

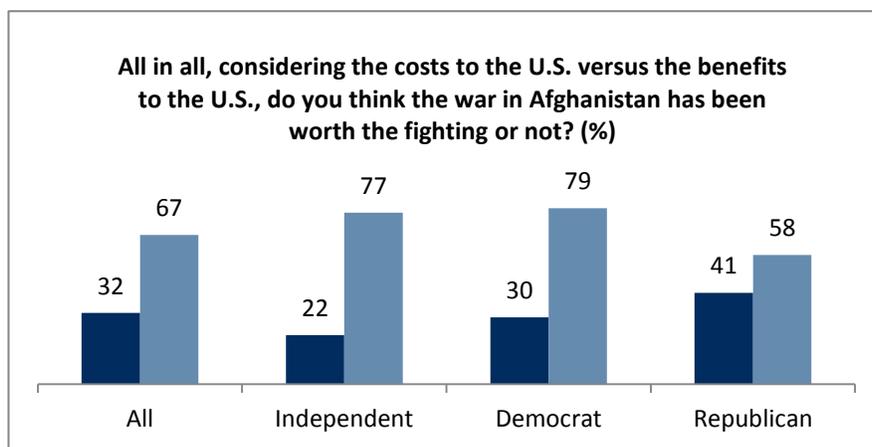
July 16, 2012

Americans Question Gains of War in Afghanistan

The United States granted Afghanistan special status as an official non-NATO ally this past weekend, adding Afghanistan to a select group that includes Israel, Japan, and Pakistan. Presumably, this move in part attempts to assuage Afghan government concerns over the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from their country in 2014. According to American public opinion, however, there are no regrets about bringing the troops home. In fact, results from the recent Chicago Council Survey find that nearly seven in ten Americans think the war in Afghanistan has not been worth the cost.

Two in three Americans believe war in Afghanistan not worth fighting

More than twice as many Americans (67%) say that the war in Afghanistan has not been worth fighting than say that it has been (32%). Majorities across the political spectrum agree that the costs outweigh the benefits, though Republicans are more likely to say the war has been worth it (41%) and Independents are least likely to say so (22%).



This finding is on par with an identically worded question in an April 2012 [ABC News/Washington Post poll](#) and a striking reversal from the ABC February 2007 poll when a majority (57%) thought that the fighting in Afghanistan was worth the costs.

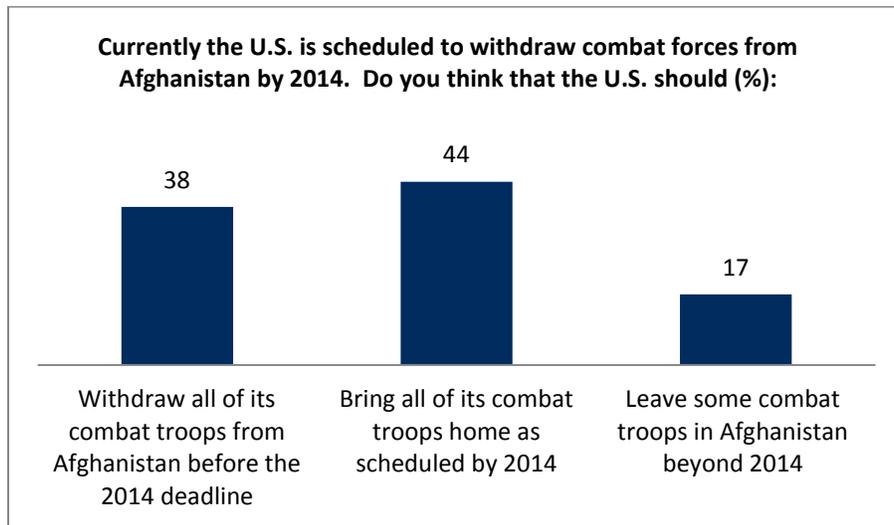
After more than a decade, a majority think Afghan war has not made U.S. safer

Half (51%) of Americans believe that as a result of the American military action in Afghanistan, the United States is no safer from the threat from terrorism. Among the rest, slightly more say the United States is safer (30%) than less safe (18%). Understandably, there is a relationship between opinions on whether the war was worth it and whether the United States is now safer from terrorism. Two-thirds of those who believe the war was worth the cost say the United States is safer from terrorism, while the same proportion of those who think the war was not worth fighting say U.S. military action has made no difference. Republicans (37%) are

somewhat more likely to say the war has made the U.S. safer, while Democrats (26%) and Independents (30%) are less likely to say so.

Americans ready to welcome troops home

Slightly more Americans (44%) think the United States should bring all of its combat troops home as scheduled than think all combat troops should be withdrawn before the 2014 deadline (38%). Only 17 percent believe that some combat troops should be left behind after 2014.



While battle fatigue is likely a major factor in the American public's disillusionment with the war in Afghanistan, most Americans feel that the Afghans themselves want NATO forces to exit their country. Six in ten (60%) say that most people in Afghanistan want NATO forces to leave now. Just over a third (36%) say most Afghans want NATO forces to remain for now, and nearly half of this group favor withdrawing before the 2014 deadline (45%).

A Note on Methods

This report is based on the results of The Chicago Council's 2012 biennial survey of public opinion conducted from May 25 to June 8, 2012. The survey probes American attitudes on a wide range of U.S. foreign policy issues. GFK Custom Research conducted the survey for The Chicago Council using a randomly selected sample of 1877 adults age 18 and older from their large-scale, nationwide research panel. The panel is recruited using stratified random digit dialing (RDD) telephone sampling. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.5%.

The report summarizing the findings of the 2012 Chicago Council Survey, *Foreign Policy in the New Millennium*, will be discussed by a panel of experts on September 10 at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington, DC. Watch the event live online at npr.org/thisisnpr beginning at 12:30 p.m EST and follow @ChicagoCouncil and @TheWilsonCenter for live updates. For more on The Chicago Council's public opinion work, visit thechicagocouncil.org/publicopinion.