



AMERICANS' SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL UNCHANGED BY RECENT HOSTILITIES

Domestic Political Distemper Continues

Pew Center for the People & the Press
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Israel's offensive into Lebanon has not resulted in a public opinion backlash in the U.S. so far. A new Pew poll conducted July 6-19 finds little change in public sympathy for Israel in its dispute with the Palestinians. A 44%-plurality of U.S. adults say they sympathize more with Israel, while 9% sympathize with the Palestinians, figures that have remained largely unchanged in polls taken since late 2001. One in five (20%) say they sympathize with neither side, while a similar number (22%) say they don't know with whom to sympathize.

The poll was underway when Israel responded militarily to the kidnapping of soldiers by Hamas and by Hezbollah. No significant difference was found in responses to this question by those interviewed earlier in the polling period, before the escalation of hostilities when Hezbollah guerillas crossed into Israel from Lebanon, and those interviewed later.

	Oct 2001	July 2003	July 2004	July 2005	--- July 2006 --- All	6-12	13-19
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Israel	47	41	40	37	44	42	45
Palestinians	10	13	13	12	9	10	8
Both (vol.)	8	8	7	5	5	4	6
Neither (vol.)	18	18	18	19	20	21	20
Don't know	17	20	22	27	22	23	21
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The poll, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, interviewed a nationwide sample of 2,003 adults by telephone.

Among political groups, Israel evokes the most sympathy among self-identified conservatives and Republicans. Among religious groups, white evangelical Christians are the most sympathetic to Israel (59%), with white Catholics slightly above the average (at 48%) and mainline Protestants and seculars significantly less sympathetic (33% and 24%, respectively). But even among those groups that express less sympathy for Israel -- Democrats, mainline Protestants, seculars -- few say they sympathize with the Palestinians; more say they have sympathy for neither.¹

A plurality of those polled say their views on this question have been shaped more by what they have seen in the media than by any other source (35%). Religious beliefs (21%) and education (19%) are also important. But among people who sympathize with Israel, religious beliefs nearly match the media in importance (32% for religious beliefs, 35% for the media).

Dissatisfaction with Bush, State of the Nation

The American public continues to express dissatisfaction with President Bush's performance in office and with the state of the nation. President Bush's job approval rating remains low, at 36%, the same as last month and just a few points higher than his low point of 33% reached in March and April of this year.

A large majority of Republicans (73%) approves of President Bush's performance in office, but only 13% of Democrats and 28% of independents agree. These levels of support are mostly unchanged from polling conducted one month ago. The president continues to receive lukewarm support from important segments of his political base. Just 57% of conservatives approve of his job performance, and while a small majority of white evangelicals (52%) continues to have a positive view of the president, that percentage is significantly lower than the 72% of evangelicals who approved of Bush's performance in January 2005, as he began his second term in office.

Dissatisfaction with the way things are going in the U.S. is as high now as in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina -- nearly two-thirds (65%) are dissatisfied -- and not far below the levels of discontent registered during the period of political disgruntlement from 1993-1995, when Pew polls found 71-75% of the public dissatisfied.

Republicans are more satisfied than Democrats with the way things are going in the United States (51% for Republicans, 14% for Democrats). But even among groups that are generally supportive of Republican policies, significant numbers express unhappiness with the state of the nation. Overall, 53% of people who identify as conservative say they are dissatisfied with how things are going, and this unhappiness is matched or exceeded by a number of important groups including white evangelicals (59% satisfied).

Half Now Say Iraq War Was Wrong Decision

One factor that may be contributing to public concern about the nation and disapproval of the president is unhappiness about the war in Iraq. In the current poll, just 44% of Americans say the U.S. made the right decision in using military force in Iraq -- the same proportion as in early October 2005 and lower than at any other time since the war began. Half (50%) say the U.S. made the wrong decision.

Bush Ratings Remain Low...						
	Jan 2005	July 2005	Oct 2005	Jan 2006	Mar 2006	July 2006
<i>Bush job as president</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	50	44	40	38	33	36
Disapprove	43	48	52	54	57	57
Don't know	7	8	8	8	10	7
	100	100	100	100	100	100

As Does Satisfaction with State of Nation						
	Jan 2005	July 2005	Oct 2005	Jan 2006	Mar 2006	July 2006
<i>Satisfaction with way things are going in this country today</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Satisfied	40	35	29	34	32	30
Dissatisfied	54	58	65	61	63	65
Don't know	6	7	6	5	5	5
	100	100	100	100	100	100

More Say Iraq War Was Wrong Decision						
	Jan 2005	July 2005	Oct 2005	Feb 2006	Jun 2006	July 2006
<i>Using force in Iraq</i>						
Right decision	51	49	44	51	49	44
Wrong decision	44	44	50	44	44	50
Don't know	5	7	6	5	7	6
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Opinions about President Bush and about the state of the nation are strongly related to opinions about the situation in Iraq. Two-thirds of people who think the war in Iraq was the right decision approve

of Bush's performance in office, while fully 85% of those who think it was the wrong decision disapprove. Among those who disapprove of the war, a similar number also say they are dissatisfied with how things are going in the country.

No Change in Views of the Parties

Images of the two political parties have remained relatively stable over the past several months, with the Democratic Party garnering somewhat better ratings than the Republican Party. Currently, 40% of those polled said they had a favorable opinion of the Republican Party; 52% had an unfavorable opinion. For the Democratic Party, 47% were favorable and 44% unfavorable. These ratings, which are basically identical to those from an April Pew poll, reflect a significant fall-off in views about Republicans, from 52% favorable in December 2004, and a somewhat less sharp decline in the image of Democrats (from 53% favorable in 2004).

Views of the Parties			
	Fav %	Unfav %	Can't rate %
Republican Party	40	52	8=100
April 2006	40	50	10=100
February 2006	44	50	6=100
Late October 2005	42	49	9=100
July 2005	48	43	9=100
December 2004	52	42	6=100
Early February 2004	52	42	6=100
December 2002	59	33	8=100
January 2001	56	35	9=100
March 1998	50	43	7=100
July 1994	63	33	4=100
July 1992	46	48	6=100
Democratic Party	47	44	9=100
April 2006	47	42	11=100
February 2006	48	44	8=100
Late October 2005	49	41	10=100
July 2005	50	41	9=100
December 2004	53	41	6=100
Early February 2004	58	37	5=100
December 2002	54	37	9=100
January 2001	60	30	10=100
March 1998	58	36	6=100
July 1994	62	34	4=100
July 1992	61	33	6=100

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas, Inc. (SRBI) among a nationwide sample of 2,003 adults, 18 years of age or older, from July 6-19, 2006. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. For results based on Form 1 (N=996) or Form 2 (N=1,007) only, the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Questions about Israel were on Form 1; favorability ratings of the parties were on Form 2.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

¹ A recent Pew review of U.S. attitudes toward Israel can be found [here](http://pewresearch.org/obdeck/?ObDeckID=39).
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