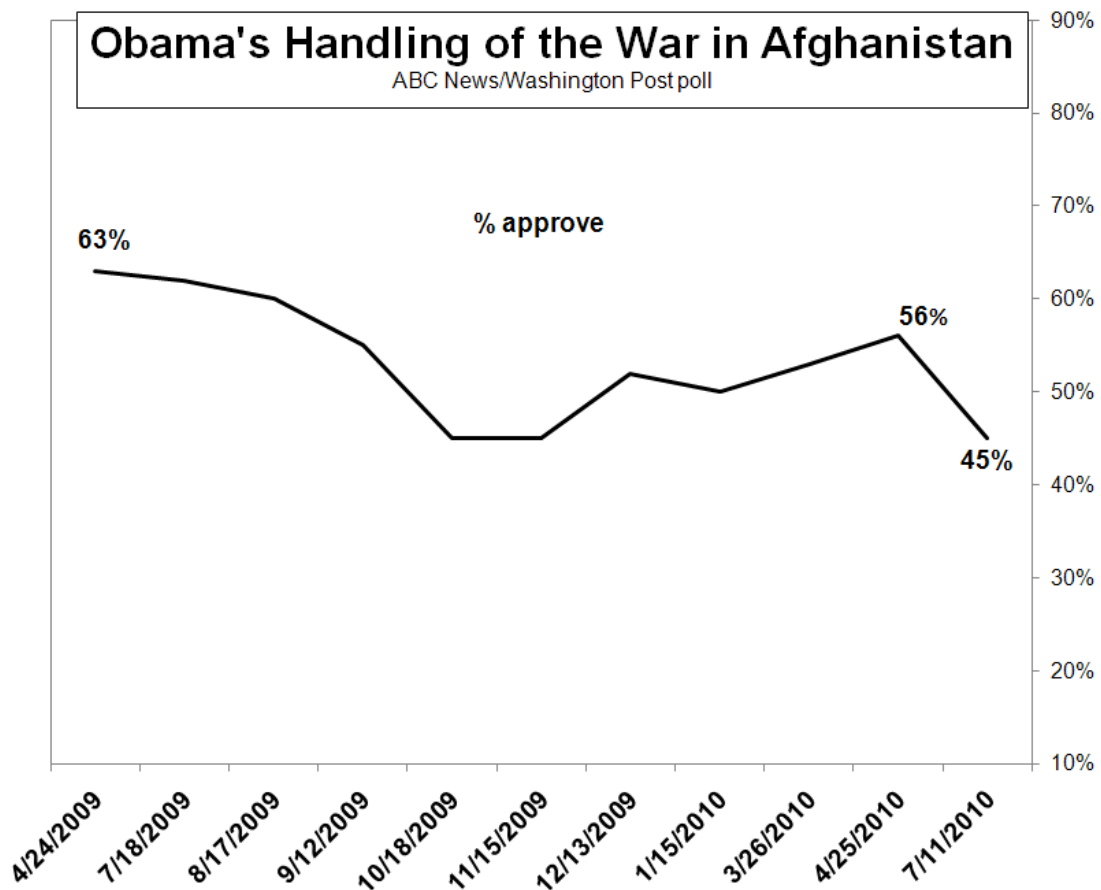


## **Obama Loses Ground on Afghanistan As the War's Intensity Mounts**

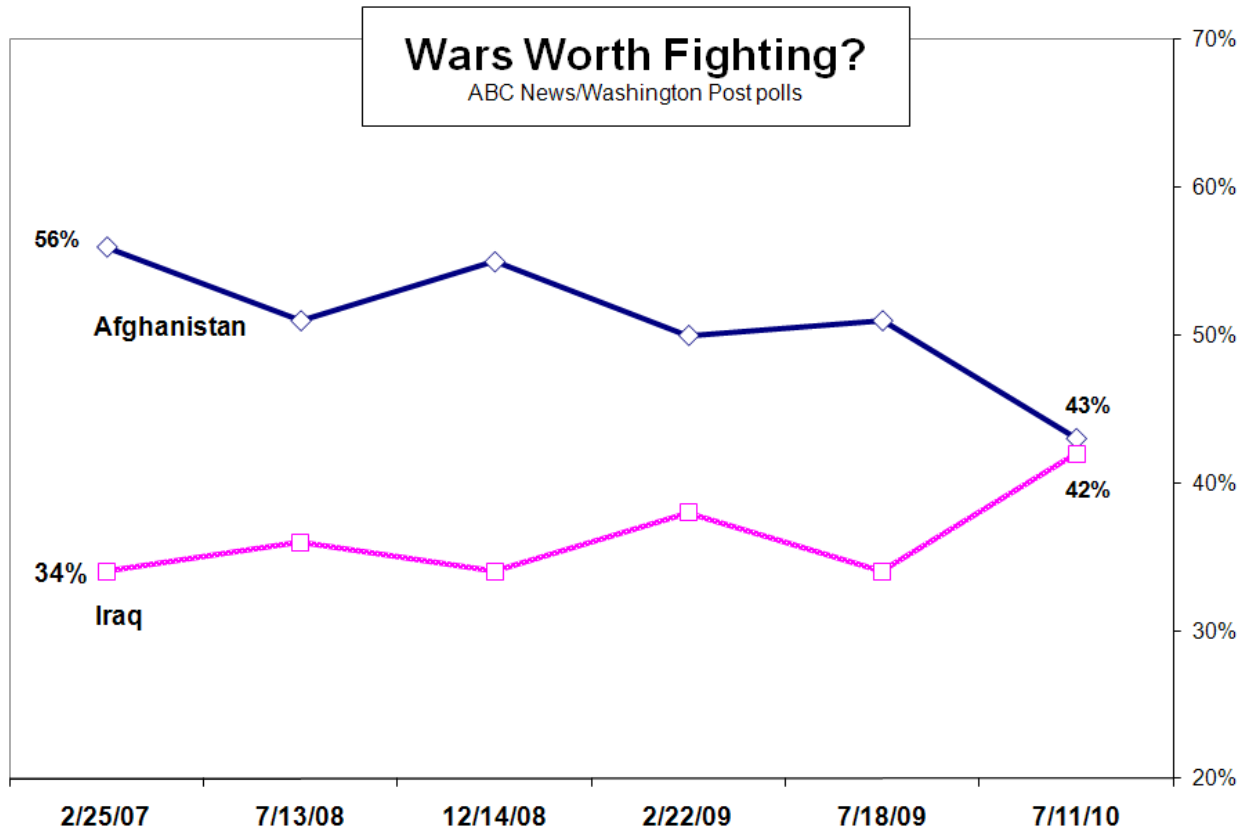
Support for the war in Afghanistan has hit a new low and President Obama's approval rating for handling it has declined sharply since spring – results that portend trouble for the administration as the violence there grows.

With Obama's surge under way – and casualties rising – the number of Americans who say the war in Afghanistan has been worth fighting has declined from 52 percent in December to 43 percent now. And his approval rating for handling it, 56 percent in April, is down to 45 percent.



Potentially complicating matters, the public by 51-37 percent opposes a negotiated settlement between the Afghan government and the Taliban that would allow Taliban members to hold government offices if they agreed to stop fighting. That kind of deal commands far higher support in Afghanistan itself – 65 percent in an ABC News/BBC/ARD poll there in December.

As views on Afghanistan have grown darker, they've improved on Iraq, a clear indicator these conflicts are most popular when they're least intense. Just 42 percent say the war in Iraq has been worth fighting, essentially the same as for Afghanistan. But that's arrived from the opposite direction, up 8 points in the past year to the most since 2006.



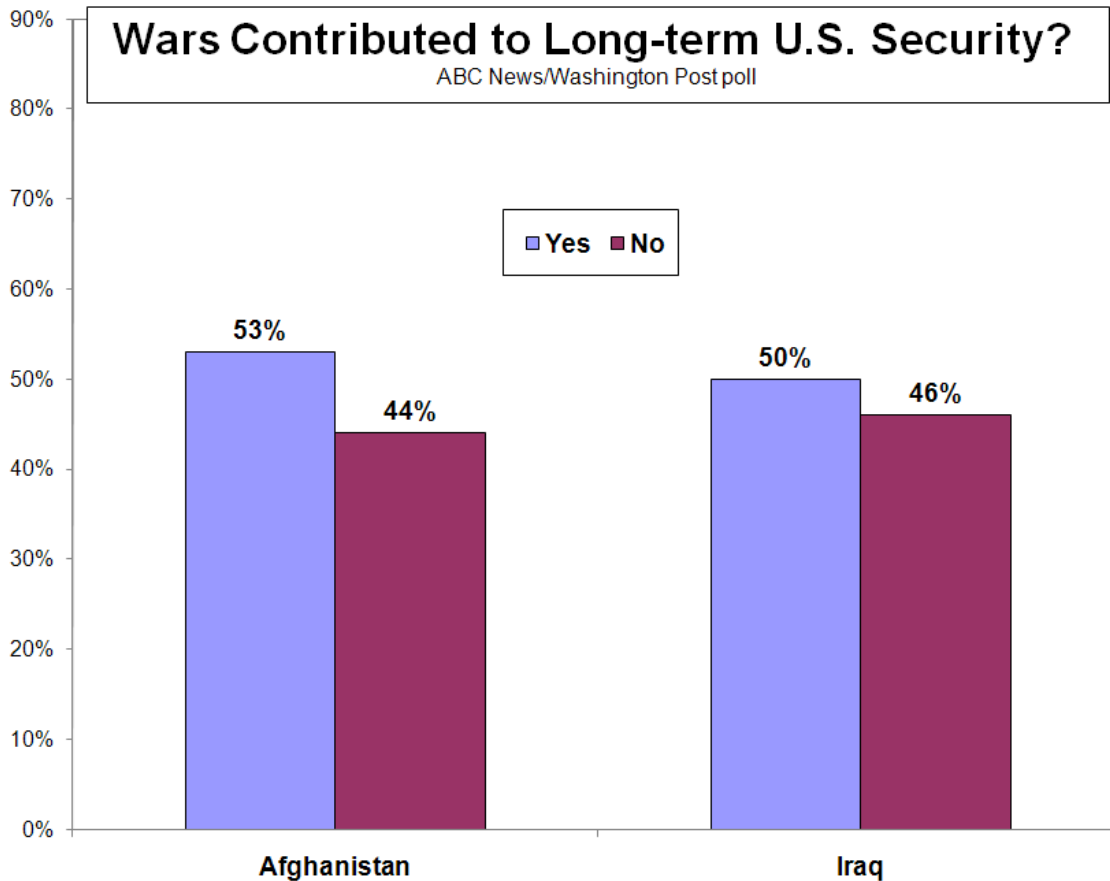
Seventy-one percent support removing all remaining U.S. combat troops from Iraq, scheduled to happen by the end of next month; fewer but still easily a majority, 60 percent, support keeping up to 50,000 non-combat troops there in a supporting role.

In Afghanistan, 45 percent call Obama's plan to start withdrawing troops by next summer "about right," but an additional 31 percent say it should start sooner.

**SECURITY** – The key question about these wars is whether they've achieved their fundamental goal – improving long-term U.S. security – and the lukewarm answers underscore their challenges winning broader support.

Fifty-three percent of Americans say the war in Afghanistan has improved the long-term security of the United States – a majority, but hardly an overpowering one. Fifty percent say the same

about the war in Iraq. And many fewer – 25 percent in both cases – say these wars have done “a great deal” to contribute to long-term security – a weak result given their costs in lives and lucre.



It matters: Among people who say the Afghanistan war has improved U.S. security, 68 percent also say the war has been worth fighting. In Iraq, among those who see security gains, 72 percent say that war’s been worth it. Among those who see no security gains, however, the sense that these wars have been worth fighting plummets, to 14 percent in Afghanistan, 10 percent in Iraq.

Along similar lines, those who view the wars as worth fighting are far more likely to want to keep American forces in Afghanistan beyond Obama’s intended withdrawal starting next summer, and to oppose removing all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by the end of next month.

FORCES – In May the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan exceeded those in Iraq for the first time, nearing 100,000 in Afghanistan as the drawdown progressed in Iraq. Obama’s increased the commitment of U.S. forces in Afghanistan by more than 50,000 since taking office, including the much-awaited policy revamp he announced in a speech at West Point on Dec. 1. The deployment in Iraq, meanwhile, has declined from its peak of more than 170,000 in 2008.

Casualties likewise are up in Afghanistan and down in Iraq. U.S. military deaths in Afghanistan have jumped from fewer than 100 per year through 2006 to more than 300 in 2009 and nearly

250 so far year, including eight in attacks Tuesday night and Wednesday. In Iraq, U.S. fatalities have fallen from more than 800 a year through 2007 to about 150 in 2009 and fewer than 50 so far this year.

**POLITICS** – Republicans consistently have been more likely to support these wars, and that remains the case – 64 percent say the war in Iraq has been worth fighting, and 57 percent say that about the war in Afghanistan, compared with 29 and 36 percent, respectively, of Democrats.

But there have been crosscurrents in their directions as the wars have come under Obama’s leadership. The number of Democrats who say the war in Iraq has been worth fighting has gained 17 points from a year ago, while unchanged among Republicans. And the number of Republicans who say the war in Afghanistan’s been worth fighting has lost 14 points in the same period, while holding steadier among Democrats.

	Iraq war: worth fighting		
	7/10	7/09	Change
Democrats	29%	12	+17
Independents	40	37	+3
Republicans	64	65	-1

	Afghanistan war: worth fighting		
	7/10	7/09	Change
Democrats	36%	41	-5
Independents	41	51	-10
Republicans	57	71	-14

Still, out of eight issues tested in this poll, Republicans give Obama their highest marks for his handling of Afghanistan and Iraq – 35 and 36 percent approval, respectively, vs. no more than 19 percent on any other specific issue and just 15 percent for his job performance overall.

**TREND** – Approval of Obama’s work on the situation in Afghanistan fell from 63 percent a few months after he took office – the honeymoon phase – to 45 percent last fall. It then rose after his war policy speech, largely with increased support from Republicans, to 56 percent this April. Now, as noted, it’s turned back down, an 11-point drop to 45 percent.

Further, in April equal numbers of Americans “strongly” approved and strongly disapproved of Obama’s work on Afghanistan. Now strong disapprovers are more prevalent, by an 11-point margin.

Increased violence isn’t the only reason for this change; Obama’s in a slump more generally, chiefly given public discontent with the economy, and there’s a spillover effect. Violence is down in Iraq, but his approval rating for handling that war, 71 percent in the honeymoon period shortly after he took office, is down to 48 percent today – about the same as the drop in his overall approval in this period.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone July 7-11, 2010, among a random national sample of 1,288 adults, including landline and cell-phone-

only respondents. Results for the full sample have a 3.5-point error margin. Click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, PA.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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).

\*= less than 0.5 percent

1, 2 a-b and 2 e-h previously released.

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling [ITEM]? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

7/11/10 - Summary Table\*

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
c. The situation in Afghanistan	45	20	25	45	14	31	10
d. The situation in Iraq	48	23	25	42	16	26	10

\*Half sample asked items c-d.

Trend:

c. The situation in Afghanistan

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
7/11/10	45	20	25	45	14	31	10
4/25/10	56	20	36	36	16	20	7
3/26/10	53	25	29	35	15	20	12
1/15/10	50	22	28	45	18	27	6
12/13/09	52	24	28	44	13	32	4
11/15/09	45	23	23	48	16	32	6
10/18/09	45	22	23	47	17	31	7
9/12/09	55	23	33	37	17	21	7
8/17/09	60	25	35	33	14	19	7
7/18/09	62	33	29	30	13	17	8
4/24/09	63	NA	NA	26	NA	NA	11

d. The situation in Iraq

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
7/11/10	48	23	25	42	16	26	10
4/24/09	71	NA	NA	21	NA	NA	8

3-27 previously released or held for release.

28. 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 Iraq was worth fighting, or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Worth fighting -----			--- Not worth fighting ---			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
7/11/10	42	26	16	55	13	42	3
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	13	1

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

29. Do you think the war in Iraq has or has not contributed to the long-term security of the United States? IF YES: Has it contributed to the long-term security of the United States a great deal, or somewhat?

	----- Contributed -----			Has	No
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat	not	opinion
7/11/10	50	25	25	46	4
12/9/07	46	26	20	50	4
9/7/07	44	NA	NA	52	4
6/1/07	44	NA	NA	53	3
12/11/06	46	25	21	51	3
10/8/06	48	26	21	50	3
9/7/06	50	28	21	47	3
6/25/06	51	28	22	48	1
5/15/06	48	28	20	51	2
4/9/06	52	32	20	46	1
3/5/06	50	28	23	48	2
1/26/06	53	32	21	45	1
12/18/05	54	32	22	44	2
11/2/05	46	25	21	52	2
8/28/05	49	29	20	49	2
6/26/05	52	31	22	46	1
6/5/05	47	24	22	52	1
3/13/05	52	29	23	46	2
1/16/05	50	30	21	47	3
12/19/04	51	27	23	46	4
10/3/04 LV	53	32	22	42	4
9/26/04 RV	54	36	18	42	4
9/8/04 RV	57	36	22	40	3
8/29/04 RV	54	33	20	42	4
7/25/04	51	32	19	45	3
6/20/04	51	28	23	46	2
5/23/04	54	30	24	43	3
4/18/04	57	33	24	40	3
3/7/04	57	29	29	40	3
2/11/04	58	32	26	38	4
1/18/04	59	34	25	38	3
12/21/03	62	34	29	34	4
7/10/03*	62	33	29	35	3

\*"did or did not"

30. (HALF SAMPLE) As you may know the United States will be removing all combat troops from Iraq by the end of August, and keeping no more than 50,000 non-combat troops there in a supporting role. Do you support or oppose the removal of all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by the end of next month?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
7/11/10	71	26	2

31. (HALF SAMPLE) As you may know, the United States will be removing all combat troops from Iraq by the end of August, and keeping no more than 50,000 non-combat troops there in a supporting role. Do you support or oppose keeping up to 50,000 non-combat troops in Iraq in a supporting role?

	Support	Oppose	No opinion
7/11/10	60	37	3

32. 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 has been worth fighting, or not? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Worth fighting -----			--- Not worth fighting ---			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
7/11/10	43	24	19	53	15	38	4
6/6/10	44	26	18	53	13	41	3
4/25/10	45	26	19	52	15	38	3
12/13/09	52	33	19	44	10	35	4
11/15/09	44	30	14	52	14	38	4
10/18/09*	47	28	19	49	13	36	4
9/12/09	46	28	18	51	14	37	3
8/17/09	47	31	15	51	10	41	3
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

\*10/18/09 "was" and "has been" wording half sampled. Previous "was."

33. Do you think the war in Afghanistan has or has not contributed to the long-term security of the United States? IF YES: Has it contributed to the long-term security of the United States a great deal, or somewhat?

	----- Contributed -----			Has not	No opinion
	NET	Great deal	Somewhat		
7/11/10	53	25	28	44	3

34. Obama has said U.S. forces will start withdrawing from Afghanistan in summer 2011. Do you think they should start withdrawing sooner than that, later than that, or is this schedule about right?

	Sooner	Later	About right	Withdraw	No
				now (vol.)	opinion
7/11/10	31	18	45	1	5
12/13/09	31	19	39	1	9

35. Do you think the Afghan government should negotiate a settlement with the Taliban in which they are allowed to hold political offices if they agree to stop fighting, or



do you think the Afghan government should continue to fight the Taliban and not enter into these negotiations?

	Negotiate with Taliban	Continue fighting/ Do not negotiate	No opinion
7/11/10	37	51	12

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