NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

ON PUBLIC OPINION IN TIME OF WAR

by

Brian S. Anthony

September 2009

Thesis Advisor:	John Arquilla
Second Reader:	Steve Iatrou

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704–0188
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202–4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704–0188) Washington DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY ***(Leave blank)***	**2. REPORT DATE** December 2009	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE On Public Opinion in Time of War			**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**
6. AUTHOR(S) Brian Anthony			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943–5000			**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Is public support for military intervention as susceptible to mounting casualties and other costs as many in the media, government leaders, and scholars believe when the conflicts become prolonged? During such conflicts, how does public opinion affect presidential decision making? At first glance, it seems that changes in presidential policy are influenced by public opinion, but further research indicates that presidents' concerns about public opinion and approval do not always cause changes in their policies. This is due to continued public support for sustained war efforts, despite increasing casualties and other costs of war.

14. SUBJECT TERMS WMD–Weapons of Mass Destruction, NES National Election Studies, Public Opinion, Vietnam War, Iraq War, President Johnson, President Bush			**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 111
			16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UU

NSN 7540–01–280–5500 Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2–89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239–18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

ON PUBLIC OPINION IN TIME OF WAR

Brian S. Anthony
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.S., U.S. Naval Academy, 2003

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION WARFARE SYSTEMS ENGINEERING

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2009

Author: Brian Anthony

Approved by: Dr. John Arquilla
Thesis Advisor

Mr. Steven Iatrou
Second Reader

Dr. Dan Boger
Chairman, Department of Information Sciences

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

Is public support for military intervention as susceptible to mounting casualties and other costs as many in the media, government leaders, and scholars believe when the conflicts become prolonged? During such conflicts, how does public opinion affect presidential decision making? At first glance, it seems that changes in presidential policy are influenced by public opinion, but further research indicates that presidents' concerns about public opinion and approval do not always cause changes in their policies. This is due to continued public support for sustained war efforts, despite increasing casualties and other costs of war.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION—THEORY OF PRESIDENTS, WAR AND PUBLIC OPINION 1
A. INTRODUCTION 1
B. IDEAL DEMOCRACY 2
C. PUBLIC OPINION 4
D. NAYSAYERS 5

II. VIETNAM WAR 7
A. RALLYING SUPPORT 1964–1966 9
1. 1965 14
2. 1966 19
3. Presidential Strategy 24
B. TURN OF THE TIDE IN SUPPORT 1967–1968 24
1. 1967 24
2. 1968 29
C. CHAPTER II ANALYSIS 35

III. IRAQ WAR 37
A. RALLYING SUPPORT 2002–2003 40
1. 2001–March 2003 40
2. 2003 46
3. 2004 51
4. 2005 59
B. THE TURNING POINT IN PUBLIC OPINION 66
1. 2006 66
2. 2007 70
3. 2008 76
C. CHAPTER III ANALYSIS 80

IV. COMPARISON 83
A. IS PUBLIC OPINION FRAGILE? 83
1. Vietnam 83
2. Iraq 84
3. Vietnam vs. Iraq 86
B. DID PUBLIC OPINION SHAPE PRESIDENTIAL POLICY? 87
1. Vietnam 87
2. Iraq 88
3. Vietnam vs. Iraq 90

V. CONCLUSION 91

LIST OF REFERENCES 93

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST 95

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. U.S. Handling Affairs in South Vietnam in 1964 11
Figure 2. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1964 13
Figure 3. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1965 15
Figure 4. What Would You Like to See Next In Vietnam? 1965 17
Figure 5. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1966 20
Figure 6. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1966 23
Figure 7. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1967 25
Figure 8. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1967 27
Figure 9. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1967 28
Figure 10. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1968 31
Figure 11. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1968 32
Figure 12. Are You a "Hawk" or Dove"? 1968 33
Figure 13. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1968 34
Figure 14. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2002–2003 43
Figure 15. Favor or Oppose of Sending Troops to Invade Iraq 2002–2003 44
Figure 16. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2002–2003 45
Figure 17. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2003 48
Figure 18. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2003 49
Figure 19. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2003 50
Figure 20. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2003 51
Figure 21. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2004 53
Figure 22. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2004 55
Figure 23. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2004 55
Figure 24. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2004 57
Figure 25. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2004 58
Figure 26. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2005 60
Figure 27. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2005 61
Figure 28. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2005 63
Figure 29. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2005 64
Figure 30. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2005 65
Figure 31. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2006 67
Figure 32. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2006 68
Figure 33. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2006 69
Figure 34. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2006 70
Figure 35. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2007 72
Figure 36. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2007 73
Figure 37. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2007 74
Figure 38. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2007 75
Figure 39. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2007 76
Figure 40. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2008 77
Figure 41. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2008 78
Figure 42. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2008 79

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Vietnam Timeline 9
Table 2. U.S. Handling Affairs in South Vietnam in 1964 11
Table 3. What to do Next in Vietnam? 1964 12
Table 4. Did U.S. Do Right Thing in Vietnam and What U.S. Should Do Now? 12
Table 5. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1964 13
Table 6. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1965 ..16
Table 7. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1965 16
Table 8. What Would You Like to See Next In Vietnam? 1965 16
Table 9. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1965 18
Table 10. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1965 19
Table 11. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1966 ..21
Table 12. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1966 22
Table 13. Did We Do the Right Thing in Vietnam and What Should be Done Now? 1966 22
Table 14. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1966 23
Table 15. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1967 ..26
Table 16. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1967 27
Table 17. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1967 28
Table 18. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1968 ..30
Table 19. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1968 31
Table 20. Are You a “Hawk” or Dove”? 1968 32
Table 21. Did We Do the Right Thing in Vietnam and What Should be Done Now? 1968 33
Table 22. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1968 34
Table 23. Iraq War Timeline 40
Table 24. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2002–2003 42
Table 25. Favor or Oppose of Sending Troops to Invade Iraq 2002–2003 43
Table 26. Favor or Oppose Military Action Against Iraq 2002 44
Table 27. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2002–2003 45
Table 28. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2003 47
Table 29. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2003 48
Table 30. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2003 49
Table 31. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2003 50
Table 32. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2004 53
Table 33. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2004 54
Table 34. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2004 56
Table 35. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2004 56
Table 36. Do You Approve or Disapprove of President Bush’s Handling War in Iraq? and Do You Think Iraq Was Worth the Cost? 2004 57
Table 37. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2004 58
Table 38. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2005 60
Table 39. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2005 62

Table 40. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2005 63
Table 41. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2005 64
Table 42. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2005 65
Table 43. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2006 67
Table 44. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2006 68
Table 45. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2006 69
Table 46. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2007 71
Table 47. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2007 72
Table 48. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2007 73
Table 49. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2007 74
Table 50. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2007 74
Table 51. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2007 75
Table 52. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2008 77
Table 53. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2008 78
Table 54. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2008 78
Table 55. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2008 79

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost would like to thank the Lord for allowing me to have this opportunity to pursue higher education. I would like to thank Dr. John Arquilla and Professor Steven Iatrou for their help and support in my pursuit of this area of research. I would like to thank my family and friends for their help and support while persevering through this chapter in my life. I would like to especially thank that special someone who endured many long days and nights with me as we journeyed through this assignment. Thank you, thank you, thank you, you are truly the best.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. INTRODUCTION—THEORY OF PRESIDENTS, WAR AND PUBLIC OPINION

A. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will examine whether public support for prolonged military intervention is as fragile as the media, government and many scholars believe. In this context, "fragility" refers to susceptibility to mounting casualties and other war costs. It will further determine if presidential policy is affected by declining popular support during a prolonged conflict. In times of national crisis, Americans initially tend to "rally around the flag" in support of the President.

> Crises are the opposite force, dramatic events capable of moving approval away from – sometimes a long way from – equilibrium approval. In situations in which the nation is in peril against external threats, particularly, Americans "rally around the flag," coming to the support of the president, standing as the national symbol.[1]

This includes support for entering into armed conflict. The literature suggests that over time this support wanes and can even shift to opposition to armed conflict despite presidential determinations that continued military engagement is in the best interest of national security. "When the president acts for all, he or she can begin to expect approval for that action from all. It is very different from … normal politics. Normalcy will always prevail in the long run. Thus the approval gained from crisis can never be expected to last."[2]

This investigation seeks to answer the following specific questions: Did public opinion affect presidential policy in the Vietnam War? Secondly, has public opinion affected presidential policy in the Iraq War? To address these questions, a study of various bodies of knowledge is required. In Chapter I, the theory of public opinion in democracy and how it relates to policymaking will be analyzed. In Chapter II and III, the

[1] James A. Stimson, Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 145.

[2] Stimson, 145.

Vietnam War and Iraq War, respectively, will be looked at with regard to presidential policy and public opinion. These two wars were chosen because they encompassed most of President Johnson's and President Bush's presidencies, during which time both wars were escalated. Public opinion demonstrates the level of support for the president prior to armed conflict, and if war support wanes or grows as the conflict continues. In Chapter IV, the similarities and differences between the two wars will be explained.

The current inquiry also involves an analysis and discussion of numerous public opinion poll data. Gallup Opinion polls and American National Election Study polls will be examined to determine the degree of public support for the president's handling of each specific conflict, whether or not the public thought it was a mistake to enter armed conflict, and what should happen "next" within the conflict. Chapter V is a summation, conclusion, and recommended future research from the above studies throughout the thesis.

B. IDEAL DEMOCRACY

In an ideal representative democracy, officials are elected by constituents in their particular proportional representation, state and country to represent them and their ideas. When it is time for a policymaker to take a position on a particular issue, it is important that the policymaker take into account what their constituents want, not their own personal or party ideas. "When a policymaker decides to take a stance or propose a particular action, they first try to develop an understanding of constituents' sentiments, either from public opinion polls or from reflections of public opinion through mass media content or from other formal means."[3] To further support this stance, J. David Kennamer adds, "Normative democratic theory calls for much more serious role for public opinion—it is supposed to have something to do with the formation of public policy."[4] Here the linkage between public opinion and presidential policy and how the president

[3] Dan Berkowitz, *Public Opinion, The Press, and Public Policy*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 87–88.

[4] J. David Kennamer, *Public Opinion, The Press, and Public Policy*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 1.

executes his policy begins. Conversely, in American democracy, as officials are elected, the choices that most policymakers make are based on their respective political party affiliation and may not coincide with what their constituent's desire.

> When a controversial new position is staked out, the "supporters" – those who have already advocated the position – will of course join with enthusiasm. And most of those in between will find easier and more comfortable to support their party's new stance than to oppose it. The cost of opposition is estrangement from their party, while going along is costless. The opponents, who, in contrast, will have taken public positions – sometimes intense ones, sometimes even winning political support for them – will not go along. For them it is not costless to join their party's position. They might appear inconsistent and unprincipled and might alienate voters they count on for support.[5]

During the Vietnam War and Iraq War, most politicians went along with their party rather than going along with what their constituents wanted as the war prolonged.

> As long as it was President Johnson's war, public support for the war was generally higher among Democrats than Republicans. When it became a Republican war, Republicans were somewhat inclined to express support for the war than were Democrats.[6]

Officials sometimes go along with party affiliation for decision making rather than constituents' desires. Both Presidents Johnson and Bush had strong public support polls for military action when they decided to escalate the Vietnam War and invade Iraq, respectively. "American public greeted the escalation in 1965 with approval."[7] Likewise in 2003, "as the war began, news reports announced that Americans rallied around the president."[8]

---

[5] Stimson, 65.

[6] Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 1996), 87.

[7] Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009), 194.

[8] Brewer, 251.

C. PUBLIC OPINION

The earliest known opinion poll in the United States was in 1824 by The Harrisburg Pennsylvanian. The locally conducted straw poll, an unofficial vote used to ascertain public opinion and predict the outcome of an official vote, showed Andrew Jackson leading John Quincy Adams for the presidency of the United States 335 votes to 169.[9] Although President Adams won the election, this example shows a case of Congress acting congruently with party desires and against more popular will. The debate on whether public opinion affects policy began when the first public opinion polls were taken and released. Over time, with regard to public opinion and policy, compelling arguments have developed on both sides. One side takes the stance that public opinion does shape presidential policy and the other that it does not. The initial focus is on those who say public opinion does affect presidential policy, and the later focus on the naysayers. "Normative expectations that mass publics should exist and should have policy input persist… and play a critical role in not how policy is determined, than at least how it is justified."[10] The public's opinion does have a voice in American democracy. It may come at the beginning of the decision making or after the decision has been made. Kennamer boldly states, "Voting is the most visible and concrete sign of public opinion."[11] According to Erikson, Wright, & McIver, "in national studies, public opinion (and its expression through the electoral process) is frequently of central concern in explaining the process of policy development and change over time…the persuasive attention to the connections between public preferences and the actions of government on the part of scholars of national politics is not in the least surprising."[12] In later chapters, polls will show as the Vietnam and Iraq Wars prolonged, if public opinion further shaped presidential policy.

---

[9] Wikipedia, "Opinion Poll," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_poll.

[10] Kennamer, 15.

[11] Kennamer, 2.

[12] Robert S. Erikson, John P. McIver, and Gerald C. Wright, Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the Am*erican States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.

During elections, wars and major economic changes in the United States, public opinion can influence perceptions of what direction the country should head and thus affect presidential policy. "Public opinion may set the outside limits beyond which policymakers cannot go, but within those limits it is quite uninvolved."[13] Once a policymaker has an idea of where public opinion stands regarding a certain issue, he or she can operate within those limits and sometimes even push the envelope in some cases. Elected officials have to be careful when taking their positions, they could either lose or gain support from their constituents depending on how their position affects their supporters. "Potentially two effects public opinion can have on public policy: effects on the process of policymaking and the effects on the actual policy choice."[14] If the public is not satisfied with the decisions of their elected officials, they can elect someone different into office that is more aligned to their beliefs. "Elected officials who ignore policy issues of importance to the general public, or whose policy actions stray beyond the bounds of what the public finds acceptable, will be less likely to stay in office."[15] When the public feels ignored, or if elected officials stray beyond the limits of public opinion, the public tends to elect someone else who is more closely aligned with their ideals.

D. NAYSAYERS

There is a minority of authors who argue that there is little to no link between presidential policy and public opinion. J.E Brooks focuses on the link between these two distinct groups. "There is little if any direct relationship between "mass public opinion" and governmental policy in Western democracies… If the preferences of "mass publics" do not seem to register in policy, then whose "wants, needs, and demands" are transmitted to policymakers and incorporated in policymaking?"[16] He further argues that

[13] Kennamer, 3.

[14] Kennamer, 13.

[15] David Pritchard, *Public Opinion, The Press, and Public Policy*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 107.

[16] Kennamer, 2.

the majority of the public do not keep up with the day–to–day agendas of policymakers and public opinion polls show how ignorant the public is about these issues.

> The difficulties and activities of everyday life command attention in ways that politics rarely, ever does. It is therefore warranted to expect most people most of the time to be absorbed in the minutiae of politics and public policy unless these intrude in a very direct way on their everyday lives. Indeed, it seems that studies of the public knowledge of such topics turn out to be studies of their lack of knowledge."[17]

Another argument is that public opinion is media–influenced. "People seek out the media that conform to their views, demonstrating a confirmation bias, the tendency to seek out, interpret, and create information that verifies ones existing beliefs."[18] If a person is a conservative, they would be more inclined to have those views of other like–minded conservatives and watch particular news channels that cater to their views. The same would hold true for a liberal person. "We regularly argue along partisan and ideological lines about media slant toward one or the other side in American politics. But arguments about slant miss the important action…It is quite wrong to assume all issues get two–sided treatment. There are many matters where one side is dominant and is the only message the public hears."[19] This allows for the public to be skewed in one direction or the other when pollsters call the public looking for a non–biased opinion.

Another example naysayers argue is loyalty to political parties. It is clear in both wars how party loyalty overshadowed public opinion and what the consequences were during an election year. Elected officials typically align with the ideals of their affiliated party rather than the interests of their constituents; this echoes the truth about the role of public opinion in politics and policy.

---

[17] Kennamer, 3.

[18] D.L. Rosenhan, "On Being Sane in Insane Places." *Science*, (1973), 179, 250–258.

[19] Stimson, 17.

II. VIETNAM WAR

1954	21–Jul	Geneva accords end Indochina war between French and Communist–led guerrillas
	8–Sep	South East Asia Treaty Organization created
	23–Oct	President Eisenhower offers aid to South Vietnamese government
1955	12–Feb	United States advisers take over training of South Vietnamese army from French
	23–Oct	Diem becomes president of South Vietnam
1958		Growth of Viet Cong guerrilla war against government of South Vietnam
1960	8–Nov	South Vietnamese government charges North Vietnam is infiltrating troops into South Vietnam
	10–Nov	Revolt of South Vietnamese paratroopers against Diem fails
1961	Fall	Decision by Kennedy Administration to increase military and economic aid to South Vietnam,
		raise numbers of military advisers from 685 to several thousands
1962	9–Oct	Diem says war against Viet Cong now going well
1963	2–Oct	Defense Secretary McNamara predicts most of the 14,000 United States military personnel in
		South Vietnam can be withdrawn by the end of 1965
	1–Nov	After months of internal political and religious turmoil, Diem ousted from office and killed in coup
	22–Nov	Kennedy assassinated; Johnson becomes president
	23–Nov	McNamara abandons plan to withdraw by end of 1965, notes gains of Viet Cong after Diem coup
1964	30–Jan	Another coup in South Vietnam
	17–Mar	United States pledge of continued assistance to South Vietnam as long as required to control
		"Communist aggression"; warnings to North Vietnam repeatedly issued
	August	In response to two firings on American ships in Gulf of Tonkin, North Vietnamese PT boat bases are
		bombed; Congress passes resolution supporting action and other such measures to protect
		United States forces and "prevent further aggression"
	3–Nov	Johnson re–elected president
1965	27–Jan	Coup in South Vietnam after months of political and religious turmoil
	7–Feb	North Vietnam bombed by United States planes in retaliation for Viet Cong attack on United States
		bases in South Vietnam
	16–Feb	Coup in South Vietnam
	24–Feb	United States planes bomb Viet Cong targets in South Vietnam for first time
	27–Feb	State Department White Paper on aggression from the North
	8–Mar	Marines land in South Vietnam to defend United States base
	21–Mar	Communist China says it will fight in Vietnam if United States invades the North or if aid is requested
		by the North Vietnamese
	2–Apr	United States to increase troops in South Vietnam, increase air strikes
	17–Apr	15,000 demonstrators in Washington protest bombings; teach–ins follow
	May	Five–day suspension of air raids
	21–Jun	Ky becomes premier of South Vietnam
	28–Jul	Johnson announces increased draft calls to allow buildup in Vietnam from current 75,000 to 125,000

	23–Sep	North Vietnam reaffirms earlier rejections of United States offers to negotiate
	30–Sep	Attempted coup by Communists in Indonesia fails, leads to massive anti–Communist movement there
	24–Dec	Month–long bombing halt begins
1966	February	Senate hearings on war in Vietnam
	Spring	Many antiwar demonstrations
	12–Apr	First B–52 raids over North Vietnam
	May	Rise of Lin Piao in China; beginnings of purges, Red Guard movement, Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
	29–Jun	Extension of bombing raids to oil dumps near Hanoi
	11–Sep	Elections in Vietnam for constituent assembly
	December	Reports from North Vietnam by *New York Times* correspondent on civilian damage caused by United States
		air strikes
1967	February	Wilson–Kosygin probes for negotiations on war; North Vietnam continues to demand unconditional bombing
		halt before talks can begin
	15–Apr	Mass antiwar rally of 100,000 in New York
	3–Sep	Elections of Thieu and Ky in South Vietnam
	21–Oct	Antiwar demonstrators storm Pentagon
	November	Bunker–Westmoreland visit to United States, voice optimism on war
1968	30–Jan	Beginning of major offensive by Communists during Tet cease–fire
	28–Feb	Military requests 206,000 more men
	1–Mar	McCarthy gets sizeable vote in challenge to president in New Hampshire primary
	22–Mar	General Westmoreland removed as commander in Vietnam and promoted
	31–Mar	Johnson declares partial bombing halt, calls for talks, announces he will not run for re–election
	3–Apr	North Vietnam agrees to preliminary peace talks
	9–Apr	Defense Secretary Clifford announces policy of 549,500 troop ceiling and gradual transfer of war responsibility
		to South Vietnamese
	Spring	Many antiwar demonstrations
	May	Further Communist offensives
	8–Aug	Nixon nominated by Republicans
	29–Aug	Humphrey nominated by Democrats at tempestuous convention
	31–Oct	Full bombing halt agreed to, 'productive discussions" to be begun
	6–Nov	Nixon elected President
1969	Spring	Communist offensives
	8–Jun	Nixon announces beginning of troop withdrawals: 25,000 by August
	3–Sep	President Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam dies
	16–Sep	Nixon announces withdrawals of 35,000 more men as pace of war slackens
	October	Nationwide protests against the war (moratorium)
	15–Nov	Mass antiwar march in Washington of 250,000 to 300,00
	16–Nov	Reports of civilian massacre by United States troops in March 1968 at Mylai

	15–Dec	Nixon announces further withdrawal of 50,000
1970	20–Apr	Nixon pledges to withdraw 150,000 troops over the next year
	May	Joint United States–South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia; massive protest in the United States
1971	February	South Vietnamese troops, with United States support, invade Laos
	Spring	Trial and conviction of Lt. Calley for mass murder at Mylai
	13–Jun	*New York Times* begins its controversial publication of the "Pentagon Papers"
	October	Reelection of Thieu
	December	Series of bombing raids on North Vietnam
1972	23–Mar	United States declares indefinite suspension of Paris peace talks
	April	Major Communist offensive; United States resumes massive bombing of North Vietnam
	July	Peace talks resume; one battalion remains as the only American combat unit in South Vietnam

Table 1. Vietnam Timeline

Source: *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*

A. RALLYING SUPPORT 1964–1966

From the Vietnam timeline (Table 1), it can be seen that U.S. forces, at first in small numbers, had been in Vietnam since 1955. Troop strength increased minimally until President Johnson came into office. It was not until after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964, which allowed for additional troops to protect U.S. forces and prevent further aggression, that troop strength began to increase significantly. Considering polls from 1964, when asked, "Do you think the U.S. is handling affairs in South Vietnam as well as could be expected, or do you think we are handling affairs there badly?"[20] Americans who thought affairs were being handled badly slightly outweighed those who thought they were going as well as expected by one to three percentage points prior to August 1964. That month, Americans who thought affairs were being handled well shot up to 72 percent and those who thought affairs were going badly was down to 16 percent. Shortly afterward, the numbers decreased to 51 and 23 percent respectively. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed in August, which could explain why the proportion of Americans that thought affairs were being handled properly spiked so high. Yet, Americans did not "rally around the flag" until 1965. Another question being asked

[20] Gallup Opinion Polls, 1964.

in 1964, "What do you think should be next in Vietnam?" The most popular choice was to remain with the present policy, keep watching, and keep troops in Vietnam. The next popular answer was to get tough and apply more pressure. According to the NES surveys, most Americans wanted to invade North Vietnam if we had to. Though those were the popular choices, the majority of Americans did not have an idea about what to do in 1964 as Tables 2, 3, and 4 show The Gallup Poll also shows that President Johnson kept a mid-70 percent overall approval rating for the most of the year, and dropped as low in 68 in November 1968.

To rally public support, President Johnson continued to use arguments to persuade the American people to support Vietnam, which were also used in the Korean War. Such arguments included the containment of communism, the "domino effect" of communism, and how isolationism was a popular choice during World War II, yet the United States still fought in the war. The first two arguments were effective for the President and he used them time and time again throughout the war. Each argument added justification to his efforts to escalate and maintain the war. "The principal reasons that lay behind continued support for the war were the containment of Communism, U.S. credibility, and strengthening resolve of others to resist communism." [21] The idea of domino theory came from President Eisenhower in 1954. "Vietnam and the other noncommunist nations of Asia stood like a row of dominoes…if one fell to communism, the rest would topple."[22] President Johnson's argument using anti–isolationism was far–fetched, but effective early on. "Johnson liked to cite favorable opinion polls, which discouraged other politicians from expressing criticism. 'Popular support and sound policy are obviously not the same thing,' pointed out New York Times columnist James Reston, as he reminded readers that isolationism in the years before World War II had been a popular policy at the time."[23]

[21] Larson, 25.

[22] Brewer, 183.

[23] Brewer, 195.

		Well As Could be Expected	Badly	No Opinion	Inapplicable
4/24/1964-4/29/1964	Do you think the U.S. is handling affairs in South Vietnam as well as could be expected, or do you think we are handling affairs there badly?	17.1	18.44	5.41	59.05
6/2/1964-6/2/1964		39.18	40.99	19.83	
7/21/1964-7/21/1964		38.77	41.03	20.2	
8/4/1964-8/4/1964		72.19	16.19	9.97	1.66
8/25/1964-8/25/1964		51.42	32.27	16.31	
11/6/1964-11/11/1964		23.9	31.15	9.84	34.38

Table 2. U.S. Handling Affairs in South Vietnam in 1964

Source: Gallup Poll 1964

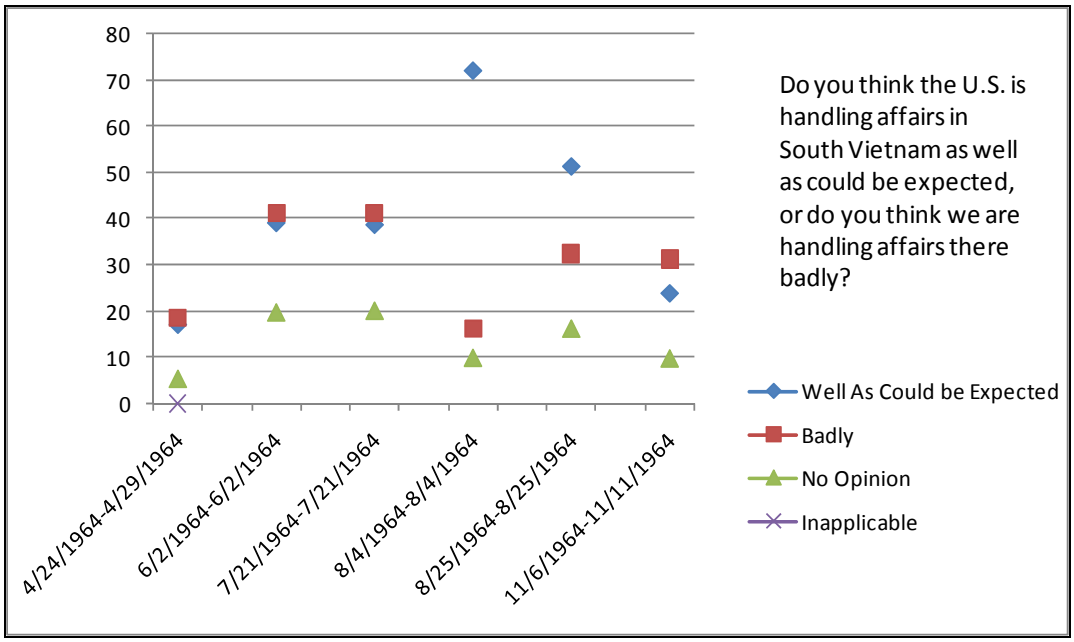

Figure 1. U.S. Handling Affairs in South Vietnam in 1964

Source: Gallup Poll 1964

		Get out of Vietnam, withdraw troops	Remain with present policy, keeping watch, keep troops in Vietnam	Get tougher (not war or fighting), put on more pressure	Fight, war, definite military action to stop further aggression	Go all the way or pull out	UN troops added or other troops	Help the people; money, education, etc	Straighten out their government, politics	Avoid all-out war, stem it as much as possible, try and settle it without war, leave shooting alone, work for peace, sit down and talk it over	No answer, blank	Miscellaneous others	DON'T KNOW
4/24/1964-4/29/1964	What do you think should be next in Vietnam?	4.45	2.56	5.13	4.42	4.59	1.8	1.28	1.42		59.33	3.9	12.11
8/4/1964-8/4/1964		3.74	26.72	11.99	9.24	2.75	1.29	1.32	0.73	9.67	0.7	5.93	28.87
8/25/1964-8/25/1964		8.58	12.11	15.88	4.43	8.85	2.11	2.26	1.36	4.74	3.03	2.29	35.88

Table 3. What to do Next in Vietnam? 1964

Source: Gallup Poll 1964

VAR 640350		YES, DID RIGHT THING	OTHER	NO, SHOULD HAVE STAYED OUT	NO	DON'T KNOW	NA	NO INTEREST	
	Q. 39. HAVE YOU BEEN PAYING ANY ATTENTION TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN VIET NAM. Q. 39A. (YES) DO YOU THINK WE DID THE RIGHT THING IN GETTING INTO THE FIGHTING IN VIET NAM OR SHOULD WE HAVE STAYED OUT	35.07	0.89	22.47	7.70	15.40	0.45	18.01	
		551	14	353	121	242	7	283	1571
VAR 640351		PULL OUT OF VIET NAM ENTIRELY	KEEP OUR SOLDIERS IN VIET NAM BUT TRY TO END THE FIGHTING	TAKE A STRONGER STAND EVEN IF IT MEANS INVADING NORTH VIET NAM	OTHER	DK	NA	INAP	
	Q. 39B. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO NOW IN VIET NAM	7.96	22.41	28.64	0.06	14.19	0.57	26.16	
		125	352	450	1	223	9	411	1571

Table 4. Did U.S. Do Right Thing in Vietnam and What U.S. Should Do Now?

Source: NES 1964

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Johnson is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1/2/1964-1/7/1964		76.92	5.32	17.67
1/30/1964-2/5/1964		75.33	7.98	16.18
2/11/1964-2/11/1964		73.65	8.66	17.69
2/28/1964-3/5/1964		79.45	8.99	11.42
3/13/1964-3/17/1964		77.41	8.98	13.44
3/27/1964-4/2/1964		75.61	11.7	12.63
4/24/1964-4/29/1964		74.78	10.94	13.85
5/4/1964-5/4/1964		75.13	10.13	14.74
5/20/1964-5/20/1964		73.65	13.4	12.95
6/2/1964-6/2/1964		73.99	12.13	13.87
6/11/1964-6/16/1964		74.13	13.97	11.87
6/25/1964-6/30/1964		73.67	14.83	11.15
11/20/1964-11/25/1964		68.45	18.24	10.54

Table 5. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1964

Source: Gallup Poll 1964

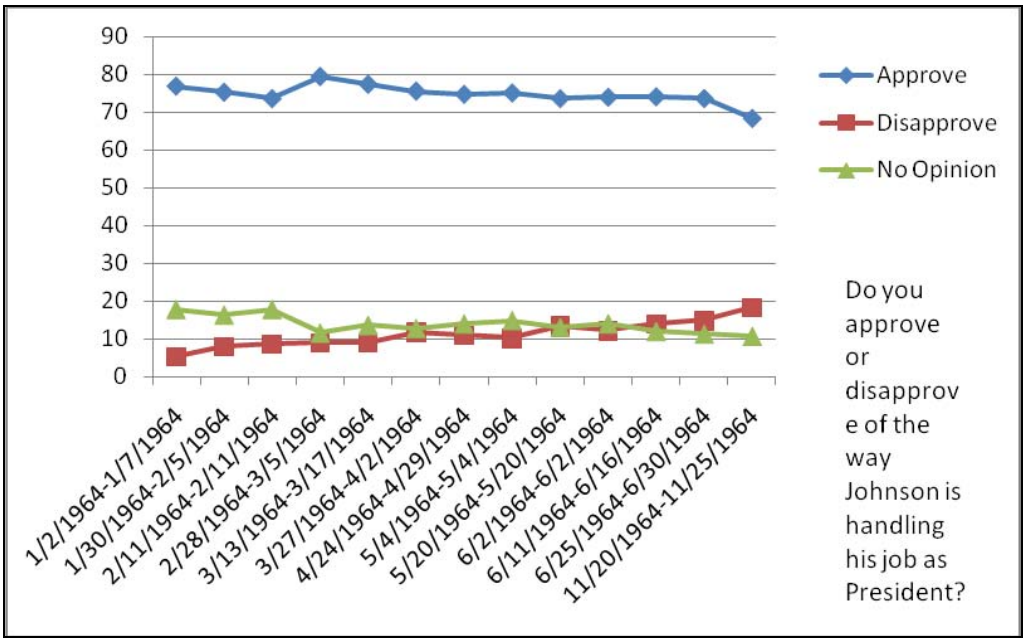

Figure 2. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1964

Source: Gallup Poll 1964

1. 1965

In 1965, Tables 5 and 9 show that approval for President Johnson's handling of the war increased from 1964. Approval remained in the mid-50 percent range throughout the year and disapproval remained in the mid-20 percent. Meanwhile, President Johnson's overall approval began at 70 percent and slowly declined to nearly 60 percent by years end. There were some major events in South Vietnam that some felt should have hurt the public's approval for the President's handling of the war, but did not. In January 1965, there was a coup after political and religious turmoil, in February another coup followed, Marines were sent into South Vietnam to defend U.S. bases, U.S. air forces began bombing Viet Cong targets, and troop strength increased. "Re–elected by a landslide in November 1964, LBJ went ahead with escalation. In early 1965, he ordered Operation Rolling Thunder, a controlled bombing attack on North Vietnam's industry and infrastructure."[24] Furthermore, the public supported this escalation providing support for the "rally around the flag" phenomenon. Brewer states, "The American Public greeted the escalation in 1965 with approval but seemed confused about its purpose. The solution was to place the cumbersome explanation of U.S. policy in Vietnam within the Cold War framework of a showdown between freedom and Communism."[25]

With all these events, the lowest level Presidential approval rating for the war to date was 48 percent in January and his highest was in September at 57 percent, while his highest overall approval was 70 percent and his lowest was 59 percent by years end. This amount of support is a clear indication of Americans seeming to "rally around the flag" for the President. "Support for the war in Vietnam rose quite considerably during the last half of 1965. There seems, therefore, to have been at the time a fairly considerable 'rally–round–the–flag' effect."[26] The question of whether one thought it was a mistake

[24] Brewer, 193.

[25] Brewer, 194.

[26] John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 53.

to send troops to Vietnam was introduced in August 1965 from the Gallup Poll. With just one sampling that year, only about 24 percent of Americans thought is was a mistake, while over 60 percent thought it was not. Over the next years this question was repeatedly asked. Another question asked in 1965, "What would you like to see next in Vietnam?" Johnson's number were high in his approval for handling Vietnam, thus the data would suggest that Americans would want escalation. The most popular answer was almost a third of Americans did not know what to do in Vietnam. Those who favored some action chose to continue present policy, withdraw troops, or escalate the war and get it over with. Approximately a quarter of Americans were also willing to start negotiations with North Vietnam in this same poll. The key idea to take away from 1965 is that with these escalations almost a third of Americans did not know what action should be taken.

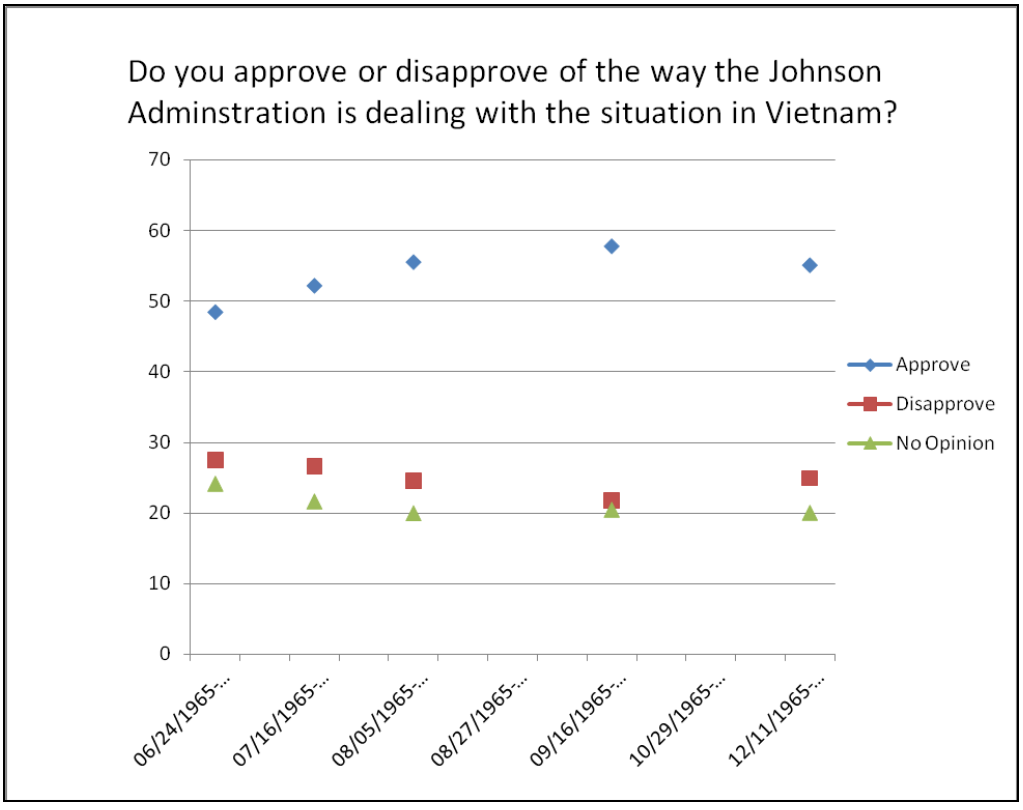

Figure 3. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

		Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
06/24/1965-06/29/1965	Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Johnson Adminstration is dealing with the situation in Vietnam?	48.39	27.52	24.1
07/16/1965-07/21/1965		52.16	26.65	21.59
08/05/1965-08/10/1965		55.54	24.53	19.93
09/16/1965-09/21/1965		57.79	21.74	20.42
12/11/1965-12/16/1965		55.09	24.92	19.99

Table 6. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

	Yes, made a mistake	No, did	Don't know	No Answer
In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam	24.06	60.37	15.46	0.11

Table 7. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

		Stopping spread of communism	Should be more aggressive	Continue present policy	Withdraw troops	Go in and get it over with	Start negotiations	Settle internal problems in South Vietnam	Red China behind problem	Misc.	Don't know
04/02/1965 - 04/07/1965	Turning to a completely different subject...In your opinion, what would you like to see the U.S. do next about Vietnam?	3.34	12.06	13.99	16.11	14.44	9.17	1.36	0.06	0.71	29.56
04/23/1965-04/28/1965		1.94	8.32	13.18	12.89	14.55	12.17	0.94	0.37	3.43	34.52
05/13/1965-05/18/1965		3.13	4.99	20.81	12.01	16.86	15.79	0.65	0.59	1.58	27.81
06/24/1965-06/29/1965		1.78	8.2	8.48	12.84	19.09	15.1	1.7	1.1	1.24	32.21

Table 8. What Would You Like to See Next In Vietnam? 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

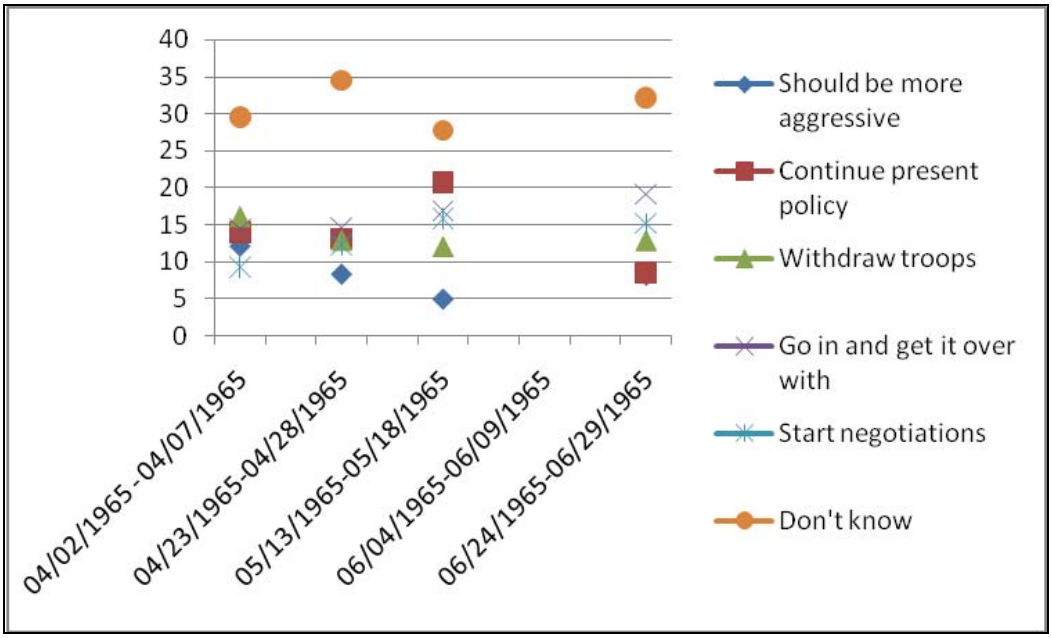

Figure 4. What Would You Like to See Next In Vietnam? 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Johnson is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1/7/1965-1/12/1965		70.9	15.29	13.8
1/28/1965-2/2/1965		70.01	14.68	14.85
2/19/1965-2/24/1965		68.5	17.75	13.61
3/16/1965-3/16/1965		69.32	20.59	10.09
4/2/1965-4/7/1965		66.68	21.6	11.72
4/23/1965-4/28/1965		63.5	22.21	14.09
5/13/1965-5/18/1965		70.3	17.68	11.93
6/4/1965-6/9/1965		68.99	18.79	12.16
6/24/1965-6/29/1965		65.89	20.93	13.18
7/16/1965-7/21/1965		65.49	19.98	14.3
8/5/1965-8/10/1965		63.35	22.17	12.36
8/27/1965-9/1/1965		63.86	24.74	11.4
9/16/1965-9/21/1965		63	23.74	13.36
10/8/1965-10/13/1965		65.6	21.42	12.78
10/29/1965-11/2/1965		64.6	21.73	13.19
11/16/1965-11/16/1965		62.43	22.14	15.43
12/11/1965-12/16/1965		63.9	25.39	10.7
12/31/1965-1/5/1966		59.32	23.37	17.25

Table 9. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

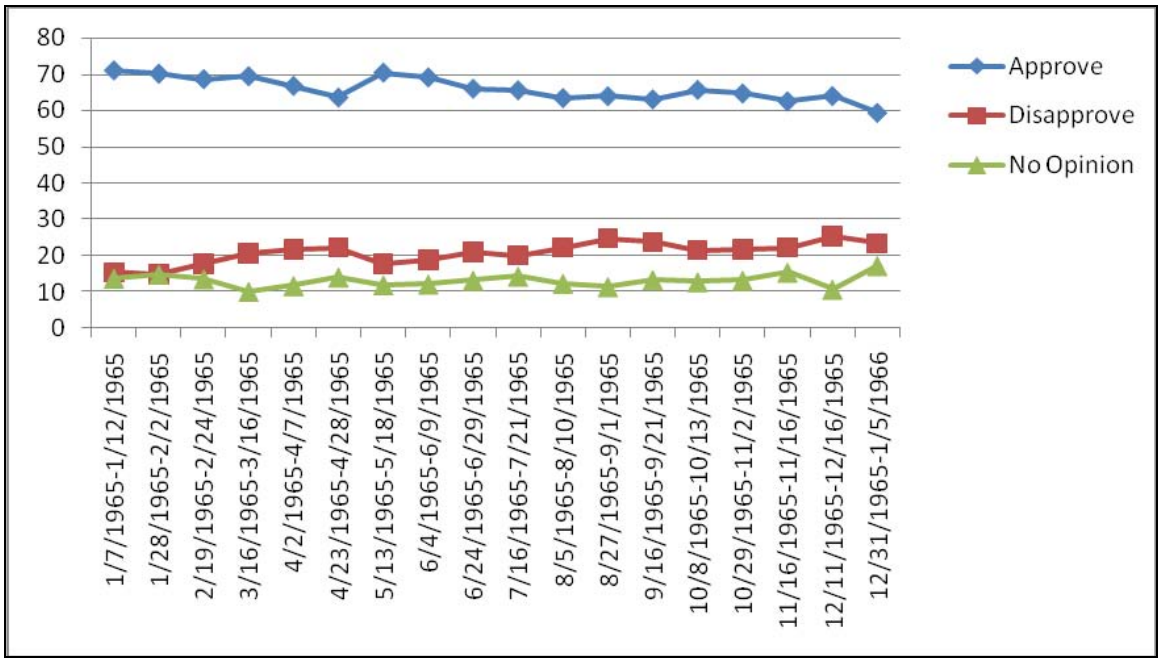

Table 10. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1965

Source: Gallup Poll 1965

2. 1966

In 1966, the conflict was gradually escalated, unlike the two previous years. Anti–war protests increased throughout the year and U.S. air forces began bombing raids in North Vietnam. President Johnson's approval ratings for the war remained high until May of 1966, and his overall approval continued to decline throughout the year. His approval rating for the war began to slowly decline each month until it dropped below 40 percent, while his disapproval rating for the war increased and surpassed his approval rating in June of 1966. During the remainder of the year, President Johnson's approval rating for the war teetered back and forth in the low 40 percent. From this point to 1968, President Johnson was never able to regain the approval rating he had the previous two years. Meanwhile, the Gallup Poll question on whether it was a mistake to send troops to fight in Vietnam did not seem to rattle Americans. Those Americans who thought it was mistake increased from 25 percent in March to 36 percent in May and then declined to 30 percent in November. Americans who thought it was not a mistake during the same

period declined from 58 percent to 48 percent and increased again to 51 percent. The NES surveys taken in 1966 still had over 35 percent of Americans saying we should keep our present policy or take a stronger stance, even if it meant invading North Vietnam.

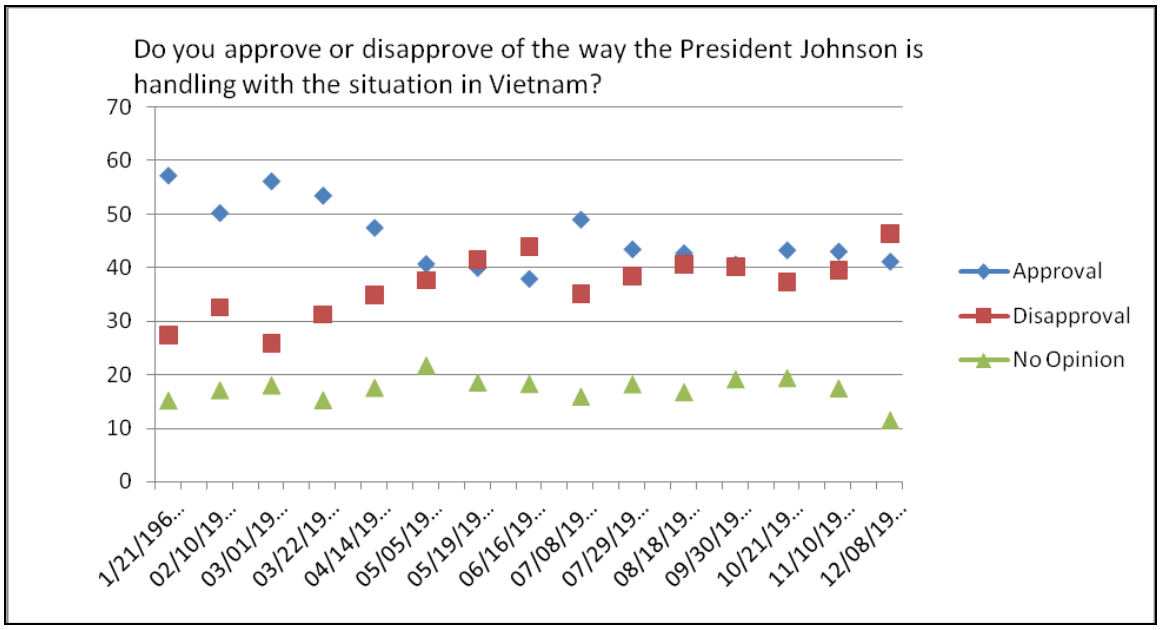

Figure 5. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1966

Source: Gallup Poll 1966

		Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion	No Answer
1/21/1966-1/26/1966	Do you approve or disapprove of the way the President Johnson is handling with the situation in Vietnam	57.3	27.45	15.11	0.14
02/10/1966-02/15/1966		50.24	32.58	17.03	0.14
03/01/1966-03/30/1966		56.23	25.82	17.95	
03/22/1966-03/22/1966		53.52	31.31	15.17	
04/14/1966-04/19/1966		47.47	34.87	17.52	0.14
05/05/1966 - 05/10/1966		40.64	37.62	21.68	
05/19/1966-05/24/1966		39.9	41.57	18.47	
06/16/1966-06/21/1966		37.83	43.89	18.22	0.06
07/08/1966 - 07/13/1966		49	35.16	15.84	
07/29/1966 - 08/03/1966		43.4	38.45	18.15	
08/18/1966 - 08/23/1966		42.67	40.64	16.69	
09/30/1966-10/06/1966		40.56	40.13	19.09	0.23
10/21/1966-10/26/1966		43.22	37.38	19.34	0.06
11/10/1966 - 11/15/1966		42.98	39.52	17.39	0.11
12/08/1966-12/13/1966		41.08	46.41	11.38	1.13

Table 11. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1966

Source: Gallup Poll 1966

		Yes, made a mistake	No, did not	Don't know
03/01/1966-03/30/1966	In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam	25.51	58.62	15.87
05/05/1966 - 05/10/1966		36.18	48.51	15.29
11/10/1966 - 11/15/1966		30.67	51.18	17.42

Table 12. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1966

Source: Gallup Poll 1966

VAR 660035		YES, DID RIGHT THING	OTHER	NO, SHOULD HAVE STAYED OUT	DON'T KNOW	NA	NO INTEREST		
	A5. "EARLIER YOU MENTIONED VIETNAM WAS AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM" OR (IF R DID NOT MENTION VIETNAM IN A1) HAVE YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN VIETNAM? A5A. (IF YES) DO YOU THINK WE DID THE RIGHT THING IN GETTING INTO THE FIGHTING IN VIETNAM OR SHOULD WE HAVE STAYED OUT?	43.76	0.70	28.66	18.90	1.01	6.97		
		565	9	370	244	13	90	1291	
VAR 660036		PULL OUT OF VIET NAM ENTIRELY	KEEP OUR SOLDIERS IN VIET NAM BUT TRY TO END THE FIGHTING	TAKE A STRONGER STAND EVEN IF IT MEANS INVADING NORTH VIET NAM	OTHER	DK	NA	INAP	
	A5B. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO NOW IN VIETNAM?	9.06	35.63	35.94	2.17	9.53	0.31	7.36	
		117	460	464	28	123	4	95	1291

Table 13. Did We Do the Right Thing in Vietnam and What Should be Done Now? 1966

Source: NES 1966

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Johnson is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1/21/1966-1/26/1966		61	26.94	11.89
2/10/1966-2/15/1966		55.7	34.06	10.18
3/1/1966-3/30/1966		57.81	27.79	14.4
3/22/1966-3/22/1966		56.74	28.47	14.79
4/14/1966-4/19/1966		53.57	33	12.77
5/5/1966-5/10/1966		46.23	33.59	20.15
5/19/1966-5/24/1966		50.61	32.62	16.71
6/16/1966-6/21/1966		48.47	38.52	13.02
7/8/1966-7/13/1966		55.85	30.57	13.18
7/29/1966-8/3/1966		51.31	38.31	10.38
8/18/1966-8/23/1966		46.94	38.92	14.15
9/30/1966-10/6/1966		44.12	41.97	13.91
10/21/1966-10/26/1966		44.33	40.97	14.9
11/10/1966-11/15/1966		48.4	35.18	16.2
12/8/1966-12/13/1966		43.42	46.36	9.12

Table 14. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1966

Source: Gallup Poll 1966

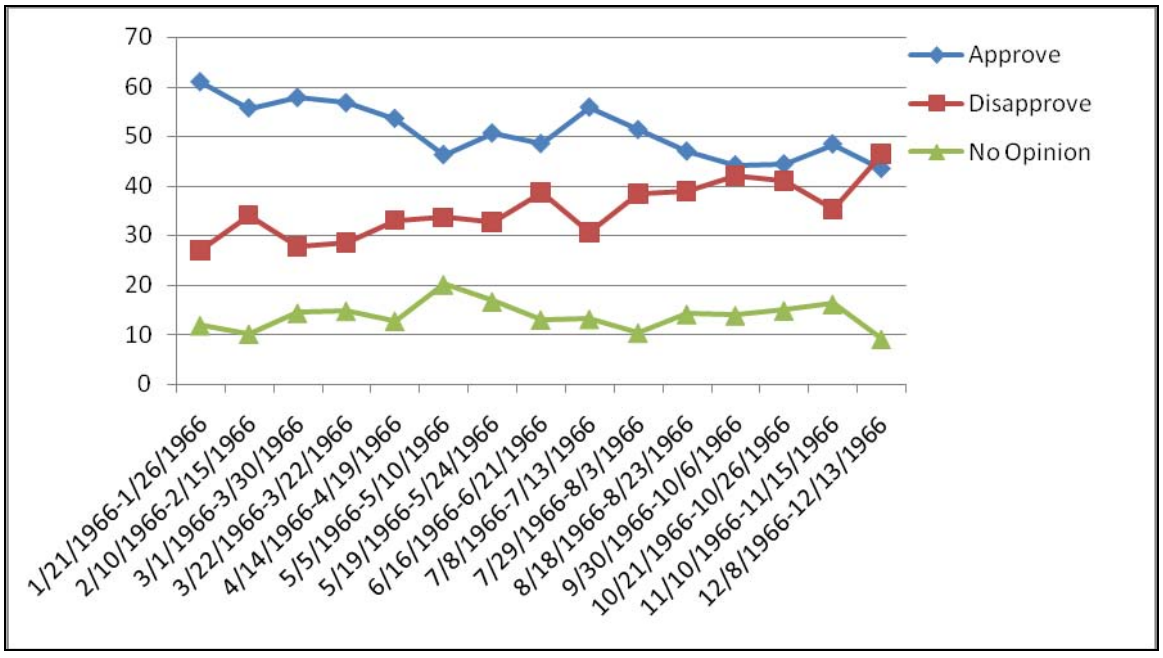

Figure 6. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1966

Source: Gallup Poll 1966

3. Presidential Strategy

President Johnson had high approval ratings for the way he handled the Vietnam War early on. His administration's strategy to promote the war was very low key as not to mobilize the mass populace. It remained low key until President Johnson wanted more troops and anti–war protests began to get larger in numbers and gain more attention. "To sell the unsellable, officials carried out what Walt W. Rostow at the State Department called in 1964 a 'low–key campaign of public information' designed to generate enough home front support without mobilizing the population."[27] Because a small number of Americans were aware of the situation in Vietnam, President Johnson wanted to keep that number as low as possible. "Aware that according to polls 63 percent of Americans paid little or no attention to Vietnam, the administration wanted to keep it that way."[28]

B. TURN OF THE TIDE IN SUPPORT 1967–1968

1. 1967

In 1967, President Johnson's approval for handling Vietnam started below 40 percent and his disapproval rating started at 42 percent. In April and June, the numbers were fairly equal to each other and his approval never surpassed his disapproval for the rest of the war. His highest approval rating was 43 percent in April of 1967 and his lowest was 26 percent in August of 1966, 8 months earlier. President Johnson's overall approval rating rebounded from 1966, and remained near mid-40 percent until late June 1967, when it rebounded to over 50 percent. It quickly shot down below 40 percent a month later and rose again to over 40 percent by the end of the year. In regards to the question if sending troops was a mistake, Table 11 shows the number of Americans who thought it was a mistake increased as the year continued and for those who thought that the war was not a mistake, those numbers dropped. "In years following mid–1966, support for the war suffers a slow and somewhat ambiguous decline while opposition

[27] Brewer, 180.

[28] Mueller, 35.

grew at a slightly faster rate."[29] From Table 9, John Mueller's statement was portrayed accurately. Also while trying to maintain support for the war in Vietnam, his administration thought all they had to do was be a little bit more persuasive and they would be fine. "Still, the president and his advisors decided they had to tell a better story. 'We must get off the defensive in the propaganda battle,' urged Johnson's old friend and advisor, Abe Fortas."[30] As 1967 progressed, anti–war rallies became larger and demonstrators began to escalate their actions for withdrawal of troops in South Vietnam.

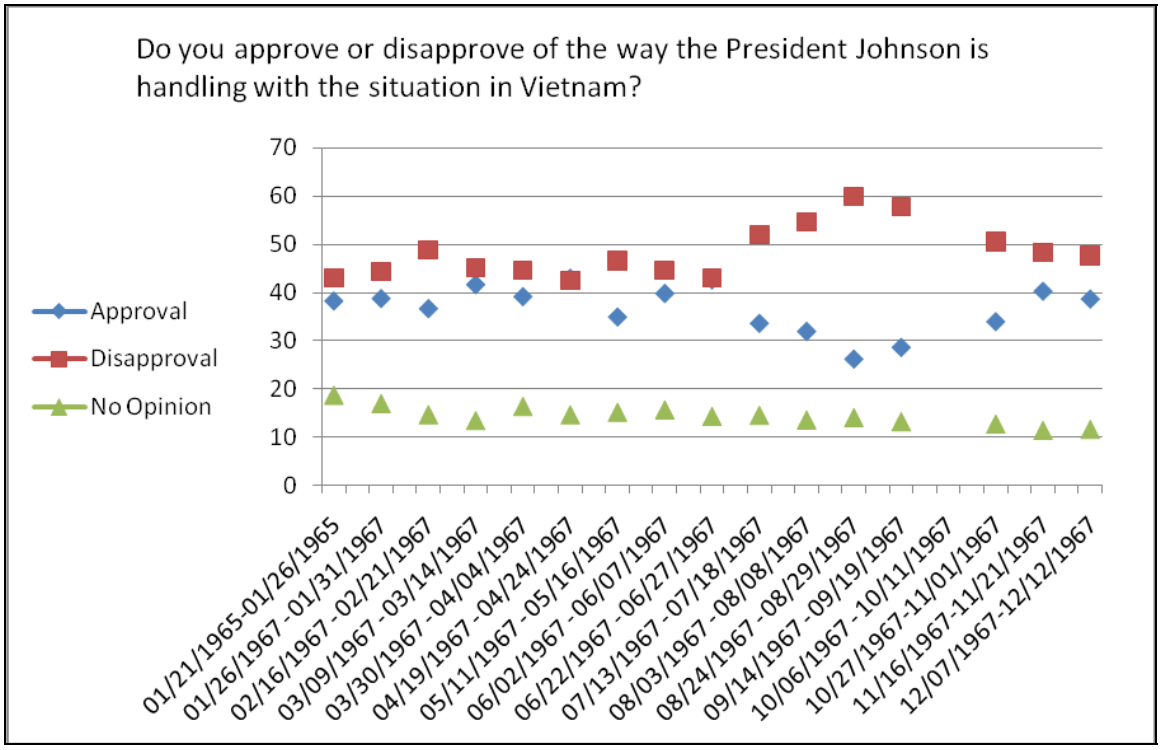

Figure 7. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1967

Source: Gallup Poll 1967

[29] Mueller, 56.

[30] Brewer, 203.

		Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion	No Answer
01/21/1965-01/26/1965	Do you approve or disapprove of the way the President Johnson is handling with the situation in Vietnam?	38.22	42.91	18.76	0.11
01/26/1967 - 01/31/1967		38.73	44.23	16.99	0.06
02/16/1967 - 02/21/1967		36.62	48.76	14.64	
03/09/1967 - 03/14/1967		41.65	45.12	13.4	0.03
03/30/1967 - 04/04/1967		39.13	44.49	16.38	
04/19/1967 - 04/24/1967		42.96	42.46	14.61	
05/11/1967 - 05/16/1967		34.87	46.54	15.15	3.44
06/02/1967 - 06/07/1967		39.79	44.56	15.66	
06/22/1967 - 06/27/1967		42.61	42.98	14.28	0.13
07/13/1967 - 07/18/1967		33.55	51.94	14.5	
08/03/1967 - 08/08/1967		31.86	54.61	13.52	0.01
08/24/1967 - 08/29/1967		26.08	59.89	14.03	
09/14/1967 - 09/19/1967		28.51	57.77	13.17	0.35
10/06/1967 - 10/11/1967					
10/27/1967-11/01/1967		33.89	50.55	12.65	2.91
11/16/1967-11/21/1967		40.25	48.18	11.3	0.27
12/07/1967-12/12/1967		38.63	47.6	11.51	2.27

Table 15. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1967

Source: Gallup Poll 1967

		Yes, made a mistake	No, did not	Don't know
01/26/1967 - 01/31/1967	In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?	31.97	52.33	15.7
04/19/1967 - 04/24/1967		36.77	49.82	13.41
07/13/1967 - 07/18/1967		41.24	47.83	10.94
10/06/1967 - 10/11/1967		46.56	43.72	9.53
12/07/1967-12/12/1967		43.85	44.73	9

Table 16. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1967

Source: Gallup Poll 1967

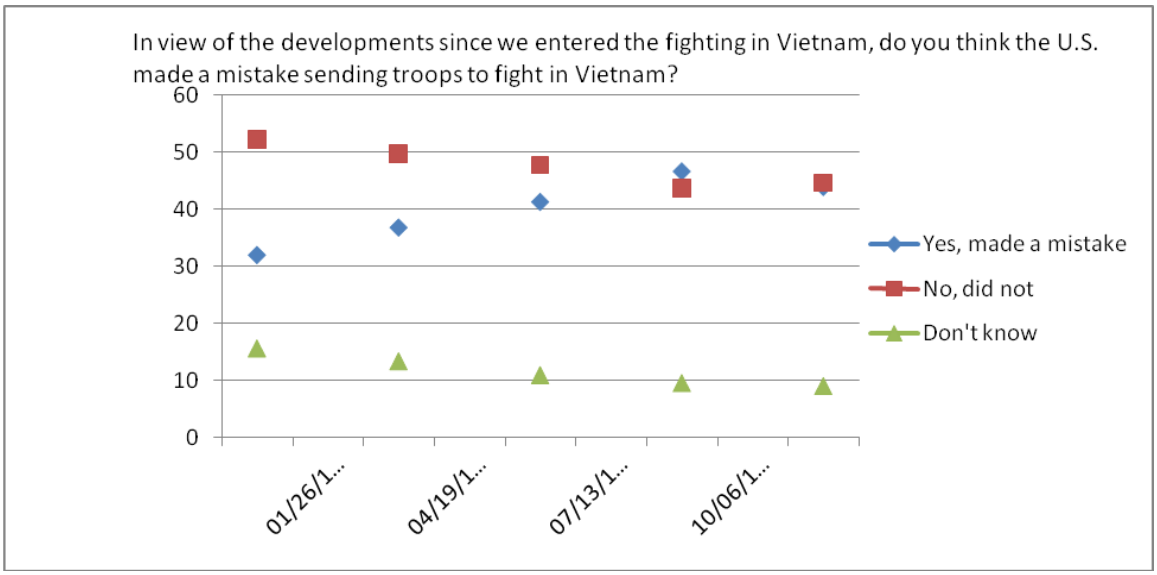

Figure 8. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1967

Source: Gallup Poll 1967

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Johnson is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1/7/1967-1/12/1967		46.83	37.09	16.14
1/26/1967-1/31/1967		45.8	36.69	17.5
2/16/1967-2/21/1967		44.94	42.21	12.82
3/9/1967-3/14/1967		44.75	41.11	14.14
3/30/1967-4/4/1967		45.95	38.33	15.55
4/19/1967-4/24/1967		48.54	36.71	14.47
5/11/1967-5/16/1967		41.67	39.67	15.15
6/2/1967-6/7/1967		43.49	39.84	16.68
6/22/1967-6/27/1967		50.22	35.94	13.84
7/13/1967-7/18/1967		46.51	39.13	14.36
8/3/1967-8/8/1967		39.65	47.24	13.11
8/24/1967-8/29/1967		38.31	48.17	13.52
9/14/1967-9/19/1967		37.77	47.17	14.71
10/6/1967-10/11/1967		37.6	50.47	11.61
10/27/1967-11/1/1967		40.07	47.88	9.53
11/16/1967-11/21/1967		41.89	45.81	11.91
12/7/1967-12/12/1967		44.97	40.29	12.32

Table 17. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1967

Source: Gallup Poll 1967

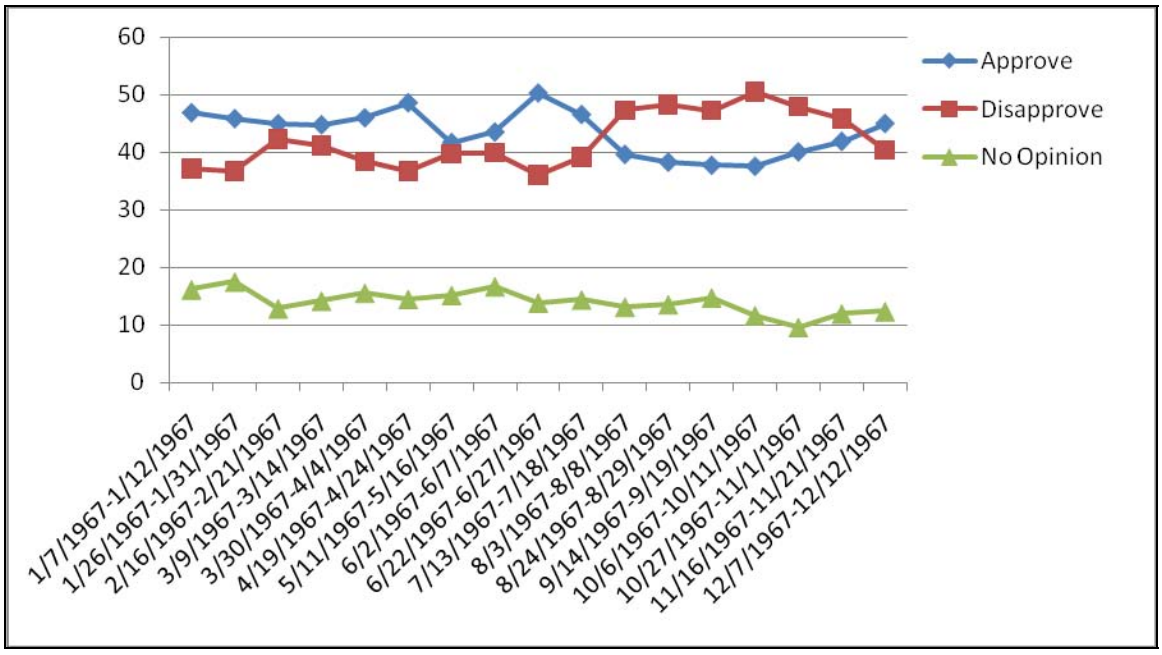

Figure 9. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1967

Source: Gallup Poll 1967

2. 1968

In 1968, the war in Vietnam took center stage in the United States when the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong launched the Tet Offensive against U.S. military bases and major cities in South Vietnam. During this offensive, the media was able to capture the war in its rawest form and put those pictures and videos on televisions across America and abroad. In addition to the Tet Offensive, over 200,000 more troops were requested. In February, President Johnson's overall approval went down to 40 percent, and quickly rose to 50 percent two months later. As a result of Tet, President Johnson removed General Westmoreland as commander in Vietnam and announced he would not seek re–election for the upcoming year. Also, because of the Tet Offensive, there is a turn in public opinion. Approval for President Johnson remained low, and those Americans who believed it was a mistake to send troops to Vietnam continued to soar in numbers. Another question introduced sporadically in previous years asked if you were a "hawk" or "dove." A hawk was one who wanted to step up attacks in Vietnam, and a dove was one who wanted to use little military involvement. Prior to Tet, hawks were in the upper 50 percent echelon, while doves were in the mid-20 percent.

> The Tet Offensive caused an initial hawkish reaction but that effect was revised in a month or two to levels significantly more dovish than prevailed in the days before Tet. With President Johnson's speech and the bombing halt at the end of March 1968, the administration became at leas by implication, 'dovish' in terms of the poll question and followers.[31]

It was not until North Vietnam decided to sit down for peace talks did more Americans become doves. After the U.S. successfully crushed the Viet Cong and pushed the North Vietnamese, President Johnson's approval increased slightly, but was never restored to its initial level. President Johnson had to begin to change his policy in Vietnam after Tet and the growing weariness of the American public.

[31] Mueller, 106.

> The Tet Offensive, replacement of General Westmoreland, President Johnson's decision not to run again and his partial bombing halt, the opening of preliminary peace talks, miscellaneous offensives in the South, and emerging of explicit challenges to the Johnson policy by prominent Democratic candidates these events had little effect for support for the war.[32]

In 1968, the turning point in the Vietnam War, support for the President waned and Americans still wanted to do more. Still, when NES surveys were taken later in the year over a third of Americans wanted to escalate or continue with the current policy. This poll further shows the resolve of the American public, that while they thought it was not the right thing to send U.S. troops to Vietnam, they continued to want the same or more stringent policy. The below tables and figures show that during the war Americans wanted something to be done. They did not approve of the way President Johnson handled the war, which cost him his presidency.

		Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
01/04/1968 - 01/09/1968	Do you approve or disapprove of the way the President Johnson is handling with the situation in Vietnam?	38.97	47.25	13.78
02/02/1968 - 02/06/1968		35.06	53.5	11.44
02/22/1968 - 02/27/1968		31.7	57.08	11.22
04/04/1968 - 04/09/1968		41.64	46.8	11.57
05/02/1968 - 05/07/1968		40.95	46.09	12.96

Table 18. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

[32] Larson, 87.

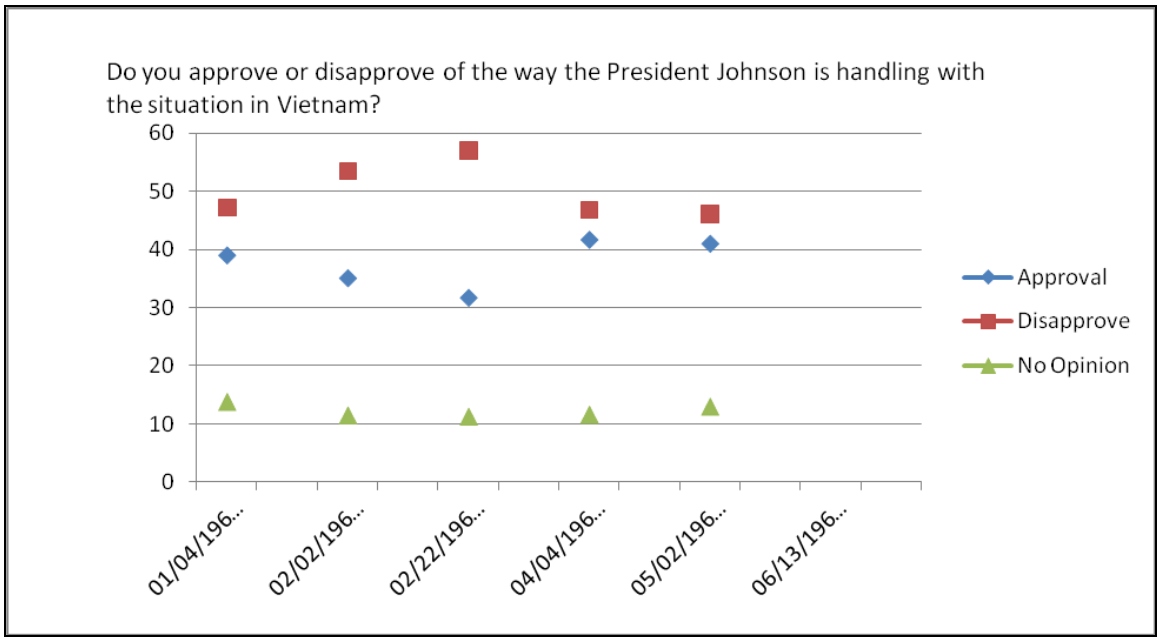

Figure 10. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Administration in South Vietnam 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

		Yes, made a mistake	No, did not	No Opinion
2/2/1968-2/6/1968	In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?	45.77	41.88	12.35
2/22/1968-2/27/1968		48.92	41.83	9.19
4/4/1968-4/9/1968		48.17	40.17	11.66
8/7/1968-8/12/1968		53.46	34.87	11.68
9/26/1968-10/1/1968		53.58	37.38	9.04

Table 19. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

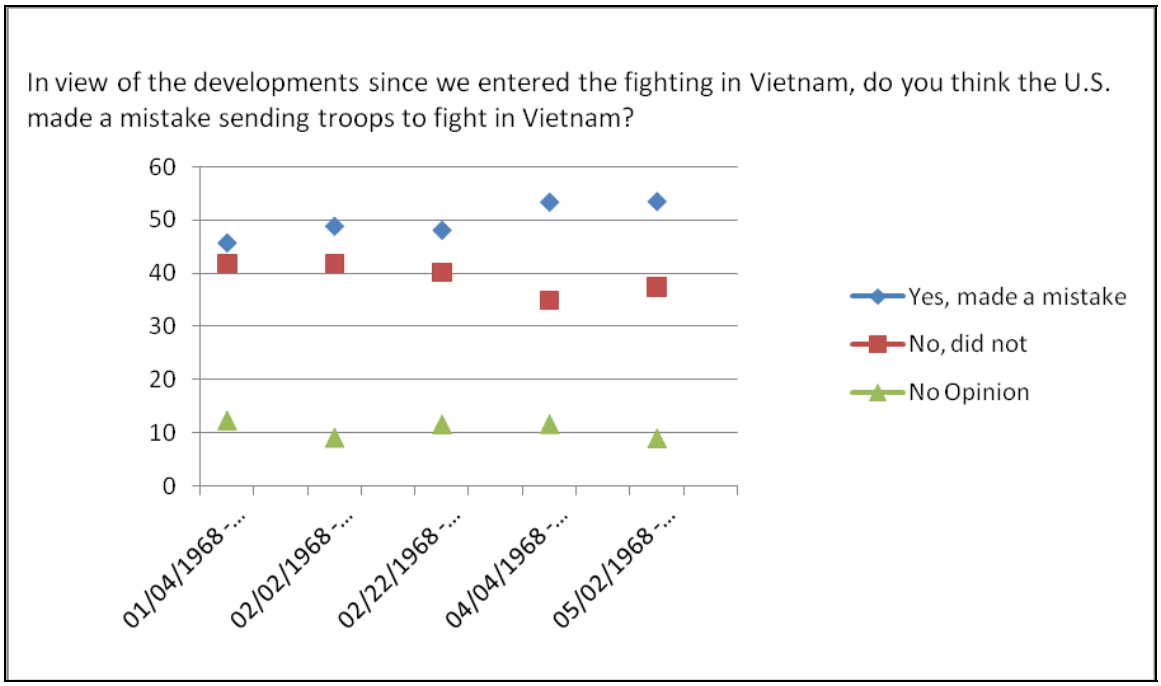

Figure 11. Do You Think U.S. Made a Mistake to Send Troops to Vietnam? 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

		Hawk	Dove	No Opinion
1/4/1968-1/9/1968	People are called "hawks" if they want to step up our military effort in Vietnam. They are called "doves" if they want to reduce our military effort in Vietnam. How would you describe yourself -- as a "hawk" or a "dove."	56.17	27.76	16.07
2/2/1968-2/6/1968		59.54	24.47	15.99
2/22/1968-2/27/1968		57.92	26.41	15.67
4/4/1968-4/9/1968		40.83	41.11	18.07

Table 20. Are You a “Hawk” or Dove”? 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

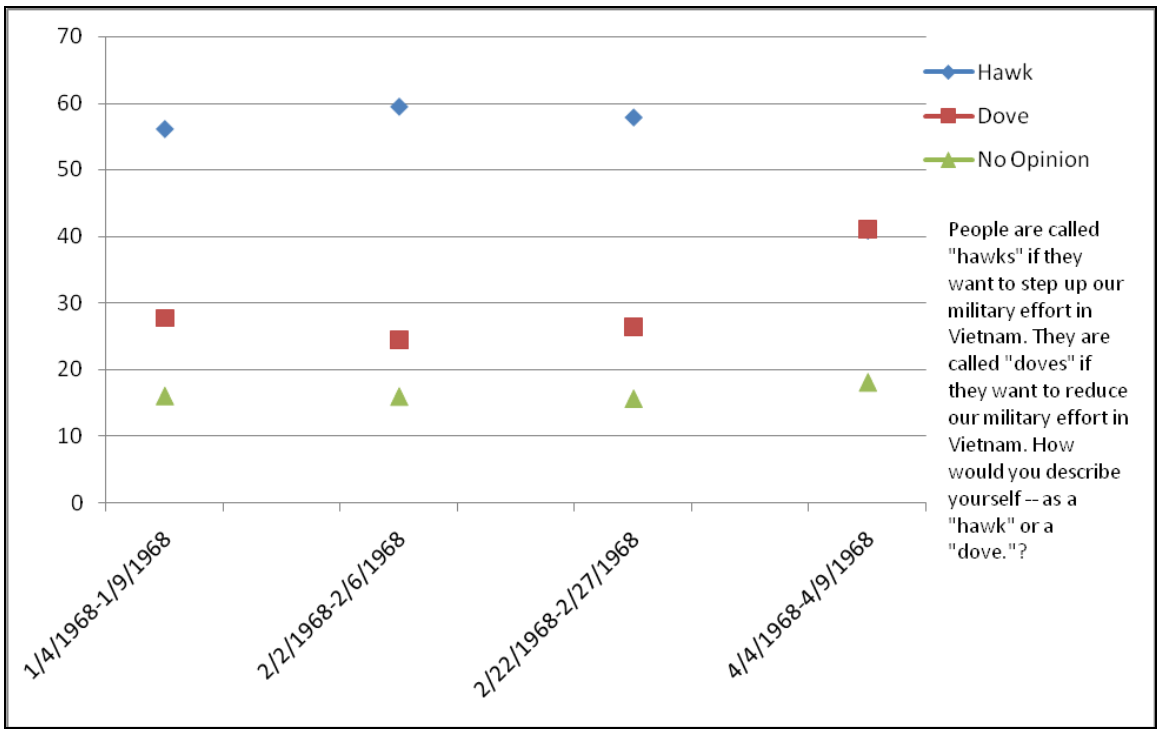

Figure 12. Are You a "Hawk" or Dove"? 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

VAR 680103		YES, DID RIGHT THING	OTHER	NO, SHOULD HAVE STAYED OUT	DON'T KNOW	NA		
	Q. 38A. DO YOU THINK WE DID THE RIGHT THING IN GETTING INTO THE FIGHTING IN VIETNAM OR SHOULD WE HAVE STAYED OUT?	30.31	1.22	51.64	16.31	0.51		
		472	19	804	254	8	1557	
VAR 680104		PULL OUT OF VIET NAM ENTIRELY	KEEP OUR SOLDIERS IN VIET NAM BUT TRY TO END THE FIGHTING	TAKE A STRONGER STAND EVEN IF IT MEANS INVADING NORTH VIET NAM	OTHER	DK	NA	
	38B. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO NOW IN VIETNAM?	19.46	36.67	33.53	3.34	6.62	0.39	
		303	571	522	52	103	6	1557

Table 21. Did We Do the Right Thing in Vietnam and What Should be Done Now? 1968

Source: NES 1968

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Johnson is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
1/4/1968-1/9/1968		48.53	38.88	12.58
2/2/1968-2/6/1968		40.78	46.72	12.41
2/22/1968-2/27/1968		41.34	48.24	10.22
4/4/1968-4/9/1968		50.02	37.98	12
5/2/1968-5/7/1968		46	42.88	11
5/23/1968-5/28/1968		40.92	45.17	13.91
6/13/1968-6/18/1968		42.6	44.73	12.67
6/26/1968-7/1/1968		39.5	47.18	13.32
7/16/1968-7/16/1968		39.66	47.74	12.59
8/7/1968-8/12/1968		34.64	52.09	13.26
9/26/1968-10/1/1968		41.65	50.75	7.6
11/9/1968-11/14/1968		43.01	44.07	12.92
12/5/1968-12/10/1968		44.1	43.41	12.5

Table 22. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

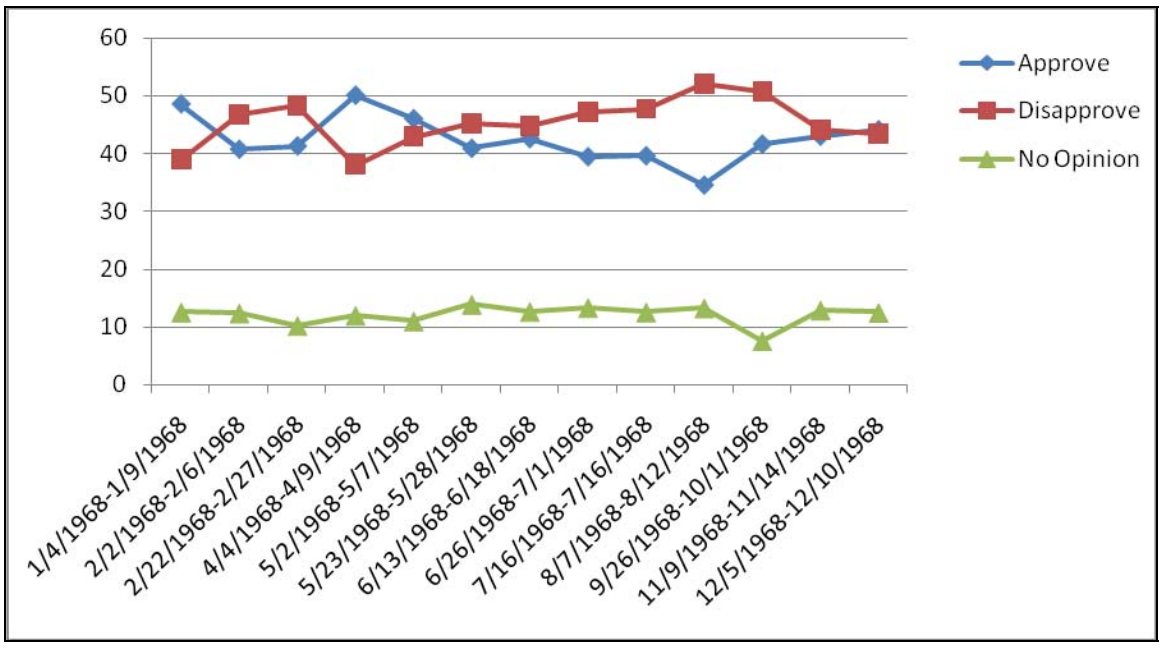

Figure 13. Approve or Disapprove of Johnson Handling Presidency 1968

Source: Gallup Poll 1968

C. CHAPTER II ANALYSIS

In 1964, the Gallup polls showed that an average of five percent of Americans wanted to get out of Vietnam altogether when asked "What to do next in Vietnam?" In the same question, an average of 13 percent of Americans wanted to continue with present policy, keeping troops in Vietnam, while an average of 25 percent of Americans did not have any comment. Later in the year, the NES polls posed a similar question showing that almost eight percent wanted to pull out of Vietnam entirely, 22 percent wanted to keep our soldiers in Vietnam, but try to end the fighting, and 28 percent wanted to take a stronger stand, even if it meant invading North Vietnam. The following year in 1965, when the Gallup poll asked "What Would You Like to See Next in Vietnam," Americans were more solidified in their answers. Approximately eight percent thought the U.S. should be more aggressive, while a 14 percent average thought the U.S. should continue its present policy. An average of 13 percent thought that the U.S. should withdraw troops and an average of 16 percent wanted to start negotiations and 31 percent of Americans did not know what should be next in Vietnam. In regards to Americans who had an opinion about Vietnam, most Americans showed their willingness to fight and not want to pack up and leave.

In 1966, NES polls posed the question "What Should be Done Now?" Nine percent of Americans wanted to pull out of Vietnam entirely, while 35 percent of Americans wanted to keep soldiers in Vietnam and try to end the fighting, and another 35 percent of Americans wanted to take an even stronger stance, even if it meant invading North Vietnam. This means that 70 percent of Americans wanted to stay and/or escalate the war during this time period. When asked which policy Americans preferred in late 1966 and 1967, nearly 50 percent of Americans wanted to increase its strength of attacks in the North, while a third of Americans felt the U.S. should withdraw. These numbers show the resiliency of the American public and a lack of fragility during prolonged conflict.

As mentioned earlier, President Johnson's reasons to escalate the war, was to contain Communism and prevent the domino theory from occurring in Southeast Asia.

After years of reaching his "rally around the flag" effect in 1965, President Johnson continued to have a high overall and handling Vietnam approval rating for the rest of the year. President Johnson's approval rating remained mostly positive through December of 1966, nearly two years after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. However, May and June of 1966, was the first instance where the President's disapproval for handling Vietnam became the majority opinion amongst Americans polled. President Johnson's approval increased sporadically, but never surpassed his disapproval for handling the war. It was not until October 1967, when most Americans thought it was a mistake to send troops to Vietnam. Just two months later, by only one percentage point, did more Americans think sending troops to Vietnam was not a mistake. In 1968, the numbers reversed again, and for the rest of the year, over 45 percent of Americans thought the United States made a mistake to send troops to Vietnam. After the Tet Offensive in early 1968, the majority of Americans wanted to continue stepping up attacks in North Vietnam. This suggests that public opinion is much more robust than commonly held. Though support waned for President Johnson and he announced he was not seeking re–election later that year, the majority of Americans wanted to keep on fighting and/or escalate the Vietnam War.

Though support tapered off for increased attacks in North Vietnam, the public still supported the war effort. The NES polls from 1968 showed that over two–thirds of Americans wanted to stay in Iraq. Broken down, 19 percent of Americans wanted to pull out of Vietnam entirely, 36 percent wanted to keep our soldiers in Vietnam but try to end the fighting, and 33 percent wanted to take a stronger stance even if it meant invading North Vietnam. President Johnson stated he had lost the American people, which was a contributing factor to him not seeking re–election. If President Johnson had paid attention to the polls, he would have realized the American public was still in his corner, even though he had a low approval rating for handling his job as president and his affairs in Vietnam. His perception of public opinion through the media influenced him to reach his decision not to run again for President, which was contrary to what was actually being recorded. The data shows Americans are staunch in their resolve, more than many allude to in debate.

III. IRAQ WAR

2001	12–Sep	President Bush tasks Richard Clarke, chief counter–terrorism adviser to search for link between Saddam Hussein and Al–Qaeda
2002	29–Jan	President Bush declares Iraq part of the "axis of evil," which includes Iran and North Korea.
	Feb	The Defense Intelligence Agency issues discrediting links between Saddam Hussein and al–Qaeda
	16–Sep	White House Economic Adviser Lawrence Lindsay estimates the cost of war on Iraq at between $100 million to $200 million. Lindsay is ousted three months later.
	10–11 Oct	Congress passes the Iraq War Resolution, giving the President the ability to use military force in Iraq
2003	28–Jan	President Bush says that the "British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." He presses the case for war on Iraq.
	6–Feb	Secretary of State Colin Powell speaks to U.N. Security, shows satellite photographs, projected on two big screens, of what he said were chemical and biological facilities, and claims Hussein is making nuclear weapons and developing missiles to deliver them. "Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option, not in a post–September 11th world," Powell says.
	7–Mar	Hans Blix, the chief U.N. weapons inspector, tells the Security Council that his searches have found "no evidence" of production facilities of biological agents in Iraq. The same day, the International Atomic Agency's Mohamed el Baradei, tells the council that "After three months of intrusive inspections, we have to date found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of a nuclear weapon program in Iraq."
	8–Mar	President Bush says: "He possesses weapons of terror. He provides funding and training and safe haven to terrorists who would willingly deliver weapons of mass destruction against America and other peace–loving countries. The attacks of September the 11, 2001 showed what the enemies of America did with four airplanes. We will not wait to see what terrorists or terror states could do with weapons of mass destruction."
	17–Mar	Congress passes the Iraq War Resolution, giving the President the ability to use military force in Iraq
	19–Mar	The U.S.–led war on Iraq begins.
	21–Mar	First American casualties reported

	30–Mar	Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is asked about the whereabouts of Iraq's purported weapons of mass destruction: "We know where they are, they're in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat."
	9–Apr	Saddam Hussein's statue is toppled in Fidros Square in Baghdad
	1–May	Speaking on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln and below a banner declaring "Mission Accomplished." President Bush states, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed."
	6–May	President Bush appoints L. Paul Bremer head of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Bremer is essentially Iraq's ruler
	16–Jul	U.S. military officials in Baghdad concede they're facing a "classic guerilla–type campaign."
	22–Jul	Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, are killed in a U.S. raid in the northern city of Mosul
	13–Dec	Saddam Hussein is captured alive by U.S. troops in Tikrit, Hussein's hometown.
2004	17–Jan	The death toll for American soldiers in Iraq reaches 500.
	31–Mar	Four American private security contractors employed by Blackwater USA (now Blackwater Worldwide) are killed in Fallujah
	4–Apr	A Shiite uprising led by cleric Moqtada al–Sadr erupts in several cities in Iraq
	29–Apr	Abu Ghraib torture scandal erupts as photographs of American soldiers torturing and humiliating inmates at Abu Ghraib prison outside of Baghdad are made public.
	28–May	Iraqi Governing Council names Iyad Alawi interim prime minister
	28–Jun	The Coalition provisional Authority is abolished, power is transferred to Iraqi authorities in a hurried, secret ceremony two days ahead of the scheduled transfer
	6–Sep	The death toll for American soldiers in Iraq reaches 1,000
	7–Oct	A CIA report concludes Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction.
	2–Nov	Bush wins re–election to the presidency, defeating Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry.
	15–Nov	U.S. Marines re–establish control over most of Fallujah after a fierce assault.
	8–Dec	Speaking to soldiers and answering a question about the inadequacy of American troop levels and equipment in Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld says: "As you know, you go to war with the Army you have. They're not the Army you might want or wish to have at a later time."
2005	30–Jan	Iraqis vote in the first democratic, multi–party parliamentary elections in 50 years. Shiites and Kurds vote in large numbers. Sunnis do not.

	May	Violence and the civilian death toll surge throughout Iraq as Iraq's interim government proves incapable of breaking deadlocks over power–sharing. Estimates put the civilian death toll since the war began at around 25,000.
	30–May	Speaking to Larry King on CNN, Vice President Dick Cheney says: "I think they're in the last throes, if you will, of the insurgency."
	15–Oct	Iraqis vote by the millions to approve an interim constitution that declares Iraq an Islamic, federal republic
	19–Oct	Saddam Hussein's trail begins in Baghdad.
	21–Oct	The death toll for American soldiers in Iraq reaches 2,000
	15–Dec	Iraqis from most regions turn out in a vote for a permanent government. Shiites win a majority of votes but fall short of a dominant plurality.
2006	22–Feb	The Shiite al–Askari shrine in Samarra is bombed and severely damaged, triggering a new round of violence. Sectarian murders multiply as dozens of bodies are found executed on Iraqi streets daily.
	22–Apr	President Jalal Talabani appoints Nouri Maliki prime minister and asks him to form a government.
	8–Jun	Abu Musab al–Zarqawi, self–styled leader of al–Qaeda in Iraq, is killed in a U.S. strike north of Baquba.
	5–Nov	Saddam Hussein is convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death by hanging.
	6–Dec	The Iraq Study Group releases its report, recommending against permanent bases in Iraq, a timetable for withdrawal and negotiations with regional belligerents such as Iran and Syria.
	30–Dec	Saddam Hussein is executed by hanging.
	31–Dec	The death toll for American soldiers in Iraq reaches 3,000. The death toll for Iraqis killed in 2006 is put at 16,723
2007	10–Jan	Bush announces troop escalation in Iraq, which he dubs a "surge."
	13–Mar	For the first time since the beginning of the war, less than half of all Americans believe the U.S. can win in Iraq.
	15–Apr	The Pentagon extends active–duty soldiers' deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan to 15 months.
	26–Apr	U.S. Senate passed a bill (51–46) setting an Oct. 1 deadline to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq. The House of Representatives passed a similar bill. Bush vetoes it.
	4–Sep	A report by the Government Accountability Office finds that daily attacks against Iraqis remain unchanged despite the U.S. troop escalation. The Iraqi government has failed to meet 11 of 18 benchmarks.
	10–Sep	ABC News reports that 60% of Iraqis see security worsening since the troop escalation. Only 10% see improvements.

	Oct	Despite the U.S. escalation, Iraqi refugees continue to be displaced. More than 2.2 million refugees have left the country, and an equal number have been displaced within its borders.
	31–Dec	For U.S. troops, 2007 is the deadliest year.

Table 23. Iraq War Timeline

Source: About.com: Middle East Issues, http://middleeast.about.com/od/iraq/a/me071209d.htm

A. RALLYING SUPPORT 2002–2003

1. 2001–March 2003

Like President Johnson during the Vietnam War, President Bush had to rally the American public and sell his argument on why the U.S. should use military force in Iraq. President Bush started his campaign shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Shortly afterward, intelligence reports linked al–Qaeda to the attacks:

> President Bush and his administration strongly implied that there was a link between Saddam and the al Qaeda hijackers, despite Osama Bin Laden's contempt for Saddam as the head of a secular state. Although Bush probably knew that the evidence was quite sketchy at best, he used the implied link to bolster support for the war with Iraq.[33]

Reports from intelligence sources indicated that Saddam Hussein was involved with the September 11 attacks. "Polls show that 53 to 70 percent of Americans thought that Saddam Hussein was personally behind the attacks and 50 percent thought some of that hijackers had been Iraqis."[34] President Bush would not have to work hard to convince the American people to go to war with Iraq, unlike his task with the international community, which was not easily persuaded. From Table 14, in January 2002 President Bush labeled Iraq as part of the "axis of evil" to both the American and

[33] James P. Pfiffner, *Intelligence and National Security Policymaking on Iraq: British and American Perspectives*, (College Station: Manchester University Press, 2008), 59–60.

[34] Brewer, 244.

international communities during his State of the Union Address. The Bush administration continued to make a case for military intervention in Iraq linking the country to terrorism. In September 2002, President Bush remarked, "The Americans must confront an enemy on scattered battlefields from the Philippines to North Africa. Terrorist sought to build up a radical Islamic empire from Spain to Indonesia…'and we must recognize Iraq as the central front in our war on terror.'"[35] Americans continued to show their support for military action in Iraq, but some were willing to fight the war unilaterally instead of as a coalition. "64 percent of Americans favored military action against Iraq, but only 33 percent approved military action without allies."[36] Shortly after those remarks, in October, Congress passed the Iraq War Resolution, giving the President the conditional power to use military force in Iraq. During 2002 and the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, American approval of the way the President was handling Iraq and his desire to employ ground troops to remove Saddam Hussein from power was over 50 percent. These numbers show there was a "rally around the flag" for the invasion of Iraq. "The President decided to invade Iraq in order to remove Dictator Saddam Hussein from power and to transform the Persian Gulf nation into a reliable ally. Officials came up with many reasons why Americans must fight, designed to rally support for a war of choice."[37] Though the President had over 50 percent approval for handling the war, his disapproval hovered around 40 percent from October 2002 to March 2003, showing there was some staunch opposition for the invasion of Iraq.

In early 2003, the final push for war came from the Bush administration. Claims of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction became the primary reason for invading Iraq. Reports of Iraq receiving yellowcake from Niger were announced in January. The arguments for weapons of mass destruction were stronger than those who argued links between Saddam Hussein and al–Qaeda. "But the most compelling arguments to the American people were the arguments that the national security of the United States was at

[35] Brewer, 231.

[36] Brewer, 245.

[37] Brewer, 230.

risk. Thus the claims that Saddam's WMD posed a direct threat were most effective in sustaining political support for war."[38] In February, then Secretary of State, Colin Powell went before the U.N. Security Council to make the United States' case before doubtful Americans and the international community. "The White House selected Powell, who was, according to polls, the most trusted member of the administration, to make the definitive case before the United Nations on February 5, 2003. The target audience of this speech was not just the international community, but also doubtful Americans."[39] After Secretary Powell's speech to the U.N., most Americans felt very comfortable and trusted the words from Powell's speech. "CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll found that 79 percent of Americans thought that the secretary of state had made a 'strong' case for invading Iraq."[40] The Gallup poll shows that after the Colin Powell's speech, over 63 percent of Americans favored sending in ground troops to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The polls further show that until the invasion of Iraq, the Americans in favor of sending troops remained near 60 percent. From October 2002 to March 2003, President Bush's overall approval was over 60 percent and before invading Iraq, it declined to just below 60 percent.

		APPROVE	DISSAPROVE	DON'T KNOW
10/21/2002-10/22/2002	Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W Bush is handling--The situation with Iraq?	52.41	39.72	7.16
12/9/2002-12/10/2002		55.52	38.71	5.41
1/3/2003-1/5/2003		55.16	40.4	3.83
1/31/2003-2/2/2003		53.7	42.03	4.19
3/14/2003-3/15/2003		56.25	40.96	2.69

Table 24. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2002–2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2002–2003

[38] Pfiffner, 76.

[39] Brewer, 244.

[40] Brewer, 245.

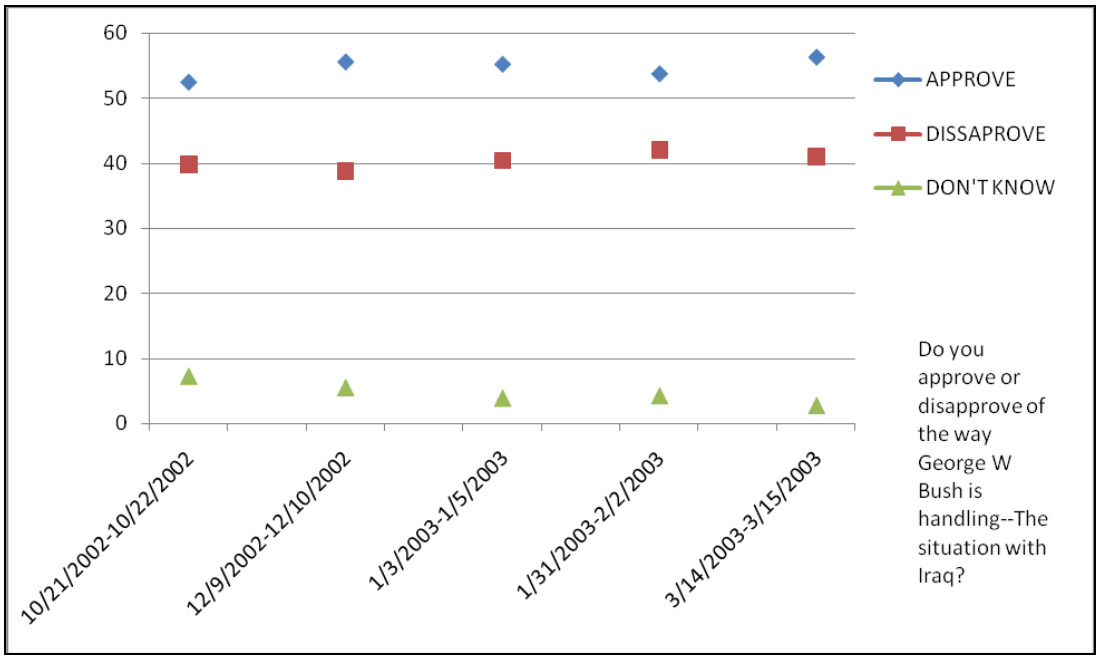

Figure 14. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2002–2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2002–2003

		Favor	Oppose	Don't know	Refused
10/21/2002-10/22/2002	Would you favor or oppose invading Iraq with U.S. ground troops in an attempt to remove Saddam Hussein from power?	53.74	39.73	5.51	1.03
11/8/2002-11/10/2002		58.66	35.32	5.52	0.5
11/22/2002-11/24/2002		57.78	37.56	4.07	0.59
12/9/2002-12/10/2002		54.97	38.88	5.36	0.79
1/3/2003-1/5/2003		56.52	38.95	3.91	0.62
1/10/2003-1/12/2003		55.42	38.31	5.6	0.67
1/23/2003-1/25/2003		52.49	42.97	3.26	
1/31/2003-2/2/2003		57.53	38.23	3.62	0.62
2/7/2003-2/9/2003		63.19	33.53	2.68	0.6
2/17/2003-2/19/2003		58.62	37.96	3.25	0.17
2/24/2003-2/26/2003		59.03	36.74	3.89	0.34
3/3/2003-3/5/2003		58.69	37.43	2.76	1.12
3/14/2003-3/15/2003		64.05	32.94	2.75	0.26

Table 25. Favor or Oppose of Sending Troops to Invade Iraq 2002–2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2002–2003

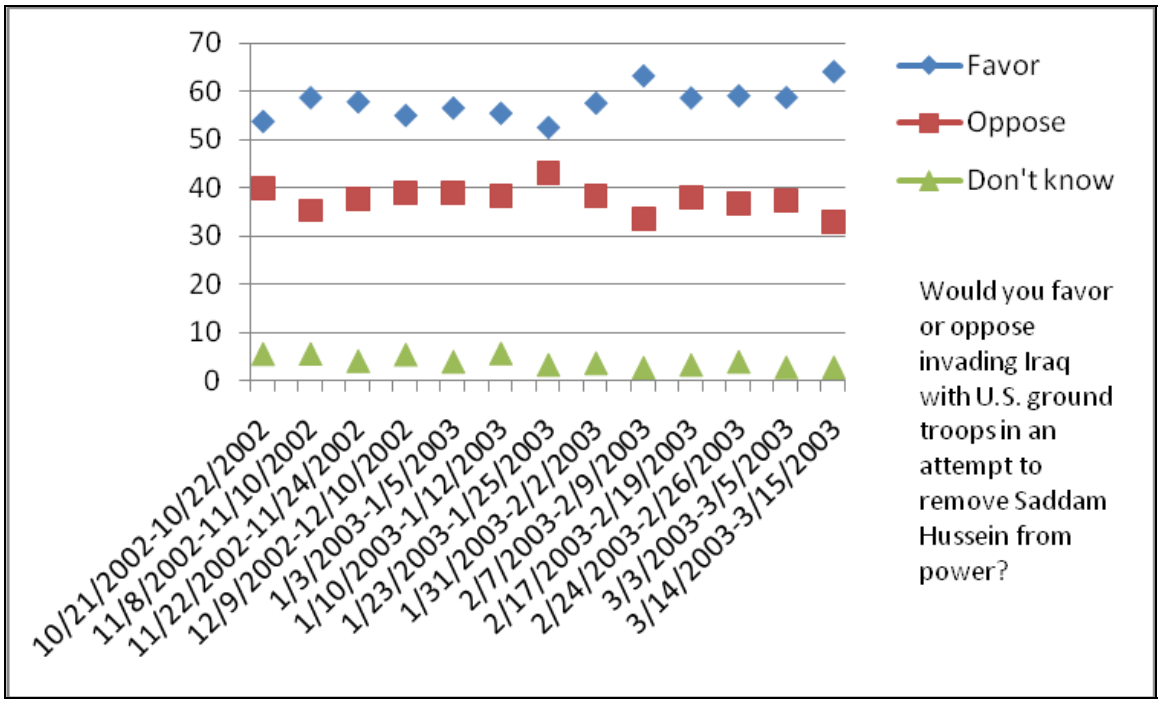

Figure 15. Favor or Oppose of Sending Troops to Invade Iraq 2002–2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2002–2003

V023122		FAVOR	OPPOSE	OTHER	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED	HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT	NA	
	As you may know, President Bush and his top advisers are discussing the possibility of taking military action against Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Do you FAVOR or OPPOSE military action against Iraq -- or is this something you haven"t thought about?	53.66	28.14	3.45	1.43	0.25	11.63	1.43	
		637	334	41	17	3	138	17	1187

Table 26. Favor or Oppose Military Action Against Iraq 2002

Source: NES 2002

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
10/21/2002-10/22/2002		66.64	28.42	4.37
11/8/2002-11/10/2002		63.46	29.01	6.17
11/22/2002-11/24/2002		68.53	26.69	4.18
12/9/2002-12/10/2002		65.14	28.15	4.85
1/3/2003-1/5/2003		63.53	31.76	3.98
1/10/2003-1/12/2003		57.56	37.13	4.69
1/23/2003-1/25/2003		59.93	35.61	3.46
2/7/2003-2/9/2003		61.42	33.95	4.09
2/24/2003-2/26/2003		56.69	37.54	4.39
3/14/2003-3/15/2003		58.01	37.74	3.42

Table 27. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2002–2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2002–2003

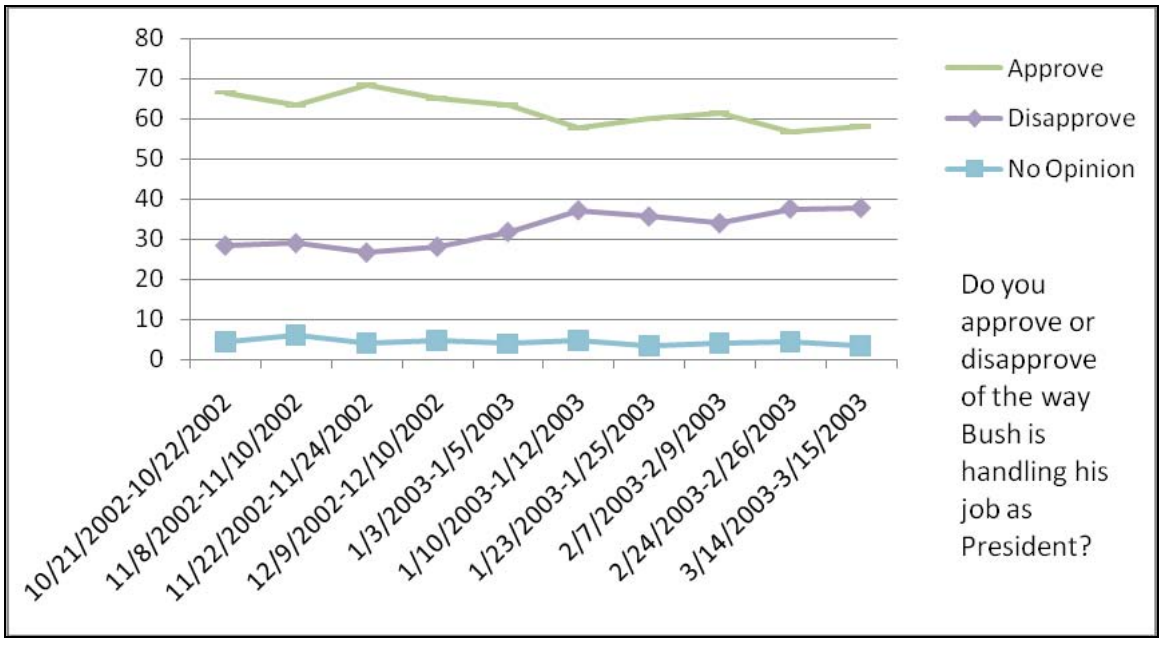

Figure 16. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2002–2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2002–2003

2. 2003

On March 17, President Bush gave Saddam Hussein 48 hours to leave Iraq or face war. Two days later, the United States entered war with Iraq under the premise of his handling of WMD, "In focusing on WMD as the main reason for war and arguing that there was an imminent threat to the United States."[41] U.S. forces moved very swiftly in toppling Saddam's regime. In less than one month, American forces were tearing down statues of Saddam, and on 1 May, President Bush declared that major combat operations were over in Iraq and "Mission Accomplished" for American troops. From the day of the invasion to mid–April, President Bush's approval rating for handling Iraq skyrocketed and maintained a level of nearly 70 percent. Americans who thought Iraq was worth going to war over maintained over 65 percent support until mid-April. Initially, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld sent retired Lt. General Jay Garner to head the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance to rebuild Iraq, and not a month later, President Bush replaced Garner and named L. Paul Bremer, as the Coalition Provisional Authority to Iraq. "Rumsfeld sent retired Lt. General Jay Garner to head the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance with the expectation that Garner would finish up by the end of the summer. Within weeks, Washington replaced Garner's ill–prepared outfit with the Coalition Provisional Authority led by former diplomat L. Paul Bremer III."[42]

After the announcement of Paul Bremer as Coalition Provisional Authority, President Bush's approval rating for the war decreased from 70 percent to upper 50 percent by July and continued to decrease to upper 40 percent by the end of the year. The decrease in approval may have occurred due to the guerilla warfare that U.S. forces were encountering. From the time line, senior military officials conceded they were in a "classic guerilla–type campaign." In October 2003, President Bush's approval rating for the war had succumbed to 50 percent of Americans disapproving of his handling for Iraq, while only 47 percent approved. There was a spike in July in his approval, when Uday

[41] Pfiffner, 77.

[42] Brewer, 264.

and Qusay Hussein were killed. President Bush's overall approval started near 70 percent after the invasion and slowly declined throughout the year. There was a slight rebound in October 2003 and then fluctuated for the rest of the year. Although President Bush's approval rating for the war was down, the majority of Americans still thought Iraq was worth going to war over, and that number also increased in July when Uday and Qusay Hussein were killed by U.S. forces. Another question introduced in October referenced what should happen next with the troops in Iraq. From August to December, most Americans felt we should either keep the number of troops already there or begin to withdraw some troops. The supporters fluctuated between the two choices, but after capturing Saddam Hussein, over 40 percent thought the U.S. should keep the current troop level.

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W Bush is handling--The situation with Iraq?	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
3/24/03 - 3/25/03		71.39	25.78	2.11
3/29/03 - 3/30/03		71.41	26.95	1.57
4/14/03 - 4/16/03		76.36	20.8	2.18
6/12/03 - 6/15/03		54.13	40.61	4.15
7/7/03 - 7/9/03		58.44	38.82	2.69
7/18/03 - 7/20/03		57.37	39.2	3.21
7/25/03 - 7/27/03		59.62	38.56	1.77
8/25/03 - 8/26/03		57.19	40.7	1.48
9/8/03 - 9/10/03		51.19	46.83	2.76
10/6/03 - 10/8/03		47.33	50.29	0.94
11/3/03 - 11/5/03		44.42	54.34	2

Table 28. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

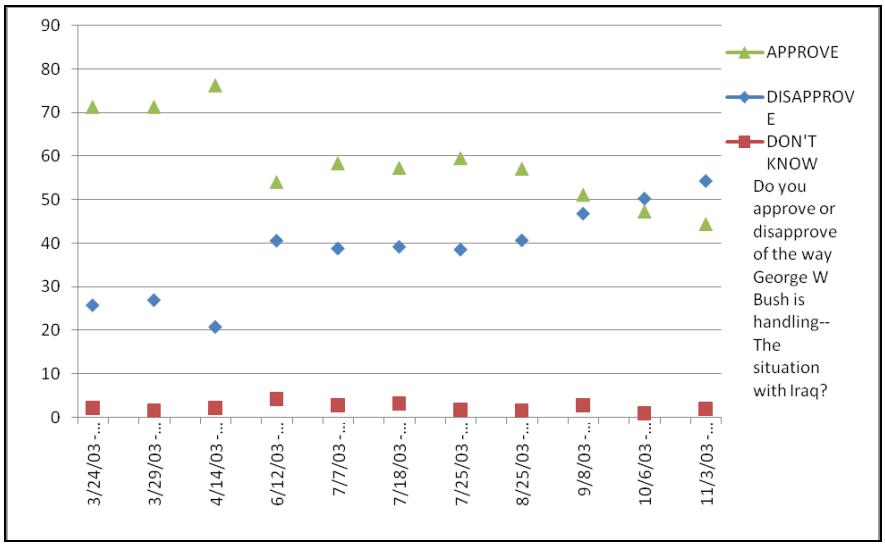

Figure 17. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

3/24/03 - 3/25/03	All in all, do you think the current situation in Iraq is worth going to war over, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		68.1	28.84	2.51
4/7/03 - 4/9/03		65.99	30.65	2.87
4/9/03 - 4/9/03		75.63	19.4	3.77
4/14/03 - 4/16/03		72.63	22.86	3.34
6/27/03 - 6/29/03		56.14	41.73	1.96
7/18/03 - 7/20/03		63.28	34.66	1.66
8/25/03 - 8/26/03		63.03	35.39	1.34
9/8/03 - 9/10/03		57.81	40.33	1.35
9/19/03 - 9/21/03		49.56	48.39	1.72
10/6/03 - 10/8/03		54.85	44.24	0.91
10/24/03 - 10/26/03		53.46	44.45	1.83
11/3/03 - 11/5/03		53.55	44.06	1.9
11/14/03 - 11/16/03		56.63	41.7	1.4
12/5/03 - 12/7/03		58.95	38.81	1.63
12/14/03 - 12/14/03		61.47	33.28	4.82

Table 29. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

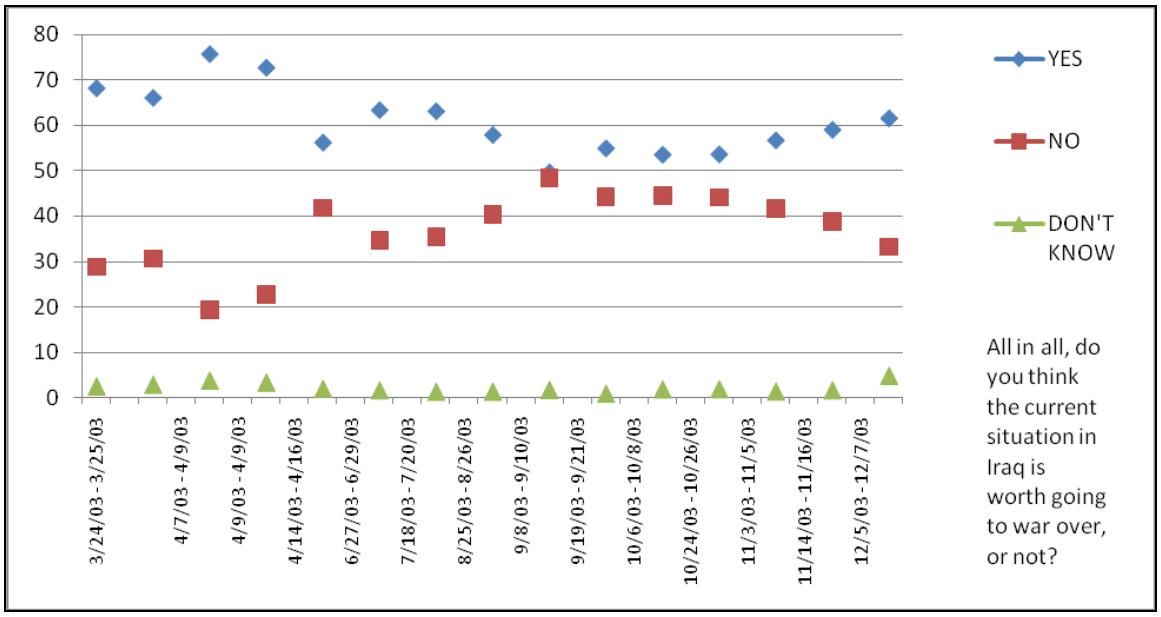

Figure 18. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2003

Source Gallup Poll 2003

		Send more troops to Iraq	Keep the number of troops the same as it is now	Begin to withdraw some troops form Iraq	Withdraw all troops from Iraq
8/25/03 - 8/26/03	Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of U.s. troops in Iraq	15.63	35.84	31.87	13.85
10/24/03 - 10/26/03		13.7	27.36	38.38	18.21
11/3/03 - 11/5/03		17.06	31.74	28.68	19.13
12/5/03 - 12/7/03		22.12	32.95	24.64	16.72
12/15/03 - 12/16/03		13.61	40.26	27.45	14.54

Table 30. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

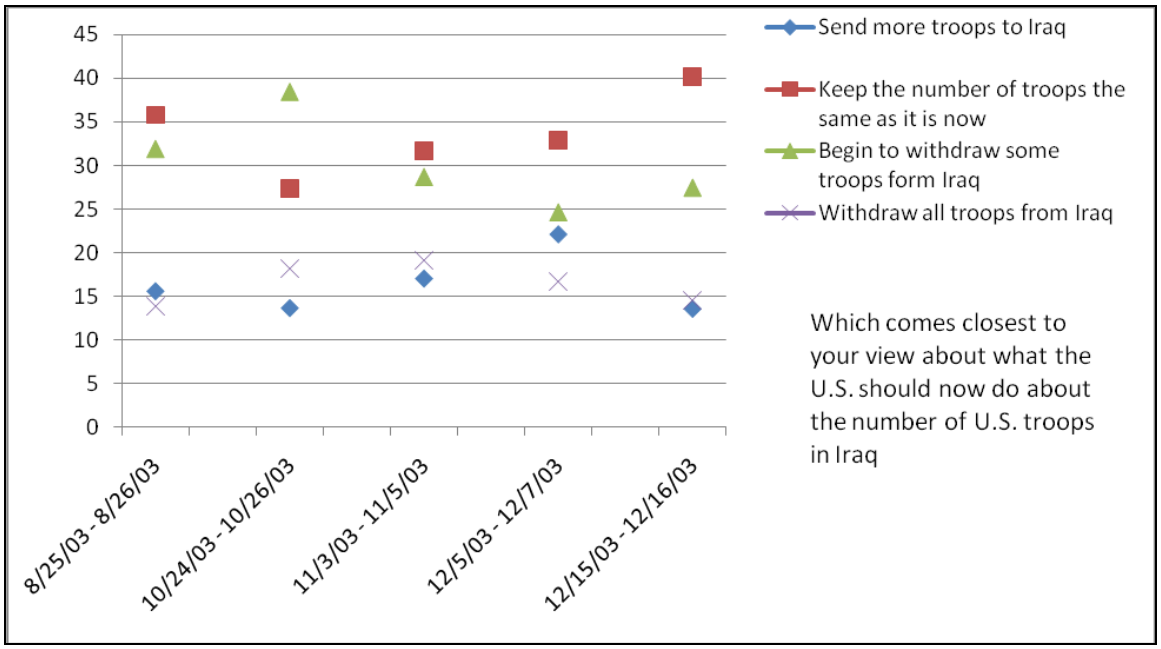

Figure 19. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
3/24/2003-3/25/2003		69.25	27.06	2.7
4/5/2003-4/6/2003		70.29	26.57	2.52
4/22/2003-4/23/2003		70.09	26.12	3.25
5/19/2003-5/21/2003		65.86	30.2	3.1
6/9/2003-6/10/2003		61.87	34.21	2.73
6/27/2003-6/29/2003		61.27	35.67	2.69
7/18/2003-7/20/2003		59.12	37.53	2.59
8/25/2003-8/26/2003		59.17	37.08	3.16
9/19/2003-9/21/2003		49.54	47.21	2
10/10/2003-10/12/2003		55.86	40.5	2.65
11/10/2003-11/12/2003		51.47	44.61	3.35
12/15/2003-12/16/2003		62.87	34.49	1.95

Table 31. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

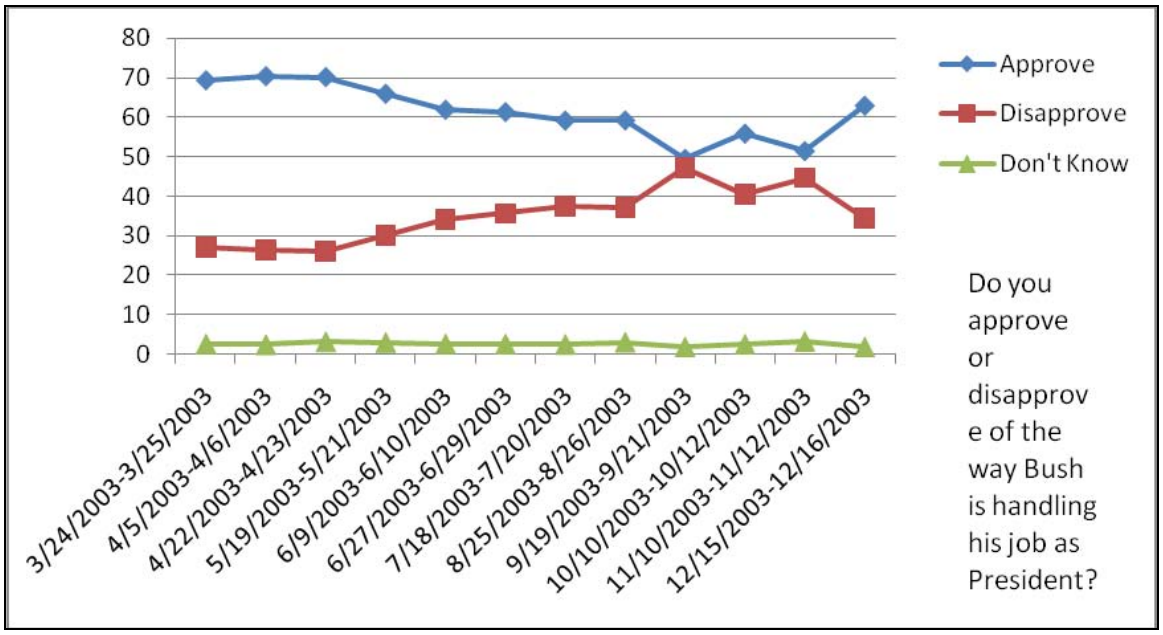

Figure 20. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2003

Source: Gallup Poll 2003

3. 2004

President Bush's overall approval rating began 2004 at 60 percent and declined until June 2004 reaching 48 percent, before seesawing the rest of the year. His approval for handling Iraq began 2004 at over 60 percent, which may be due to U.S. troops capturing Saddam Hussein in late December 2003. As the year progressed the numbers leveled off and by April more Americans disapproved of President Bush's handling of Iraq, from which he did not recover for the rest of the year. Most Americans still thought it was worth going to war over Iraq until May. In May, most Americans did not think Iraq was worth going to war over. However, the numbers reverted back for two months, reflecting a change to most Americans thinking Iraq was worth going to war over. In October, the numbers swapped again. When asked if one thought it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq, most Americans did not think it was a mistake sending troops to Iraq for most of the year. During June and July, most Americans thought it was a mistake. Those numbers reverted back, and for the remainder of 2004, most Americans thought it was not a mistake to send troops to Iraq. Throughout 2004, Americans were torn on

whether to send more troops, keep the same number of troops, begin withdrawal of some troops or withdraw troops completely. The Gallup poll shows how this question fluctuates from survey to survey. It is important to find correlations between each to see why that particular answer was the dominant one.

In early January 2004, U.S. deaths reached 500, and security was considered weak, when four civilian contractors were attacked in Fallujah. A few days after the attack, Shiite cleric Moqtada al–Sadr led an uprising in several cities. Examining the polls after this attack President Bush's approval rating fell below his disapproval rating, yet over 30 percent of Americans felt we should send more troops to Iraq. After the Abu–Ghraib scandal in April, almost 30 percent of Americans thought all troops should be withdrawn. Meanwhile, President Bush's approval rating declined to 40 percent, his lowest of the year. It is interesting to note that while the U.S. was preparing to hand power over to the Iraqi people, more Americans thought it was a mistake to send troops into Iraq and thought Iraq was not worth going to war over. For the rest of the year President Bush's approval rating recovered to over 45 percent, which may coincide with his re–election, while the other opinion questions were answered at the same levels for the rest of the year.

1/2/04 - 1/5/04	Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W Bush is handling--The situation with Iraq?	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
		61.14	36.25	1.94
1/29/04 - 2/1/04		48.95	49.35	1.2
3/26/04 - 3/28/04		53.25	44.56	2.2
4/16/04 - 4/18/04		47.88	49.37	2.14
5/2/04 - 5/4/04		41.68	55.54	2
5/7/04 - 5/9/04		40.46	58.16	1.38
6/3/04 - 6/6/04		41.55	56.74	1.4
6/21/04 - 6/23/04		41.93	56.09	1.31
8/9/04 - 8/11/04		44.8	51.92	2.37
9/24/04 - 9/26/04		48.11	48.87	1.89
10/14/04 - 10/16/04		46.53	51.54	1.51
11/7/04 - 11/10/04		46.9	51.21	1.56

Table 32. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

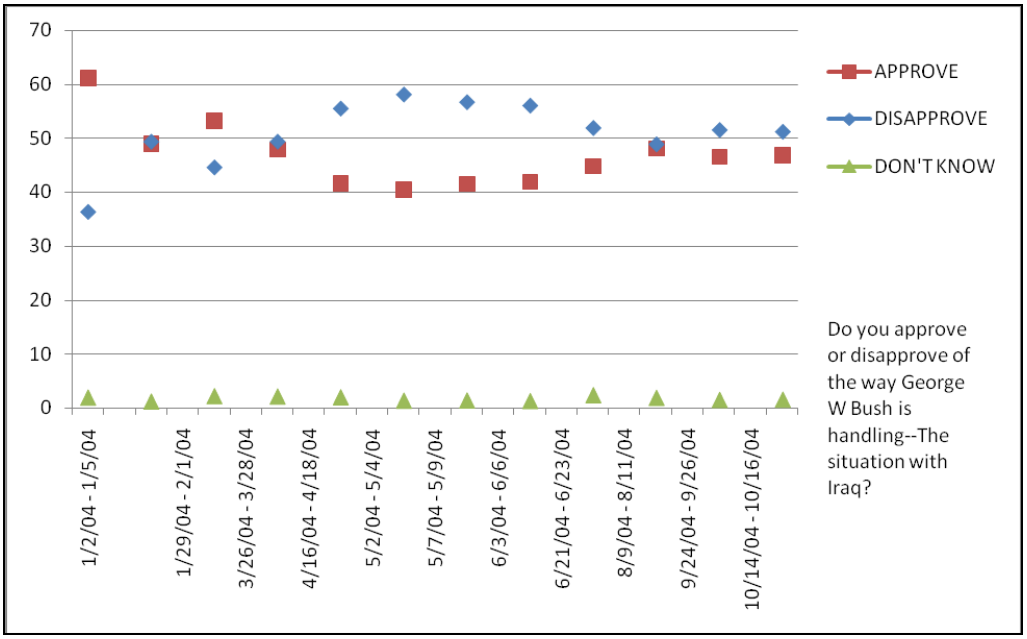

Figure 21. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

1/9/04 - 1/11/04	All in all, do you think the current situation in Iraq is worth going to war over, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		58.96	38.34	2.31
1/29/04 - 2/1/04		50.45	47.25	2.1
3/5/04 - 3/7/04		55.22	42.79	1.79
3/26/04 - 3/28/04		57.24	40.86	1.6
4/5/04 - 4/8/04		50.04	47.45	1.81
4/16/04 - 4/18/04		52.36	45.57	1.79
5/2/04 - 5/4/04		49.51	47.47	2.67
5/7/04 - 5/9/04		43.86	54.05	1.83
5/21/04 - 5/23/04		45.36	51.95	2.26
6/3/04 - 6/6/04		45.63	52.56	1.81
6/21/04 - 6/23/04		45.66	50.86	3.48
7/8/04 - 7/11/04		46.97	50.43	2.6
8/23/04 - 8/25/04		50.46	46.11	3.2
9/3/04 - 9/5/04		49.02	48.47	2.51
10/9/04 - 10/10/04		44	53.54	2.46

Table 33. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

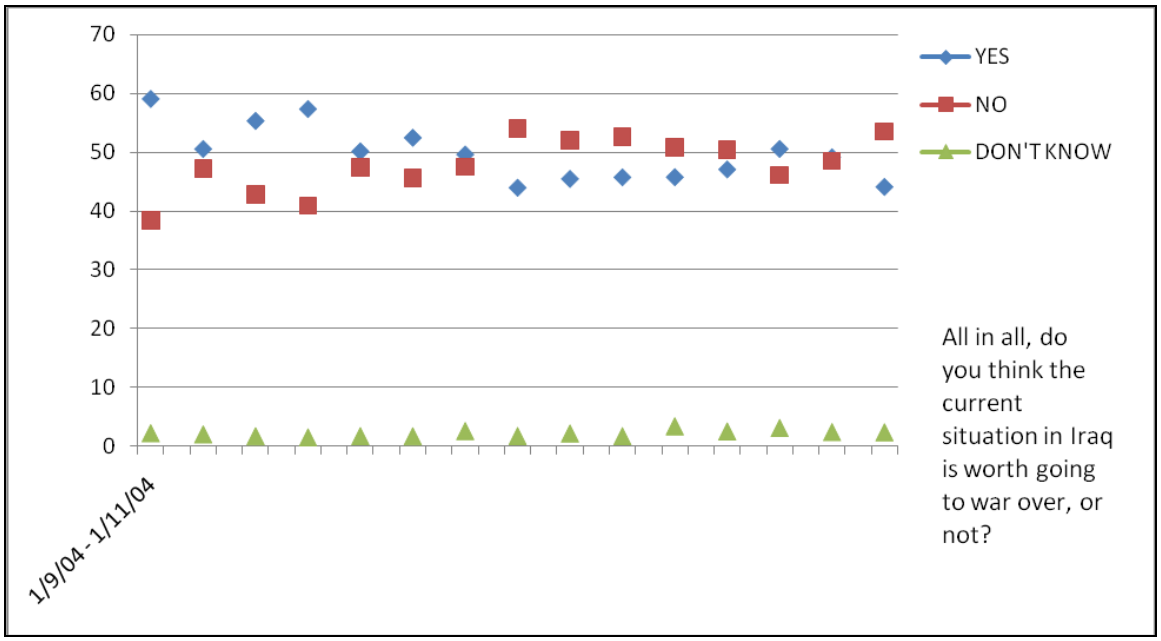

Figure 22. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

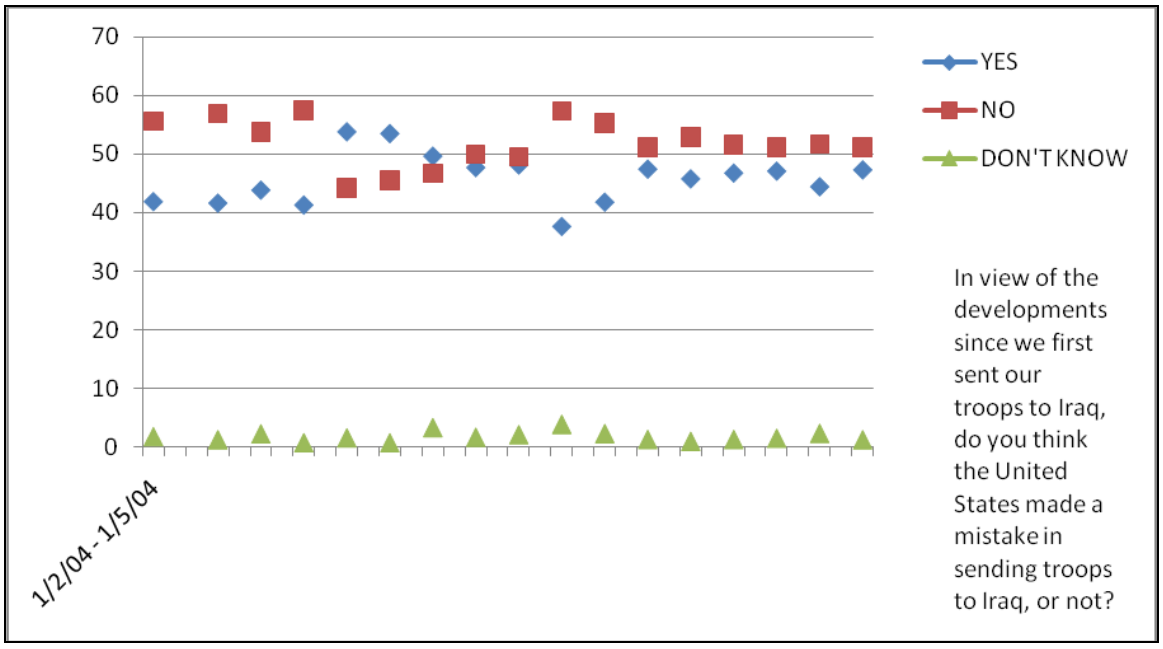

Figure 23. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

1/12/04 - 1/15/04	In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		41.94	55.68	1.76
4/16/04 - 4/18/04		41.69	56.92	1.23
5/7/04 - 5/9/04		43.91	53.83	2.25
6/3/04 - 6/6/04		41.36	57.53	0.71
6/21/04 - 6/23/04		53.85	44.16	1.55
7/8/04 - 7/11/04		53.55	45.53	0.72
7/19/04 - 7/21/04		49.7	46.75	3.3
7/30/04 - 7/31/04		47.75	50.02	1.66
8/23/04 - 8/25/04		48.2	49.52	2.11
9/3/04 - 9/5/04		37.71	57.42	3.87
9/24/04 - 9/26/04		41.86	55.31	2.29
10/1/04 - 10/3/04		47.49	51.22	1.29
10/9/04 - 10/10/04		45.83	52.87	0.96
10/14/04 - 10/16/04		46.82	51.66	1.28
10/22/04 - 10/24/04		47.15	51.16	1.48
10/29/04 - 10/31/04		44.49	51.74	2.33
11/19/04 - 11/21/04		47.36	51.23	1.23

Table 34. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

1/2/04 - 1/5/04	Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of U.S. troops in Iraq	Send more troops to Iraq	Keep the number of troops the same as it is now	Begin to withdraw some troops form Iraq	Withdraw all troops from Iraq
		11.41	40.3	28.92	15.82
4/5/04 - 4/8/04		19.76	28.82	18.48	28.2
4/16/04 - 4/18/04		32.75	25.39	16.14	20.61
5/7/04 - 5/9/04		24.68	24.28	17.45	29.22
6/3/04 - 6/6/04		18.39	29.75	23	26.8
9/24/04 - 9/26/04		20.99	34.91	20.5	18.19

Table 35. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

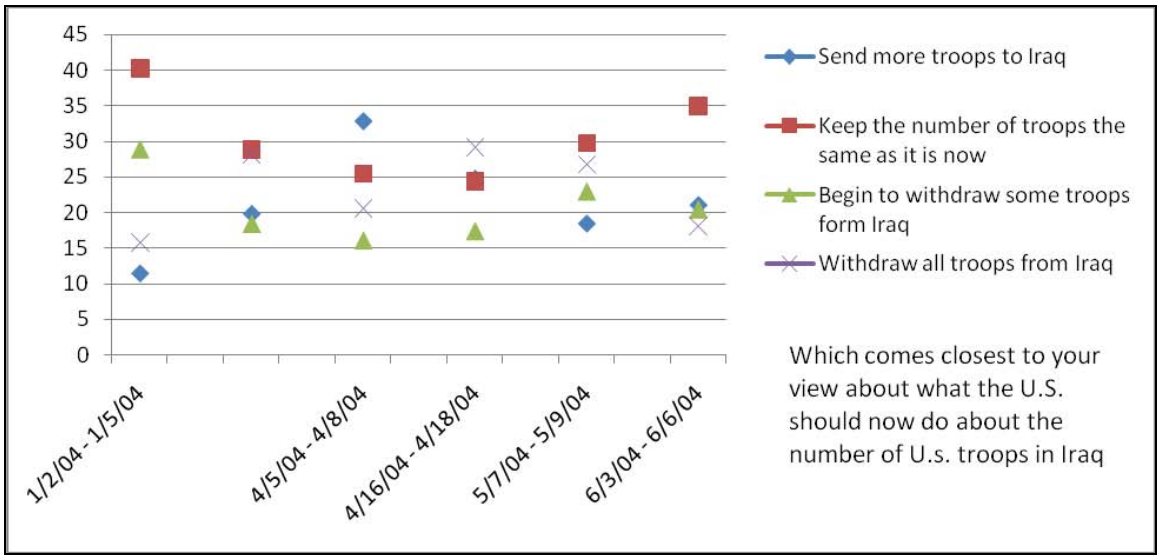

Figure 24. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

		Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Refused	
V043132	Do you APPROVE or DISAPPROVE of the way George Bush is HANDLING THE WAR IN IRAQ?HANDLING THE WAR IN IRAQ?	41.34	57.10	1.40	0.17	
		501	692	17	2	1212
		Worth It	Not Worth It	Don't Know	Refused	
V043134	Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been WORTH THE COST or NOT?	38.37	58.91	2.48	0.25	
		465	714	30	3	1212

Table 36. Do You Approve or Disapprove of President Bush's Handling War in Iraq? and Do You Think Iraq Was Worth the Cost? 2004

Source: NES 2004

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
1/2/2004-1/5/2004		60.25	35.36	3.6
2/6/2004-2/8/2004		51.19	44.44	2.88
3/5/2004-3/7/2004		50.35	46.97	2.09
4/16/2004-4/18/2004		51.89	44.76	2.12
5/7/2004-5/9/2004		46.41	50.72	1.9
6/3/2004-6/6/2004		48.75	49.15	1.33
9/24/2004-9/26/2004		53.63	44.42	1.06
10/9/2004-10/10/2004		47.44	48.96	3.51
11/19/2004-11/21/2004		54.65	41.89	2.64
12/17/2004-12/19/2004		49.33	46.08	3.98

Table 37. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

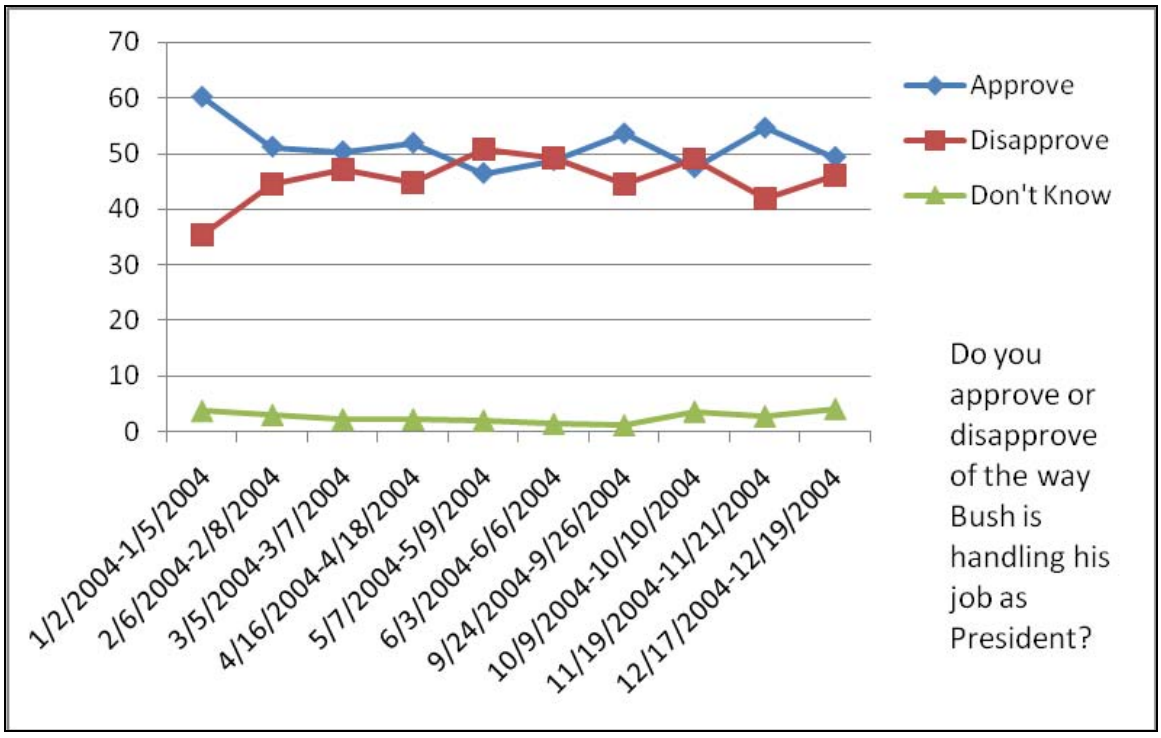

Figure 25. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2004

Source: Gallup Poll 2004

4. 2005

During the Iraq War, the timeline shows that violence continued to escalate throughout the years. Over 25,000 civilian deaths were reported and over 2,000 U.S. soldiers died by October 2005. There was some progress within the Iraqi Government, elections were held for a parliamentary and permanent government and an interim constitution was passed in October. President Bush's overall approval rating seesawed until August 2005 and the difference between his approval and disapproval continued to grow for the rest of the year. His highest rating was 57 percent and his lowest was 36 percent. Like his overall approval rating, President Bush's approvals for the Iraq War were still low and the disparity grew further apart. He began in the lower 50 percent and by the end of the year he was near the low 40 percent. Most Americans thought that President Bush did a good job as President overall. The way he handled Iraq, most Americans did not regard him as high, and because of the magnitude Iraq, this subject would affect his overall approval rating by the time he leaves office. Polls from 2006, 2007, and 2008 will show how closely aligned the President's overall approval and approval for Iraq are. Regarding the question if it was a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, initially most Americans thought it was a mistake. From February to July, most Americans thought it was not a mistake, and afterward more Americans continued to think that it was mistake to send troops for the rest of the year. The American public fluctuated with whether or not Iraq was worth going to war over. It was not clear until April 2005 that most Americans thought Iraq was not worth going to war over. At this time, there is also a clear distinction that Americans did not want to send more troops to Iraq, and they were also willing to withdraw troops out of Iraq. As the year progressed, Americans were less inclined to keep troops in Iraq, and they wanted to begin to see troops withdraw, but not fully.

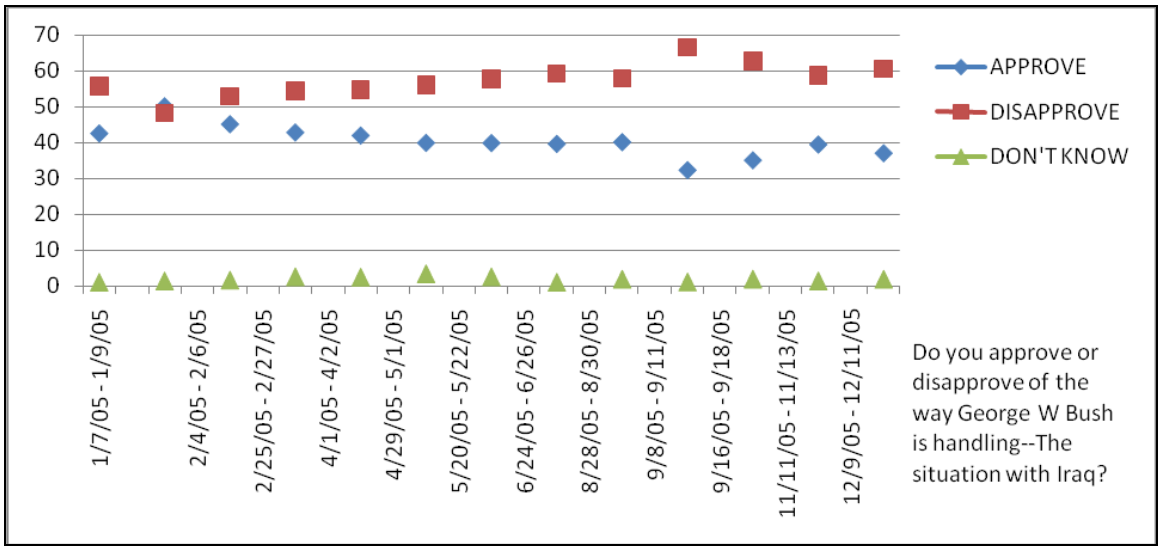

Figure 26. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

1/7/05 - 1/9/05	Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W Bush is handling--The situation with Iraq?	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
		42.62	55.69	0.98
2/4/05 - 2/6/05		50.19	48.15	1.33
2/25/05 - 2/27/05		45.21	52.69	1.57
4/1/05 - 4/2/05		42.9	54.24	2.47
4/29/05 - 5/1/05		42.05	54.6	2.35
5/20/05 - 5/22/05		40	56.02	3.29
6/24/05 - 6/26/05		39.94	57.57	2.44
8/28/05 - 8/30/05		39.72	59.08	0.96
9/8/05 - 9/11/05		40.21	57.78	1.81
9/16/05 - 9/18/05		32.43	66.45	1.06
11/11/05 - 11/13/05		35.17	62.75	1.85
12/9/05 - 12/11/05		39.56	58.67	1.33
12/16/05 - 12/18/05		37.13	60.56	1.81

Table 38. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

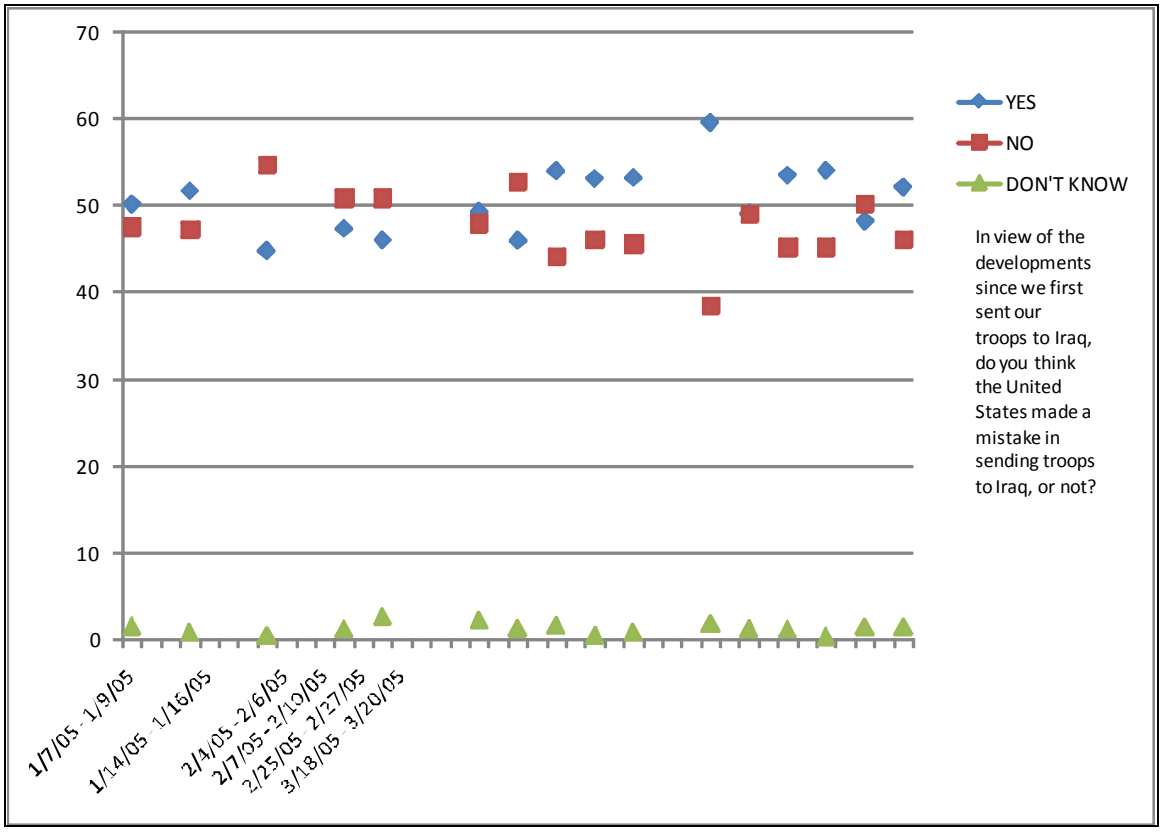

Figure 27. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

1/7/05 - 1/9/05	In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		50.21	47.63	1.54
1/14/05 - 1/16/05		51.68	47.3	0.78
2/4/05 - 2/6/05		44.76	54.68	0.44
2/7/05 - 2/10/05				
2/25/05 - 2/27/05		47.31	50.93	1.26
3/18/05 - 3/20/05		46.02	50.92	2.7
4/1/05 - 4/2/05				
4/29/05 - 5/1/05		49.27	47.97	2.29
7/22/05 - 7/24/05		45.96	52.73	1.31
8/5/05 - 8/7/05		53.94	44.16	1.65
8/28/05 - 8/30/05		53.14	46.17	0.48
9/8/05 - 9/11/05		53.16	45.64	0.86
9/12/05 - 9/15/05				
9/16/05 - 9/18/05		59.56	38.59	1.8
10/21/05 - 10/23/05		49.05	49.13	1.27
10/28/05 - 10/30/05		53.51	45.24	1.18
11/11/05 - 11/13/05		54.01	45.25	0.33
12/9/05 - 12/11/05		48.23	50.24	1.4
12/16/05 - 12/18/05		52.15	46.1	1.49

Table 39. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

1/3/05 - 1/5/05	All in all, do you think the current situation in Iraq is worth	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
	going to war over, or not?	45.58	52.31	1.67
2/7/05 - 2/10/05		47.95	49.9	1.85
2/25/05 - 2/27/05		58.96	38.34	2.31
4/1/05 - 4/2/05		45.51	52.79	1.29
4/29/05 - 5/1/05		40.63	57.15	1.96
6/6/05 - 6/8/05		41.48	56.43	1.93
7/7/05 - 7/10/05		44.24	52.91	2.25
8/5/05 - 8/7/05		43.9	54.24	1.74
9/12/05 - 9/15/05		44.76	53.62	1.36
11/11/05 - 11/13/05		38.39	59.54	1.55

Table 40. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

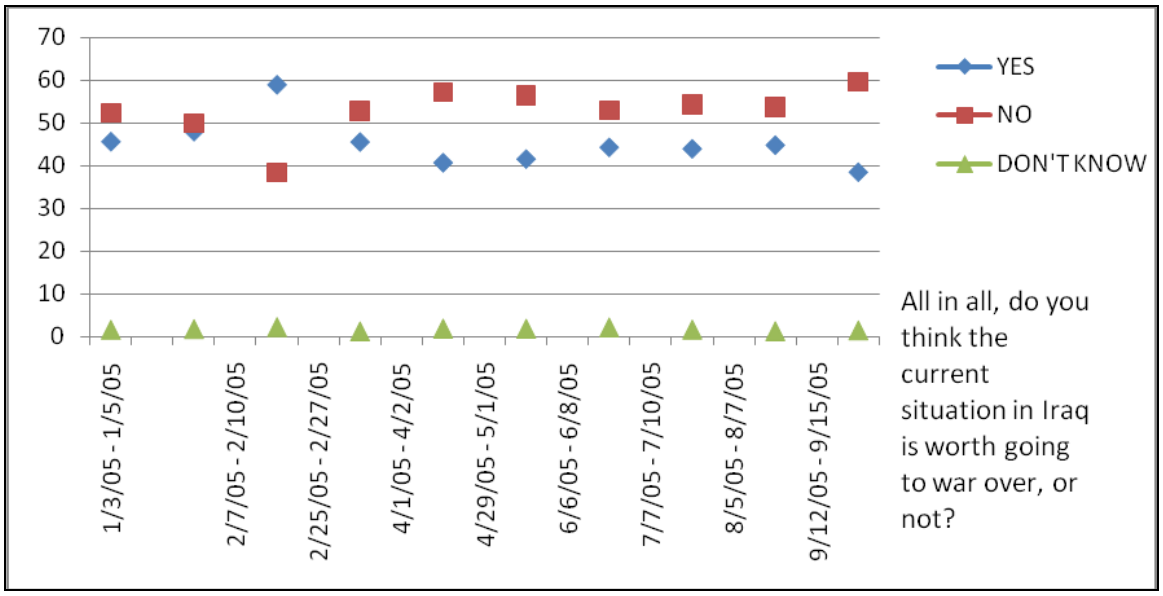

Figure 28. Was Iraq Worth Going to War Over? 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

1/14/05 - 1/16/05	Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of U.s. troops in Iraq	Send more troops to Iraq	Keep the number of troops the same as it is now	Begin to withdraw some troops form Iraq	Withdraw all troops from Iraq
		24.36	26.02	20.98	25.1
2/4/05 - 2/6/05		9.87	38.23	31.54	17.49
6/6/05 - 6/8/05		10.13	25.73	30.76	28.65
8/5/05 - 8/7/05		13.44	28.25	22.71	32.46
8/28/05 - 8/30/05		19.47	25.75	26.77	25.62
9/16/05 - 9/18/05		8.07	25.77	33.17	30.44
12/9/05 - 12/11/05		8.87	24.59	38.47	25.62

Table 41. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

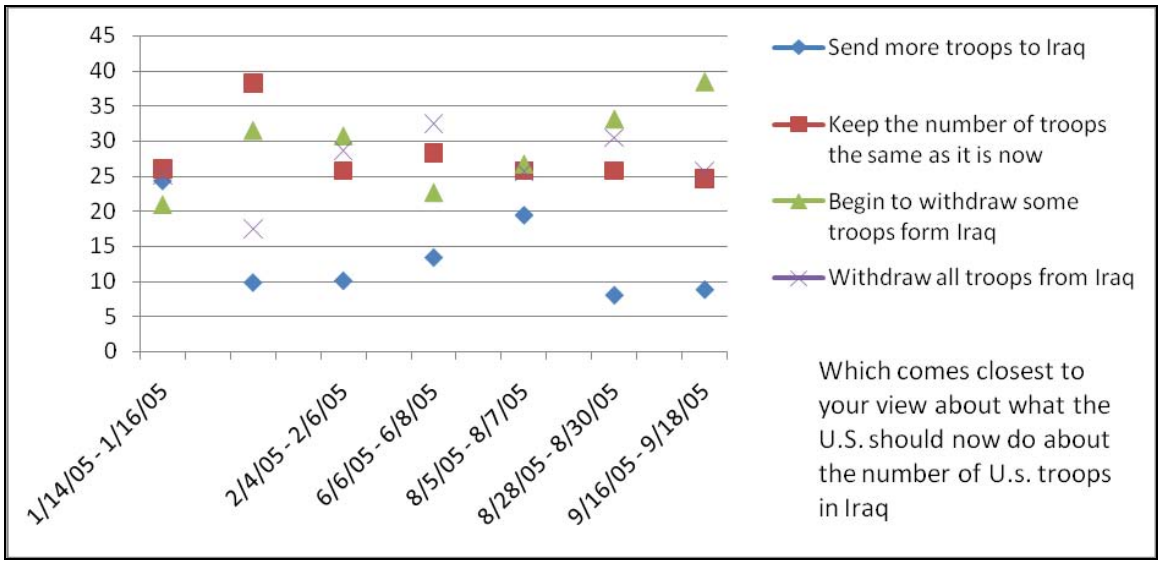

Figure 29. What Should the U.S. Do Now about U.S. Troops in Iraq? 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
1/7/2005-1/9/2005		51.88	44.52	2.68
2/4/2005-2/6/2005		57.07	39.49	2.74
2/25/2005-2/27/2005		52.14	45	1.42
3/18/2005-3/20/2005		51.77	44.13	2.84
4/1/2005-4/2/2005		47.71	48.56	2.51
4/29/2005-5/1/2005		47.92	49.03	2.08
5/20/2005-5/22/2005		45.92	50.17	2.81
6/6/2005-6/8/2005		47.01	48.79	2.75
7/22/2005-7/24/2005		48.93	47.87	2.66
8/5/2005-8/7/2005		44.78	51.12	3.33
9/8/2005-9/11/2005		46.14	50.79	2.12
10/21/2005-10/23/2005		41.99	54.82	2.5
11/11/2005-11/13/2005		36.91	60.06	2.57
12/9/2005-12/11/2005		42.47	54.91	1.5

Table 42. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

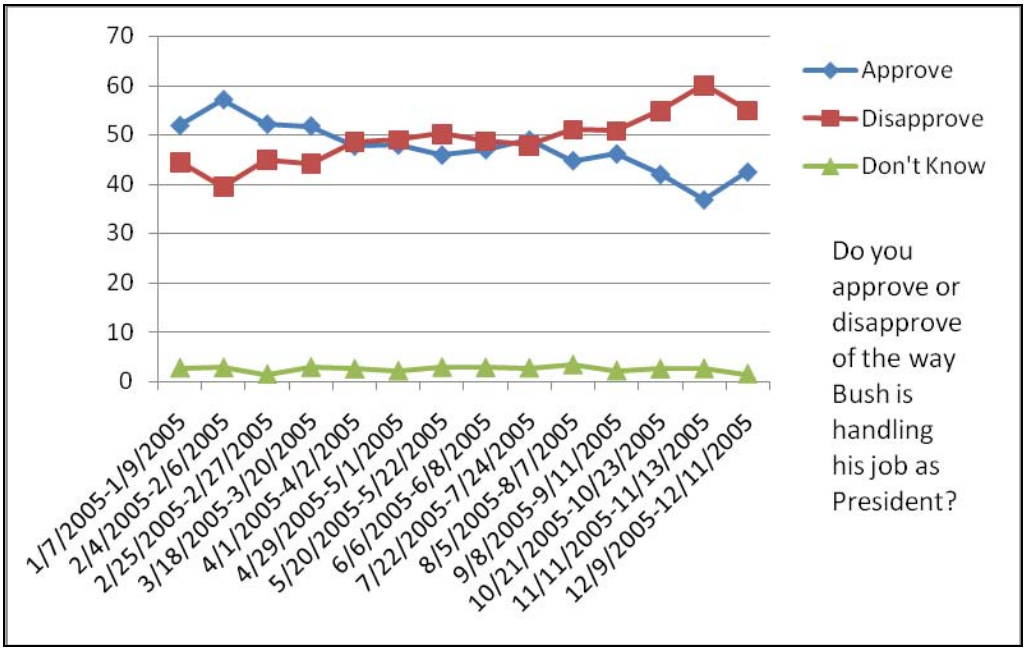

Figure 30. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2005

Source: Gallup Poll 2005

B. THE TURNING POINT IN PUBLIC OPINION

1. 2006

President Bush continued 2006 with a low approval rating for the war beginning with 38 percent in January and finishing the year at a mere 30 percent, while nearly 60 percent of Americans disapproved. 2006 is clearly the turning point for the war in Iraq. Nearly 60 percent of Americans disapproved of the President's handling of his job as President and handling of Iraq for the entire year. Over half of Americans thought that it was a mistake to send troops into Iraq and over one–third of Americans thought we should begin to withdraw troops and turnover military control to the Iraqis. By the end of 2006, American deaths in Iraq reached 3,000 and deaths of Iraqi civilians for the year grew over 16,000. After Democrats took over the majority of Congress, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld resigned in late 2006. President Bush's overall approval was the same as his approval for the war. It did not exceed 43 percent the whole year, and at times his approval was near 30 percent. Table 23 (Iraq Timeline) shows that sectarian violence continued to escalate, and although Abu Musab al–Zarqawi, an al–Qaeda leader in Iraq, was killed by U.S. forces, public sentiment did not change on Iraq. 2006 also welcomed the sentencing and execution of Saddam Hussein, but still the American public was ready for changes in Iraq.

1/20/06 - 1/22/06	Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W Bush is handling--The situation with Iraq?	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
		38.55	58.11	2.79
2/6/06 - 2/9/06		37.66	59.14	2.43
2/28/06 - 3/1/06		34.61	63.74	1.2
4/7/06 - 4/9/06		32.48	65.36	1.59
4/28/06 - 4/30/06		32.2	65.86	1.39
6/9/06 - 6/11/06		35.96	60.29	3
7/21/06 - 7/23/06		34.96	61.82	2.6
8/18/06 - 8/20/06		36.4	61.43	1.7
10/6/06 - 10/8/06		30.29	65.62	3.59

Table 43. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006.

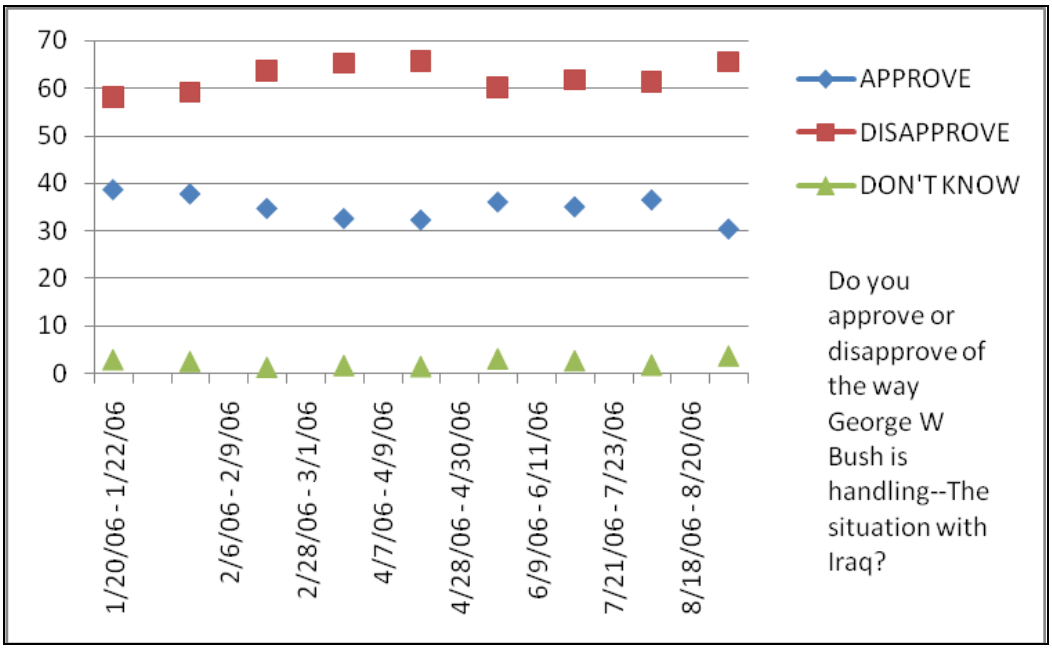

Figure 31. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006

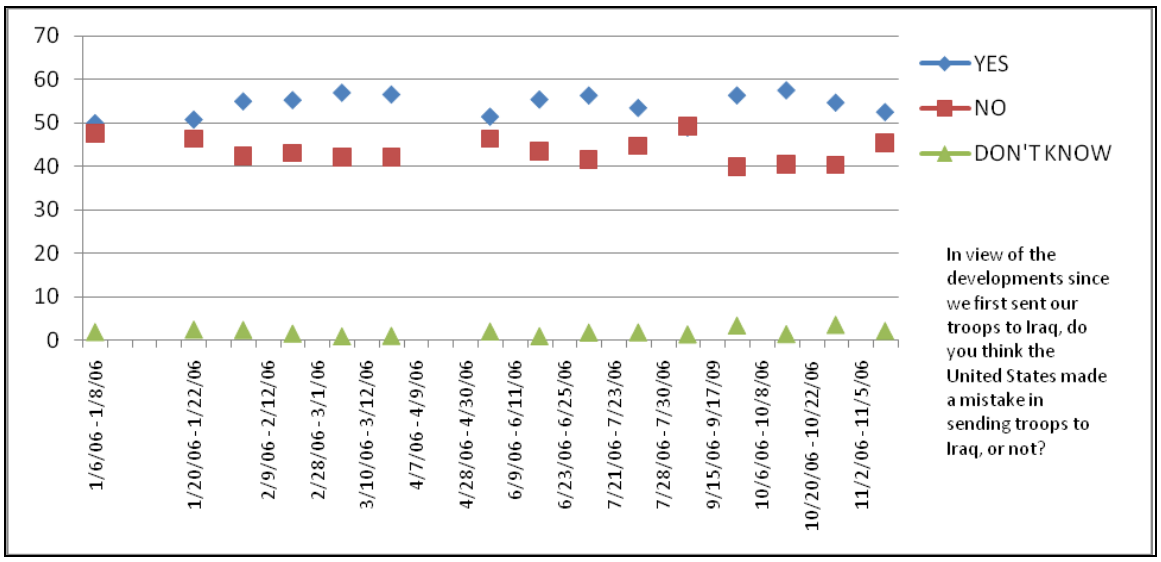

Figure 32. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006

3/10/06 - 3/12/06	Here are four different plans the U.S. could follow in dealing with the war in Iraq. Which ONE do you prefer?	Withdraw all troops from Iraq immediately	Withdraw all troops in 12 months time	Withdraw troops in as many yrs needed to turn over control to Iraqis	Send more troops to Iraq
		19.39	34.65	39.44	3.79
6/9/06 - 6/11/06		16.87	32.22	41.79	6.48
6/23/06 - 6/25/06		16.79	33.36	40.59	7.76
7/21/06 - 7/23/06		19.02	33.32	38.36	7.02
7/28/06 - 7/30/06		19.15	36.2	35.35	6.25
9/15/06 - 9/17/06		17.12	30.56	41.63	8.65
10/20/06 - 10/22/06		19.94	33.73	35.17	8.73

Table 44. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006

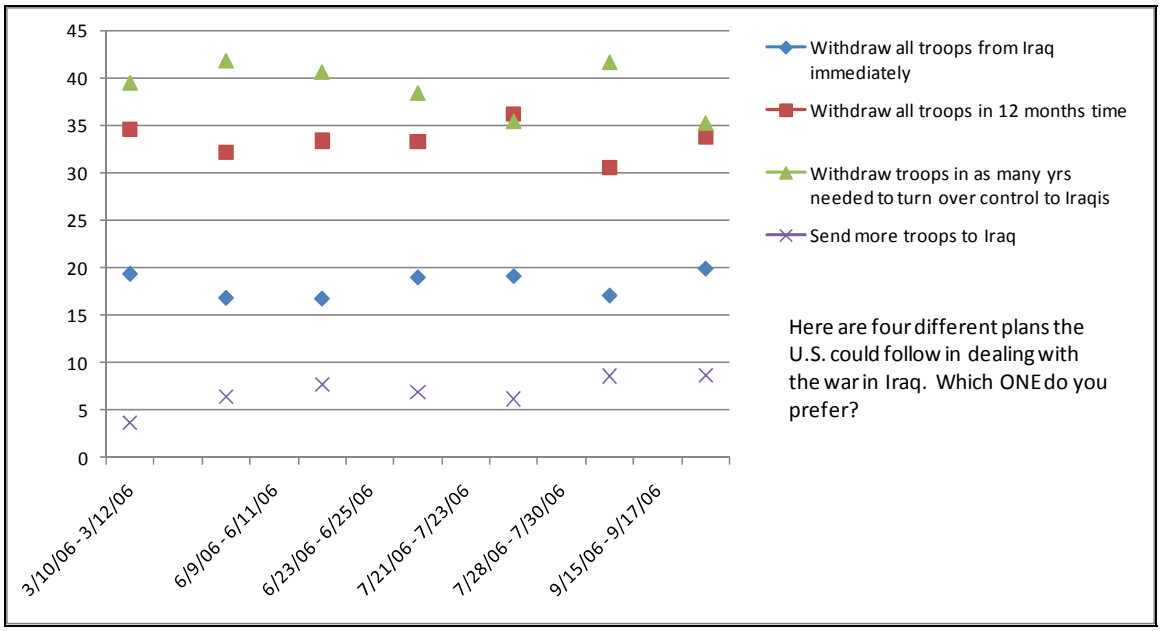

Figure 33. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
1/6/2006-1/8/2006		42.83	53.92	1.77
2/9/2006-2/12/2006		41.73	54.53	2.46
3/10/2006-3/12/2006		36.32	59.85	2.58
4/7/2006-4/9/2006		36.86	60.14	2.36
5/5/2006-5/7/2006		30.68	64.8	3.39
6/1/2006-6/4/2006		36.27	57.41	4.68
7/21/2006-7/23/2006		36.84	59.04	3.26
8/18/2006-8/20/2006		42.21	53.62	3.17
9/15/2006-9/17/2006		43.74	51.24	4.3
10/6/2006-10/8/2006		36.67	58.92	3.42
12/8/2006-12/10/2006		37.71	58.58	2.91

Table 45. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006

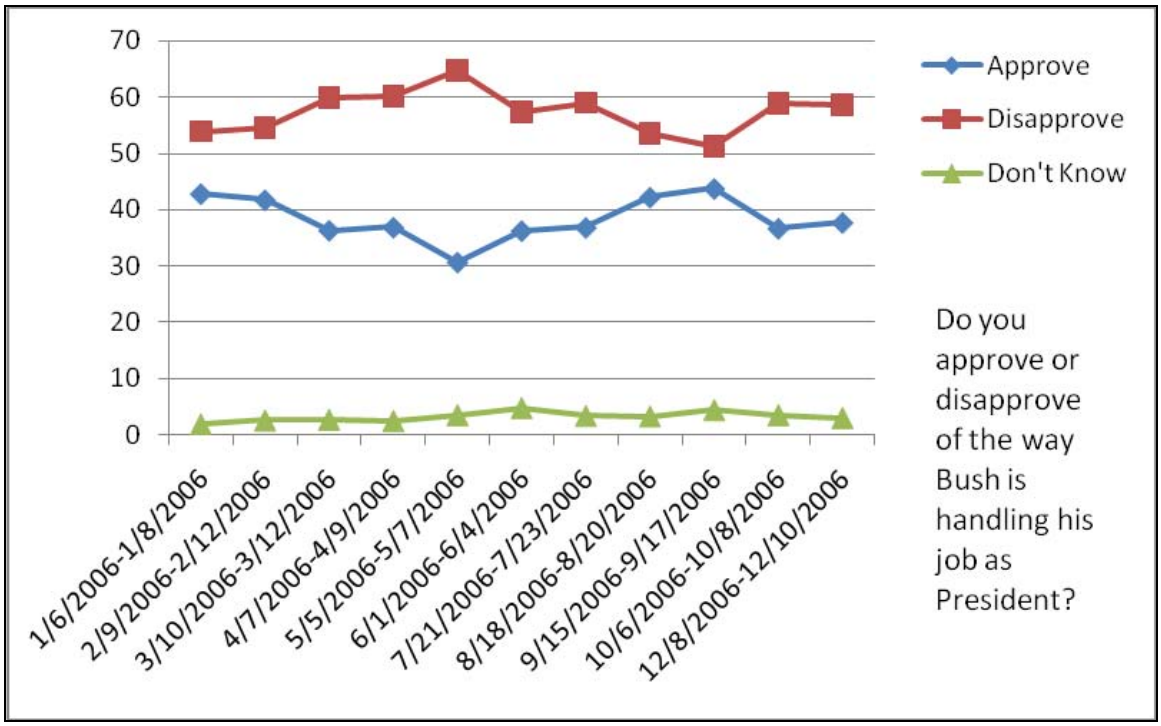

Figure 34. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2006

Source: Gallup Poll 2006

2. 2007

By January 2007, President Bush's approval rating for the war was well below 30 percent when he announced a troop surge in Iraq to quell the violence that was tearing the country apart. Still, as he went about a change in his strategy in Iraq, his approval rating for handling Iraq did not reach over 31 percent in 2007. His overall approval averaged near 35 percent the entire year. There is only a four percent difference between his overall approval and approval for handling Iraq, as they become closely aligned to each other. Furthermore, nearly two–thirds of Americans thought it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq and most Americans wanted troops home within a year time frame. On April 15, 2007 Pentagon officials announced an extension for troop deployments to 15 months in Iraq and Afghanistan. After the surge took place, 20 percent of Americans felt that the surge was making a difference, while over half felt there was no difference and 25 percent felt the situation was getting worse. At the end of the year, over 40 percent

felt the surge was making a difference, while less Americans felt the there was no difference or that the situation was getting worse. 2007 would also be the deadliest year for U.S. troops. Both Americans and President Bush hoped for the situation in Iraq to get better for 2008. With all these changes over 60 percent of Americans wanted to either withdraw all troops within 12 months or withdraw troops in as many years as needed to turnover control to Iraqis. Though the public did not approve of President Bush, they were resilient in not just wanting to drop everything and leave immediately.

1/5/07 - 1/7/07	In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		57.28	41.21	1.3
1/12/07 - 1/14/07		57.55	40.83	1.1
2/9/07 - 2/11/07		55.88	42.22	1.69
3/2/07 - 3/4/07		59.11	38.56	1.5
3/23/07 - 3/25/07		55.61	42.79	1.13
4/13/07 - 4/15/07		56.88	41.24	1.35
5/4/07 - 5/6/07		58.37	40.03	1.12
6/1/07 - 6/3/07		55.88	40.33	3.08
7/6/07 - 7/8/07		61.81	36.2	1.36
8/3/07 - 8/5/07		56.59	41.53	1.52
9/7/07 - 9/8/07		54.22	43.89	1.36

Table 46. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

1/5/07 - 1/7/07	Do you approve or dissaprove of the way George W. Bush is handling -- The situation in Iraq?	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
		26.17	71.57	1.39
1/12/07 - 1/14/07		28.14	69.8	1.49
2/1/07 - 2/4/07		26.14	72.4	1
3/23/07 - 3/25/07		28.33	68.52	2.15
5/4/07 - 5/6/07		30.42	66.53	2.12

Table 47. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

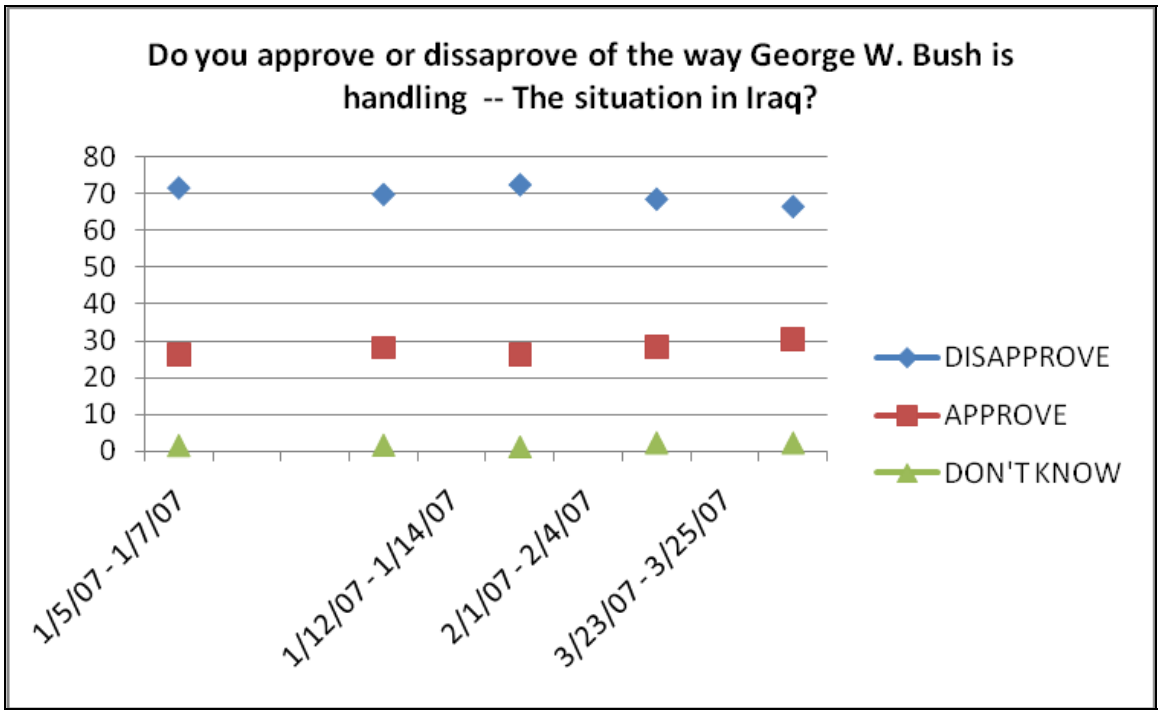

Figure 35. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

1/5/07 - 1/7/07	In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		57.28	41.21	1.3
1/12/07 - 1/14/07		57.55	40.83	1.1
2/9/07 - 2/11/07		55.88	42.22	1.69
3/2/07 - 3/4/07		59.11	38.56	1.5
3/23/07 - 3/25/07		55.61	42.79	1.13
4/13/07 - 4/15/07		56.88	41.24	1.35
5/4/07 - 5/6/07		58.37	40.03	1.12
6/1/07 - 6/3/07		55.88	40.33	3.08
7/6/07 - 7/8/07		61.81	36.2	1.36
8/3/07 - 8/5/07		56.59	41.53	1.52
9/7/07 - 9/8/07		54.22	43.89	1.36

Table 48. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

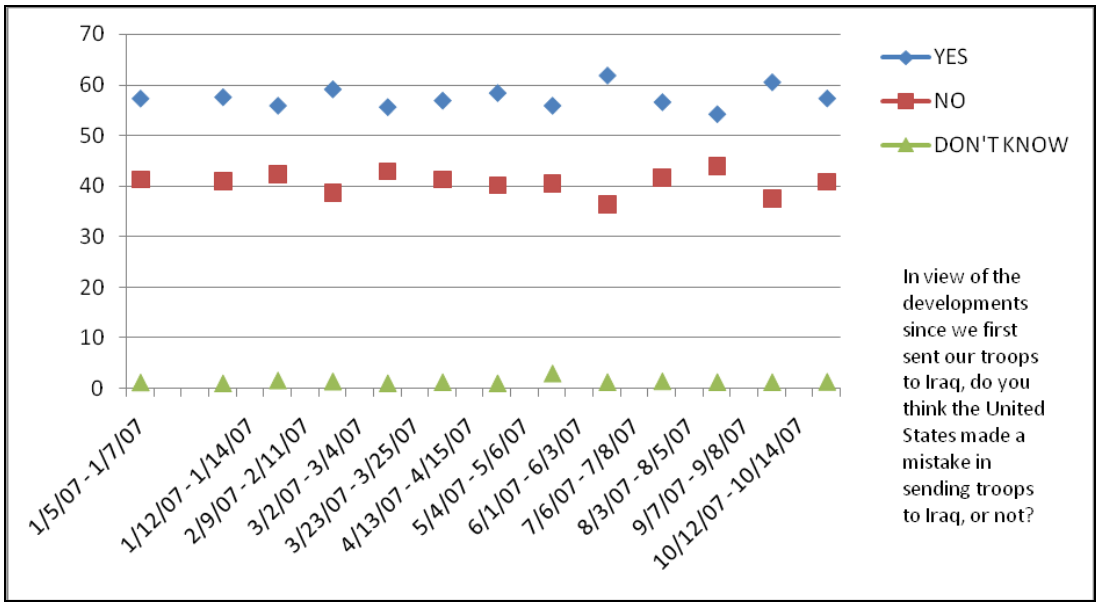

Figure 36. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

1/5/07 - 1/7/07	Here are four different plans the U.S. could follow in dealing with the war in Iraq. Which ONE do you prefer?	Withdraw all troops from Iraq immediately	Withdraw all troops in 12 months time	Withdraw troops in as many yrs needed to turn over control to Iraqis	Send more troops to Iraq
		15.21	39.37	30.57	12.36
1/12/07 - 1/14/07		17.1	38.94	28.87	12.6
3/2/07 - 3/4/07		19.5	37.89	26.46	13.4

Table 49. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

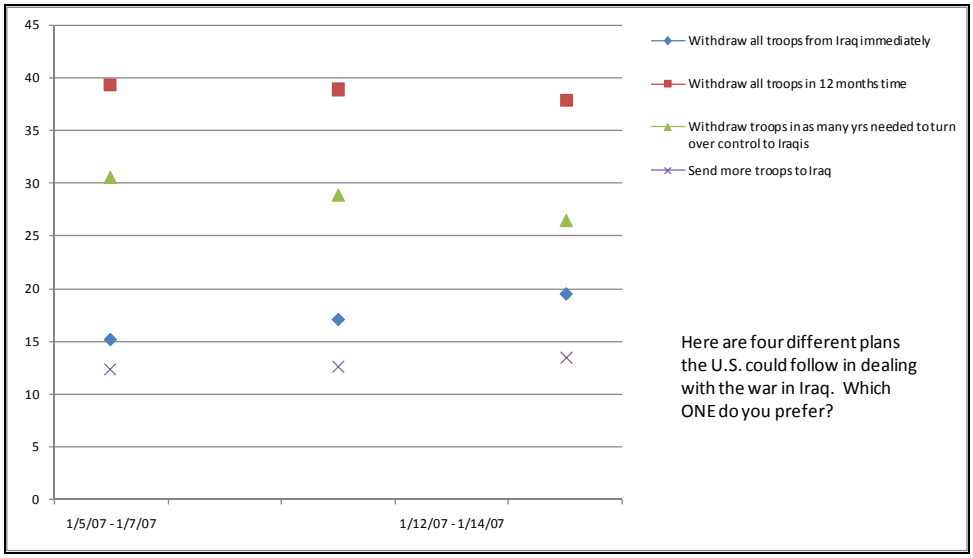

Figure 37. Which Plan Would You Prefer for Troop Withdrawal? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

		Making the situation better	Not making a difference	Making the situation worse	Don't Know
7/6/07 - 7/8/07	Based on what you have heard or read about the recent surge of U.S. troops in Iraq, do you think the increase in the number of U.S. troops in Iraq is Making the situation there better, Not making much difference, or is it Making the situation there worse?	21.64	51.45	25.14	1.66
8/3/07 - 8/5/07		30.72	41.34	24.21	2.9
9/7/07 - 9/8/07		31.71	44.45	19.27	3.29
11/30/07 - 12/2/07		40.06	38.68	20.04	0.98

Table 50. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

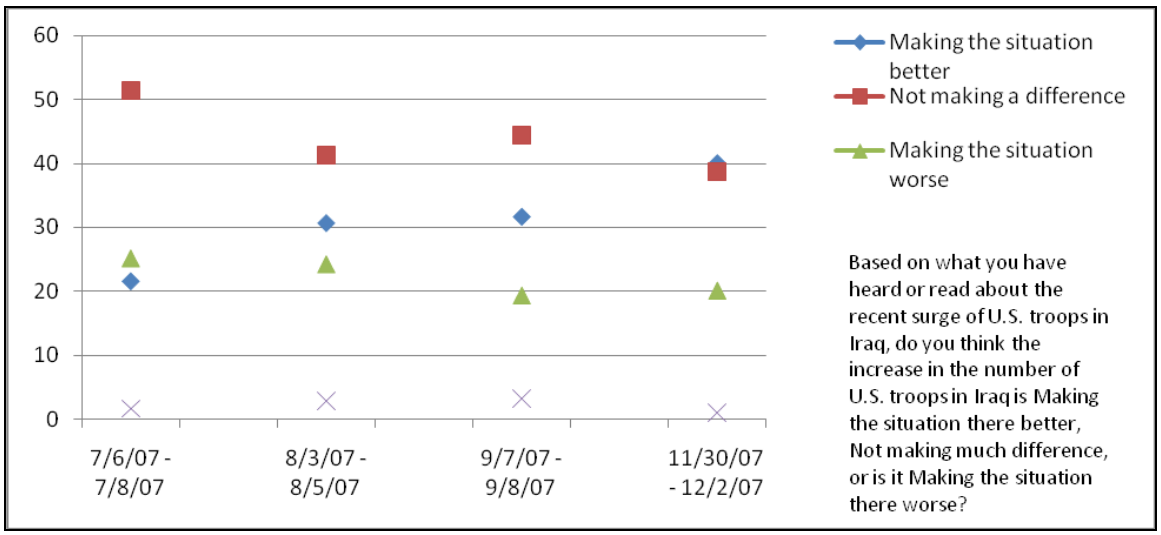

Figure 38. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
1/5/2007-1/7/2007		36.7	59.09	4.21
2/9/2007-2/11/2007		37.12	59.49	2.61
3/2/2007-3/4/2007		32.69	63.15	3.16
4/13/2007-4/15/2007		35.85	60.41	2.65
5/4/2007-5/6/2007		34.07	62.59	2.36
6/1/2007-6/3/2007		32	62.34	4.31
7/6/2007-7/8/2007		28.51	66.03	3.74
8/3/2007-8/5/2007		33.87	61.77	2.65
9/7/2007-9/8/2007		33	62.48	3.06
10/12/2007-10/14/2007		32.48	64.23	2.46
11/30/2007-12/2/2007		34.34	61.84	2.46
12/10/2007-12/13/2007		35.29	62.25	2.21

Table 51. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

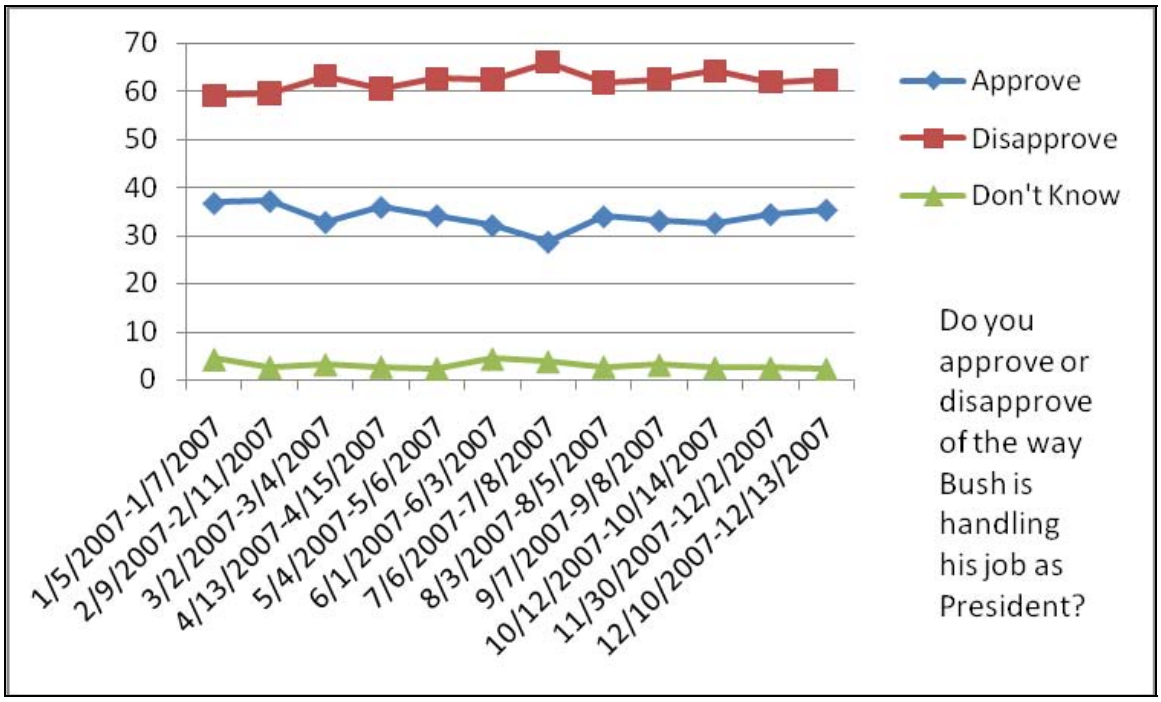

Figure 39. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2007

Source: Gallup Poll 2007

3. 2008

President Bush's approval ratings did not fare well in 2008 either. He began the year with an overall approval rating of 33 percent and finished the year at 29 percent. There was only one month when polls asked, if you approve or disapprove of President Bush's handling of Iraq? 66 percent of Americans disapproved. The surge was in full swing, yet nearly 60 percent of Americans continued to think that it was a mistake to send troops into Iraq. Through July, over 40 percent of Americans thought the surge was making conditions better. By the end of 2008, both his approval for handling his job as President and Iraq were almost at the same level. From Table's 50 and 53, the increase in support for those Americans who thought the surge was making the situation better in Iraq showed the public's will not to pack up and leave during a prolong conflict.

1/30/08 - 2/2/08	In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		57.46	40.71	1.2
2/8/08/ - 2/10/08		60.34	37.87	1.25
2/21/08 - 2/24/08		58.68	39.06	1.79
4/18/08 - 4/20/08		62.77	35.74	0.79
6/15/08 - 6/19/08		60.44	36.91	2.17
7/25/08 - 7/27/08		56.35	40.27	2.39
9/5/08 - 9/7/08		58.29	40.7	0.91
10/31/08 - 11/2/08		58.45	39.42	1.46

Table 52. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

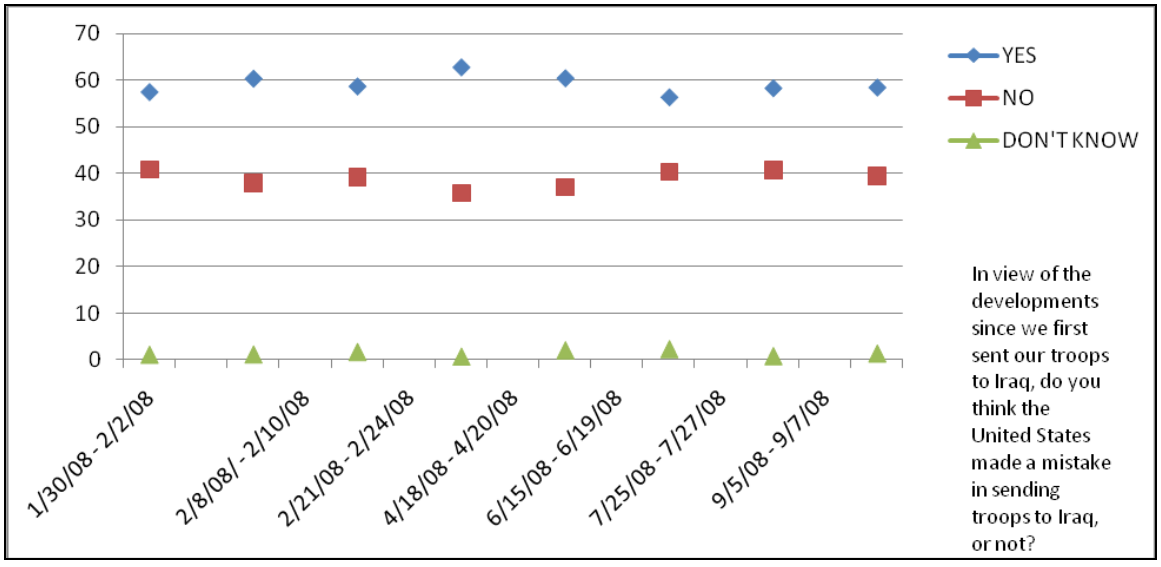

Figure 40. Was it a Mistake to Send Troops to Iraq? 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

		Making the situation better	Not making a difference	Making the situation worse	Don't Know
2/8/08/ - 2/10/08	Based on what you have heard or read about the recent surge of U.S. troops in Iraq, do you think the increase in the number of U.S. troops in Iraq is Making the situation there better, Not making much difference, or is it Making the situation there worse?	42.71	34.61	20.63	1.96
2/21/08 - 2/24/08		40.27	37.56	20.35	1.5
7/25/08 - 7/27/08		47.98	32.12	17.34	2.56

Table 53. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

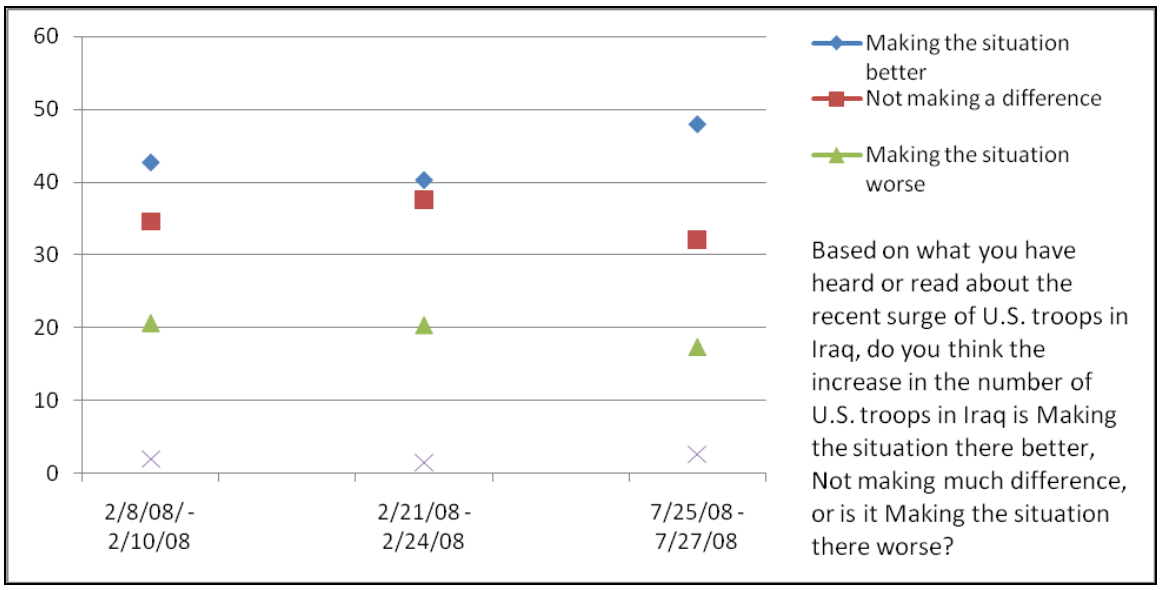

Figure 41. Is Troop Surge Making a Difference? 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

2/11/08 - 2/14/08	Do you approve or dissaprove of the way George W. Bush is handling	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE	DON'T KNOW
	-- The situation in Iraq?	31.11	66.4	2.29

Table 54. Approve or Disapprove of President Bush in Iraq 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

	Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job as President?	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know
1/10/2008-1/13/2008		33.74	60.46	4.57
2/21/2008-2/24/2008		32.25	62.49	3.62
3/14/2008-3/16/2008		31.55	64.22	3.14
4/18/2008-4/20/2008		27.84	68.63	1.96
5/1/2008-5/3/2008		28.3	66.92	3.15
6/9/2008-6/12/2008		30.18	64.22	4
7/25/2008-7/27/2008		31.89	64.65	2.91
10/10/2008-10/12/2008		25.27	70.81	2.69
11/7/2008-11/9/2008		27.58	67.9	3.59
12/12/2008-12/14/2008		29.26	66.82	2.33

Table 55. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

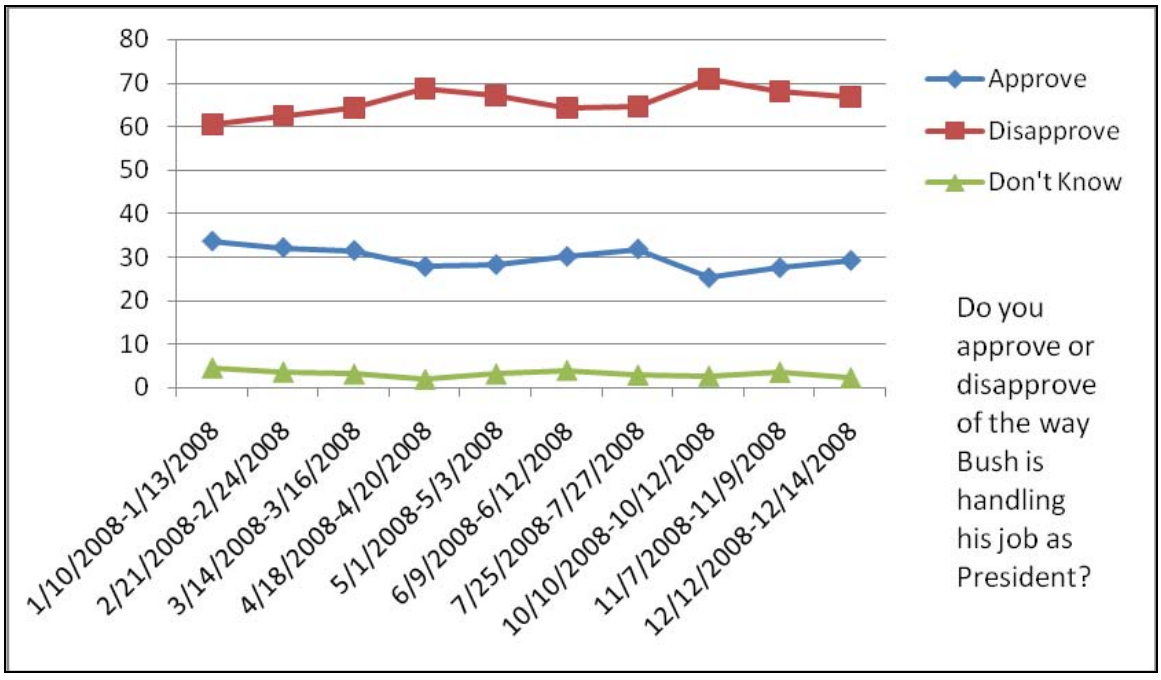

Figure 42. Approve or Disapprove of Bush Handling Job as President 2008

Source: Gallup Poll 2008

C. CHAPTER III ANALYSIS

President Bush's approval rating for Iraq was positive through September of 2003, six months after invading Iraq. However, his overall approval rating, a computation of several factors external from the war on Iraq, remained over 60 percent until February 2004. It was not until May 2004 that his overall approval dipped below 50 percent. The Presidents most dramatic shifts in both his overall approval ratings and approval for the war in Iraq came in 2006. His disapproval rate for handling Iraq had an average increase of 5 percent throughout the year and an average increase of 6 percent in his disapproval rating overall, compared to 2005. 2006 proves to be a pivotal year for public opinion, it's the first time the majority of Americans clearly and steadily disapprove of President Bush's performance as both President and Commander in Chief. From this point on the President's approval rating overall and in response to his handling the situation in Iraq run closely in line with one another. From this information it can be inferred that the American public's put great weight on the war in Iraq when determining their opinion of the President. During the years 2007–08, the approval averaged a dismal 31 percent. The steady decline in President Bush's approval rating shows how American's will grow war weary in a prolonged conflict, however their desire to keep troops in Iraq also shows that the public remains steadfast in the war effort.

At the start of the Iraq conflict, 54 percent of Americans were in favor of military action against Iraq, with only 28 percent against action. The remaining 18 percent were unsure or hadn't thought about the idea. When Americans continued to be polled about whether or not it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq, for the first couple years of the war, the majority still thought that it was not a mistake to send in troops, despite a constant gradual decrease in the approval of the President's handling the situation in Iraq. In summer of 2005, over 50 percent of Americans thought it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq and in light of the current situation in Iraq it was not worth going to war over. In 2006, the turning point of the Iraq War, close to 60 percent of American's polled began to think that it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq, showing steady growth in disapproval. This sentiment persisted and grew in the following year. 2007 was also the year of the troop surge. Two thirds of the public that year thought it was a mistake sending troops to

Iraq initially, so they logically would not be in favor of a surge of U.S. forces. Yet, Americans did not call for a complete withdrawal from Iraq.

Just five months after the invasion of Iraq, the question regarding what should be done about the number of troops in Iraq was polled. On average, only 15 percent of American's polled wanted a complete withdraw of troops. Approximately 33 percent said to keep it the same and another 30 percent wanted some troops to withdraw. At this stage in the war, Americans were split in their opinions of more, or less, troops in country. In 2004, the number of Americans who wanted to send more troops to Iraq or keep the level the same was over 50 percent. This trend, however, did not continue into 2005, showing the "rally around the fact" effect diminishing. Although the majority of Americans were no longer in favor of the same number or more troops being in Iraq, the clear majority is still to keep the same number or begin to withdraw some troops. In no way was this, an indication that America wanted to pull completely out of Iraq, maintaining the same level of persistence as in Vietnam. Even 2006, which showed a drastic decrease in Presidential approval, approval of the war, Americans thinking that Iraq was not worth going to war over, did not yield polling results that called for troop withdrawal. Still, the majority of public opinion saw a gradual withdrawal, either in 12 months time or as long as is needed to turn control back to Iraqis, as the best option for U.S. forces. This response continued into 2007. Furthermore, the data for the number of troops in Iraq and preferred plan for withdrawal shows the American public's resiliency during prolonged conflict. President Bush's response to continued support for troops in Iraq and declining support of the American public for how he was handling the situation in Iraq was a change in policy.

In response to the loss of American support and in an effort to regain public support and show the American people that the lives lost were for a valiant cause, President Bush escalated the war in the form of a troop surge. After he announced the surge, Americans still remained skeptical about his handling of the war. At the beginning of 2007, half of Americans thought the surge was making no difference and only 20 percent thought that it was making the situation better, but by the end of 2007, 40 percent of Americans thought that the surge was making the situation better and approximately

34 percent thought it was not making a difference. No facts listed in Table 23, the Iraq War Timeline, give reason for the doubling in approval for the surge, in fact, they support the converse conclusion. The year 2007 was the deadliest year for U.S. troops, the Iraqi government failed to meet 11 of its 18 benchmarks, majority of Iraqis see a worsening in security and Iraqi refugees continued to be displaced. Perhaps, this marked rally of American support can be seen as a support for change, a support of the admittance that a new strategy was necessary. Regardless of the reason the American public decided to stand behind their President, one thing is certain and that is that America's support for their country and their military is resolute.

IV. COMPARISON

A. IS PUBLIC OPINION FRAGILE?

1. Vietnam

There is a clear point in both Vietnam and Iraq when public opinion "rally around the flag" in support of the President during armed conflict. The focus of this thesis is not the "rally around the flag" effect, but what happens after this phenomenon subsides. What happens to public opinion? In Vietnam, the "the rally around the flag" took place mid-1965, so data taken from 1966 to 1968 will be evaluated to determine the fragility of public opinion. As stated in Chapter II, anti–war protests increased in 1966, as did the number of Americans attuned to the situation in Vietnam. President Johnson's overall approval rating began at 61 percent and slowly declined to 43 percent by years end. His disapproval surpassed his approval by December 1966, 46 percent to 43 percent. Johnson's approval for the war slowly declined from January 1966 to May 1966 and seesawed between each other the rest of the year. Over half of Americans in late 1966 still thought the United States did the right thing to send troops to Vietnam. These are all clear indications that public opinion is not fragile during 1966.

In 1967, President Johnson's overall approval rating remained higher than his disapproval rating until August of 1967. It was not until December 1967, when his approval rating surpassed his disapproval rating to finish the year. President Johnson's overall approval rating was also higher than his approval for handling the war. President Johnson's approval for the war in Vietnam was low, and more Americans disapproved of his handling throughout the entire year. However, more Americans thought it was a mistake to send troops into Vietnam throughout the year with the exception of July 1967. Support for the war in 1967 was low, but most Americans were not willing to give up completely on Vietnam. This shows the beginnings of Americans' approval for the

President, with respect to the war in Vietnam, starting to taper off. Yet, public support for the troops abroad and the United States' purpose in Vietnam remained steady.

President Johnson's overall approval rating seesawed during the first half of 1968, and finally his disapproval rating was higher than his approval rating for the rest of his Presidency. His disapproval for the war in Vietnam during 1968 was significantly higher than his approval rating. More Americans thought that it was a mistake to send troops to Vietnam throughout the entirety of 1968. The NES polls taken toward the end of 1968, show that most Americans thought we should have stayed out of Vietnam, but in the next question asked, over 60 percent of Americans thought we should keep our soldiers there and try to end the fighting or take a stronger stand, even if it meant invading North Vietnam. The year 1968 shows the American public was growing weary, but not ready to give in just yet.

Between 1966 and 1968, the American public did not approve of President Johnson's handling of Vietnam and eventually thought it was a mistake to send troops to Vietnam, however, when asked what should be done next? Most Americans were in favor of keeping troops on the scene, or stepping up our stance against North Vietnam. The data shows that the American public is not fragile with prolonged conflict as alluded to earlier.

2. Iraq

President Bush achieved his "rally around the flag" effect prior to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. In doing so, measurement of fragility of the American public will be from April 2003 to 2008. After the invasion of Iraq, President Bush's overall approval rating was near 70 percent and slowly decreased to 49 percent by September 2003, and recovered to 62 percent by years end. President Bush's approval for his handling of Iraq began over 70 percent and began its decline for the year finishing the year at 44 percent. In spite of his declining approval, most Americans believed that Iraq was worth going to war over. Though the number dropped during the year, over 61 percent of Americans thought Iraq was still worth going to war over. With declining approval ratings for the

President, Americans also wanted to keep the same level of troops in Iraq or begin the withdrawal of some troops as 2003 progressed. These polls demonstrate that there was no sign of weakness in the publics will for support of the war.

In 2004, President Bush continued to suffer a declining overall approval rating and approval rating for his handling of Iraq. By May of 2004, the number of Americans who thought Iraq was not worth going to war over surpassed those who thought Iraq was worth going to war over, and still Americans seesawed with this question for the rest of 2004. Despite these fluctuations in the polls, most Americans did not think it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq for most of the year. Once again, this shows the resiliency of the American people. President Bush's overall approval fluctuated in 2005, but disapproval for handling the war continued to grow as the year progressed and over time, most Americans thought it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq. By April 2005, most Americans thought Iraq was not worth going to war over. At the end of 2005, with Americans not liking the situation in Iraq, about one third of Americans wanted to see some troop withdrawal, and a quarter of Americans wanted to keep troops at the present levels, continuing the desire for Americans not to fold their tents and return home.

President Bush's overall approval level declined between 2006 and 2008. His overall disapproval hovered near 60 percent for the remainder of his Presidency. His approval for the war stayed below 40 percent and then fell into the near 30 percent level, or below, through 2008. Most Americans thought it was mistake to send troops to Iraq, but thought the withdrawal of U.S. troops should take place in as many years needed, until complete control could be turned over to the Iraqis. Others wanted to take at least a year to withdraw troops. Still, after four years of fighting in Iraq, the American public had shown its resiliency in support of prolonged military conflict. In 2007, the average percentage of Americans who wanted an immediate withdrawal was a mere 18 percent. Proof that although the majority of Americans thought that it was a mistake to send troops into Iraq their idea of resolution was not a complete withdrawal. Nearly 40 percent of Americans wanted to withdraw within 12 months, and approximately 30 percent wanted to withdraw troops in as many years it takes to turn over control to Iraqis.

An even stronger indicator of the American publics' resiliency in response to the prolonged war with Iraq is their response regarding the effectiveness of the troop surge in 2007. After the initial surge in mid-2007, 30 percent of Americans polled thought that the surge was making things better in Iraq and 45 percent did not think that it was either helping or hurting, but only 21 percent thought negatively of the increase in troops. After losing many American lives in Iraq in 2007, it may be expected that Americans would begin to disapprove of the surge, however steadfast public support is apparent within the 2008 "Is the troop surge making a difference?" poll statistics 43 percent, a markedly high number of Americans thought that the surge was making things better in Iraq. With a presidential approval rating near 30 percent and most Americans feeling Iraq was not worth fighting for, the American public showed it was not fragile.

3. Vietnam vs. Iraq

There are similarities and differences between the Vietnam and Iraq Wars. In looking at public opinion for each of the conflicts, there are significant differences in the timeline for public sentiments. The American public, although proving to be resilient in enduring prolonged conflicts, is not short of memory. In Vietnam, it took two years after the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, for the "rally around the flag" affect to diminish and for the public to start to doubt our purpose in the war. Conversely, less than 40 years later, with many of the public remembering the war in Vietnam, the "rally around the flag" affect lasted a mere six months after the initial invasion of Iraq.

Another significant difference between public opinion in the two wars was the ability for the American public to receive information. The disparity is made clear with the answers to the polling question, "Do you approve of the way the President is handling the situation in Vietnam/Iraq?" Looking a year into the war, so we may assume that the public has had sufficient time to become aware of the happenings within the war, the amount of people polled who answered "Don't Know" to the above question in 1965 was an average of 20 percent, a strikingly high percentage in comparison to the same question in 2004, one year after the Iraq invasion, where the same response was 1.25 percent. This phenomenon may be attributed to the various amounts of media available in 2004, as

compared to 1965. The information age that spawned since the late 1980s has created several avenues to receive information. In contrast, during the Vietnam era, the public may have been limited to radio, television, and printed news mediums only.

A popular polling question throughout both wars asked the public if they thought going to war with Vietnam/Iraq was a mistake. Two years after the start of both wars, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution for Vietnam and the initial invasion of Iraq, was when the majority of the American public started to feel like it indeed was a mistake to enter into war. This seemingly obvious parallel does have a caveat, if you take into consideration the "rally around the flag" time periods for each conflict. In Vietnam, this change in public opinion came simultaneously with the end of the "rally round the flag" period. With respect to the Iraq War, American support was much more resilient after the "rally round the flag" period had ended. It took the American public one and a half years after this point to begin to feel like the invasion may have been a mistake. In both cases, for two years, America on the whole had no reservations about being engaged in armed conflict.

B. DID PUBLIC OPINION SHAPE PRESIDENTIAL POLICY?

1. Vietnam

From Chapter II, President Johnson's reason for escalating the war in Vietnam was to contain communism and avert the feared "domino theory" in Southeast Asia. "The simplistic Cold War narrative, once constructed to build consensus for the containment of Soviet Communism, shaped U.S. policy in Vietnam."[43] President Johnson continued to escalate the war and the public supported the escalation. It was not until after the Tet Offensive, that presidential policy shifted. "Not until the events in Vietnam challenged the professed war aims did television coverage begin to reflect the public's growing doubt about the war."[44] A few months after the Tet Offensive, public support for escalation began to wane. "The Domino Theory, which explained that

[43] Brewer, 181.

[44] Brewer, 181.

Americans must fight Communism in Vietnam, so they would not have to fight them at home turned out to be wrong nor did the assumption hold that a show of American military would persuade Vietnamese Communist to back down."[45] Not only did President Johnson realize the North Vietnamese were not going to succumb to the U.S., but funding the war was becoming too great for the President.

> McNamara's successor, Clark Clifford, learned from civilian analysts at the Pentagon that under the current strategy 200,000 more troops would not change Hanoi's determination to fight or inspire the South Vietnamese government to defend itself. For LBJ, the worst blow was when the Wise Men counseled disengagement. After all, Acheson and others had defined the conflict in Vietnam as a crucial stand against communism. Now they concluded that the United States could not achieve victory nor could it afford to fight much longer. The war, at a cost of two billion dollars a month contributed to inflation and a growing federal deficit.[46]

On March 31, 1968, President Johnson announced he would not seek re–election. This would be the ultimate policy shift for his administration. He realized that the U.S. would not win the war. "From President Johnson's point of view, the most damaging report came from Cronkite who returned from a tour of South Vietnam to announce on national TV that 'we are mired in stalemate' and 'the only rational way out would be to negotiate – not as victims, but as an honorable people who …did the best they could.'"[47]

2. Iraq

In Chapter III, President Bush's primary reasons for invading Iraq were links to al–Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction. Both reasons to go to war were later proven to be inaccurate. "But on September 18, President Bush conceded: 'No, we've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September the 11th.' He gave no explanation as to why the previously implied connection was abandoned."[48] For the premise of weapons of mass destruction, "Claims about chemical and biological weapons

[45] Brewer, 226.

[46] Brewer, 208.

[47] Brewer, 208.

[48] Pfiffner, 61.

were based on legitimate evidence that was widely accepted internationally, despite the failure to find the weapons by late 2003."[49] Even after the links of al–Qaeda and Saddam Hussein were found untrue as well as Saddam Hussein not having weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. was already in Iraq. Since both reasons were found untrue, the Bush administration began to focus on how bad Saddam Hussein was as a leader and person. "They preferred to focus on Saddam Hussein's brutality. Of that there was plenty of evidence in mass graves and mourning families."[50]

President Bush still wanted to transform Iraq into a democratic ally as stated in Chapter III, but the Iraqi people looked at U.S. forces as an occupational force. The Bush administration envisioned U.S. forces being greeted with open arms as liberators as we began our invasion.

> To those who said an invasion would destabilize the region and interfere with the war on terrorism, Cheney rejoined: 'the opposite is true…extremists in the region would have to rethink their strategy of jihad. Moderates...would take heart, and our ability to advance the Israeli–Palestinian peace process would be enhanced.' Officials predicted that the Iraqis would welcome the U.S. military's liberators.[51]

The opposite occurred, and internal strife began according to the Iraq timeline. The insurgency began the summer of 2003, first targeting Americans then progressing to Iraqi on Iraqi violence. U.S. forces would be forced to continue to deal with this insurgency for the next several years. " The Iraqi insurgency bombed, kidnapped, and executed American military personnel and civilians, U.N. officials, coalition partners, and Iraqis who worked with Americans or belonged to rival religious sects or ethnic groups."[52]

---

[49] Pfiffner, 59.

[50] Brewer, 262.

[51] Brewer, 244.

[52] Brewer, 264.

3. Vietnam vs. Iraq

Public opinion was influential in the presidential policy during both war periods. However, the influence of the public did manifest itself in very different ways for Presidents Johnson and Bush. President Johnson responded to a decline in public approval by choosing not to seek re–election. President Bush, during his second term as President, was aware of the diminishing public approval of his handling of the war in Iraq. Prior to his resignation, in late 2006, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated, "the current strategy in Iraq was not working. He suggested that the administration should not "lose," but recast the way it talked about the U.S. mission."[53] In response, President Bush adjusted his approach to the Iraq War. This adjustment yielded the troop surge in 2007.

A change in presidential policy occurred within both conflicts. After the Tet Offensive and listening to Walter Cronkite's reports on Vietnam, President Johnson spoke to his Press Secretary, George Christian and said, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost the country."[54] Acknowledging this, 2.5 years after the "rally around the flag," President Johnson shifted his presidential policy towards Vietnam, by not running for re–election. Clearly showing public opinion does affect presidential policy. On the contrary, President Bush waited until late 2006 early 2007, with an approval for handling Iraq at 30 percent and an overall approval at 36 percent, coupled with the resignation of his Secretary of Defense and a staunch Democratic Congress, to shift his strategy in Iraq. This shift in strategy occurs four years after the "rally around the flag" effect diminished. These two Presidents during each of their conflicts responded differently. President Johnson reacted quicker in response to public opinion than President Bush, who was more inflexible in his policy regarding Iraq.

---

[53] Brewer, 270.

[54] Johanna Neuman, *Lights, Camera, War*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 179.

V. CONCLUSION

The data from the Gallup Polls and American National Election Studies show that the public's opinion is not as malleable as scholars, government officials, and politicians believe during prolonged military conflict. The question of fragility of the American public should not just be viewed as a singular opinion of approval or disapproval. After analyzing the data it appears that this question is two–pronged. In both wars, public support for the President began to taper off when the war did not appear to be going in the direction the American public desired. Yet, even with the disapproval for the way the President was handling the situation in Vietnam, or Iraq, public opinion still suggested that we stay and finish what we started. In some polls, the public was even for sending more troops into combat. This suggests that public opinion is not so malleable when it comes to standing behind the President and his policy. It further suggests that public opinion is not soft and will stand behind America, regardless of a perception of "winning" or "losing" of the war.

Public opinion and its affect on presidential policy, reflects clear distinctions between the two wars. President Johnson was aware of the growing national debt during the war and his inability to win the war in Vietnam; he decided to not seek re–election. Meanwhile, President Bush was re–elected in 2004 and he continued his "stay the course" policy until the last year of his Presidency. The changes in presidential policy, due to public opinion, become clear when analyzing the data along with Presidential action. President Johnson thought he lost American support and his response to this was to not seek re–election. "The Tet Offensive, the replacement of General Westmoreland, President Johnson's decision not to run again and his partial bombing halt, [and] the opening of preliminary peace talks,"[55] were all changes in his policy in response to the American's disapproval of his handling of the war. His ultimate response was to not seek re–election.

[55] Brewer, 57.

President Bush showed change in his policy in response to the declining approval of the American public. At the end of 2006, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld resigned. At this point Bush's approval rating for handling the situation in Iraq was at 30 percent and his overall approval rating was around 37 percent. With this type of disapproval and the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld, President Bush took action in a direction very different than what was seen in the previous two years. At the beginning of 2007, President Bush announced a troop surge in Iraq. Along with the surge in 2007, Americans saw the deadliest year for troops in Iraq. By mid-2007, the changes that President Bush made to his policy with the Iraq War yielded him an approval rating of only 28 percent, for both his handling of the situation in Iraq and his overall presidential approval.

Events happening domestically did not figure into the area of study. President Johnson was dealing with the civil rights movement and other national movements. President Bush faced an already existing war in Afghanistan and attempted to link the two wars together. These factors should be looked at in further research. Additionally, evaluating the role the media played, and plays, in prolonged conflict should be studied along with the relationship and influence the media provides for affecting presidential policy and public opinion. Future research may also include Afghanistan in this analysis of Vietnam and Iraq about the effect of public opinion with respect to prolonged conflicts and the apparent fragility of American support for war. An additional topic of research on Afghanistan could use the data studied in this thesis and by association determine whether or not the same commitment by the American public holds true in Afghanistan.

LIST OF REFERENCES

About.com "About.com: Middle East Issues." http://middleeast.about.com/od/iraq/a/me071209d.htm (accessed September 1, 2009).

Berkowitz, Dan, and Kennamer, J. David, and Pritchard, David. *Public Opinion, The Press, and Public Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992.

Brewer, Susan A. *Why America Fights*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc. 2009.

Erikson, Robert S, and McIver, John P., Wright, Gerald C. *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States*. New York: Cambridge University Press 1993.

Gallup Poll. "Decade Breakout 1960–1969." http://institution.gallup.com.libproxy.nps.edu/documents/decadebreakout1960.aspx (accessed August 20, 2009).

Gallup Poll. "Decade Breakout 2000-present." http://institution.gallup.com.libproxy.nps.edu/documents/decadebreakout.aspx (accessed August 20, 2009).

Larson, Eric V. *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996.

Mueller, John E. *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973.

Murphy, Walter, Tanenhaus, Joseph, and the Political Behavior Program of the University of Michigan. NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES, 1966: POST-ELECTION STUDY [dataset]. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor].

The National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org). THE 2002 NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY [dataset]. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor].

The National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org). THE 2004 NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY [dataset]. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor].

Neuman, Johanna. *Lights, Camera, War*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
Pfiffner, James P. *Intelligence and National Security Policymaking on Iraq: British and American perspectives*. College Station, TX: Manchester University Press, 2008.

Political Behavior Program, the Survey Center of the Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan. NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES, 1964: PRE-/POST-ELECTION STUDY [dataset]. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1999.

Political Behavior Program, the Survey Center of the Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan. NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES, 1968: PRE-/POST-ELECTION STUDY [dataset]. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1999.

Rosenhan, D. L. 1973. On Being Sane in Insane Places. *Science* 179: 250–58.

Stimson, James A. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Wikipedia. "Opinion Poll." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_poll (accessed September 23, 2009).

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2. Dudley Knox Library
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California

3. NETWARCOM/N1/N17
   Norfolk, Virginia

4. CDR Michael Herrera,
   Program Officer IWSE
   Monterey, California

5. D.C. Boger
   Chair, Department Operational and Information Sciences
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California