

Foreign Challenges and the President

March 21-24, 2105

- 29% of Americans think the U.S. gives too much support to Israel, but about as many (27%) say the U.S. does too little. Among Republicans, 53% say the U.S. gives too little support to Israel.
- Neither President Barack Obama nor the Republicans in Congress receive good marks for their handling of relations with Iran.
- 65% say the fight against ISIS is going badly for the U.S., and the public is divided on sending U.S. ground troops to Iraq and Syria to fight ISIS.
- President Obama’s job approval rating is 45% in this poll; 46% disapprove. These ratings are similar to last month.

Israel

Americans are split when asked about the level of U.S. support for Israel: 29% say the U.S. gives too much, about as many say it gives too little, and a third say the U.S. gives the right amount. The percentage that says U.S. support is too little has risen by ten points since 2011.

But Republicans hold a stronger view -- just over half say the U.S. gives too little support to Israel.

	Support U.S. Gives to Israel				
	All	Reps	Dems	Inds	11/2011
Too much	29%	16%	36%	30%	31%
Too little	27	53	14	22	17
Right amount	33	22	41	33	38

Iran

The public’s assessment of President Barack Obama’s handling of relations with Iran is net negative: just 38% of Americans approve of the job he is doing, while more, 47%, disapprove.

President Obama’s Handling of Iran Relations					
	All	Reps	Dems	Inds	
Approve	38%	9%	69%	34%	
Disapprove	47	75	21	48	
Don’t know	15	16	10	18	

Republicans in Congress fare worse on their handling of relations with Iran – public disapproval outweighs approval by two to one. And while 45% of Republicans approve, 31% disapprove of how members of their own party in Congress are handling relations with Iran.

Republicans in Congress: Handling of Iran Relations

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Approve	27%	45%	17%	23%
Disapprove	54	31	69	56
Don't know	20	24	14	21

Three in four Americans view Iran's nuclear program as a threat to the U.S. 45% think it is one that can be contained for now, while another 29% think it requires military action now.

Iran's Nuclear Program is...

	All	Reps	Dems	Inds
Threat requiring military action now	29%	45%	20%	28%
Threat, can be contained	45	41	48	46
Not a threat	18	10	25	18

ISIS

By a large margin, Americans see the fight against the militant group ISIS as going badly for the U.S. – a view similar to last month.

How is the U.S. Fight Against ISIS Going?

	Now	2/2015	10/2014
Well	28%	28%	33%
Badly	65	67	57

Just 43% of Americans now favor the U.S. sending ground troops into Iraq or Syria to fight ISIS militants; 46% oppose it. Support for sending ground troops rose to 57% in February, in the immediate aftermath of the death of aid worker Kayla Mueller, but has now dropped to levels seen last fall.

Using U.S. Ground Troops Against ISIS

	Now	2/2015	10/2014	9/2014
Favor	43%	57%	47%	39%
Oppose	46	37	46	55

Support for ground troops has dropped among Republicans, Democrats and independents.

Using U.S. Ground Troops Against ISIS

(by political party)

	----- Now -----			-- 2/2015 --		
	Reps	Dems	Inds	Reps	Dems	Inds
Favor	62%	38%	38%	72%	50%	53%
Oppose	26	56	50	27	43	39

The percentage of Americans that views ISIS as a major threat to the U.S. is about the same as it was last month. Now, 62% view it as a major threat to the U.S., and another 21% see it as a minor threat. Just 13% say ISIS is not a threat.

79% of Republicans say ISIS is a major threat; just 47% of Democrats say the same.

How Great a Threat is ISIS to the U.S.?

	Now	2/2015	10/2014
Major threat	62%	65%	58%
Minor threat	21	18	21
Not a threat	13	13	15

A quarter of Americans think that President Obama has a clear plan for dealing with ISIS, similar to last month. 64% think he does not. Just 47% of Democrats say he has a clear plan; 41% think he does not.

Does President Obama Have a Clear Plan for Dealing with ISIS?

	Total	Reps	Dems	Inds
Yes	25%	5%	47%	22%
No	64	87	41	67

President Obama

The President's overall job approval rating continues to hover in the mid-forties. 45% now approve, and just as many, 46%, disapprove.

President Obama's Overall Job Rating

	Now	2/2015	9/2014	3/2014	3/2013	3/2012
Approve	45%	44%	40%	43%	45%	41%
Disapprove	46	46	50	50	46	47

Evaluations of the President on terrorism and ISIS are slightly more negative than last month. At 36%, President Obama's approval rating on handling ISIS is the lowest since CBS News began asking the question last fall.

His ratings on foreign policy generally and the economy are largely unchanged.

President Obama's Job Ratings on Issues

	Now		Past Rating		
	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove	
Economy	47%	46	48%	47	(2/2015)
Terrorism	42%	50	45%	47	(2/2015)
Foreign policy	38%	51	39%	50	(2/2015)
Iran	38%	47	39%	44	(9/2013)
ISIS	36%	53	39%	51	(2/2015)

The Economy, Direction of the Country

Positive assessments of the economy, first seen in CBS News Polls in January, continue. Half of Americans say the economy is in good shape.

Condition of the Economy

	Now	2/2015	1/2015	10/2014	3/2014	3/2012
Good	51%	54%	53%	40%	37%	22%
Bad	48	45	46	58	61	75

34% say the economy is improving, and another 37% say it is staying the same. 27% say it is getting worse.

30% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction, while 62% say it is off on the wrong track. These views are more negative than they have been for the last two months.

	Direction of the Country							
	Now	2/2015	1/2015	10/2014	1/2014	2/2013	10/2010	10/2008
Right direction	30%	37%	38%	27%	33%	40%	34%	7%
Wrong track	62	56	56	66	61	54	61	89

This poll was conducted by telephone March 21-24, 2015 among a random sample of 1,023 adults nationwide. Data collection was conducted on behalf of CBS News by SSRS of Media, PA. Phone numbers were dialed from samples of both standard land-line and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups may be higher. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. This poll release conforms to the Standards of Disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

CBS NEWS POLL
Foreign Challenges and the President
March 21-24, 2015

Q1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Feb15b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	45	6	82	42	44
Disapprove	46	89	14	45	46
Don't know/No answer	8	5	4	12	10

Q2. Do you feel things in this country are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

Right direction	30	8	53	27	37
Wrong track	62	89	40	62	56
Don't know/No answer	8	3	7	11	7

Q4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling foreign policy?

Approve	38	9	70	34	39
Disapprove	51	85	23	51	50
Don't know/No answer	11	6	7	15	12

Q5. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy?

Approve	47	10	79	45	48
Disapprove	46	83	18	46	47
Don't know/No answer	7	7	3	9	5

Q6. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism?

Approve	42	9	74	38	45
Disapprove	50	84	22	50	47
Don't know/No answer	8	6	3	12	7

Q7. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation with ISIS militants in Iraq and Syria?

Approve	36	9	62	32	39
Disapprove	53	83	28	53	51
Don't know/No answer	12	8	10	15	11

Q8. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling relations with Iran?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Sep13d
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Approve	38	9	69	34	39
Disapprove	47	75	21	48	44
Don't know/No answer	15	16	10	18	17

Q12. How would you rate the condition of the national economy these days? Is it very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Feb15b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	5	3	7	4	5
Fairly good	46	31	60	44	49
Fairly bad	26	36	19	25	31
Very bad	22	28	13	24	14
Don't know/No answer	2	2	1	2	2

Q13. Do you think the economy is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Feb15b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Better	34	16	52	32	38
Worse	27	33	13	33	19
Same	37	50	33	34	42
Don't know/No answer	1	1	2	1	1

Q13a. Do you think the United States gives too much support to Israel, too little support to Israel, or does the US give the right amount of support to Israel?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Nov11a
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Too much	29	16	36	30	31
Too little	27	53	14	22	17
Right amount	33	22	41	33	38
Don't know/No answer	11	9	9	14	14

Q18. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans in Congress are handling relations with Iran?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS			
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
Approve	27	45	17	23
Disapprove	54	31	69	56
Don't know/No answer	20	24	14	21

Q25. How would you say things are going for the U.S. in its fight against the militant group ISIS in Iraq and Syria? Would you say things are going very well, somewhat well, somewhat badly, or very badly?

					Feb15b
Very well	2	1	2	2	2
Somewhat well	26	14	38	24	26
Somewhat badly	34	29	36	35	34
Very badly	31	49	18	30	33
Don't know/No answer	8	8	7	9	6

Q26. Do you think the militant group ISIS is a threat to the security of the United States, or not?
(IF YES, ASK): Do you think it is a major threat or a minor threat?

Yes, major	62	79	47	62	65
Yes, minor	21	14	27	20	18
Not a threat	13	5	21	12	13
Don't know/No answer	5	2	5	7	4

Q27. Do you think Barack Obama has a clear plan for dealing with ISIS militants, or not?

Yes, has clear plan	25	5	47	22	30
No, does not have clear plan	64	87	41	67	60
Don't know/No answer	11	8	12	11	10

Q28. Do you favor or oppose the U.S. sending ground troops into Iraq or Syria to fight ISIS militants?

	TOTAL RESPONDENTS				Feb15b
	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	
	%	%	%	%	%
Favor	43	62	38	38	57
Oppose	46	26	56	50	37
Favor ground troops in Syria only (vol.)	*	*	-	*	-
Favor ground troops in Iraq only (vol.)	*	-	-	*	-
Don't know/No answer	10	12	6	12	6

Q52. Which of these comes closest to your opinion? 1. Iran's nuclear program is a threat to the United States that requires military action now. 2. Iran's nuclear program is a threat that can be contained for now. 3. Iran's nuclear program is not a threat to the United States at this time.

Threat requiring action now	29	45	20	28
Threat that can be contained	45	41	48	46
Not a threat at this time	18	10	25	18
Don't know/No answer	7	4	7	8

	<u>Unweighted</u>	<u>Weighted</u>	
Total Respondents	1023		
Total Republicans	270	240	(23%)
Total Democrats	293	297	(29%)
Total independents	460	486	(48%)