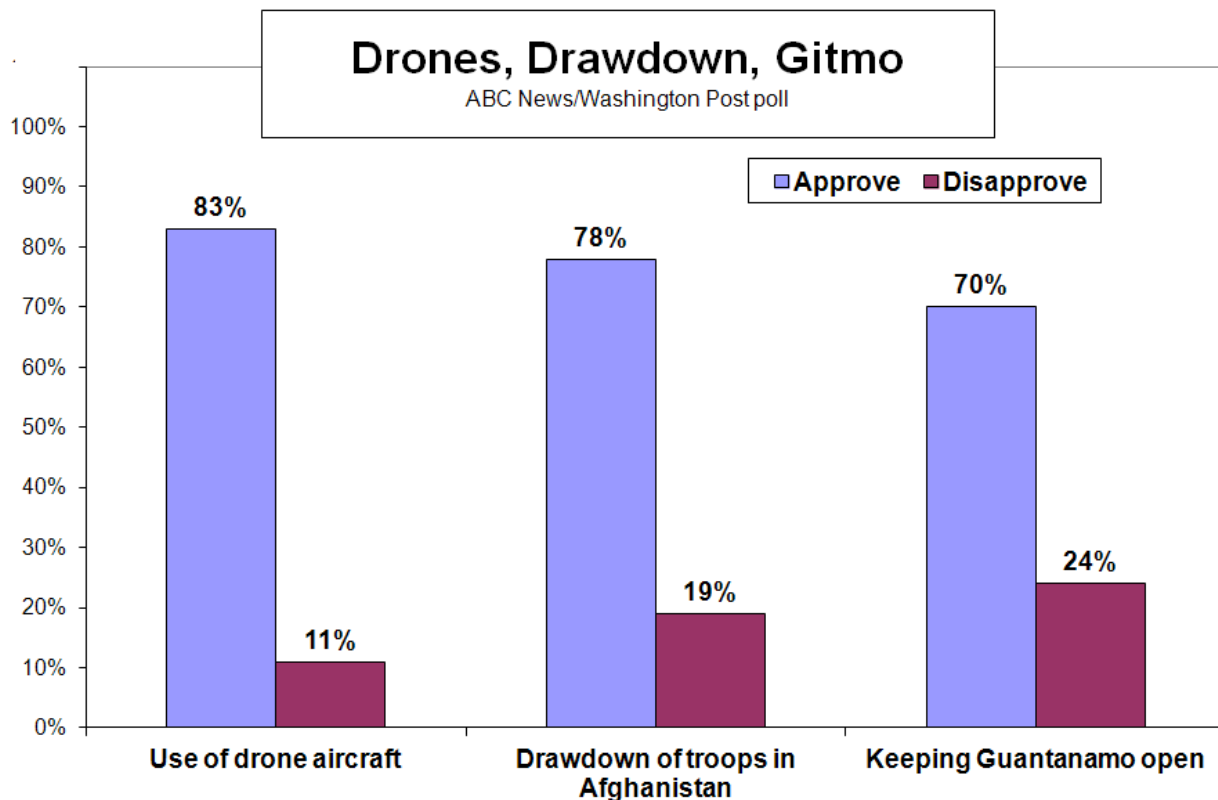


Drones, Gitmo and Drawdown Give Obama Foreign Policy Cred

Barack Obama is drawing strength from an unexpected area as he gears for his re-election campaign, benefiting from military and anti-terrorism policies that have been controversial in some quarters – but are broadly popular with the public overall.

Eighty-three percent of Americans in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll approve of Obama’s use of unmanned drones against terrorist suspects, 78 percent back the drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and 70 percent favor keeping open the Guantanamo Bay detention center – the latter a reversal by Obama of his 2008 campaign position.

Strength of sentiment also is very much on the positive side. Strong approval far outpaces strong disapproval, by 55 points on drones (59-4 percent), 47 points on troop withdrawal (56-9 percent) and 29 points on keeping Gitmo running (42-13 percent).



Two-thirds in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), also favor the use of unmanned drones specifically against American citizens in other countries who are terrorist suspects – potentially touchier legal territory.

DIVIDE – These fit a divide on Obama’s presidency: Given the difficult economy at home, he’s been consistently better-rated on foreign affairs in general, and anti-terrorism efforts in particular, even before the killing of Osama bin Laden last spring.

In a [January ABC/Post poll](#), 56 percent approved of Obama’s handling of the threat of terrorism, 49 percent of his work on international affairs more generally - his top-rated issues, and the only two areas in which approval outweighed disapproval. He’s never been below majority approval on terrorism, hitting a high of 69 percent after bin Laden’s death.

Moreover, other results from this poll, [released Monday](#), found that Obama leads Mitt Romney by wide margins – about 20 points – both in trust to handle terrorism and international affairs (56-36 percent and 56-37 percent, respectively). That’s better than Obama’s showing against Romney across a range of domestic issues save one, protecting the middle class.

These strengths are unexpected for Obama. He scored relatively weakly against John McCain in the 2008 campaign in trust to handle terrorism and international affairs. Still, Obama did improve on each of these during his last campaign: On terrorism he trailed by as many as 25 points, but closed at a dead heat; on international affairs trailed by as many as 12 points, but at one point went +2. He also trailed McCain by as many as 43 points in preference as commander-in-chief of the military, later closing to a still-distant 19-point deficit.

PARTY – Despite broad approval across these policies, there is variation along partisan and ideological lines. Troop withdrawal, for example, clearly plays less well among strong conservatives, while liberals are less apt to endorse keeping Gitmo open.

Agree-disagree by party identification and ideology

	Drone use	Afghan withdrawal	Gitmo open
All	83-11%	78-19	70-24
Democrats	79-13	93-5	62-32
Republicans	91-5	64-33	78-15
Independents	81-14	74-23	73-23
Liberals	77-18	87-12	56-39
Moderates	83-11	85-14	73-22
Somewhat conservatives	85-8	72-25	76-22
Very conservatives	90-6	58-36	77-15
Liberal Democrats	77-18	92-8	53-41
Conservative Republicans	92-4	55-41	81-13

Notably, a mere 5 percent of Republicans disagree, and a remarkable three-quarters “strongly” agree, with the use of drones against terrorism suspects – while the exact same numbers of Democrats feel the same on the issue of a troop drawdown in Afghanistan.

There’s still a challenge for Obama: Barring an international crisis, elections tend to be about domestic issues – especially, in these times, the economy, an area in which he’s far more vulnerable.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Feb. 1-4, 2012, among a random national sample of 1,000 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 4.0 points for the full sample. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Gregory Holyk.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1-8, 14-40 previously released.

9-12 held for release.

13. Changing topics, thinking about the following decisions of the Obama administration, please tell me whether you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove.

2/4/12 - Summary Table

	--- Approve ----			-- Disapprove --			No
	NET	Str.	Smwt.	NET	Smwt.	Str.	op.
a. Keeping open the prison at Guantanamo Bay for terrorist suspects	70	42	28	24	12	13	5
b. The drawdown of U.S. troops from Afghanistan	78	56	23	19	10	9	2
c. The use of unmanned, “drone” aircraft against terrorist suspects overseas	83	59	23	11	7	4	6

13a. (IF APPROVE OF DRONE AIRCRAFT) What if those suspected terrorists are American citizens living in other countries? In that case do you approve or disapprove of the use of drones?

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
2/4/12	79	17	4

13/13a NET:

	Approve	NET	----- Disapprove ----- At first	Now do	No opinion
2/4/12	65	26	12	14	9

*** END ***