

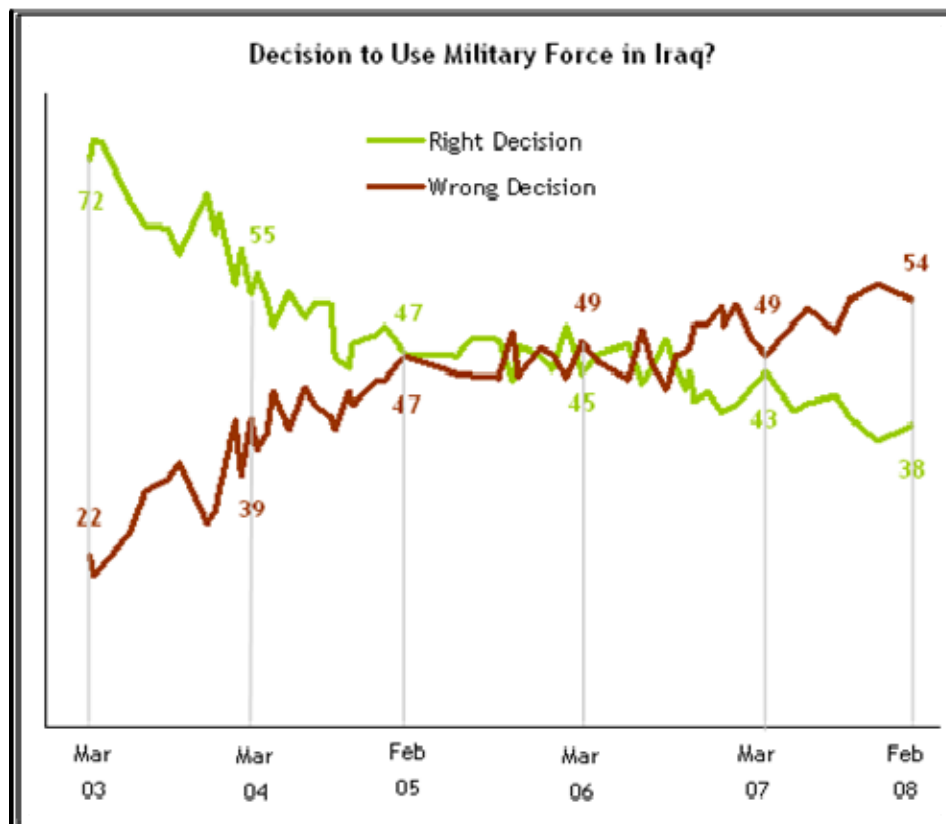


# Public Attitudes Toward the War in Iraq: 2003-2008

March 19, 2008

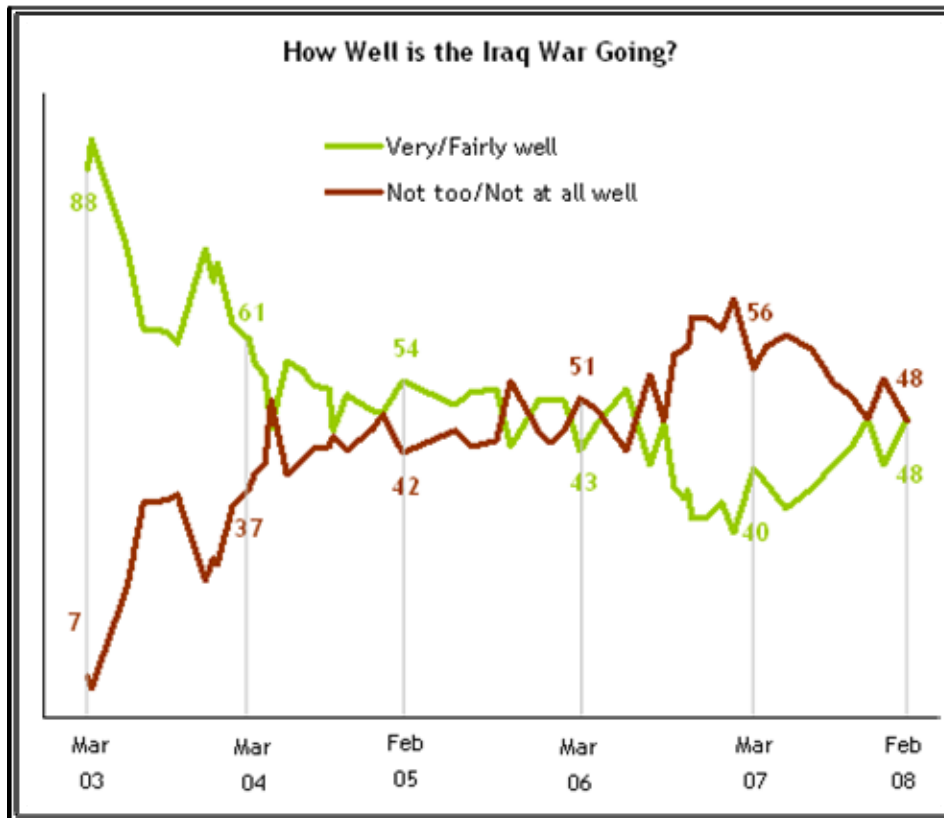
Five years after the start of the conflict in Iraq, many public evaluations of the situation in Iraq have turned more positive. But there has been no turnaround in the public's opinion about the original decision to take military action in Iraq. While ratings of how things are going in Iraq have improved over the past year and more Americans now say the United States should keep troops there, the proportion saying the initial decision to go to war was wrong has increased since the spring of 2007.

In Pew's latest national survey, conducted Feb. 20-24 among 1,508 adults, a 54% majority said the U.S. made the wrong decision in using military force in Iraq, while 38% said it was the right decision. Last March, 49% said the decision to go to war was wrong, while 43% said it was right. During the third and fourth years of the conflict public opinion on this question was divided, while in the war's first two years clear majorities backed the decision to use force in Iraq.



The decrease in support for the decision to go to war has occurred despite a dramatically improved perception of how the effort in Iraq is going. In Pew's latest survey, as many Americans say the military

situation in Iraq is going well as say it is not going well (48% each). In February 2007, fully two-thirds (67%) said the war in Iraq was not going well - the largest percentage expressing this view since the war began. The current division on this question is comparable to public perceptions through most of the second and third years of the conflict, while evaluations turned decidedly negative during the fourth year.



Americans continue to be divided on whether to keep troops in Iraq or bring them home. A slim plurality of Americans (49%) now supports bringing the troops home as soon as possible, while 47% favor maintaining troops in Iraq until the situation there is stabilized. A year ago, a narrow majority (52%) favored a troop withdrawal as soon as possible, compared with 43% who favored keeping the troops in Iraq. Public support for a troop pullout peaked at 56% in June 2007. The percentage favoring withdrawing the troops as soon as possible is at its lowest level since mid-January 2007 (48%).

### Should U.S. Keep Troops in Iraq?

