggregate, the most broadly documented expression of popular opposition to a military operation in the past several decades and it crosses boundaries in ways that is simple unprecedented in the history of survey research.

Political scientists have spent many years trying to understand how the opinions of regular people actually change the decisions a government makes about war and foreign countries. One famous idea they study is called the "rally round the flag" effect. This describes a specific pattern: whenever a country starts a new war or faces a big international crisis, the public usually forgets their disagreements and rushes to support their leader. In the beginning, the President's approval ratings usually go up very fast, and most people support the military. It is a natural emotional reaction to a national threat. In the recent case involving Iran, this effect was much weaker than usual. This is what experts call "attenuated." Instead of a huge wave of national support, the public remained divided or skeptical from the very start.

The AP-NORC data shows only 16% support for military intervention even after strikes had begun, while AP-NORC and Quinnipiac data reveal that trust in executive judgment on military affairs was overwhelmingly negative before operations commenced. This suggests a public that had, in advance, declined to offer the customary short-term endorsement of presidential leadership in crisis an unusual and significant departure from historical patterns (Berinsky, 2009; Mueller, 1973).

6.2 Why Governments Diverge from Public Opinion

The question that the polling data ultimately poses is not merely descriptive, what does the public think? but rather normative and structural, why do governments so often act in ways that contradicts what their publics think? The Iran case offers a particularly instructive setting for examining this divergence, because the gap between public and government was not incidental but systematic, occurring simultaneously across multiple allied democracies.

The first and most obvious explanatory frame is the existence of commitments and interests that are structurally invisible to the public at the moment of polling. Governments operate within dense networks of treaty obligations, security partnerships, intelligence sharing arrangements, and informal alliance commitments that do not appear in public discourse and are rarely submitted to democratic scrutiny. NATO commitments, bilateral defense treaties, intelligence agreements such as Five Eyes, and informal presidential assurances given to allied leaders may create felt obligations to act in ways that cannot be openly explained to domestic publics. The Trump administration's reported communication to allies that it did not plan to actively engage unless Iran targeted Americans, made just one month before strikes were launched which suggests precisely this kind of private commitment structure operating independently of publicly stated policy.

Beyond treaty obligations, governments are influenced by what scholars of foreign policy call the 'military industrial intelligence complex', a constellation of institutional interests, defense contractors, intelligence agencies, think tanks funded by arms manufacturers, media platforms, technology companies (lately) and career military officials that structurally favors active military engagement over diplomatic restraint. These interests do not operate through crude corruption alone; they operate through the shaping of threat assessments, the framing of intelligence, and the institutional cultures of national security bureaucracies. When 56% of Americans report distrust in the President's military judgment (AP-NORC, 2026), they are not necessarily identifying a personal deficiency; they may be intuiting the degree to which presidential decision making on military matters is shaped by institutional forces that have interests distinct from those of the general public.

A third explanatory frame concerns geopolitical and economic interests that are acknowledged but contested. Energy supply chains, currency arrangements, arms sales relationships, and regional alliance architectures all create incentive structures for certain military postures that have nothing to do with the security rationale publicly offered. The fact that 80% of Americans express concern about Iran's nuclear program (AP-NORC, 2026) while 60% oppose military intervention demonstrates that the public is not naively unaware of the threat environment; it simply draws different conclusions about how to respond, conclusions that may be closer to an accurate cost benefit analysis than those reached in structures insulated from democratic accountability.

6.3 The Long-Term Consequences of Ignoring Public Sentiment

In both theory and historical practice, it is clear that when a government consistently ignores public opinion regarding military conflict, the consequences extend far beyond a single election cycle. While leaders might feel that strategic or national security interests justify a disregard for the popular will, this choice carries heavy long-term costs for the entire democratic system. When the gap between what the people want and what the government does becomes too wide, it creates a "democratic deficit." This lack of alignment erodes the foundational idea that a government rules with the consent of its citizens, leading to a society that feels disconnected from its own leadership.

As these instances of misalignment accumulate over time, moving from conflicts like Iraq to modern tensions with Iran, the public begins to withdraw its trust. Citizens who feel their voices are ignored eventually stop extending the "presumption of good faith" to their leaders. This means that when a government claims a new threat exists, a skeptical public is less likely to believe them, making it nearly impossible to build the national unity required for genuine emergencies. This loss of trust is a self-inflicted injury to the country's institutions. It often results in lower voter turnout, increased political polarization, and a general sense of cynicism that can take decades to repair, ultimately weakening the very democratic and support structures the government is supposed to represent.

The most immediate cost is political. Leaders who commit to military action against the explicit preferences of their publics place themselves in a position of vulnerability that can be exploited by domestic opponents. The British political landscape following the Iraq War, in which Tony Blair's support for military action despite public protest of up to two million people contributed to a fundamental delegitimization of his government is the paradigmatic case. The UK polling in this report, which records 47% of Britons rating Prime Minister Starmer's handling of the crisis as poor, suggests a similar political dynamic in formation. The German data, showing US trust at a 20-year low, signals that damage extends beyond individual leaders to the bilateral relationships themselves.

The second and more structurally significant cost is institutional. Repeated divergence between government action and public preference on high stakes issues erodes the foundational legitimacy of democratic institutions. When citizens repeatedly observe that their expressed preferences, even when majorities of between 53% and 68% register opposition have no visible influence on government behavior, the rational inference is that the democratic contract is not operating as described. This inference, once made, does not remain confined to foreign policy. It generalizes into broader political cynicism, institutional distrust, and vulnerability to authoritarian or populist alternatives that promise to 'take back control' from entrenched elites. The 85% of Germans who believe global politics is now governed by 'might is right' (40dB Research, 2026) are not merely commenting on Iran; they are expressing a worldview about the nature of international order, a

worldview shaped, in part, by repeated observation of democratic governments acting in contradiction to their publics' stated values.

Experts like Robert Putnam and Pippa Norris have spent years studying why people lose faith in their governments. They found that when a government makes major decisions about foreign countries that the public does not agree with, it creates a deep sense of distrust. Once this trust is broken, it is very hard to fix.

In many Western countries, trust in the government crashed after the Iraq War. Even though leaders tried to fix this relationship over many years, the damage was never fully repaired. When a government makes the same kind of mistakes repeatedly such as in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and now Iran, it creates a "cumulative effect." This means the problems pile up. Eventually, citizens stop believing that their leaders are being honest when they talk about new threats or the need for military action.

This lack of trust is called a "self inflicted injury" because the government caused the problem itself. By ignoring what the public thinks or making choices that don't turn out well, the government loses its most important tool, the benefit of the doubt. Instead of trusting their leaders during a crisis, people now start with skepticism. This makes it much harder for a country to act effectively on the world stage because the people at home no longer believe the reasons they are being given.

6.4 Media, Public Sentiment, and the Architecture of Selective Visibility

The way news media and public opinion interact during a war is one of the most researched topics in the study of politics. For a long time, experts have looked at how the news influences what people think about fighting. However, we now need to take a much closer look at the specific ways that public opposition to war is managed. In many cases, the voices of people who are against military action are made to seem invisible or unimportant. Sometimes, their arguments are even changed or "reframed" to mean something else entirely by news organizations. Understanding this is more important now than ever because our modern media world is completely different from the past. The older theories about how news works were written before we had the internet, social media, 24 hour digital news cycles and largely immersive media. In this new environment, the old rules do not always apply. The structures of how we get information have changed so much that the classic ideas from books are no longer enough to explain how public protest is pushed to the side. We must study these new digital systems to see how they allow governments and media companies to ignore or drown out the millions of people who may be calling for peace instead of conflict.

Media organizations operate under incentive structures that do not straightforwardly favor accurate representation of public opinion. Media uses several methods to shape how the public understands war. These methods do not always silence disagreement directly, but they can reduce its visibility and influence. Media organizations decide which issues receive attention and which are ignored. They may not tell audiences exactly what to think, but they strongly influence what people think about. For example, if large numbers of citizens protest against a war but the news mainly reports on military technology, troop movements, or statements from armed forces spokespersons, the protests receive little coverage. As a result, public opposition can appear smaller or less important than it actually is. Framing is used to describe a group or event in a way that shapes how the audience interprets it. The choice of words can change public perception. For instance, people calling for peace might be described as "activists," or "rioters," such language shifts attention away from their message and focuses instead on inconvenience or disorder. This can make their concerns seem less legitimate.

Media coverage depends heavily on official sources. Journalists often rely on information from government spokespeople, military officers, and official briefings because these sources have direct access to events and data. Their statements are reported quickly and repeatedly. In contrast, ordinary citizens, independent analysts, or anti war experts receive less coverage and must struggle for attention. Over time, this imbalance can make the official view appear more credible or dominant. Another important issue is how public opinion data is presented. Opinion polls and survey reports sometimes show strong public concern or opposition to war. However, media outlets may ignore these results or highlight only the parts that support a preferred narrative. For example, a survey might show that a majority of people oppose military action but still support national security

measures. A news report might emphasize the second finding while downplaying the first. In some cases, poll results are briefly mentioned but not discussed in detail, which reduces their impact on public debate. By selecting certain statistics or angles, media coverage can create a version of reality that appears consistent with official or dominant viewpoints.

Commercial pressures within the media industry also influence how wars are reported. Conflict attracts large audiences because it provides dramatic visuals and emotional intensity. Images of missile launches, military briefings, and battlefield footage are more likely to capture attention than statistics or opinion surveys. A poll showing that many people oppose military action is less visually engaging than scenes of military operations. Because media companies compete for viewers, advertising, and online traffic, they often focus on content that is more dramatic, even if it does not fully represent public opinion. Another factor is access to information. Major media organizations, journalist and writers depend on regular access to government officials and military briefings to obtain information. Maintaining this access can create pressure not to challenge those sources too strongly. Journalists may avoid publishing stories that question official explanations because doing so could risk losing future access to briefings or interviews. This situation often leads to subtle self censorship rather than direct orders from editors or authorities.

Even in democratic societies, governments have several ways to control the flow of information. By using national security laws and classification systems, officials can legally withhold details about military operations, airstrikes, and the resulting damage or casualties. These "information blackouts" significantly limit what journalists can actually verify and report to the public. While the media might still publish dissenting opinions or critical polls, the government often shapes the broader narrative through more subtle means. By strategically timing data releases, issuing scripted official statements, and holding controlled briefings, they ensure their perspective dominates the headlines. Collectively, these tactics allow government messaging to overshadow competing viewpoints during times of conflict.

6.5 The Democratic Dark Zone

The rise of social media as a major news consumption environment for significant portions of the global public has brought about a new mechanism of opinion management, that of algorithmic curation. Unlike traditional media, whose editorial decision were made by identifiable human beings working within established professional norms and regulatory boundaries, algorithmic platforms shape the information environment of hundreds of millions of users through opaque, proprietary systems whose design principles, which maximize engagement, watch time on the platform, and advertising revenue are not aligned with the production of an informed and accurately represented public sphere.

Research on platform algorithm behavior in conflict contexts has documented several patterns of concern. First, content that generates high emotional arousal like outrage, fear, moral condemnation is systematically amplified by engagement optimized algorithms, because aroused users are more likely to comment, share, and remain on platform. This creates a structural bias in the information environment toward emotionally extreme content, regardless of its accuracy or representativeness. Second, platforms have been documented suppressing or down ranking content relating to Palestinian and pro ceasefire perspectives during the Gaza conflict of 2023–25, findings confirmed by multiple independent studies and acknowledged, in some cases, by platform representatives themselves (Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2023).

Third, and most structurally significant, the opacity of algorithmic systems makes external accountability effectively impossible. Unlike the editorial board of a newspaper, whose decisions can be scrutinized and challenged through journalism, criticism, and regulatory action, algorithmic content ranking systems are proprietary intellectual property, inaccessible to scrutiny by scholars, regulators, and the public. This opacity means that platform influence on public opinion formation occurs in a genuine democratic dark zone, systematically shaping what hundreds of millions of people see, share, and believe, without any of the accountability mechanisms that democratic societies have developed, imperfectly, for traditional media.

The implications for the representation of anti war public opinion are significant. Survey data shows that majorities across multiple Western publics oppose military escalation. But if the social media environments in which those publics consume news systematically amplify pro-intervention voices, suppress anti war content, and create filter bubbles in which citizens encounter primarily affirmation of their pre existing views, the actual distribution of opinion may be rendered invisible both to other citizens who might be reassured by the knowledge that they are in a majority, and to political elites who might otherwise feel the democratic pressure of majority opposition.

6.6 Self Censorship and the Internal Suppression of Dissent

Internal or self censorship is arguably the most powerful and the most undertheorised mechanism through which public sentiment on conflict is suppressed. It operates not through institutional prohibition but through the internalization of professional, social, and political norms that define certain expressions of opinion as unacceptable, dangerous, or career limiting.

In the context of the Iran conflict, multiple forms of self censorship are identifiable. Journalists and commentators who have questioned the strategic rationale for military action have, in several documented cases, faced professional consequences, loss of media platforms, social media pile ons, lynching from pro war constituencies, accusations of sympathy with Iranian theocracy. These consequences, even when rare, function as deterrents with broad effects, the perceived risk of speaking dissent reshapes the willingness to do so among a much larger population of potential dissenters.

In academic contexts, scholars who work on public opinion and foreign policy have noted the structural disincentives to publishing research that directly challenges government security narratives. Funding sources, institutional reputations, and career advancement considerations all create pressure toward self censorship in research design, interpretation, and publication. The data in this report showing clear and consistent public opposition to military action across multiple countries and polling organizations, arguably represents findings that are methodologically straightforward but politically inconvenient, and whose circulation has been considerably less prominent in mainstream media than their evidential weight warrants.

Citizens, too, engage in self censorship particularly in environments of polarized political opinion. The phenomenon of 'preference falsification' (Kuran, 1995), in which individuals publicly express opinions that differ from their private views to avoid social sanction, is relevant here in contexts where public support for military action is the normatively expected position, individuals may under report their opposition in conversations, on social media, and even, to some degree, in polling contexts. This dynamic would mean that survey measured opposition to the conflict may, if anything, understate actual public sentiment, making the findings compiled in this report more significant, not less.

6.7 Toward Accountability: Closing the Gap

The way that big media companies make money, the secret ways social media apps work, and the pressure on journalists to stay quiet all come together to create a serious problem. These factors, combined with the private interests of powerful organizations and the hidden promises governments make to each other, build a system that pushes aside the public's voice. This happens even when most people in a country are clearly against going to war. It is important to understand that this is not a secret plot or a hidden conspiracy. Instead, it is the natural result of many different systems working at the same time. Each system has its own goals, but when they all overlap, they protect leaders from having to answer to the people when they make big decisions about war and foreign policy.

The question of how to fix this deep divide is too big for a single report to answer. However, the first step in solving any problem is to prove that it exists and to show how large it really is. The data in this report does exactly that by gathering evidence from respected organizations like Reuters, Ipsos, Pew Research, and several other international institutes. This evidence shows a clear pattern across many different countries. Even though these nations have different cultures, histories, and interests, their regular citizens consistently share the same feelings. They are cautious, they are doubtful, and they often stand against making military conflicts larger or more intense.

According to the basic rules of democracy, these public opinions must be taken seriously. They should not be seen as a problem for leaders to "manage" or ignore through clever messaging. Instead, these opinions are the true voice of the people who give the government the right to lead. When we look at what the people said and compare it to what the governments actually did, the gap between them becomes impossible to ignore. Because of this, the responsibility to explain these actions falls on the leaders who chose to go to war, rather than on the people who simply expressed their disagreement. The surveys collected here serve as a permanent record of what the public actually wanted.

Findings

The polling data surveyed in this report presents a picture of remarkable international convergence: across the United States, Europe, the Arab world, and the Asia Pacific, majorities or substantial pluralities of ordinary citizens have expressed opposition to military escalation against Iran, distrust of the stated justifications for conflict, and preference for diplomatic resolution. The sole exception is the Israeli public opinion, where 81% support the military campaign is explicable by the proximity of existential threat and the specific security context in which Israeli citizens evaluate the conflict, recent public demonstration against Benjamin Netanyahu shows a different picture this is why there is a need to verify and substantiate Institute for National Security Studies claims.

This lack of agreement between the people and their leaders has not led to any change in how governments actually behave. Many governments, especially the United States, have continued to move toward military conflict even though their own citizens clearly said they did not want it. There are many hidden reasons why this happens. These include secret deals between countries, the financial interests of companies that make weapons, and the way news stations and social media apps choose what to show us. Together, these forces create a deep "democratic deficit." This means there is a big, dangerous gap between what the people want and what the government actually does.

The long-term damage from this gap is not just about politics. It affects the very heart of our society. It destroys the trust that people need to have in their government for a democracy to work. It makes people feel like voting or speaking up is a waste of time. It also confirms a cynical view that is now held by 85% of people in Germany: the belief that the world is run by raw power and force rather than by fair rules or moral principles. These are not just small or academic worries. They are the warning signs of the next big crisis for democracy and the next war started without the people's permission.

Public opinion surveys are not perfect tools. They only show us a snapshot of a single moment, and they reflect what people say quickly rather than what they might think after a long debate. However, we do not have better or more advanced ways to measure the distance between the public and the government when it comes to war. For now, these surveys are the best evidence we have. When we look at the conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States, the message from these surveys is impossible to miss. The people of the world did not want this war.

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