

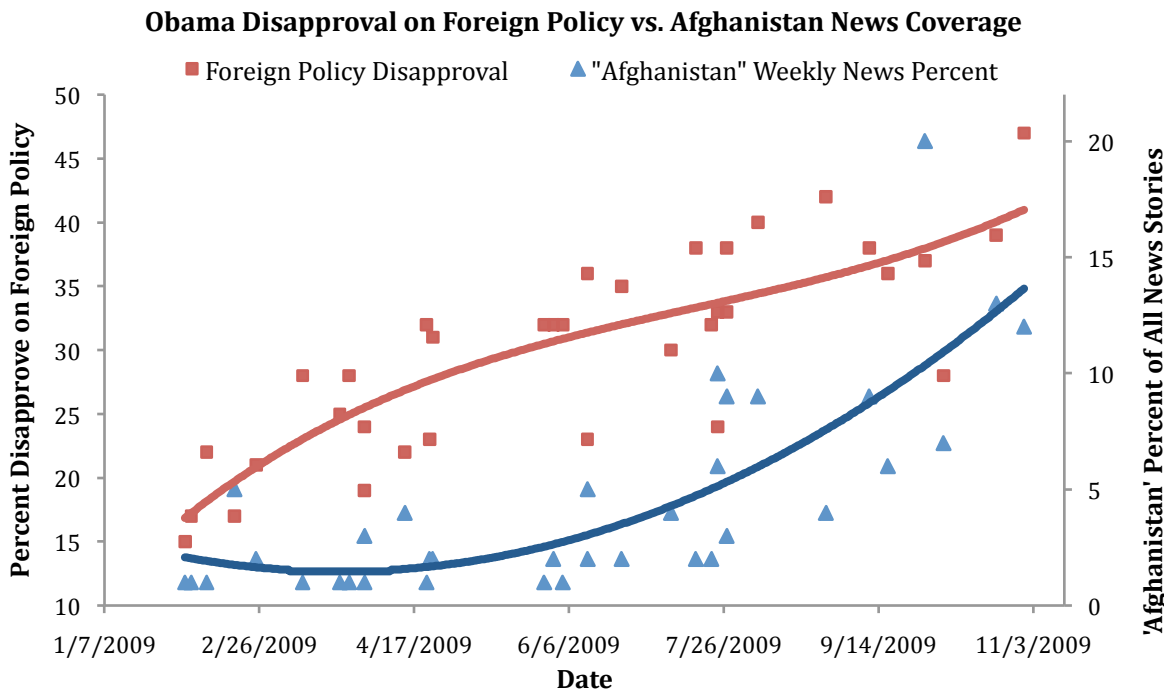
Polling News & Notes

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Obama as a War President: Within the next few days, President Obama will decide whether to adopt Gen. Stanley McChrystal's recommendation to send around 40,000 more U.S. combat troops to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, polling suggests that the worsening situation there may already be costing Obama political support.

After a few months in office, Obama's job approval on foreign policy—an issue obviously broader than Afghanistan alone, but useful to examine because it is asked more frequently in national polls—was among his highest on any issue. A late March *USA Today*/Gallup poll found that 61% of Americans approved of the way Obama was handling foreign policy when he announced a “comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” with just 28% of Americans disapproving. Afghanistan was, however, rarely covered by the news media at that time. Even the week of March 23rd, when Obama rolled out his new strategy, the weekly news index published by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism found that just 5% of all news stories featured Afghanistan.

Yet over the summer, as violence increased in Afghanistan and the country's presidential election was swept up in allegations of fraud, Obama's ratings on foreign policy have steadily worsened. In recent weeks, as many as 20% of all news stories have featured Afghanistan and the president's approval rating on foreign policy has dipped as low as 48%. The graph below shows that as the proportion of news stories featuring Afghanistan has increased, so too has the number of voters who disapprove of how he is handling foreign affairs.



Obama's ratings may begin improving if adopting McChrystal's recommendation and sending more troops produces positive results. Otherwise, Obama may find his poll ratings increasingly defined by Afghanistan, whether he likes it or not.

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