

## World View of US Role Goes From Bad to Worse

The global view of the United States' role in world affairs has significantly deteriorated over the last year according to a BBC World Service poll of more than 26,000 people across 25 different countries.

As the United States government prepares to send a further 21,500 troops to Iraq, the survey reveals that three in four (73%) respondents disapprove of how the US government has dealt with Iraq.

The poll shows that in the 18 countries that were previously polled, the average percentage saying that the United States is having a mainly positive influence in the world has dropped seven points from a year ago - from 36 percent to 29 percent - after having already dropped four points the year before.

On the eve of President George Bush's State of the Union address, one citizen in two (49%) across all 25 countries polled now says the US is playing a mainly negative role in the world.

Over two-thirds (68%) believe the US military presence in the Middle East provokes more conflict than it prevents and only 17 percent believe US troops there are a stabilising force.

A majority (57%) of the British public continues to see US influence as mainly negative and 81% disapprove of US actions in the war in Iraq.

The poll shows that world citizens disapprove of the way the US government has handled all six of the foreign policy areas explored. After the Iraq war (73% disapproval), majorities across the 25 countries also disapprove of US handling of Guantanamo detainees (67%), the Israeli-Hezbollah war (65%), Iran's nuclear program (60%), global warming (56%), and North Korea's nuclear program (54%).

Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes comments, 'According to world public opinion, these days the US government hardly seems to be able to do anything right.'

GlobeScan president Doug Miller comments, 'The US Administration's recent decision to send more troops to Iraq is at odds with global public opinion that thinks the US military presence in the region provokes more conflict than it prevents. This policy is likely to further hurt America's image.'

The survey of 26,381 respondents across 25 countries 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. GlobeScan coordinated fieldwork during November 2006 to January 2007 (mainly following the US mid-term elections).

### Further Highlights of the Survey

Asked about specific foreign policy areas, in most of the 25 countries the most common view was disapproval of how the US was handling the situation, including how the US is handling the situation in Iraq (21 countries disapproving), detainees in Guantanamo and other prisons (22 countries), the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon (20 countries), Iran's nuclear program (20 countries),

North Korea's nuclear program (19 countries), and global warming or climate change (19 countries).

The US military presence in the Middle East is exceedingly unpopular. In 23 of 25 countries the most common view is that it 'provokes more conflict than it prevents.' While in only one country (Nigeria) is the most common view that the US presence is stabilizing.

### **The View From Great Britain**

A majority (57%) continues to see US influence in the world as mainly negative, while just 33 percent sees US influence as mainly positive—down slightly from 36 percent in 2006. Britons have significantly negative views of US handling of foreign policy issues, with an overwhelming majority disapproving of US actions on the war on Iraq (81%), as well as its treatment of detainees at Guantanamo and other prisons (76%), the Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon (70%), and Iran's nuclear program (64%). Issues receiving lower levels of disapproval are the US approach to global warming (79%) and the handling of North Korea's nuclear weapons program (55%). More than 7 in 10 Britons (72%) sees the US military presence in the Middle East as 'provoking more conflict than it prevents;' just 14 percent believe that the US is a 'stabilizing force' in the region.

### **The View From The US**

The American public also seems to have serious doubts about US foreign policy. Majorities disapprove of how the US is handling the war in Iraq (57%) and global warming or climate change (54%), while numerous respondents disapprove of US treatment of detainees in Guantanamo and other prisons (50%) and its handling of Iran's nuclear program (50%). Views are divided on US handling of the war in Lebanon. The one area that receives plurality endorsement is the US handling of North Korea's nuclear weapons program (50%). A majority of 53 percent of Americans say that the US military presence in the Middle East 'provokes more conflict than it prevents,' with just 33 percent saying that it is a stabilizing force.

More broadly, a majority of Americans (57%) say that the US is having a mainly positive influence in the world. This is down from 63 percent a year ago and 71 percent two years ago.

*In total 26,381 citizens in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and the United States were interviewed between 3 November 2006 and 9 January 2007. Polling was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan and its research partners in each country. In 10 of the 25 countries, the sample was limited to major urban areas. The margin of error per country ranges from +/-2.5 to 4 percent.*

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