

What Kind of Foreign Policy Does the American Public Want?

October 20, 2006

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**PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL
POLICY ATTITUDES (PIPA)**

A joint program of the Center on Policy
Attitudes and the Center for International and
Security Studies at the University of Maryland



**Knowledge
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The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) is a joint program of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Center on Policy Attitudes. PIPA undertakes research on American attitudes in both the public and in the policymaking community toward a variety of international and foreign policy issues. It seeks to disseminate its findings to members of government, the press, and the public as well as academia.

WorldPublicOpinion.org is an online publication devoted to increasing understanding of public opinion in nations around the world and to elucidate the global patterns of world public opinion. It conducts its own studies of public opinion on international issues as well as analyzing and integrating polls from other organizations around the world. It is published by the staff of the Program on International Policy Attitudes.

Knowledge Networks is a polling, social science, and market research firm based in Menlo Park, California. Knowledge Networks uses a large-scale nationwide research panel which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and is subsequently provided Internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have Internet access).

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), at the University of Maryland's School for Public Policy, pursues policy-oriented scholarship on major issues facing the United States in the global arena. Using its research, forums, and publications, CISSM links the University and the policy community to improve communication between scholars and practitioners.

Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, Evan Lewis, Mary Speck, Melanie Ciolek, and Stephen Weber designed the questionnaires and wrote the analysis.

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This research was supported by the Tides Foundation, Connect US, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

INTRODUCTION

As the midterm Congressional elections approach, a number of recent polls have found that the American public seems dissatisfied with the general direction of U.S. foreign policy and, more broadly, with how the United States is regarded in the world. However, it has been harder to discern what kind of foreign policy Americans want. In assessing Congressional candidates, what foreign policy positions resonate with voters? Looking beyond the election, what foreign policy directions would they like to see and what spending priorities would they like Congress to pursue? These are some of the questions addressed by the present study.

The question of what foreign policy Americans want transcends the war in Iraq and the increasing violence in Afghanistan. Finding the best balance of military force, diplomacy, foreign aid, and the other tools of foreign policy is the perennial problem of international leadership. How do Americans want to see this balance adjusted today?

To change priorities means to make tradeoffs—sometimes painful ones. Surveys often give the impression that the public would like “more of everything” and that it does not understand that government has to operate in a finite universe of costs. For this reason, this study asked respondents to allocate a fixed number of tax dollars for a foreign policy budget. If Americans could determine how the U.S. government spends its foreign policy budget, what changes would they make to the current spending on defense, the State Department, development assistance, and other items?

The Bush administration has resisted working with international institutions such as the United Nations, especially when U.S. preferences seem unlikely to prevail. How do Americans feel about working through the United Nations and generally pursuing multilateral, as opposed to unilateral, approaches to solving global problems?

Do Americans favor direct talks with Iran and North Korea? While respondents were being interviewed for this study, North Korea performed a nuclear test, and this event remained prominent in the news throughout the fielding period. Did this affect Americans’ attitudes about the idea of holding direct talks?

Polls have found that Americans complain about the level of partisanship in Congress. But when it comes to foreign policy do Americans want members of Congress who will energetically pursue the foreign policy views of their party, or those who will seek a more bipartisan approach?

To address these and other questions the Program on International Policy Attitudes, together with Knowledge Networks, conducted a poll of 1,058 American adults from October 6 to October 15, 2006. The poll has a margin of error of +/-3.1 to +/-3.6 percent, depending on the sample size for each question. The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

Key findings of the study were:

1. Dissatisfaction with Current U.S. Foreign Policy

In the upcoming Congressional race seven in ten Americans are looking for candidates who will pursue a new approach to U.S. foreign policy. Large majorities are dissatisfied with the position of the United States in the world today and say that current U.S. foreign policy has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks and decreased goodwill toward the United States. Overwhelming majorities consider it important for people in other countries to feel goodwill toward the United States. Most Americans think that the negative attitudes toward the United States expressed by publics in the Middle East reflect their dislike of U.S. policies, not their rejection of America’s values.....5

2. Redistributing Priorities and Spending for U.S. Foreign Policy

Americans favor shifting the U.S. government’s foreign policy priorities. A large majority feels that the Bush administration has put too much emphasis on military force. Majorities want their Congressional representatives to place a higher priority on reducing oil dependence, strengthening homeland security and a variety of soft power approaches (such as intelligence cooperation, improving intercultural understanding, and building goodwill through aid). Given the opportunity to redistribute the foreign policy budget, Americans increase spending on these approaches while cutting defense spending sharply.....7

3. Support for a Cooperative and Multilateral Approach

Americans prefer Congressional candidates who say that the United States should cooperate in multilateral efforts to solve international problems rather than either remaining the dominant world power or disengaging. Large majorities say the United States would best serve the national interest by thinking in terms of being a “good neighbor” and doing what is best for the world as a whole. Large majorities say that the United States should work through the United Nations and reject the argument that international institutions are too slow and bureaucratic. A majority favor entering into talks with North Korea and Iran without preconditions.13

4. Critique of Partisanship in Congress

Americans prefer that Democrats and Republicans seek common ground on international issues rather than fighting for their preferred view. A large majority believes that U.S. leaders should give greater weight to the views of the American people as a whole, rather than the views of their own party, when they develop foreign policy. A large majority believes that if the American public had more influence, Congress would be more cooperative and reject the view that Congressional partisanship mirrors public attitudes.....17

5. The Use of Fear

Americans feel that the U.S. government plays too much on the public’s fears in order to justify its foreign policies. Most believe that other Americans are more fearful when they think about terrorism than they are themselves.18

6. The Role of Congress and Retired Military

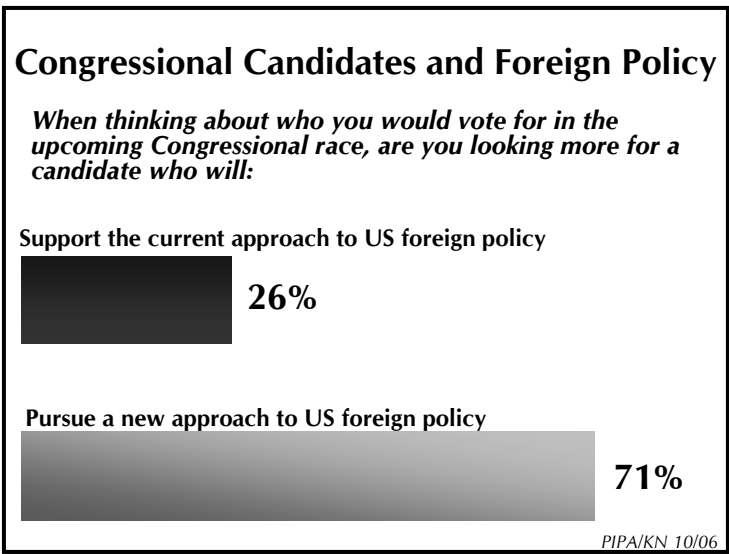
A modest majority feels that Congress should play a larger role in overseeing U.S foreign policy. Americans also feel that it is appropriate for retired military officers to publicly evaluate military policy.19

Findings

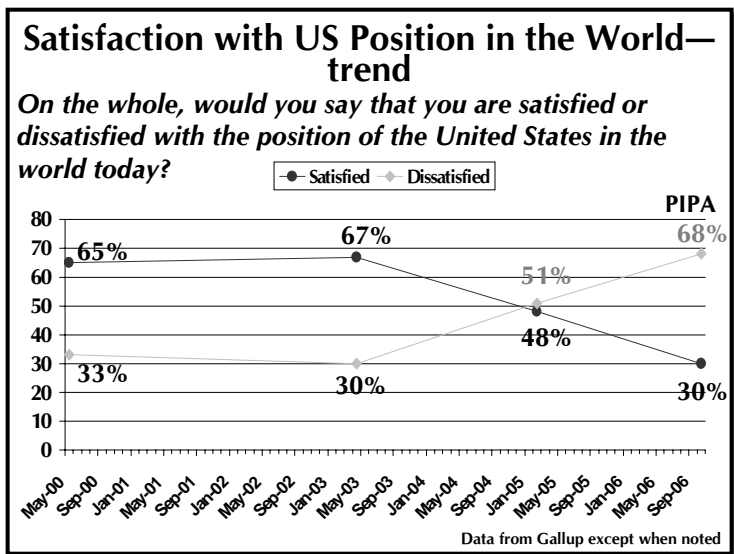
1. Dissatisfaction with Current U.S. Foreign Policy

In the upcoming Congressional race seven in ten Americans are looking for candidates who will pursue a new approach to U.S. foreign policy. Large majorities are dissatisfied with the position of the United States in the world today and say that current U.S. foreign policy has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks and decreased goodwill toward the United States. Overwhelming majorities consider it important for people in other countries to feel goodwill toward the United States. Most Americans think that the negative attitudes toward the United States expressed by publics in the Middle East reflect their dislike of U.S. policies, not their rejection of America’s values.

Americans express a clear desire for major change in the United States’ current approach toward foreign policy. Seven out of ten (71%) say that in the November mid-term elections, they are looking for candidates who will “pursue a new approach to U.S. foreign policy.” Only about one-fourth say they prefer candidates who support the current approach. However, this desire for change is much stronger among Democrats than among Republicans. An overwhelming 91 percent of Democrats say they want a candidate who will pursue a new approach while less than half (43%) of Republicans do. Most Independents (77%) also prefer candidates who will pursue new policies.



This desire for a new approach to foreign policy may reflect Americans’ concern about the U.S. position in the world. A strong majority (68%) shows dissatisfaction with the United States’ international position and this sentiment has been growing. In 2003, only a third (30%) of the American public expressed such a view to Gallup, a proportion that increased to half (51%) in 2005.



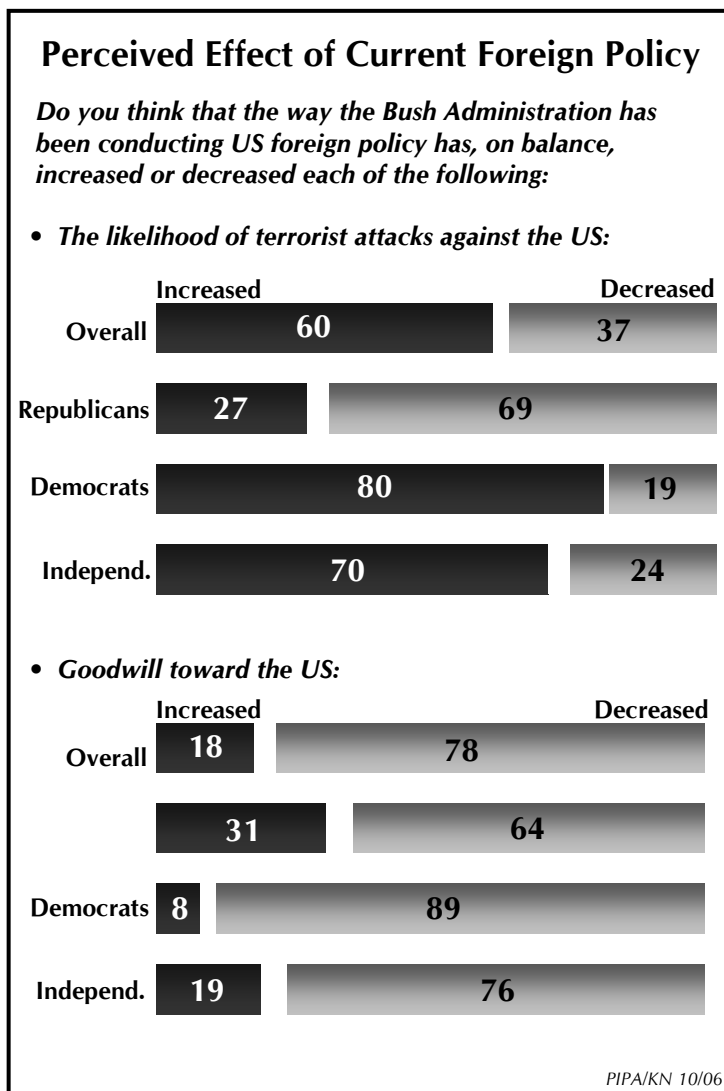
The Bush administration’s foreign policy receives quite negative ratings. Sixty percent think that the way the Bush administration has been conducting U.S. foreign policy has, on balance, increased “the likelihood of terrorist attacks” and 78 percent think that it has decreased “goodwill toward the U.S.” While Republicans differ from the majority on the question of terrorist attacks—only 27% think Bush administration policies have increased them—Republicans concur (64%) that the Bush policies have decreased goodwill toward the United States.

International goodwill is important to most Americans: nine out of ten (87%) say it is very (47%) or somewhat (40%) important “for people in other countries to feel goodwill toward the United States.”

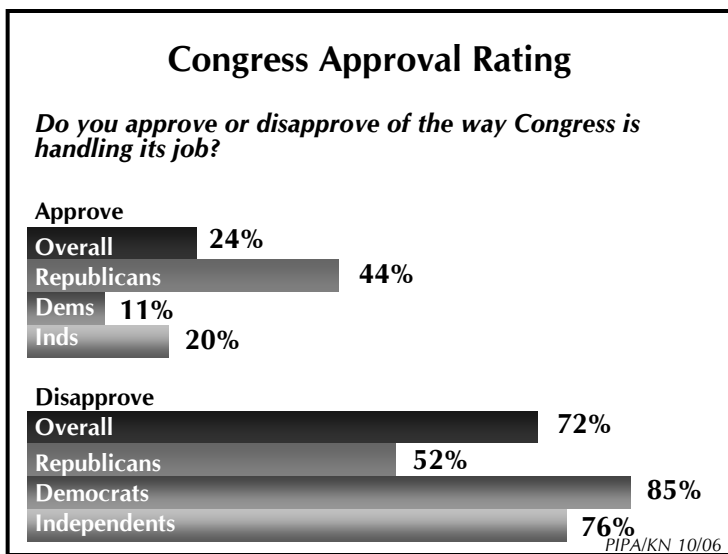
Americans see U.S. policies as contributing to negative attitudes toward the United States in the Middle East. Asked what contributes to these negative attitudes 62 percent attribute them to “dislike of American policies” in the region, compared to 34 percent who say “dislike of American values.”

Democrats are far more likely to cite policies (78%) than values (20%) while Republicans tend to choose values (59%) more than policies (38%). Independents, like Democrats, cite policies (67%) more than values (27%).

Consistent with these negative ratings of the Bush administration’s foreign policy, 61 percent overall say they generally disapprove of the way that President Bush is handling his job. However while Democrats disapprove by margins of nine to one (91% approve, 8% disapprove), a large majority of Republicans approve (80% approve, 19% disapprove). Independents disapprove by a large margin, 69 percent, while just 29 percent approve.



Seven out of ten (72%) disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job, while only a quarter (24%) approve. Especially interesting is that a modest majority of Republicans (52%) disapprove of the Republican led Congress (44% approve). Independents (76% disapprove, 20% approve) are nearly as negative as Democrats (85% disapprove, 11% approve).



Overall, more respondents say they would vote for the Democratic candidate (57%) in their district, if elections were held today, than for the Republican candidate (38%).

Voting preferences follow overwhelmingly partisan lines, with Independents leaning toward Democratic candidates. Ninety-seven percent of Democrats and 89 percent of Republicans say they would vote for their party’s candidate. Slightly more than half (53%) of Independents say they would vote for the Democratic candidate in their district if the election were held today, while about a third (29%) say they would vote for the Republican.

2. Redistributing Priorities and Spending for U.S. Foreign Policy

Americans favor shifting the U.S. government’s foreign policy priorities. A large majority feels that the Bush administration has put too much emphasis on military force. Majorities want their Congressional representatives to place a higher priority on reducing oil dependence, strengthening homeland security and a variety of soft power approaches (such as intelligence cooperation, improving intercultural understanding, and building goodwill through aid). Given the opportunity to redistribute the foreign policy budget, Americans increase spending on these approaches while cutting defense spending sharply.

The poll finds that a majority of Americans favors a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy away from methods that emphasize military force or hard power. Asked about the Bush administration’s “dealings with foreign countries and its handling of international problems,” 65 percent say that it has been “too quick to get American military forces involved” (up from 59 percent when the Pew Research Center asked this question in July 2004) while 32 percent say that the administration “tries hard enough to reach diplomatic solutions.”

Similarly, 67 percent agree with the idea that “In the effort to fight terrorism [the Bush administration] should put more emphasis on diplomatic and economic methods” (up from 58 percent in a September 2003 PIPA poll). This is a majority view among Republicans (52%, up from 41% in 2003) as well as Democrats (77%) and Independents (74%). Twenty-eight percent feel that the administration should “put more emphasis on military methods.”

Respondents were also presented a list of 17 approaches for improving U.S. and global security and asked whether they would like to see their member of Congress place more or less emphasis on each approach. The highest level of support (84%) is for placing higher priority on “reducing dependence

on oil.” Putting greater emphasis on homeland security by increasing port security (83%) and airport security (64%) also receives very high levels of support.

Most of the approaches that majorities want to emphasize fall within the category of soft power. Expanding security cooperation with other countries receives especially high levels of support, with very large majorities favoring increased emphasis on:

- Coordinating with the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of other countries to track and capture members of terrorist groups (83%)
- Working through the U. N. to strengthen international laws against terrorism and make sure U.N. members cooperate in enforcing them (71%)
- Programs to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons by securing nuclear materials in countries of the former Soviet Union (68%)

Majorities also want to place greater emphasis on efforts to address humanitarian problems and promote economic development:

- Fighting the global spread of HIV/AIDS (68%)
- Programs to stabilize countries at risk of conflict by helping them develop economically (58%)
- Building goodwill toward the U.S. by providing food and medical assistance to people in poor countries (57%).

Also popular were public diplomacy programs to promote international understanding:

- Programs to promote dialogue and intercultural understanding between the United States and the Muslim world (59%)
- Programs to increase other countries’ understanding of U.S. policies and the American people (58%).

All of the methods that receive less than 50 percent support fall in the general category of hard power.

- Building a national missile defense system (49%)
- Building new types of naval destroyers (40%)
- Rough interrogation techniques to inflict pain on detainees who might have useful information about terrorist groups (37%)
- Helping dissident groups to try to overthrow the government of Iran (28%)
- Building new nuclear weapons (25%)

Adjusting the Balance of Foreign Policy Methods

Q24. STATEMENT: As you know there is much discussion about how much priority the US government should give to various approaches to improving US and global security. Here is a list of some approaches that the US government is trying, at least to some extent. For each one please indicate if you would like your member of Congress to get the US government to increase or decrease the priority it places on each approach. Please answer on a scale of +5 to -5, with +5 meaning that you think it should be given a much higher priority than it has now, -5 meaning that it should be given a much lower priority or not done at all, and 0 meaning that it should be given the same priority it has now.

	-1 to -5	0	+1 to +5
Working to reduce US dependence on oil	5	9	84
Increasing port security	4	11	83
Coordinating with the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of other countries to track and capture members of terrorist groups	4	10	83
Working through the UN to strengthen international laws against terrorism and make sure UN members cooperate in enforcing them	13	14	71
Fighting the global spread of HIV/AIDS	11	20	68
Programs to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons by securing nuclear materials in countries of the former Soviet Union	10	17	68
Increasing airport security	10	24	64
Programs to promote dialogue and intercultural understanding between the US and the Muslim world	18	19	59
Programs to stabilize countries at risk of conflict by helping them develop economically	18	21	58
Programs to increase other countries' understanding of US policies and the American people	17	22	58
Building goodwill toward the US by providing food and medical assistance to people in poor countries	14	27	57
Pressuring both Israel and the Palestinians to resolve their conflict	22	25	50
Building a national missile defense system	23	25	49
Building new types of naval destroyers	25	32	40
Rough interrogation techniques to inflict pain on detainees who might have useful information about terrorist groups	34	24	37
Helping dissident groups to try to overthrow the government of Iran	39	28	28
Building new nuclear weapons	43	29	25

Foreign Policy Budget Exercise

When respondents are given a list of areas to prioritize, as in the previous series of questions, they are free to propose increases in all areas and, indeed, a majority favors placing greater emphasis on the majority of items. To see how Americans would respond in the context of a zero-sum framework—and force them to deal with the concrete trade-offs involved in setting actual spending levels—respondents were presented the largest 15 items of the actual foreign policy budget and given the opportunity to adjust it. *

Respondents were told:

As you may know, every year Congress passes a budget, part of which includes spending for US foreign policy, defense, and security. We would like to know how you think this part of the budget should be distributed. For this exercise, this part of the budget is divided into 15 areas. Please imagine that you have \$900 of your tax money to divide among these 16 areas. This is about how much of the average taxpayer's money goes to these 15 areas as a whole. For each area, you'll see how much of your \$900 goes to each of these areas in the current year's budget. Then you can indicate how many of your dollars you'd like to see go to that area next year.

They were then presented a budget with 15 items and given the opportunity to redistribute the spending as they saw fit. If the total budget exceeded \$900 they were then asked to make sufficient cuts to bring it down to \$900.

The chart below shows the mean results of the exercise and the percentages that want to increase, reduce, or maintain the current spending levels, with the amounts translated back into their equivalent in terms of the actual budget. These totals represent how the overall budget would be changed if all of the preferred budgets of this sample were combined.

By far the most dramatic change is in defense spending. A large majority (76%) want deep cuts in funding for the military. This includes a majority of Republicans (61%), as well as Democrats (85%) and Independents (81%). On average, respondents cut defense spending the equivalent of \$198.1 billion or 36 percent.

The only other area to be cut on average is supplemental spending for military operations in Iraq, which is reduced the equivalent of \$17.6 billion, or 26 percent.

These cuts free up substantial amounts for other areas. Six areas are increased by 50 percent or more of the respondents. These include one area related to homeland security—preparedness for disasters and outbreaks of disease in the United States—which has a net increase of \$39.8 billion. Energy conservation and developing renewable energy resources also have a net increase of 38.8 billion.

Three areas that would advance soft power get substantial net increases: humanitarian and disaster assistance (\$25.4 billion), initiatives to control the global spread of HIV/AIDS (\$19 billion), and helping poor countries develop their economies (\$17.5 billion).

* Note: The foreign policy budget exercise was presented to respondents at the very end of the questionnaire. Thus the information respondents received about the distribution of the budget did not affect their responses to any other questions.

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<p>STATEMENT: As you may know, every year Congress passes a budget, part of which includes spending for US foreign policy, defense, and security. We would like to know how you think this part of the budget should be distributed. For this exercise, this part of the budget is divided into 15 areas. Please imagine that you have \$900 of your tax money to divide among these 16 areas. This is about how much of the average taxpayer's money goes to these 15 areas as a whole. For each area, you'll see how much of your \$900 goes to each of these areas in the current year's budget. Then you can indicate how many of your dollars you'd like to see go to that area next year. You'll be able to monitor how much of the \$900 you have left as you make decisions by scrolling down to the bottom of the page.</p>				
	Change (\$)	2006 Appropriations (billions)	Mean Preferences (billions)	% who increased
Preparedness for disasters and outbreaks of disease in the US	+\$39.76	\$3.00	\$42.76	73
Energy: conservation - developing renewable energy resources	+\$38.77	\$2.80	\$41.57	72
Humanitarian and disaster assistance	+\$25.43	\$1.40	\$26.83	62
Initiatives to control the global spread of HIV/AIDS	+\$19.01	\$2.00	\$21.01	55
Helping poor countries develop their economies	+\$17.46	\$7.30	\$24.76	50
Programs to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, such as helping other countries secure nuclear materials	+\$15.50	\$0.90	\$16.40	64
Homeland Security	+\$11.60	\$33.30	\$44.90	45
UN and UN Peacekeeping	+\$11.53	\$2.50	\$14.03	48
State Department: including diplomacy, policy development, cultural exchanges	+\$9.33	\$8.20	\$17.53	33
Military aid to foreign countries	+\$6.42	\$5.30	\$11.72	28
Intelligence Costs	+\$6.38	\$44.00	\$50.38	43
Extra cost for Afghanistan	+\$4.06	\$10.41	\$14.47	31
Reconstruction in Iraq	+\$1.74	\$7.00	\$8.74	27
Extra costs for Iraq military operation	-\$17.56	\$66.69	\$49.13	21
Defense spending (does not include extra costs for operation in Iraq and Afghanistan)	-\$198.09	\$555.30	\$357.21	8

The primary source for the figures presented was the Office of Management and Budget's functional breakdown of discretionary budget appropriations for fiscal 2006 (available at its website). The amounts for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan were derived from Congressional Research Service reports, notably: "FY 2006 Supplemental Appropriations (RL33298) and "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and Enhanced Base Security Since 9/11" (RL33110). The amount for homeland security came from the Department of Homeland Security's budget. The amount for intelligence came from a public statement made on Oct. 31, 2005, by the deputy director for national intelligence collection, Mary Margaret Graham. Respondents were allowed to distribute a total of \$900, which represents approximately how much an average taxpaying household would pay for all of the items listed.

Programs to help prevent the spread of nuclear weapons also receive a substantial net increase of \$15.5 billion.

Two areas are increased by less than 50 percent of respondents, but by more than the number that propose cuts, producing a substantial net increase. These are the Department of Homeland Security, which is increased an average of \$11.6 billion, and United Nations and U.N. peacekeeping, which is increased \$11.5 billion.

Spending for the State Department and intelligence agencies is increased and cut by approximately equal numbers of respondents, however, the increases are far greater than the cuts resulting in a large net increase of \$9.3 billion for the State Department and \$6.4 billion for intelligence.

Although majorities support reductions in funding for reconstruction in Iraq (55% favor cuts) and military aid to foreign countries (51% favor cuts), their preferences are outweighed by the large increases favored by a minority of respondents (27 % and 28%, respectively). Thus reconstruction in Iraq ends up with a modest increase of \$1.7 billion and military aid with a substantial addition of \$6.4 billion.

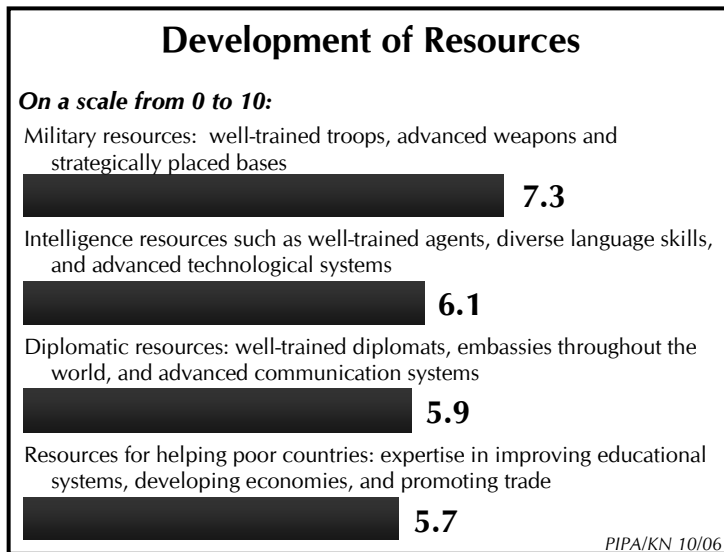
Extras costs for Afghanistan also have a modest net increase of \$4.1 billion, though more favor cuts (45%) than increases (31%).

Perceptions of the Level of Development of Foreign Policy Resources

Just as they prefer to shift funds from defense to other spending categories, Americans believe that military programs are more developed than other means of addressing international challenges.

Respondents were asked to assess the level of development of four different types of resources used by the U.S. government to deal with international problems. “Military resources, such as well-trained troops, advanced weapons and strategically placed bases,” are seen as the best developed, with a rating of 7.3 on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not well developed at all and 10 means very well developed.

This judgment is consistent with the budget exercise where most respondents (76%) shifted substantial funds away from the military in favor of other areas.



Two areas formed a middle tier: “intelligence resources, such as well-trained agents, diverse language skills, and advanced technological systems,” given a mean rating of 6.1. and “diplomatic resources, such as well-trained diplomats, embassies throughout the world, and advanced communication systems,” given a mean rating of 5.9.

The budget exercise results in substantial net increases in spending on intelligence and the State Department, though the number of respondents favoring cuts is approximately the same as the number favoring increases.

The area seen as having the lowest level of development is “resources for helping poor countries, such as expertise in improving educational systems, developing economies, and promoting trade,” which receives a mean assessment of 5.7.

In the budget exercise, some of the largest increases go to humanitarian and disaster assistance, initiatives to control the global spread of HIV/AIDS, and helping poor countries develop their economies. In all of these cases, 50 percent or more of respondents favor increases.

Preferred Level of Military Spending Relative to Potential Enemies

Another finding consistent with the general orientation to deemphasize military spending is that Americans propose a level of spending, relative to the spending of potential enemies, which is much lower than the actual level.

Respondents were told:

Now please think about how much the U.S. should spend on defense as compared to its potential enemies. For discussion's sake, let's include as potential enemies Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria. Here are some possible levels that have been suggested for U.S. spending. Please tell me which one makes the most sense to you.

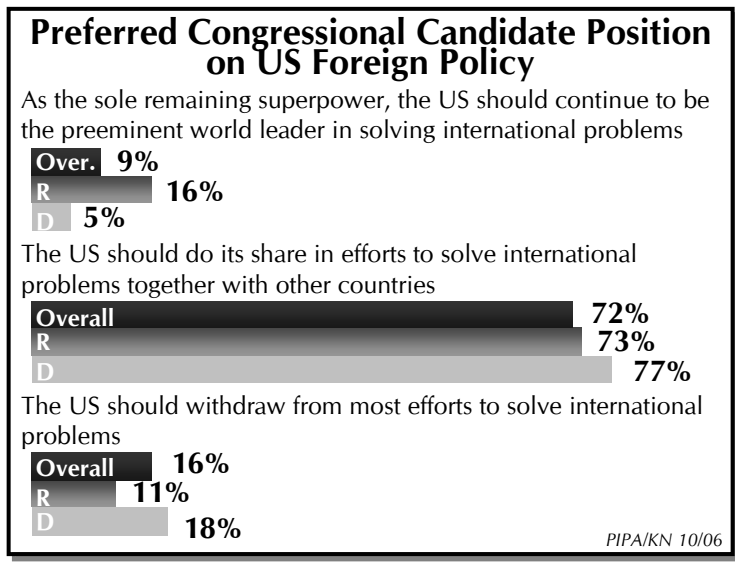
The most common view, endorsed by 33 percent, is that the United States should spend “a bit more than its most powerful potential enemy.” Nearly as many (31%) say that the United States should spend “about as much as all of its potential enemies combined.” Thus a majority of 64 percent endorse the view that the United States should spend no more than its potential enemies combined (including 59% of Republicans, 69% of Democrats, and 63% of Independents). Smaller numbers endorse spending twice as much as all enemies combined (16%), or three times this amount (10%).

In fact, the United States spends more than three times as much as all of its potential enemies combined, though we should not assume that the most Americans are aware of this. According to *The Military Balance, 2005-2006* (International Institute for Strategic Studies) the most recently available defense spending (including off-budget spending) of the six countries named in the poll question totaled \$106 billion as compared to U.S. spending of \$465 billion in outlays for 2005.

3. Support for a Cooperative and Multilateral Approach

Americans prefer Congressional candidates who say that the United States should cooperate in multilateral efforts to solve international problems rather than either remaining the dominant world power or disengaging. Large majorities say the United States would best serve the national interest by thinking in terms of being a “good neighbor” and doing what is best for the world as a whole. Large majorities say that the United States should work through the United Nations and reject the argument that international institutions are too slow and bureaucratic. A majority favor entering into talks with North Korea and Iran without preconditions.

Americans prefer Congressional candidates who say that the United States should cooperate in multilateral efforts to solve international problems rather than being the dominant world power or disengaging from the world. Asked to “imagine that you heard three Congressional candidates make the following statements” and then choose the one they would be most likely to support, seventy-two percent prefer the candidate who said, “the United States should do its share in efforts to solve international problems together with other countries.” Only 9 percent prefer the candidate who said, “as the sole remaining superpower, the United States should continue to be the preeminent world leader in solving international problems.” Sixteen percent prefer the candidate who said, “The United States should withdraw from most efforts to solve international problems.” These views are highly bipartisan. Support for a candidate with a cooperative approach is endorsed by 72 percent of Republicans, 77 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of independents.

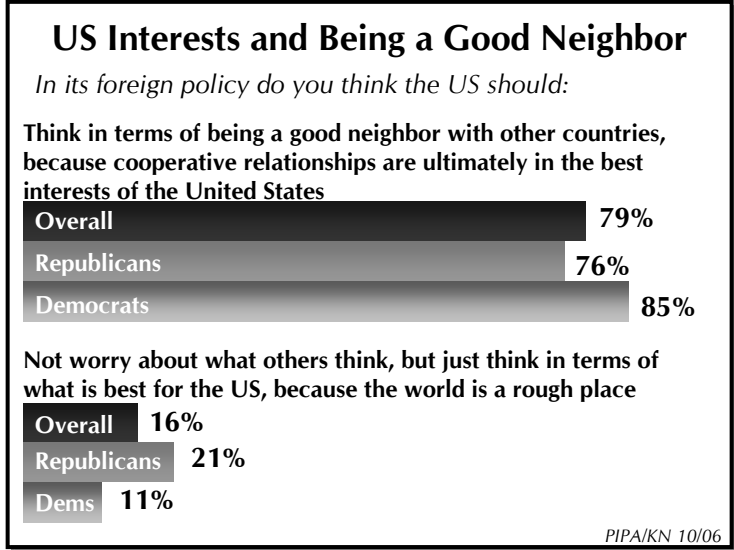


Americans perceive that the primary lesson of the September 11th attacks is that the United States needs to cooperate more with other countries. Asked, “What do you think is the more important lesson of September 11th?” and offered two options: “The United States needs to work more closely with other countries to fight terrorism,” or “the United States needs to act on its own more to fight terrorism,” a very large majority—72 percent—says the need to work more closely with other countries is the more important lesson. Twenty-four percent say the lesson is that the United States needs to act more on its own.

A nearly unanimous 94 percent say it is important “for the struggle against terrorism to be seen by the world as an effort of many countries working together, not just a U.S. effort.” Seventy-three percent call this very important.

Offered a classic argument favoring the unilateral approach, a majority rejects it. A long-used trend question puts it this way: “Since the United States is the most powerful nation in the world, we should go our own way in international matters, not worrying too much about whether other countries agree with us or not.” Seventy-three percent disagree, while only 25 percent agreed with the statement (only 36 percent of Republicans). This is in line with how Americans have replied to this question for decades: typically the percentage of those disagreeing has numbered in the high or low sixties.

An overwhelming majority prefers the idea that acting as a cooperative “good neighbor” ultimately serves U.S. interests more than acting without being concerned about what others think. Seventy-nine percent say “the United States should think in terms of being a good neighbor with other countries, because cooperative relationships are ultimately in the best interests of the United States,” while only 16 percent say the United States “should not worry about what others think, but just think in terms of what is best for the U.S., because the world is a rough place.” There is little difference between the parties on this question.



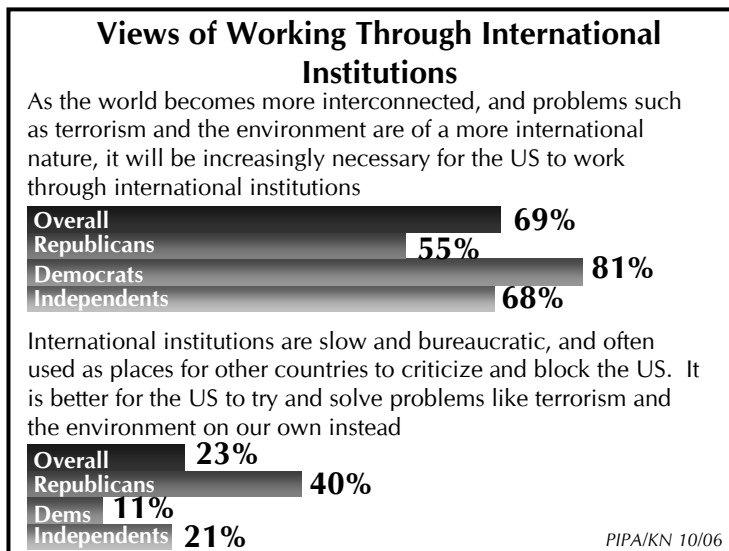
The National Interest and the Global Interest

When Americans think about what would be best for U.S. foreign policy, a majority of Americans tend to view the United States as a constituent part of a larger whole. Respondents were offered two principles and asked which they thought was the more important one. Only 16 percent endorse the view that “the United States should use its power to make the world be the way that best serves U.S. interests and values.” Seventy-nine percent opt for the view that “the U.S. should coordinate its power together with other countries according to shared ideas of what is best for the world as a whole.”

Within this context, large majorities say the United States should be willing to make some sacrifices for the collective good. Seventy-five percent say that “sometimes the U.S. should be willing to make some sacrifices if this will help the world as a whole,” while only 22 percent say the United States should not make such sacrifices.

Support for Working through Multilateral Institutions and the United Nations

The majority’s willingness to cooperate extends to the sometimes onerous process of working with other countries in the United Nations. Sixty-one percent agree with the statement: “When dealing with international problems, the U.S. should be more willing to make decisions within the United Nations even if this means that the United States will sometimes have to go along with a policy that is not its first choice” (35% disagree). Among Republicans, however, 41 percent



agree while 56 percent disagree . Most Independents (62%) and Democrats (77%) agree.

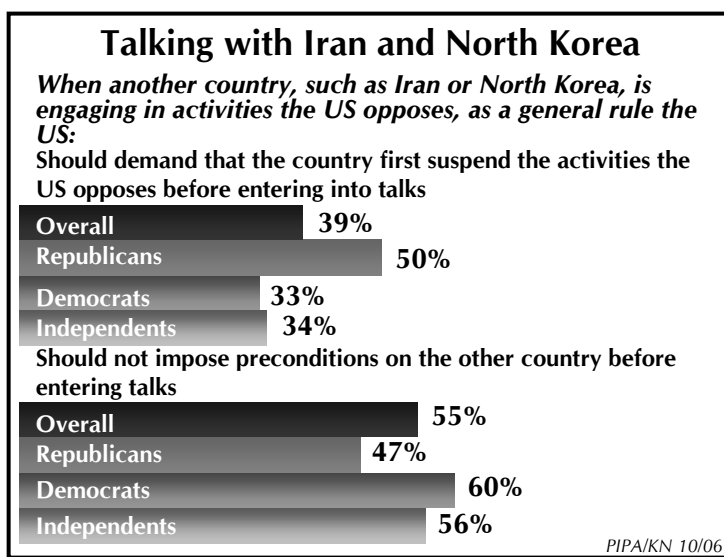
The counterargument that international institutions are too bureaucratic and difficult to work with does not overcome most Americans’ preference for cooperation. Respondents were offered two arguments: First, “International institutions are slow and bureaucratic and often used as places for other countries to criticize and block the U.S. It is better for the U.S. to try and solve problems like terrorism and the environment on our own instead.” And, second, “As the world becomes more interconnected, and problems such as terrorism and the environment are of a more international nature, it will be increasingly necessary for the U.S. to work through international institutions.” The first, favoring unilateral action, is chosen by only 23 percent (40% of Republicans). The second, which supports working with international institutions, is preferred by sixty-nine percent (55% of Republicans).

Similarly, two in three (68%) agree with the statement, “For the U.S. to move away from its role as world policeman and reduce the burden of its large defense budget, the U.S. should invest in efforts to strengthen the U.N.’s ability to deal with potential conflicts in the world.” Fifty-three percent of Republicans also agree with this.

A modest majority wants their member of Congress to vote in favor of paying U.S. dues for U.N. peacekeeping. Fifty-one percent say they favor this while 42 percent oppose it. Republicans (44% favor, 49% opposed) are divided while independents (43% to 49%) lean against it. Democrats strongly favor paying U.N. dues (60% to 32%). The slimness of this majority support may be related to concerns about how much money is owed to the United Nations. In the budget exercise, respondents saw the actual proportion of expenditures on the U.N. and U.N. peacekeeping compared to a range of other foreign policy items. With this information, 75 percent wanted the United States to pay its U.N. dues. Of this percentage, 48 percent wanted to increase the U.S. contribution to the U.N. (27% wanted it left unchanged). Sixty-one percent of Republicans wanted the United States to pay U.N. dues, including 28 percent who wanted to pay more.

Engaging in Talks with North Korea and Iran

A modest majority favors the idea of entering into talks with North Korea and Iran without preconditions. Respondents were asked whether “when another country, such as Iran or North Korea, is engaging in activities the U.S. opposes” the United States should as a general rule either “demand that the country first suspend the activities the U.S. opposes before entering into talks,” or “not impose preconditions on the other country before entering into talks.” Fifty-five percent say the United States should be willing to enter talks without preconditions, while 39 percent say the United States should demand a change in the other country’s behavior as a condition for talks.

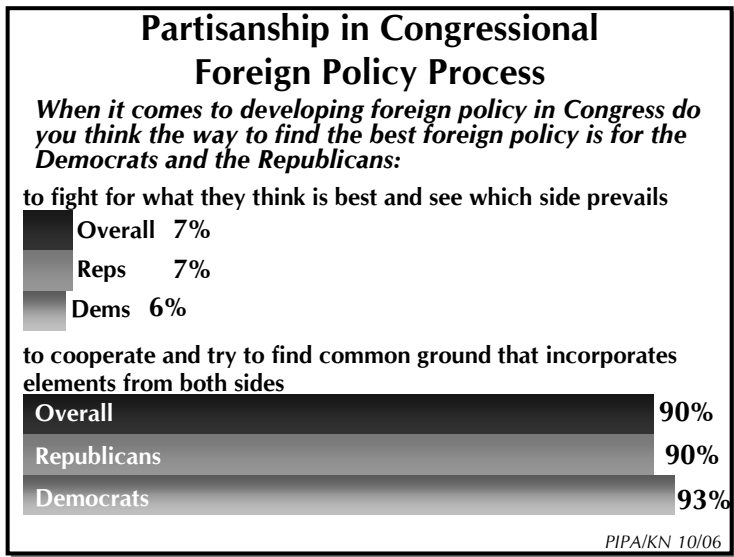


The fielding period for this poll began on Oct. 6 and continued until Oct. 15. North Korea declared that it had tested a nuclear device on Oct. 9. Examining responses before and after the test there was a modest downward movement in support for entering into talks, but a majority continued to favor them even immediately after the test. Thus the preference for talks remains, even when put under pressure by North Korean actions.

4. Critique of Partisanship in Congress

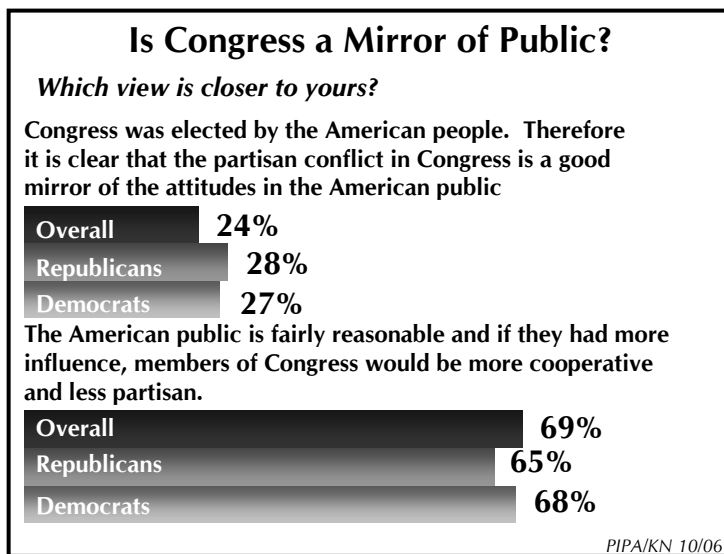
Americans prefer that Democrats and Republicans seek common ground on international issues rather than fighting for their preferred view. A large majority believes that U.S. leaders should give greater weight to the views of the American people as a whole, rather than the views of their own party, when they develop foreign policy. A large majority believes that if the American public had more influence, Congress would be more cooperative and reject the view that Congressional partisanship mirrors public attitudes.

When it comes to formulating foreign policy, most Americans believe that Congress should reject partisanship. Overwhelming majorities from both parties (90%) think that Congress should “cooperate and try to find common ground that incorporates elements from both sides.” Only a small minority (7%) thinks the two parties should “fight for what they think is best and see which side prevails. Nine out of ten Republicans (90%) and Democrats (93%) want lawmakers to find common ground as do eight out of ten Independents (82%).”



Americans believe that the views of the country as a whole, rather than those of a particular party, should have the most influence on international policy. Seven out of ten (71%) say the views of the majority of the American people should prevail, including three out of four Democrats (76%), six out of ten Republicans (59%) and eight out of ten Independents (80%). More Republicans (38%) than Democrats (20%) say they want the views of a majority of their own party to have the most influence.

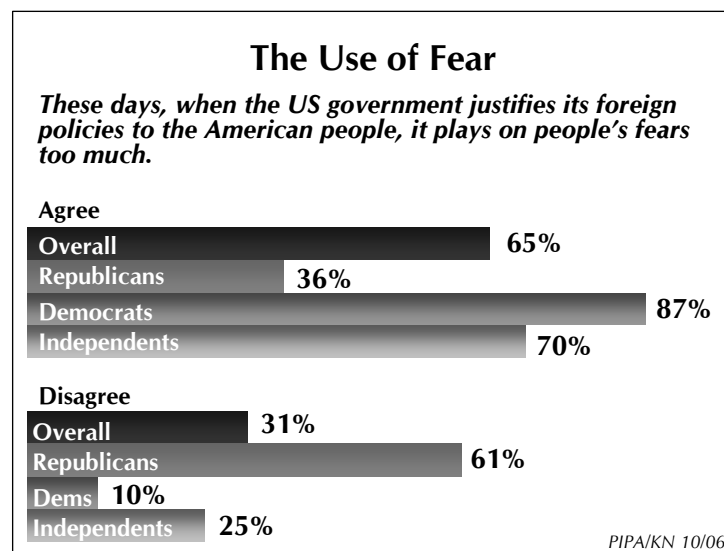
Most members of both parties believe that the American public is less partisan than Congress. Sixty-nine percent agree with the statement that “the American public is fairly reasonable and if they had more influence, members of Congress would be more cooperative.” Only a quarter (25%) agrees that “the partisan conflict in Congress is a good mirror of the attitudes of the American public.” There are only minor differences between the parties on this question.



5. The Use of Fear

Americans feel that the U.S. government plays too much on the public’s fears in order to justify its foreign policies. Most believe that other Americans are more fearful when they think about terrorism than they are themselves.

A majority of Americans think that the government is playing on people’s fears to justify its foreign policies, though Republicans differ with Democrats on this issue. Overall, sixty-five percent agree with the statement, “When the U.S. government justifies its foreign policies to the American people, it plays on people’s fears too much.” While an overwhelming majority of Democrats (87%) and a strong majority of Independents (70%) agree with this, only a minority of Republicans (36%) do. Thirty-one percent of respondents say they disagree, including a majority of Republicans (61%), a quarter of Independents (25%) and a tenth of Democrats (10%).

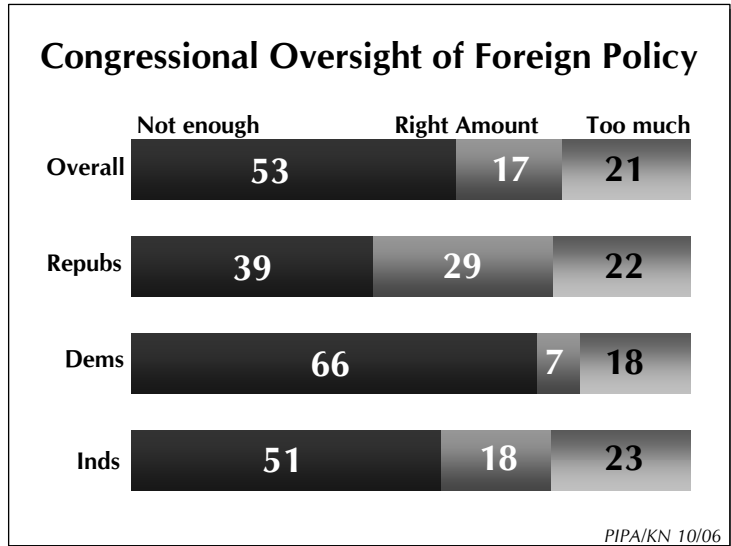


Most Americans, regardless of party affiliation, believe that they are less fearful than most other Americans. Three out of four (74%) say “average Americans” are more fearful than they are; only one out of five (19%) think average Americans are less fearful than they are.

6. The Role of Congress and Retired Military

A modest majority of Americans feels that Congress should play a larger role in supervising the conduct of foreign affairs. Asked whether Congress is doing too much, not enough or the right amount in overseeing U.S. foreign policy 53 percent choose not enough, while 21 percent say it is doing too much and 17 percent say it is doing the right amount.

Although the current Congress is Republican, support for a stronger Congressional role is greatest among Democrats (66%) and Independents (51%). Among Republicans, four in ten say Congress is not doing enough (39%), while three in ten (29%) say lawmakers are doing the right amount and about a fifth (22%) say too much.



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Americans also support the idea that retired military officers should play a public role in developing U.S. military policy. A majority (66%) thinks that retired military officers can make “a valuable contribution to the public discussion” when they evaluate military policies. But 31 percent say, “It is inappropriate for retired military officers to use the prestige of their military service to offer critiques of government policy.” Republicans, however, are divided on this question.

Seven in ten (69%) say they would give the opinions of retired officers “some weight” (50%) or “a lot of weight.” (19%). Interestingly, Republicans are less apt to give the views of retired officers weight (60%) than Democrats (78%).

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