



[What Biden's Support for Israel Could Mean for the Upcoming Election](#)

By Brenna Haggerty

Many Americans believe that the Israel-Hamas war is one of if not the most pressing foreign policy issues for America right now. Though the conflict has been ongoing for several decades, the October 7 attacks on Israel escalated the crisis to unprecedented levels of national coverage. It is at the forefront of Americans' minds regardless of political affiliation. Biden's vocal support for Israel and the U.S.'s astronomical financial support is a point of concern for voters. Biden's approval rating is lower than any president since Jimmy Carter at this point in office. This raises the question of how U.S. support for Israel will impact next year's presidential elections.

The United States government consistently provides economic and, most notably, military aid to Israel. According to a March 2023 Congressional Research Service report, “[t]o date, the United States has provided Israel \$158 billion (current, or noninflation-adjusted, dollars) in bilateral assistance and missile defense funding. At present, almost all U.S. bilateral aid to Israel is in the form of military assistance; from 1971 to 2007, Israel also received significant economic assistance.” The Obama Administration pledged to give Israel \$38 billion over a ten-year period. One week ago, the House approved a proposal for roughly \$14 billion in additional aid. Yet as more of the atrocities committed against Palestinians are brought to light in the media, Americans are growing more outraged with where their tax dollars are being spent.

In the wake of the war in Gaza, many political analysts are looking forward to the next election. The presidential election will take place on November 5th, 2024, less than a year away. Incumbent President Joe Biden is running for reelection with the Democratic Party and former president Donald Trump currently leads the polls as the Republican candidate. Other notable Republican candidates include Ron DeSantis, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Nikki Haley; yet none have shown they can beat Trump’s ratings so far. A poll by The New York Times and Siena College shows the former president would beat Biden in five of the six most important battleground states. Trump is leading in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, in some states by as many as 10 points. Biden is ahead only in Wisconsin. These were all states Biden carried in the last election. Most respondents said that Biden’s policies personally hurt them. Voters preferred Trump over Biden by 11 points on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, new studies show that Muslim and Arab Democrats are willing to vote to replace Joe Biden.

There do not appear to be divisions in the Republican party, however. The GOP has declared its firm commitment to the Israeli state. Senator Linsey Graham was even quoted saying Israel should, “level the place” when referring to Gaza. Presidential candidate Nikki Haley described the attack on Israel as an attack on America itself and said, “finish ‘em” in reference to Hamas. Senator Marco Rubio said he did not believe there was “any way Israel can be expected to coexist or find some diplomatic off-ramp with these savages...they have to be eradicated.” Originally, Donald Trump criticized the Israeli government for being unprepared for the attack. He also called the militant group Hezbollah “very smart.” After receiving heavy backlash, he instead bragged about his own record of supporting Israel and claimed “Joe Biden betrayed Israel.”

Throughout his presidency, Trump was a strong advocate for the Israeli state and a close friend of Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved the U.S. embassy there, lowering the chances of a two-state solution. In a controversial move, Trump officially recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, land internationally recognized as Syrian territory. Netanyahu and Trump were so closely aligned, that the prime minister named a neighborhood in Golan Heights "Trump Heights" and unveiled a giant gold sign in his honor. Trump also consistently supported building new illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Democrats in Michigan have warned Washington that Biden's stance on the Israel-Hamas war could cost him the support he needs to win Michigan, a state Biden cannot afford to lose if he wants to win reelection. New polls from Lake Research Partners show that Biden has lost a lot of support from Muslim and Arab voters. This demographic greatly supported him in the 2020 presidential election. Michigan is home to around 240,000 Muslims; and Biden won the state by just 150,000 votes in 2020. While a poll from CAIR in 2020 found that 69% of Muslims voted for Biden, this new poll shows that two-thirds of the Arabs and Muslims polled now think they will vote to replace Biden. Three-quarters of the respondents said they were willing to vote for a third-party candidate.

This issue is not isolated to Michigan, however. Last week the National Muslim Democratic Council, which includes Democrats from battleground states, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania as well as Michigan, urged Biden to negotiate a ceasefire with Israel. The council said they would "withhold endorsement, support, or votes for any candidate who endorses the Israeli offensive against the Palestinian people." The Associated Press exit polls showed 64% of Muslims voted for Biden in the last election; this is a demographic he needs yet even as he meets with Muslim leaders, he fails to address their major concerns about the war.

Biden's approval rating among Democrats has also dropped to a record low. In one month, it dropped eleven points to 75%. His national approval rating is just a few points shy of an all-time low at 39% according to Reuters. CNN describes these numbers as those reflective of a one-term president. Trump's approval rating one year out from re-election was at 41% by comparison. Jimmy Carter's numbers were at 32%. This demonstrates little faith that Biden will be able to pull ahead in the next year to beat Trump once again. In 2020, Millennials and Gen Z voters were the blocs that helped Biden secure the presidency; however, they now appear to be leaning towards Trump with a favorable 48% rating. The discontent with President Biden is shared across generations and political parties.

Concern for the direction in which Biden is steering the country is becoming a bipartisan issue. Unsurprisingly, Biden's approval among Republicans is at a staggering 5%. Red voters are becoming increasingly frustrated that the President is focused more on matters abroad than tackling systematic and pressing issues at home. Republicans believe the lack of support and social services available for veterans is one of the biggest problems in America. Although this is not a new talking point, Republicans will leverage it as a weakness during campaigning.

Democrats will face the dual challenge of expected Republican criticism coupled with the fact that only three-quarters of Democrats and a third of Independents approve of the job Biden is doing as President. Communities who have historically voted blue, such as Muslims, are now threatening to abstain from voting next year because they feel abandoned. Political analysts believe that Biden is "alienating members of his own party" and driving the left apart.

These statements are not unfounded. Democratic Representative from Indiana, Andre Carson recently called fellow Democratic Rep. Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey a "coward" and a "punk" for the latter's criticism of lawmakers who voted to continue supporting Israel. In-fighting will only further the instability of the party. Biden has already seen a fluctuating approval rating, especially because of his policy towards the Russia-Ukraine war. It is a volatile time for the party with the upcoming election. Currently, no other prominent Democratic candidate is running against Biden; and his stance on the war on Gaza is yet another hurdle to victory in the next presidential election. How the party leadership deals with the ongoing crisis abroad as well as the internal divisions at home may well determine whether voters will stay blue