



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL  
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**AFGHANISTAN, THE THREAT OF TERRORISM, AND IRAQ**  
September 19-23, 2009

Americans are divided as to whether the U.S. is doing the right thing by fighting the war in Afghanistan now, though a majority says that the war is not going well. Most Americans do not agree with General Stanley A. McChrystal, the U.S.'s top military commander in Afghanistan, that the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan should be increased - just 29% think so.

Nevertheless, most Americans do not see an immediate need to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan either -- only 32% think troop levels should be decreased. Most Americans - 62% - are willing to keep large numbers of U.S. troops in Afghanistan for more than a year.

Perceptions of the war in Iraq are different. In contrast to Afghanistan, Americans think things are going well in Iraq, even though two-thirds do not think the result there so far was worth the loss of American life and the other costs of attacking that country.

**ASSESSING PROGRESS IN AFGHANISTAN**

47% say the U.S. is doing the right thing by fighting the war in Afghanistan now. 42% disagree, and think the U.S. should not be involved there. Most Republicans think the U.S. is doing the right thing, while most Democrats do not. Independents are divided.

**IS THE U.S. DOING THE RIGHT THING  
BY FIGHTING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN?**

	Total	Reps	Dems	Ind
Yes	47%	67%	36%	45%
No	42	25	55	41

But most Americans do say that things are going at least somewhat badly for the U.S. in Afghanistan. Positive assessment of the situation in Afghanistan has risen somewhat since December of last year, though it is far below what it was in December 2001, shortly after the U.S. invasion.

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

	Now	8/2009	12/2008	3/2003	12/2001
Well	35%	37%	27%	76%	93%
Badly	53	52	62	14	5

Few Americans (8%) think things are getting better for the U.S. in Afghanistan. Most (56%) think things are staying the same, while 26% think things are getting worse.

Americans are largely divided as to what to do about troop levels in Afghanistan. 32% want troop levels there decreased (down from 41% in August), while 29% want troop levels increased and 27% want them kept the same.

**U.S. TROOP LEVELS IN AFGHANISTAN SHOULD...**

	Now	8/2009
Increase	29%	25%
Decrease	32	41
Keep the same	27	23

Americans who are paying a lot of attention to news about Afghanistan are more enthusiastic about increasing the number of troops there: 55% of Americans paying a lot of attention want troop levels raised.

Overall, Americans are divided about how long large numbers of U.S. troops should remain in Afghanistan. 32% want troops removed within twelve months, while 24% want them removed within one or two years. 38% are willing to keep troops there for more than two years, including 26% who say troops should remain for "as long as it takes".

**WILLING FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF TROOPS  
TO REMAIN IN AFGHANISTAN FOR...**

Less than a year/leave now	32%
One to two years	24
More than two years	12
As long as it takes	26

**AFGHANISTAN AND THE THREAT OF TERRORISM**

44% of Americans think the main goal of U.S. military action in Afghanistan is to eliminate all terrorists from the country, more than the percentage that thinks the goal is defeating the Taliban (28%), or capturing or killing Osama Bin Laden specifically (9%).

**WHAT IS THE MAIN GOAL OF  
U.S. MILITARY ACTION IN AFGHANISTAN?**

	Now	10/2001
Eliminate all terrorists	44%	48%
Defeat the Taliban	28	18
Capture/kill Bin Laden	9	18

But just 27% of Americans think U.S. military actions in Afghanistan have reduced the threat of terrorism against the U.S. Most - 51% - think the threat of terrorism has remained the same, while 17% think U.S. military actions have increased the threat.

**BECAUSE OF U.S. MILITARY ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN,  
THE THREAT OF TERRORISM HAS...**

Increased	17%
Decreased	27
Stayed the same	51

Still, many Americans - 43% - are concerned that the threat of terrorism would increase if the U.S. withdrew its troops from Afghanistan. Nearly an equal amount (42%) thinks withdrawing troops would have no effect. Just 9% think withdrawing troops would decrease the threat.

**IF THE U.S. WITHDRAWS TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN,  
THE THREAT OF TERRORISM WILL...**

Increase	43%
Decrease	9
Stay the same	42

**THE WAR IN IRAQ**

As they have for over a year, Americans are more positive about how things are going for the U.S. in Iraq than they are about Afghanistan. 57% of Americans think things are going at least somewhat well in Iraq, though only 5% say things are going very well there. This number is down from 71% in April, though far above an all-time low of 22% back in June 2007.

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

	Now	7/2009	4/2009	8/2008	6/2007
Well	57%	56%	71%	45%	22%
Badly	38	37	24	51	77

Though most Americans now think things are going well for the U.S. in Iraq, two-thirds still do not think the war was worth the loss of life and the other costs of attacking Iraq. Just 24% of Americans think it was worth it, down slightly from 28% back in March 2008.

**WAS THE IRAQ WAR WORTH IT?**

	Now	3/2008
Worth it	24%	28%
Not worth it	67	66

Democrats and independents think the costs were not worth it, while Republicans are divided.

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This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1042 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone September 19-23, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from random digit dial samples of both standard land-line 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.

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 SEP09B  
 September 19-23, 2009

q80 Do you think the result of the war with Iraq was worth the loss of American lives and other costs of attacking Iraq, or not?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Mar08a
	*** Party ID ***				
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Worth it	24	47	10	23	28
Not worth it	67	44	84	65	66
Don't know/No answer	9	9	6	12	6

q81 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?

					Jul09b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
Very well	5	6	2	8	7
Somewhat well	52	66	44	51	49
Somewhat badly	26	18	34	24	25
Very badly	12	5	16	12	12
Don't know/No answer	5	5	4	5	7

q82 Thinking about the last few weeks, how much attention have you been able to pay to news about the war in Afghanistan--a lot, some, not much, or no attention so far?

A lot	20	22	21	19
Some	35	36	34	36
Not much	30	35	32	25
None at all	14	7	13	20
DK/NA	1	0	0	0

q83 Do you think the U.S. is doing the right thing by fighting the war in Afghanistan now, or should the U.S. not be involved in Afghanistan now?

Right thing	47	67	36	45
Not involved	42	25	55	41
DK/NA	11	8	9	14

q84 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?

					Aug09a
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
Very well	3	7	2	2	2
Somewhat well	32	40	27	32	35
Somewhat badly	38	38	45	33	34
Very badly	15	7	20	15	18
DK/NA	12	8	6	18	11

q85 Would you say the situation in Afghanistan is getting better, getting worse, or is it staying about the same?

Getting better	8	18	4	6
Getting worse	26	25	26	26
Staying the same	56	47	63	54
Don't know/No answer	10	10	7	14

q86 Which of the following do you think is the main goal of U.S. military action in Afghanistan right now? Is it to defeat the Taliban, kill or capture Osama bin Laden, or eliminate all terrorists from the country?

\*\* TOTAL RESPONDENTS \*\*

\*\*\* Party ID \*\*\*

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	Oct01d*
	%	%	%	%	%
Defeat the Taliban	28	34	24	28	18
Kill/capture Osama bin Laden	9	4	13	9	16
Eliminate all terrorists	44	45	47	40	48
All three (vol.)	6	6	7	5	9
Taliban and bin Laden(vol.)	1	1	1	2	2
Taliban and terrorists(vol.)	0	1	0	0	2
bin Laden and terrorists(vol.)	1	1	1	0	1
Don't know/no answer	11	8	7	16	1

\*Wording change: "Is it to **bring down the Taliban government**, kill..."

q87 From what you have seen or heard about the situation in Afghanistan, what should the United States do now--should the U.S. increase the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, keep the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan as there are now, or decrease the numbers of troops in Afghanistan?

					Aug09a
					%
Increase	29	42	23	27	25
Keep the same	27	29	28	25	23
Decrease	32	17	42	31	41
Don't know/No answer	12	12	7	17	11

q88 From what you know about the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, how much longer would you be willing to have large numbers of U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan --less than a year, one to two years, two to five years, five to ten years, or as long as it takes?

Less than a year	31	21	34	33
One to two years	24	17	32	20
Two to five years	11	11	11	9
Five to ten years	1	0	0	2
As long as it takes	26	44	17	25
Should leave now (Vol.)	1	1	1	2
Don't know/No answer	6	6	5	9

q89 As a result of the United States' military actions in Afghanistan, do you think the threat of terrorism against the United States has increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?

Increased	17	14	19	16
Decreased	27	37	21	28
Stayed the same	51	45	57	50
DK/NA	5	4	3	6

q90 If the U.S. withdrew its troops from Afghanistan, do you think the threat of terrorism against the United States would increase, decrease, or stay the same?

Increase	43	58	37	40
Decrease	9	3	12	9
Stay about the same	42	36	45	43
Don't know/No answer	6	3	6	8

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>	
Total Respondents	1042		
Total Republicans	289	234	(22%)
Total Democrats	357	385	(37%)
Total Independents	396	423	(41%)