



CBS NEWS POLL  
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**SIX YEARS IN IRAQ**

March 12-16, 2008

As the country marks the sixth anniversary of U.S. military engagement in Iraq, Americans have recently become more optimistic about how things are going for the U.S. there. Still, when looking back, a majority thinks the U.S. should have stayed out of Iraq in the first place.

**ASSESSMENTS OF THE IRAQ WAR**

Today, 64% of Americans say U.S. efforts to bring stability and order to Iraq are going at least somewhat well. While this percentage is similar to last month, opinions have not reached these levels since December 2003, shortly after the U.S. capture of Saddam Hussein. Just one year ago, only 43% described things in Iraq as going well.

Now, 81% of Republicans and 55% of Democrats say U.S. efforts in Iraq are going at least somewhat well.

**HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR THE U.S. IN IRAQ?**

	Now	3/2008	3/2007	3/2006	4/2005	12/2003
Well	64%	43%	29%	40%	48%	65%
Badly	33	54	69	57	50	33

Americans began feeling more positive about the situation in Iraq last fall. In September 2008, 52% said things were going well - the first time a majority said so since February 2005 (53%), shortly after Iraqi elections were held.

The public gave the war in Iraq its most positive marks in May 2003, shortly after then-President George W. Bush announced major combat operations in Iraq were over. Back then, 72% of Americans thought things were going well in Iraq.

Assessments of the Iraq war reached their lowest point in June 2007, when only 22% said things in that country were going somewhat well.

**HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR THE U.S. IN IRAQ?**

	High	Low
	5/2003	6/2007
Well	72%	22%
Badly	24	77

While optimism about the situation in Iraq may be on the rise, a CBS News/New York Times Poll conducted in February found that 78% of Americans think it is important that the majority of U.S. combat troops

are withdrawn from Iraq within 16 months, including 46% who think it is very important.

**HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT U.S. TROOPS LEAVE IRAQ IN 16 MONTHS?**

(CBS News/New York Times Poll, February 2009)

Very important	46%
Somewhat important	32
Not too/at all important	18

**SHOULD THE U.S HAVE GONE IN?**

Looking back, 40% of Americans think the U.S. did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, but 55% believe the U.S. should have stayed out - similar to opinions held at this time last year. In March 2003 - right after the initial invasion of Iraq - seven in 10 Americans said the U.S. did the right thing.

**DID U.S. DO THE RIGHT THING GOING TO WAR WITH IRAQ?**

	Now	3/2008	3/2007	3/2006	3/2004	3/2003
Yes	40%	36%	39%	41%	58%	69%
No	55	59	56	54	37	25

As has been the case throughout the war, Republicans think the U.S. did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, while Democrats disagree.

When Americans are asked more specifically about what should have been done in Iraq, just 29% think the U.S. should have stayed to rebuild Iraq after it removed Saddam Hussein from power. Almost as many - 28% - think the U.S. should have pulled out of Iraq after removing him. Four in ten think the U.S. should have never gotten involved in Iraq.

**WHAT SHOULD THE U.S. HAVE DONE?**

	Now	3/2008
Remove Saddam AND stay to rebuild Iraq	29%	31%
Remove Saddam, then left Iraq	28	27
Never gotten involved in Iraq	42	41

**PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF THE IRAQ WAR**

Assessments of how the President is handling the war have risen since February; 61% now approve.

**OBAMA'S HANDLING OF IRAQ**

	Now	2/2009
Approve	61%	54%
Disapprove	23	24
Don't know	16	22

**THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

While public assessments of the Iraq war are positive, views of the war in Afghanistan are now negative. More than half of Americans (57%)

think things are going badly for the U.S. in Afghanistan; a third says things are going well.

**HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR THE U.S. IN...?**

	Afghanistan	Iraq
Well	33%	64%
Badly	57	33

Even though these evaluations are slightly more positive than in December, they are markedly more pessimistic than at the early stages of the conflict. In October 2001, when the war began, 83% of Americans said things were going well for the U.S. in Afghanistan, reaching a high of 93% in December of that year. In December 2008, only 27% said U.S. efforts in Afghanistan were going well - an all-time low.

**HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR THE U.S. IN AFGHANISTAN?**

	Now	Low 12/2008	3/2003	High 12/2001	10/2001
Well	33%	27%	76%	93%	83%
Badly	57	62	14	5	13

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1142 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone March 12-16, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**CBS NEWS POLL**  
**March 12-16, 2009**  
**Six Years in Iraq**

q5 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with Iraq?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Feb09B
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Approve	61	31	83	58	54
Disapprove	23	53	5	24	24
DK/NA	16	16	12	18	22

q60 Looking back, do you think the United States did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq, or should the US have stayed out?

					Oct08e
Did the right thing	40	79	17	39	39
Should have stayed out	55	18	79	55	54
DK/NA	5	3	4	6	7

q61 How would you say things are going for the U.S. in its efforts to bring stability and order to Iraq? Would you say things are going very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

					Feb09b
Very well	10	21	3	9	11
Somewhat well	54	60	52	53	52
Somewhat badly	22	15	29	20	20
Very badly	11	3	13	14	9
Don't know/No answer	3	1	3	4	8

q62 Which comes closer to your view about the Iraq war? 1. The U.S. was right to remove Saddam Hussein and stay in Iraq to help rebuild a new government there. 2. The U.S. was right to remove Saddam Hussein but then should have left Iraq soon after that. OR 3. The U.S. should never have gotten involved in Iraq in the first place.

					Mar08a
Right to remove and stay	29	65	9	26	31
Remove Hussein and left	28	23	27	33	27
Never have gotten involved	42	10	63	39	41
DK/NA	1	2	1	2	1

q63 What is your impression of how the war in Afghanistan is going for the United States right now--very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

					Dec08a
Very well	3	4	5	1	2
Somewhat well	30	42	26	28	25
Somewhat badly	36	35	37	36	44
Very badly	21	10	25	24	18
DK/NA	10	9	7	11	11

	<u>Unweighted</u>	<u>Weighted</u>
Total Respondents	1142	
Total Republicans	301	265
Total Democrats	419	442
Total Independents	422	435