



Afghanistan One Year Later: What Does America Really Think?

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One year after the surrender, Americans remain deeply unsettled about the end of the war: Last September, TIPP did some of the earliest polling on how Americans viewed the fall of Afghanistan. This data revealed strong concerns about the potential for Afghanistan to be a base for future terrorist attacks against the United States, a desire to retain counter-terrorism capabilities in the country, and a disinclination to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan (although there was a stronger partisan split on this question with 40% liberals likely to support the move as opposed to only 13% of conservatives).

Earlier this month, TIPP revisited the topic in anticipation of the one-year anniversary of the end of America's "longest war" with three questions on whether or not the fall of Afghanistan was a "generational setback" for the United States, on whether or not the fall of Afghanistan encouraged Vladimir Putin to invade Ukraine, and on whether or not Afghanistan might be exploited for future terrorist attacks on the United States.

A majority of Americans (53%) agreed that the fall of Afghanistan was indeed a "generational setback" for the United States. Although conservatives were more likely to agree at 64% versus 47% of moderates and 45% of liberals, for no group did a majority disagree with the statement.

The Fall Of Afghanistan Was A Generational Strategic Setback For The U.S.



Q: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: The fall of Afghanistan was a generational strategic setback for the United States. TIPP Poll, 8/2-8/4/22, n=1,355 adults, Online survey, +/-2.8 PTS

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Views on a connection between the fall of Afghanistan and Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine in light of perceived American weakness fall on similar lines, with about a half of respondents agreeing and a quarter disagreeing. Again, there was a partisan split with 59% of conservatives agreeing compared to 42% of moderates and 43% of liberals.

The Fall Of Afghanistan Emboldened Vladimir Putin To Invade Ukraine



Q: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: The fall of Afghanistan emboldened Vladimir Putin to invade Ukraine. TIPP Poll, 8/2-8/4/22, n=1,355 adults, Online survey, +/-2.8 PTS

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On the final question, regarding concerns about a future terrorist attack on the United States from Afghanistan, however, there was far greater unity with a majority of all three groups agreeing. Only 11% of conservatives, 17% of moderates and 27% of liberals disagreed, indicating that even as we approach the 21st anniversary of the 911 attacks, those memories remain fresh.

Concerns About A Taliban-Led Afghanistan Being Used As A Base For A Terrorist Attack On The U.S.



Q: How concerned are you about a Taliban-led Afghanistan being used as a base for a future terrorist attack on the United States? TIPP Poll, 8/2-8/4/22, n=1,355 adults, Online survey, +/-2.8 PTS



Notably, for the first two questions, roughly a quarter of those polled responded they were not sure, suggesting a significant number are still processing the ramifications of the end of the war in Afghanistan. But for the third question on concerns about future attacks that number dropped to 8%, including 5% of conservatives and 6% of liberals, clearly indicating this is a major worry for most Americans.

The TIPP polling was done before the strike on Ayman al Zawahiri, the head of al Qaeda, who moved into a former USAID villa in Kabul after the U.S. departed. While the Biden administration tried to frame the strike as a vindication of their claims that they would retain “over the horizon” counter-terrorism capabilities, it could also be understood as an indication of how very permissive an environment for terrorism has been created by the Taliban, and it will be interesting to see what future data reveals.

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