

Global poll condemns Bush administration on Iraq war and global militarism

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The global view of the role of the US in world affairs has dramatically deteriorated over the past year, according to a BBC World Service poll released Wednesday. The study documents mounting hostility to US foreign policy, its destabilizing effect on entire regions of the world, as well as growing awareness of the threat posed to the environmental health of the planet.

The poll is an indictment by world opinion of Bush administration policies, particularly its handling of the Iraq war, mirroring the growing opposition within the US itself to the government's destructive military policy. Released two weeks after Bush's announcement that he is escalating the war—preparing to send more than 21,000 additional troops—it is evidence that the US government is proceeding not only in defiance of US popular opinion, but is sharply at odds with global opinion as well.

The BBC poll questioned more than 26,000 people in 25 countries (including the US)* between November 3, 2006, and January 9, 2007. Across all 25 countries, one in two people now says the US is playing a mainly negative role in the world. Three quarters, or 73 percent, disapprove of how the US government has dealt with Iraq.

World citizens disapprove of the way the US government has handled all six of the foreign policy areas explored by the poll. In addition to the overwhelming disapproval of US policy in Iraq, majorities across 25 countries also disapprove of the US handling of the Guantánamo detainees and other prisoners (67 percent), the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon (65 percent), global warming (56 percent) and US handling of the nuclear programs of both Iran (60 percent), and North Korea (54 percent).

The most negative feelings were found in western

Europe, Latin America and predominantly Muslim countries, but disapproving sentiments were registered around the globe. What stands out is not only the overwhelmingly negative attitude of those queried, but the rate at which the view of US foreign policy has plummeted over the past year. Any objective analysis of the figures must tie this decline in approval to the growing debacle in Iraq as a direct result of the US colonial occupation.

Some of the sharpest drops in positive ratings came in countries where favorable opinions have been polled in the past. In Poland, for instance, the overall approval rating of US foreign policy influence dropped 24 points, from 62 percent a year ago to only 38 percent today. Positive ratings in Indonesia plunged 19 points, with only 21 percent giving an approval rating compared to 40 percent a year earlier.

US military presence in the Middle East is extremely unpopular. In 23 of 25 countries, the most common opinion is that it “provokes more conflict than it prevents.” This view prevailed among 86 percent of those polled in Argentina, 85 percent in Egypt, 80 percent in France and 83 percent in Indonesia. Nigeria is the only country polled where a majority felt that US presence in the Middle East is a stabilizing force.

There is also widespread disapproval of the US government's handling of detainees in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, with disapproval ratings in 22 of the 25 countries. In 7 countries—Argentina, China, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Russia and Turkey—only 1 or 2 percent “strongly approve” of US policy related to the prison camp, while in 9 countries—Argentina, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Lebanon, Portugal, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates—60 percent or more “strongly disapprove.”

Similarly low opinions were found for the US

government's handling of global warming issues, with disapproval ratings in 19 countries, reflecting the US's reputation as a leading polluter and hostility to the Bush administration's refusal to sign on to international environmental treaties. Five percent or less in more than half of the countries polled—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Russia and Turkey—approved of US policy in this area.

The views prevailing in a number of countries are particularly instructive. Of the 25 countries polled, **Germany** showed the largest negative rating of world influence of the United States, with 74 percent holding a mainly negative view. In opposition to the stance of German government leaders, an overwhelming 88 percent disapprove of the US approach to the war in Iraq, and 73 percent view the US as a destabilizing force throughout the Middle East. Eighty-four percent of Germans polled disapprove of US handling of global warming issues, second only to France (86 percent).

In **Indonesia**, overwhelming majorities disapprove of US foreign policy, including Washington's handling of the Iraq war (85 percent disapproval), the 2006 war in Lebanon (81 percent) and the treatment of detainees at Guantánamo and other US prisons (72 percent).

In **Turkey**, 69 percent hold a negative view of US world influence, a sharp jump of 20 points over the previous year. Nine in 10 disapprove of both US handling of the war in Iraq and last summer's Israeli assault on Lebanon. More than three quarters see the US military presence in the Middle East as a disruptive force.

Views in **Argentina** reflect opposition and hostility prevalent throughout Latin America to US global policy. Only 1 percent of Argentines "strongly approve" of the Bush administration's handling of the Iraq war, while 86 percent "strongly disapprove." Favorable ratings for US policy are minuscule in a wide range of areas: only 3 percent approve of US handling of the Israel-Lebanon conflict, detainees in Guantánamo, Iran's nuclear program and North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Only 6 percent approve of US handling of global warming and climate change.

The figures polled in the US also show widespread disapproval for US foreign policy. While a majority (57 percent) say the US is having a mainly positive

influence in the world, this is down from 63 percent a year ago and 71 percent the previous year. A growing number of Americans see the foreign policy of their own government as having a destabilizing and destructive impact on the international arena.

The poll shows a solid majority, 57 percent, in the US disapprove of their government's policy in Iraq, with 40 percent strongly disapproving. It should be taken into account that this sharp disapproval was registered in polling completed before Bush's January 10 announcement on escalating the war. According to a recent poll by NBC and the *Wall Street Journal*, 65 percent of Americans want all US troops out of Iraq by the end of 2007.

Taken as a whole, the BBC World Service poll is a indication of the growing opposition of hundreds of millions of people around the world to the military and environmental policies of not only the Bush administration, but those of the entire US political establishment—Democrats and Republicans alike. It reflects a growing awareness that the lives, safety and well-being of the vast majority of the world's citizens are being held hostage and sacrificed to a tiny wealthy elite that scours the globe in pursuit of military conquest and personal enrichment.

* *Countries polled include 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.*



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