



PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL
POLICY ATTITUDES (PIPA)

The PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll
The American Public on International Issues

Americans on Iraq & the UN Inspections



Introduction

With US policy on Iraq facing increasing challenges from US allies and other members of the UN Security Council, the administration must also address the question of how robust US public support is for its policy. In the wake of September 11th the President immediately gained an extraordinarily high level of support, with the public clearly ready to give him the benefit of the doubt on many fronts. In recent weeks this approval rating has sunk to levels not seen since before September 11th, raising questions about how the public's "reserve" of willingness to follow the President is being affected.

As the Administration faces an impending debate in the Security Council about whether to declare Iraq in material breach or to continue with inspections, the question arises: if there were an open conflict between the President and other members of the UN Security Council, would the public side with the President?

More significantly, if the Security Council refused to give authorization and the President, nonetheless, decided to proceed with military action, how would the public be likely to respond? Over and above what they express as their preference, are Americans comfortable saying they would not agree with the President?

A point frequently made by the Bush administration is that the UN's prior resolutions, including the recently passed Resolution 1441, could justify US military action. Does the public also have this impression, or does it think further authorization by the Security Council is necessary?

The UN inspectors' discovery of Iraqi artillery shells that could be used as chemical weapons is arguably a basis for taking action against Iraq. Does the public see it that way?

Behind the issues just discussed is a further question: What is the source of legitimacy for using military force to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction? Since it is often argued that the US is the ultimate guarantor of international order, does the public see the US as having, in itself, the right to use force for this purpose? Do they see the UN Security Council as having the right to authorize force against another country for this purpose? Would they view a different country—not the US—as having such a right?

Finally, another argument frequently made by the administration is that there is a past, or current, or prospective link between Iraq and al-Qaeda (the nature of the link has been posed differently on different occasions). Polling evidence shows that the public did not see such a link in the several weeks following September 11, 2001. Has the idea of such a link since made headway with the public? If so, how many think such a link is a demonstrated fact?

To explore US public attitudes on these issues, the Program on International Policy Attitudes and Knowledge Networks conducted a nationwide poll of 1063 American adults over January 21-26. The margin of error was plus or minus 3%.

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide research panel, which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology see page 9, or go to:

www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

Key findings:

- Americans are showing an increasing readiness to disagree with the President on Iraq. Even when told that President Bush and other members of the UN Security Council are at odds, a strong majority sided with other members of the Security Council calling for continued inspections. Asked how they would respond if the Security Council failed to support military action against Iraq and the President proceeded with such action, a growing majority of respondents say they would disagree with the President's decision. However, in this event, a majority (albeit a declining one) says it would nonetheless support the President. Negative ratings of the US's Iraq policy have increased significantly.
- In disagreement with Administration claims that previous UN Security Council resolutions provide the necessary authority, a strong majority says that it is still necessary for the US to get approval from the UN Security Council before invading Iraq. The discovery of undeclared artillery shells in Iraq is also not seen as a cause for military action.
- Insistence on UN authorization for military action against Iraq appears to be partly derived from a strong consensus that the UN Security Council has the right to authorize military force to prevent a country from acquiring nuclear weapons. The public is divided about whether countries in general--or the US--have the right to take such action on their own, though a modest majority thinks the US does have such a right in relation to Iraq.
- While a large majority is convinced by the Bush administration's claim that Iraq played an important role in the September 11th attacks, only a small minority says that they have seen conclusive evidence.

Growing Readiness to Disagree With President on Iraq

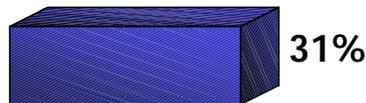
Americans are showing an increasing readiness to disagree with the President on Iraq. Even when told that President Bush and other members of the UN Security Council are at odds, a strong majority sided with other members of the Security Council calling for continued inspections. Asked how they would respond if the Security Council failed to support military action against Iraq and the President proceeded with such action, a growing majority of respondents say they would disagree with the President's decision. However, in this event, a majority (albeit a declining one) says it would nonetheless support the President. Negative ratings of the US's Iraq policy have increased significantly.

Poll respondents showed a clear willingness to explicitly disagree with the President on the question of Iraq. When respondents were told that President Bush has said he wants the UN Security Council to decide to invade Iraq before the end of this month, but that UN inspectors and most members of the Security Council want to continue with the inspections, only 31% favored pushing for a Security Council vote to invade Iraq now, while 66% sided with the UN inspectors and other members of the Security Council calling for more inspections.

Support for Continued Inspections

President Bush has said he wants the UN Security Council to decide to invade Iraq within the next few weeks. However, UN inspectors and most members of the Security Council want to continue with the inspections. Do you think:

the US should push for vote to invade Iraq now



the UN should continue with inspections



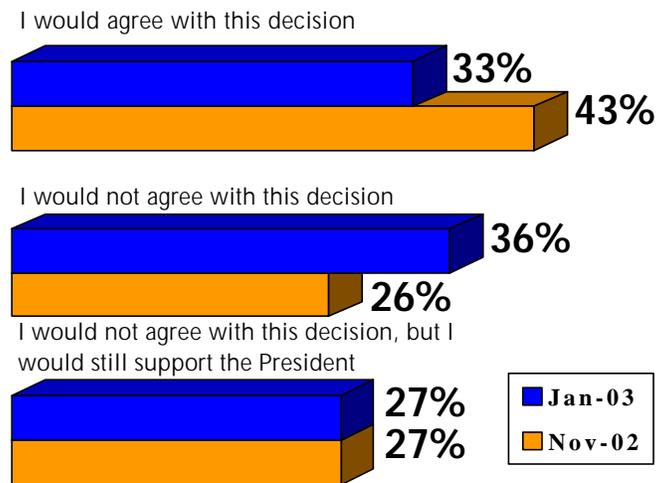
Respondents also showed a growing readiness to disagree with the President, should he decide to proceed with an attack against Iraq. Respondents were asked to imagine a scenario in which the US and other countries of the UN Security Council disagree about whether the Iraq is adequately cooperating with the UN inspectors, and President Bush ultimately decides for the US to proceed with an invasion of Iraq without UN approval. Respondents were given the option to express whether they would support the President, as well as whether they would agree with the decision.

Only 33% said they would agree with this decision—down from 43% when PIPA/Knowledge Networks asked this question in November. A clear majority of 63% said they would disagree—up from 55% in November.

Combining those who said they would agree with the decision and those who said they would not agree but would support the President, a substantial majority of 60% said they would support the President. This is down from 70% in November.

If US Invades Iraq Unilaterally

Imagine that after the initial UN inspections in Iraq, the US and other countries in the UN Security Council disagree about whether Iraq is adequately cooperating with the UN inspectors. President Bush moves that the UN approve an invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein, but most of the other members of the UN Security Council want to continue to use threats and diplomatic pressure to get Iraq to comply, and the motion does not pass. President Bush then decides that the US will undertake an invasion of Iraq, even if the US has to do so on its own. Just based on this information, what do you think your attitude would be about this decision?



Naturally, one must take such findings with a grain of salt. Respondents are not always good at predicting their responses to events, and actual events would have many more specific variables than can be spelled out in a poll question. Past experience does suggest, though, that it is likely that if the President proceeded he would get a “rally round the President” effect, as suggested in the response to the imagined scenario. Past experience also suggests that if the operation is successful, this support is likely to be sustained. At the same time, because much of this support appears to be reluctant, it would likely be highly sensitive to any lack of success over time.

Negative Ratings of US Iraq Policy Increase

Respondents were asked to evaluate US foreign policy toward Iraq, with 0 being very negative, 10 being very positive, and 5 being neutral. Since November, when PIPA/Knowledge Networks last asked this question, the percentage giving a negative rating (0-4) has increased from 25% to 37%. Positive ratings have declined from 52% to 45% and neutral ratings (5) have gone from 16% to 15%. The mean rating declined from 5.78 to 5.23.

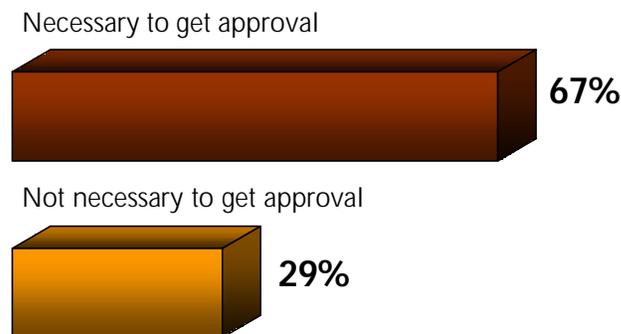
Majority Says US Still Needs UN Approval for Military Action

In disagreement with Administration claims that previous UN Security Council resolutions provide the necessary authority, a strong majority says that it is still necessary for the US to get approval from the UN Security Council before invading Iraq. The discovery of undeclared artillery shells in Iraq is also not seen as a cause for military action.

A majority of Americans appears to disagree with the Bush Administration's assertion that the previous UN Security Council resolutions provide the necessary authority for the US to invade Iraq. A strong majority of respondents—67%—expressed the view that it is still necessary for the US to get approval from the Security Council before invading Iraq. Just 29% said that it is not necessary.

Need for Further UN Approval

Do you think that for the US to invade Iraq at this point, it is necessary or not necessary to get approval from the UN Security Council?



This is consistent with a November 22-24 Gallup poll taken immediately after the passage of Resolution 1441, which asked respondents to “suppose Iraq does not comply with the UN resolution.” In that case just 33% said the US “should begin military action immediately,” while 64% said the US should “go back to the United Nations for authorization to take military action against Iraq.”

In response to more general questions, the public also continues to reject the idea of the US taking military action without UN approval. PIPA/Knowledge Networks reasked a question that was first asked in June 2002 by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and then again by PIPA/Knowledge Networks in November. Opinion on this question as not budged since November.

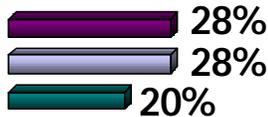
Continuing Insistence on UN Approval

There has been some discussion about whether the US should use its troops to invade Iraq and overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. Which of the following positions is closest to yours?

The US should only invade Iraq with UN approval and the support of its allies



The US should invade Iraq even if we have to go it alone



The US should not invade Iraq



Undeclared Artillery Shells

While some have argued that the discovery of the undeclared Iraqi artillery shells constitutes a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1441 and is thus a cause for military action with or without further UN approval, the public is divided on whether it is a cause for UN action, and would presumably be even less supportive of using it as a basis for the US to take action on its own. Respondents were told, “As you may know, UN inspectors found about a dozen artillery shells that could be used with chemical weapons that Iraq had not declared to the UN.” They were then asked, “Do you think that the fact that the Iraq did not declare these weapons is or is not a good enough reason for the UN to authorize and invasion of Iraq?” A slight majority of 51% said that it was not a good enough reason, while 45% said that it was.

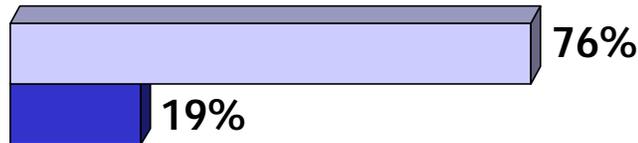
The Right to Forcibly Prevent Nuclear Proliferation

Insistence on UN authorization for military action against Iraq appears to be partly derived from a strong consensus that the UN Security Council has the right to authorize military force to prevent a country from acquiring nuclear weapons. The public is divided about whether countries in general--or the US--have the right to take such action on their own, though a modest majority thinks the US does have such a right in relation to Iraq.

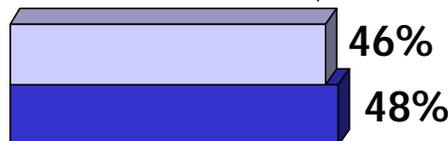
The public's insistence on getting UN authorization for action against Iraq appears to be derived in part from a strong consensus that the UN Security Council has the right to authorize military force to prevent a country from acquiring nuclear weapons. An overwhelming 76% said that "the UN Security Council has the right to authorize the use of military force to prevent a country that does not have nuclear weapons from acquiring them."

The Right to Use Military Force to Prevent Nuclear Proliferation

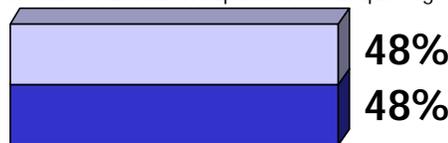
Do you think the **UN Security Council** has the right to authorize the use of military force to prevent a country that does not have nuclear weapons from acquiring them?



Do you think that **countries**, without UN approval, have the right to use military force to prevent another country that does not have nuclear weapons from acquiring them?



Do you think that **the US**, without UN approval, has the right to use military force to prevent a country that does not have nuclear weapons from acquiring them?



Note: The order of the presentation of the above questions was randomly reversed to offset effects that may be due to the order of the questions.

As to whether countries in general or the US has such a right, the public is divided. Respondents were evenly divided (46% to 48%) when asked whether countries in general have the right to use military force to stop nuclear proliferation without UN approval.

Asked whether the US has such a right, the responses were no different (48% saying that it has the right, 48% that it does not).

However, when it comes to the question of Iraq specifically, a slightly larger percentage—a modest majority of 53%--said that the US would have such a right. Respondents were asked:

Putting aside what you would favor the US doing, do you think the US would have the right, without UN approval, to invade Iraq to make sure it cannot develop nuclear weapons?

Fifty-three percent said that the US would have such a right, while 43% said that it would not. This percentage may well be higher than in the more general question because some respondents may view Iraq as a special case in the context of the Gulf War armistice, or because of the Security Council's passage of Resolution 1441.

Iraq's Role in September 11

While a large majority is convinced by the Bush administration's claim that Iraq played an important role in the September 11th attacks, only a small minority says that they have seen conclusive evidence.

Respondents were told, "As you may know, the Bush administration has said that Iraq played an important role in the September 11th attacks." They were then offered three response options to characterize their views on this. Just 13% said they have seen conclusive evidence for this, while 55% said they have not seen such evidence, but believe it is true. Twenty-nine percent said they have not seen evidence and do not believe it is true.

METHODOLOGY

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Menlo Park, California, with a randomly selected sample of its large-scale nationwide research panel. This panel is itself randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access). The distribution of the sample in the web-enabled panel closely tracks the distribution of United States Census counts for the US population on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, geographical region, employment status, income, education, etc.

The panel is recruited using stratified random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone sampling. RDD provides a non-zero probability of selection for every US household having a telephone. Households that agree to participate in the panel are provided with free Web access and an Internet appliance, which uses a telephone line to connect to the Internet and uses the television as a monitor. In return, panel members participate in surveys three to four times a month. Survey responses are confidential, with identifying information never revealed without respondent approval. When a survey is fielded to a panel member, he or she receives an e-mail indicating that the survey is available for completion. Surveys are self-administered.

For more information about the methodology, please go to:

www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp