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WAR WITH IRAQ AND VIEWS OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

As the nation approaches possible war with Iraq, President Bush brings moderate ratings into his role as Commander in Chief. When Wisconsin residents were asked to rate his overall job as President, just under six in ten rated him as either excellent (19%) or good (39%), compared with the four in ten who assigned him a grade of either fair (25%) or poor (16%). In terms of this overall assessment, men took a slightly more favorable stance than did women as a group. Those at the top and bottom of the age scale (below thirty, at or above sixty) were more critical than those in the middle, with the thirty to forty-four year olds most positive. Partisanship makes the biggest difference, as may be seen in the detailed tables following this summary: one in three Democrats, almost half of Independents, and nineteen out of twenty self-described Republicans rated Bush good or excellent.

An accompanying table shows results for this question (and others) which were also included in one or more earlier Badger Polls™. This shows that views of Bush in February are similar to what we found in January. Whatever differences are observed are small enough that one may have only very limited confidence that the differences reflect real shifts in the population as opposed to random variation due to who is selected for the sample. Those readings in turn, showed a distinctly less positive overall assessment than was evident last year (in March, June, and September).

Specific ratings on the economy are notably weaker than the overall view. Only three in ten called Bush's performance excellent or good (4% and 26% respectively) on that. Seven in ten opted for either fair (38%) or poor (31%). Demographic patterns are similar -- granted the lower general opinion -- with those for overall assessment. The current ratings are almost exactly where they were in January, which was slightly down from last September.

Three specific areas of foreign policy were tapped, which tend to find Bush viewed in a more favorable light than the economy. He does best when the issue is "dealing with terrorism". There, almost two thirds call his performance excellent (20%) or good (43%). Either fair (23%) or poor (13%) is chosen by one in three. Individual groups follow similar patterns, so each clearly sees Bush as doing better with terrorism than the economy.

Dealing with Iraq comes next. One half choose excellent (19%) or good (30%). The other go for fair (25%) or poor (24%). Once again one sees a modest gender divide, somewhat differing views by age group, and a clear partisan disagreement. Across time, Iraq ratings now are essentially back to where they

were last September, before they hit a lower level in January, so there is some evidence of a rebound now (or a dip in January, whichever way one wishes to see it). Ratings of the President's handling of terrorism, however, now show little difference from January. At any rate, the drop from September we observed then seems not to have continued.

The final foreign area was "dealing with North Korea". Overall assessments here are the weakest of the three foreign policy areas. On in six call Bush's performance here excellent (6%) or good (30%). Somewhat over half graded it as fair (30%) or poor (23%). This shows no clear change from the only other time (last month) this particular question was put. Age patterns are weaker here, but men and women, and the different partisan groups stand in about the same relative positions as they do on the other questions.

Cross-Time Trends of Views of Bush

	FEB03	JAN03	SPT02	JUN03	MAR02
Overall Bush job rating					
EXCELLENT	19%	16%	19%	25%	28%
GOOD	39	38	45	44	40
FAIR	25	29	23	22	22
POOR	16	14	12	8	7
TOO SOON TO TELL (VOL.)	--	*	--	*	*
Bush handling of economy					
EXCELLENT	4%	4%	6%		
GOOD	26	23	30		
FAIR	38	38	36		
POOR	31	31	25		
Dealing with terrorism					
EXCELLENT	20%	18%	32%		
GOOD	43	42	40		
FAIR	23	26	17		
POOR	13	12	11		
Dealing with Iraq?					
EXCELLENT	19%	11%	22%		
GOOD	30	31	30		
FAIR	25	28	23		
POOR	24	26	20		
Dealing with North Korea					
EXCELLENT	6%	7%			
GOOD	30	26			
FAIR	30	31			
POOR	23	21			

Responses of Don't Know/Refused Omitted from Table

Attitudes to the possible war with Iraq are complex. To begin with, the basic idea of "threatening war if Saddam Hussein refuses to give up any weapons of mass destruction he may have" is endorsed on balance. Two thirds (65%) believe the United States did the right think in pursuing this general strategy. One in four (25%) dissent. Men are more belligerent than women (three quarters of them, as opposed to fewer than six in ten women) endorse the policy. While Republicans come much closer to unanimity than either Democrats or Independents, both groups have majorities in support. All age groups on balance think this

was a good idea, though those "in the middle" are more onesided. Those who either served in the military themselves or reported a family member had are indistinguishable from the overall population as is the much smaller group with a family member on active duty or with the reserves.

Further, the Wisconsin public tends to agree with the idea that threats may not be enough. Seven in ten (71%) say that the US will have to choose between letting Iraq have weapons of mass destruction or going to war against Baghdad. The similarity of attitudes on this point across groups is striking. Except for Independents (who fall just below this range) between two thirds and three quarters of all groups believe this choice will ultimately be necessary).

That leaves the question of timing, however, where opinions are clearly more mixed. Asked whether "the Bush Administration has done everything it reasonably could to avoid war with Iraq, or is there something else it should have tried", half (51%) feel everything reasonably has been (or is being) done to avoid war, but four in ten (41%) think there is something else it should have done.

Women are evenly split on this point. Men are satisfied by a three to two margin. Both Independents and Democrats think on balance more should have been done (by about three to two), while Republicans overwhelmingly think enough has been done to avoid war to this point. Modest majorities of the "middle" age groups think enough has been done; both the oldest and youngest split evenly. Those with family or personal contact with the military or with someone now in service think enough has been done by a margin slightly greater than the overall population.

Going along with the earlier question that a choice will sooner or later have to be made to use force or accept Iraqi prohibited weapons, Wisconsinites think war is likely. Without any specific timeframe, two thirds (65%) call war "very likely". Almost all the remainder (31%) say it is somewhat likely.

Perceived likelihood of war is similar among men and women. It rises with age until it falls back again to its lowest point among the oldest group (but still almost half call it very likely). Those with a connection to the military at some point look like the population at large. Three quarters of those with relatives now serving think war is very likely.

The public does not expect a "lighting war" as some experts have suggested. Offered a series of choices, the largest single proportion (42%) thought an eventual war would last "several months", and one in three (33%) expected it would be a matter of "a year or more". Fewer than one in five expected the fighting to last "just a few days" (2%) or "a matter of weeks" (16%).

Men were only slightly more optimistic than women. Hopes for a shorter war is somewhat higher among Republicans, with age showing only muted patterns. Military contact does NOT go along with increased optimism. In any event, it would seem that the typical resident does not foresee a speedy termination of the conflict, once started.

There is little doubt voiced that on the military front the US (and any partners) will win. Three in four call this very likely, and one in six somewhat so. Men voice more onesided optimism than women, and belief that a US victory is "very likely" rises as one moves across the partisan spectrum. Increasing age goes modestly along with increasing conviction until it falls off some among the oldest group.

Just as the public does not expect a quick cakewalk, there is little evidence that the public thinks the US can quickly disengage. Almost three in four (73%) call it very likely that "American soldiers will be tied up for a long time afterwards keeping order in Iraq" assuming "there is a war and the US side wins". Virtually all the others (20%) call this outcome somewhat likely.

There is some division on the question of further UN resolutions. When respondents were reminded of the past resolutions and asked whether the US should "try to get another resolution explicitly calling for war if Iraq does not comply", almost four in ten (37%) said yes. But half (51%) took the position that the existing resolutions were enough. Women were slightly more closely divided than men were. Democrats split, Republicans and Independents agreed with one another on balance (just shy of two to one) that a further resolution was not necessary. The middle age groups were less inclined to want another resolution. Those with military contact were no more convinced of the need for another step than others. But it is worth noting that the groups examined tended to have substantial numbers on whatever side was not the typical position for the group.

Finally, respondents were asked about a situation where "such a resolution fails, or is blocked" by a veto-wielding member of the Security Council. Under those circumstances, almost six in ten (58%) think "the US and other willing countries" should "use force anyway". One in three (32%) do not. This sentiment is at least as strong among those who have a family connection to past or present service as among the population. There is a substantial difference here between men (go it alone if necessary by almost three to one) and women (relatively divided by five to four). Democrats and Independents split, but Republicans solidly back action without further formal UN resolution in the circumstances described. As often before on this issue, the thirty to forty-four year olds and forty-five to fifty-nine year olds are most inclined to use force, those under thirty least so.

Overall then, the public is clearly NOT of one mind in how Bush is doing with Iraq, let along other areas of his performance. Some misgivings are evident, but the public seems willing to contemplate the use as well as the threat of force to get Iraq to disarm. Many clearly expect the situation to come to war, and there is little evidence that the view of war with Iraq assumes a painless, quick strike, with no long term involvement. Much will ultimately depend -- if it does come to war -- on how well things proceed, and whether the arguments (which the public largely buys) that the Iraqis DO have prohibited weapons and that force is necessary to get rid of them is ultimately borne out.

Statewide Marginals and Percentages for Key Groups

What follows is the exact question wording for each of the items referred to in the release. All results shown are for the basic sample of state residents. The first column is the percentage of the entire sample giving each response. The second and third reports the percentages for men and women separately. The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns show self-described Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Columns seven through ten group respondents by age. The final columns depict two groups separately defined by personal or family contact with the military. The first is those who have served themselves at some point or who report that a member of their immediate family has. The second shows those who said that some member of their immediate family was currently on active duty or in the reserves.

Q01. INTERVIEWER: (DO NOT ASK) Enter respondent's gender

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
MALE	49%	100%	--%	40%	52%	55%	48%	53%	48%	44%	50%	49%
FEMALE	51	--	100	61	48	45	52	47	52	56	50	51

Q02. How would you rate the job George W. Bush is doing as President?

Excellent, good, fair or poor?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
EXCELLENT	19%	22%	16%	7%	13%	40%	18%	19%	21%	16%	22%	33%
GOOD	39	40	39	28	31	55	32	46	38	35	38	29
FAIR	25	23	26	35	33	4	38	22	21	27	24	29
POOR	16	15	17	28	22	2	12	12	18	20	15	9
TOO SOON TO TELL (VOL.)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	2	*	--	--	--	1	2	1	1
REFUSED	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	1	--	1	--

GWB06. How would you rate the job George W. Bush is doing handling the economy?
(PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
EXCELLENT	4%	6%	2%	1%	2%	8%	10%	5%	2%	2%	4%	10%
GOOD	26	26	26	16	20	46	19	28	30	24	29	35
FAIR	38	35	41	28	40	40	45	41	36	32	36	39
POOR	31	32	31	54	37	6	26	25	32	41	30	16
DON'T KNOW	1	*	1	--	2	--	--	1	--	1	1	1
REFUSED	1	1	*	2	--	--	--	1	1	1	*	--

GWB07. Dealing with terrorism? (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
EXCELLENT	20%	24%	16%	9%	14%	42%	12%	22%	22%	13%	22%	26%
GOOD	43	45	41	35	42	48	45	47	41	42	42	43
FAIR	23	20	26	35	24	6	23	22	23	27	21	16
POOR	13	11	15	19	19	2	20	8	12	16	13	13
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	3
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	*	--

GWB08. Dealing with Iraq? (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
EXCELLENT	19%	25%	12%	6%	15%	41%	11%	18%	24%	13%	23%	25%
GOOD	30	30	30	27	20	39	33	32	29	28	29	35
FAIR	25	20	30	30	28	13	27	27	18	34	24	23
POOR	24	24	25	36	35	4	27	20	28	22	22	17
DON'T KNOW	2	2	3	1	2	3	2	2	1	4	1	--
REFUSED	1	--	1	--	1	*	--	1	--	--	*	--

GWB08A. Dealing with North Korea? (PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES AS NECESSARY)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
EXCELLENT	6%	8%	5%	4%	3%	13%	3%	7%	8%	6%	7%	13%
GOOD	30	33	27	20	26	47	29	31	35	27	30	26
FAIR	30	26	33	29	30	28	33	33	26	27	31	34
POOR	23	24	23	36	35	5	18	19	27	28	23	20
DON'T KNOW	10	8	12	11	6	8	17	10	5	12	8	7
REFUSED	*	*	1	*	--	*	--	1	--	1	1	--

IRAQ01. Do you think the United States did the right thing in threatening war if Saddam Hussein refuses to give up any weapons of mass destruction he may have?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
YES, DID RIGHT THING	65%	74%	57%	58%	51%	90%	58%	73%	70%	53%	66%	68%
NO, HAS NOT	26	20	32	35	35	7	35	18	25	33	24	23
ONLY W/OTHERS (VOL.)	1	1	1	*	3	--	2	--	1	1	1	--
DON'T KNOW	7	5	9	6	7	4	6	6	3	13	7	8
REFUSED	1	1	2	*	4	--	--	3	1	1	2	2

IRAQ02. Do you think the United States will have to choose between letting Iraq have weapons of mass destruction or going to war with Iraq?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
YES, HAVE TO CHOOSE	71%	71%	71%	76%	62%	77%	77%	71%	71%	66%	71%	74%
NO, WILL NOT HAVE TO	20	22	19	18	31	14	12	21	25	17	20	21
IRAQ HAS NONE (VOL.)	1	1	*	1	--	--	--	--	--	3	1	--
DON'T KNOW	7	6	8	5	6	7	9	6	4	13	7	6
REFUSED	1	*	2	*	1	2	3	1	--	1	1	--

IRAQ03. Do you think the Bush administration has done everything it reasonably could to avoid war with Iraq, or is there something else it should have tried?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
DONE ALL REASONABLE	51%	60%	43%	34%	34%	85%	48%	54%	55%	40%	56%	58%
SHOULD HAVE TRIED	41	37	46	56	58	12	51	39	38	45	36	36
DON'T KNOW	7	3	11	9	7	3	2	6	5	14	8	6
REFUSED	1	1	1	1	1	--	--	1	2	--	1	1

IRAQ04. How likely do you think it is that the United States will actually go to war against Iraq? Is it very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not likely at all?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
VERY LIKELY	65%	66%	63%	57%	63%	75%	56%	66%	77%	47%	66%	76%
SOMEWHAT LIKELY	31	30	32	38	32	22	38	31	21	44	30	23
NOT VERY LIKELY	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	5	3	1
NOT LIKELY AT ALL	1	1	1	1	2	--	4	*	--	2	1	--
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	1	1	*	1	--	--	3	*	--
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	*	--

IRAQ05. If a war starts, how long do you think it will last? Just a few days, a matter of weeks, several months, or a year or more?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
JUST A FEW DAYS	2%	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%	4%	--%	3%	4%	2%	1%
A MATTER OF WEEKS	16	23	10	13	11	25	7	17	19	19	15	12
SEVERAL MONTHS	42	42	41	37	39	51	50	47	38	35	43	41
A YEAR OR MORE	33	28	38	43	38	19	37	30	34	31	33	40
DON'T KNOW	7	5	8	5	8	5	3	5	6	12	7	6
REFUSED	*	--	*	--	1	--	--	1	--	--	--	--

IRAQ06. Ultimately, how likely is it that the United States and its allies will win the war? (IF "CERTAINLY" CODE AS "VERY LIKELY")

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
VERY LIKELY	73%	84%	64%	63%	74%	87%	58%	74%	81%	71%	77%	74%
SOMEWHAT LIKELY	17	11	23	25	17	10	30	19	10	20	14	13
NOT TOO LIKELY	3	2	3	5	2	--	3	2	3	3	2	2
NOT AT ALL LIKELY	2	1	3	3	1	1	3	1	3	2	2	3
DON'T KNOW	4	2	6	4	6	3	6	3	3	5	4	5
REFUSED	1	1	1	--	1	*	--	1	1	1	1	4

IRAQ15. Is any member of your immediate family still in the active service or reserves?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
YES	15%	15%	16%	10%	17%	19%	23%	17%	15%	10%	16%	100%
NO	84	84	84	90	83	80	77	82	85	89	84	--
DON'T KNOW	*	1	--	--	--	1	--	1	--	1	*	--
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

QD05. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
DEMOCRAT	30%	25%	36%	100%	--%	--%	30%	28%	28%	40%	28%	19%
REPUBLICAN	29	33	26	--	--	100	33	31	27	28	31	38
INDEPENDENT	25	27	24	--	100	--	21	26	28	21	25	27
OTHER	9	8	9	--	--	--	7	11	10	4	9	8
NONE	5	6	4	--	--	--	5	3	7	5	5	7
DON'T KNOW	1	1	1	--	--	--	4	1	--	1	*	2
REFUSED	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	*	2	1	--

QD11. In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR) (Calculated and grouped as below)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				MILITARY	
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	FAM	ACT
18-29	14%	14%	14%	13%	12%	15%	100%	--%	--%	--%	8%	14%
30-44	31	33	28	28	32	33	--	100	--	--	28	32
45-59	33	33	34	31	36	30	--	--	100	--	36	35
60 and over	20	18	22	27	17	19	--	--	--	100	24	16
DK/REFUSED	3	3	3	2	4	2	--	--	--	--	3	4

* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. The media sponsors of the survey are the (Madison) Capital Times, and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. The BADGER POLL™ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

A total of 504 randomly chosen state residents were interviewed for this survey by telephone between February 11 and 19, inclusive. Telephone numbers were generated by computer in proportion to the number of adults living in each area of the state. Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible resident in Wisconsin, exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by

more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error".