

Public Opinion on Global Issues

Chapter 12b: U.S. Opinion on Transnational Threats: Weapons of
Mass Destruction

www.cfr.org/public_opinion

July 16, 2012

CHAPTER 12B: U.S. OPINION ON COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL THREATS: PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Concerns about Nuclear Proliferation

A large majority of Americans are concerned about the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers and believe that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is an important foreign policy goal for the United States.

Overwhelmingly, Americans perceive nuclear proliferation as a critical threat. According to a 2010 Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) poll, more than two-thirds of U.S. respondents (69 percent) believe the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers is a critical threat, compared to 27 percent who believe it is important but not critical, and only 3 percent who believe it is not important. This level of concern was essentially the same as is in the 2006 CCGA poll. It was also higher than the average of nine other countries polled in 2006 by WPO and CCGA: on average 58 percent of respondents in these countries regarded the possible acquisition of nuclear weapons by unfriendly countries as a critical threat, 28 percent as important but not critical, and 8 percent as unimportant.¹

A large majority of U.S. respondents (73 percent) said that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is a very important foreign policy goal, with another 24 percent saying that it is an important goal, and just 2 percent saying it is not an important goal (CCGA 2010). When previously asked in the 2006 international poll, responses were virtually the same. This U.S. level of concern is a bit higher than the average across eight countries polled in 2006: 63 percent of international respondents indicated that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is a very important goal, 25 percent that it is an important goal, and 7 percent that it is unimportant.²

Goal of Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

A large majority of Americans favor an international agreement to eliminate all nuclear weapons, even when this would include an intrusive international inspection regime.

In 2011 Americans were asked by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) about the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, preceded by arguments for and against making elimination a goal. The argument against it cast doubt on the efficacy of verification: “Even if we have a system for verifying that nations are complying, there will always be some evil leaders who will find a way to cheat. We should not pursue the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.” Sixty-three percent found this convincing (18 percent very convincing); 34 percent found it unconvincing (11 percent very).³ The argument supporting the goal of elimination focused on the risk of nuclear use: “Given the potential for evil, the risk is too great that someday nuclear weapons be used, creating untold destruction. We should work to reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons through an international agreement with an advanced monitoring system.” Seventy-five percent found this convincing (24% very convincing); 24 percent found this unconvincing (8% very).⁴ Having been exposed to both pro and con arguments respondents were asked about whether they supported “an international agreement for eliminating nuclear weapons according to a timetable, with international monitoring.” Sixty-nine percent were in favor and 28 percent opposed.⁵

In a 2008 WPO poll, respondents in twenty-one nations, including the United States, were similarly asked about the possibility of an agreement for eliminating nuclear weapons, in which all nuclear-armed countries would be required to disarm according to a timetable and all other states would be prohibited from developing nuclear weapons. The question specified that all countries, including the country of the respondent, would be monitored. A majority of Americans (77 percent) favored the idea of such an agreement (39 percent strongly), while only 20 percent were opposed (7 percent strongly). On average across all twenty-one nations polled, 76 percent favored the idea of an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons (50 percent strongly) while 16 percent were opposed (7 percent strongly).⁶

A 2011 PIPA poll of Americans found a majority in favor of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, in a question that offered a range of four positions on U.S. nuclear weapons policy. Fifty-five percent thought that either “Our goal should be to gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons through an international agreement, while developing effective systems for verifying all countries are eliminating theirs, too” (47 percent, up from 38 percent in 2007⁷), or thought the United States should proceed to eliminate its arsenal unilaterally if necessary, because nuclear weapons are morally wrong (8 percent). Another 30 percent supported reducing the U.S. arsenal through verifiable agreements without taking on the goal of elimination. Only 11 percent disagreed with reductions, saying “Nuclear weapons give the U.S. a uniquely powerful position in the world. It is not in the interest of the U.S. to participate in treaties that would reduce or eliminate its nuclear arsenal.” Support for the goal of elimination in this question was ten points higher in 2011 than when it was asked in 2007.⁸

In 2005, Pew also found that 70 percent of Americans favor the United States “signing a treaty with other nations to reduce and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons, including our own.”⁹ Interestingly, support was a little lower than in the 2008 WPO poll discussed above, which mentioned an international inspections regime.

Use of Force by the United Nations to Prevent Nuclear Proliferation

Americans favor the UN Security Council having the power to authorize the use of military force to prevent a country from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Though the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) is something that states enter into voluntarily and from which they have the right to withdraw, Americans favor the UN Security Council having the power to authorize the use of military force to prevent a country from acquiring nuclear weapons. A large majority of Americans (62 percent) favored giving the UN Security Council this authority in a 2006 CCGA poll (33 percent were opposed). This was slightly higher than the average of the seventeen nations polled, where 59 percent of respondents favored the Security Council having such a right and 31 percent were opposed (WPO/CCGA 2006-08).¹⁰

General Attitudes Regarding Binding International Agreements on Nuclear Weapons

Almost all Americans begin with a generally positive outlook on the idea of international agreements to govern nuclear issues. In 2011 WPO asked Americans a series of questions about international agreements taken broadly as an approach to dealing with global problems. They were told that “there is some discussion about whether or not it is a good idea for nations to work together to establish legally binding agreements, such as treaties, to address certain international problems.” They were then offered a series of problem areas, three of them concerning nuclear weapons. In each of the nuclear cases, nine in ten thought “binding international agreements” were a good idea, specifically when geared toward: “preventing the spread of nuclear weapons (92 percent),¹¹ “reducing the number of nuclear weapons (90 percent),¹² and “reducing the risk of nuclear war” (92 percent).¹³

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

An overwhelming majority of Americans support U.S. participation in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) seeks to reduce the danger of nuclear proliferation by preventing nonnuclear nations from developing nuclear weapons and hindering nuclear nations from improving them. The idea of such a treaty, which the United States has not ratified, enjoys strong U.S. public support. When asked in a 2010 CCGA poll, 82 percent of Americans said the United States should participate in a treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapon test explosions worldwide. In 2006, support for U.S. participation was slightly higher (86 percent). Among all of the four countries asked in the earlier poll, the average was a bit lower, with 76 percent saying their country should participate in such a treaty and 18 percent saying their country should not participate.¹⁴

Proposed Agreement to Lower the Number of Nuclear Weapons On High Alert

There is strong majority support among Americans for negotiating an agreement with other nuclear powers that would reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert.

Four in five Americans are supportive of the idea of negotiations to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world that are on trigger alert and hence more prone to fire in an accidental war situation. Respondents in a 2011 WPO poll were told that “some people have proposed that the U.S. and the other nuclear powers could lower the risk of accidental nuclear war by having a verifiable agreement to lower the number of nuclear weapons each country has on high alert—that is, ready to fire on very short notice. Others oppose this idea, saying it is too difficult to make sure that the other countries would not cheat.” Eighty-two percent said the U.S. should “work with other nuclear powers to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert.”¹⁵ This is exactly the percentage who took this position in 2004¹⁶ (in 2007, 79 percent).¹⁷

Multilateral Control of Nuclear Fuel Production

There is substantial U.S. public support for prohibiting some countries from developing nuclear fuel out of concern that they will use it to develop nuclear weapons. Americans would also favor an international regime under the United Nations that would stop new countries from beginning production of nuclear fuel and instead supply them with the fuel they need for energy production. Americans even favor giving the UN Security Council the right to authorize military force to prevent a country from developing nuclear fuel that could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

The NPT puts limits on the development of nuclear weapons, but does not limit the production of nuclear fuel—provided that nations only do so to produce nuclear energy and submit to monitoring from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). To prevent diversion into weapons programs, there have been calls for greater international regulation of nuclear fuel production. Several polls show strong U.S. support for greater control over the production of nuclear fuel. CCGA asked the following question in 2006: “In the past, the international community has agreed that all countries have the right to produce nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes. Now it has been proposed that certain countries not be allowed to develop nuclear fuel out of concern they will use it to develop nuclear weapons. Do you think this proposal is a good idea or a bad idea?”

A large majority of U.S. respondents (66 percent) said the proposal is a good idea, while 31 percent said it is a bad idea. This was somewhat higher than the average of the thirteen countries that participated in the poll: 56 percent of respondents in these nations said the proposal is a good idea and 29 percent said it is a bad idea (WPO/CCGA 2006-07).¹⁸

A British Broadcasting Company (BBC)/GlobeScan/Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) poll in 2006 asked respondents to choose between two arguments about new countries developing nuclear fuel: “All countries should be free to produce nuclear fuel under United Nations oversight, because they have the right to have nuclear energy and should not have to depend on other countries” OR “Because nuclear fuel can be developed for use in nuclear weapons, the United Nations should try to stop new countries from producing nuclear fuel, but should provide them with the fuel they need.”

A majority of Americans (56 percent) endorsed the statement that the United Nations should try to stop countries from producing nuclear fuel, while 29 percent said that all countries should have a right to produce fuel. U.S. support for UN action to prevent new countries from developing nuclear fuel was slightly higher than the average (52 percent) of twenty-five countries polled. Thirty-three percent of respondents in these nations said that all countries should have a right to produce fuel.¹⁹

Some of the strongest U.S. public support for multilateral control of the production of nuclear fuel emerged in a 2006 CCGA poll that asked whether the UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of force to stop a country that did not have nuclear weapons from producing nuclear fuel that could be used to produce such weapons. Fifty-seven percent of Americans supported granting the UN Security Council such authority, with 39 percent opposed. This is almost exactly the same as the average of sixteen countries polled (56 percent to 32 percent) (WPO/CCGA 2006-08).²⁰

In 2010, CCGA also asked about an idea, similar to one proposed by then-IAEA Director Mohamed ElBaradei, that called for “having a UN agency control access to all nuclear fuel in the world to ensure that none is used for weapons production.” Sixty-four percent of Americans favored the idea.²¹ In 2008 CCGA found the same level of support for the idea.²²

Dealing with Iran’s Nuclear Program

A large majority of Americans believe that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons, rather than limiting itself to energy production, and there is substantial concern over this. There is widespread pessimism that a nuclear armed Iran would be deterred by the threat of retaliation. Nonetheless, presented a menu of options, few endorse a military option while majorities favor either diplomatic options or sanctions. Majorities express pessimism about the likely effectiveness of a military strike. Diplomatic efforts to engage Iran are supported by majorities. However, questions that present a choice between a military option and inaction, imply that a military strike would be effective in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon (a controversial assumption), or pose a hypothetical scenario in which Iran is clearly on the verge of acquiring a nuclear weapon, elicit support for military action among about half of respondents or modest majorities. Americans support the idea of allowing Iran to produce nuclear fuel if it accepts intrusive UN inspections. Asked which institution would best handle the issue of Iranian nuclear weapons, Americans are divided, though a plurality chooses the United Nations.

In March 2012 a PIPA/ Sadat Chair poll asked Americans about Iran’s intent in its nuclear program. Three options were offered including the position endorsed by the U.S. intelligence community that “Iran is developing some of the technical ability necessary to produce nuclear weapons, but has not decided whether to produce them.” However this option was only endorsed by 30 percent. A majority of 58 percent said “Iran has decided to produce nuclear weapons and is actively working to do so.” Only 6 percent thought Iran is “producing nuclear fuel strictly for its energy needs.”²³ Further, in the same poll, almost all respondents (89 percent) thought it was very (49 percent) or somewhat (40 percent) likely that Iran will eventually develop nuclear weapons.²⁴

In October 2009 CNN found 88 percent of Americans believed that Iran was attempting to develop nuclear weapons. This marked a significant increase from a 2007 CNN finding in which 61 percent believed Iran was trying to develop nuclear weapons. (The 2007 finding came shortly after a National Intelligence Estimate report saying that Iran had abandoned its nuclear weapons program).²⁵

International polling conducted in 2006 found that American perceptions that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons were higher than in other countries. BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA surveyed twenty-five countries, including the United States, on whether “Iran is producing nuclear fuel strictly for its energy needs or ... is also trying to develop nuclear weapons.” An overwhelming majority of U.S. respondents (83 percent) believed Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons, while only 5 percent believed that it was producing nuclear fuel solely for its energy needs. Among the 25 countries polled on average 60 percent of respondents believed Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons and 17 percent that it was producing nuclear fuel strictly for its energy needs.²⁶

Level of Concern

Americans and Europeans both express a high level of concern about the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. Polled by the German Marshall Fund in 2011, 76 percent of Americans expressed concern (56 percent very concerned). In the European average, 75 percent of respondents were concerned (44 percent very).²⁷ A 2010, Fox News poll asked [Americans?] “How concerned are you about Iran getting a nuclear bomb?” Phrased this way, 78% were concerned (38% extremely concerned).²⁸

A November 2011 Quinnipiac poll of Americans asked a question premised on the view, contrary to the views of the U.S. intelligence community, that Iran is seeking to develop a nuclear weapon by asking about “Iran’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons.” In this case concern was substantially higher. Eighty-eight percent called it a “serious threat to US national security” (55 percent very).²⁹

Other polls have simply asked about Iran's nuclear program. When asked by CCGA in 2010, 68% of Americans saw Iran's nuclear program as a critical threat "to the vital interest of the United States" in the next ten years, and 27% saw it as important but not critical. Only 4% said Iran's nuclear program was not an important threat.³⁰ In 2009 a Pew poll found that a large majority (69 percent) of Americans believed that Iran's nuclear program poses "a major threat," and Gallup found a modest majority (54 percent) saying they were very concerned about it (moderately concerned, 29 percent).³¹

Americans show higher levels of concern than publics in other countries, though concern is quite high globally. The 2006 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll asked about the level of concern "if Iran were to develop nuclear weapons." An overwhelming 92 percent of U.S. respondents said they would be concerned (72 percent very concerned), while just 7 percent said they would not be concerned. Comparable global averages were 72 percent and 20 percent, respectively.³²

A 2006 German Marshall Fund (GMF) poll found that the prospect of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons was considered an extremely important threat by three-quarters of Americans. Nineteen percent called it an important threat, and 5 percent said it was not an important threat at all. This indicates a greater level of concern than the average of respondents polled in Europe, where 53 percent called it an extremely important threat, 27 percent called it an important threat, and 10 percent said it was not a threat.³³

The high level of concern about the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons appears to be related to pessimistic assumptions about how Iran would behave with a nuclear weapon. Americans assume that a nuclear-armed Iran would not make rational calculations as a nuclear actor and fit its behavior into a logic of deterrence. In a March 2012 Sadat Chair/PIPA question, respondents were asked to "suppose Iran develops nuclear weapons" and to say which of two alternatives they thought more likely to occur. Three in five (62%) chose, "Iran would be likely to use them against Israel because it is so hostile toward Israel," while only 32 percent chose, "Iran would be deterred from striking Israel for fear of being destroyed in a nuclear retaliatory strike."³⁴ (It should be noted that this poll did not measure how many respondents were aware that Israel has nuclear weapons.)

A 2008 GMF poll also found a majority of Americans convinced that Iran would actually use nuclear weapons—in higher percentages than among Europeans. If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons 75 percent of Americans believed Iran would attack other countries in the region (58 percent of Europeans held this view); and 66 percent believed Iran would threaten Europe with nuclear weapons (a view held by 54 percent of Europeans) Fifty-two percent said it was unlikely that would only use nuclear weapons for defensive purposes, whereas more 40 percent of Europeans took this position. Eighty-three percent of Americans also thought it was at least somewhat likely that Iran would supply nuclear weapons to terrorists (compared to 66 percent of Europeans).³⁵

Americans are also pessimistic about the effect of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon on the potential for a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Eighty-three percent of Americans believed that with a nuclear-armed Iran, other Middle Eastern countries would likely decide to pursue nuclear weapons (a view held by 68 percent of Europeans);

What Action to Take

Presented a menu of options, most Americans want to put international pressure on Iran to stop it from producing nuclear fuel, while few endorse the option of military force.

In 2011 GMF presented respondents with five policy options for dealing with Iran's nuclear program, not mutually exclusive, and asked which one they thought was best. Imposing economic sanctions was the most commonly chosen option—at 33 percent. Twenty-eight percent chose more accommodating options—either to offer economic incentives for Iran to drop the program (20%) or to simply accept that Iran may develop nuclear weapons (8%). Twenty-six percent chose approaches that would be more threatening to Iran's regime—either to provide support to opponents of the current government (13%) or to take military action (13%). In the European average, the most commonly chosen option was to offer economic incentives (32%), with imposing sanctions a close second (28%).³⁶

A 2010 CCGA poll showed similar views. When asked what the UN Security Council should do if Iran continues to enrich uranium and presented four options, only 21 percent of Americans chose the approach of authorizing “a military strike against Iran’s nuclear energy facilities.” The most popular approach (endorsed by 45 percent) was to impose economic sanctions, followed by simply continuing diplomatic efforts (26 percent). Just 4 percent favored applying no pressure. Responses were virtually the same when CCGA asked the question previously in 2008.³⁷

In an international poll conducted in December 2007, with the same four response options, Americans’ support for military action was similarly low. The BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll asked about actions the UN Security Council should take if Iran continues to develop nuclear fuel and offered four options. Among Americans, only 15 percent favored authorizing military strikes, while the largest number favored economic sanctions (45 percent) and 35 percent favored softer approaches (31 percent diplomacy, 4 percent no pressure). In contrast, on average among the twenty-six countries polled, 56 percent favored softer approaches (42 percent use only diplomatic efforts, 14 percent not pressure Iran) and just 33 percent supported “tougher measures” (26 percent impose economic sanctions, 8 percent authorize military strikes).³⁸

A 2008 GMF poll that did not offer a military strike as an option found Americans were divided between those in favor of increasing pressure while maintaining the option of using military force (49 percent), and those in support of taking a range of milder approaches, including: accepting that Iran may develop nuclear weapons (6 percent); maintaining the level of diplomatic pressure on Iran (13 percent); and increasing diplomatic pressure while ruling out use of military force (27 percent). On average among Europeans, only 21 percent supported increasing pressure while keeping force as an option, whereas 47 percent supported increasing diplomatic pressure but ruling out military force. Sixteen percent of Europeans supported maintaining the present level of diplomatic pressure and 6 percent supported accepting that Iran may develop nuclear weapons.³⁹

In 2007, Gallup initially asked what the United States “should do to get Iran to shut down its nuclear program,” providing two options: “Take military action” and “Rely on economic/diplomatic efforts.” Only 18 percent of Americans opted for military action, while 73 percent favored relying on economic and diplomatic efforts. These 73 percent were then asked, “Suppose U.S. economic and diplomatic efforts do not work ... [should the United States] take military action?” Thirty-four percent of this group (25 percent of the full sample) said the United States should then take military action while 55 percent still rejected the idea of military action.⁴⁰

Consistent with this emphasis on diplomatic approaches, majorities of Americans support diplomatic engagement with Iran. In 2010 CCGA found that 62 percent thought “U.S. leaders should ... be ready to meet and talk with leaders of Iran,”⁴¹ similar to the 65 percent level in 2008.⁴² Sixty-two percent said in November 2008 that President-elect Obama should “personally negotiate with the leaders of Iran to limit their nuclear program” (Quinnipiac University 2008).⁴³ In a different poll in 2008, a more modest majority (53 percent) said that the United States should “establish diplomatic relations with Iran while Iran has a nuclear program” (CBS/*New York Times* 2009).⁴⁴ However, CCGA in 2010 found this willingness had eroded somewhat: 54 percent were opposed to diplomatic relations with Iran, with 42 percent in favor.⁴⁵

In a November 2011 CBS poll question that named Iran but did not evoke the nuclear issue directly, Americans were asked: “Which comes closer to your opinion--Iran is a threat to the United States that requires military action now, Iran is a threat that can be contained with diplomacy now, or Iran is not a threat to the United States as this time?” Only 15 percent thought Iran was a threat requiring military action now; 55 percent saw it as a threat that can be contained via diplomacy now, and another 17 percent said it is not a threat at this time.⁴⁶

Resistance to military options may well arise from pessimism about its likely effects. CCGA in 2010 asked Americans to consider the possible outcomes of a military strike. Eight in ten (80 percent) believed that Iran’s nuclear program would be slowed but not stopped, and three quarters (76 percent) did not believe strikes would cause Iran to give up its nuclear program. Large majorities believed that Iranians would rally around their government (74 percent) and that Muslim people worldwide would become more hostile toward the United States (82 percent). Similarly large numbers believed that Iran would retaliate against U.S. targets in neighboring states (82 percent) and that retaliatory attacks against the

United States itself would be likely (81 percent). The only positive effect that a modest majority (52%) foresaw was that other countries in the region would likely be deterred from developing their own nuclear weapons.⁴⁷

Several polls have found support for military strikes from half or more US respondents. In all cases these questions have one or more of the following features: the military option is the only option presented, so that the alternative is not associated with any form of effort to address the problem; the military action is presented as being effective in achieving the desired end of stopping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons; or it is placed in a hypothetical context in which it becomes somehow established that diplomatic efforts have conclusively failed to stop Iran from building a nuclear weapon. These findings have limited applicability in a policy context. First, the military option is never considered in isolation from other alternatives. Second, the notion that a military strike would prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is doubtful unless it were to be accompanied by occupation of the country; while it would slow Iran's program, it would not prevent it from proceeding in a facility protected from bombing attacks. Third, a hypothetical scenario in which it established that diplomatic efforts have conclusively failed to stop Iran from building a nuclear weapon are not entirely plausible as it is not clear how this would occur, short of Iran actually acquiring nuclear weapons, which is not specified in the questions. Finally, in many of the cases it is not specified whether the military action would be unilateral or multilateral, a factor that has shown to have a strong effect on support.

A question that presented a military option and no other option and implied that a strike would be effective elicited support from about half of respondents. CBS/NY Times asked in March 2012, "Would you support or oppose the United States taking military action against Iran in order to prevent it from developing a nuclear weapons program?" 51 percent said they supported it, while 36 percent were opposed.

In the 2011 GMF poll those who initially chose an option other than military force or accepting a nuclear-armed Iran (81 percent of the sample) were asked to consider a hypothetical scenario, "Now imagine that all of these non-military options have been tried and the only option left to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is the use of military force." Then offered two options, 36 percent of the sub-sample supported taking military action and 28 percent opted to "simply accept that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons." Combined with the original 13 percent who favored military action this equals 49 percent favoring military action.⁴⁸

An NBC/Wall Street Journal poll told respondents to assume that Iran "is close to developing a nuclear weapon," and only offered the option of taking military action. In 2008 41 percent favored military action, rising to 54 percent in December 2011.⁴⁹

CCGA in 2010 first asked respondents to consider the possible outcomes of a military strike and then posed a hypothetical scenario in which diplomatic efforts and economic sanctions failed to stop or slow down Iran's nuclear program. In this context 47 percent favored a strike and 49 percent were opposed.⁵⁰

Two other polls had the additional complexity of making the implicit assertion that Iran already has a nuclear weapons program, not just a nuclear energy program. This is a point of controversy. As discussed above, U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program though it is developing capacities that could be applied to such a program. This is also the position of a substantial number of Americans when polled (see above).

A 2012 Pew poll of the United States and 20 other countries asked respondents which would be more important and offered two options: to "prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, even if it means taking military action" (implying that Iran is developing nuclear weapons) or "avoiding a military conflict with Iran, even if it means they may develop nuclear weapons" (implying that the failure to take military action means accepting Iran having a nuclear weapon as no other means of taking action was offered). Fifty-nine percent (of the whole sample) took the first position (down from 61% in 2009) and 30 percent the second (up six points).⁵¹ (Note: There was some confusion in the press reporting on this question as Pew presented the percentage of a subsample who were asked this question and some mistook this for the whole sample.)

However this should not be interpreted as signifying support for military action over diplomatic methods. In the same poll when Pew asked those who had said they opposed Iran acquiring nuclear weapons whether they favored “tougher international economic sanctions on Iran to try to stop it from developing nuclear weapons,” 75 percent (of the whole sample) said they did favor it. This highlights how support for an option presented in isolation should not be read as absolute support but as relative to the other options posed in the question, which in some cases is implicitly no action. The only way to determine whether military action or intensified sanctions are preferred is to compare them in the same question.⁵²

Another question that asserted that Iran is developing nuclear weapons was a November 2011 Quinnipiac poll. It began by asking simply “Do you think the U.S. should take military action to prevent Iran’s development of a nuclear weapon, or not” (a wording which also implies military action would result in prevention). Thirty-six percent said the U.S. should take military action, while a 55 percent majority said it should not. This 55 percent were then posed a hypothetical context, asking whether the United States should take military action “if the economic sanctions are unable to stop Iran’s nuclear weapons program.” A further 14 percent of the full sample said it would change its view in this case, meaning that, combined with the 36 percent who supported it initially, half (50 percent) would support military action under some conditions.⁵³

Scenario: Israel Preparing to Attack Iran’s Nuclear Facilities

Beginning in 2011, there was increasing discussion in Israeli government circles, and in the United States, of the prospect that Israel might attempt an airstrike against Iran’s nuclear facilities along the lines of the 1980 airstrike that destroyed the Osirak reactor in Iraq. There is little sentiment in the U.S. public in favor of such a move. In March 2012 a Sadat Chair/PIPA poll asked whether Americans preferred “Israel to conduct a military strike against Iran’s nuclear program before it makes further progress,” or whether “it is better for to wait for the newly-increased sanctions against Iran to take effect and that the U.S. and other major powers should continue pursuing negotiations with Iran.” Only 24 percent favored Israel conducting such a strike, while 69 percent preferred the United States and other powers to keep pursuing negotiations.⁵⁴

The same poll asked a series of questions on what the U.S. government’s stance should be regarding the possibility that Israel would undertake such a strike. First, respondents separately evaluated how convincing they found three arguments--one that the United States should discourage Israel, another that the United States should take a neutral stance, and a third that the United States should encourage Israel. Finally they were asked to come to a conclusion.

The argument for discouraging Israel from attacking was found convincing by the greatest number. It said that “there are huge risks to U.S. national interests, since Iran may attack U.S. assets in retaliation, pulling the U.S. into a war”--and that such attacks would not be ultimately successful, since “U.S. military leaders say the most that could be achieved would be to slow down Iran’s nuclear program a bit and probably just lead them to rebuild it underground.” A large majority (71 percent) found this argument convincing (unconvincing, 24 percent).⁵⁵

Second most popular was the argument for neutrality, which said that while “Israel has a right to take actions it sees as necessary for its own defense,” “the U.S. should think about its own interests and make a clear statement distancing itself from whatever Israel may choose to do, to reduce the chance that Iran will retaliate against U.S. targets.” A modest majority of 52 percent found this argument convincing, while 45 percent found it unconvincing.⁵⁶

The least convincing argument was the one that supported the United States encouraging Israel to attack. “Clearly Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons,” it stated, “and if Israel will take the heat for stopping or at least slowing down the program, all the better for the U.S.” Only 38 percent found this argument convincing, while 57 percent found it unconvincing.⁵⁷

In a final question, respondents were offered the three options again and asked to choose which the United States should follow. Fewer than one in five (14 percent) thought the United States should “encourage Israel to attack Iran’s nuclear

program.” The largest number (46 percent) said that the United States should take a neutral stance. Thirty-four percent said that the United States should discourage Israel from attacking (34 percent).⁵⁸ As just discussed, these two stances’ arguments were both found convincing by majorities.

Making a Deal

A December 2007 BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll asked, "If Iran were to allow UN inspectors permanent and full access throughout Iran to make sure it is not developing nuclear weapons, do you think Iran should or should not be allowed to produce nuclear fuel for producing electricity?" A majority of respondents in the United States (55 percent) favored granting Iran permission to produce nuclear fuel for energy (while 38 percent were opposed). Interestingly, this was somewhat higher than the average of 47 percent across all twenty-six countries polled who favored the idea (36 percent were opposed).⁵⁹

CCGA asked this same question in 2010 and 52 percent of U.S. respondents favored the idea, while 45 percent were opposed.⁶⁰

This same bargain has been proposed to respondents in more detailed questions as well. On each occasion supporters have outnumbered opponents, though the numbers in support have diminished somewhat over the years. In a November 2006 PIPA poll the bargain was explained in this way:

Iran should be able to enrich uranium, but only on two conditions:

- 1) Enrichment must be limited to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy, while enrichment to higher levels needed for nuclear weapons would be forbidden.
- 2) Iran must fully cooperate with the U.N. inspectors, allowing full access to make inspections throughout the country, to make certain Iran is limiting its uranium enrichment to low levels.

Respondents also received a pro and a con argument as part of the question. On the positive side, it was argued that “if Iran were to try to cheat, it would take them years to enrich uranium to the higher levels necessary for nuclear weapons, and with full access for U.N. inspectors they would be caught.” On the negative side, it was argued that “Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at all, because doing so would give them technical experience that would put them in a strong position if they later decide to violate the agreement and build nuclear weapons.”

After considering all this, 55 percent said making such an agreement was a good idea, while 38 percent saw it as a bad idea.⁶¹ This 55 percent majority support is identical to the level found a year later in the BBC/GlobeScan/PIPA poll, cited above.

Most recently (March 2012)—in the midst of high international tension and domestic debate over a possible Israeli plan to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities—PIPA presented fuller arguments about the same bargain, and asked respondents to rate each argument.

The argument favoring such an agreement said: “Sanctions and threats haven’t worked to stop Iranians from enriching. And bombing their program would just lead them to rebuild it underground, as well as risking major war. The best hope is to hold Iran to its word by having inspectors free to check anything suspicious. We will then be able to spot any moves toward building a bomb and respond in time.” Sixty-six percent found this argument convincing, while 26 percent found it unconvincing.⁶²

The argument opposing such an agreement went: “Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at all, because if they do they will gain technical expertise that would make them more capable if they later decide to violate the agreement and develop nuclear weapons. We should continue to use economic sanctions and the threat of possible air strikes to try to get Iran to stop all enrichment.” This argument was also found convincing by a majority—55 percent—though by a lesser margin than for those who found the argument in favor of the agreement, while 39 percent found it unconvincing.⁶³

Finally, asked then whether such an agreement would be a good or a bad idea, a 50 percent plurality said it was a good idea, while 43 percent called it a bad idea.⁶⁴

Who Best to Handle Iran?

Three quarters of Americans prefer for the United States to try to primarily act through the UN Security Council in dealing with the Iran nuclear issue—and this was true when tensions were high over Israel’s consideration of airstrikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities. A March 2012 poll by the Sadat Chair, University of Maryland/PIPA asked: “In dealing with the problem of Iran’s nuclear program, do you think that the U.S. should primarily act by itself, or try to primarily act through the U.N. Security Council?” Seventy-four percent said the United States should try to primarily act through the Security Council; 20 percent said it should primarily act by itself.⁶⁵

In 2006, GMF asked who could best handle the issue of Iranian nuclear weapons, offering respondents a larger range of options. A plurality of Americans (36 percent) said the United Nations was the best to handle the issue, 22 percent said the United States, 18 percent said the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and 13 percent said the European Union. Comparatively, in Europe, an average of 43 percent supported the United Nations handling the issue, 19 percent supported the European Union, 15 percent supported NATO, and 8 percent favored the United States.⁶⁶

When Americans are not offered the option of the United Nations, a slight majority prefers the European Union taking the lead on Iran rather than the United States. In 2006, Pew asked “Who should take the lead in dealing with Iran’s nuclear program—the United States or countries in the European Union?” Fifty-one percent said the European Union, while 30 percent said the United States.⁶⁷

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher dedicated to being a resource for its members, government officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries. Founded in 1921, CFR carries out its mission by maintaining a diverse membership, with special programs to promote interest and develop expertise in the next generation of foreign policy leaders; convening meetings at its headquarters in New York and in Washington, DC, and other cities where senior government officials, members of Congress, global leaders, and prominent thinkers come together with CFR members to discuss and debate major international issues; supporting a Studies Program that fosters independent research, enabling CFR scholars to produce articles, reports, and books and hold roundtables that analyze foreign policy issues and make concrete policy recommendations; publishing *Foreign Affairs*, the preeminent journal on international affairs and U.S. foreign policy; sponsoring Independent Task Forces that produce reports with both findings and policy prescriptions on the most important foreign policy topics; and providing up-to-date information and analysis about world events and American foreign policy on its website, CFR.org.

The Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional position on policy issues and has no affiliation with the U.S. government. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained in its publications are the sole responsibility of the author or authors.

For further information about CFR or this paper, please write to the Council on Foreign Relations, 58 East 68th Street, New York, NY 10065, or call the Director of Communications at 212.434.9400. Visit CFR’s website, www.cfr.org.

¹ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.

The possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers

	Critical	Important but not critical	Not important	Not sure/ Decline
1994	72	21	3	4
1998	75	18	3	4
2002	85	12	2	1
2004	66	26	5	3
2004	64	31	3	2
2006	69	27	3	1
2008	67	30	3	0
2010	69	27	3	1

WorldPublicOpinion.org/Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2006

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of [survey country] in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.

The possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers

	Critical	Important but not critical	Not important	Not sure/ Decline
United States	69	27	3	1
Armenia	62	21	7	10
Australia	68	25	6	1
China	27	43	17	12

India	54	27	12	7
Israel	72	17	7	4
Mexico	75	17	4	3
South Korea	50	40	9	0
Ukraine	45	31	7	17

² **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one please select whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all?

Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not sure/ Decline
1990	84	12	2	2
1994	82	14	2	2
1998	82	14	1	3
2002	86	12	2	1
2004	73	23	2	2
2006	74	22	2	2
2008	73	25	2	1
2010	73	24	2	1

WorldPublicOpinion.org/Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2006

Below is a list of possible foreign policy goals that [survey country] might have. For each one please select whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of [survey country], a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all?

Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not sure/ Decline
United States	74	22	2	2
Armenia	58	24	12	6
Australia	82	14	4	0
China	52	33	7	8
India	56	25	9	10
Mexico	65	23	8	3
South Korea	56	38	6	1
Thailand	57	20	7	17

³ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

Even if we have a system for verifying that nations are complying, there will always be some evil leaders who will find a way to cheat. We should not pursue the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

18% Very convincing

45	Somewhat convincing
23	Somewhat unconvincing
11	Very unconvincing
2	Don't know/Refused

⁴ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

Given the potential for evil, the risk is too great that someday nuclear weapons will be used, creating untold destruction. We should work to reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons through an international agreement with an advanced monitoring system.

23%	Very convincing
51	Somewhat convincing
16	Somewhat unconvincing
7	Very unconvincing
2	Don't know/Refused

⁵ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

So now would you favor or oppose an international agreement for eliminating nuclear weapons according to a timetable, with international monitoring?

69%	Favor
28	Oppose
3	Don't know/Refused

⁶ **WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008**

I would like you to consider a possible international agreement for eliminating all nuclear weapons. All countries with nuclear weapons would be required to eliminate them according to a timetable. All other countries would be required not to develop them. All countries, including [country], would be monitored to make sure they are following the agreement. Would you favor or oppose such an agreement?

	Strongly favor	Somewhat favor	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	DK / NS
Argentina	85	8	2	2	3
Mexico	70	17	7	3	3
United States	39	38	13	7	2
France	58	28	7	5	3
Britain	55	26	9	8	2
Russia	38	31	8	6	16
Ukraine	53	27	5	2	14
Azerbaijan	48	22	8	14	8
Egypt	39	44	7	10	0
Iran	50	18	8	5	19
Israel	42	25	13	12	8
Pakistan	20	26	21	20	13
Palestinian Territories	33	37	14	8	9
Turkey	55	10	5	5	24
Kenya	68	28	2	1	1
Nigeria	55	31	8	4	2
China	60	23	9	5	3
India	31	31	11	9	18

Indonesia	60	21	6	5	9
South Korea	53	33	11	4	1
Thailand	45	22	4	4	25
Average	50	26	9	7	9

⁷ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2007**

Which position on nuclear weapons is closest to yours?

- 7% Nuclear weapons are morally wrong, and the US should proceed to eliminate its arsenal whether or not others follow our lead
- 38 Our goal should be to gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons through an international agreement, while developing effective systems for verifying all countries are eliminating theirs, too
- 33 We should do our best to reduce the number of nuclear weapons through verifiable international agreements, but it should not be our goal to eliminate them entirely
- 19 Nuclear weapons give the US a uniquely powerful position in the world. It is not in the interest of the US to participate in treaties that would reduce or eliminate its nuclear arsenal
- 2 Don't know/Refused

⁸ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

Which position on nuclear weapons is closest to yours?

- 8% Nuclear weapons are morally wrong, and the US should proceed to eliminate its arsenal whether or not others follow our lead
- 47 Our goal should be to gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons through an international agreement, while developing effective systems for verifying all countries are eliminating theirs, too
- 30 We should do our best to reduce the number of nuclear weapons through verifiable international agreements, but it should not be our goal to eliminate them entirely
- 11 Nuclear weapons give the US a uniquely powerful position in the world. It is not in the interest of the US to participate in treaties that would reduce or eliminate its nuclear arsenal
- 3 Don't know/Refused

⁹ **Pew Research Center for the People & the Press/CFR America's Place In The World Survey October 2005**

Would you favor or oppose the U.S. (United States) signing a treaty with other nations to reduce and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons, including our own?

- 70% Favor
- 24 Oppose
- 6 Don't know/Refused

¹⁰ **WorldPublicOpinion.org 2006-2008**

Do you think that the UN Security Council should or should not have the right to authorize the use of military force for each of the following purposes:

To prevent a country that does not have nuclear weapons from acquiring them.

	Should	Should not	Not sure/ Decline
Mexico	70	21	10
United States	62	33	5
France	50	48	2
Russia	55	27	19
Ukraine	51	22	26
Azerbaijan	59	26	16
Egypt	74	26	0
Israel	62	33	5
Palestinian Territories	38	59	3
Turkey	58	23	19
Kenya	84	15	1
Nigeria	81	17	2
China	47	40	14
India	53	34	13
Indonesia	68	19	14
South Korea	43	55	1
Thailand	52	31	18
Average	59	31	10

¹¹ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

For each of the following international problems, please select whether you think binding international agreements are a good idea or not a good idea:

Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons

92% Good idea
8 Not a good idea
1 Don't know/Refused

¹² **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

For each of the following international problems, please select whether you think binding international agreements are a good idea or not a good idea:

Reducing the number of nuclear weapons

90% Good idea
9 Not a good idea
1 Don't know/Refused

¹³ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

For each of the following international problems, please select whether you think binding international agreements are a good idea or not a good idea:

Reducing the risk of nuclear war

92% Good idea

7 Not a good idea
 1 Don't know/Refused

¹⁴ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

Based on what you know, do you think the U.S. should or should not participate in the following treaties and agreements?

The treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapon test explosions worldwide

	Should participate	Should not participate	Not sure/ Decline
2002	84	13	3
2004	87	9	3
2006	86	10	4
2008	88	11	1
2010	82	15	3

Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2006

Do you think that [survey country] should or should not participate in the treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapon test explosions worldwide?

	Should participate	Should not participate	Not sure/ Decline
United States	86	10	4
China	73	17	10
India	57	31	12
South Korea	86	13	2

¹⁵ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2011**

Some people have proposed that the US and the other nuclear powers could lower the risk of accidental nuclear war by having a verifiable agreement to lower the number of nuclear weapons each country has on high alert—that is, ready to fire on very short notice.

Others oppose this idea, saying it is too difficult to make sure that the other countries would not cheat.

Do you think the US should or should not work with other nuclear powers to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert?

82% Should
 15 Should not
 3 Don't know/Refused

¹⁶ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2004**

Some people have proposed that the US and the other nuclear powers could lower the risk of accidental nuclear war by having a verifiable agreement to lower the number of nuclear weapons each country has on high alert—that is, ready to fire on very short notice.

Others oppose this idea, saying it is too difficult to make sure that the other countries would not cheat.

Do you think the US should or should not work with other nuclear powers to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert?

82% Should
 16 Should not
 2 Don't know/Refused

¹⁷ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, September 2007**

Some people have proposed that the US and the other nuclear powers could lower the risk of accidental nuclear war by having a verifiable agreement to lower the number of nuclear weapons each country has on high alert—that is, ready to fire on very short notice.

Others oppose this idea, saying it is too difficult to make sure that the other countries would not cheat.

Do you think the US should or should not work with other nuclear powers to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on high alert?

79% Should
 20 Should not
 1 Don't know/Refused

¹⁸ **WorldPublicOpinion.org/Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2006**

In the past, the international community has agreed that all countries have the right to produce nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes. Now it has been proposed that certain countries not be allowed to develop nuclear fuel out of concern they will use it to develop nuclear weapons. Do you think this proposal is a good idea or a bad idea?

	Good Idea	Bad Idea	Not sure/ Decline
United States	66	31	3
Argentina	48	29	23
Armenia	61	22	18
China	57	23	20
France	56	40	4
India	49	36	15
Israel	69	27	3
Palestinian Territories	40	57	3
Peru	56	42	2
Poland	61	19	20
Russia	59	23	19
Thailand	41	33	26
Ukraine	60	17	24

¹⁹ **BBC July 2006**

Which of the following positions about new countries developing nuclear fuel is closer to your own?

	All countries should be free to produce nuclear fuel under United Nations oversight, because they have the right to have nuclear energy and should not have to depend on other countries	Because nuclear fuel can be developed for use in nuclear weapons, the United Nations should try to stop new countries from producing nuclear fuel but should provide them with the fuel they need	Neither / Depends	DK / NA
Australia	32	60	6	2
Brazil	28	60	8	5
Canada	31	59	6	3

Chile	26	55	9	11
China	44	42	8	5
Egypt	49	39	6	5
France	44	46	6	4
Germany	28	63	6	2
India	25	29	22	24
Indonesia	46	45	3	5
Iraq	42	51	-	3
Israel	30	59	3	8
Italy	29	57	12	2
Kenya	35	51	5	9
Mexico	33	60	8	-
Nigeria	38	48	4	10
Philippines	32	56	8	4
Poland	32	49	6	14
South Korea	22	76	1	1
Russia	26	46	14	13
Spain	14	61	13	12
Turkey	51	29	8	12
Ukraine	26	50	11	13
Great Britain	36	55	6	3
United States	29	56	7	7
Average	33	52	7	7

²⁰ **WorldPublicOpinion.org/Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2006-2008**

Do you think that the UN Security Council should or should not have the right to authorize the use of military force for each of the following purposes:

To prevent a country that does not have nuclear weapons from producing nuclear fuel that could be used to produce nuclear weapons

	Should	Should not	Not sure/ Decline
United States	57	39	5
France	50	48	2
Russia	53	22	25
Ukraine	52	20	27
Azerbaijan	59	20	21
Egypt	51	49	0
Israel	54	39	7
Palestinian Territories	39	57	4
Turkey	58	20	23
Kenya	84	15	2
Nigeria	75	21	4
China	47	34	19
India	50	32	18
Indonesia	62	25	14
South Korea	42	56	2
Thailand	59	21	20
Average	56	32	12

²¹ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2008**

Thinking about specific steps that could be taken to strengthen the UN (United Nations), here are some options that have been proposed. For each one, select if you would favor or oppose this step.

Having a UN agency control access to all nuclear fuel in the world to ensure that none is used for weapons production

63% Favor
35 Oppose
2 Not sure/Decline

²² **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

Thinking about specific steps that could be taken to strengthen the UN (United Nations), here are some options that have been proposed. For each one, select if you would favor or oppose this step.

Having a UN agency control access to all nuclear fuel in the world to ensure that none is used for weapons production

	Favor	Oppose	Not sure/ Decline
2008	63	35	2
2010	64	35	2

²³ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2012**

Do you think that Iran is:

6% Producing nuclear fuel strictly for its energy needs
58 Has decided to produce nuclear weapons and is actively working to do so
30 Is developing some of the technical ability necessary to produce nuclear weapons, but has not decided whether to produce them
6 Don't know/Refused

²⁴ **Sadat Chair., Univ. Maryland/Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2012**

How likely do you think it is that Iran will eventually develop nuclear weapons?

49% Very likely
40 Somewhat likely
4 Not very likely
3 Not likely at all
3 Don't know/Refused

²⁵ **CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll October 2009**

Based on what you have read or heard, do you think the government of Iran is or is not attempting to develop its own nuclear weapons?

88% Is

-
- 11 Is not
 - 2 Don't know/Undecided/Refused

CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll December 2007

Based on what you have heard or read, do you think that the government of Iran is or is not attempting to develop its own nuclear weapons?

- 61% Yes, is
- 33 No, is not
- 7 Don't know/Undecided/Refused

²⁶ **BBC July 2006**

Do you think that Iran is producing nuclear fuel strictly for its energy needs or do you think it is also trying to develop nuclear weapons?

	Iran is producing nuclear strictly for energy needs	Iran is also trying to develop nuclear weapons	Neither / Depends	DK / NA
Australia	21	65	5	10
Brazil	10	72	6	13
Canada	10	68	5	16
Chile	13	58	4	25
China	18	58	11	13
Egypt	38	54	4	4
France	10	66	7	16
Germany	15	65	10	9
India	18	32	19	31
Indonesia	35	47	6	11
Iraq	38	60	-	1
Israel	9	83	1	7
Italy	10	74	4	13
Kenya	13	63	5	20
Mexico	20	41	4	35
Nigeria	26	46	4	23
Philippines	26	59	6	8
Poland	7	67	3	23
South Korea	11	76	2	11
Russia	12	48	13	27
Spain	11	58	8	23
Turkey	15	59	10	17
Ukraine	17	39	11	33
Great Britain	19	57	6	19
United States	5	83	3	9
Average	17	60	6	17

²⁷ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2011**

Thinking about Iran, are you concerned or not concerned about Iran acquiring nuclear weapons? Please tell me if you are very much concerned, somewhat concerned, a little concerned, or not at all concerned?

	Very much concerned	Somewhat concerned	A little concerned	Not at all concerned	DK/Refusal
European Average	44	31	14	9	2
United States	56	20	14	9	1
Turkey	14	24	19	32	11
Bulgaria	24	41	21	8	7
France	40	36	13	10	0
Germany	50	25	16	8	1
Italy	57	28	8	5	2
Netherlands	44	22	18	16	1
Poland	24	43	18	7	8
Portugal	57	30	7	6	0
Romania	32	32	20	11	4
Slovakia	25	29	25	13	7
Spain	45	34	12	8	2
Sweden	33	37	21	8	1
United Kingdom	45	27	14	13	1

German Marshall Fund 2010

Thinking about Iran, are you concerned or not concerned about Iran acquiring nuclear weapons? Please tell me if you are very much concerned, somewhat concerned, a little concerned, or not at all concerned?

	Very much concerned	Somewhat concerned	A little concerned	Not at all concerned	DK/Refusal
United States	69	17	4	10	1
France	39	37	13	10	0
Germany	61	22	12	5	0
United Kingdom	50	28	12	10	0
Italy	63	24	8	4	1
Netherlands	38	29	21	12	1
Poland	36	38	15	7	5
Portugal	60	25	7	6	1
Spain	40	41	11	7	2
Slovakia	34	32	19	9	5
Turkey	18	21	12	36	13
Bulgaria	35	41	11	4	8
Romania	40	35	11	9	5
European Average	45	29	12	11	3

²⁸ FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, Sep, 2010

(How concerned are you about each of the following?) How concerned are you about...Iran getting a nuclear bomb--extremely concerned, very concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned?

38% Extremely concerned
 40% Very concerned
 16% Not very concerned

6 Not at all concerned
 1 Don't know

²⁹ **Quinnipiac University Poll, November 2011**

Do you consider Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons to be a very serious threat to US (United States) national security, a somewhat serious threat, not a very serious threat or not a threat to US national security?

55% Very serious threat
 33 Somewhat serious threat
 7 Not very serious threat
 3 Not a threat
 2 Don't know/No answer

³⁰ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.

Iran's nuclear program

	Critical	Important but not critical	Not important	Not sure/ Decline
2010	68	27	4	1

³¹ **Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Political Survey June 2009**

(I'd like your opinion about some possible international concerns for the United States.) Do you think that...Iran's nuclear program...is a major threat, a minor threat or not a threat to the well being of the United States?

69% Major threat
 20 Minor threat
 5 Not a threat
 5 Don't know/Refused

Gallup Poll April 2009

(Next, please tell me how concerned you are about each of the following international matters--are you very concerned, moderately concerned, not too concerned, or not concerned at all?) How about...Iran's nuclear capabilities?

54% Very concerned
 29 Moderately concerned
 9 Not too concerned
 6 Not at all concerned
 3 No opinion

³² **BBC July 2006**

How concerned would you be if Iran were to develop nuclear weapons? Would you be...?

	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not very concerned	Not at all concerned	Depends	DK / NA
Australia	67	24	4	4	0	1
Brazil	57	17	10	12	0	4

Canada	63	24	6	5	1	1
Chile	49	25	12	6	1	7
China	23	45	22	7	1	1
Egypt	37	37	17	7	1	1
France	46	39	11	3	1	1
Germany	57	27	11	2	2	0
India	29	28	9	11	8	16
Indonesia	16	37	31	9	3	4
Iraq	25	40	20	14		0
Israel	64	18	7	9	0	3
Italy	65	25	6	3	0	0
Kenya	48	21	11	12	1	6
Mexico	34	21	15	8	5	17
Nigeria	31	24	16	16	2	11
Philippines	36	30	18	10	2	4
Poland	53	27	10	3	2	7
South Korea	30	52	14	2	0	0
Russia	25	33	21	7	4	10
Spain	42	33	9	7	2	6
Turkey	28	29	24	7	8	4
Ukraine	21	36	16	7	8	12
Great Britain	67	23	5	4	0	0
United States	72	20	5	2	0	0
Average	43	29	13	7	2	5

³³ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2006**

I am going to read you a list of possible international threats to [Europe/the United States] in the next 10 years. Please tell me if you think each one on the list is an extremely important threat, an important threat, or not an important threat at all.

Iran acquiring nuclear weapons

	Extremely important threat	Important threat	Not an important threat at all	DK/ Refused
United States	75	19	5	1
France	53	37	9	1
Germany	67	26	7	1
United Kingdom	56	30	10	4
Italy	62	29	7	1
Netherlands	62	27	9	1
Poland	64	31	3	3
Portugal	69	17	10	4
Spain	68	25	7	-
Slovakia	5	11	24	60
Turkey	35	30	21	13
Bulgaria	43	36	9	12
Romania	57	28	8	8
European Average	53	27	10	10

³⁴ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2012**

Suppose Iran develops nuclear weapons. Do you think that:

- 62% Iran would be likely to use them against Israel because it is so hostile toward Israel
- 32 Iran would be deterred from striking Israel for fear of being destroyed in a nuclear retaliatory strike
- 6 Don't know/Refused

³⁵ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2008**

If Iran obtains nuclear weapons, how likely or not do you think it is that the following will happen? Just give us your best guess.

Iran will attack other countries in the region

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all	DK/Refused	Likely	Not Likely
United States	44	31	16	7	3	75	22
France	20	35	31	10	4	55	41
Germany	33	35	23	7	3	68	29
United Kingdom	28	34	23	9	5	62	33
Italy	10	46	26	6	3	65	32
Netherlands	20	34	32	12	3	53	44
Poland	16	47	19	3	14	64	22
Portugal	39	36	17	7	11	65	24
Spain	30	38	21	9	3	68	30
Slovakia	10	35	31	7	18	44	38
Turkey	17	32	18	15	18	49	33
Bulgaria	16	34	20	9	21	50	29
Romania	23	29	21	9	18	52	30
European Average	24	37	23	9	7	61	32

Other countries in the Middle East will decide that, like Iran, they should have nuclear weapons as well

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all	DK/Refused	Likely	Not Likely
United States	50	33	8	6	3	83	13
France	28	39	20	10	3	67	30
Germany	37	34	16	10	3	71	20
United Kingdom	37	41	13	7	3	77	20
Italy	21	50	21	5	3	71	27
Netherlands	32	39	19	9	1	71	28
Poland	20	47	15	4	15	67	18
Portugal	35	36	13	7	9	71	20
Spain	32	40	15	11	2	72	26
Slovakia	15	43	20	6	16	58	26
Turkey	18	40	12	7	23	58	19
Bulgaria	20	44	11	4	21	64	16
Romania	25	33	16	6	21	58	22
European Average	28	40	16	8	8	68	24

Iran will supply nuclear weapons to terrorists

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all	DK/Refused	Likely	Not Likely
--	--------------------	------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------	---------------	-------------------

United States	56	27	10	5	3	82	15
France	26	39	23	7	5	65	30
Germany	40	34	17	6	2	75	23
United Kingdom	34	34	17	8	6	69	25
Italy	30	47	16	4	3	77	20
Netherlands	30	36	23	8	4	65	31
Poland	25	49	12	3	13	73	14
Portugal	34	38	18	8	3	72	26
Spain	33	38	20	6	18	56	26
Slovakia	18	38	20	6	18	56	26
Turkey	21	27	13	16	23	47	30
Bulgaria	22	33	15	7	23	55	22
Romania	29	28	16	7	19	57	24
European Average	30	37	17	8	8	68	24

Iran will threaten Europe with nuclear weapons

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all	DK/Refused	Likely	Not Likely
United States	36	30	20	9	5	67	29
France	16	26	41	14	3	42	55
Germany	23	32	31	12	2	56	43
United Kingdom	23	30	29	14	4	54	42
Italy	17	37	33	10	2	55	43
Netherlands	14	27	40	18	2	40	58
Poland	22	48	17	4	10	70	20
Portugal	22	33	23	13	10	54	36
Spain	24	31	29	15	2	54	44
Slovakia	13	30	31	10	16	43	41
Turkey	25	34	11	9	21	59	20
Bulgaria	18	34	10	9	20	52	27
Romania	22	28	21	10	10	50	31
European Average	21	33	28	11	7	54	39

Iran will only use nuclear weapons for defensive purposes (if attacked themselves)

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not likely at all	DK/Refused	Likely	Not Likely
United States	19	24	25	27	5	43	52
France	23	35	28	11	4	58	38
Germany	29	22	27	20	2	52	47
United Kingdom	24	33	25	12	6	57	37
Italy	10	36	36	15	3	45	52
Netherlands	22	30	29	16	3	52	45
Poland	13	37	26	7	18	50	32
Portugal	21	27	27	16	10	47	43
Spain	21	34	25	17	3	55	42
Slovakia	10	27	29	13	22	37	42
Turkey	30	26	12	11	21	56	22
Bulgaria	13	29	21	11	27	42	32

Romania	18	27	20	14	22	45	33
European Average	22	31	26	14	8	52	39

³⁶ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2011**

As you may know, negotiations to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons are under way. There are different ways to address Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons. Which of the following do you think is the best option?

	Offer economic incentives to Iran in exchange for giving up nuclear weapons	Impose economic sanctions	Provide support to opponents of the current government in Iran	Take military action against Iran	Accept that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons	More than one option	None of the above	DK/Refusal
European Average	32	28	15	6	6	2	4	6
United States	20	33	13	13	8	2	4	7
Turkey	12	20	9	4	25	9	6	15
Bulgaria	25	35	6	3	5	1	4	20
France	32	27	20	8	3	2	5	2
Germany	42	24	13	6	6	2	2	5
Italy	32	31	19	4	3	2	8	2
Netherlands	29	30	14	6	8	8	3	3
Poland	33	29	7	4	8	4	2	12
Portugal	28	37	14	8	5	1	2	5
Romania	17	26	5	7	9	3	8	25
Slovakia	30	17	7	3	7	11	7	17
Spain	23	34	23	7	5	1	3	5
Sweden	26	25	31	3	5	2	1	7
United Kingdom	36	28	12	5	11	1	2	6

German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2010

As you may know, negotiations to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons are under way. There are different ways to address Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons. Which of the following do you think is the best option?

	Offer economic incentives	Impose economic sanctions	Provide support to opponents of current gov't	Take military action	Accept the fact (Iran acquiring Nuclear weapons)	More than one option	None of the above	DK/Refusal
United States	16	40	25	9	4	3	2	
France	33	24	18	10	5	2	5	4
Germany	44	28	13	5	4	1	2	4
United Kingdom	37	28	10	5	12	1	1	5
Italy	34	25	19	6	4	6	3	4
Netherlands	33	31	15	6	7	2	3	3
Poland	41	24	6	4	7	5	1	13

Portugal	36	32	12	6	3	1	4	6
Spain	21	37	16	10	6	2	6	2
Slovakia	32	20	10	3	6	12	5	13
Turkey	12	24	6	3	25	6	7	17
Bulgaria	29	32	4	4	7	5	1	18
Romania	25	31	8	3	5	2	25	1
European Average	32	27	12	6	8	3	5	6

³⁷ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

The UN Security Council has asked Iran to stop enriching uranium. If Iran continues to enrich uranium do you think the UN Security Council should:

	Not pressure Iran to stop enriching uranium	Continue diplomatic efforts to get Iran to stop enriching uranium	Impose economic sanctions on Iran	Authorize a military strike against Iran's nuclear energy facilities	Not sure/Decline
2006	3	35	41	18	3
2008	3	27	48	20	2
2010	4	26	45	21	4

³⁸ **BBC December 2007**

What action should the UN Security Council take if Iran continues to produce nuclear fuel?

	Not pressure Iran	Use only diplomatic efforts	Impose economic sanctions	Authorize military strike
Canada	6	42	35	10
United States	4	31	45	15
Central America	26	30	17	3
Argentina	16	31	12	1
Mexico	15	65	10	6
Chile	13	39	23	4
Germany	17	44	34	3
Russia	12	38	24	3
Portugal	10	46	32	4
Spain	9	45	28	8
France	8	46	24	7
Great Britain	7	50	29	5
Italy	4	52	29	7
Egypt	56	29	13	3
Turkey	21	33	28	5
Israel	6	15	37	34
Nigeria	25	41	17	12
Ghana	18	43	17	8

Kenya	16	56	16	9
Indonesia	19	53	16	2
India	17	26	20	6
Philippines	13	63	16	3
China	13	42	27	13
Australia	7	47	35	7
South Korea	7	37	48	5
Japan	4	53	37	2

³⁹ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2008**

Diplomatic efforts are underway to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Should these efforts fail, which of the following strategies would you most favor?

	Accept that Iran may develop nuclear weapons	Maintain the present level of diplomatic pressure on Iran	Increase diplomatic pressure on Iran but rule out the use of military force	Increase diplomatic pressure on Iran and maintain the option of using military force	DK/ Refused
United States	6	13	27	49	6
France	2	19	54	22	2
Germany	4	11	56	27	2
United Kingdom	8	20	38	28	5
Italy	3	14	59	23	2
Netherlands	7	14	45	31	4
Poland	5	19	47	14	15
Portugal	3	13	62	15	8
Spain	4	18	53	20	5
Slovakia	4	18	56	8	14
Turkey	23	17	12	12	35
Bulgaria	4	20	47	12	17
Romania	3	17	46	8	26
European Average	6	16	47	21	9

⁴⁰ **Gallup/USA Today Poll November 2007**

What do you think the United States should do to get Iran to shut down its nuclear program--take military action against Iran, or rely mainly on economic and diplomatic efforts?

18% Take military action
73 Rely on economic/diplomatic efforts
8 No opinion

Gallup/USA Today Poll November 2007

Suppose U.S. (United States) economic and diplomatic efforts do not work (to get Iran to shut down its nuclear program). If that happens, do you think the United States should--or should not--take military action against Iran?

Subpopulation/Note: Asked of those who said the United States should rely mainly on diplomatic and economic efforts to get Iran to shut down its nuclear program (73 percent)

34%	Yes, should
55	No, should not
11	No opinion

⁴¹ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2010**

As you may know there is currently a debate about whether U.S. government leaders should be ready to meet and talk with leaders of countries and groups with whom the U.S. has hostile or unfriendly relations. Do you think U.S. leaders should or should not be ready to meet and talk with leaders of...Iran?

62%	Should be
33	Should not be
5	Not sure/Decline

⁴² **Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2008**

As you may know there is currently a debate about whether U.S. government leaders should be ready to meet and talk with leaders of countries and groups with whom the U.S. has hostile or unfriendly relations. Do you think U.S. leaders should or should not be ready to meet and talk with leaders of...Iran?

65%	Should be
30	Should not be
5	Not sure/Decline

⁴³ **Quinnipiac University Poll November 2008**

Should President (Barack) Obama personally negotiate with the leaders of Iran to limit their nuclear program?

62%	Yes
28	No
10	Don't know/No answer

⁴⁴ **CBS News/New York Times Poll April 2009**

Do you think the United States should or should not establish diplomatic relations with Iran while Iran has a nuclear program?

53%	Should
37	Should not
10	Don't know/No answer

⁴⁵ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2010**

Do you favor or oppose having diplomatic relations with the following countries?
Iran

42% Yes, favor relations
 54 No, oppose relations
 4 Not sure/Decline

⁴⁶ **CBS News Poll, November 2011**

Thinking about Iran, which comes closer to your opinion--Iran is a threat to the United States that require military action now, Iran is a threat that can be contained with diplomacy now, or Iran is not a threat to the United States as this time?

15% Requires action now
 55 Can be contained
 17 Not a threat now
 13 Don't know/No answer

⁴⁷ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2010**

If the U.S. were to conduct a military strike against Iran's nuclear program, please select how likely each of the following outcomes would be:

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Not sure/Decline
Iran would give up trying to have a nuclear program	8	13	48	28	4
Iran's nuclear program would be slowed down, but not stopped	28	52	11	5	4
The current Iranian government would lose popular support in Iran	11	31	42	10	6
The Iranian people would rally around their government	34	40	18	4	5
U.S. allies would publicly support the U.S. action	17	42	31	6	4
Muslim people worldwide would become more hostile toward the U.S.	44	38	11	3	5
Iran would retaliate against U.S. targets in neighboring states	40	42	10	4	5
There would be retaliatory terrorist attacks in the U.S. itself	40	41	11	3	5
Other countries in the region would be deterred from developing nuclear weapons	14	38	35	9	5

⁴⁸ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2011**

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID "Offer economic incentives to Iran in exchange for giving up nuclear weapons," "impose economic sanctions," or "provide support to opponents of the current government of Iran"]

And now imagine that all of these non-military options have been tried and the only option left to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is the use of military force. In that case, should the [European Union/United States] take military action against Iran, or should [it/they] simply accept that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons?

	Take military action against Iran	Accept that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons	DK/Refusal	Take military action against Iran (prev. ques.)	Accept that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons (prev. ques.)	More than one option (prev. ques.)	None of the above (prev. ques.)	DK/Refusal (prev. ques.)
European Average	36	28	14	6	6	2	4	6
United States	36	23	7	13	8	2	4	7
Turkey	10	20	10	4	25	9	6	15
Bulgaria	19	25	21	3	5	1	4	20
France	48	22	10	8	3	2	5	2
Germany	32	41	9	6	6	2	2	5
Italy	38	20	25	4	3	2	8	2
Netherlands	37	28	7	6	8	8	3	3
Poland	23	28	18	4	8	4	2	12
Portugal	55	16	13	8	5	1	2	5
Romania	24	10	17	7	9	3	8	25
Slovakia	16	15	21	3	7	11	7	17
Spain	47	22	13	7	5	1	3	5
Sweden	42	28	12	3	5	2	1	7
United Kingdom	33	35	9	5	11	1	2	6

NOTE: Percentages of total sample

German Marshall Fund June 2010

[ASKED ONLY OF THOSE WHO SAID “Offer economic incentives to Iran in exchange for giving up nuclear weapons,” “impose economic sanctions ,” or “provide support to opponents of the current government of Iran”]

And now imagine that all of these non-military options have been tried and the only option left to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is use of military force. In that case, should the [European Union\ United States] take military action against Iran, or should [it/they] simply accept that Iran could acquire nuclear weapons?

	Take Military Action against Iran	Accept that Iran could acquire Nuclear Weapons	DK/Refusal
United States	64	35	
France	58	23	18
Germany	39	47	14
United Kingdom	32	57	11
Italy	46	28	26
Netherlands	43	45	12
Poland	28	43	28
Portugal	57	24	19
Spain	58	27	15
Slovakia	27	30	43
Turkey	13	54	33
Bulgaria	23	35	42
Romania	42	22	36
European Average	41	39	20

⁴⁹ **NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll August 2010**

If Iran continues with its nuclear research and is close to developing a nuclear weapon, do you believe that the United States should or should not initiate military action to destroy Iran's ability to make nuclear weapons? (If Should/Should not, ask:) And do you feel strongly about that, or not?

40% Should initiate military action-feel strongly
12 Should initiate military action-do not feel strongly
12 Should not initiate military action-do not feel strongly
23 Should not initiate military action-feel strongly
13 Not sure

NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll July 2008

And now, thinking about Iran, if Iran continues with its nuclear research and is close to developing a nuclear weapon, do you believe that the United States should or should not initiate military action to destroy Iran's ability to make nuclear weapons? (If Should/Should not, ask:) And do you feel strongly about that, or not?

31% Should initiate military action-feel strongly
10 Should initiate military action-do not feel strongly
13 Should not initiate military action-do not feel strongly
33 Should not initiate military action-feel strongly
13 Not sure

Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll November 2007

If Iran continues to produce material that can be used to develop nuclear weapons, would you support or suppose the United States taking military action against Iran. (If Support/Oppose, ask:) Would you support/oppose that strongly or only somewhat?

29% Support strongly
17 Support somewhat
14 Oppose somewhat
26 Oppose strongly
14 Don't know

⁵⁰ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

If diplomatic efforts and economic sanctions fail to stop or slow down Iran's nuclear program, would you favor or oppose a U.S. military strike against Iran's nuclear program, taking into account the possible benefits and costs.

	Favor a U.S. military strike	Oppose a U.S. military strike	Not sure/ Decline
2010	47	49	5

⁵¹ **Pew Global Attitudes Project May 2012**

[ASKED IF OPPOSED IRAN ACQUIRING NUCLEAR WEAPONS] In your opinion, which is more important...

	Preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, even if it means taking military action OR	Avoiding a military conflict with Iran, even if it means they may develop nuclear weapons	Neither (vol.)	Both (vol.)	Don't Know /Refused
United States	59	26	1	0	7
Britain	46	36	2	1	6
France	49	46	1	0	0
Germany	48	39	3	1	5
Spain	50	35	5	1	4
Italy	47	20	13	5	5
Greece	23	26	28	5	4
Poland	45	19	9	6	10
Czech Republic	52	29	4	0	8
Russia	18	32	12	6	10
Turkey	14	23	4	2	12
Egypt	34	11	13	3	5
Jordan	38	19	14	0	5
Lebanon	29	22	6	3	2
Tunisia	9	30	2	0	1
China	16	21	3	4	9
India	18	9	2	0	5
Japan	38	46	6	1	4
Pakistan	3	3	3	0	2
Brazil	50	28	8	1	4
Mexico	46	29	3	3	4

NOTE: Percentages of total sample

⁵² **Pew Global Attitudes Project May 2012**

[ASKED IF OPPOSED IRAN ACQUIRING NUCLEAR WEAPONS] Do you approve or disapprove of tougher international economic sanctions on Iran to try to stop it from developing nuclear weapons?

	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know/Refused
United States	75	15	3
Britain	72	16	3
France	71	25	0
Germany	77	17	2
Spain	68	24	2
Italy	71	14	6
Greece	48	34	4
Poland	62	18	7
Czech Republic	74	16	3
Russia	35	32	9
Turkey	18	28	8
Egypt	46	14	6
Jordan	52	21	3
Lebanon	46	12	4
Tunisia	18	23	2
China	21	29	4
India	19	13	2

Japan	57	32	5
Pakistan	4	6	2
Brazil	56	33	2
Mexico	63	20	3

NOTE: Percentages of total sample

⁵³ **Quinnipiac University Poll, November 2011**

Do you think the US (United States) should take military action to prevent Iran's development of a nuclear weapon or not?

36%	Yes
55	No
9	Don't know/No answer

⁵⁴ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/PIPA, March 2012**

As you may know, some people are calling for Israel to conduct a military strike against Iran's nuclear program before it makes further progress. Others are arguing that it is better to wait for the newly-increased sanctions against Iran to take effect and that the US and other major powers should continue pursuing negotiations with Iran. Do you favor:

24%	Israel conducting a military strike against Iran's nuclear program
69	The US and other major powers continuing to pursue negotiations with Iran
7	Don't know/Refused

⁵⁵ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/PIPA, March 2012**

Currently there is some debate about what stance the US should take in relation to the possibility that Israel might attack Iran's nuclear program. You will see three arguments on this issue. Please select how convincing you find each of them...

The US should discourage Israel from attacking Iran's nuclear program. There are huge risks to US national interests, since Iran may attack US assets in retaliation, pulling the US into a war. Oil prices would skyrocket. Furthermore, US military leaders say the most that could be achieved would be to slow down Iran's nuclear program a bit and probably just lead them to rebuild it underground.

17%	Very convincing
54	Somewhat convincing
17	Somewhat unconvincing
7	Very unconvincing
5	Don't know/Refused

⁵⁶ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/PIPA, March 2012**

Currently there is some debate about what stance the US should take in relation to the possibility that Israel might attack Iran's nuclear program. You will see three arguments on this issue. Please select how convincing you find each of them...

The US should take a neutral stance. Israel has a right to take actions it sees as necessary for its own defense. Meanwhile, the US should think about its own interests and make a clear statement distancing itself from whatever Israel may choose to do, to reduce the chance that Iran will retaliate against US targets.

- 11% Very convincing
- 41 Somewhat convincing
- 30 Somewhat unconvincing
- 15 Very unconvincing
- 4 Don't know/Refused

⁵⁷ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/PIPA, March 2012**

Currently there is some debate about what stance the US should take in relation to the possibility that Israel might attack Iran's nuclear program. You will see three arguments on this issue. Please select how convincing you find each of them...

The US should encourage Israel to attack Iran's nuclear program. Clearly Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons, and if Israel will take the heat for stopping or at least slowing down the program, all the better for the US. The risk of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons is of greater concern than the fallout from an Israeli strike.

- 8% Very convincing
- 30 Somewhat convincing
- 33 Somewhat unconvincing
- 24 Very unconvincing
- 5 Don't know/Refused

⁵⁸ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/PIPA, March 2012**

So now, do you think the US should:

- 34% Discourage Israel from attacking Iran's nuclear program
- 46 Take a neutral stance
- 14 Encourage Israel to attack Iran's nuclear program
- 6 Don't know/Refused

⁵⁹ **BBC December 2007**

If UN inspectors are given access, should Iran be allowed to produce nuclear fuel for electricity?

	Should be allowed	Should not be allowed
Canada	58	36
United States	55	38
Mexico	79	6
Chile	36	36
Central America	30	38
Argentina	26	24
Great Britain	71	22
Portugal	59	26
Italy	58	30
France	56	24
Spain	49	36

Germany	38	50
Russia	33	24
Egypt	86	14
Turkey	30	54
Israel	28	62
Kenya	56	39
Nigeria	46	40
Ghana	45	39
Australia	64	31
Indonesia	56	31
China	51	40
South Korea	38	51
Philippines	27	60
India	24	25
Japan	23	54

⁶⁰ **Chicago Council on Global Affairs**

If Iran were to allow UN inspectors permanent and full access throughout Iran, to make sure it is not developing nuclear weapons, do you think Iran should or should not be allowed to produce nuclear fuel for producing electricity?

	Should be allowed	Should not be allowed	Not sure/ Decline
2008	56	41	3
2010	52	45	3

⁶¹ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, November 2006**

As you may know, the US and other countries have demanded that Iran stop enriching uranium out of concern that this could lead to Iran gaining the ability to develop nuclear weapons. However, Iran has refused, insisting that it is only enriching uranium for its nuclear energy program, not to build nuclear weapons. Here is a proposal some people have offered for resolving this impasse. Iran should be able to enrich uranium, but only on two conditions:

- 1) Enrichment must be limited to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy, while enrichment to higher levels needed for nuclear weapons would be forbidden.
- 2) Iran must fully cooperate with the UN inspectors, allowing full access to make inspections throughout the country, to make certain Iran is limiting its uranium enrichment to low levels.

Proponents of this idea say that this is a safe approach, because if Iran were to try to cheat, it would take them years to enrich uranium to the higher levels necessary for nuclear weapons, and with full access for UN inspectors they would be caught.

Critics of this idea say that Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at all, because doing so would give them technical experience that would put them in a strong position if they later decide to violate the agreement and build nuclear weapons.

Do you think it is a good idea or not a good idea to make an agreement whereby Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium, provided that this is limited only to low levels and UN inspectors would have full access to make sure that enrichment remained at low levels?

55% Good idea
38 Not a good idea
7 (No answer)

⁶² **Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2012**

Sanctions and threats haven't worked to stop Iranians from enriching. And bombing their program would just lead them to rebuild it underground, as well as risking major war. The best hope is to hold Iran to its word by having inspectors free to check anything suspicious. We will then be able to spot any moves toward building a bomb and respond in time.

Do you find this argument:

18% Very convincing
48 Somewhat convincing
18 Somewhat unconvincing
8 Very unconvincing
7 Don't know/Refused

⁶³ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2012**

Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at all, because if they do they will gain technical expertise that would make them more capable if they later decide to violate the agreement and develop nuclear weapons. We should continue to use economic sanctions and the threat of possible air strikes to try to get Iran to stop all enrichment.

Do you find this argument:

20% Very convincing
35 Somewhat convincing
28 Somewhat unconvincing
11 Very unconvincing
6 Don't know/Refused

⁶⁴ **Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 2012**

Now, having considered these arguments, do you think it is a good idea or not a good idea to make an agreement whereby Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium, provided that this is limited only to low levels and UN inspectors have full access to make sure that enrichment remains at low levels?

50% Great idea
43 Bad idea
7 Don't know/Refused

⁶⁵ **Sadat Chair, Univ. Maryland/PIPA, March 2012**

In dealing with the problem of Iran's nuclear program, do you think that the US should:

20% Primarily act by itself
74 Try to primarily act through the UN Security Council
6 Don't know/Refused

⁶⁶ **German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2006**

And who do you think can best handle the issue of Iranian nuclear weapons?

	The United Nations	The NATO alliance	The United States	The European Union	DK/Refused
United States	36	18	22	13	10
France	49	22	8	17	5
Germany	47	12	8	25	9
United Kingdom	56	17	6	13	8
Italy	52	13	9	17	9
Netherlands	55	21	9	9	6
Poland	28	13	18	15	26
Portugal	45	14	10	18	13
Spain	44	14	8	25	9
Slovakia	50	20	6	8	16
Turkey	21	14	5	25	34
Bulgaria	34	15	10	10	30
Romania	36	21	8	10	26
European Average	43	15	8	19	14

⁶⁷ **Pew News Interest Index Poll February 2006**

Who should take the lead in dealing with Iran's nuclear program--the United States or countries in the European Union?

30%	The United States
51	Countries in the European Union
11	Other (Vol.)
8	Don't know/Refused