

CBS NEWS POLL

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For release: Friday, October 9, 2009
6:30 PM EDT

AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN

October 5-8, 2009

Not only is there debate within the Obama Administration as to what direction the war in Afghanistan should take, but there is also division among Americans on whether U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan should be increased or decreased. The public gives President Barack Obama - now weighing military strategy and options in Afghanistan - his lowest approval rating ever on handling the situation there: 42%. However, his overall job approval rating of 56% is unchanged since last month.

This poll was conducted before the announcement that President Obama was the winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

AFGHANISTAN

Debate over what to do in Afghanistan continues in Congress and within the Obama Administration, and fewer Americans are backing the status quo in regards to troop levels. 37% of Americans want troop levels in Afghanistan increased, while 38% want them decreased -- both of those numbers have risen since last month. Meanwhile, the percentage who wants troop levels kept as they are has dropped ten points since last month to 17% now.

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

	Now	9/2009	8/2009	2/2009
Increase	37%	29%	25%	42%
Decrease	38	32	41	24
Keep the same	17	27	23	23

Democrats want troop levels decreased, while Republicans want them increased. Independents are divided.

Approval of how President Obama is handling Afghanistan has slowly dropped over the past six months - now 42% of Americans approve, while 34% disapprove. One in four doesn't have an opinion. Back in April a clear majority of 58% approved of how the president was handling Afghanistan.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN

	Now	9/2009	8/2009	4/2009
Approve	42%	44%	48%	58%
Disapprove	34	35	30	21
Don't know	24	21	22	21

The President's approval rating on this issue has dropped almost thirty points among Republicans since April.

However, the war itself, begun under a Republican administration, gets more support from Republicans than Democrats. Most Republicans think the U.S. is doing the right thing by fighting in Afghanistan, while more Democrats think the U.S. should not be involved there now.

Overall, the percentage of Americans that believes the U.S. is doing the right thing by fighting the war in Afghanistan rose slightly: now 51% think so, while 39% do not. Last month Americans were more closely divided.

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

	Now	9/2009
Yes	51%	47%
No	39	42

IRAN

A clear majority of Americans supports attempts at a diplomatic solution in dealing with Iran - the policy currently being pursued by the Obama Administration. 57% of Americans think Iran is a threat that can be contained with diplomacy. 19% think that Iran is a threat that requires military action now, a number that has risen slightly from the 13% recorded last February.

HOW GREAT A THREAT IS IRAN?

	Now	2/2009
Requires military action now	19%	13%
Can be contained with diplomacy	57	58
Not a threat at this time	13	19

43% of Americans approve of how President Obama is handling Iran, while 35% disapprove.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HANDLING OF IRAN

Approve	43%
Disapprove	35
Don't know	22

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 829 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone October 5-8, 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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Afghanistan and Iran
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q1 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **				Sep09b
	Total	*** Party ID ***			
	%	Rep	Dem	Ind	%
Approve	56	20	87	52	56
Disapprove	34	69	8	35	33
DK/NA	10	11	5	13	11

q2-q4 RELEASED SEPARATELY

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

Approve	42	20	54	44	44
Disapprove	34	58	16	36	35
DK/NA	24	22	30	20	21

q8 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling Iran?

Approve	43	25	63	37
Disapprove	35	54	14	41
DK/NA	22	21	23	22

q9-q44 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q45 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	51	76	37	47	47
Not involved	39	21	49	41	42
DK/NA	10	3	14	12	11

q46 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 same number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan as there are now, or decrease the numbers of troops in Afghanistan?

Increase	37	57	27	34	29
Keep the same	17	20	15	16	27
Decrease	38	16	52	39	32
Don't know/No answer	8	7	6	11	12

q47-48 BLANK

q49 Thinking about Iran, which comes closer to your opinion -- Iran is a threat to the United States that requires military action now, Iran is a threat that can be contained with diplomacy now, or Iran is not a threat to the United States at this time?

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Requires action now	19	23	14	20	13
Can be contained	57	61	63	51	58
Not a threat now	13	9	15	14	19
Don't know/No answer	11	7	8	15	10

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>	
Total Respondents	829		
Total Republicans	227	184	(22%)
Total Democrats	265	273	(33%)
Total Independents	337	372	(45%)