



Program for Public Consultation

A Joint Program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and
the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL &
SECURITY STUDIES
AT MARYLAND

Americans on Negotiations with Iran

A Policymaking Simulation



Fieldwork by



The **Program for Public Consultation (PPC)** seeks to improve democratic governance by helping governments consult their citizenry on the key public policy issues the government faces. Unlike standard polls, in public consultations respondents are presented information that helps simulate the issues and tradeoffs faced by policymakers. PPC has been established to develop the methods and theory of public consultation and to conduct public consultations. PPC is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes and the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland's (CISSM) Advanced Methods of Cooperative Security Program builds the case for a fundamental transformation of security policies by focusing on areas where current policies fail to adequately reduce risks:

- the management of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy;
- the local dynamics of civil conflict and post-conflict reconstruction;
- emerging challenges, such as cybersecurity, climate change, and geoengineering;
- the oversight of research with dangerous pathogens; and
- the use of space for security and for the public good.

CISSM is led by Director John Steinbruner and Research Director Nancy Gallagher. It includes full-time faculty and staff, research associates, post-doctoral fellows, graduate research assistants, and short-term visitors.

GfK is a major research company operating in more than 100 countries. This study was conducted using their web-enabled KnowledgePanel®, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection.

INTRODUCTION

July 20, 2014 is the end of the six-month period initially assigned for negotiating an agreement among Iran, the United States and five other nations to assure that Iran's nuclear program is for purely peaceful purposes. While the negotiations have made some progress, it is unlikely that a permanent agreement will be reached in this time frame.

During this six-month period an interim plan of action has been in place, in which Iran has allowed greater access to inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) and has diluted stocks of uranium that it had enriched to the 20 percent level. For the US' part, it has relaxed some sanctions on Iran related to its nuclear program and has not introduced any additional sanctions.

Congressional floor debates have discussed at some length what the US should do next after the six-month negotiation period runs out. Two different options have dominated this debate. One option is for the US to continue to pursue an agreement that would accept some enrichment by Iran, but with substantial limits and intrusive inspections to ensure those limits are met. The other option does not involve accepting Iranian enrichment. Instead, the US would continue trying to impose new sanctions in hopes that the pressure would eventually persuade Iran to cease enrichment completely.

Which path is taken by US policy could have important repercussions for global security, particularly in the Middle East, and for other efforts to prevent proliferation. And yet very little is known about how the American public would look at these options.

Prior polling on the subject is inconclusive. The subject of Iran's nuclear program is complex, and it may be impossible to gauge respondents' attitudes with only one or two questions. Thus, this topic is particularly appropriate for using the Citizen Cabinet method by which a representative sample goes through a policymaker simulation in which they are effectively put in the shoes of an administration official or member of Congress. Working online, they receive a briefing on an issue, are presented policy options and evaluate strongly-stated arguments for and against each option. Only then do respondents make their final recommendations. All of the materials presented to the respondents are fully vetted with proponents of the various policy options to ensure that the briefing materials are accurate and unbiased, and that the arguments in support of the policy options are the strongest ones available.

The briefing and arguments for this simulation were initially developed from an analysis of the policy discourse on options for reducing proliferation risks posed by Iran's nuclear program, with special reference to speeches given on the Senate or House floor. The briefing and arguments were then vetted and refined based on conversations with staffers (Republican and Democratic) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as several outside experts. Thus, this consultation gives a wealth of information on how the public thinks about policy options when it has enough information for an informed opinion, how it reacts to the arguments being made, and what judgment it comes to when offered the time and the tools to deliberate.

The model Citizen Cabinet's sample was drawn from a larger standing panel called the KnowledgePanel that is managed by the research company GfK. Though these surveys take place online, this panel is not derived from an "opt-in" by which any online user can volunteer a respondent. Instead, panelists are recruited through a scientific process of selection using two methods: a random selection of residential addresses using the United States Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in GfK's KnowledgePanel. Those who agree to participate but who do not have Internet access are provided a laptop computer and Internet service. A representative sample is then chosen for a specific survey. Once that sample completes a survey, the demographic breakdown of the sample is compared to the US census. Any variations from the census are adjusted by weighting.

The study was fielded over June 28-July 7, 2014 with a sample of 748 American adults. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.6%; with the design effect also taken into account, the margin of error is plus or minus 3.9%. Findings were weighted to census data.

Summary of Study

Briefing

Respondents were briefed about issues surrounding Iran's uranium enrichment program and the current negotiations. Most respondents said they knew little about the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and only one in three said they knew that, as part of the NPT Iran had agreed to not develop nuclear weapons.

Presentation of Options and Evaluation of Arguments for Each

Respondents were presented the two major options for dealing with Iran that are being promoted in the current discourse: a) making a deal that allows Iran to enrich but only to a low level, provides more intrusive inspections and gradually lifts some sanctions; b) not continuing the current negotiations, imposing more sanctions, and pressing Iran to agree to end all uranium enrichment. They then evaluated a series of arguments for and against each option. All arguments were found convincing by substantial majorities, with neither option having a clear advantage at this stage. Some arguments for each option were more persuasive than others.

Evaluation of Options Separately

Both before and after hearing the pro and con arguments, respondents were asked to evaluate each policy option separately in terms of how acceptable or tolerable they would find it if the US pursued that approach. Before hearing pro and con arguments, negotiating limited enrichment was found acceptable by just under half and 'just tolerable' by a third, with those finding it acceptable rising several points after hearing the arguments. The option of increasing sanctions in hopes of stopping enrichment did not do as well: it was initially found acceptable by a third and 'just tolerable' by three in ten, with the number finding it acceptable dropping several points after the pro and con arguments.

Final Recommendation

Asked for their final recommendation between the options, a six in ten majority recommended making a deal that allows limited uranium enrichment rather than ramping up sanctions in an effort to get Iran to terminate all enrichment. More than six in ten Republicans and Democrats

took this position, as well just over half of independents. Those with higher levels of education were substantially more supportive.

US-Iran Cooperation on Iraq

Six in ten favor the US and Iran working together to address the current crisis in Iraq.

Confidence-Building Measures

Very large majorities favor a variety of confidence-building measures: direct talks between the US and Iran on issues of mutual concern; greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges; and providing more access to each other's journalists. A more modest majority also favors greater trade, but views are divided on having more Americans and Iranians visiting each other's countries as tourists.

Views of Iranian Government and Relations Between Islam and the West

Interestingly, support for cooperative measures between the US and Iran is high, though a large majority has a negative view of the Iranian government and nearly half say that the Islamic and Western traditions are not compatible and reject the view that it is possible to find common ground.

Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Seven in ten favor a Middle East nuclear weapons free zone that would include Israel as well as Islamic countries, and three in four favor the general goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons.

AMERICANS ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN

A Policymaking Simulation

Briefing

Respondents were briefed about issues surrounding Iran's uranium enrichment program and the current negotiations. Most respondents said they knew little about the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and only one in three said they knew that, as part of the NPT Iran had agreed to not develop nuclear weapons.

The background briefing was designed to ensure that respondents had a basic understanding of the issues surrounding Iran's enrichment program. It was vetted by Republican and Democratic Congressional staffers and outside experts for accuracy and balance.

Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

First, respondents were told that “the US, Iran, and most other countries are members of the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty that aims to prevent new countries from acquiring nuclear weapons.” They were asked how much they had heard about the NPT. A little over a quarter said they had heard some (22%) or a lot (4%) about the NPT, while most said they had heard a little (28%) or nothing at all (46%). Partisan differences were minimal.

Respondents were then informed that “in establishing the NPT, all members that did not already have nuclear weapons agreed not to develop them. Iran is one of those members that has agreed not to develop nuclear weapons.”

Again, they were probed for their prior knowledge on this point: “Did you know that Iran, as a member of the NPT, has agreed to not develop a nuclear weapon, or had you not heard this?” Barely a third (34%) said they knew this, while two thirds (66%) said they had not heard this.

Republicans were the best informed on this (40%), while independents were the least (28%).

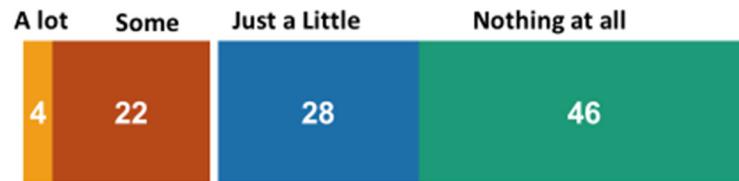
Uranium Enrichment

Next the briefing explained why enrichment of uranium can be a crucial international issue, covering the following points:

The Non-Proliferation Treaty

The US, Iran, and most other countries are members of the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty that aims to prevent new countries from acquiring nuclear weapons.

How much have you heard about the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT?



- Under the NPT, Iran can have a nuclear energy program
- Iran is required as an NPT member to provide information to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and accept IAEA inspections, to assure that its program is only for peaceful purposes
- For nuclear energy purposes, enrichment of uranium to the 5 percent level is adequate; for use in a nuclear weapon, a 90% level is usually necessary

Iran's Nuclear Program

Respondents were then told about the recent history of Iran's program and the concerns of the international community. They learned that:

- In 2002 the IAEA determined that Iran had been building an enrichment facility without informing the agency, and had other activities that could be related to developing a nuclear weapon
- From 2003 to 2006, Iran suspended work towards enrichment and cooperated with the IAEA as part of an international effort to resolve the issue, but no final agreement resulted and Iran resumed enrichment
- The UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding that Iran suspend enrichment-related activities and imposing some economic sanctions

US Sanctions on Iran related to its Nuclear Program

The role of US sanctions in putting pressure on Iran's nuclear program was then explained briefly to respondents. They learned that:

- The US had stopped virtually all its trade with Iran well before it imposed new sanctions
- The US' new and additional sanctions, related to Iran's nuclear program, are aimed at other countries' business with Iran and have indeed reduced such business
- Iran, nonetheless, persisted in enriching uranium and substantially increased its capacity to do so

Current Negotiations

Finally, respondents learned that the US, Germany, and other key members of the UN Security Council are in a new round of negotiations with Iran, and that:

- A temporary, six-month agreement was reached in November, in which Iran permitted more intensive IAEA inspections in return for some moderation of sanctions

- The negotiations focus on creating a system for limiting Iran's enrichment, ensured by continued scrutiny to the low levels necessary for nuclear energy, which would be ensured through intrusive inspections
- Negotiations have made progress and Iran has cooperated in its short-term obligations, but a long-term agreement has not been reached

Presentation of Options and Evaluation of Arguments for Each

Respondents were presented the two major options for dealing with Iran that are being promoted in the current discourse: a) making a deal that allows Iran to enrich but only to a low level, provides more intrusive inspections and gradually lifts some sanctions; b) not continuing the current negotiations, imposing more sanctions, and pressing Iran to agree to end all uranium enrichment. They then evaluated a series of arguments for and against each option. All arguments were found convincing by substantial majorities, with neither option having a clear advantage at this stage. Some arguments for each option were more persuasive than others.

Respondents were told:

The initial term of the temporary agreement runs out July 20th. Right now, US policymakers are considering whether to support extending the agreement and continuing the negotiations.

These negotiations are controversial. Some members of Congress think that the US should not try to negotiate **limits** on Iran's enrichment program, but rather impose new sanctions to try to get Iran to **completely stop** enriching uranium.

If Congress were to impose new sanctions, this would make the continuation of the negotiations extremely unlikely because the temporary agreement says that the US will not impose new sanctions during the negotiations.

Respondents were then shown the two alternative policies between which they would ultimately decide:

- Continue to pursue a long-term agreement that limits Iran's enrichment of uranium: Iran would accept intrusive inspections of their program, while the US would accept Iran enriching to the low level necessary for nuclear energy, and would gradually ease some sanctions provided that Iran sticks to the agreement.
- Do not negotiate an agreement that includes Iran having limited enrichment, but rather impose new sanctions on other countries to get them to cut their economic relations with Iran to pressure Iran to agree to completely stop all uranium enrichment.

This statement of the problem was developed after close analysis of the body of Congressional floor speeches on this subject over the past twelve months. Other positions, including preventive

military action, exist in the general policy discourse on Iran, but these two alternatives were the only ones argued for at any length in speeches printed in the Congressional Record in recent months.

Evaluation of Arguments

Respondents were given three arguments for and three arguments against each of these options—a total of twelve arguments. The arguments were initially developed from an analysis of the policy discourse on the subject, with special reference to speeches given on the Senate or House floor. They were refined based on conversations with staffers (Republican and Democratic) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs as well as several outside experts.

All respondents got the arguments in the same order, which was designed to resemble a formal debate. Three arguments in favor of continuing to pursue a long-term agreement on enrichment limits were followed by three arguments against that policy. Then, three arguments favoring the policy of increasing sanctions, and seeking an end to all enrichment instead of accepting limited enrichment, were followed by three arguments against that policy.

All arguments were found at least somewhat convincing by majorities, suggesting that respondents were genuinely deliberating on the issue rather than just responding from preformed opinions. Interestingly, on average, arguments *against* either policy option were found convincing by slightly larger majorities than were arguments that supported that option. This suggests that given a policy problem as difficult as that of Iran's nuclear program, negative arguments seemed a little more salient than arguments that carried the burden of proposing a course of action.

Arguments In Favor of Negotiating Limited Enrichment

The argument in favor of negotiated limits on Iran's enrichment that the greatest number of respondents found convincing declared that whatever Iran's future behavior, the US would be better able to reduce the risk of proliferation with agreed limits and more inspections (even if the agreement was eventually broken) than if it rejects such an agreement.

No matter what happens, making a deal with Iran to limit its enrichment will put us ahead of where we are now. If Iran sticks with the deal, we'll know they aren't making a nuclear weapon. If they try to break out of the deal, with more intrusive inspections, we will have much better means to spot it immediately and it will be so completely clear that we will be better able to mobilize the world against them. Either way we come out ahead.

Sixty-three percent found this convincing—13% very convincing, and 50% somewhat convincing. About a third (34%) found it somewhat unconvincing (23%) or very unconvincing (11%). Partisan differences were minimal.

The second most persuasive argument was one sometimes made by Iran: that it is equitable under the NPT for Iran, like any other signatory, to run a nuclear program for peaceful purposes.

Getting Iran to limit its enrichment is the only reasonable goal. As a Member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran agreed not to have nuclear weapons, but it never agreed not to enrich uranium. The Treaty even recognizes all nations' right to a nuclear energy program. We would never let other countries tell us whether or not we can make our own nuclear fuel.

Sixty-two percent found this argument convincing (19% very convincing and 43% somewhat convincing). Thirty-six percent found it unconvincing (24% somewhat, 12% very). Republicans and Democrats had the same response.

The argument for negotiated limits that did least well emphasized that the US does not really have any other options—perhaps because acknowledging limits to American power may be off-putting to some respondents.

The only real option is to make a deal with the Iranian government. We have been applying sanctions for years now and yet Iran's uranium enrichment program has only grown. Bombing Iran's nuclear facilities would just lead Iran to kick out the IAEA inspectors and rebuild the program underground. Invading and occupying is completely unrealistic given that Iran is a huge country, with a substantial military, and a large population that would likely be very hostile. Given that the Iranian government says that it is ready to make a deal based on a commitment not to build nuclear weapons, we should give this option a chance.

Though a majority did find this argument at least somewhat convincing, the number that did so (57%) was significantly less than for the other two arguments offered for a negotiated resolution—and only 11% found the “no other option” argument very convincing. Forty-one percent found it unconvincing (13% very). It may be that the “least worst option” quality of this argument made it less persuasive; it is interesting that the argument discussed above, maintaining that Iran has a right to a nuclear program within the strictures of the NPT, did better. Democrats were considerably more willing (64%) than Republicans (54%) to concede that the United States might not have any more effective way of constraining Iranian enrichment than negotiation.

Arguments Against Negotiating Limited Enrichment

The three arguments against continuing negotiations in the current framework did better on average than the arguments in favor. The best-received argument critiquing the negotiation framework said:

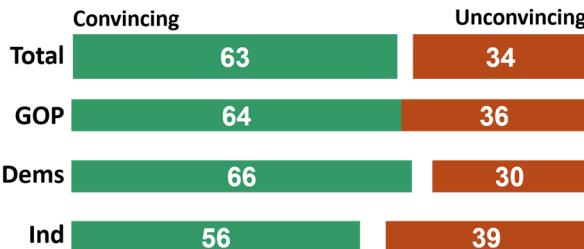
The UN Security Council told Iran to stop enrichment. But Iran has been defiant. We should not reward Iran's defiance by giving in and letting it go ahead and enrich. This will lead others to defy international rules to extract concessions. We need to set an example and make it clear that countries that defy the international system will eventually regret it. The international community needs to stick to its guns.

Sixty-seven percent found this at least somewhat convincing, and 28% found it very convincing—the highest of any argument in the consultation. Thirty-two percent found it unconvincing (10% very). The inclusion in this argument of a positive affirmation of

Arguments For and Against Negotiating Limited Enrichment

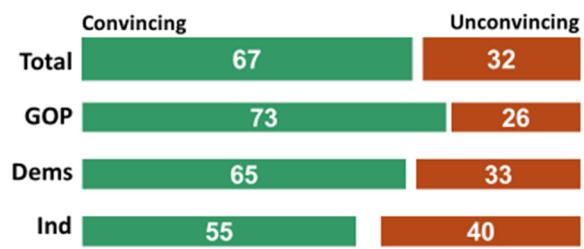
Pro Negotiating Limits 1

No matter what happens, making a deal with Iran to limit its enrichment will put us ahead of where we are now. If Iran sticks with the deal, we'll know they aren't making a nuclear weapon. If they try to break out of the deal, with more intrusive inspections, we will have much better means to spot it immediately and it will be so completely clear that we will be better able to mobilize the world against them. Either way we come out ahead.



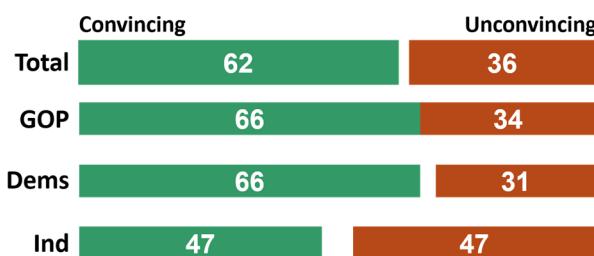
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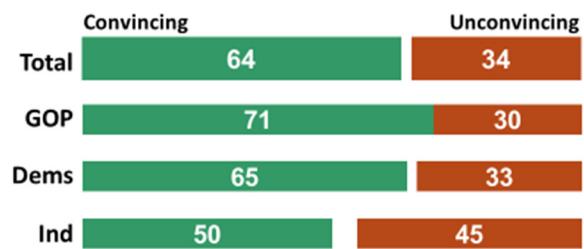
Pro Negotiating Limits 2

Getting Iran to limit its enrichment is the only reasonable goal. As a Member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran agreed not to have nuclear weapons, but it never agreed not to enrich uranium. The Treaty even recognizes all nations' right to a nuclear energy program. We would never let other countries tell us whether or not we can make our own nuclear fuel.



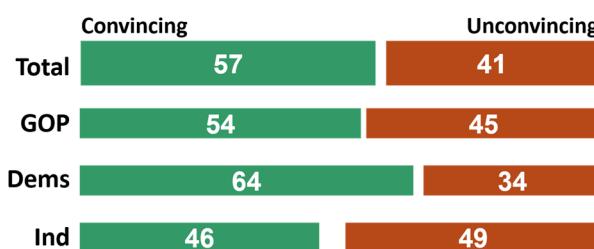
Con Negotiating Limits 2

Giving up the international sanctions that have been so difficult to put in place is very risky. If the international sanctions are dismantled, at some point Iran could decide it is safe to break out of the treaty and race for nuclear weapons. Then it could take so long to reassemble the international system of sanctions that Iran could make so much progress that we could end up facing a nuclear-armed Iran.



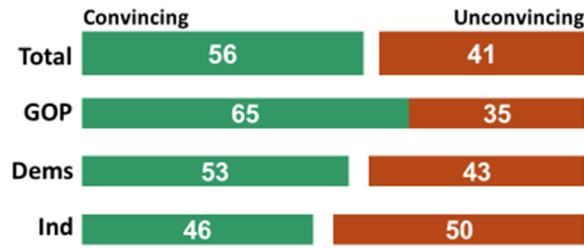
Pro Negotiating Limits 3

The only real option is to make a deal with the Iranian government. We have been applying sanctions for years now and yet Iran's uranium enrichment program has only grown. Bombing Iran's nuclear facilities would just lead Iran to kick out the IAEA inspectors and rebuild the program underground. Invading and occupying is completely unrealistic given that Iran is a huge country, with a substantial military, and a large population that would likely be very hostile. Given that the Iranian government says that it is ready to make a deal based on a commitment not to build nuclear weapons, we should give this option a chance.



Con Negotiating Limits 3

If we have an agreement that lets Iran enrich to the 5% level, it does not mean that their progress toward a nuclear weapon will be completely stopped. They will be able to continually refine their know-how on enrichment. Thus, should they decide to break out of the agreement, they will be able to move toward getting a nuclear weapon even faster than they could now. The only way to stop their movement toward a nuclear weapon is to stop all enrichment.



international rules may partly account for its good reception, suggesting that even some respondents who support a negotiated resolution would want to see it framed as an affirmation of international rules (the basic NPT bargain) rather than as an acceptance of Iran's defiance. Republicans were more persuaded (73%) than Democrats (65%).

The second most convincing argument in this group pointed out that setting up an international sanctions regime is a long and difficult undertaking and that once it is in place it should not be lightly taken apart.

Giving up the international sanctions that have been so difficult to put in place is very risky. If the international sanctions are dismantled, at some point Iran could decide it is safe to break out of the treaty and race for nuclear weapons. Then it could take so long to reassemble the international system of sanctions that Iran could make so much progress that we could end up facing a nuclear-armed Iran.

Sixty-four percent found this argument convincing, with 22% calling it very convincing. Thirty-four percent said it was unconvincing (9% very). Partisan differences were minimal.

The least persuasive of the three arguments against negotiated limits—though it too garnered a clear majority—was a more technical one that focused on how the expertise to make highly enriched uranium gradually develops:

If we have an agreement that lets Iran enrich to the 5% level, it does not mean that their progress toward a nuclear weapon will be completely stopped. They will be able to continually refine their know-how on enrichment. Thus, should they decide to break out of the agreement, they will be able to move toward getting a nuclear weapon even faster than they could now. The only way to stop their movement toward a nuclear weapon is to stop all enrichment.

This argument was rated as convincing by 56% (very, 14%). A fairly substantial 41% found it unconvincing (very, 11%). Republicans were more persuaded (65%), than Democrats (53%).

Arguments In Favor of Increased Sanctions

On average, the arguments favoring increased sanctions did neither substantially better and nor substantially worse than those favoring negotiated limits. The most popular argument was:

We have the international sanctions in place now, along with the UN Security Council resolutions calling for Iran to stop its enrichment. It's no time to ease off and accept limited enrichment. We need to keep this momentum going and get other countries to cut their business ties to Iran until it complies with the UN resolutions. And we have to keep ramping up these sanctions until the Iranians scrap their enrichment program.

Sixty percent found this argument convincing, and 20% found it very convincing. Again, in this case the theme of the UN Security Council was present and may partly explain the success of this argument with respondents. Republicans found it more convincing (69%) than Democrats (58%).

Nearly as many found convincing an argument that presented the sanctions program as a policy success that needs only to be reinforced and expanded to get further good results:

Clearly we need to stick with sanctions and ratchet them up higher. We can see they are working. The Iranian economy is suffering and the Iranian people have had enough. That is why they elected a new president that was willing to come to the table. Eventually, the Iranian people are going to get tired of the economic pain that comes from the sanctions, and this will lead them to demand that Iran give up its enrichment program. We should stick with the sanctions until Iran gives up enrichment entirely.

This was found convincing by 59%, with 18% finding it very convincing. Thirty-nine percent found it unconvincing (10% very). Partisan differences were minimal.

The argument in favor of using more sanctions to seek zero enrichment that did least well (while still getting a majority) was based on evoking distrust of Iran's leadership and its intentions:

Given how hard the Iranian leadership resists giving up enrichment, despite all of the sanctions so far, they must really be motivated by a desire for nuclear weapons. Negotiating limits on their enrichment will not make this desire go away among the Iranian leadership. Our only hope is to ratchet up the sanctions until they are painful enough that the leaders will finally give up that desire.

This argument was rated as convincing by 53%, with 14% finding it very convincing. While much past polling indicates a low level of trust in Iran's leadership on the US public's part, this does not seem to be the best pivot on which to ground an argument in favor of imposing more sanctions to try to stop all enrichment. Republicans were more convinced (62%) than were Democrats (52%).

Arguments Against Increased Sanctions

As happened with the proposal for continuing negotiations, arguments against imposing more sanctions in hopes of stopping all enrichment by Iran did better than the arguments for it. For two of the opposing arguments, majorities of nearly two thirds found them convincing.

One such argument focused on the costs of the US' sanctions policy on its relations with other countries.

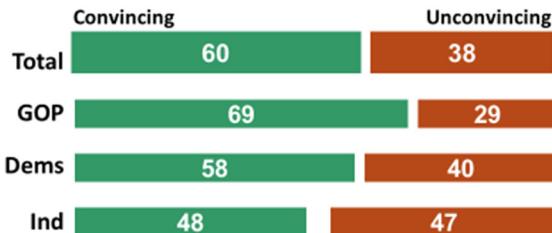
Because the US has already stopped its trade with Iran, the only way Congress has been able to impose new sanctions is by threatening other countries, some of them allies, with sanctions unless they stop their business relations with Iran. Sometimes, we have actually punished their companies with fines. Many countries resent this. Cutting off trade with Iran hurts other countries' economy and they do not like being pushed around. This harms our relations with other countries, including friends and allies.

This was convincing to 65% (19% very). Thirty-one percent found it unconvincing (8% very). Republicans and Democrats were equally convinced.

Arguments For and Against Increasing Up Sanctions

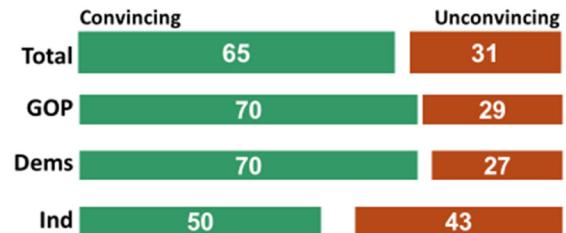
Pro Increasing Sanctions 1

We have the international sanctions in place now, along with the UN Security Council resolutions calling for Iran to stop its enrichment. It's no time to ease off and accept limited enrichment. We need to keep this momentum going and get other countries to cut their business ties to Iran until it complies with the UN resolutions. And we have to keep ramping up these sanctions until the Iranians scrap their enrichment program.



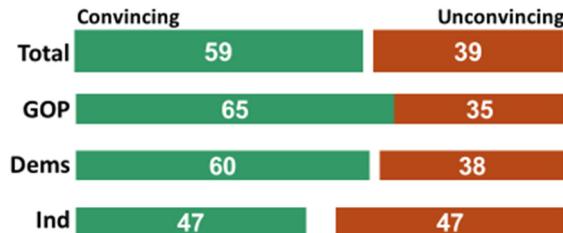
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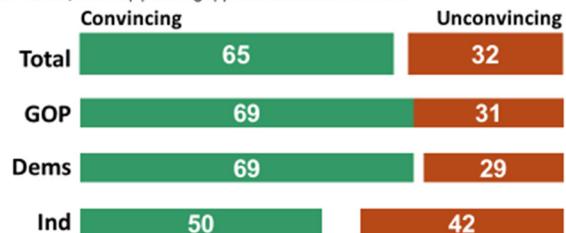
Pro Increasing Sanctions 2

Clearly we need to stick with sanctions and ratchet them up higher. We can see they are working. The Iranian economy is suffering and the Iranian people have had enough. That is why they elected a new president that was willing to come to the table. Eventually, the Iranian people are going to get tired of the economic pain that comes from the sanctions, and this will lead them to demand that Iran give up its enrichment program. We should stick with the sanctions until Iran gives up enrichment entirely.



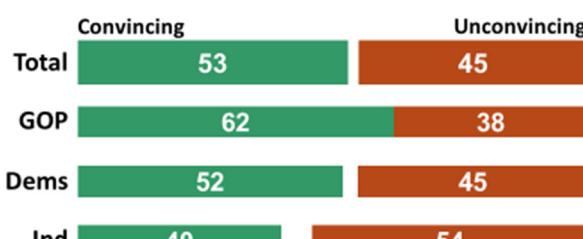
Con Increasing Sanctions 2

We need to really face the fact that sanctions have not worked to get Iran to give up enriching. Even as countries imposed more and more sanctions on Iran, it increased its level of enrichment activities, building more and better centrifuges and even enriching somewhat above the 5% level. On the other hand, the sanctions have helped to bring Iran to the table to negotiate limits on its enrichment and have led Iran to already accept some limits. We need to be realistic, take advantage of what has worked, and stop pursuing approaches that do not work.



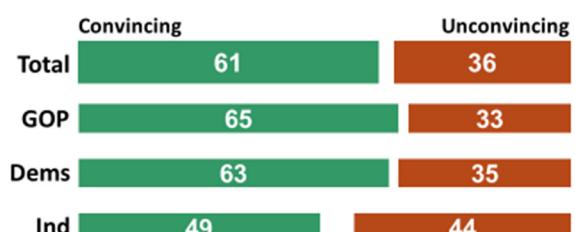
Pro Increasing Sanctions 3

Given how hard the Iranian leadership resists giving up enrichment, despite all of the sanctions so far, they must really be motivated by a desire for nuclear weapons. Negotiating limits on their enrichment will not make this desire go away among the Iranian leadership. Our only hope is to ratchet up the sanctions until they are painful enough that the leaders will finally give up that desire.



Con Increasing Sanctions 3

We need to remember that the system of sanctions on Iran requires the cooperation of other countries, who want the US to negotiate a deal with Iran so that we limit their nuclear program, allowing us to move away from the sanctions that harm their own economies too. If the US ramps up sanctions and pulls out of the negotiations now, when Iran says it is ready to make a deal, other countries will get annoyed and probably resume trading with Iran. The whole system of sanctions on Iran may well unravel, and then it will be even harder to get a deal with Iran. But if we show we would accept a deal that can be fully verified, these other countries are more apt to stick with us.



An equally well-received argument presented the sanctions as ineffective at increasing Iran's willingness to give up enrichment, while their fruits in terms of bringing them to the table can only be reaped through successful negotiations:

We need to really face the fact that sanctions have not worked to get Iran to give up enriching. Even as countries imposed more and more sanctions on Iran, it increased its level of enrichment activities, building more and better centrifuges and even enriching somewhat above the 5% level. On the other hand, the sanctions *have* helped to bring Iran to the table to negotiate limits on its enrichment and have led Iran to already accept some limits. We need to be realistic, take advantage of what has worked, and stop pursuing approaches that do not work.

For this argument also, 65% found it convincing, but a lesser 16% found it very convincing. Equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats found it convincing.

The argument that did least well in this group still got a substantial majority that found it at least somewhat convincing. It focused on the expectations of the many other countries that are now involved in the sanctions on Iran:

We need to remember that the system of sanctions on Iran requires the cooperation of other countries, who want the US to negotiate a deal with Iran so that we limit their nuclear program, allowing us to move away from the sanctions that harm their own economies too. If the US ramps up sanctions and pulls out of the negotiations now, when Iran says it is ready to make a deal, other countries will get annoyed and probably resume trading with Iran. The whole system of sanctions on Iran may well unravel, and then it will be even harder to get a deal with Iran. But if we show we would accept a deal that can be fully verified, these other countries are more apt to stick with us.

Sixty-one percent found this argument convincing (16% very). It was unconvincing to 36% (8% very). Partisan differences were minimal.

Evaluation of Options Separately

Both before and after hearing the pro and con arguments, respondents were asked to evaluate each policy option separately in terms of how acceptable or tolerable they would find it if the US pursued that approach. Before hearing pro and con arguments, negotiating limited enrichment was found acceptable by just under half and ‘just tolerable’ by a third, with those finding it acceptable rising several points after hearing the arguments. The option of increasing sanctions in hopes of stopping enrichment did not do as well: it was initially found acceptable by a third and ‘just tolerable’ by three in ten, with the number finding it acceptable dropping several points after the pro and con arguments.

To gain an understanding of the respondents' reactions to the two proposals in the course of their deliberative process, they were asked to respond separately to each position in terms of how they would feel if that policy were to be pursued, but without having to choose between them. They were asked to rate each one on a 0-to-10 scale, in which 0 meant very unacceptable 10 meant very acceptable and 5 meant “just tolerable.” They were asked these questions at two points:

first, after the briefing but before evaluating the arguments; and second, after the arguments but before making their final recommendation.

After the Briefing, Before the Arguments

For the position of negotiating limited enrichment, 46% initially rated this position as acceptable (6 or higher) and another 32% rated it as just tolerable. Twenty-one percent rated it as not acceptable (4 or lower). The mean score was 5.6, with Republicans at 5.6, Democrats at 5.7, and independents 5.4.

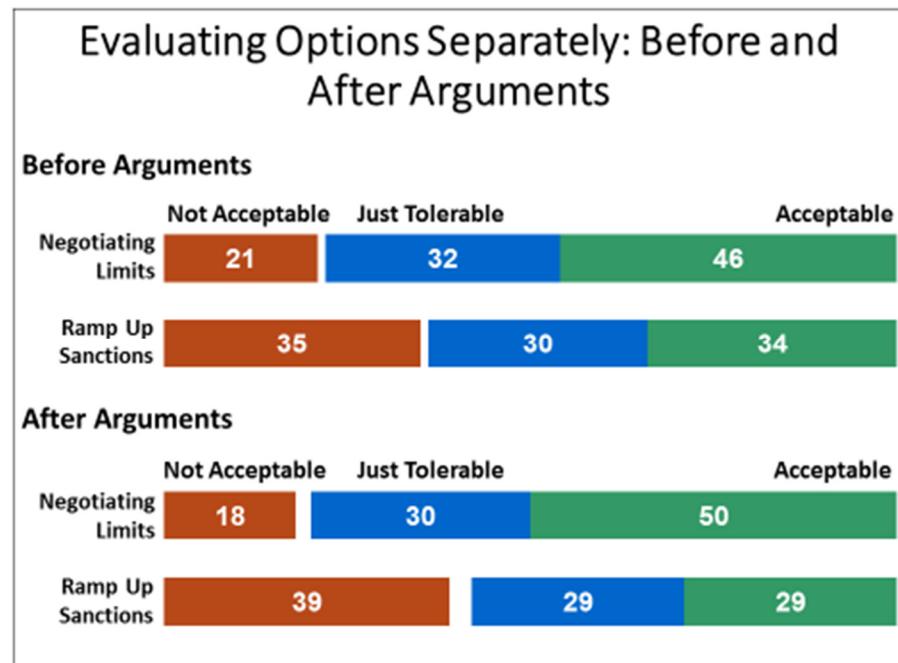
On the second proposal, increasing sanctions to pursue zero enrichment, 34% percent found it acceptable while 30% found it just tolerable. Thirty-five percent rated it as not acceptable. The mean score was 5.1, with Republicans at 5.4, Democrats at 4.9 and independents at 5.0.

Thus before hearing arguments, while the negotiations-based position was better favored, both had majorities that viewed them as at least tolerable, while neither had majorities.

After the Arguments

Overall the effect of hearing the arguments seemed to move views a bit more positively to the option of negotiation. Those finding the position of negotiating limited enrichment acceptable rose four points to 50%, while those finding it just tolerable diminished two points to 30%. Those regarding it as not acceptable declined three points to 18%. The mean response rose from 5.6 to 5.9, with Republicans at 5.9, Democrats at 6.0, and independents at 5.5.

On the second proposal of pursuing zero enrichment through more sanctions, those rating it as acceptable declined five points to 29%, while those finding it unacceptable rose four points to 39%. The percentage finding it just tolerable was essentially unchanged, declining one point to 29%. The mean rating dropped from 5.1 to 4.8, with Republicans at 4.9, Democrats at 4.7, and independents at 4.6.



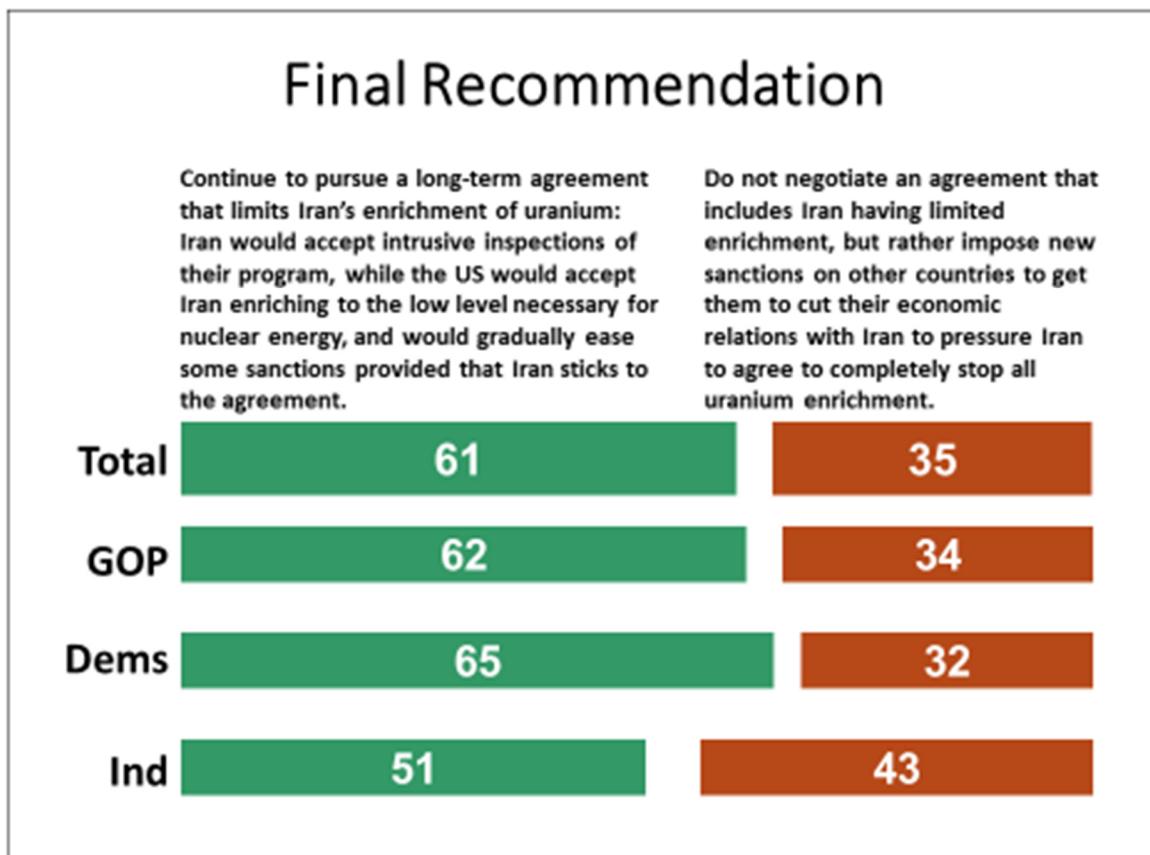
Final Recommendation

Asked for their final recommendation between the options, a six in ten majority recommended making a deal that allows limited uranium enrichment rather than ramping up sanctions in an effort to get Iran to terminate all enrichment. More than six in ten Republicans and Democrats took this position, as well just over half of independents. Those with higher levels of education were substantially more supportive.

Finally, respondents were asked to make a definitive choice between the two positions. Both positions were re-presented to them in full and in exactly the same language as before (see graph).

Sixty-one percent recommended continuing to pursue a long-term agreement that limits Iran's enrichment of uranium. Substantially fewer—35%—chose the position of not negotiating such an agreement, but rather imposing new sanctions.

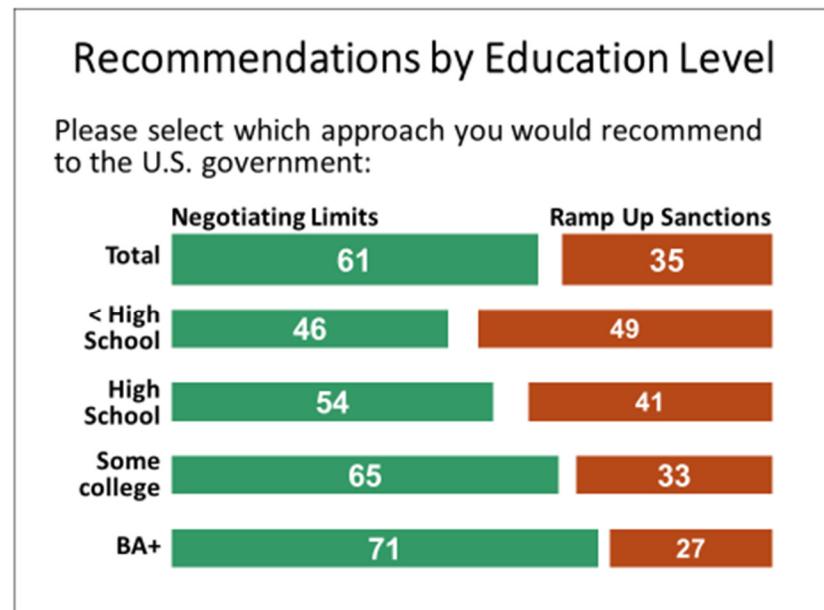
Majorities of Republicans, Democrats and independents all made this same judgment. There were only slight partisan differentiations; Republicans chose continuing negotiations by 62 to 34% while Democrats by 65 to 32%. Independents were relatively more divided at 51 to 43% (6% of this group did not answer).



People who lived in red Congressional districts (represented by a Republican) were not statistically different from those who lived in blue districts (represented by a Democrat). Majorities favored negotiating limited enrichment in red districts by 60 to 36%, while in blue districts the ratio was 62 to 35%.

Of all the demographic variables the most powerful was education. Those with less than high school education were divided, while support for negotiating limited enrichment rose with each level of education. Among those with a bachelor's degree or higher support was 71%. Whites were more supportive than African-Americans or Hispanics, but this was largely derived from the differences in education. Similarly, those who reported having some knowledge about the Non-Proliferation Treaty were significantly more supportive than those who did not know about it.

In terms of knowledge about existing constraints on Iran's nuclear program, respondents who knew at least a little about the NPT were significantly more likely to choose the negotiated limits option than those who knew nothing at all about it. Interestingly, there was not a significant difference between respondents who knew that Iran has a legal obligation under the NPT not to pursue nuclear weapons and those who did not know this.



US-Iran Cooperation on Iraq

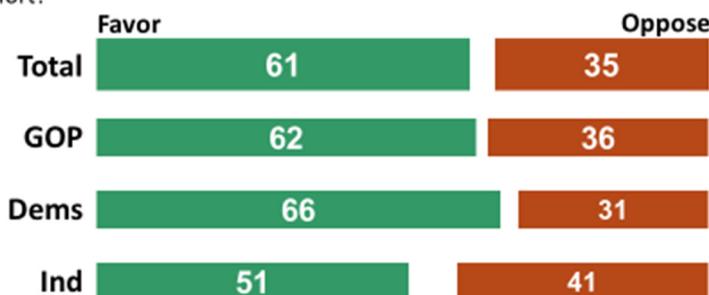
Six in ten favor the US and Iran working together to address the current crisis in Iraq.

After going through the consultation and making their final recommendation, respondents were asked a question about the unrest in Iraq current at the time of fielding. The question began by reminding respondents of Iraq's situation: As you may know, a militant group formerly associated with Al Qaeda has taken over a substantial portion of Iraq. The US is providing support to the Iraqi government to help them counter this group. Iran also supports the current government of Iraq and has indicated a willingness to cooperate with the United States to help the Iraqi government regain control. Would you favor or oppose the US cooperating with Iran in this effort?

Sixty-one percent favored such a step on the US' part, with no meaningful partisan difference (62% of Republicans, 66% of Democrats). A third (35%) were opposed.

Possible US-Iran Cooperation on Iraq

As you may know, a militant group formerly associated with Al Qaeda, has taken over a substantial portion of Iraq. The US is providing support to the Iraqi government to help them counter this group. Iran also supports the current government of Iraq and has indicated a willingness to cooperate with the United States to help the Iraqi government regain control. Would you favor or oppose the US cooperating with Iran in this effort?



Confidence-Building Measures

Very large majorities favor a variety of confidence-building measures: direct talks between the US and Iran on issues of mutual concern; greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges; and providing more access to each other's journalists. A more modest majority also favors greater trade, but views are divided on having more Americans and Iranians visiting each other's countries as tourists.

Very large majorities favored a number of possible confidence-building measures between the US and Iran. A striking 82% favored direct talks between the US and Iran on issues of mutual concern, with little partisan difference. This is consistent with the response to a question about cooperating on dealing with the situation in Iraq, discussed above.

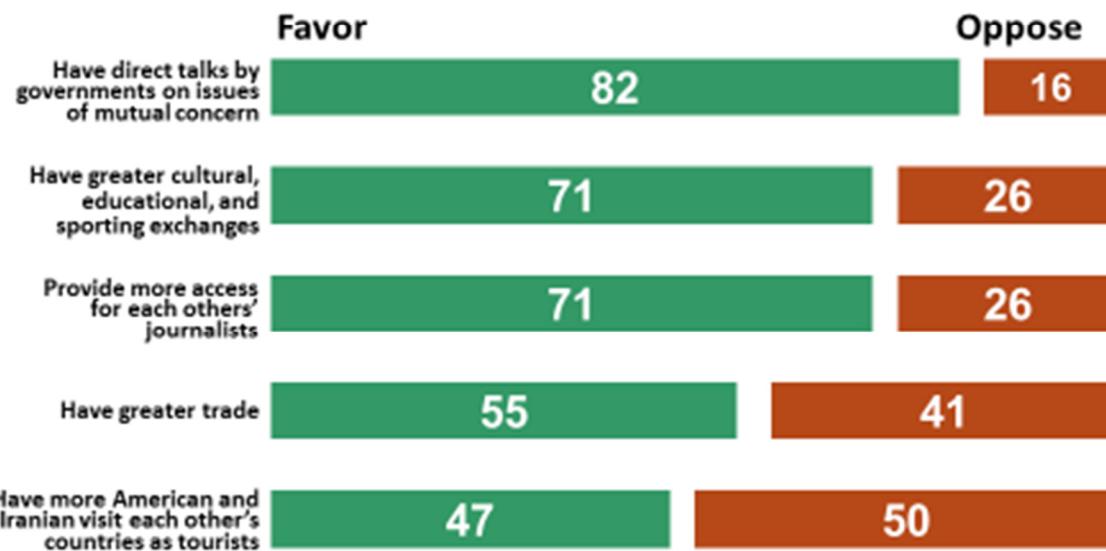
Seventy-one percent favored greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges. The same number favored providing more access to each other's journalists.

A more modest majority of 55% favored greater trade. Curiously, this is fewer than the majority that supported seeking a deal that would result in lifting sanctions and thus increasing trade. The context of a nuclear agreement may be necessary to garner such a larger majority.

Views were divided on having more Americans and Iranians visiting each other's countries as tourists. Just under half (47%) favored it, while 50% were opposed. This may be related to fears of spies posing as tourists.

Confidence Building Measures

Here are a number of steps that some people have proposed to improve relations between the United States and Iran.



Views of Iranian Government and Relations Between Islam and the West

Interestingly, support for cooperative measures between the US and Iran is high, though a large majority has a negative view of the Iranian government and nearly half say that the Islamic and Western traditions are not compatible and reject the view that it is possible to find common ground.

After making their final recommendation on what US policy should be regarding Iran's nuclear program, respondents were asked broader questions relating to US-Iran relations. Asked their opinion of the current Iranian government, four in five (79%) said they had an unfavorable view (31% very unfavorable), while just 19% said their view was favorable (2% very). While this is undoubtedly chilly, it represents a slight thaw from responses to the same question in the Ahmadinejad years, when 43% rather than 31% held a very unfavorable view (PIPA 2006).

Respondents were asked to think about the broader picture of relations between Islamic and Western societies in the following question:

Which position is closer to yours: a) Islamic and Western religious and social traditions are incompatible with each other; or b) Most people in the West and the Islamic world have similar needs and wants, so it is possible to find common ground?

A slim majority selected the second position that common ground is possible—52%, with 46% saying the two traditions are incompatible. This response showed clear partisan differences, with 65% of Democrats saying it is possible to find common ground but only 38% of Republicans taking this position. When asked by PIPA in 2006 there was a divided response to this question.

Those who thought that common ground is possible were more likely to favor negotiating limits (71%). Nonetheless, even among those who said that the two traditions are incompatible, a modest majority (52%) also favored negotiations.

Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Seven in ten favor a Middle East nuclear weapons free zone that would include Israel as well as Islamic countries, and three in four favor the general goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons.

After making their final recommendation on what US policy should be regarding Iran's nuclear program, respondents were asked about possible further steps on nuclear arms control. Asked whether they favored or opposed "the idea of having a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East that would include both Islamic countries and Israel," a large 69% majority favored this, with 32% favoring it strongly. Twenty-eight percent were opposed (12% strongly).

Majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and independents were in accord in supporting a Middle East nuclear weapons free zone, at 68%, 75%, and 59% respectively.

The majority in support was statistically no different than the 71% that supported it when the question was last asked by PIPA in 2006. However, there has been some drop in enthusiasm. At that time, 41% were strongly in favor of a nuclear weapons free zone, compared to 32% in this study.

On the broader question of the long-term goal of eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons—which is envisioned in the NPT—three-quarters (77%) favored this goal, with 20% opposed. This included 72% of both Republicans and independents, plus 83% of Democrats. While quite large, this support has declined slightly since PIPA's 2006 poll, when 82% were in favor and 14% opposed.