

World Public Says Iraq War has Increased Global Terrorist Threat

February 28, 2006

Favors Early Withdrawal from Iraq

But Not If New Government Asks Forces to Stay

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

A new global poll finds that in 33 of 35 countries surveyed, the most common view is that the war in Iraq has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world. On average, 60 percent of the respondents have this perception, while just 12 percent think the Iraq war has decreased the likelihood of terrorist attacks; another 15 percent think it has had no effect either way.

The poll of 41,856 people was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. The 35-nation fieldwork was coordinated by GlobeScan and completed between October 2005 and January 2006.

Steven Kull, director of PIPA, comments, “Though the Bush administration has framed the intervention in Iraq as a means of fighting terrorism, all around the world—including in the US—most people view it as having increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks. The near unanimity of this assessment among countries is remarkable in global public opinion polling.”

Consistent with this uneasiness about the war in Iraq, more people than not in 20 of 35 countries think US-led forces should withdraw from Iraq in the next few months, while in nine countries, more people think US-led forces should remain until the situation is stabilized. Six countries are divided. On average, 50 percent favor an early withdrawal, while 35 percent favor remaining until the situation is stabilized.

The countries most eager for US coalition withdrawal are Argentina (80%), Egypt (76%), China (67%), Brazil (67%), Saudi Arabia (64%) and Senegal (64%). The countries most inclined to favor the US remaining until Iraq is stable are the US (58%), Afghanistan (58%), Australia (57%), Great Britain (56%) and Germany (55%).

Overview of Responses

-Number of Countries in Which a Majority or Plurality Takes Each Position-

Do you think the US, Britain and their allies should pull their troops out of Iraq in the next few months or that they should stay in Iraq until it becomes stable?



What if the Iraqi government asks the allied forces to stay? In that case, would you favor the US, Britain, and their allies staying or pulling out?



Do you think that the war in Iraq has increased, decreased, or had no effect on the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world?



As you know, the US, Britain and some allies removed the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003. Do you think that this was the right decision or a mistake?



BBC, 12/2005

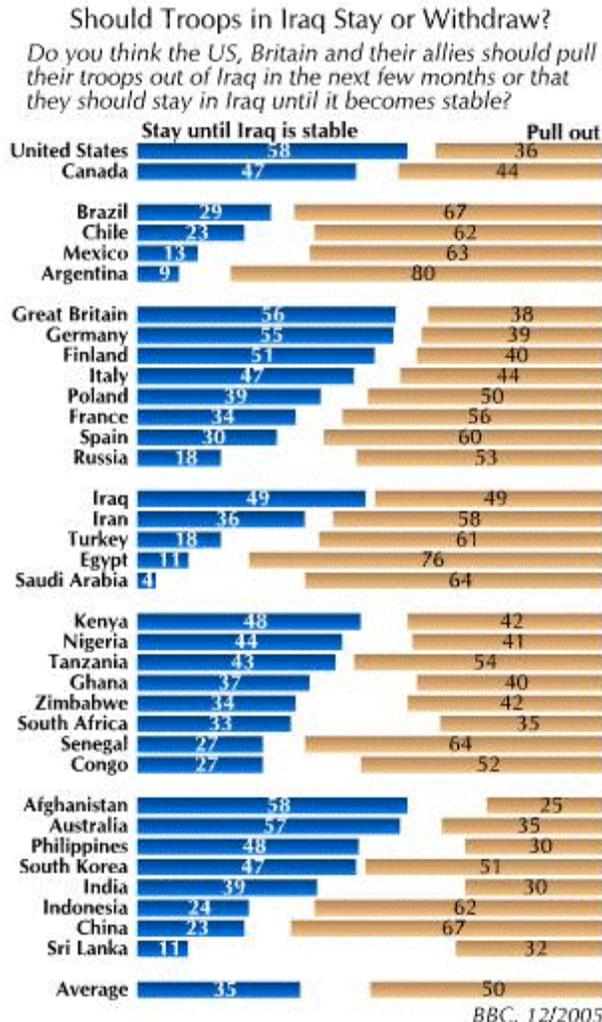
However, if the new Iraqi government asks US-led forces to remain until the situation is stabilized, the picture changes sharply. In that case, more people in 21 of 34 countries asked this question think the coalition should stay; while in 11 countries more think the coalition should leave even if asked to stay. Two countries were divided. On average, 48 percent think US-led forces should agree to stay at the request of the new Iraqi government, while 32 percent stand by the view that, even if asked, US-led forces should pull out in the next few months.

While nearly all countries reject the idea that the Iraq war was an effective part of a larger war against terrorism, more countries than not also think it was a mistake to remove Saddam Hussein. There are 21 countries where more people view the 2003 removal of Saddam Hussein as a mistake, while in 11 countries more people view it as the right decision. Three countries are divided. On average, 45 percent view removing Saddam as a mistake, while 36 percent view it as the right decision.

GlobeScan President Doug Miller concludes, "It's official. Citizens worldwide think Western leaders have made a fundamental mistake in their war on terror by invading Iraq. And, short of the Iraqi government asking them to stay longer, people think the troops should leave."

Iraqis: Naturally one of the most interesting questions is how Iraqis feel about the presence of US-led forces. Iraqis are sharply divided, with 49 percent favoring an early withdrawal and 49 percent favoring US-led forces remaining until Iraq is stable. If the new Iraqi government asks the forces to stay, support for doing so rises only slightly, to 53 percent.

Looking back at the removal of Saddam in 2003, Iraqis are easily the most enthusiastic about it, with 74 percent saying it was the right decision. At the same time, 75 percent believe that it has increased the risk of terrorist attacks around the world.



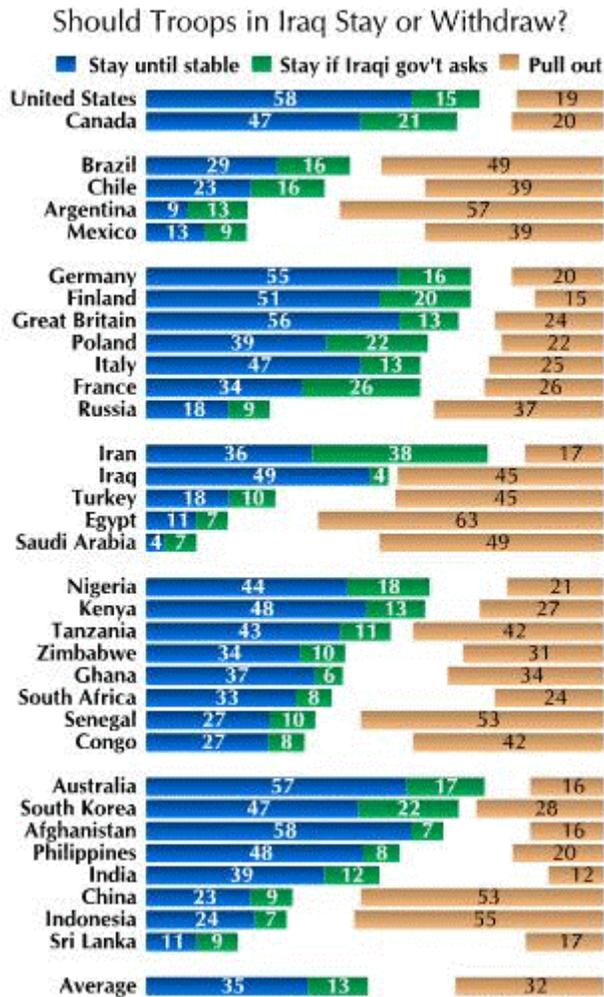
Countries with Forces in Iraq: A key question

is what the publics of countries that have troops participating with the US-led forces in Iraq believe those forces should do now (the question asked about US, British and allied forces in general, not about any specific country's forces). Six countries polled have troops in Iraq. In three, majorities favor remaining until Iraq is stabilized—the US (58%), Great Britain (56%) and Australia (57%). In Italy, views are divided (44% pull out, 47% remain) and in Poland, a plurality of 50 percent favors pulling out while 39 percent favors remaining. In South Korea a slight majority (51%) favors pulling out while 47 percent favors staying.

If Iraq's new government were to ask the forces to stay, support for staying jumps to a majority in all six of these countries—Australia (74%), US (73%), UK (69%), South Korea (69%), Poland (61%) and Italy (60%).

It should be noted, though, that support for US-led forces remaining in Iraq does not necessarily mean that public opinion in each of these countries favors their own country's troops remaining. Indeed, polling in countries with forces in Iraq has often found public opposition to contributing troops.

Americans: As mentioned, 58 percent of Americans say that the US should remain in Iraq until Iraq is stabilized, rising to 73 percent if the new government requests it. However, 55 percent of Americans believe that the war has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks and just 21 percent say it has decreased this likelihood. A majority of Americans (60%) say that removing Saddam Hussein was the right thing, but it should be noted that other polls that have asked about the war itself, rather than about removing Saddam, have found modest majorities saying that the war was a mistake.



BBC, 12/2005

Iraq's Neighbors: Included in the poll were five of Iraq's Islamic neighbors—Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Egypt and Afghanistan. Iraq's

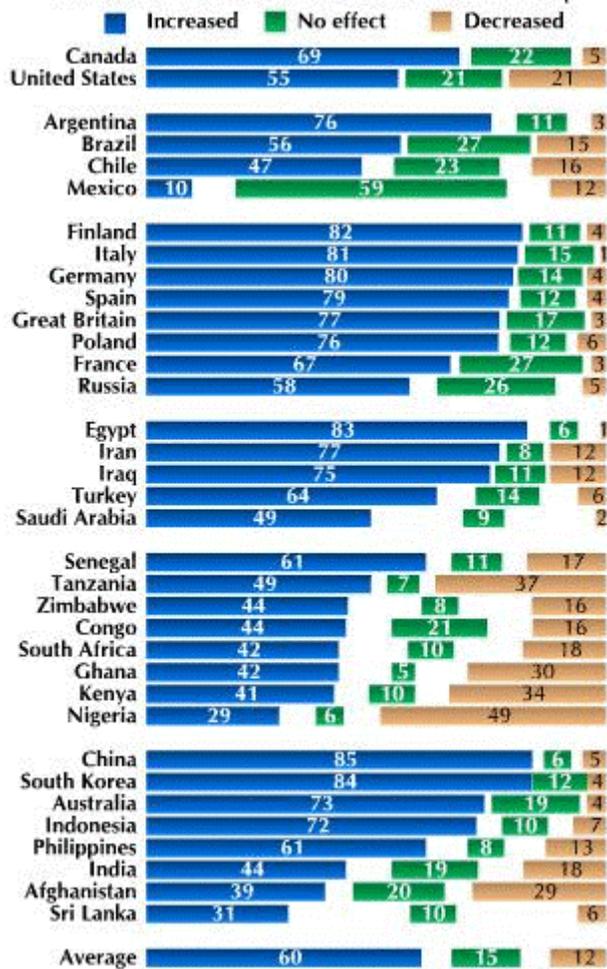
immediate neighbors as well as Egypt all have clear majorities calling for withdrawal: 76 percent in Egypt; 64 percent in Saudi Arabia; 61 percent in Turkey and 58 percent in Iran (though over a third, 36 percent, prefer that the coalition remain). In Afghanistan, however, a clear majority wants to see the coalition remain (58% to 25%).

Views are quite mixed among Iraq's neighbors about the significance of the new Iraqi government asking US-led forces to stay. In Iran, support for forces remaining jumps 38 points from 36 percent to 74 percent—a finding that highlights how important considerations of sovereignty are in Iranians' thinking. Other countries in the region do not share this response. Even with an Iraqi government request, only 11 percent of Saudis think the coalition should stay (leave, 49%), 18 percent of Egyptians (leave, 63%), and only 28 percent of Turks (leave, 45%). In Afghanistan, though, the factor of an Iraqi government request means that support for the coalition staying goes up from 58 percent to 65 percent.

When asked how the intervention had affected the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world, all neighboring countries lean to the view that it had increased it. This is especially true of Egypt (83%) and Iran (77%). Turks agree only a little less forcibly (64%). In Saudi Arabia, a 49 percent plurality also thinks so, but 40 percent preferred not to answer the question. Afghans have the most mixed views: 39 percent think the war increased the likelihood of attacks, 29 percent think it decreased the likelihood and 20 percent think it made no difference.

Iraq's big 74 percent majority thinking that removing Saddam Hussein was the right decision has no parallel in neighboring countries. The most support for this position is in Afghanistan, where 40 percent agree—but this is actually a narrow plurality, because 35 percent of Afghans think it was a mistake. Among Saudis, a very slim plurality—36 percent to 32 percent—regard the coalition's removal of Saddam as a mistake, with a large percentage not weighing in on the question. In Iran, this plurality is more robust (48% mistake to 33%). Turkey and Egypt are clearly opposed, with 55 and 54 percent, respectively, calling it a mistake and only 22 and 20 percent the right decision.

Threat of Terrorism since the War in Iraq



BBC, 12/2005

Europeans: Views in European countries on

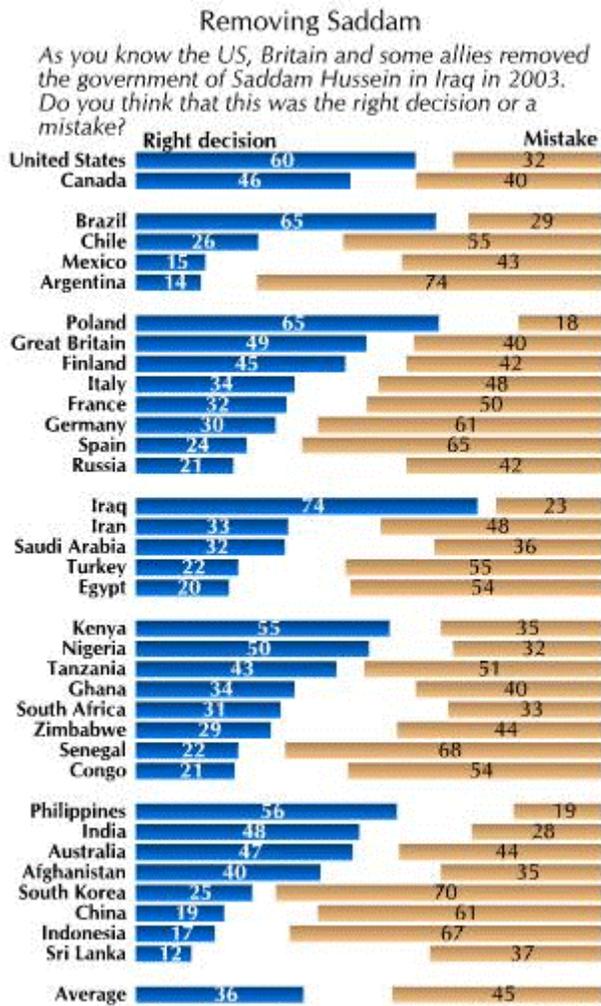
Iraq are more varied at this point than conventional wisdom suggests. Perhaps most striking, a 55 percent majority of Germans say the coalition should now remain until Iraq is stable, even though three in five say it was a mistake to remove Saddam in the first place. On the other hand, a 50 percent plurality of Poles think the coalition should now leave (39% stay), though about two-thirds think removing Saddam was the right decision in 2003. The other countries that think the coalition should leave Iraq early are Spain (60%), France (56%) and Russia (53%). Countries besides Germany where majorities think the coalition should stay until stable are Britain (56%, leave 38%) and Finland (51%, leave 40%). Italians are divided (47% stay, 44% leave early).

Views shift sharply if the Iraqi government asks the coalition to stay. Sixty percent of French say that under this condition, the coalition should stay—up from 34 percent. Similarly, among Poles, 61 percent say that if asked, the coalition should stay, up from 39 percent. In three other countries, majorities favoring the coalition staying were increased: in Germany, from 55 percent to 71 percent; in Britain, from 56 percent to 69 percent; and Finland, from 51 percent to 71 percent.

It is a consensus view in Europe that the Iraq war has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks worldwide. A full three-quarters or more say this in six of the eight European countries polled:

Finland (82%), Italy (81%), Germany (80%), Spain (79%), Britain (77%) and Poland (76%). Two-thirds agree in France (67%), as does a lesser majority in Russia (58%). Only 3 percent and 5 percent in France and Russia, respectively, say it has decreased the likelihood of terrorist attacks.

Views about whether it was a mistake to remove Saddam Hussein are a bit more varied. Of the eight European countries polled, five countries have majorities (2) or pluralities (3) who think it was a mistake for the US and Britain to remove Saddam Hussein's government: Spain (65%), Germany (61%), France (50%, 32% right decision), Italy (48%, 34% right), and Russia (42%, 21% right). In two countries, more think it was the right decision: Poland (65%) and Britain (49%, 40% mistake). Finland is divided (45% right decision, 42% mistake). Again, it should be noted that other polls that have asked about the war itself, as opposed to removing Saddam Hussein, have found larger percentages disapproving.



BBC, 12/2005

Latin America: Latin America has some of the largest majorities anywhere in the world favoring US-led forces withdrawing. The largest majority of all countries polled is found in Argentina, with 80 percent calling for withdrawal. Not far behind are Brazil (67%), Mexico (63%) and Chile (62%). Even if the new Iraqi government asks US-led forces to stay, in each country polled, with the exception of Chile,

which was evenly divided (39%), Latin Americans still lean toward withdrawal, though in distinctly smaller numbers: Argentina (57%), Brazil (49%), Mexico (39%).

Asked to assess the war, Latin American views show some interesting patterns. Though Brazilians show an eagerness for US-led forces to withdraw, 65 percent say that the decision to remove Saddam was right, while a plurality of Mexicans (43%) and majorities of Argentines (74%) and Chileans (55%) say it was wrong. While large majorities of Argentines (76%) and Brazilians (56%) and a plurality of Chileans (47%) say that the war has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks, most Mexicans (59%) say that it has had no effect either way.

Asia/Pacific: Asians are quite divided on what US-led forces should do at this point. Favoring an early pullout are large majorities of the Chinese (67%) and Indonesians (62%), a slight majority of South Koreans (51%) and a plurality of Sri Lankans (32% to 11%). On the other hand, majorities of Afghans (58%) and Australians (57%) and pluralities of Filipinos (48%) and Indians (39%) favor remaining until stability is established.

If the new Iraqi government asks US-led forces to stay, the Chinese (53%) and Indonesians (55%) mostly stick by their preference for withdrawal, Sri Lankans become divided (20% stay, 17% pull out), South Koreans shift to favor remaining—rising to a robust 69 percent—while the numbers favoring remaining rise to 74 percent in Australia, 65 percent in Afghanistan, 56 percent in the Philippines and 51 percent in India.

In every Asian country, a majority or plurality sees the war having increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks. But they divide on the question of whether it was a good idea to remove Saddam. Saying it was the right decision are a majority in the Philippines (56%), a clear plurality in India (48% to 28%) and a bare plurality in Afghanistan (40% to 35%). On the other hand, large majorities of South Koreans (70%), Chinese (61%) and Indonesians (67%) say it was a mistake, as do a plurality of Sri Lankans (37%). Curiously, Australians are divided on the question (47% right decision, 44% a mistake), though a clear majority (57%) favors US-led forces (which include Australians) remaining in Iraq.

Africa: Of the eight African countries polled, four favor the US pulling out early, one favors them remaining until stable and three are divided. Those who favor pulling out early are a majority of Senegalese (64%), Tanzanians (54%) and Congolese (52%) and a plurality of Zimbabweans (42% pull out, 34% remain). Only Kenyans lean toward having the forces remain (48% remain, 42% pull out). Divided views are found in Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa.

If the Iraqi government asks the forces to stay, views shift only modestly, but enough so that six of the eight countries favor forces remaining: majorities in Nigeria (62%), Kenya (61%) and Tanzania (54%); pluralities in Zimbabwe (44%), Ghana (43%) and South Africa (41%). A majority of Senegalese (53%) and a plurality of Congolese (42%) stand by their preference for withdrawal.

In Nigeria, a plurality of 49 percent says that the likelihood of terrorist attacks has decreased, and 50 percent say that removing Saddam was the right decision. A majority in Kenya (55%) also

endorses the removal of Saddam, though a plurality of 41 percent thinks terrorism has increased as a result.

Otherwise, in all African countries a plurality or majority says that the war has increased the likelihood of terrorism (Senegal 61%, Tanzania 49%, and Zimbabwe 44%, Democratic Republic of the Congo 44%, South Africa 42% and Ghana 42%) and, except for South Africa which is divided, that removing Saddam was a mistake (Senegal 68%, Democratic Republic of the Congo 54%, Tanzania 51%, Zimbabwe 44% and Ghana 40%).