



Americans Assess US International Strategy

-A WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll-

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Fielded by Knowledge Networks

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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.

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The poll was developed in conjunction with the conference "Leveraging US Strength in an Uncertain World," held by the Stanley Foundation, December 7, 2006.

INTRODUCTION

The dramatic Republican loss of the House and Senate has been widely interpreted as a critique of the Bush administration's international strategy, leading to the departure of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and UN Ambassador John Bolton. However elections are a blunt instrument, raising questions about what Americans do not like about US international strategy.

Is it simply that Americans are frustrated about the situation in Iraq, or do Americans differ with other aspects of US strategy? What international problems would they emphasize? Which policies would they change?

The Bush administration came into office with an apparent determination to be less constrained than previous administrations when it comes to using military force. Do Americans believe that there has been a change in the world's perception of US readiness to use military power? If so, do they think this has helped or hurt US security?

What do Americans think has been the effect of the United States' invasion of Iraq? In 2003, PIPA found a large majority assumed that the war in Iraq decreased the likelihood that Iran and other problem countries would try to acquire weapons of mass destruction. What do they think now?

How do Americans feel about how the United States is dealing with Iran? The Iranian government claims to be enriching uranium solely for its nuclear energy program, while others in the international community, including the United States and the United Nations Security Council, suspect that Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons. The Bush administration has resisted entering into talks with Iran until it first stops enriching uranium. Do Americans believe this is the best approach? Do Americans think that threats of air strikes will dissuade Iran from enriching uranium? Do they see air strikes as a viable military option? Do Americans think that the United States should be willing to negotiate a compromise with Iran?

How do Americans feel about how the United States is dealing with Iraq? The Iraq Study Group has released its report calling for engaging Iran and Syria, holding an international conference and gradually drawing down US forces. Is American public opinion in line with these proposals?

How do Americans feel about how the United States is dealing with North Korea? Do Americans feel that the United States should be willing to offer security guarantees or provide aid if North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons?

To address these and other questions WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted a poll with a nationwide sample of 1,326 Americans, Nov. 21-29. It was developed in conjunction with the conference, "Leveraging U.S. Strength in an Uncertain World", to be held by the Stanley Foundation Dec. 7 at the Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. The poll was designed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland. It has a margin of error +/- 2.7-3.9 %, depending on whether the question was asked to the whole sample or a half sample, and 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. Effect of International Perceptions of Threat from US

A large majority believes that over the last few years, countries around the world have grown more afraid that the United States will use force against them. Majorities see this as bad for US security because it makes foreign governments more likely to pursue policies such as the development of WMD. They reject the view that this growing fear of the United States enhances US security because it makes countries more compliant. While in 2003 a large majority believed that the US invasion of Iraq decreased the likelihood that Iran would pursue nuclear weapons, a large majority now believes that the invasion has increased this possibility. A very large majority rejects the view that the United States is so strong it does not need to be concerned about maintaining goodwill abroad.....6

2. Dealing with Problem Countries and Terrorist Groups

A large majority of Americans do not think the United States should generally announce the goal of regime change for problem countries. A large majority also rejects the policy of isolating such countries and believes the United States should be willing to talk with them. However, the public is divided on whether the United States should actively offer reassurances to such countries that it will not use force against them. A large majority rejects the view that the problem of terrorist groups can only be dealt with by destroying them, believes that pursuing such an approach can backfire by producing more hostility and more terrorists, and favors an approach that also addresses the sources of hostility. A large majority also rejects the idea that the struggle against terrorism should take precedence over all other foreign policy goals.9

3. Dealing with Iran

A large majority opposes dealing with Iran primarily through implied threats of military force preferring instead to try to build better relations. Americans do not think that threatening Iran with air strikes would cause Iran to stop enriching uranium. Nor do they believe that such strikes could destroy Iran’s uranium enrichment program. A bare plurality favors talking to Iran without preconditions. However, the public is divided about whether the United States should promise not to use military force against Iran if it agrees to stop enrichment or whether the United States should leave military options open. A majority of Americans would be willing to allow Iran to enrich uranium under the following conditions: Iran agrees to limit its uranium enrichment programs to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy and it allows full access to its nuclear facilities by UN inspectors to ensure that such limits are being respected.....11

4. Dealing with Iraq

To stabilize Iraq, very large majorities favor the idea of engaging in talks with Iran and Syria and holding an international conference, which suggests that the American public is receptive to some of the key proposals of the Iraq Study Group. A majority of Americans believe the United States should establish a timeline for the withdrawal of US troops, but opinions vary about the period of time needed (six months to two years). Most Americans believe (correctly) that a majority of Iraqis want the United States to pull its forces out of the country within a year and that the US government should comply with their wishes. A smaller majority thinks the United States should withdraw its troops within a year even if the Iraqi government asks them to stay. A large majority opposes permanent US bases in Iraq and assumes (correctly) that the Iraqi people also oppose such a long-term presence.13

5. *Dealing With North Korea*

A very large majority of Americans think that the United States should be willing to enter into a nonaggression pact and provide more aid to North Korea if it agrees to eliminate its nuclear weapons..... 16

6. *Nuclear Proliferation*

An overwhelming majority endorses US participation in the NPT treaty even when informed that this commits the US to seek to eliminate its nuclear weapons together with other nuclear weapon states. A large majority favors a nuclear free zone in the Middle East that includes Israel, as well as the broader goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons..... 17

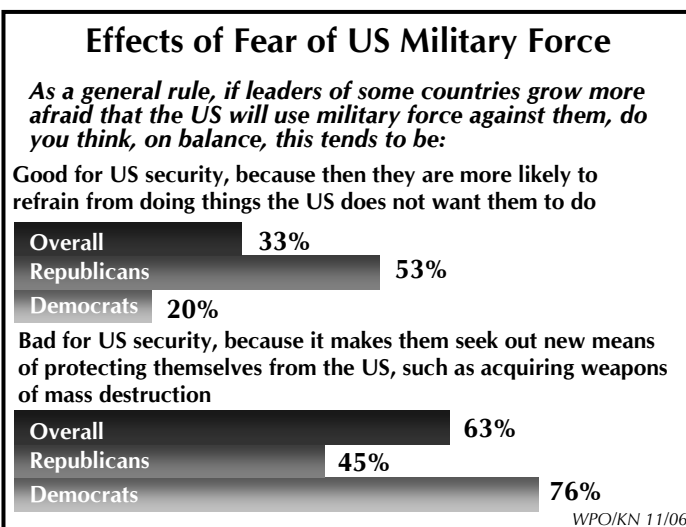
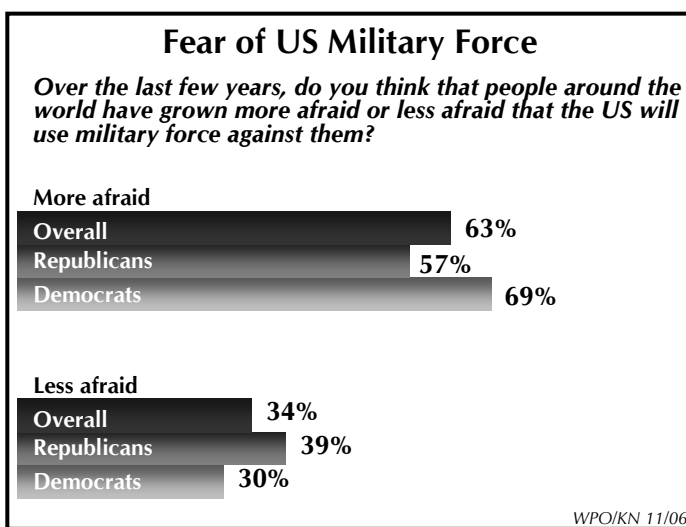
FINDINGS

1. Effect of International Perceptions of Threat from US

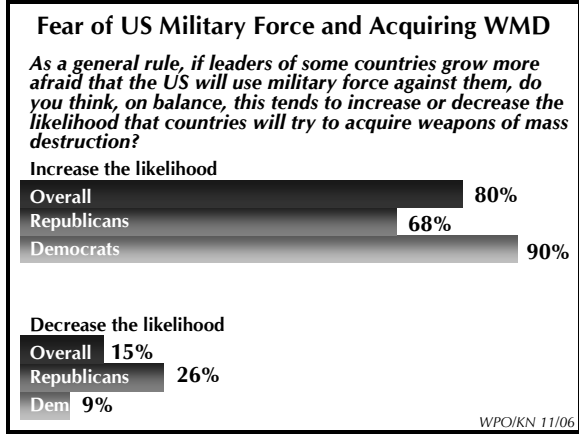
A large majority believes that over the last few years, countries around the world have grown more afraid that the United States will use force against them. Majorities see this as bad for US security because it makes foreign governments more likely to pursue policies such as the development of WMD. They reject the view that this growing fear of the United States enhances US security because it makes countries more compliant. While in 2003 a large majority believed that the US invasion of Iraq decreased the likelihood that Iran would pursue nuclear weapons, a large majority now believes that the invasion has increased this possibility. A very large majority rejects the view that the United States is so strong it does not need to be concerned about maintaining goodwill abroad.

A large majority believes that countries around the world have grown more afraid in recent years that the United States will use force against them. Sixty-three percent said this, while only 34 percent said there was less fear that the US would use military force. This assessment was bipartisan: 69 percent of Democrats agreed with 57 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of independents.

A majority views this growing fear of US military power as negative for US security, even when presented the argument, sometimes made in policy circles, that fearing American military power will make other countries more responsive to US preferences. Respondents were asked whether “as a general rule, if leaders of some countries grow more afraid that the US will use military force against them,” on balance, this tends to be good for US security because such leaders are “more likely to refrain from doing things the US does not want them to do”, or bad for US security “because it makes them seek out new means of protecting themselves from the US, such as acquiring weapons of mass destruction.” By a two-to-one margin (63% to 33%), a majority thought that rising fear of US force was bad for US security. Republicans differed, however, with 53 percent saying such fear was good and 45 percent saying it was bad. Among Democrats, 76 percent thought this growing fear was bad for US security (independents: 66%).



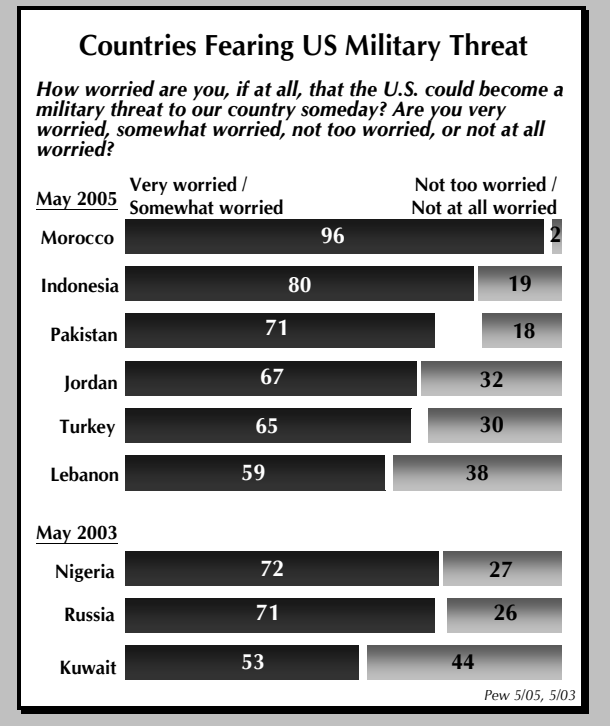
When asked, in a later question, “if leaders of some countries grow more afraid that the US will use military force against them, this tends to increase or decrease the likelihood that countries will try to acquire weapons of mass destruction,” a very large 80 percent, including 68 percent of Republicans, said it increased the likelihood foreign governments would pursue WMD.



Americans do not feel that superior strength insulates the United States from the negative effects of the insecurity felt by people in other countries. Eighty-seven percent said that “insecurity in other parts of the world” impacted US security a great deal (39%) or some (48%); only 13 percent agreed with the counterargument that “the US is so strong that such conditions in other parts of the world have little real impact on US security” and said the US was impacted just a little (9%) or hardly at all (4%).

These findings are consistent with a trend question used by Pew Research Center, which asks whether, to reduce the threat of terrorist attacks on the United States, it would be better to increase America’s military presence overseas or decrease it. When this question was first asked in August 2002—less than a year after the September 11, 2001 attacks—a 48 percent plurality thought increasing the US military presence would be more effective in reducing the threat, while 29 percent thought decreasing this presence would be more effective. By August 2006, the proportions had reversed: 45 percent said that decreasing US military presence would be more effective, while just 32 percent thought increasing it would be more effective.

The American perception that a significant number of countries view the United States as a potential military threat appears to be correct. In May 2005 and 2003, the Pew Research Center asked publics in nine countries how worried they were that the United States “could become a military threat to [their] own country someday.” In all cases except one, a majority said that they were very or somewhat worried, indicating that this was not simply a passing anxiety in response to the Iraq war. In 2005, these included the NATO ally Turkey (65%) as well as Morocco (96%), Indonesia (80%), Pakistan (71%), Jordan (67%) and Lebanon (59%). In May 2003, Russia (71%), and Nigeria (72%) also had majorities that were worried the United States could become a threat, as did Kuwait (53%), a country the United States defended after it was invaded by Iraq in 1990. In Morocco, only 46 percent had such fears in 2003, which jumped a remarkable 50 points to 96 percent in 2005. It should be noted that this was a small sample of countries, in which seven were predominantly Muslim.

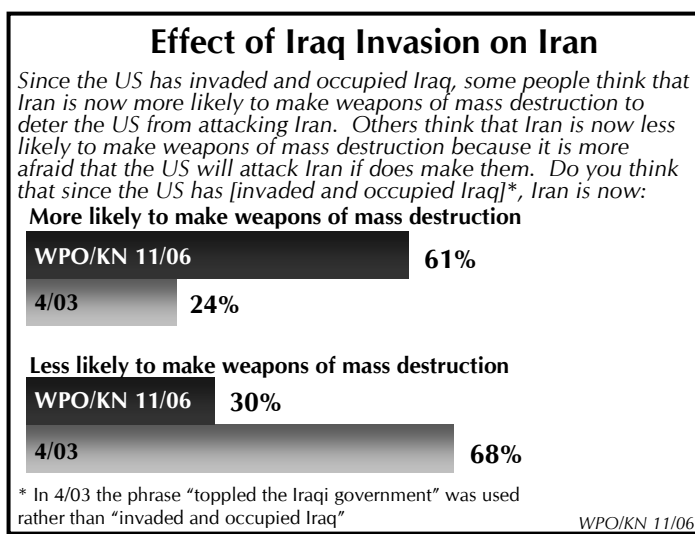


Effect of Iraq Invasion

Americans have gone through a major change in their view of how the Iraq war has affected US security. In 2003 a large majority believed that the US invasion of Iraq decreased the likelihood that Iran would pursue nuclear weapons. Today, a large majority believes that the invasion has made this outcome more likely.

In the current poll, 61 percent said that “since the US has invaded and occupied Iraq, Iran is more likely to make weapons of mass destruction.” This view was shared by 71 percent of Democrats, and 49 percent of Republicans (42% disagree). Only 30 percent overall said that Iran was now less likely to make WMD “because it is more afraid that the US will attack Iran if it does make them.”

This attitude is very different from US opinion during the invasion of Iraq (April 2003), when 68 percent thought that toppling the Iraqi government would make Iran less likely to pursue WMD; only 24 percent saw it as more likely. The same question was asked about Syria at that time. Sixty-two percent thought Syria would also be less likely to make WMD with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s government.



There has been a similar shift in public attitudes about the relationship between the war on terrorism and the invasion of Iraq. In February 2003, just before the war began, PIPA/KN found 44 percent of Americans thought invading Iraq would help the war on terrorism, while 25 percent thought it would be harmful and another 25 percent thought it would have little effect either way. By November 2005, a BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll found that 55 percent said the war in Iraq had increased “the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world” (decreased 21%, no effect 21%). In November 2006, a CNN poll found that 56 percent said the war with Iraq had made the United States less safe from terrorism (safer, 35%) and in August 2006 59 percent said it had made world less safe from terrorism (safer, 32%).

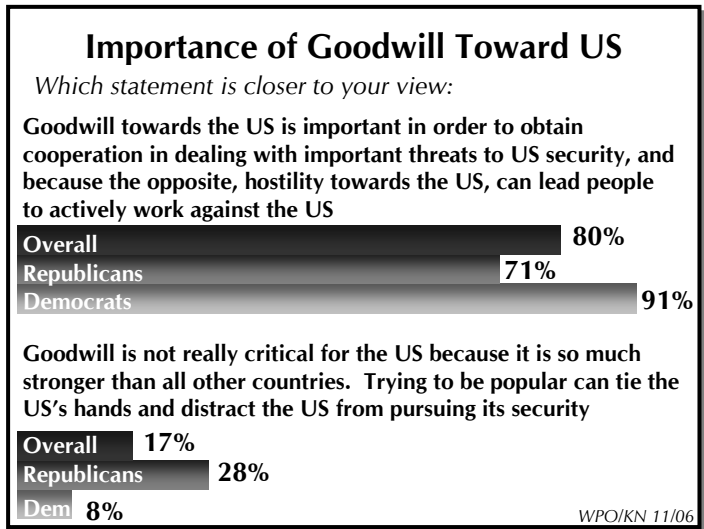
Americans are less likely to believe, however, that the invasion of Iraq has had an affect on North Korea. In the current study, respondents were asked in retrospect:

Some people think that the US invasion of Iraq increased the determination of North Korea to develop nuclear weapons because it became more afraid the US would attack North Korea. Others think the invasion of Iraq had no effect on North Korea either way.

Fifty-nine percent thought the invasion had not affected North Korea’s intentions either way (76% of Republicans, 54% of Democrats, 48% of independents). In 2003, Americans were divided about the effect the invasion would have on North Korea, with 47 percent saying North Korea would be less likely to seek WMD and 44 percent saying it would be more likely.

Importance of Goodwill

There is an ongoing debate in policy circles about whether goodwill toward the United States on the part of publics abroad is essential for US security, or whether being concerned about it might inhibit the pursuit of US goals. The current study presented respondents with two arguments: 1) “Goodwill toward the US is important in order to obtain cooperation in dealing with important threats to US security, and because the opposite, hostility towards the US, can lead people to actively work against the US.” 2) “Goodwill is not really critical for the US because it is so much stronger than all other countries. Trying to be popular can tie the US’s hands and distract the US from pursuing its security.”

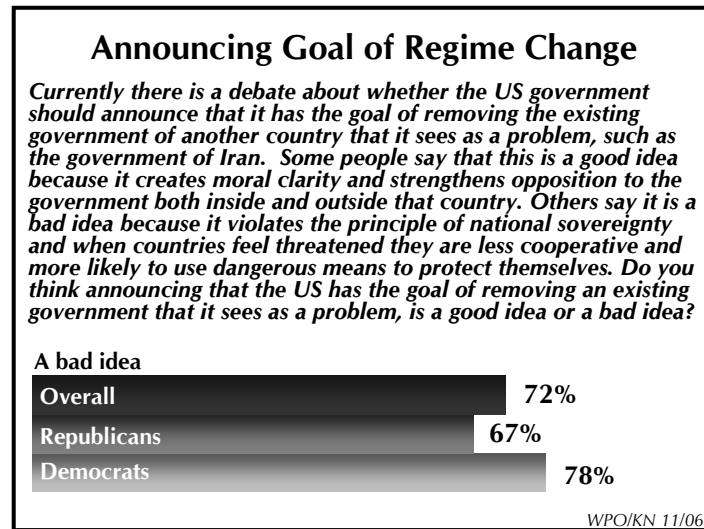


A very large majority—80 percent—rejected the view that the United States was so strong it did not need to be concerned about maintaining other countries’ goodwill. This included 71 percent of Republicans, 75 percent of independents, and 91 percent of Democrats. Only 17 percent saw goodwill as not critical for US security.

2. Dealing with Problem Countries and Terrorist Groups

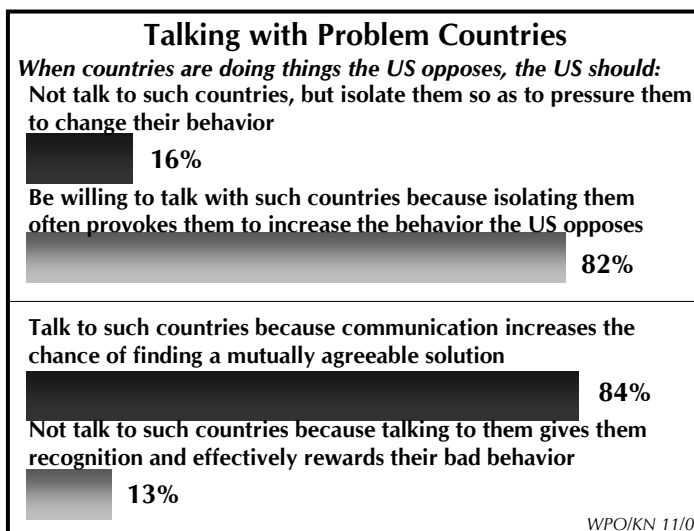
A large majority of Americans do not think the United States should generally announce the goal of regime change for problem countries. A large majority also rejects the policy of isolating such countries and believes the United States should be willing to talk with them. However, the public is divided on whether the United States should actively offer reassurances to such countries that it will not use force against them. A large majority rejects the view that the problem of terrorist groups can only be dealt with by destroying them, believes that pursuing such an approach can backfire by producing more hostility and more terrorists, and favors an approach that also addresses the sources of hostility. A large majority also rejects the idea that the struggle against terrorism should take precedence over all other foreign policy goals.

To deal with countries whose behavior is problematic for the United States, as a general rule, a large majority believes the US should not say publicly that it seeks regime change. After hearing the



arguments for and against this type of policy (see graph), a very large 72 percent said they thought it was a bad idea to announce the goal of removing an existing government; this included 67 percent of Republicans, 68 percent of independents and 78 percent of Democrats. Only 21 percent believed such a policy was a good idea.

A large majority also rejects the policy of isolating problem countries and believes instead that the United States should be willing to enter into talks with them. Respondents were told, “there are debates about whether the US should have diplomatic talks with countries that are doing things that the US opposes” and offered two sets of arguments: 1) It is better not talk to such countries and instead “isolate them so as to pressure them to change their behavior.” 2) It is better to talk to such countries because “isolating them often provokes them to increase the behavior the US opposes.” A very large 82 percent, including 71 percent of Republicans, thought the United States should be willing to talk. Only 16 percent thought the United States should refuse to talk with problem countries.

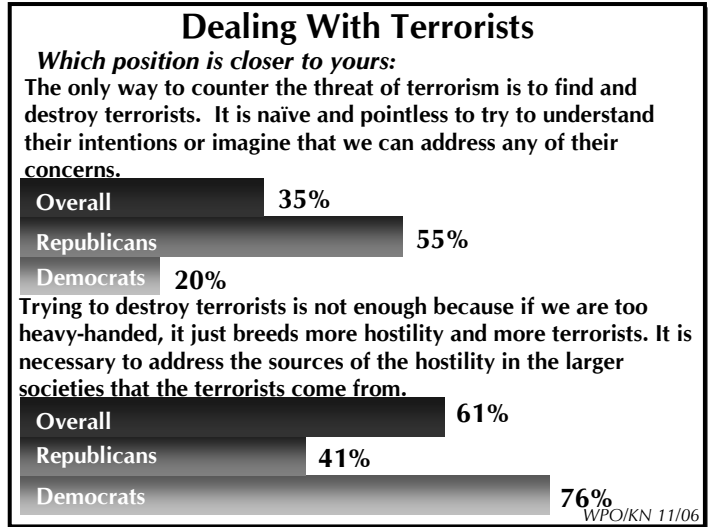


The poll also presented a second set of arguments about the same issue: 1) It is better not to talk to problem countries “because talking to them gives them recognition and effectively rewards their bad behavior.” 2) It is better to talk because “communication increases the chance of finding a mutually agreeable solution.” Again, a very large 84 percent, including 79 percent of Republicans, preferred that the United States be willing to talk. Only 13 percent preferred rejecting talks.

However, the public is divided about whether the United States should reassure such countries that it does not plan to use force against them without some quid pro quo. Again, two arguments were offered. Forty-five percent agreed with the view that “the US should be willing to make such commitments, because [...] refusing to do so increases their fear that the US will attack them, which often leads them to do things that are negative for US security.” Forty-eight percent agreed “the US should not be willing to make such commitments, because it is important for the US to be able to put pressure on these countries to change their behavior by keeping open the possibility that the US might attack them.” Partisan divisions were strong on this issue. Republicans rejected making reassuring non-aggression commitments by 63 to 31 percent. Democrats preferred making them by 55 to 41 percent.

Terrorist Groups

A large majority reject the view that terrorist groups should be dealt with only by force, believing instead that such an approach could backfire by producing more hostility and more terrorists. Only 35 percent said they agreed that the “only way to counter the threat of terrorism is to find and destroy terrorists. It is naïve and pointless to try to understand their intentions or imagine that we can address any of their concerns.” Sixty-one percent agreed with the counterargument that trying “to destroy terrorists is not enough because if we are too heavy-handed, it just breeds more hostility and more terrorists. It is necessary to address the sources of the hostility in the larger societies that the terrorists come from.” Republicans differed with the majority on this issue, with 55 percent endorsing the first argument and 41 percent the second.



A large majority also reject the idea that the struggle against terrorism should take precedence over all other foreign policy goals. Only 27 percent said they agreed with the argument that the “threat of terrorism is the most important issue of our time, and we should be willing to do whatever it takes to fight it.” Seventy-one percent said instead that while “terrorism is an important threat, it is important to remember that it is not the only one we face. We should not let our concern about terrorism overwhelm all other priorities.” This view was shared by 83 percent of Democrats and 77 percent of independents. Republicans were divided, with 47 percent choosing the first statement and 50 percent the second.

3. Dealing with Iran

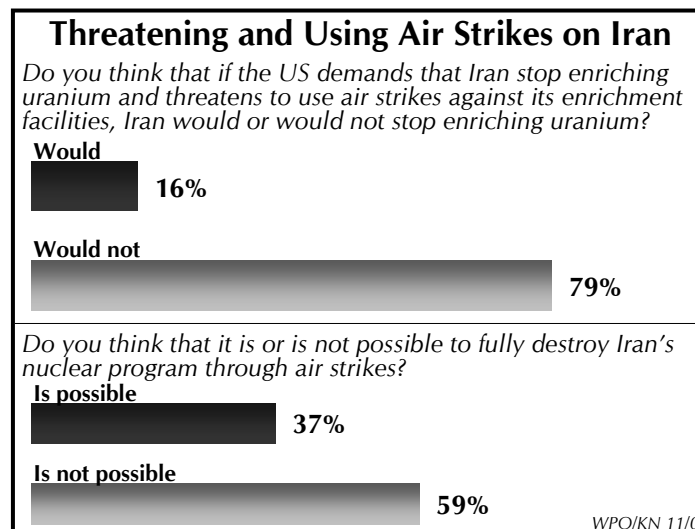
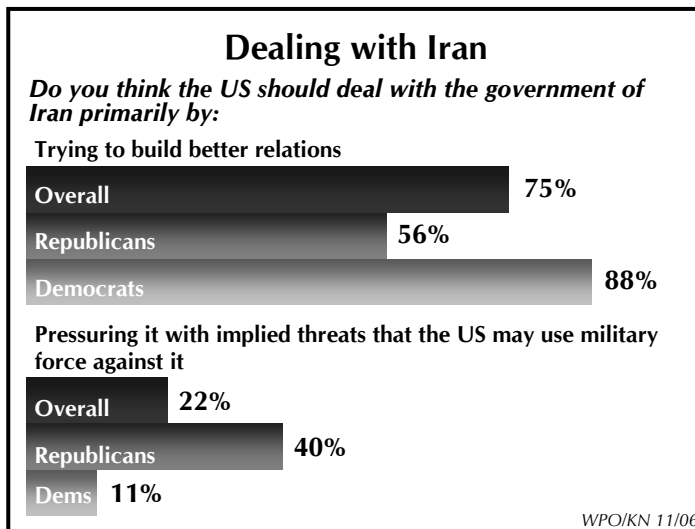
A large majority opposes dealing with Iran primarily through implied threats of military force preferring instead to try to build better relations. Americans do not think that threatening Iran with air strikes would cause Iran to stop enriching uranium. Nor do they believe that such strikes could destroy Iran’s uranium enrichment program. A bare plurality favors talking to Iran without preconditions. However, the public is divided about whether the United States should promise not to use military force against Iran if it agrees to stop enrichment or whether the United States should leave military options open. A majority of Americans would be willing to allow Iran to enrich uranium under the following conditions: Iran agrees to limit its uranium enrichment programs to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy and it allows full access to its nuclear facilities by UN inspectors to ensure that such limits are being respected.

When asked how the United States should conduct relations with Iran, a large majority of Americans (75%) said they preferred trying to “to build better relations,” rather than pressuring Iran “with implied threats that the US may use military force” (22%). This view was bipartisan, though Democrats (88%) were more likely to prefer trying to build better relations than Republicans (56%).

A majority do not think threatening Iran with air strikes would cause Iran to stop enriching uranium. Nor do most Americans believe that air strikes could destroy Iran’s uranium enrichment program. Eight-in-ten Republicans, Democrats and Independents agreed that threatening to bomb Iran’s uranium enrichment facilities would not deter the Iranians from continuing their nuclear program. Even if the US government decided to employ a “campaign of repeated air strikes” on these facilities, a majority (59%) said that it would not be possible to destroy them all. Republicans were evenly split on whether air strikes would destroy Iran’s nuclear program (48% to 49%).

A bare plurality (50%) favored talking with Iran without the precondition that it first stop enriching uranium (contrary to the position of the Bush administration), while 46 percent disagreed. Respondents were told that “Iran has been enriching uranium against the wishes of the US and the UN Security Council.” Views on this question were highly partisan with 62 percent of Democrats favoring talks without preconditions and 62 percent of Republicans favoring the insistence on preconditions.

However, Americans are also divided about whether the United States should be willing to offer a diplomatic tradeoff in which it promises to refrain from attacking Iran militarily if Iran commits to halting the enrichment of uranium. Respondents were presented arguments on both sides of this debate. Forty-seven percent found more persuasive the argument that the United States should make such a commitment to encourage Iran to stop enriching uranium while 45 percent favored the view that the United States should not make such a commitment “because Iran does other things that are negative for US security interests, so the US should keep the option of threatening the US with military strikes.” Recent implied threats against Israel by the President of Iran may have played a role here. This view also divided along party lines with 51 percent of Democrats favoring making such a commitment and 56 percent of Republicans opposed.



There was, however, one proposal that garnered bipartisan majority support. Respondents were presented the idea for a deal with Iran whereby it could enrich uranium but only to the very low levels necessary to produce nuclear power—not the high levels required to produce nuclear weapons—and only if UN inspectors would have full access to make sure that Iran’s enrichment did not exceed these low levels. Arguments were presented on both sides (see box). Fifty-five percent thought this would be a good idea while 38 percent considered it a bad idea. This was a bipartisan view with 53 percent of Republicans and 62 percent of Democrats endorsing the idea.

Most Americans do not think that Iran would really benefit from acquiring nuclear weapons. Presented two arguments, only 23 percent endorsed the view that nuclear weapons would increase Iran’s security “because it would be able to threaten nuclear retaliation against an attacker,” while 72 percent agreed that the acquisition of nuclear weapons would decrease Iran’s security “because other countries in the region could feel threatened and might want to develop nuclear weapons too.”

As in the case of the United States, discussed above, Americans tend to see the threat of using military force as likely to provoke a self-protective backlash from other countries that produces a net reduction in a nation’s security.

4. Dealing with Iraq

To stabilize Iraq, very large majorities favor the idea of engaging in talks with Iran and Syria and holding an international conference, which suggests that the American public is receptive to some of the key proposals of the Iraq Study Group. A majority of Americans believe the United States should establish a timeline for the withdrawal of US troops, but opinions vary about the period of time needed (six months to two years). Most Americans believe (correctly) that a majority of Iraqis want the United States to pull its forces out of the country within a year and that the US government should comply with their wishes. A smaller majority thinks the United States should withdraw its troops within a year even if the Iraqi government asks them to stay. A large majority opposes permanent US bases in Iraq and assumes (correctly) that the Iraqi people also oppose such a long-term presence.

Negotiating with Iran Re: Uranium

As you may know, the US and other countries have demanded that Iran stop enriching uranium out of concern that this could lead to Iran gaining the ability to develop nuclear weapons. However, Iran has refused, insisting that it is only enriching uranium for its nuclear energy program, not to build nuclear weapons. Here is a proposal some people have offered for resolving this impasse. Iran should be able to enrich uranium, but only on two conditions:

- 1) Enrichment must be limited to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy, while enrichment to higher levels needed for nuclear weapons would be forbidden.
- 2) Iran must fully cooperate with the UN inspectors, allowing full access to make inspections throughout the country, to make certain Iran is limiting its uranium enrichment to low levels.

Proponents of this idea say that this is a safe approach, because if Iran were to try to cheat, it would take them years to enrich uranium to the higher levels necessary for nuclear weapons, and with full access for UN inspectors they would be caught.

Critics of this idea say that Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at all, because doing so would give them technical experience that would put them in a strong position if they later decide to violate the agreement and build nuclear weapons.

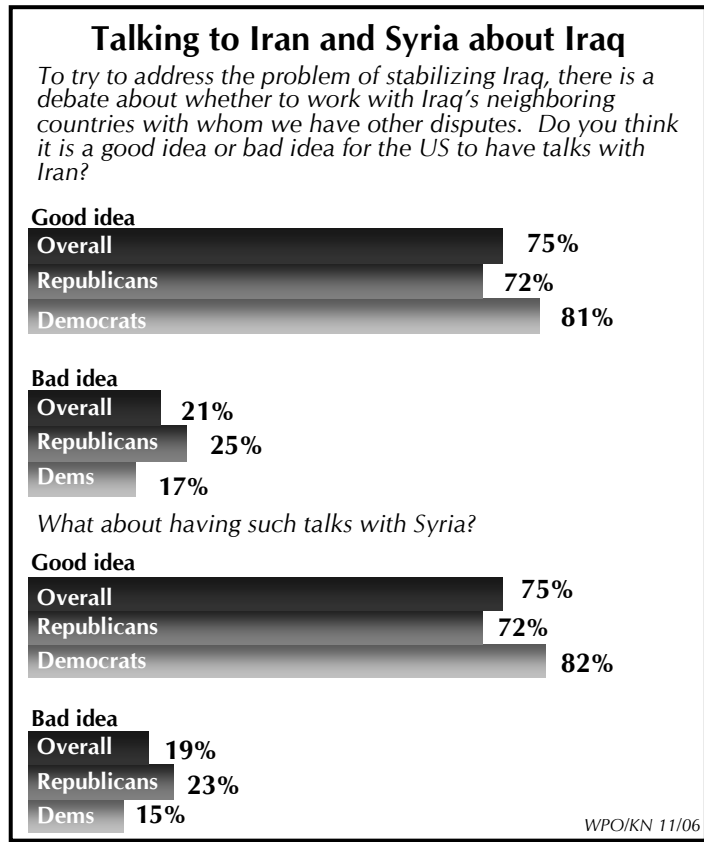
Do you think it is a good idea or not a good idea to make an agreement whereby Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium, provided that this is limited only to low levels and UN inspectors would have full access to make sure that enrichment remained at low levels?

Good idea	55%
Bad idea	38%

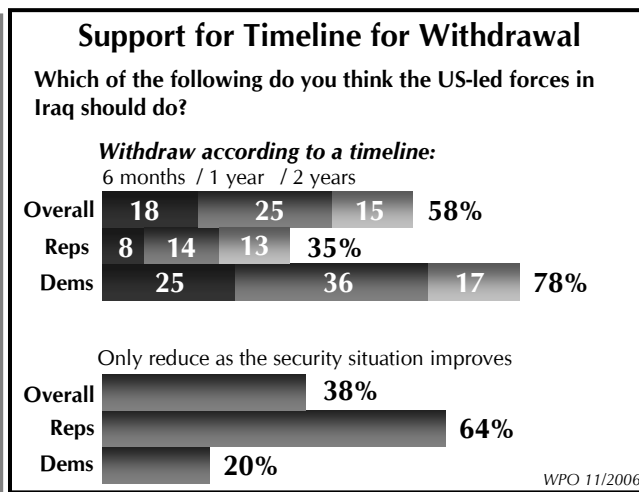
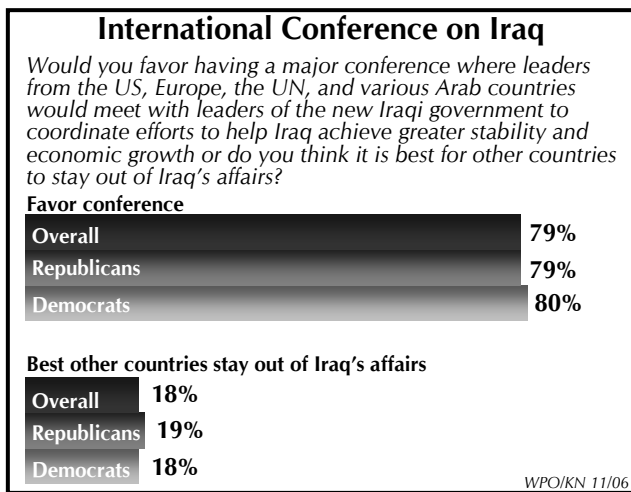
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It appears that the American public is likely to be receptive to some of the key proposals of the Iraq Study Group headed by James Baker III, a former secretary of state and Lee H. Hamilton, a former Democratic congressman. Told that there is “a debate about whether to work with Iraq’s neighbors with whom we have other disputes.” 75 percent said that the United States should have talks with Iran and the exact same number said that the United States should have talks with Syria. This diplomatic approach was endorsed overwhelmingly by both parties: eight in ten Democrats and seven in ten Republicans endorsed talking with both Iran and Syria.

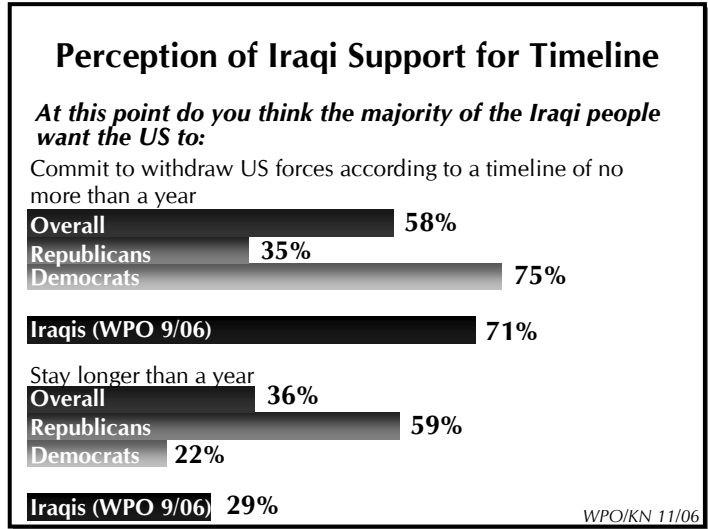
There is also strong bipartisan support for calling a major international conference where diplomats from the United States, Europe, the United Nations and the Arab world could meet Iraqi leaders to discuss how to stabilize Iraq and encourage economic growth there. Seventy-nine percent (Republicans 79%, Democrats 80%) said they supported such a conference; only 18 percent believed that instead foreign leaders should “stay out of Iraq’s affairs.”



On the issue of how long US troops should remain in Iraq, a majority of Americans reject the current policy of keeping troops in the country indefinitely. Fifty-eight percent said troops should be withdrawn according to a timetable, while 38 percent said that US-led forces should only be reduced “as the security situation improves.” But there was substantial variation in the length of the timetable preferred: 18 percent preferred six months, 25 percent one year and 15 percent two years.



There are partisan differences on this issue, however. While most Democrats (78%) thought US forces should be out within two-years or less, including 61 percent who favored withdrawal within one-year or less, a majority of Republicans (64%) believed forces should be withdrawn only as security improved. Support for withdrawal according to a timetable became stronger when respondents were told “the majority of the Iraqi people say they want the US to commit to withdraw US forces according to a timeline of no more than a year.” Seventy-three percent said the United States should withdraw in a year or less if most Iraqis wanted them to, including 67 percent of Republicans and 82 percent of Democrats.

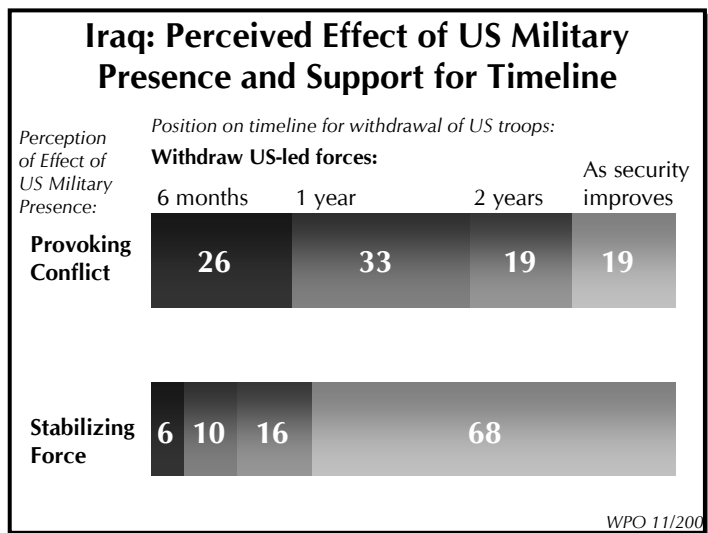


Fifty-eight percent also believed that the majority of the Iraqi people wanted the United States to commit to one-year timeline. This appears to be a correct perception: a poll of the Iraqi public conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org in September 2006 found that 71 percent wanted US-led forces to commit to leave Iraq within a year.

Some Iraqi leaders have expressed a desire for US-led forces to remain for several years. When asked whether the United States should stay longer at the request of the Iraqi government, even if a large majority of the Iraqi people wanted the United States to leave within a year, a bare majority (52%) thought that the United States should follow the preferences of the Iraqi people, not the government, and commit to withdrawing within a year.

Six out of ten (60%) believed that the United States’ military presence in Iraq was provoking more conflict than it was preventing, while 35 percent believed US forces were helping stabilize Iraq. The belief that US forces are provoking conflict has risen 5 points since March 2006 and 9 points October 2004. However, there were partisan differences on this issue, with a majority of Republicans (68%) saying they believed the presence of US forces helped stabilize Iraq, down 7 points since March, compared to less than a fifth of Democrats (14%), down 5 points.

This perception that the presence of US forces provokes conflict was highly related to attitudes about US withdrawal. Among those who believe the US presence provokes conflict, 59 percent



avored withdrawal in six months (26%) or a year (33%), and only 19% favored an open-ended commitment. However, among those who saw the US presence as a stabilizing force, 68% favored an open-ended commitment and 16 percent favored withdrawal in six months (6%) or a year (10%).

Iraqis concur with the perception that the presence of US troops is provoking more conflict than it is preventing. In the September 2006 WPO poll, 78 percent of Iraqis expressed this view.

Most Americans (68%) did not want the United States to establish permanent military bases in Iraq. Approximately the same number (66%) thought that the Iraqi people opposed permanent US military bases in their country.

About four in ten Americans (43%) believed that only a minority of Iraqis approved of attacks on US troops and four in ten (39%) thought half of the Iraqi population approved. Only 13 percent said that a majority of Iraqis approved of insurgent attacks on foreign forces. The September WPO poll of Iraqis showed that most Americans were underestimating Iraqi approval of such insurgent violence. According to that survey, six in ten Iraqis (61%) approved of attacks on US-led forces in their country.

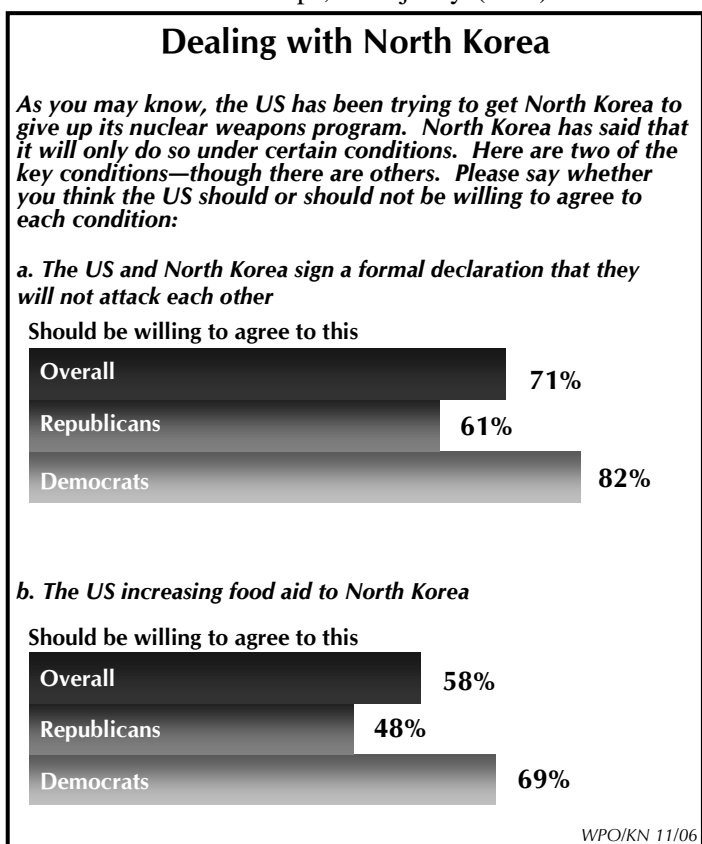
Americans' perceptions about the depth of Iraqi support for attacks on US-led troops were highly related to their attitudes toward a withdrawal timetable. Among those who thought (incorrectly) that only a minority of Iraqis approved of attacking foreign forces, support for an open-ended commitment was much higher (49%) than among those who believed that half or more of Iraqis approved of attacking US-led troops (27%).

Among those who underestimated support for attacks on US troops, a majority (54%) felt that the United States should stay in Iraq if the Iraqi government asked them to, even if the Iraqi people supported withdrawal within a year. Among those who recognized that at least half of Iraqis approved of attacks, only 34 percent took this position.

5. Dealing With North Korea

A very large majority of Americans think that the United States should be willing to enter into a nonaggression pact and provide more aid to North Korea if it agrees to eliminate its nuclear weapons.

Most Americans are willing to make concessions to the government of Kim Jong Il in return for a commitment to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Among the concessions that have at times been sought by North Korea's government are security guarantees and humanitarian assistance.



Asked whether as part of a deal with North Korea the United States should be willing to sign an agreement guaranteeing that it will not attack North Korea, seven out of ten Americans (71%) said that it should. This was a bipartisan position, supported by eight out of ten Democrats (82%) and six out of ten Republicans (61%).

Asked whether the United States should agree to send food to North Korea as part of such a deal, six out of ten (58%) Americans said the US government should be willing. But while a large majority of Democrats took this position (69%), Republicans were divided: 49 percent said such aid should not be sent, 48 percent said it should.

6. Nuclear Proliferation

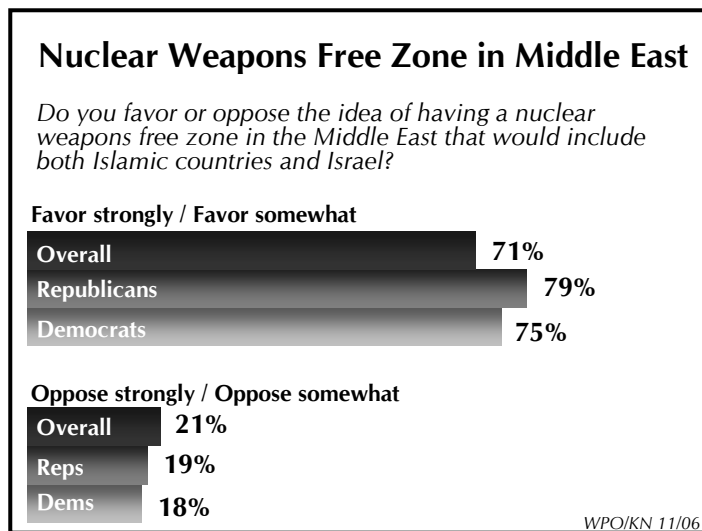
An overwhelming majority endorses US participation in the NPT treaty even when informed that this commits the US to seek to eliminate its nuclear weapons together with other nuclear weapon states. A large majority favors a nuclear free zone in the Middle East that includes Israel, as well as the broader goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

Only a bare majority (51%) was aware that the United States and most countries of the world had signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but this was up sharply from March 2004 when just 39 percent knew. Nonetheless, when respondents were told that “according to this treaty, the countries that have nuclear weapons have agreed to actively work together toward eliminating their nuclear weapons” while “countries that do not have nuclear weapons, including Iran, have agreed not to try to acquire them,” 78 percent said that they approved of US participation including 79 percent of Republicans and 85 percent of Democrats.

More specifically, 82 percent supported the “goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons, which is stated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty” including 73 percent of Republicans and 87 percent of Democrats.

Seventy-one percent favored (41% strongly) “the idea of having a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East that would include both Islamic countries and Israel.” Seventy-nine percent of Republicans supported such a nuclear-free zone as did 75 percent of Democrats (Independents 56%).

When asked how well the United States was fulfilling its obligation to “actively work together” with other members of the NPT “toward eliminating nuclear weapons,” 15 percent said that the United States was doing very well, 40 percent somewhat well, 28 percent not very well and 9 percent not at all well. Republicans, however, expressed much higher levels of confidence about how well the United States was pursuing this goal (very 25%, somewhat 47%, not very 20%) than Democrats (very 11%, somewhat 39%, not very 33%).



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