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U.S. Public Beliefs and Attitudes About Iraq

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**PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL
POLICY ATTITUDES (PIPA)**

A joint program of the Center on Policy
Attitudes and the Center for International and
Security Studies at the University of Maryland



**Knowledge
NETWORKS**

A polling, social science, and
market research firm based in
Menlo Park, California

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The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) is a joint program of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Center on Policy Attitudes. PIPA undertakes research on American attitudes in both the public and in the policymaking community toward a variety of international and foreign policy issues. It seeks to disseminate its findings to members of government, the press, and the public as well as academia.

Knowledge Networks is a polling, social science, and market research firm based in Menlo Park, California. Knowledge Networks uses a large-scale nationwide research panel which is randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and is subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access).

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), at the University of Maryland's School for Public Affairs, pursues policy-oriented scholarship on major issues facing the United States in the global arena. Using its research, forums, and publications, CISSM links the University and the policy community to improve communication between scholars and practitioners.

The Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) is an independent non-profit organization of social science researchers devoted to increasing understanding of public and elite attitudes shaping contemporary public policy. Using innovative research methods, COPA seeks not only to examine overt policy opinions or positions, but to reveal the underlying values, assumptions, and feelings that sustain opinions.

Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, Evan Lewis, and Stephen Weber designed the questionnaires and wrote the analysis.

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Meredith Perry, Roman Gershkovich and Batsuuri Haltar contributed to the production of the report.

The search of existing poll data was done with the aid of the Roper iPOLL database.

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INTRODUCTION

When historians of the future look back on the current period, the Iraq war will no doubt stand out as a remarkably strange episode. An extraordinarily powerful country with unprecedented intelligence capabilities went to war based on intelligence that later proved to be wrong. Given the human, political and economic costs of the war, it is not surprising that it may be difficult for citizens of the country to grasp that this has occurred. Indeed, earlier polling by PIPA/Knowledge Networks (most recently in March) and other organizations have found a majority of the public has persisted in believing that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or a major program for developing them, and that Iraq was providing substantial support to al Qaeda. Such beliefs were also found to be highly related to support for the decision to go to war.

Recently, though, there have been new developments. The Senate Intelligence Committee issued a major report on failures of prewar intelligence, concluding that immediately before the war Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction or a major program to develop them. In late July, the 9/11 Commission made its final report about the 2001 terrorism attacks, finding that, while there had been some contact between Iraq and al Qaeda, that Iraq had not given substantial support to al Qaeda. And, of course, more time has gone by during which no new evidence has emerged confirming the original assumptions for going to war.

Research conducted by PIPA/Knowledge Networks in 2003 and early 2004 indicated that many members of the public continued to believe that, just before the war, Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and was providing support to al Qaeda. Now, after the findings of the Senate Intelligence Committee and the 9/11 Commission, what do people think? What position does the public feel the Bush Administration is taking on these two issues that were important elements of the war's rationale? Do people feel they have been intentionally misled?

In addition, this new poll has sought to track the public's image of world public opinion on the US going to war with Iraq, which was found earlier to be highly related to attitudes about the war. Does it matter what the world thinks? Also, what does the public see to be the consequences of the war on the life of the average Iraqi, on world public opinion, and on US efforts to fight terrorism? What are the chances of success in Iraq? Is the American public aware of the level of casualties suffered by the military in Iraq? What about the number of Iraqi civilians killed?

To answer these and related questions, PIPA/KN conducted a nationwide poll from August 5-11, 2004 with a sample of 733 Americans. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.7%. The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access, whether or not they previously had internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.

Funding for this research was provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Ford Foundation.

Key findings of the study were:

1. Perceptions of Bush Administration's Positions re Pre-War Iraq

A large majority of Americans perceive that the Bush administration is currently saying Iraq, just before the war, had actual WMD and was giving substantial support to al Qaeda3

2. Beliefs About Pre-War Iraq

The percentage of the public agreeing with the perceived positions of the Bush administration has declined. Now, approximately half believe Iraq was providing substantial support to al Qaeda, or had WMD or a major WMD program. Such beliefs are highly correlated with support for the decision to go to war with Iraq.5

3. Perceptions of Expert Opinion on Pre War Iraq

Changes in public perceptions of pre-war Iraq have been accompanied by changes in how the public perceives expert opinion. A growing percentage perceive most experts as saying that Iraq did not have WMD or was not providing substantial support to al Qaeda, but this is still not a majority perception.8

4. Perceptions of World Public Opinion on Iraq War

Growing numbers perceive that world public opinion opposes the US going to war with Iraq, so that half now have this perception. Other says views are evenly divided, or that world public opinion approves the war. Such perceptions are highly related to support for the war. A large majority says that the war has worsened the US image in the world, and most say that this is important 10

5. Support for Iraq War

Attitudes about the Iraq war have grown cooler. Support for the decision to go to war with Iraq has eroded, so that half now say it was the wrong decision and only a third says it was the best thing to do. A majority says that it would have been better for the war on terrorism to pursue al Qaeda and stabilize Afghanistan, rather than to pursue the war in Iraq. A plurality says it is not confident that the operation will ultimately succeed, and half think the conflict is creating more terrorists planning to attack the US (only a quarter think it is reducing them). However, a plurality thinks the war has improved life for the average Iraqi 11

6. Maintaining US Troops in Iraq

The percentage wanting to reduce US troops has risen to slightly over half, but only a minority favors withdrawing all US troops. A slight majority thinks that the majority of the Iraqi people want the US to leave Iraq. Contrary to common assumptions, desire to withdraw US troops does not appear to be related to the number of US military fatalities 14

7. Factors Related to Opposition to War and Desire to Withdraw Troops

A multivariate regression analysis found that the most powerful factors related to the belief that going to war was the wrong decision were: lower confidence that the operation would succeed; perceptions that Iraq did not have WMD (or even a major program) and did not support al Qaeda; and the perception that world public opinion opposes the US going to war. The desire to withdraw US troops was most related to perceptions that the Iraqi people want us to leave, and to low confidence in the success of the operation. 16

8. Iraqi Civilian Fatalities

On average, Americans' estimates of the number of Iraqi civilian fatalities have risen sharply since March, but are still much lower than expert estimates. Those who perceive higher numbers of Iraqi civilian fatalities are significantly more likely to oppose the war; however, they are not more likely to want to withdraw US troops. 16

9. NATO Command

A very strong majority thinks that NATO’s new training mission to Iraq should be under NATO command, not US command17

10. Beliefs About Iraq and Attitudes Toward President Bush

Though more Americans say that the president’s handling of Iraq will decrease rather than increase their likelihood of voting for him, there is not a clear majority holding him responsible for presenting incorrect information in the run-up to the war. This is consistent with the fact that half still believe that Iraq had at least a major WMD program and was providing substantial support to al Qaeda. Among those who do not have such beliefs, large majorities do believe the president deliberately misled the public in the run-up to the war and say they are less likely to vote for him as a result of his handling of Iraq.18

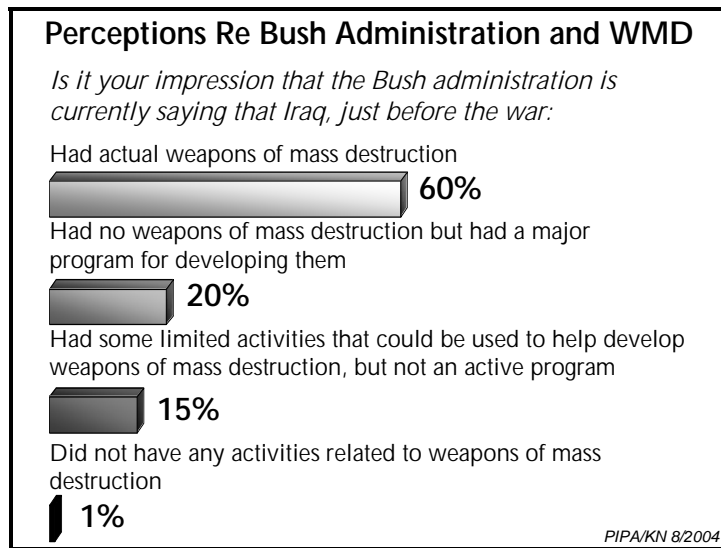
FINDINGS

1. Perceptions of Bush Administration’s Positions re Pre-War Iraq

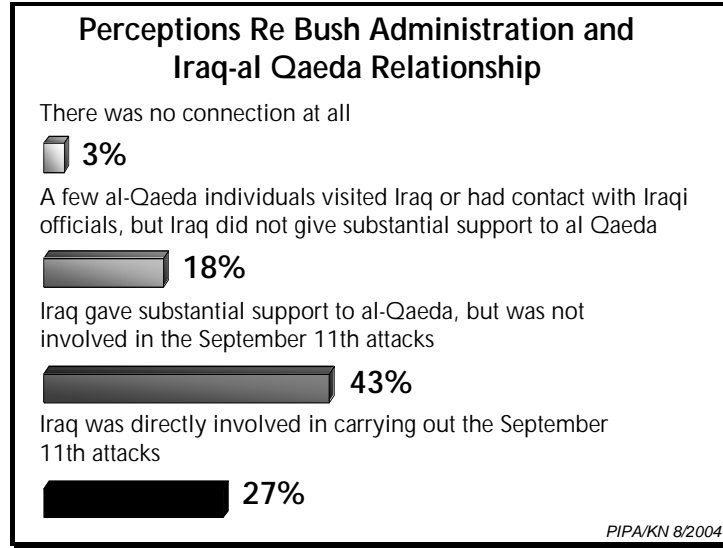
A large majority of Americans perceive that the Bush administration is currently saying Iraq, just before the war, had actual WMD and was giving substantial support to al Qaeda.

A large majority perceive the Bush administration making assertions about pre-war Iraq that are diametrically opposed to the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission and the Senate Intelligence Committee.

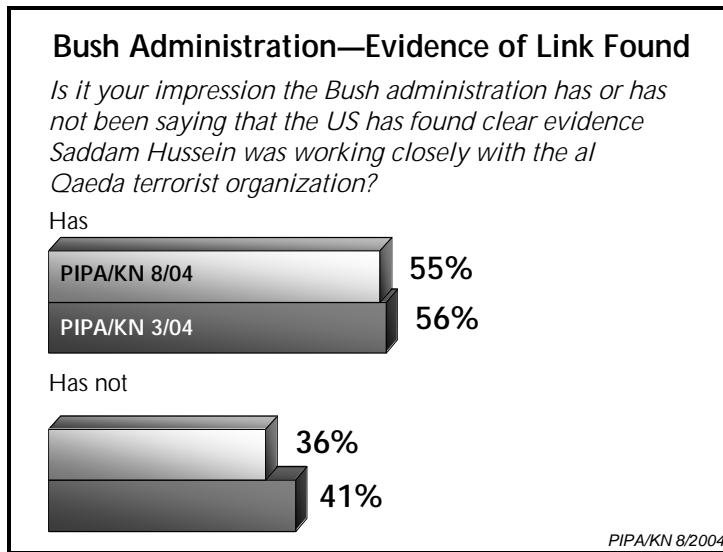
Eighty percent perceive the administration as “currently saying that Iraq, just before the war, had actual weapons of mass destruction” (60%) or that it had a major WMD program (20%). Only 16% thought the administration was saying that Iraq only had limited activities that could relate to WMD (15%) or that it had nothing (1%).



On the issue of al Qaeda, there was a similar response. Seventy percent perceived the administration as currently saying Iraq gave substantial support to al-Qaeda (43%) or was directly involved in the September 11 attacks (27%). Only 21% heard the administration as saying that a few al Qaeda individuals visited Iraq, but Iraq did not give substantial support (18%), or as saying there was no connection at all (3%).



Equally striking, asked “Is it your impression the Bush administration has or has not been saying that the US has found *clear evidence* Saddam Hussein was working closely with the al Qaeda terrorist organization?” (emphasis added) 55% said they thought the administration has, while 36% said it has not.



There appears to be little movement on this impression. Asked the same question in March 2004, 56% said they thought the administration has been saying evidence of a close working relationship had been found, while the number saying that the administration had not been saying this was even higher then, at 41%.

Are People Just Hearing What They Want to Hear?

Naturally, the question arises whether perceptions of what the Bush administration are saying are simply a function of people hearing what they want to hear to confirm their bias.

Were this true, respondents should have varied by their political party. However, people of different parties varied little on these perception questions. Fifty-seven percent of Republicans, 65% of

Democrats and 60% of independents all thought the Bush administration is currently saying that Iraq had WMD before the war. Seventy-two percent of Republicans, 74% of Democrats and 72% of independents thought the Bush administration is saying Iraq was either giving al Qaeda substantial support or was directly involved in 9/11. (However, only 15% of Republicans thought the administration is saying Iraq was involved in 9/11, while 35% of Democrats and 31% of independents have this impression.) And 65% of Republicans, 51% of Democrats and 56% of independents thought the administration has been saying the US has found clear evidence Saddam Hussein was working closely with al Qaeda.

Are People Simply Not Paying Attention?

Another possible explanation of why people have these perceptions of the Bush administration may be that people are simply not paying enough attention. If so, those who that are paying attention to the news on these issues would be less likely to say that the Bush administration was making such assertions.

However, this did not turn out to be the case. We first identified a better informed subgroup of respondents that correctly answered three factual questions:

- They gave estimates of US military fatalities in Iraq that were no more than 100 deaths away from the most frequently reported number at fielding time (900);
- They correctly said that the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that Iraq had only limited activities before the war that could be used to develop WMD, but not an active program;
- They correctly said that the 9/11 commission found that there had been contacts between al Qaeda individuals and Iraqi officials, but Iraq did not give al Qaeda substantial support.

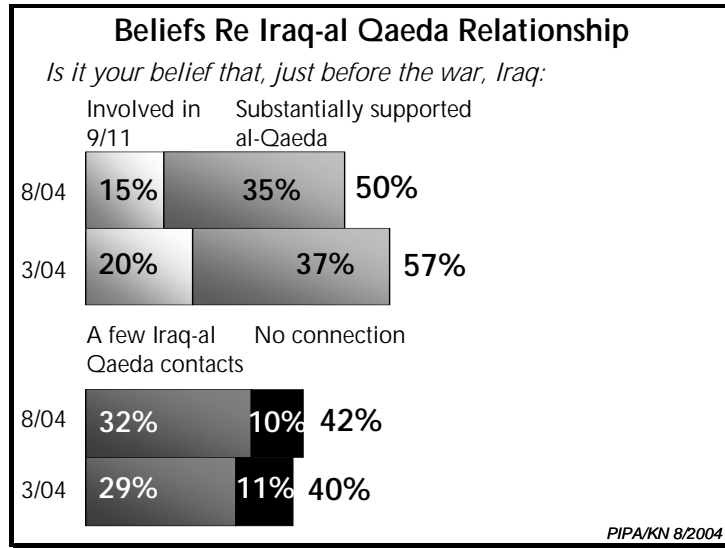
Ten percent of the sample answered all three questions correctly, making up a sub-group of the better informed. Seventy-six percent of the better informed thought the Bush administration is currently saying either that Iraq gave substantial support to al Qaeda, or that it was involved in 9/11—as compared to 70% in the full sample. (However, only 24% of the better-informed thought the Bush administration is saying Iraq was involved in 9/11; a higher 27% of the full sample thought this.) Among the better informed, a majority of 57% thought the Bush administration is currently saying that Iraq had WMD before the war—only slightly less than in the full sample (60%). Consequently, it appears that having more information on current news about Iraq does not change the overall picture Americans have of the Bush administration's statements on these matters.

2. Beliefs About Pre-War Iraq

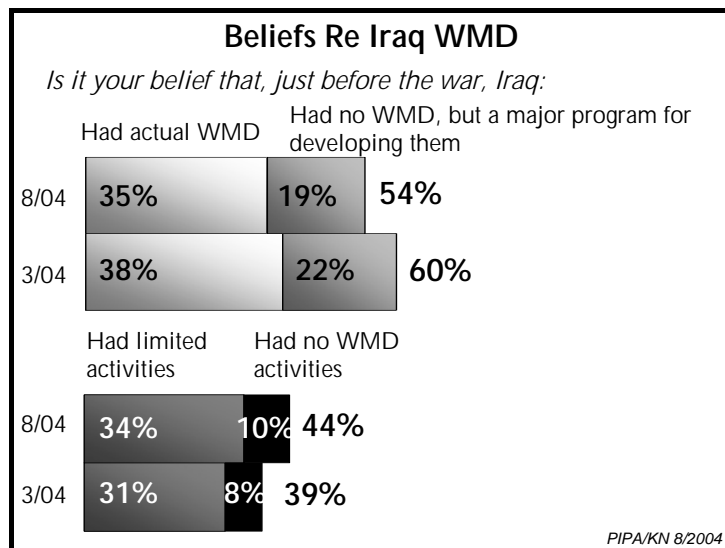
The percentage of the public agreeing with the perceived positions of the Bush administration has declined. Now, approximately half believe Iraq was providing substantial support to al Qaeda, or had WMD or a major WMD program. Such beliefs are highly correlated with support for the decision to go to war with Iraq.

Since the end of the war majorities of the public have consistently followed the president's lead and believed what they perceived the president to be saying. However, these majorities appear to be eroding. The percentage saying that Iraq was giving substantial support to al Qaeda has dropped from 57% in March to 50% today. The percentage saying that Iraq had WMDs or a major WMD program has dropped from 60% to 54%.

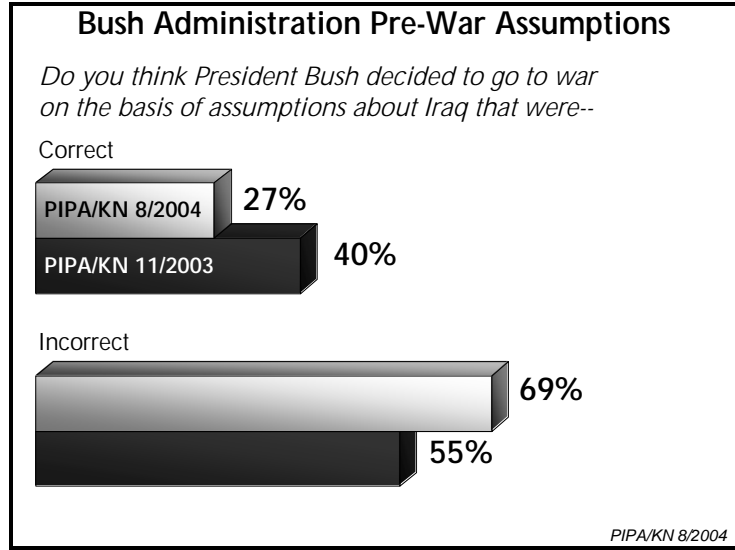
On the question of the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda, respondents were given four options. Fifty percent believed either that “Iraq gave substantial support to al Qaeda, but was not involved in the September 11th attacks” (35%), or that “Iraq was directly involved in the September 11th attacks” (15%). This is down from 57% in March, when 37% believed that Iraq gave al Qaeda substantial support and 20% believed that Iraq was directly involved in 9/11. In the current poll 42% believed either that “a few al Qaeda individuals visited Iraq or had contact with Iraqi officials, but Iraq did not provide substantial support to al Qaeda” (32%), or that “there was no connection at all” (10%).



Given four options on the question of WMD, 54% said they believed either that “just before the war, Iraq had actual weapons of mass destruction” (35%) or “had no WMD but had a major program for developing them” (19%). This is down six points from March, when 60% believed that Iraq had WMD (38%) or a major WMD program (22%). In the current poll 44% said they believed either that Iraq “had some limited activities that could be used to develop WMD, but not an active program” (34%), or “did not have any activities related to WMD” (10%).

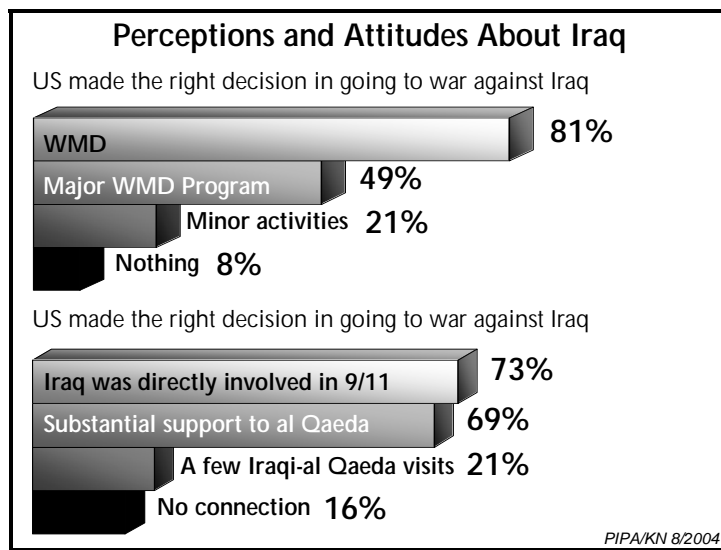


A large majority—69%—now say that the US went to war with Iraq based on incorrect assumptions. This is up from 55% when this question was asked in November 2003.



Such beliefs are highly correlated with support for the decision to go to war with Iraq. Among those who believed that Iraq had WMD 81% thought going to war was the right decision, and among those who thought it had a major WMD program 49% believed it was the right decision. Among those who thought that Iraq only had some WMD-related activities only 21% thought war was the right decision, and for those who thought there was no such activity just 8% thought it was the right decision.

Likewise, among those who thought Iraq was directly involved in the 9/11 attacks, 73% thought going to war was the right decision, and among those who thought Iraq was giving al Qaeda substantial support 69% thought this was the right decision. But among those who thought there were only a few contacts between Iraq and al Qaeda, 21% thought war was the right decision; and among those who thought there was no relationship at all, only 16% saw war as the right decision.



Are These Beliefs Derived From Political Bias?

Naturally the question arises whether these beliefs are indeed having an impact on attitudes or if the causal relationship may go the other way--i.e., they are the result of bias, with people seeking out or avoiding information to sustain beliefs that are consistent with their attitudes. Consistent with this idea, such beliefs are indeed more widespread among Republicans and those planning to vote for the president than in the general public. However, these beliefs are also widespread among independents and those who are not committed to a candidate¹—people who presumably have no prior political disposition to hold these beliefs.

A majority of independents (54%) and of uncommitted voters (51%) believed that before the war Iraq had either WMD or a major WMD program. Thirty-nine percent of independents and 38% of the uncommitted thought that the US has found clear evidence that Saddam Hussein was working closely with al Qaeda. And 46% of independents and 44% of the uncommitted believed that Iraq was either giving substantial support to al Qaeda or was directly involved in 9/11.

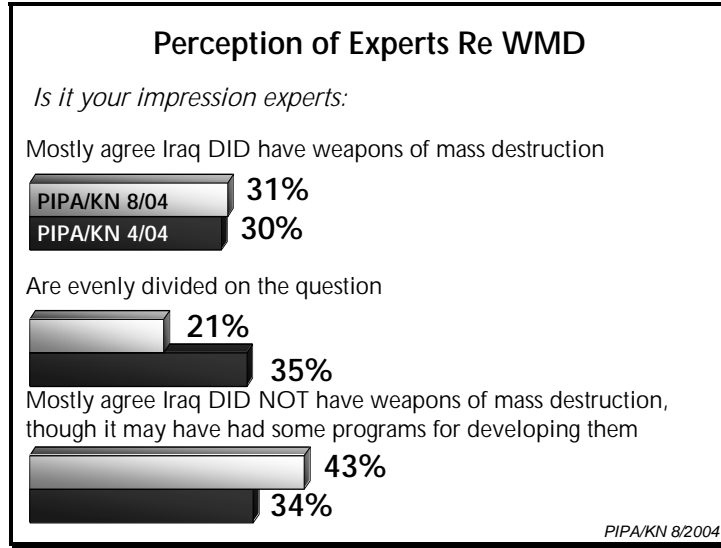
3. Perceptions of Expert Opinion on Pre War Iraq

Changes in public perceptions of pre-war Iraq have been accompanied by changes in how the public perceives expert opinion. A growing percentage perceive most experts as saying that Iraq did not have WMD or was not providing substantial support to al Qaeda, but this is still not a majority perception.

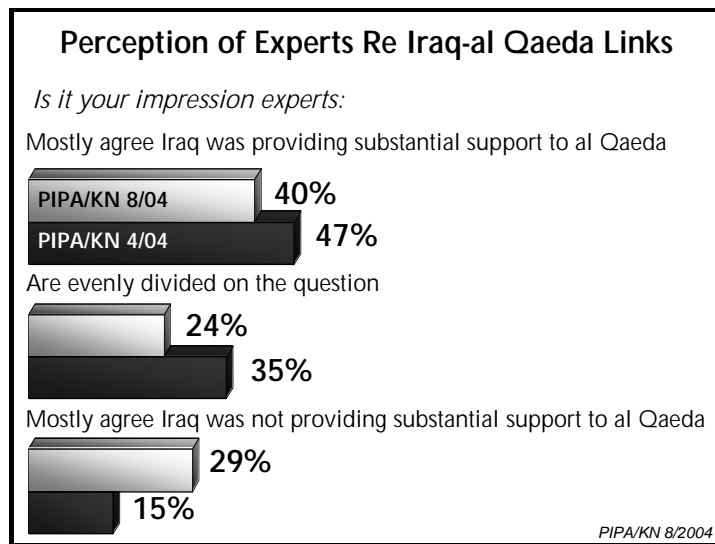
The newest findings indicate that awareness has grown that that most experts agree that Iraq did not have WMD before the war and that Iraq was not providing substantial support to al Qaeda; however, these are still not majority perceptions.

Forty-three percent of Americans now think most experts believe that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction just before the war—up modestly from 34% of the public who held that view in March 2004. Still, 52% of the public feels either that experts “mostly agree Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction” (31%) or that experts were evenly divided on the question (21%). But this is down sharply from March, when 65% had one or the other of these beliefs.

¹ In the present study, “uncommitted voters” are those who met one of the following conditions: they skipped the question asking whether they intended to vote for Bush or Kerry for president; or, they answered the question, but replied in the follow-up question that they were “not very certain” that they would vote that way; or, they called themselves independents in a party identification question, answered the question on voting for Bush or Kerry, and replied to the follow-up question *either* that they were “not very certain” or were “somewhat certain.” Such “uncommitted voters” were 20% of the sample.



On the question of whether Iraq was providing substantial support to al Qaeda, a growing but still small minority is aware most experts are saying it was not. Presently 29% are aware of this—up from just 15% in March. A plurality of 40% continues to believe that expert opinion mostly holds the view that Iraq *was* providing substantial support to al Qaeda, and an additional 24% assumes that views are evenly divided. Thus 64% are still misperceiving expert opinion, but this is fewer than the 82% who were doing so in March.



Senate Intelligence Committee and 9/11 Commission Reports

The Senate Intelligence Committee and the 9/11 Commission reports may have played a significant role in changing perceptions of expert opinion and beliefs about pre-war Iraq. As we shall see, there were strong correlations between perceptions of these reports and perceptions of expert opinion and, even more so, beliefs about pre-war Iraq. These correlations do not demonstrate a causal relationship. However, these correlations are very suggestive when seen in combination with other changes on various measures (some of which had been quite steady for twelve months or more).

Only 44% of respondents knew that the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that before the war Iraq did not have WMD or a major WMD program, and only 47% knew that the 9/11 Commission concluded that Iraq did not give substantial support to al Qaeda. However, those who *did* report knowing this had sharply different views of expert opinion than those who did not, and had very different views of prewar Iraq.

Among those who knew the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded Iraq did not have WMD or a major WMD program, 58% knew that most experts think Iraq did not have WMD (as compared to 32% among those who did not know), and 68% said they think this themselves (as compared to 23% among those who did not know what the Committee concluded).

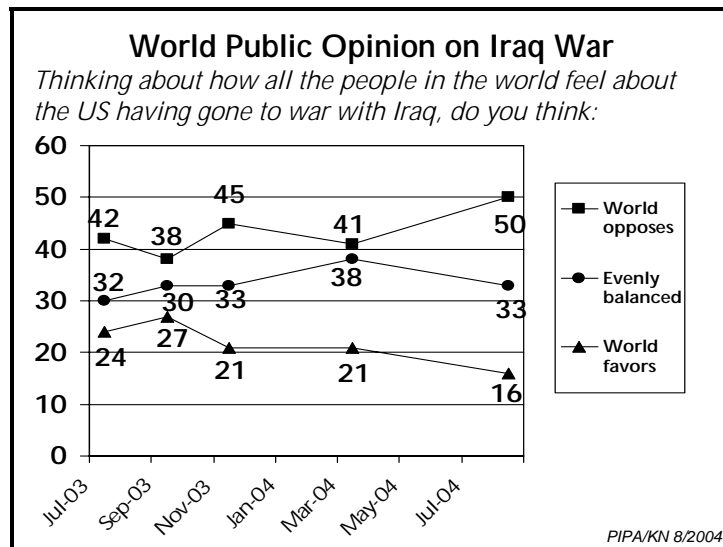
Among those who knew the 9/11 Commission concluded that Iraq had not provided substantial support to al Qaeda, 55% knew that most experts also think this (as compared to just 6% among those who did not know) and 73% reported thinking it themselves (as compared to 14% among those who did not know what the Committee concluded).

4. Perceptions of World Public Opinion on Iraq War

Growing numbers perceive that world public opinion opposes the US going to war with Iraq, so that half now have this perception. Other says views are evenly divided, or that world public opinion approves the war. Such perceptions are highly related to support for the war. A large majority says that the war has worsened the US image in the world, and most say that this is important.

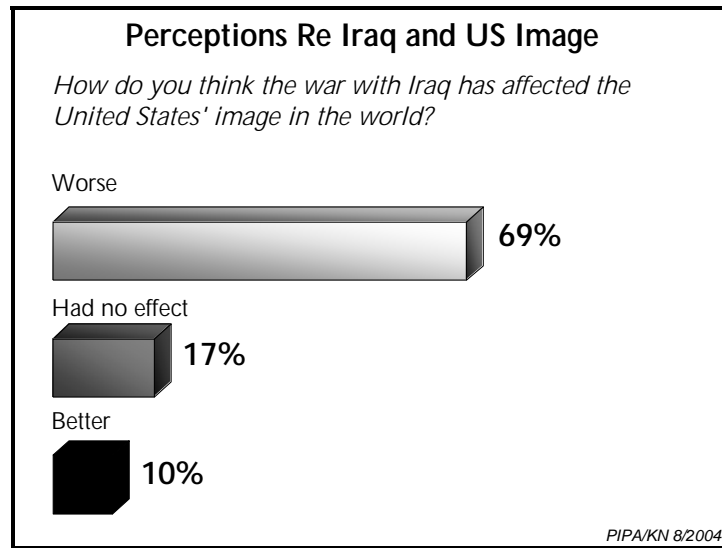
Asked, “Thinking about how all the people in the world feel about the US having gone to war with Iraq, do you think the majority of people favor the US having gone to war; the majority of people oppose the US having gone to war; or views are evenly balanced?” just 50% perceive correctly that a world majority opposes the US having gone to war. Forty-nine percent say a majority favored the US having gone to war (16%), or that views are evenly balanced (33%).

The 50% with the perception that the majority is in opposition is up from 41% in March 2003, and represents the first time there has been any significant upward movement since the question was first asked in July 2003.



Perceptions of world public opinion are highly related to support for the war. Among those who believe that majority world opinion supports the US going to war with Iraq, 89% think it was the right decision. Among those who think majority opinion is opposed, 75% think it is the wrong decision. Among those who think views are evenly divided, 62% think it was the right decision.

A very large majority thinks that the Iraq war has worsened the US image in the world. Sixty-nine percent said the war with Iraq has made the US image worse; only 10% said it has made the US image better, and 17% said it has had no effect. (This is consistent with other recent findings; in June ABC/Washington Post found 77% saying “the war with Iraq has damaged the United States’ image in the rest of the world.”)



Nor is the US image in the world a matter of indifference to Americans. Asked, “For US foreign policy, how important do you think it is for the United States to have a positive image in the world?” 91% said it was very important (62%) or somewhat important (29%).

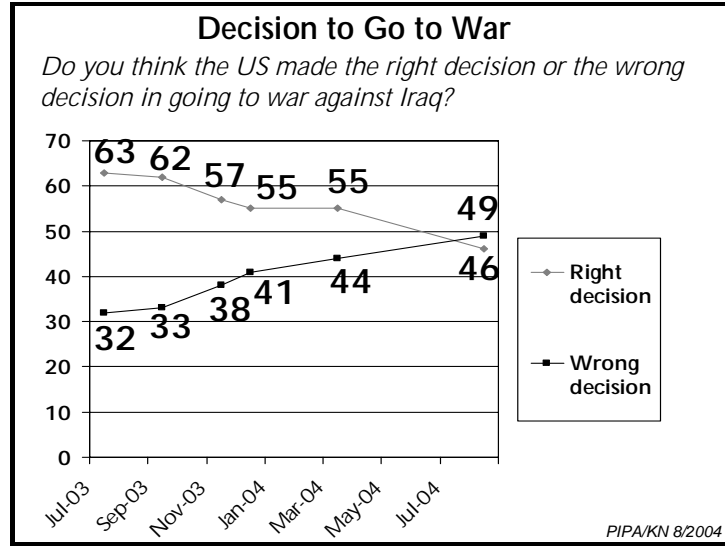
5. Support for Iraq War

Attitudes about the Iraq war have grown cooler. Support for the decision to go to war with Iraq has eroded, so that half now say it was the wrong decision and only a third says it was the best thing to do. A majority says that it would have been better for the war on terrorism to pursue al Qaeda and stabilize Afghanistan, rather than to pursue the war in Iraq. A plurality says it is not confident that the operation will ultimately succeed, and half think the conflict is creating more terrorists planning to attack the US (only a quarter think it is reducing them). However, a plurality thinks the war has improved life for the average Iraqi.

Perhaps in part due to the modest shifts in beliefs about pre-war Iraq, perceptions of expert opinion on prewar Iraq as well as perceptions of world public opinion, the public’s attitudes about the decision to go to war has eroded, according to a variety of measures.

Since November 2003, when asked whether the US made the right or wrong decision in going to war against Iraq, those replying “right decision” have remained a majority in the mid-50s. Now, this number has dropped to 46%, with 49% saying going to war was the “wrong decision.”

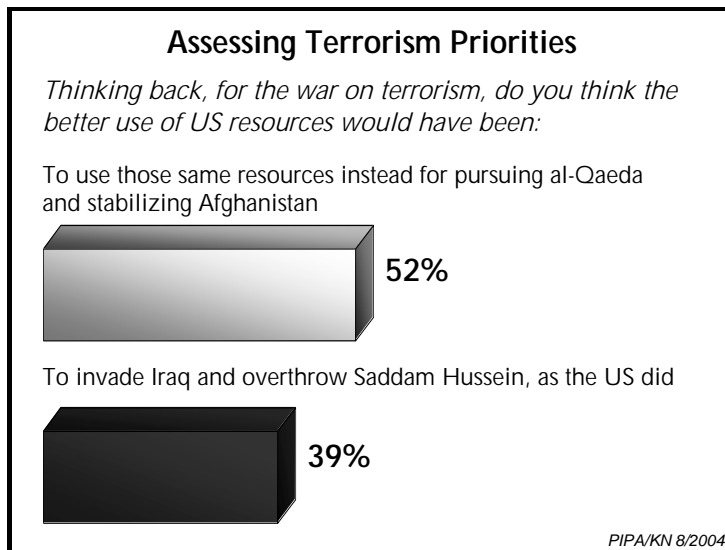
These results are highly consistent with other recent polls. In July, CNN/*USA Today* (Gallup) found 50% saying the US “made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq,” with 47% saying the US did not. An August poll by *Time* magazine found the public split, 47%-47%, over whether the US “was right or wrong in going to war with Iraq.”



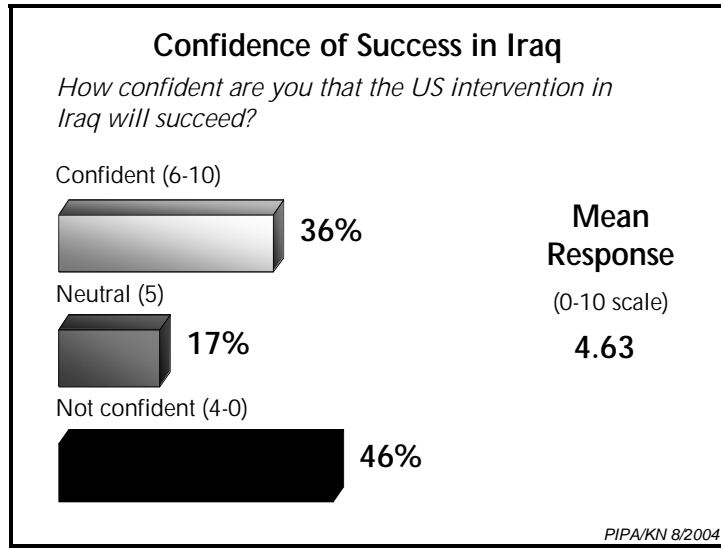
In addition, PIPA asked those who said the war was the right decision whether they supported having gone to war “because I think it was the best thing to do,” or whether they supported Bush’s decision because he is the president. Those who thought it was the best thing to do dropped to 33%, from 40% in March.

Asked if going to war with Iraq was necessary, only 47% said that it was, while 49% said that it was not.

A majority also says that the Iraq war was not the best use of US resources for the war on terrorism. Fifty-two percent said that it would have been better to put a higher priority on pursuing al Qaeda and stabilizing Afghanistan, rather than pursuing the Iraq war. Only 39% thought invading Iraq and overthrowing Saddam Hussein was the better use of resources.



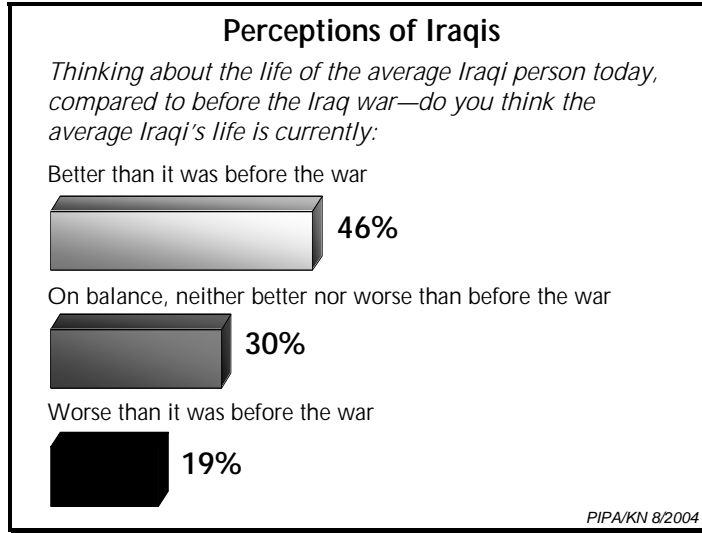
A plurality says it is not confident that the Iraq operation will ultimately succeed. Respondents were asked, “How confident are you that the US intervention in Iraq will succeed?” and offered a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 meaning not at all confident and 10 extremely confident. A plurality of 46% gave a more pessimistic answer from 0 to 4, while 36% were more optimistic (answering 6-10) and 17% gave a neutral answer of 5. The mean response was 4.63.



Americans show little optimism that the war in Iraq is meeting the goal of reducing the risk of terrorist attacks on the US. Only a quarter said the conflict is eliminating terrorists who were planning to attack the US, while almost half think it is creating more such terrorists. Offered three alternatives, 49% said “US involvement in Iraq is creating more terrorists who are planning to attack the US”; 25% said Iraq involvement was eliminating such terrorists; and 22% said it was not affecting their number.

Similarly, when offered the statement “The war will result in greater peace and stability in the Middle East,” a 55% majority disagreed (agree: 40%). However, this attitude has not changed significantly since March.

On a more positive note, when asked to think “about the life of the average Iraqi person today, compared to before the Iraq war,” only 19% thought the average Iraqi’s life was now worse. Forty-six percent said the average Iraqi’s life was now better, and 30% thought that “on balance, [it was] neither better nor worse.”

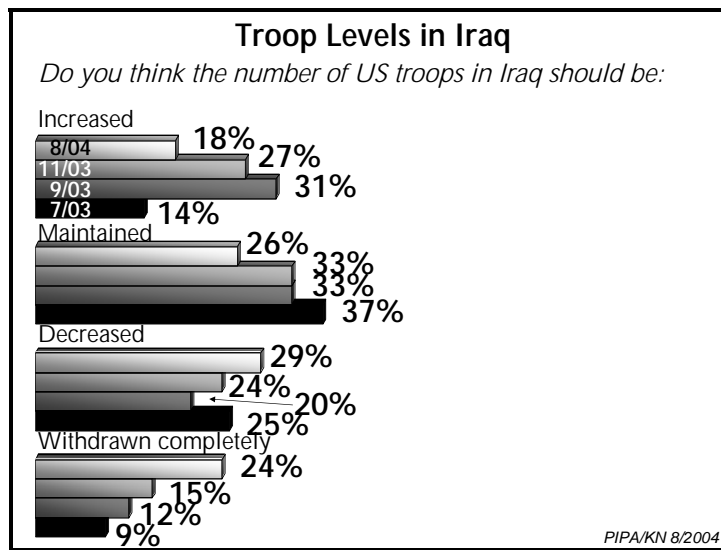


6. Maintaining US Troops in Iraq

The percentage wanting to reduce US troops has risen to slightly over half, but only a minority favors withdrawing all US troops. A slight majority thinks that the majority of the Iraqi people want the US to leave Iraq. Contrary to common assumptions, desire to withdraw US troops does not appear to be related to the number of US military fatalities.

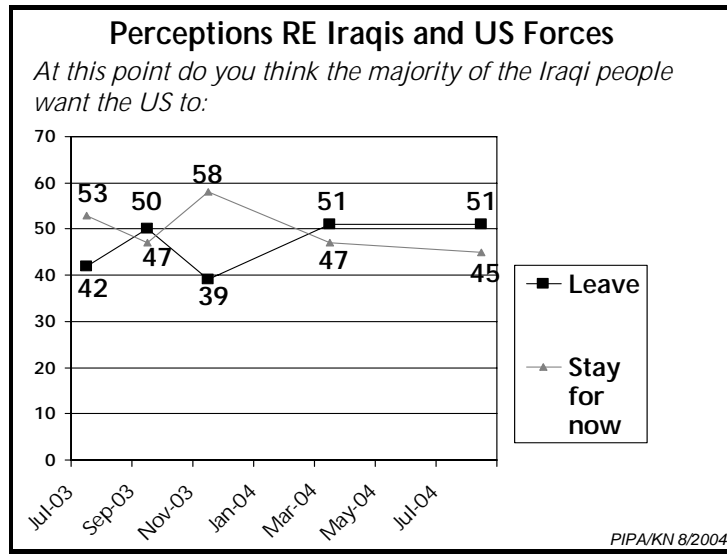
In addition to decline in support for the original decision to go to war, there has also been an increase in the number wanting to reduce US troops. The percentage wanting to reduce US troops has risen to slightly over half. However, only a small minority want to pull them out completely.

Asked what US troop strength in Iraq should be, 18% wanted to increase it; 26% wanted to keep it at the current level; 29% wanted to decrease it; and 24% wanted troops withdrawn completely. Thus 53% want at least some troop reduction.



At the same time, a majority is not ready to lower its standards regarding when the US should finally remove its troops from Iraq. Offered four choices, 56% said the US should not remove its troops until “a government has been elected and there are laws that protect human rights”—essentially the same number as when PIPA/KN last asked in November 2003. Only 11% chose removing troops “once a government has been elected, though there are not yet laws that protect human rights,” and only 9% chose “once a government has been established that is friendly to the US, though there have not been elections.” Twenty percent said immediately—similar to the 24% who wanted to “withdraw completely” in the question discussed just above.

A bare majority (51%) think the majority of the Iraqi people want the US to leave, while 45% think an Iraqi majority want the US to “stay for now”—assessments that are unchanged since March.



Contrary to common assumptions, desire to withdraw US troops does not appear to be related to the number of US military fatalities. This is based on a question that asked respondents, “About how many American soldiers do you think have been killed by hostile fire in Iraq since the US went to war with Iraq in March 2003?” and let them give a number. The median response was 900—the very number most frequently reported in the news during the poll’s fielding period.² Strikingly, 41% of the whole sample gave an estimate between 800 and 1,000, and were off by no more than 100 from the most frequently reported news figure. (On the two previous occasions when PIPA/KN asked for such an estimate, respondents were also fairly accurate: see “US Public Beliefs on Iraq and the Presidential Election,” April 2004, and “Americans Reevaluate Going to War with Iraq,” November 2003.)

The 15% with high estimates of US troop fatalities (above 1,000) were then compared with the general sample. This group was no more likely to want to withdraw. In fact they were somewhat *less* likely. Nineteen percent of those with high estimates wanted to withdraw; 21% of those with fairly accurate estimates wanted to; and 30% of those with low estimates wanted to withdraw. Presumably the reaction of some with high fatalities estimates was due to the view that if significant blood has been shed, it should not be in vain.

² Media reports typically give a fatalities statistic that includes deaths from accidents as well as hostile fire, and thus is slightly higher than the true hostile-fire based statistic (approximately 700 over the fielding period).

7. Factors Related to Opposition to War and Desire to Withdraw Troops

A multivariate regression analysis found that the most powerful factors related to the belief that going to war was the wrong decision were: lower confidence that the operation would succeed; perceptions that Iraq did not have WMD (or even a major program) and did not support al Qaeda; and the perception that world public opinion opposes the US going to war. The desire to withdraw US troops was most related to perceptions that the Iraqi people want us to leave, and to low confidence in the success of the operation.

Naturally the question arises: what are the most influential factors in the growing view that going to war was the wrong decision? A multivariate regression analysis was performed that included a wide range of factors, including demographic factors, such as age, education, income, gender, and party preference. The most powerful factor predicting rejection of the war was the belief that the Iraq operation would not succeed, with those having this view being 4.5 times more likely to say that going to war was the wrong decision. Very close behind were the perceptions that Iraq did not have WMD or a major WMD program, and the perception that Iraq was not providing substantial support to al Qaeda—in both cases those who had these perceptions were 4 times more likely to disapprove of the war. Also close behind was the perception that world public opinion was opposed to the war—those with this perception were 3.8 times more likely to oppose the war. Those who believed that the Iraqi people want the US to leave were 2.7 times more likely.

Party identification was also influential, with Democrats being 3.0 times more likely to oppose the decision than independents, and Republicans being 3.1 times less likely than independents. No demographic factors were significant, nor were perceptions of the number of US troop fatalities.

Factors Related to Desire to Withdraw

The most powerful factor related to the desire to withdraw US troops from Iraq was the perception that the Iraqi people want us to leave—with those having such a perception 5.0 times more likely to want to withdraw. Those who believed that the war would not succeed were 3.4 times more likely. Those with a high estimate of US troop fatalities were actually 2.4 times *less* likely.

Party identification was not a significant factor, but several demographic factors were. Those with education of high school or less were 2.5 times likely to want to withdraw, and women were 2.4 times more likely than men.

8. Iraqi Civilian Fatalities

On average, Americans' estimates of the number of Iraqi civilian fatalities have risen sharply since March, but are still much lower than expert estimates. Those who perceive higher numbers of Iraqi civilian fatalities are significantly more likely to oppose the war; however, they are not more likely to want to withdraw US troops.

Respondents were asked, "Please just give your impression. About how many Iraqi civilians have been killed in Iraq since the beginning of the war?" The median estimate was 2000 deaths. This response is sharply higher than when PIPA/KN asked the same question in March; at that time, the median answer was 800 deaths.

However, Americans' estimates are still much lower than expert estimates. In March 2004, various researchers made estimates in the 3,000 to 7,000 range. This range has moved upward since, with one

ongoing count now positing between 11,500 and 13,500 deaths since March 2003. In the current poll, only 30% gave estimates of over 5000 Iraqi civilian casualties.

Those who perceive higher numbers of Iraq fatalities are significantly more likely to oppose the war and to intend to vote against the president; however, they are not more likely to want to withdraw US troops.

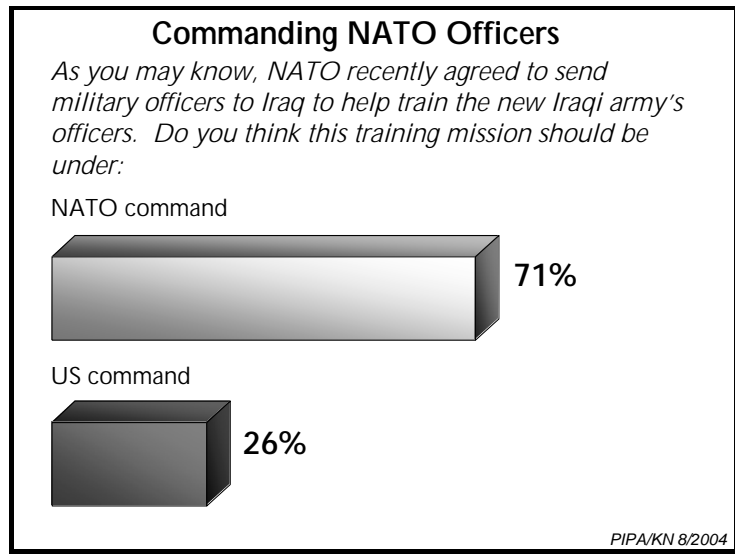
Support for the war is significantly less among those who perceive that more than 5000 Iraqis have been killed during the war in Iraq, with only 37% of this group saying that going to war was the right decision, and 59% saying it was the wrong decision. On the vote for president, among those perceiving higher Iraqi casualties, 53% say they will vote for Kerry and 38% say they will vote for Bush. However, those who perceive higher numbers of Iraqi casualties are not more likely to want US forces to withdraw completely (21%, compared to 24% in the general sample).

9. NATO Command

A very strong majority thinks that NATO’s new training mission to Iraq should be under NATO command, not US command.

This month, a NATO training mission of initially about 40 officers is to arrive in Iraq and begin to train officers of the new Iraqi army. The question of who will command this training mission is still in dispute. The US government has made clear that it wants the NATO mission under the US command of coalition forces in Iraq, while France in particular insists that the mission should remain under NATO command.

PIPA/KN asked, “As you may know, NATO recently agreed to send military officers to Iraq to help train the new Iraqi army’s officers. Do you think this training mission should be under US command or NATO command?” A very strong 71% favored placing the operation under NATO command (26% opposed).



This support for the multilateral option is consistent with earlier polling, on both Iraq and on many other problems. A June 2004 *Los Angeles Times* poll question asking for an even broader commitment—the United States giving NATO “the principal role in the security of Iraq”—found 56% in favor and only 31% opposed. Past research has established that in general, the public is willing to share control with

others in exchange for greater multilateral sharing of risks and burdens, and that this is a source of majority public support for multilateral institutions.

10. Beliefs About Iraq and Attitudes Toward President Bush

Though more Americans say that the president's handling of Iraq will decrease rather than increase their likelihood of voting for him, there is not a clear majority holding him responsible for presenting incorrect information in the run-up to the war. This is consistent with the fact that half still believe that Iraq had at least a major WMD program and was providing substantial support to al Qaeda. Among those who do not have such beliefs, large majorities do believe the president deliberately misled the public in the run-up to the war and say they are less likely to vote for him as a result of his handling of Iraq.

When Americans are asked how they think “the way that President Bush has dealt with the situation in Iraq” will affect their vote in the upcoming election, a plurality of 44% say it will decrease the likelihood they will vote for President Bush (up from 41% in March), while 34% say it will increase the likelihood and 19% say it will have no effect on their vote. This represents a net negative of 10% of respondents.

There is not a clear majority holding the president responsible for presenting incorrect information in the run-up to the war. When asked whether they “think President Bush gave the country the most accurate information he had before going to war with Iraq, or ...deliberately misled people to make the case for war,” Americans are divided, with 48% saying he gave accurate information and 49% saying he deliberately misled the public. This is consistent with *NBC/Wall Street Journal*, which asked the same question in June (most accurate information he had, 44%; deliberately misled, 47%).

Such a result is not surprising, given that half still believe that Iraq had at least a major WMD program and was providing substantial support to al Qaeda. However, among those who do not have such beliefs, 79% say that the president deliberately misled the public in the run-up to the war, and 70% say that they are less likely to vote for him as a result of his handling of Iraq.

Americans are also more prone to say that people in the intelligence agencies knowingly put forward false information in the run-up to the war. While 69% said the President went to war with Iraq based on incorrect assumptions, only 30% thought the president knew these assumptions were incorrect. However 59% believed “some key people in US intelligence agencies” knew this —up from 48% in November 2003.

Still, the President's credibility is in question for many. Asked about the president's credibility in general, three out of five—60%—said they “sometimes have doubts about things he says,” while only 36% said “President George Bush is honest and frank”—numbers that are unchanged from the spring.

METHODOLOGY

The poll was fielded by Knowledge Networks, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Menlo Park, California, with a randomly selected sample of its large-scale nationwide research panel. This panel is itself randomly selected from the national population of households having telephones and subsequently provided internet access for the completion of surveys (and thus is not limited to those who already have internet access). The distribution of the sample in the web-enabled panel closely tracks the distribution of United States Census counts for the US population on age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, geographical region, employment status, income, education, etc.

The panel is recruited using stratified random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone sampling. RDD provides a non-zero probability of selection for every US household having a telephone. Households that agree to participate in the panel are provided with free Web access and an Internet appliance, which uses a telephone line to connect to the Internet and uses the television as a monitor. In return, panel members participate in surveys three to four times a month. Survey responses are confidential, with identifying information never revealed without respondent approval. When a survey is fielded to a panel member, he or she receives an e-mail indicating that the survey is available for completion. Surveys are self-administered.

For more information about the methodology, please go to:

www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp.