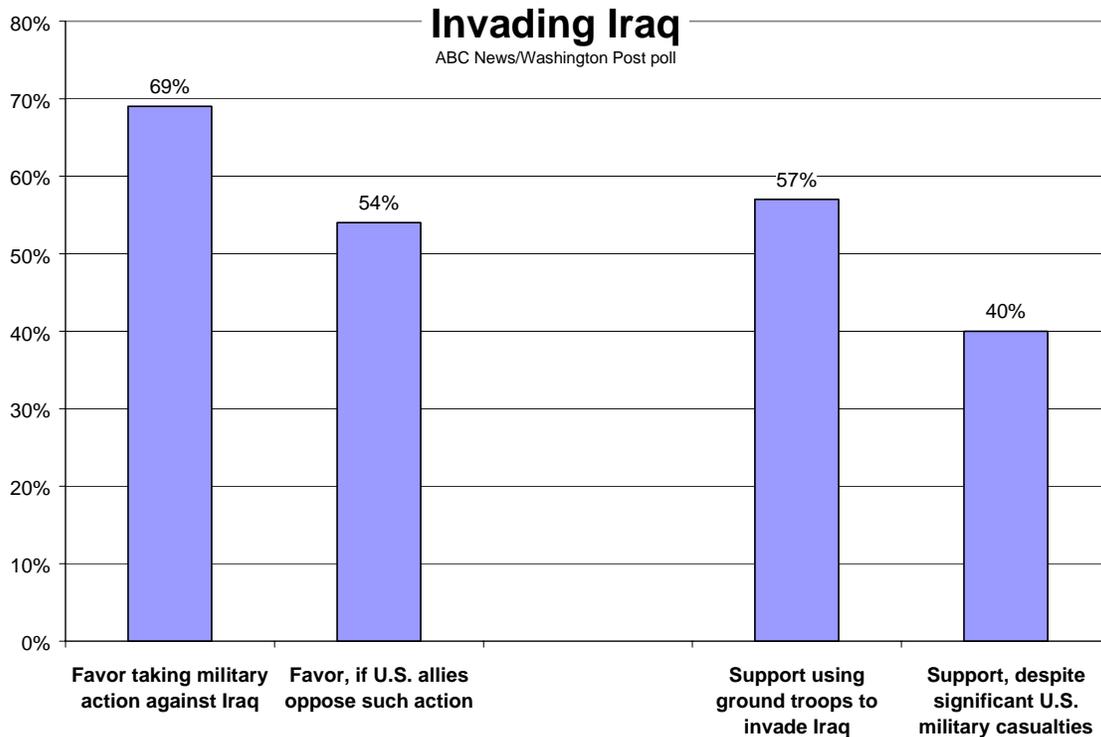


Prospect of High U.S. Casualties Dampens Support for Iraq War

Public support for attacking Iraq declines in the absence of allied support, and falls even lower if it would mean a high-casualty ground war – significant challenges as the Bush administration seeks to forge consensus on action against Baghdad.

As it stands, fewer than half of Americans say the Bush administration has a clear policy on Iraq, and many look to Congress to vet any plans for war. Indeed the public divides about evenly on whether Bush, or Congress, should have the final say.

While 69 percent do favor U.S. military action to force Saddam Hussein from power, that falls to 54 percent if U.S. allies oppose it. And while 57 percent support a U.S. invasion of Iraq with ground troops, that drops to 40 percent if it means heavy U.S. casualties.

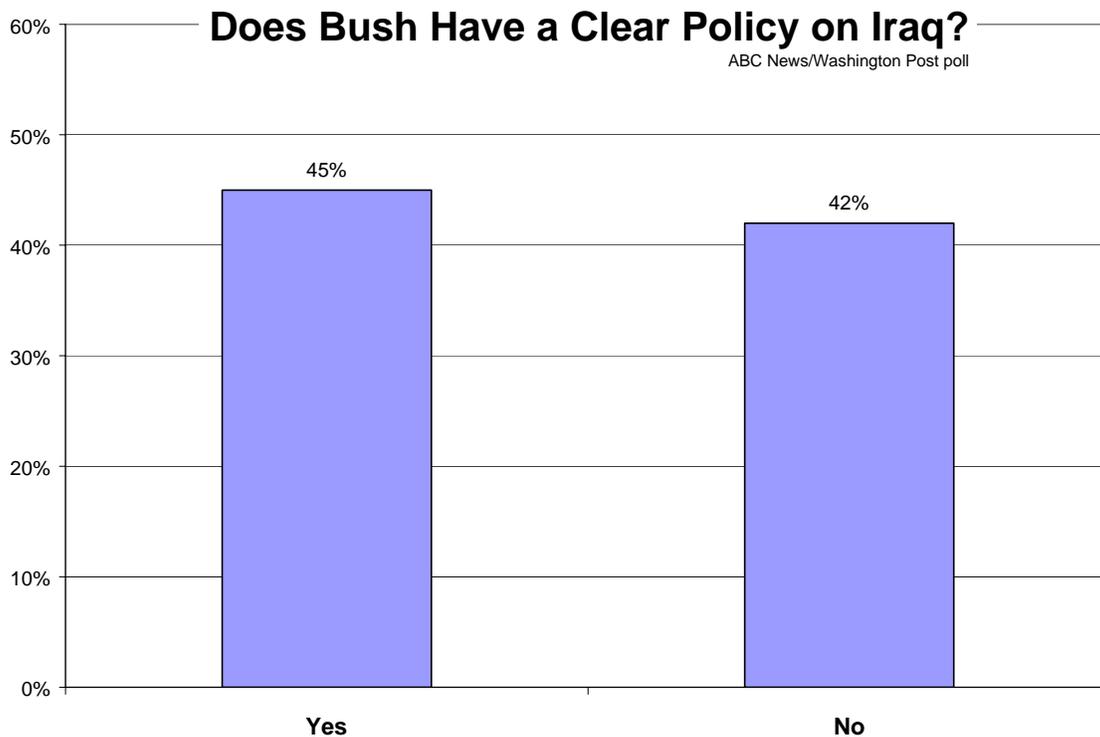


The prospect of casualties is not always so daunting: Last fall two-thirds of Americans expressed a willingness to sustain high casualties in U.S. military action against groups or nations responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks. The critical factor is a sense of threat, and on this the administration is halfway there: Seventy-nine percent of Americans do see

Iraq as a threat. But clearly, fewer see it as a big enough threat to justify a high-casualty invasion.

POLICY – For Bush, winning support will require clarifying his views. After weeks of heightened debate on the subject, the public divides evenly on whether or not he has a clear policy on Iraq: Forty-five percent say he does, but 42 percent think not. (In February 1998, amid rising tension over U.N. weapons inspections, 55 percent said Bill Clinton’s policy on Iraq was clear.)

Today 75 percent of Americans say Bush should get authorization from Congress before going to war with Iraq. Probably of greater concern to the administration is the public’s view on who should have the final decision: Forty-eight percent say it should be Bush, but about as many, 44 percent, say it should be Congress.



THREAT – These results underscore the fundamental importance of two factors in public support for military action – a clear policy and a demonstrated threat. Support for action against Iraq soars among those who see it as a threat, and among those who think Bush’s policy is clear. It dives among those who are doubtful on these two scores.

Attacking Iraq to oust Saddam is favored by 76 percent of those who see him as a threat, compared to just 49 percent of those who don’t. And it’s favored by 84 percent of those who think Bush has a clear policy, compared to 59 percent of those who think not.

Similarly, support for a ground war falls from 62 percent of those who see Iraq as a threat to 44 percent of those who don't. And it declines even more steeply from 73 percent of those who think Bush's policy is clear to 43 percent of those who think not.

Also, people who think Bush has a clear policy are far more apt to say he – rather than Congress – should have the final decision on whether to attack.

	Iraq a threat?		Bush policy clear?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Attack to remove Saddam	76%	49	84	59
Attack without allied support	61	37	69	45
Invade Iraq with ground troops	62	44	73	43
Invade even if high U.S. casualties	44	29	54	29
Final say should be Bush's	51	38	63	34
Final say should be Congress'	42	57	31	63

GROUPS – There are divisions among some groups; women are less apt to favor attacking Iraq (though 63 percent still do so), and substantially less apt to favor invading it with ground troops (49 percent, compared to 65 percent of men). Older Americans, age 65 and up, are also less supportive of taking military action.

Political partisanship is strongest in views of whether Bush's policy is clear: Sixty-six percent of Republicans say it is, but this dives to 36 percent of independents and Democrats alike. Accordingly, 55 percent of Democrats, and 48 percent of independents, say Congress should have the final word. Just 28 percent of Republicans agree.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Aug. 7-11, 2002, among a random national sample of 1,023 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by TNS Intersearch of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

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*=less than 0.5 percent.

1. Would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein from power?

	Favor	Oppose	No opin.
8/11/02	69	22	9
3/10/02	72	24	4
2/21/02*	67	30	4
1/27/02	71	24	4
12/19/01	72	24	5
11/27/01	78	17	6

10/11/94**	72	23	5
1/15/93***	82	15	3
8/21/92 RV	65	30	5
2/9/92	62	35	3
4/22/91	51	43	6
4/5/91	54	37	9
3/15/91	57	38	5

*Strongly/somewhat follow asked

**10/11/94 and previous: Gallup

***1/15/93 and previous: Would you support or oppose having U.S. forces resume military action...?

2. (IF FAVOR) What if U.S. allies opposed such military action - in that case would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq?

	Favor	Oppose	No opin.
8/11/02	80	17	4
3/10/02	77	21	3

1/2 NET. Would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq to force Saddam Hussein from power? (IF FAVOR) What if U.S. allies opposed such military action - in that case would you favor or oppose having U.S. forces take military action against Iraq?

	-----Favor-----					
	-----If allies oppose-----					
	NET	Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Oppose	No op.
8/11/02	69	54	11	3	22	9
3/10/02	72	55	15	2	24	4

3. Would you support or oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq with ground troops?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
8/11/02	57	36	8

Compare to (note question order):

2/18/98	36	60	4
2/17/98	37	55	8

4. (IF SUPPORT) What if that caused a significant number of U.S. military casualties - in that case would you support or oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq with ground troops?

	Support	Oppose	No opin.
8/11/02	70	26	4

3/4 NET. Would you support or oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq with ground troops? (IF SUPPORT) What if that caused a significant number of U.S. military casualties - in that case would you support or oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq with ground troops?

	-----Support-----					
	-----If significant casualties-----					
	NET	Support	Oppose	Don't know	Oppose	No opin.
8/11/02	57	40	15	2	36	8

5. Do you think Iraq does or does not pose a threat to the United States?

	Does	Does not	No opin.
8/11/02	79	16	5

6. Do you think George W. Bush has a clear policy on Iraq, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
8/11/02	45	42	14

Compare to: Do you think Clinton has a clear policy on Iraq, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
2/18/98	55	38	7
2/17/98	59	35	6

7. If Bush decides to go to war with Iraq, do you think he should get authorization from Congress before launching an attack, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
8/11/02	75	21	5

Compare to: If Bush decided to go to war with Iraq do you think he should ask permission from Congress before launching an attack, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
1/6/91	66	31	3
12/2/90	78	21	1
11/15/90	76	20	4
1/4/90	69	30	1

8. (IF YES) If Bush and the Congress disagree on attacking Iraq, who should have the final decision - Bush, or the Congress?

	Bush	Congress	No opin.
8/11/02	37	59	4

7/8 NET. If Bush decides to go to war with Iraq, do you think he should get authorization from Congress before launching an attack, or not? (IF YES) If Bush and the Congress disagree on attacking Iraq, who should have the final decision - Bush, or the Congress?

	-----Bush's final decision-----			Don't know	No	
	NET	Don't ask Congress	Ask Congress but his decision	Congress' decision	whose decision	opin.
8/11/02	48	21	27	44	4	5

END