

Opinions of the War, And the War of Opinions



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With growing economic globalization, and the existence of the U.S. as the world's only "hyper-power," there will be increasing pressure by the citizens of the world to get their political institutions in line with the new economic and military realities. See article on page 3.

Can Bush count on reelection? Only if he can convince the swing group, who remain skeptical about his handling of the economy, that he knows what he is doing. See article on page 7.

The well-established popularity of George W. Bush could anaesthetize any form of credible political opposition to the American presidency. See article on page 8.



Rally for Peace in London, February 15, 2003.

Opinions of the War, And the War of Opinions

by Darrell Bricker and Pierre Giacometti

Arguably the most significant geo-political event of the 20th Century was the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 that produced the controversial Treaty of Versailles. As Margaret MacMillan argues in her brilliant analysis of the events of January to July 1919, this truly was “Six Months That Changed the World.” While there is no doubting the brilliance of MacMillan’s analysis, there is one important factor that she struggles with throughout *Paris 1919* – public opinion.

Exactly what did the people of the world (or even the participating countries) think about the decisions being made in Paris? To cover this ground, MacMillan is reduced to analyzing diplomatic dispatches, contemporary press reports and interpreting demonstrations and election results as expressions of the *vox populi*.

The historians of tomorrow will not have the same struggles as MacMillan did in recreating contemporary public opinion. That’s because public opinion researchers are busily creating an accurate record of what we’re thinking about the important issues of our times.

So, what will our polling artifacts tell historians about public opinion and the war in Iraq? On the eve of the war, Ipsos conducted its quarterly syndicated survey of global public opinion called “Global Powers in Changing Times.” The survey was fielded in nine countries, with 9,000 people over nine days. The nine countries, which we label the “Nine Powers,” consist of the G7 nations – the United States, Italy, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan – plus Russia and Spain.

Collectively, these nine countries are among the world’s wealthiest nations, greatest military powers, and most formidable political players. Most importantly, the combined GDP of the nine

countries accounts for almost 70 per cent of the world’s economy. They are pivotal in the process of globalization, expansion of international trade, and consumerism. And, as democratic countries, the opinions of their citizens shape the changing views and actions of their governments.

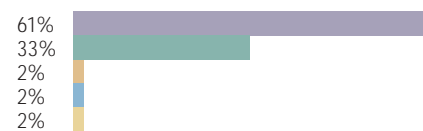
What were the people of the Nine Powers thinking on the brink of war? Our survey shows that in terms of public opinion the U.S. was standing alone. President Bush may have been reflecting the views of a majority of Americans (61%) – that Saddam Hussein should be removed from power as soon as possible, by force if necessary – but none of the traditional allied populations in Canada, France or the United Kingdom felt the same way.

When respondents from four of the countries – Canada, France, the U.K. and the U.S. – were given the choice between removing Saddam Hussein from power as soon as possible, or extending the U.N. inspection process by at least four months, majorities in Canada (53%), the United Kingdom (55%) and France (66%) chose the United Nations’ inspections route over immediate removal by force. This is in contrast with a third (33%) of Americans who favored extended inspections.

Which of the following approaches to the situation in Iraq would you be more likely to support?

- Remove Saddam Hussein from power as soon as possible by force if necessary
- Extend the U.N. inspection process by at least four months and perhaps much longer
- Both
- Neither
- Don't know

United States



Canada



United Kingdom



France



Poll conducted March 2003.

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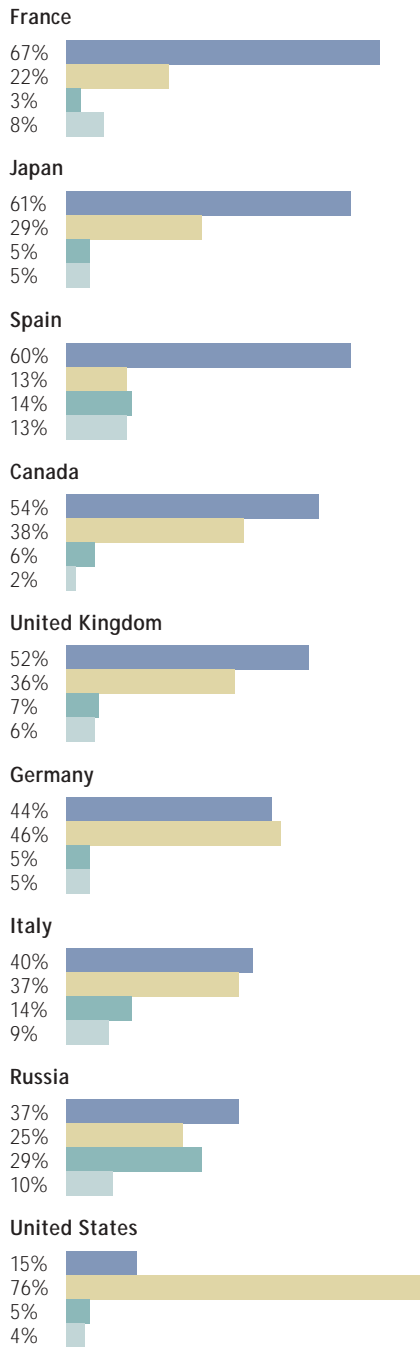
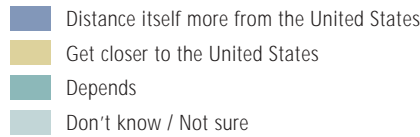
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Respondents in each of the nine countries were also asked whether the foreign policies of their government should aim to draw closer to U.S. policies or seek more distance from the U.S. (U.S. respondents were asked whether the policies of the other countries should seek more distance or draw closer to U.S. policies.)

While a majority of Americans (76%) believe that foreign policies of other governments in the coming years should be closer to those of the United States as opposed to those which distance themselves more from U.S. policy (15%), it is clear that this view is not shared by citizens in the other eight countries.

Of the other eight major countries surveyed, a majority of citizens in five of the countries want their governments to distance themselves more from the United States, while three other countries essentially split or tilt towards distancing themselves from the U.S. This trend is most pronounced in France, Japan, Spain, Canada, and the U.K. Germans are split on this point but slightly favor getting closer, while Italians and Russians are also split but favor moving away from U.S. policies.

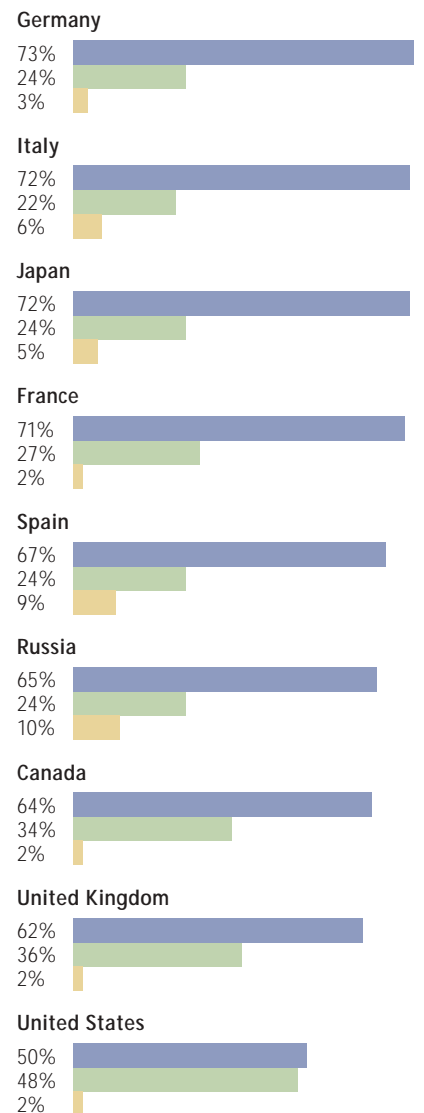
Choice of moving farther away from the U.S. or getting closer



Poll conducted March 2003.

Following hostilities in Iraq we conducted another wave of our *Global Powers in Changing Times* survey. The results show that strong majorities in all countries surveyed (including 50% of Americans) agree that “there is no country or world organization that can stop the U.S. from doing whatever it wants in the world today.” Furthermore, strong majorities in all countries (45% in the U.S.) agree that “we need a new international organization to balance the growing power of the United States in the world.”

There is no country or world organization that can stop the United States doing whatever it wants in the world today

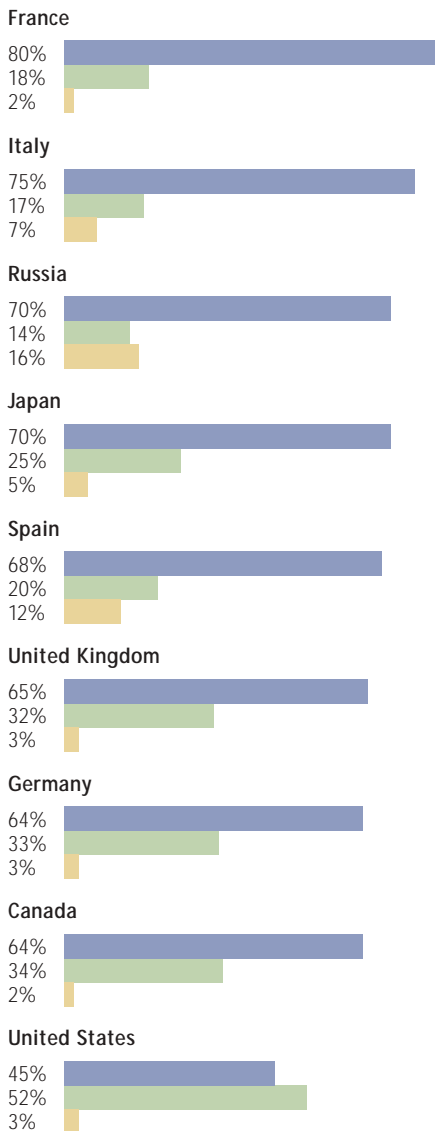


Poll conducted June 2003.

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We need a new international organization to balance the growing power of the United States in the world

Agree Disagree Don't know



Poll conducted June 2003.

Together, these data show that while the U.S. may have won the war on the ground in Iraq, they've clearly lost the important battle for hearts and minds in eight of the Power Nine nations. Instead of rallying to the victors, the Power Nine public has become fearful of what the awesome power of the U.S. now represents in world affairs.

So, what does this add up to and where does it take us? Here are some points to ponder for the future:

- Are we on the brink of events that are as momentous for us as 1919 was for the 20th Century? Clearly, the second Gulf War would have been much less possible under the security arrangements that prevailed during the Cold War. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union eliminated the old balance of power. The U.S. now stands astride the world regulated only by self-restraint. And, the nature of this restraint is the desire by Americans to both do the right thing, and to be seen by others as doing the right thing. In other words, the best speed governor on the American colossus will be public opinion.
- Now, the U.S. and the "coalition of the willing" ultimately proceeded with their attack on Iraq in spite of the negative opinion environment, as shown in our surveys. Nonetheless, the U.S. administration clearly worked very hard to build public support outside of its borders for the war. Evidence of this includes working with the U.N. inspection and deliberation process longer than it wanted to (to show respect for due process), as well as a concerted effort to show evidence of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction (to establish motive). Why did the U.S. do this? It wasn't to build support for the war in the U.S. They didn't have to; allusions to 9/11 were a much more powerful motivator

for Americans. We submit it was because the U.S. government was doing its best to manage the new force of global public opinion. Now, as our post-war survey shows, the U.S. administration clearly made a hash of this. But, by their actions, they showed that non-domestic public opinion is a variable that impacts their thinking and actions.

- A new force is emerging in world affairs – global public opinion. We now have the ability to measure this force (save some important gaps that we'll note in a moment), and to understand its consequences at least at a domestic level. But, are its domestic consequences ultimately that important? At the moment they are, because one can only vote for or against a domestic government (leaving aside for a moment the EU). But, with growing economic globalization, and the existence of the U.S. as the world's only "hyper-power," there will be increasing pressure by the citizens of the world to get their political institutions in line with the new economic and military realities. So, will we see the emergence of new global political institutions that are elected, representative, and accountable? At some point in our future, global opinion will tolerate no less.
- Taking world public opinion into account is different than influencing world opinion. The Bush Administration will have a difficult time overcoming the resentment the world feels about American military unilateralism or derailing the demand for a counterbalancing military power. In the same Ipsos poll, citizens were asked how strong an influence the U.S. has on world affairs today – sensibly, two-thirds to three-quarters or more believe the U.S. enjoys a strong influence. Then citizens were asked to rate how much of an influence they feel their own country has on world affairs.

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In commenting on that Ipsos poll (which was conducted immediately prior to the G8 summit in France in June) CNN analyst Bill Schneider put it this way:

Does the world need a new international organization to balance U.S. power? You bet, say about two-thirds of people everywhere. Nearly half of Americans agree.

Europeans are frustrated. Take the French. Over 70 percent say the United States has a strong influence on world affairs. Only 12 percent think France does. So much for "la gloire." Take the Russians. More than 70 percent say the United States has a strong influence on world affairs. Only 14 percent think Russia does. How the mighty have fallen.

A new international organization that balances U.S. military and economic power would make it easier for citizens of other countries to overcome their resentment and fear of America's unilateral military might.

But in the meantime, can Bush hope to communicate with citizens around the world today and convince them that the world is better off, after all, as a result of the U.S. war in Iraq? Yes, that is conceivably possible, even in the absence of a comforting new international organization to balance U.S. power – but only if people decide that the unilateral U.S. pursuit of U.S. political interests is a good thing,

because it leads to removal of dangerous figures such as Hussein. That's a tough sell.

The challenge for the Bush Administration is to convince citizens around the world to look at the situation in Iraq the way they look at the role of the U.S. in their nation's economy – namely that, in pursuing its self interests, the U.S. sometimes makes the world a better place. A consumer may feel a tinge of regret when a U.S. retailer supplants a national retailer at the local mall in their country, but that same consumer might also feel the mall offers better choices now. Is the world better off because Hussein no longer rules Iraq?

- At present, global public opinion is a conceit reserved for the world's developed liberal democracies. So, what does Arab Street really think? What does the average citizen of China think? What do people who reside outside of major metropolitan areas in less developed countries think? The next phase of identifying, measuring and articulating global public opinion will be finding ways of conducting representative surveys among these populations. We're getting closer each time out, but we still have much work to do.
- One phenomenon that seemed to emerge during the war was "European" public opinion. Is this an emerging

trend or a one-time-only and situational event? The determining factor here will be how the U.S. participates in world affairs. Opposition to the dominance of the U.S. may force Europeans to start putting their similarities first and their differences second to build a common front. The emergence of a common front on international issues re-enforces the concept of being European. This will be an important trend to track in the future.

- One of the lessons of the war is how public opinion can shift and build momentum according to images presented in the media. The additive impact of blanket media coverage was to quickly drive up opposition to the war, especially among populations that were already skeptical. In fact, the longer the war went on, the stronger opposition became. And governments that were opposed to the war were buoyed and emboldened by being in tune with their electors. One notable exception to this trend was Spain. Polls showed that the national government's support for the war was wildly unpopular. Nonetheless, when Spaniards went to the polls for their local elections in May, opposition candidates were not able to capitalize on voter antipathy. In the end, the old adage still rings true – all politics are local.

Darrell Bricker



Darrell Bricker is President and COO of Ipsos Public Affairs in North America. He joined the company in 1989 after holding increasingly senior research positions, including director of public opinion research in the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada. Like his colleague Pierre Giacometti, Darrell is often called on by the media to comment on the major issues of the day, particularly Canadian and international politics and election campaigns. He is the author of several books, including most recently, *Searching for Certainty*. You can reach him at darrell.bricker@ipsos-na.com.

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Pierre Giacometti



Communicating in Wartime by Thomas Riehle

Even Caesar felt the need to tell his side of the story of war: *Gallia est omnia divisa in partes tres* (all of Gaul is divided into three parts) is how Caesar famously began his public relations spin on war and empire.

For U.S. President George W. Bush, opinion is also divided into three parts – with the key swing group in the middle:

- 45% of American voters in a recent Ipsos Public Affairs/Cook Political Report poll say the war in Iraq was worth it, and Bush did not exaggerate on the issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). For this group, Bush can do no wrong – 75% of them also approve Bush's handling of the economy and other domestic issues, as well.
- 36% say the war in Iraq was not worth it (whether Bush exaggerated on WMD or not). For them, Bush can do nothing right. More than 80% of them also disapprove of the way Bush is handling the economy and other domestic issues.
- In the middle are 13% who say the war was worth it AND Bush exaggerated on WMD. They were all for removing Hussein, they just did not buy Bush's argument for why we should do it – to make the world safe from Iraq's weapons arsenal.

If this middle group swings strongly against Bush's reelection (despite their support for his Iraq policy) Bush could

lose the race for reelection next year. He did not need to exaggerate the WMD threat to them; they were all for attacking Iraq. But in letting the discussion of WMD dominate his domestic communications in wartime, Bush risks losing credibility on other issues with this swing group, who just aren't buying the idea that Iraq's WMD posed any threat to us.

This swing group is skeptical about a lot of things Bush has to say when the topic of conversation moves from the removal of Hussein. Two thirds of this group disapproves of Bush's handling of the economy and other domestic issues. This group is predominantly white, male, Southern, and lower middle class, with no college experience, in skilled blue-collar trades or sales jobs. To them, the economy is in a lot of trouble and Bush has a lot of explaining to do: Bush cannot afford to squander his credibility trying to convince the swing group that he needed to invade Iraq because of WMD.

Among this swing group today, the election in 2004 is a toss-up; one-third would definitely vote to reelect Bush, one-third would definitely vote for someone else, and one-third would consider voting for someone else.

All Registered Voters in the U.S.

Definitely vote to reelect Bush	40%
Consider someone else	23%
Definitely vote for someone else	35%

Pro-Bush on War (45% of voters) Bush did not exaggerate on WMD, And Iraq war was worth it

Definitely vote to reelect Bush	72%
Consider someone else	20%
Definitely vote for someone else	6%

Swing Voters (13% of voters) Bush did exaggerate on WMD, But Iraq war was worth it

Definitely vote to reelect Bush	33%
Consider someone else	33%
Definitely vote for someone else	32%

Anti-Bush on War (36% of voters) Whether Bush did or did not exaggerate on WMD, The Iraq war was not worth it

Definitely vote to reelect Bush	6%
Consider someone else	23%
Definitely vote for someone else	70%

Source: Ipsos Public Affairs/Cook Political Report poll of 1,520 registered voters in the U.S., conducted July 8 – 10, 2003, and July 22 – 24, 2003.

Can Bush count on reelection? The odds favor his reelection, but he still needs to convince the swing group, who remain skeptical about his handling of the economy, that he knows what he is doing and he is telling them the truth about what to expect from his economic plan of tax cuts. As long as he continues trying (and failing) to sell them something they are not buying – that Iraq's WMDs were a risk that required Hussein's removal – Bush continues to lose the ability to convince them he is telling them the truth about the prospects for the economy under his economic program.

Veteran pollster **Thomas Riehle** leads the Ipsos U.S. Public Affairs division, which is headquartered in Washington D.C. Riehle was the pollster on dozens of winning political campaigns, ballot initiatives, and public relations and advertising campaigns. He has provided strategic and tactical research and analysis for corporations, governments, candidates, interest groups, and associations in the United States and around the world. You can reach him at thomas.riehle@ipsos-na.com



Thomas
Riehle

Opinion Never Lies by Jean-Marc Lech

Where have the American Democrats gone? The well-established popularity of George W. Bush could anaesthetize any form of credible political opposition to the American presidency. Above all, it could authorize Bush to relaunch one of the United States' oldest dreams: its Manifest Destiny. It was in 1845, on the occasion of Texas joining the United States, that the theory was established: God had entrusted the United States with the mission of developing the values of liberty, justice and progress, and of spreading them geographically as far as possible. It would be essential to be able to defend these values from any tyrannical attack.

It is indeed the return to this eternal national past that still lulls the Democrat opponents to sleep. Before the attacks of September 11, President Bush had been elected on a fairly weak basis. After the attacks he did not win the mid-term elections (2002) hands down, in spite of opinion polls regarding the hunt for Bin Laden that were very favorable.

And it is polls that the President's teams will use to persuade Americans that issues of national security may be anywhere, since the threats are defined within societies rather than by frontiers and territories.

Thus a "soft power" could become established; an American empire with responsibility for protecting the values that it considers universal, and even imposing them.

But the Imperial Republic, to use the title of a book by Raymond Aron, needs enemies. Because the United States is a democracy that appears to change only

as a result of crises, that reorganizes itself through war and under the aegis of the presidency.

Since 1945, new types of wars have occurred: the Cold War, Star Wars, the war against terrorism.... The American dispenser of justice deals with them, never hesitating to fend off any opponents – this is how the French became "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" in the war against Iraq.

But there are others beside the French. World public opinion, favorable to the hunt for Bin Laden, was opposed to war without the United Nations. Including the British. Since then, America becoming bogged down in Iraq has revived doubts about Bush, and not only in regard to the existence of weapons of mass destruction.

As a result, American support has become fairly mediocre for a president preparing for a reelection campaign. The reason? In a democracy public opinion is never an enemy.

In the face of the "post-McCarthyism" established by the American media led by Fox News, the administration of George W. Bush has only one opponent: its own public opinion. So, the Democrats and Al Gore are probably wrong to wish for the creation of a left-wing communication group. So too, the Republicans must find a new approach to the American destiny. It follows that the 2004 presidential election is more open than might have been expected after the violence of the events of the past four years. And let's not forget Hillary Clinton in 2008.



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