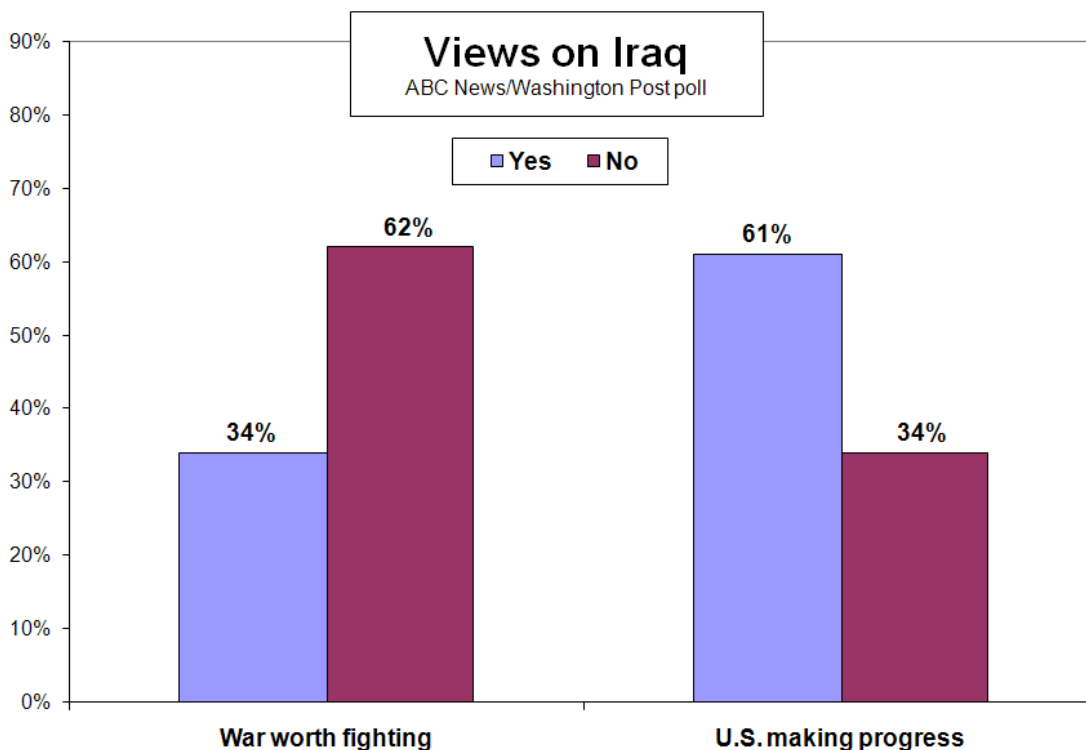


## **Iraq and Afghanistan: A Tale of Two Wars**

Americans increasingly see progress in Iraq yet by a wide margin continue to say the war there was not worth fighting – a sharp contrast to Afghanistan, where views of progress are far more subdued but support for the U.S.-led war is higher, albeit not high.

Sixty-one percent say the United States is making significant progress restoring civil order in Iraq, whose prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, visits the White House today. That's the highest in polls the past five years, and up 21 points since spring 2008.

Yet views on the Iraq war's justification are as sour as ever: Sixty-two percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say it was not worth fighting. Majorities have held that view steadily for more than four and a half years – disapproval that pushed then-President George W. Bush into deep and long-lasting unpopularity.

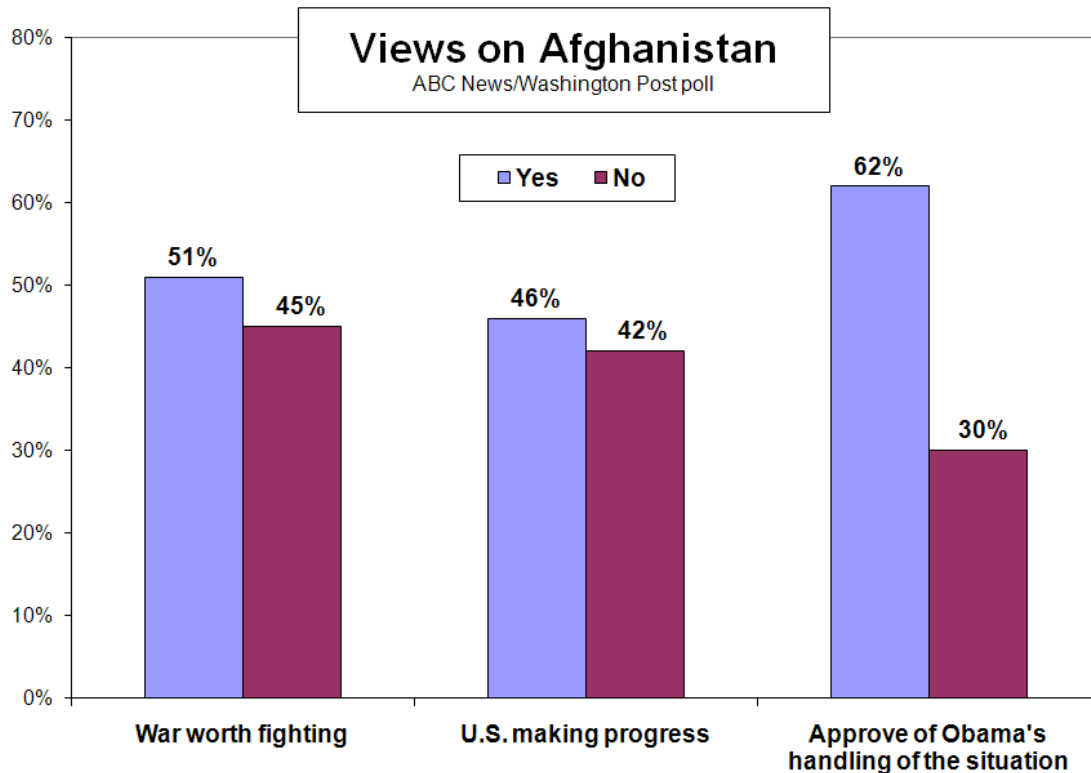


Fifty-one percent, moreover, feel “strongly” that the war in Iraq was not worth fighting, vs. 21 percent who strongly feel the opposite. That negative intensity, too, is long-lived.

With combat roles for U.S. troops in Iraq winding down, al-Maliki visits Washington to pay respects to U.S. soldiers and meet with President Obama to seek U.S. investment in Iraq and discuss political reconciliation among Iraq's sectarian and ethnic groups. That may not be easy: An ABC/BBC/NHK poll in Iraq earlier this year found continued sharp ethnosectarian differences in the country, albeit leavened by sharply improved security, greater public optimism and broader support for democracy.

AFGHANISTAN – While Americans by nearly 2-1 say the war in Iraq was not worth fighting, the war in Afghanistan continues to draw more of a split decision: Fifty-one percent say the war there has been worth the costs, vs. 45 percent who say not.

Support has slipped by 5 points since spring, perhaps in response to rising casualties; July has been the deadliest month for U.S. forces in Afghanistan since the war there began nearly eight years ago, with 31 reported killed as of Tuesday.



Support for the war in Afghanistan has hovered between 50 and 56 percent in recent years. U.S. casualties there have been far lower than in Iraq, and the al Qaeda/Taliban link made justification for the Afghanistan war less contentious.

But views on Afghanistan are somewhat conflicted. Sixty-two percent approve of the way Obama is handling the situation there, even though he's continuing to prosecute a war that fewer, 51 percent, see as worth fighting, and in which just 46 percent see significant progress. The level of casualties and extent of perceived progress in Afghanistan likely will influence public assessments moving ahead.

While Obama's been de-escalating the Iraq war, pulling U.S. troops out of cities and towns, he's ordered 21,000 more U.S. forces to Afghanistan, where the United States and its NATO allies launched a major offensive against insurgents this month.

Challenges there are extensive; an ABC/BBC/ARD poll in Afghanistan in January found sharply lower ratings for the Kabul government and its Western allies alike, with broad complaints about civilian casualties, insecurity, lack of development and corruption.

OBAMA – Obama's credentials to serve as commander-in-chief were a subject of debate during the presidential campaign; in late October, with Obama ahead on other gauges, John McCain led him by 19 points as the better military leader. Nonetheless, as noted, 62 percent now approve of Obama's handling of Afghanistan, 10 to 19 points better than his ratings on the economy, unemployment, health care and the deficit. And 56 percent in this poll say he is a good commander-in-chief of the military; 37 percent disagree.

There are vast partisan differences; eight in 10 Democrats and 56 percent of independents call him a good commander-in-chief, vs. just 19 percent of Republicans. That's dropped among Republicans from 31 percent in April.

PARTISANSHIP – Bottom-line assessments of both wars also are informed by partisan differences. In Afghanistan, 71 percent of Republicans call the war "worth fighting," vs. 51 percent of independents and 41 percent of Democrats. In Iraq, similarly, 65 percent of Republicans say it was worth the fight, compared with 37 percent of independents and just 12 percent of Democrats.

The question of progress in Iraq, though, is one on which partisanship largely evaporates. Two-thirds of Republicans and independents alike think progress is being made; fewer Democrats, but still 54 percent, say the same.

They've taken different paths to this point, though: Positive views about progress in Iraq have more than doubled among Democrats and risen by 20 points among independents since July 2008, but actually are down by 9 points among Republicans since last year.

There's still a broad ideological gap: Seventy-two percent of conservatives see progress in Iraq, vs. 58 percent of moderates and 51 percent of liberals. But that's up among liberals by 31 points from this time last year.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone July 15-18, 2009, among a random national sample of 1,001 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3.5-point error margin; for half samples, 5 points. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Peyton M. Craighill

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow (\*= less than 0.5 percent).

1-14c previously released.

14. Please tell me whether the following statement applies to Obama, or not?

d. He is a good commander in chief of the military

7/18/09	56	37	7
4/24/09	56	34	10
1/16/09*	62	32	7
9/29/08** RV	46	48	5
9/22/08** RV	48	47	5
7/13/08**	48	48	4

\*"will be"

\*\*"would be"

15-18 previously released or held for release.

19. (HALF SAMPLE) On another subject, all in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Afghanistan was worth fighting, or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Worth fighting -----			--- Not worth fighting ---			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
7/18/09	51	34	18	45	11	34	4
3/29/09	56	37	19	41	12	28	4
2/22/09	50	34	17	47	9	37	3
12/14/08	55	NA	NA	39	NA	NA	5
7/13/08	51	NA	NA	45	NA	NA	4
2/25/07	56	NA	NA	41	NA	NA	3

20. (HALF SAMPLE) Do you think the United States is or is not making significant progress toward achieving success in Afghanistan?

	Is making significant progress	Is not making significant progress	No opinion
7/18/09	46	42	12
3/29/09	45	47	8

21. (HALF SAMPLE) On another subject, all in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war with Iraq was worth fighting, or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Worth fighting -----			--- Not worth fighting ---			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
7/18/09	34	21	12	62	11	51	4
2/22/09	38	24	14	60	13	48	2
1/16/09	39	21	17	61	12	49	1
12/14/08	34	21	13	64	14	50	2
9/7/08	36	24	13	61	13	48	3
8/22/08	35	22	13	63	13	50	2
7/13/08	36	22	13	63	13	50	1

6/15/08	34	21	13	63	9	54	3	
4/13/08	34	24	11	64	11	52	2	
3/2/08	34	24	11	63	12	51	2	
2/1/08	34	23	11	65	11	53	1	
1/12/08	35	21	13	64	13	51	2	
12/9/07	37	25	12	61	11	50	2	
11/1/07	35	23	12	63	12	51	2	
9/30/07	38	25	14	59	12	47	3	
9/7/07	36	23	13	62	11	51	2	
7/21/07	36	25	12	63	10	53	1	
6/1/07	37	24	12	61	12	50	2	
4/15/07	33	22	11	66	12	54	1	
2/25/07	34	22	12	64	13	51	2	
1/10/07	40	28	12	58	11	47	2	
12/11/06	36	25	11	61	12	50	2	
11/4/06	RV	44	33	12	53	10	44	2
10/22/06	40	28	12	57	11	47	2	
10/8/06	35	25	10	63	13	50	2	
9/7/06	42	29	13	56	11	45	2	
8/6/06	39	29	10	59	12	47	1	
6/25/06	40	25	15	58	13	45	2	
5/15/06	37	24	14	62	12	50	1	
4/9/06	41	30	11	58	10	48	1	
3/5/06	42	29	14	57	11	46	1	
1/26/06	44	32	12	55	13	42	1	
1/8/06	43	30	13	55	12	43	2	
12/18/05	46	33	14	52	11	42	1	
11/2/05	39	25	13	60	12	48	1	
8/28/05	46	33	12	53	9	44	1	
6/26/05	46	33	13	53	10	43	1	
6/5/05	41	29	12	58	12	46	1	
4/24/05	44	31	13	54	12	42	2	
3/13/05	45	34	11	53	11	42	2	
1/16/05	44	32	12	55	10	45	1	
12/19/04	42	31	11	56	10	47	2	
10/3/04	LV	49	34	15	48	11	37	3
9/26/04	RV	46	35	12	51	8	42	3
9/8/04	RV	51	38	13	45	10	34	4
8/29/04	RV	48	34	14	50	11	39	2
7/25/04	49	36	13	48	11	37	3	
7/11/04	45	34	10	53	12	42	2	
6/20/04	47	32	14	52	13	39	2	
5/23/04	48	35	13	50	13	37	1	
5/6/04	49	NA	NA	47	NA	NA	5	
4/18/04	51	"	"	47	"	"	2	
3/7/04	52			44			3	
2/11/04	48			50			2	
1/18/04	56			41			3	
12/21/03	59			39			2	
12/14/03	53			42			5	
11/16/03	52			44			4	
10/29/03	54			44			2	
10/13/03	54			44			2	
9/13/03	61			37			2	
9/7/03	54			42			4	
8/24/03	57			37			5	
8/11/03	61			35			4	
7/10/03	57			40			3	
6/22/03	64			33			3	
4/30/03	70			27			4	
2/2/92*	66			32			2	
7/28/91	67			30			3	
6/2/91	70			26			3	

3/4/91 86

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\*2/2/92 and previous: "the Persian Gulf war"; 3/4/91: "this war"

22. (HALF SAMPLE) Do you think the United States is or is not making significant progress toward restoring civil order in Iraq?

	Is making significant progress	Is not making significant progress	No opinion
7/18/09	61	34	5
12/14/08	56	40	4
9/7/08	52	40	7
8/22/08	50	46	4
7/13/08	46	51	3
4/13/08	40	57	3
3/2/08	43	51	6
2/1/08	42	54	4
1/12/08	42	54	4
12/9/07	41	55	4
11/1/07	39	59	2
9/7/07	36	60	4
6/1/07	32	64	4
12/11/06	31	66	3
6/25/06	48	49	2
3/5/06	43	56	2
12/18/05	60	37	2
11/2/05	44	55	2
8/28/05	48	50	2
6/26/05	48	51	1
12/19/04	44	49	7
6/20/04	51	48	1

23-28 held for release.

\*\*\*END\*\*\*