



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 30, 2013

CNN/ORC Survey: 82 Percent Want U.S. Out of Afghanistan

A [CNN/ORC International survey](#) released  on December 30 indicates that 82 percent of Americans are opposed to U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan, with only 17 percent responding that they still support the operation. The percentage who say they support the U.S. presence in the chaotic Asian nation is down from 52 percent in December 2008. During the 2008 survey, only 46 percent of respondents opposed our involvement in the conflict.

“Those numbers show the war in Afghanistan with far less support than other conflicts,” CNN Polling Director Keating Holland commented on the poll’s results. “Opposition to the Iraq war never got higher than 69 percent in CNN polling while U.S. troops were in that country, and while the Vietnam War was in progress, no more than six in 10 ever told Gallup’s interviewers that war was a mistake.”

Holland also noted the higher opposition to the war among those who identified themselves as political independents: “Independents have a much gloomier view of the war in Afghanistan than Republicans or Democrats. That may be because a Republican president started the war and a Democratic president has continued it, so there may be some residual support among people who identify with either party.”

CNN also reported that although the U.S. timetable calls for the withdrawal of nearly all American forces by the end of 2014, slightly more than one half of those polled would rather see U.S. troops withdrawn earlier than that deadline. Only a quarter say that the United States should still have troops in Afghanistan after that date.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops at the end of 2014 is by no means certain, however. Speaking at an event held at the Brookings Institution’s Falk Auditorium in Washington, D.C., on March 26, 2012, Gen. John Allen, the former commander of international forces in Afghanistan, said that the United States would retain a troop presence in Afghanistan sufficiently large to support Afghan forces after the withdrawal of international combat troops at the end of 2014.

While the percentage of Americans expressing opposition to U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan may be at an all-time high, an anti-war movement of the magnitude and intensity of that formed during the nearly-10-year war in Vietnam has never materialized. During the course of the long war in Vietnam, anti-war demonstrations regularly attracted tens of thousands of participants, with about 500,000 protesters marching in Washington, D.C. on November 15, 1969 and April 24, 1971. Public support for the war diminished the longer it dragged on, with Gallup registering 61 percent support in 1965, declining to a low of 28 percent support by 1971.

More than [2,300 Americans have died](#) in the 12-year conflict in Afghanistan, which began in October 2001 in response to the 9/11 attacks that year.

There are many parallels between the wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan. The Vietnam war was fought



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under the authority of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), while the war in Afghanistan is similarly a NATO operation. Both NATO and the now-defunct SEATO were formed under Articles 51-54 of the UN Charter as “regional arrangements.”

There is also a notable presence of Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) members among those overseeing the war in Afghanistan, including Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel; Secretary of State John Kerry; former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; former Secretary of State Colin Powell; former Defense Secretary (in both the Bush and Obama administrations) Robert Gates; Ambassador to Afghanistan James Cunningham; former Ambassador to Afghanistan (2011-2012) Ryan Crocker; former Ambassador to Afghanistan (2009-2011) Karl Eikenberry; former USCENTCOM Commander General David Petraeus; former Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal; and former Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke.

A similar situation existed during the Vietnam war, with such influential CFR players as President John Kennedy, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge, and Generals Lyman Lemnitzer, Maxwell Taylor, William Westmoreland, and Andrew Goodpaster. The CFR has long advocated an “interventionist” U.S. foreign policy.

Starting with the military action in Korea beginning in 1950, the United States has invested billions of dollars and thousands of lives in undeclared wars. Most of these, except for those fought against regimes with greatly inferior armies, such as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, have ended in stalemates, and even Iraq has yet to form a stable government that ensures freedom for all its citizens. In the case of Vietnam, our former adversaries, the communist North Vietnamese, overran the country immediately upon our withdrawal.

It is apparent that our foreign policy of interventionism, besides being responsible for tens of thousands of U.S. battle deaths, rarely accomplishes its stated objectives.

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gives the U.S. Congress the power to declare war. The historic results of having engaged in declared versus undeclared wars validates the wisdom of our Founders who authored the Constitution. The last time Congress passed a declaration of war was on June 5, 1942, against Axis partners Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania during World War II.

Perhaps not coincidentally, World War II was the last decisive major military victory our country has won.

Photo of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan

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