

John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart
Trends in Public Opinion on Terrorism

Posted at politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/terrorpolls.pdf
May 1, 2017

Public opinion trend data on terrorism as discussed in
John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing
of Terrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 2

This file contains the figures in the book, some of them updated,
as well as additional public opinion material

Earlier postings: September 28, 2015, December 8, 2015, January 5, 2016,
March 14, 2016, May 30, 2016, July 16, 2016, December 5, 2016, January 20, 2017

The data in this file are also relevant to the discussions in

John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, "The Terrorism Delusion: America's
Overwrought Response to September 11," *International Security*, Summer 2012
politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/absisfin.pdf

John Mueller, "Never have so few been able to frighten so many," *Philadelphia
Inquirer*, September 9, 2012
articles.philly.com/2012-09-09/news/33714781_1_terrorism-major-attack-poll-respondents

John Mueller and Mark Stewart, "Terrorism In the American Psyche: Why Fears
of Attacks are So Overblown," foreignaffairs.com, December 10, 2015
politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/TNifearopinionFAfin.pdf

John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, "American Public Opinion on Terrorism Since
9/11: Trends and Puzzles," March 8, 2016, presented at the National Convention
of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, March 17, 2016
politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/tpoISA16.pdf

OK City: Terrorist bombing in Oklahoma City
 9/11: Terrorist attacks of September 11
 Iraq: Beginning of the Iraq War
 Saddam: Capture of Saddam Hussein
 Madrid: Terrorist bombings in Madrid
 London: Terrorist bombings in London
 Underwear: Underwear bomber
 OBL: Killing of Osama bin Laden
 Boston: Terrorist bombings at the Boston Marathon
 ISIS: First beheadings of Americans by ISIS
 Paris I: Charlie Hebdo shootings, January 2015
 Paris II: Multiple shootings, November 13, 2015,
 followed by Santa Barbara shootings
 20 days later

Figure 2-1: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? Gallup

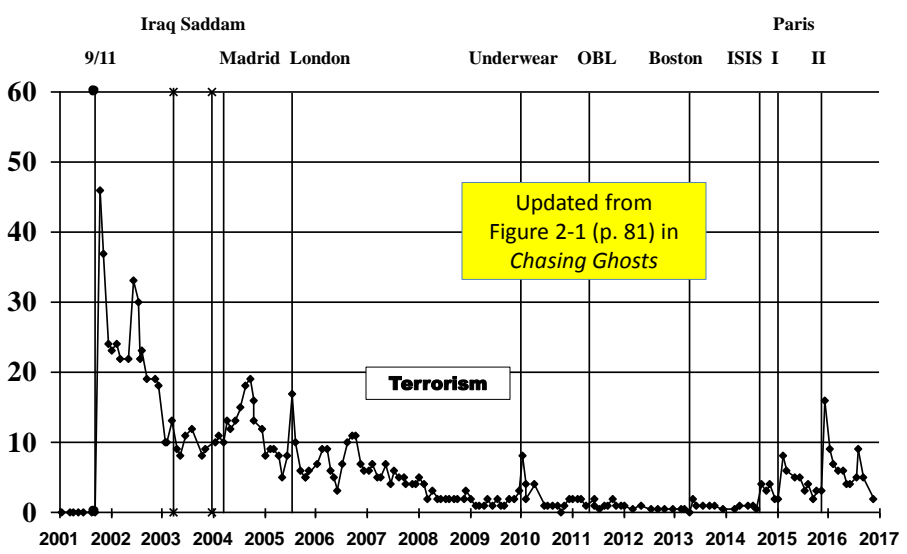


Figure 2-2: How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of terrorism? Very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not worried at all? USA Today/Gallup and CNN/Opinion Research Corporation

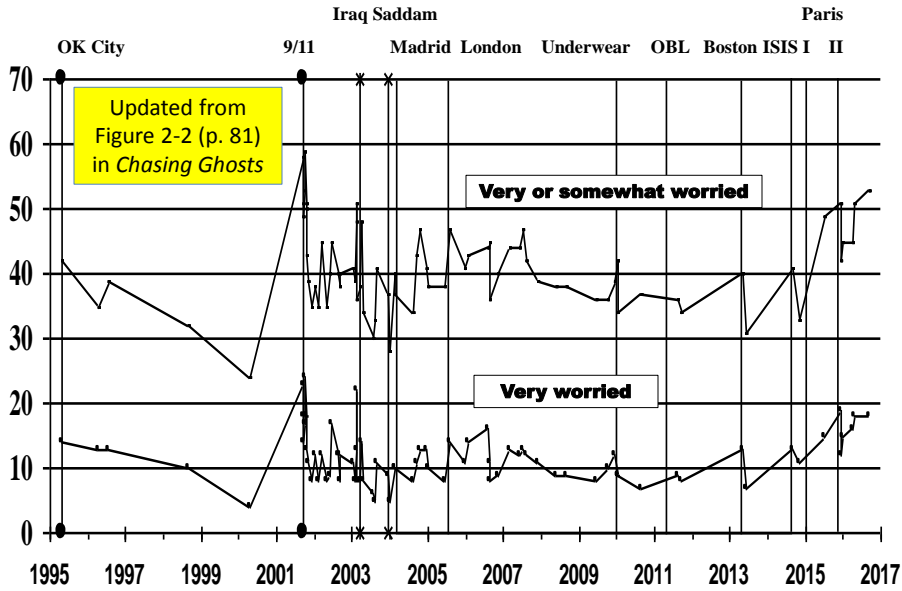


Figure 2-3: How likely do you think it is that another terrorist attack causing large numbers of American lives to be lost will happen in the near future? Fox/Opinion Dynamics

How likely do you think it is that in the near future there will be a terrorist attack in the United States causing large numbers of lives to be lost? Quinnipiac, Washington Post

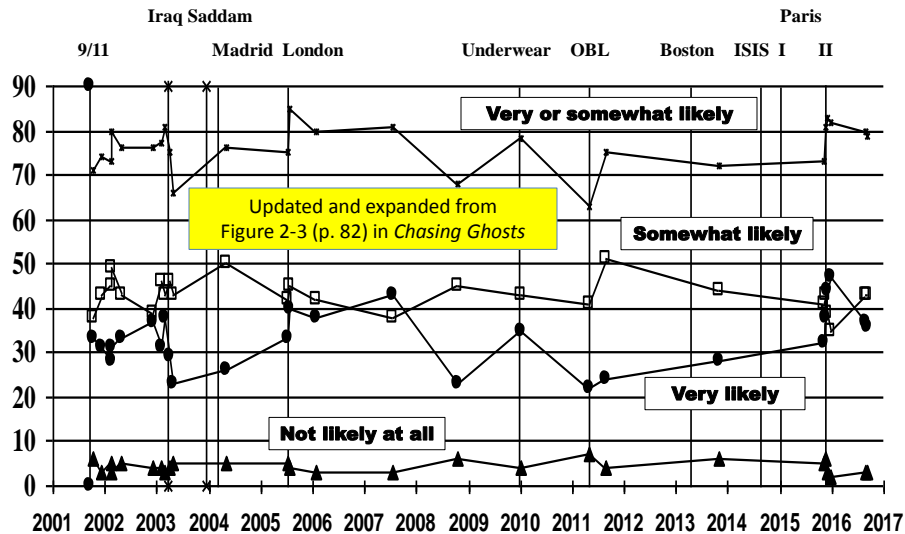


Figure 2-4: Who do you think is currently winning the war on terrorism: the U.S. and its allies, neither side, or the terrorists?

Gallup/CNN/USA Today and CBS/New York Times

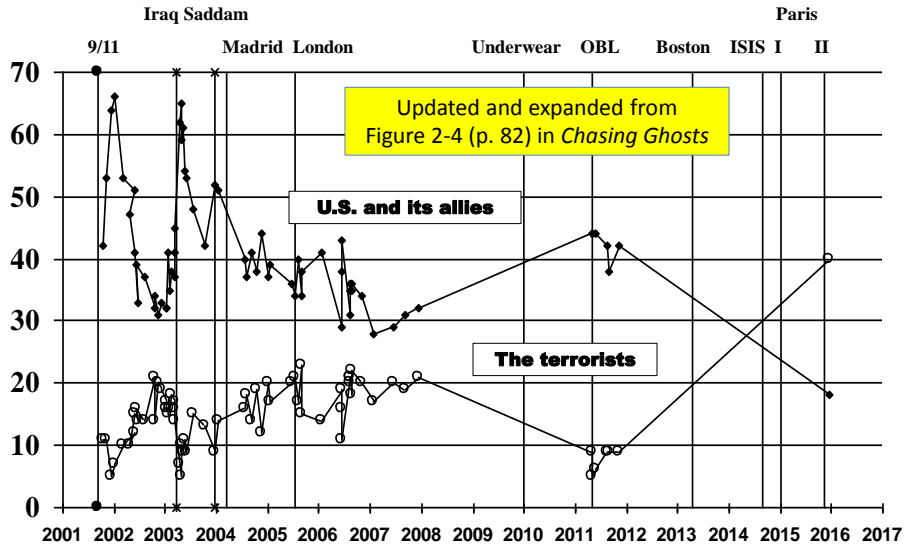


Figure 2-5: Overall, do you think the ability of terrorists to launch another major attack on the U.S. is greater, the same, or less than it was at the time of the September 11th terrorist attacks? Pew

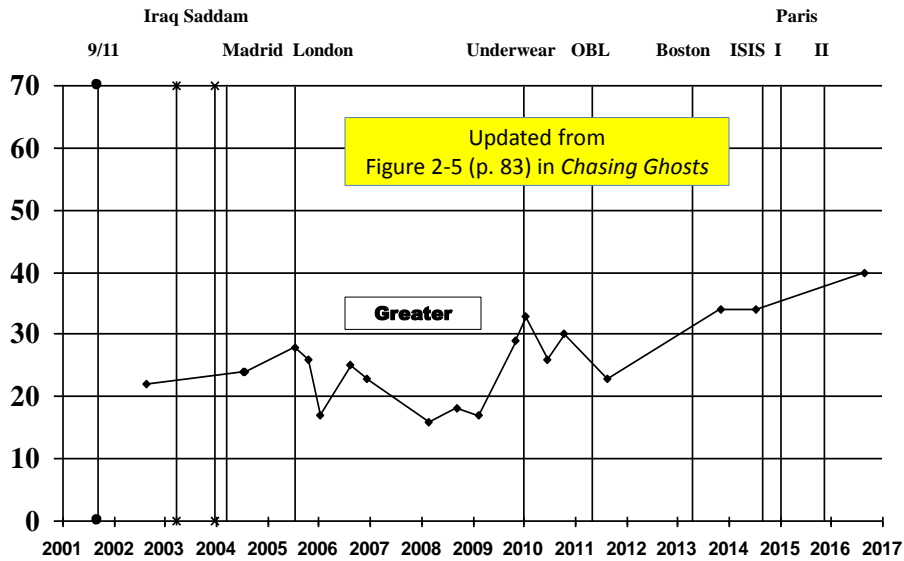


Figure 2-6: How much confidence do you have in the ability of the U.S. government to prevent further terrorist attacks against Americans in this country: a great deal, a good amount, only a fair amount or none at all?

ABC/Washington Post

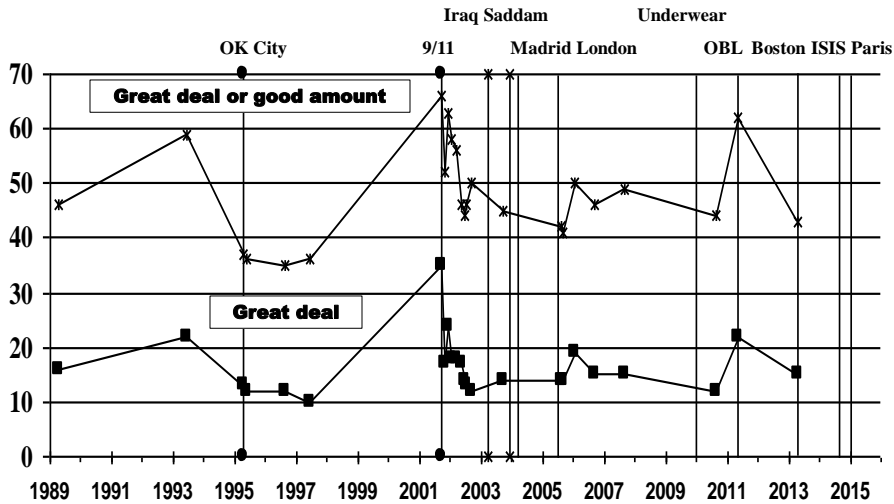


Figure 2-7: How much confidence do you have in the U.S. government to protect its citizens from future acts of terrorism—a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

Gallup

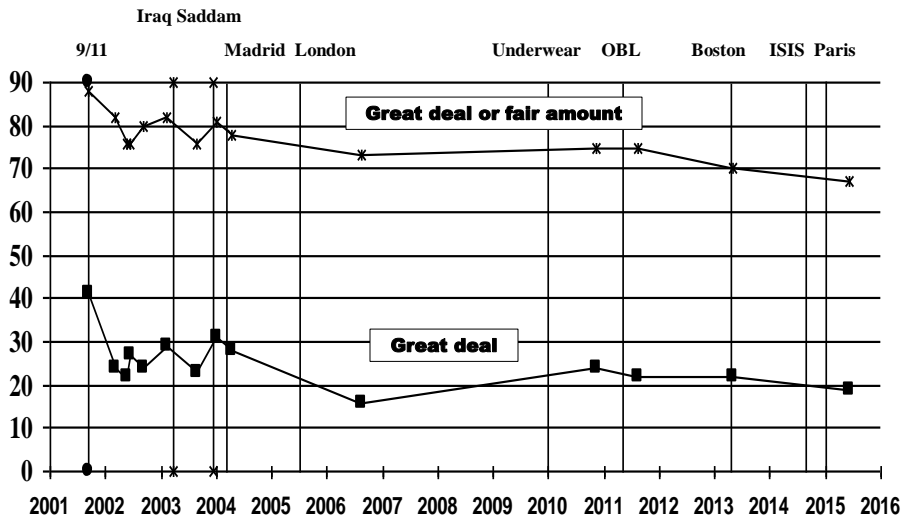


Figure 2-8: A: Compared to before September 11, 2001, do you think the country today is safer from terrorism or less safe from terrorism?

ABC/Washington Post

B: Do you think the United States is safer or less safe today than before 9/11?

Fox/Opinion Dynamics

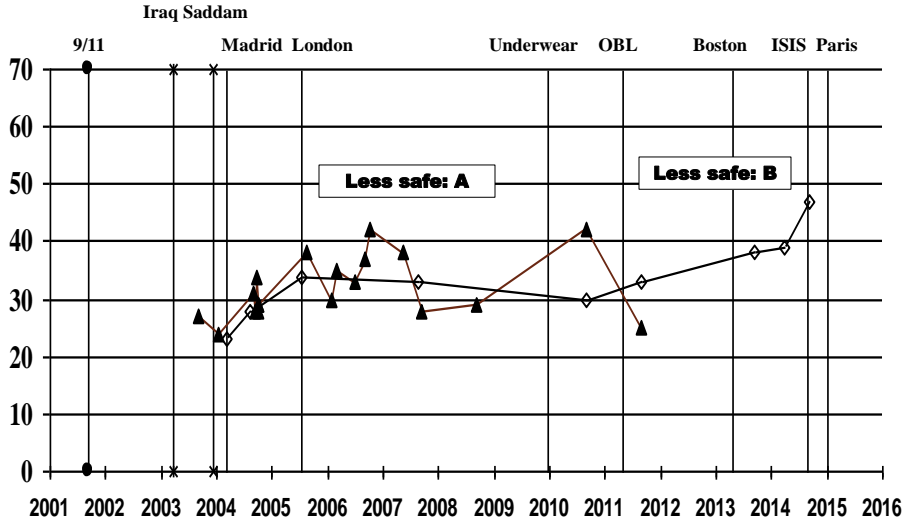


Figure 2-9: Do you think that as a country, we are more safe, about as safe, or less safe than we were before September 11? *NBC/Wall Street Journal*

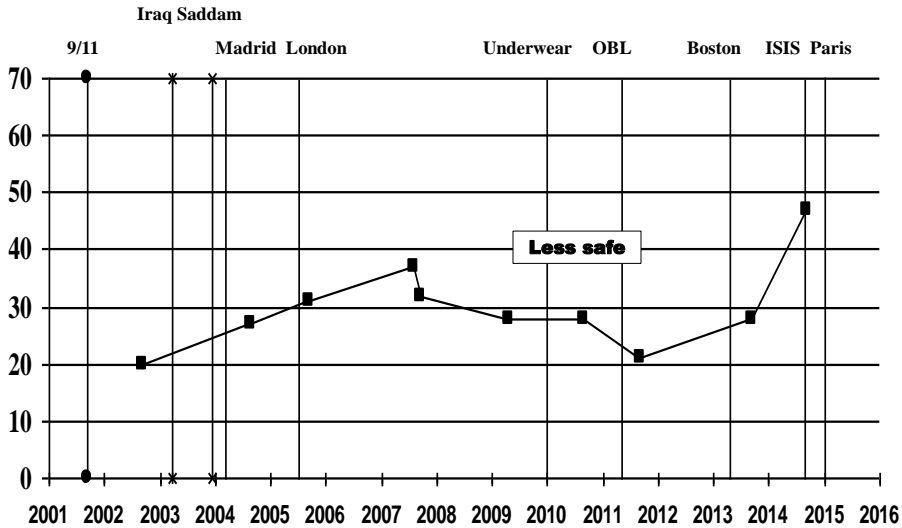


Figure 2-10: What concerns you more about the government's anti-terrorism policies? That they have not gone far enough to adequately protect the country or that they have gone too far in restricting the average person's civil liberties? Pew

What do you think is more important right now: for the federal government [FBI: first 3] to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy; or for the federal government not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats? Options rotated ABC/*Washington Post*

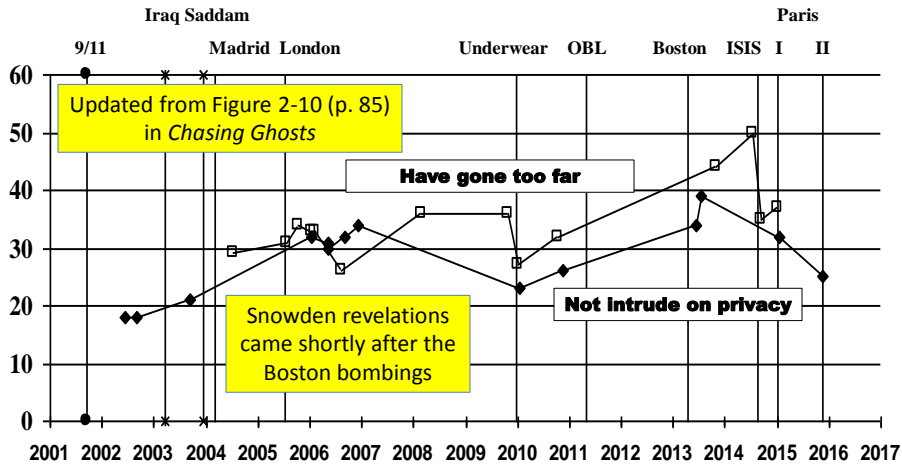


Figure 2-11: Next, I'm going to read a list of problems facing the country. For each one, please tell me if you personally worry about this problem a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or not at all? First, how much do you personally worry about- [read in random order]The possibility of future terrorist attacks in the U.S. Gallup

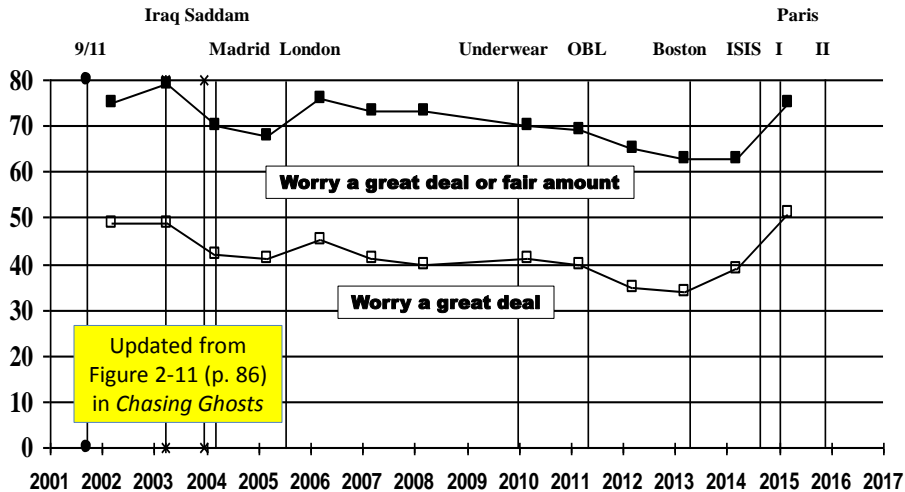


Figure 2-12: How concerned are you about the possibility that there will be more major terrorist attacks in the United States? Is that something that worries you a great deal, somewhat, not too much, or not at all? ABC/Washington Post

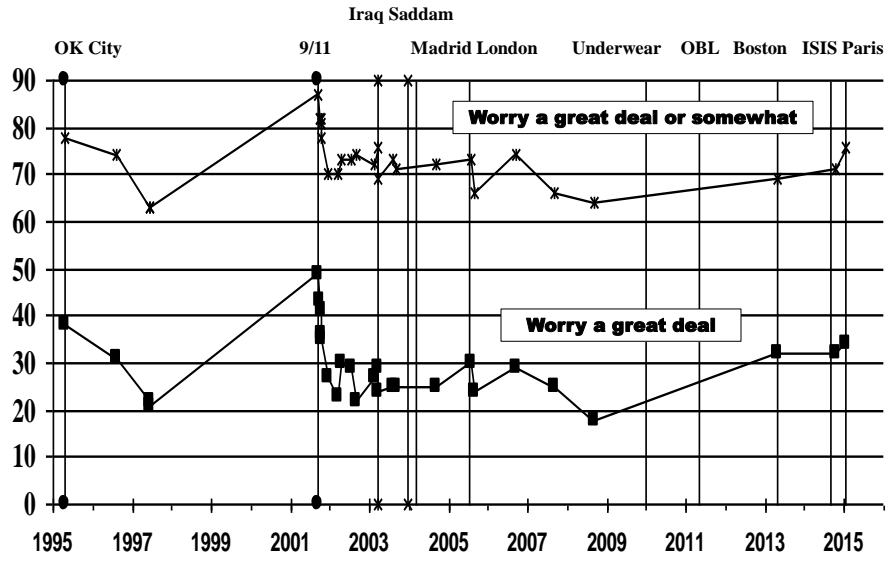


Figure 2-13: Percentage of those with an opinion thinking the wars were not a mistake

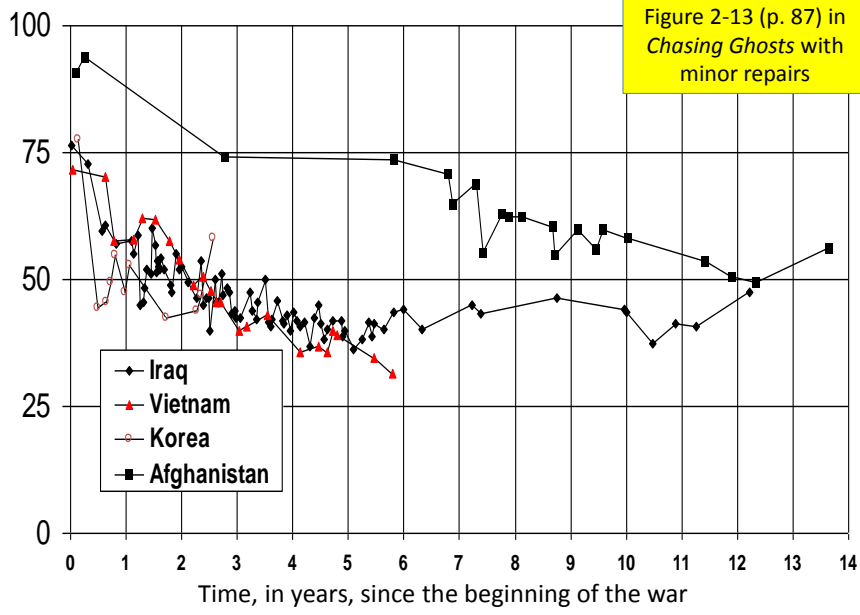
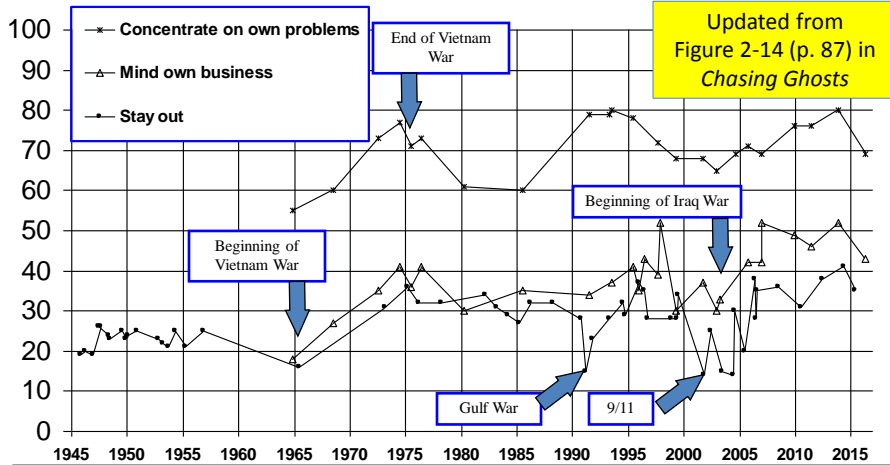


Figure 2-14: Public opinion trends on intervention

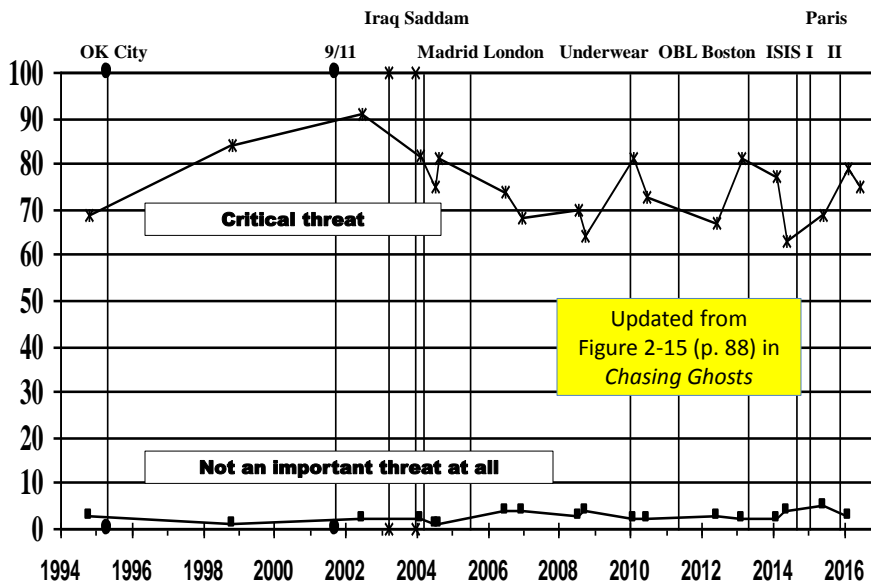


We shouldn't think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems and building up our strength and prosperity here at home.

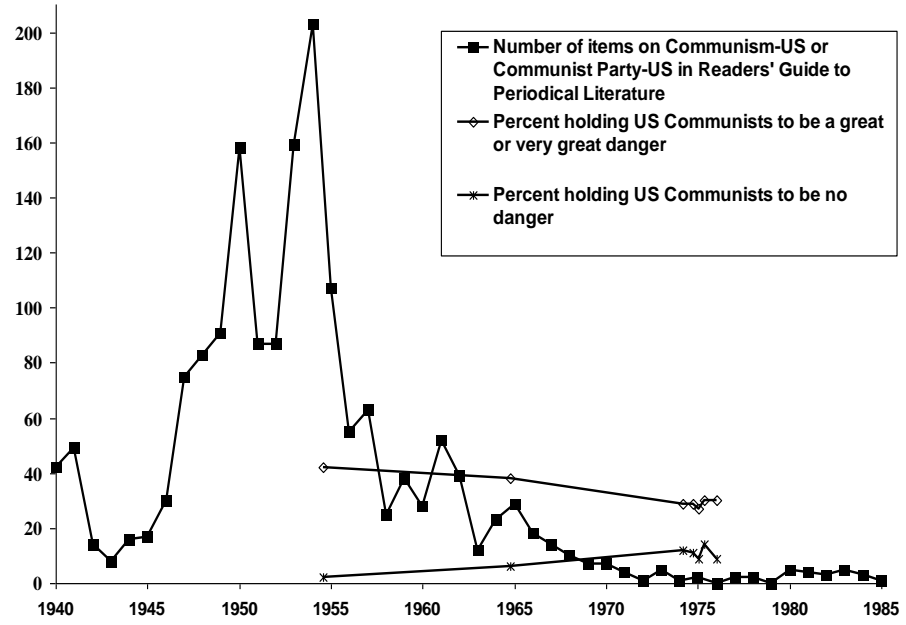
The United States should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along as best they can on their own.

Do you think it will be best for the future of this country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stayed out of world affairs?

Figure 2-15: I am going to read you a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please tell me if you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all....International terrorism Gallup/Worldviews/Globalviews/Chicago Council



**Figure 2-16: Domestic Communism:
press coverage and public fears, 1940-1985**



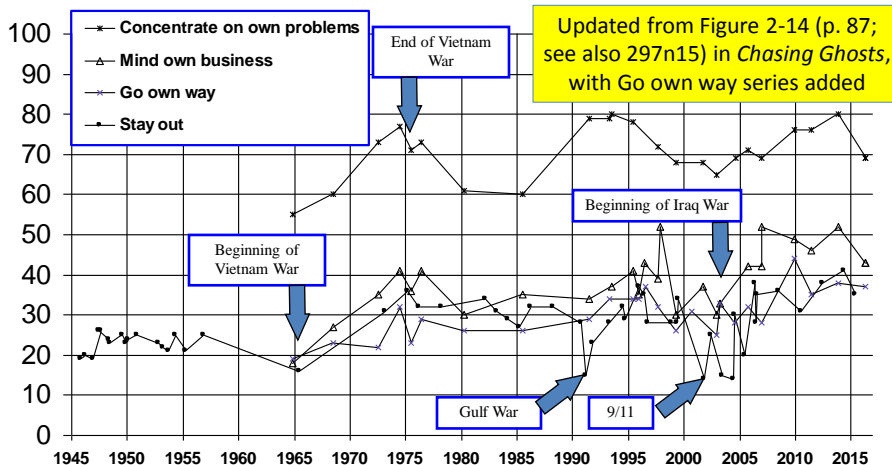
Additional material

Relates to the discussion on p. 60 (and 298n19) in *Chasing Ghosts*

Do you approve or disapprove of the presence of US troops in Bosnia?

| | Approve | Disapprove | Don't know | |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------|------------|------|
| US troops sent in → 1995 Dec 6-7 | 36 | 57 | 7 | 1000 |
| 1995 Dec 15-18 | 41 | 54 | 6 | 1000 |
| 1996 Jan 5-7 | 36 | 58 | 6 | 1000 |
| 1996 Jan 10-11 | 41 | 50 | 9 | 1000 |
| 1996 May 28-29 | 42 | 51 | 7 | 1019 |
| 1996 Jun 12-13 | 44 | 45 | 11 | 1004 |
| 1997 Feb 5-6 | 40 | 54 | 6 | 1227 |
| 1997 Jun 26-29 | 39 | 53 | 8 | 1013 |
| 1997 Nov 12-16 | 50 | 42 | 8 | 1200 |
| 1997 Dec 18-21 | 49 | 43 | 8 | 1005 |
| 1998 Jan | 43 | 50 | 7 | 1218 |
| 1999 Jan | 53 | 43 | 5 | 1004 |
| 1999 Mar 24-28 | 57 | 34 | 9 | 1488 |

Public opinion trends on intervention: four series



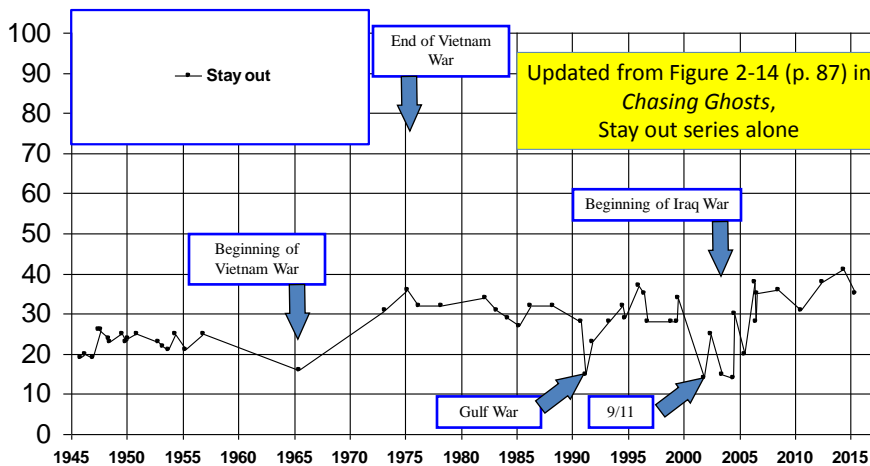
We shouldn't think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems and building up our strength and prosperity here at home.

The United States should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along as best they can on their own.

Since the United States is the most powerful nation in the world, we should go our own way in international matters, not worrying too much about whether other countries agree with us or not.

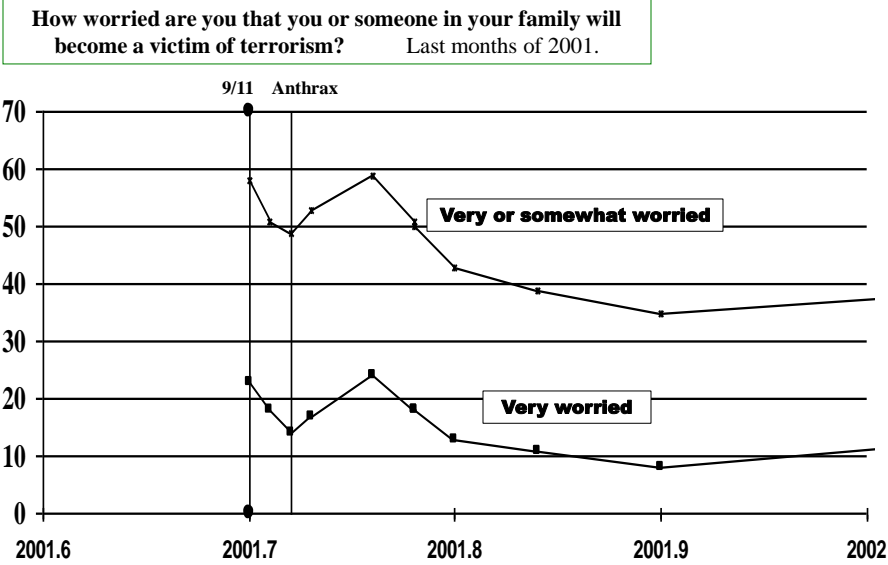
Do you think it will be best for the future of this country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stayed out of world affairs?

Public opinion trends on intervention: one series



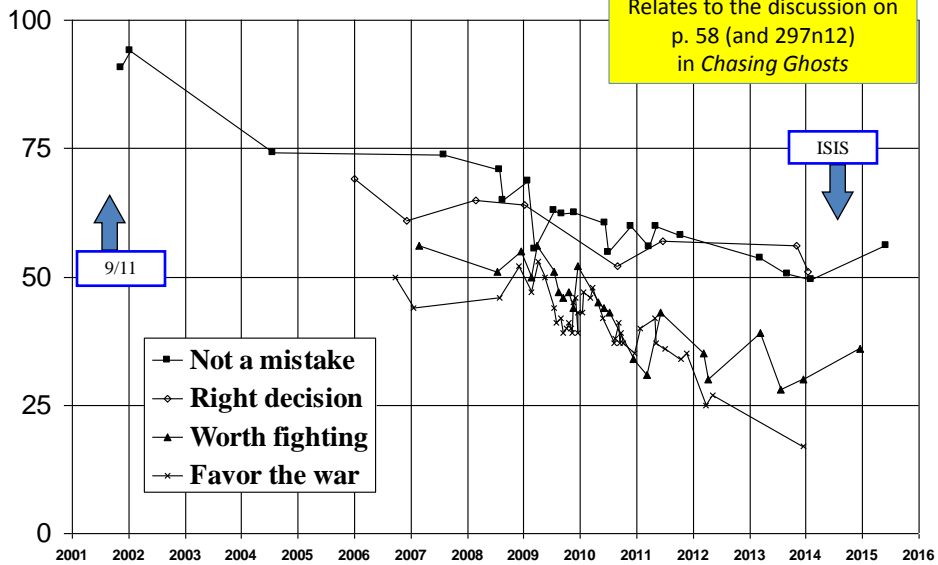
Do you think it will be best for the future of this country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stayed out of world affairs?

Detail from Figure 2-2, relating to the discussion on p. 70 in *Chasing Ghosts*

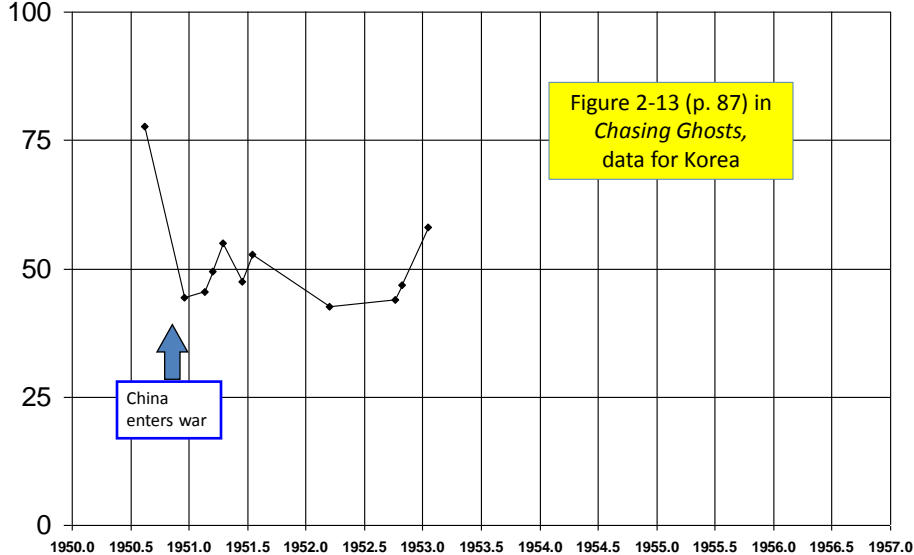


Trends in various questions about supporting the war in Afghanistan

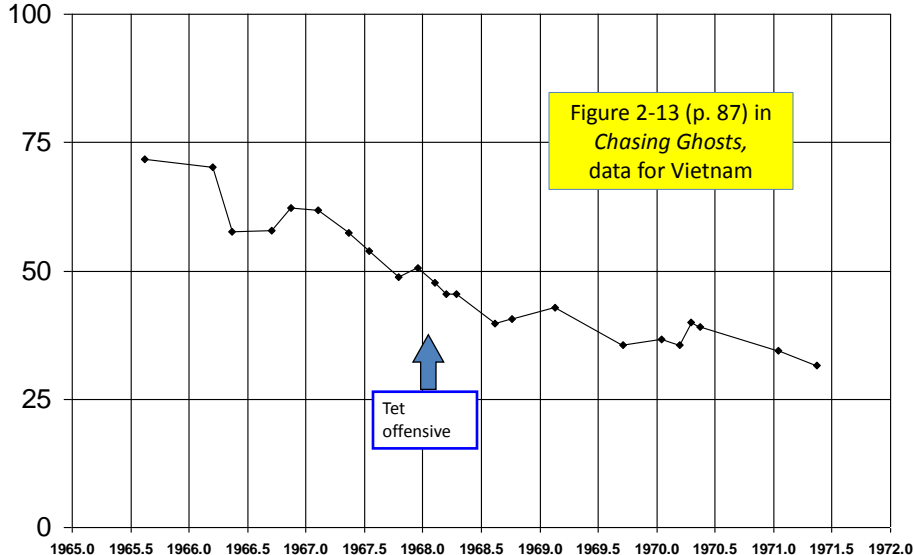
Relates to the discussion on p. 58 (and 297n12) in *Chasing Ghosts*



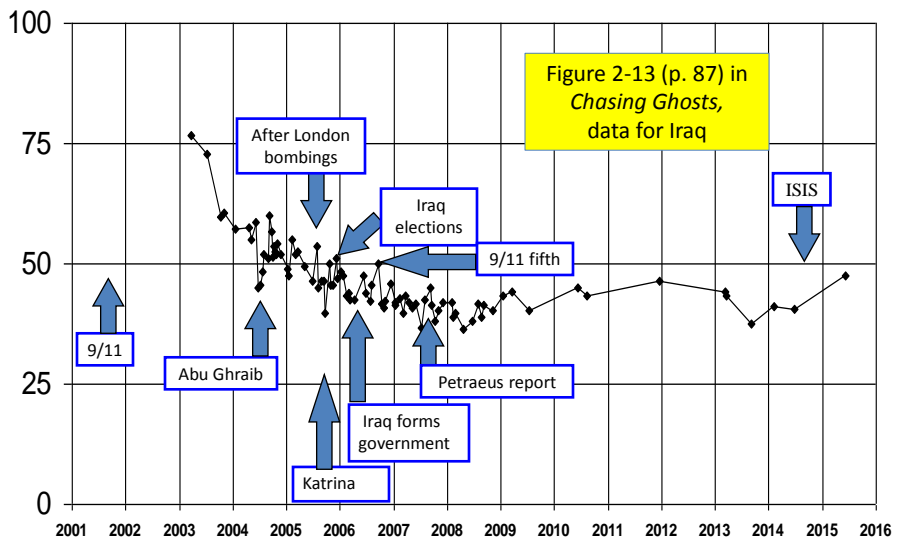
In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Korea, do you think the United States made a mistake in deciding to defend Korea (South Korea), or not? Or: Do you think the United States made a mistake in going into the war in Korea, or not?
 (percent supporting of those with opinion)



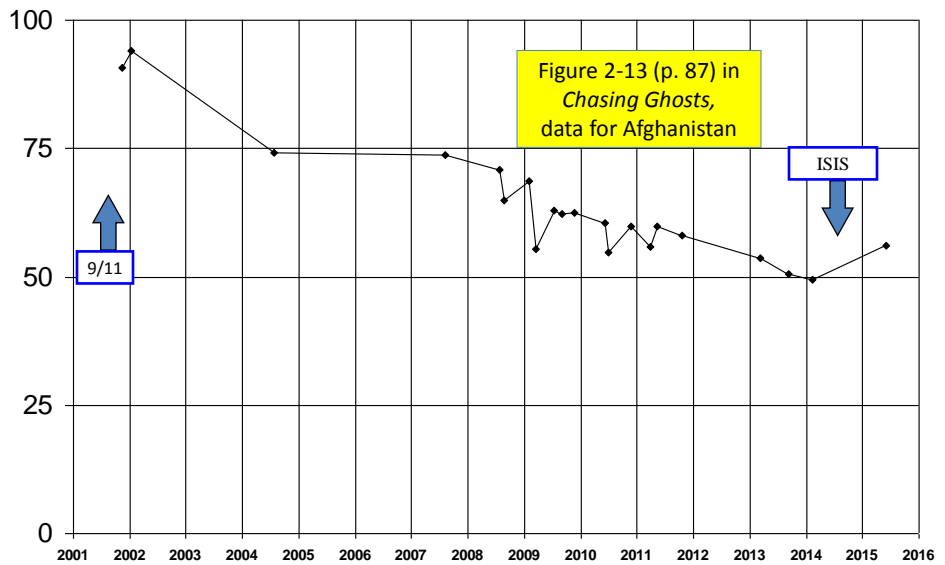
In view of the developments since we entered the war in Vietnam, do you think the U.S. made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?
 (percent supporting of those with opinion)



In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not? (percent supporting of those with opinion)



Thinking (now) about U.S. military action in Afghanistan: Do you think the United States made a mistake in sending military forces to Afghanistan, or not? (percent supporting of those with opinion)

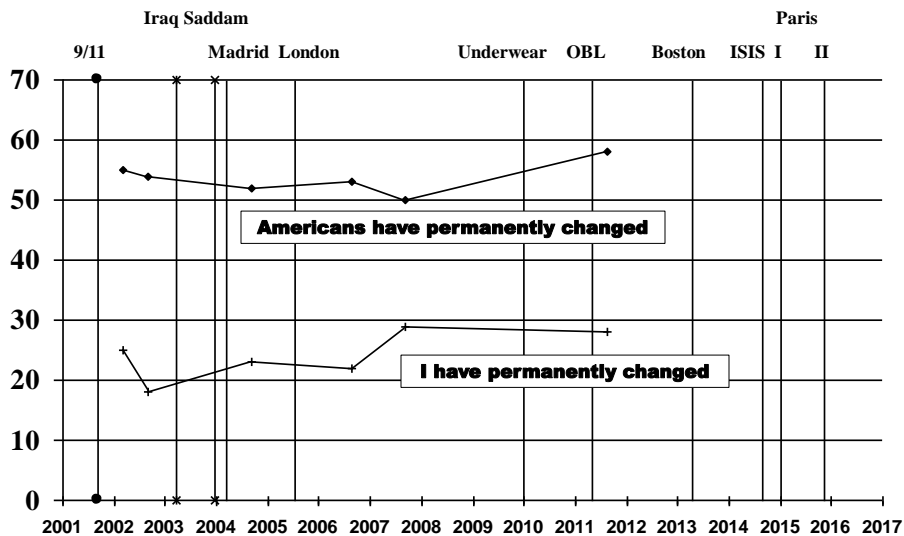


Relates to the discussion in p. 297n11 in *Chasing Ghosts*

Public opinion changes, 2007-2008

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Surge making things better | 30 to 46 |
| Surge having no impact | 51 to 32 |
| US making significant progress | 36 to 46 |
| US winning the war | 21 to 37 |
| Favor the war | 34 to 33 |
| War as been worth it | 36 to 36 |
| War was the right decision | 42 to 39 |
| Stay as long as it takes | 26 to 26 |
| Approve Bush handing of war | 33 to 34 |

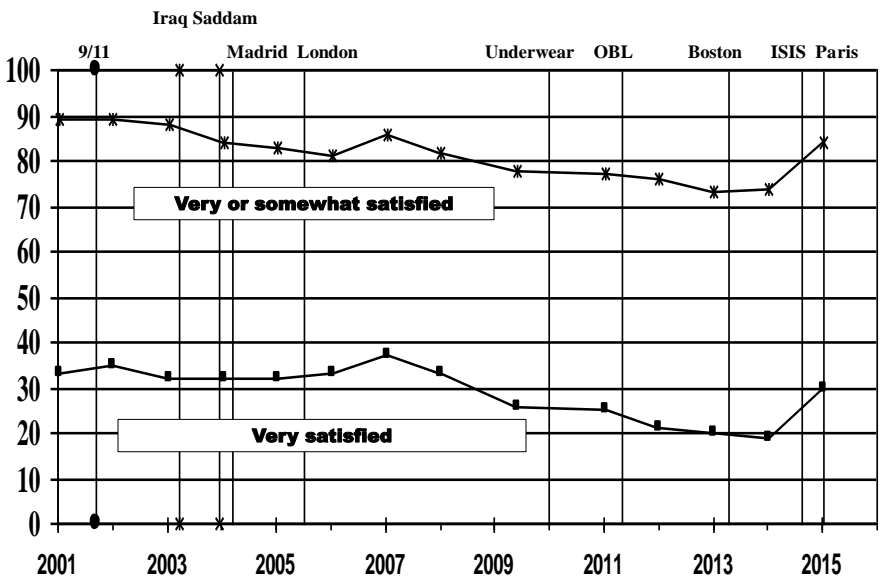
As a result of the September 11th terrorist attacks, do you think Americans have permanently changed the way they live, or not? have you permanently changed the way you live, or not? Gallup/CNN/USA Today



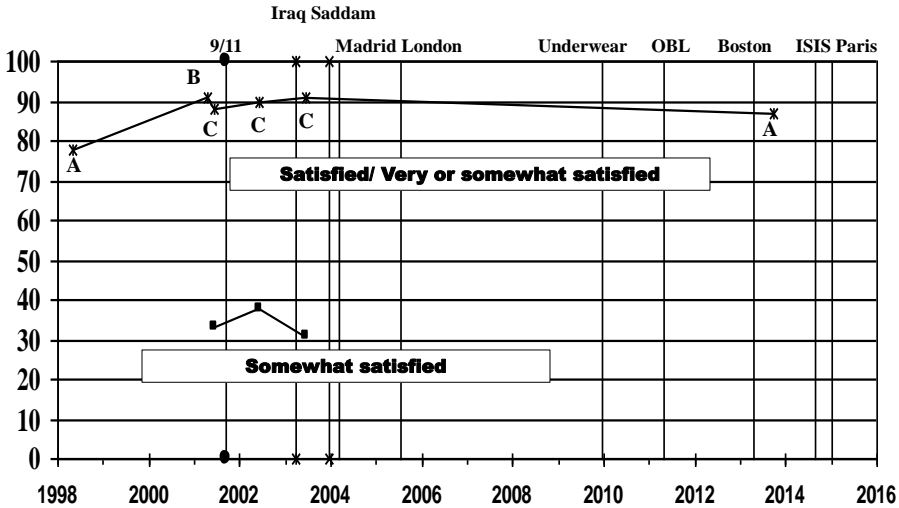
| | 8/2002 | 8/2005 |
|---|--------|--------|
| Life did not change on 9/11 | 31 | 24 |
| Life changed on 9/11, but now completely back to normal | 11 | 13 |
| Life changed on 9/11, but will completely return to normal | 24 | 19 |
| Life changed on 9/11, and will never completely return to normal | 32 | 42 |

—Gallup

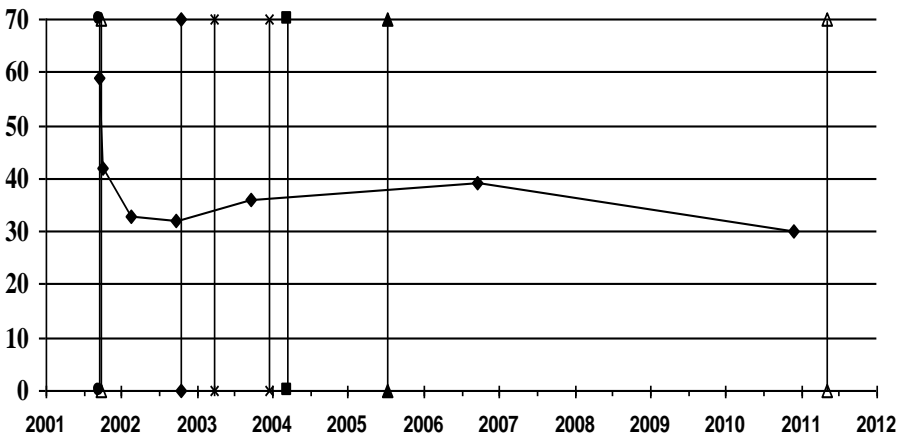
I'm going to read some aspects of life in America today. For each one, please say whether you are—very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. How about...the overall quality of life? Gallup



A. Please tell me whether you are generally satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following. How about...your safety from physical harm or violence?
 B. I'd like to ask you about some aspects of your life. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following aspects of your life?) How about... your safety from physical harm or violence?
 C. We'd like to know how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your life--very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied? How satisfied are you with... your safety from physical harm or violence? Gallup

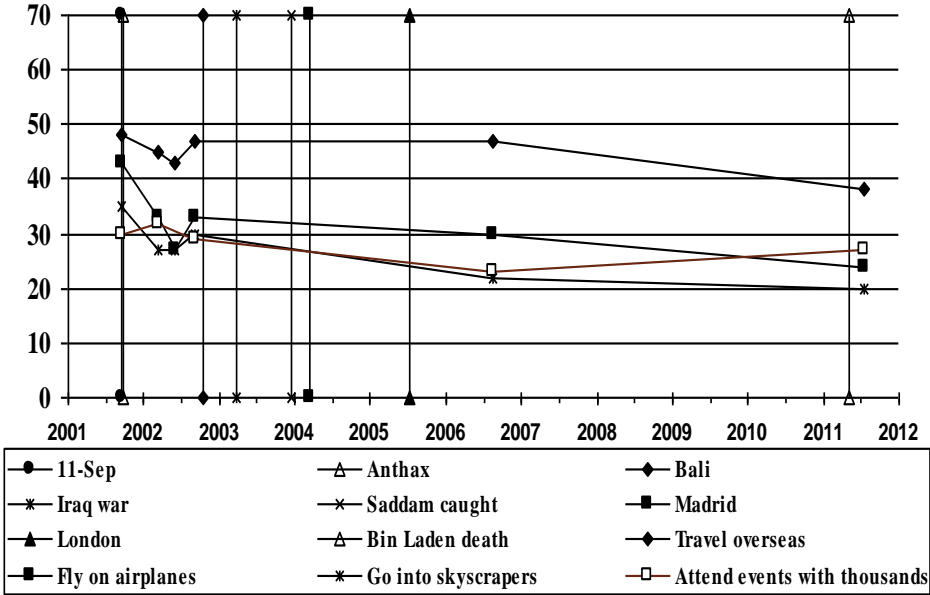


Are you personally worried about traveling by commercial airplane because of the risk of terrorism, or do you think the risk is not that great? ABC/WP

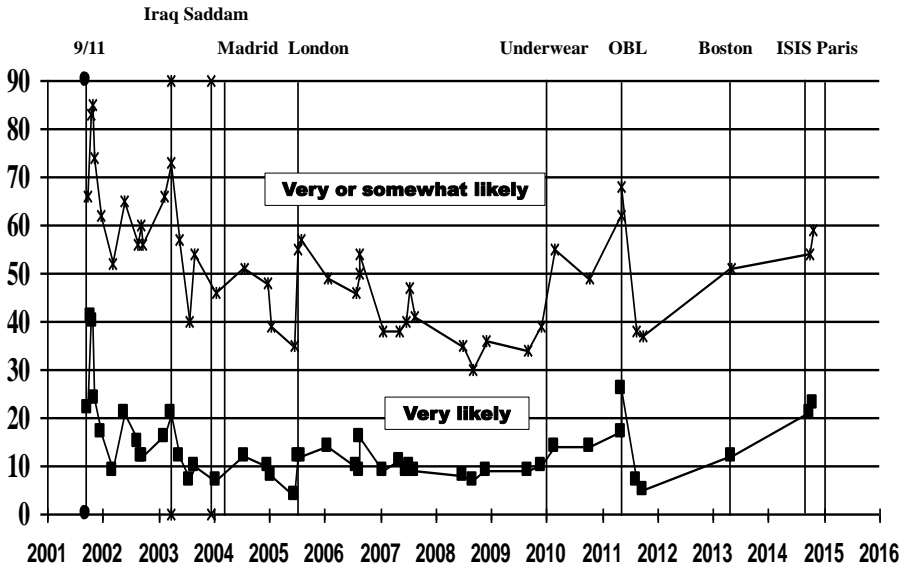


- 11-Sep
- ◆ Anthrax
- ◆ Bali
- * Iraq war
- * Saddam caught
- Madrid
- ▲ London
- ▲ Bin Laden death
- ◆ Worried

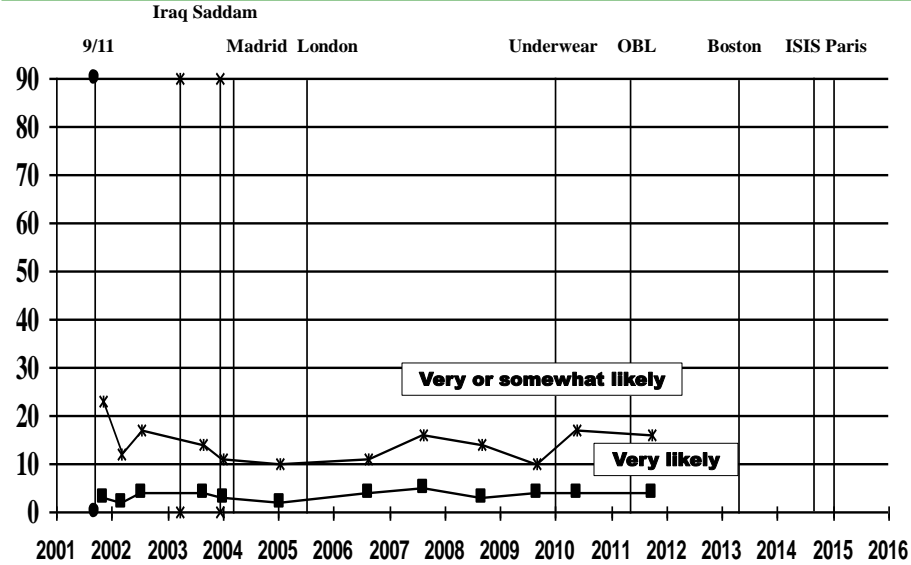
As a result of the events that occurred on September 11th, would you say that now you are less willing to fly on airplanes, go into skyscrapers, attend events where there are thousands of people, travel overseas--or not? (order randomized) Gallup



How likely is it that there will be further acts of terrorism in the United States over the next several weeks: very likely, somewhat likely, or not at all likely? CNN/US Today/Gallup/ORC

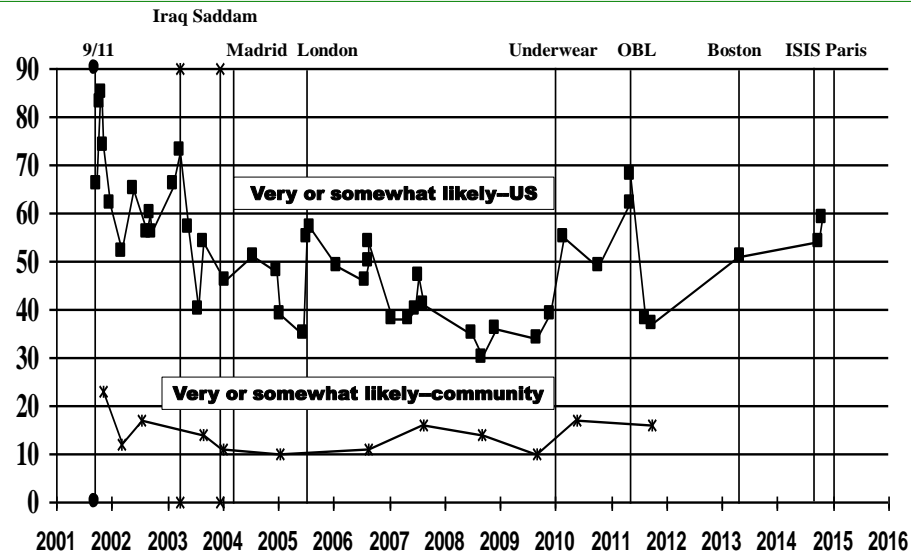


How likely is it that there will be further acts of terrorism in your community over the next several weeks: very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?
 CNN/US Today/Gallup/ORC

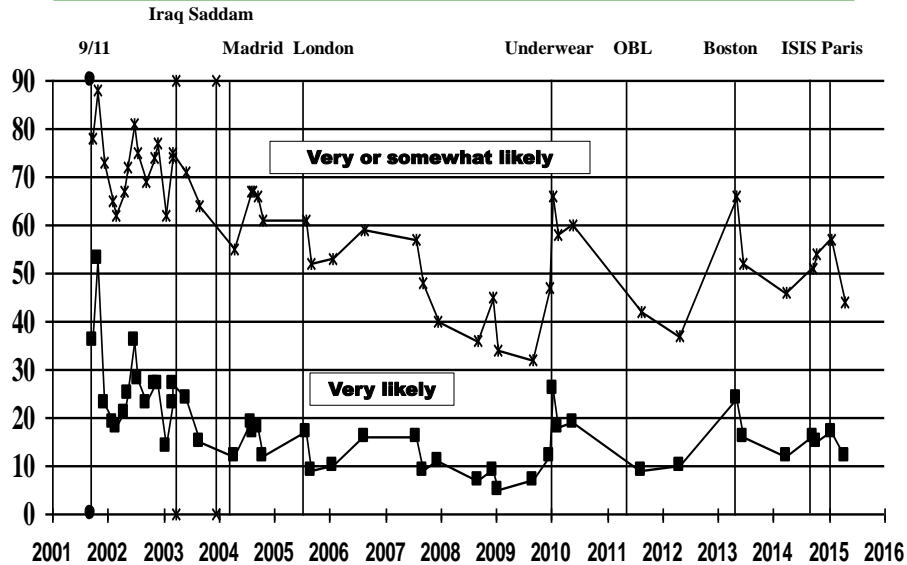


How likely is it that there will be further acts of terrorism in the United States over the next several weeks: very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

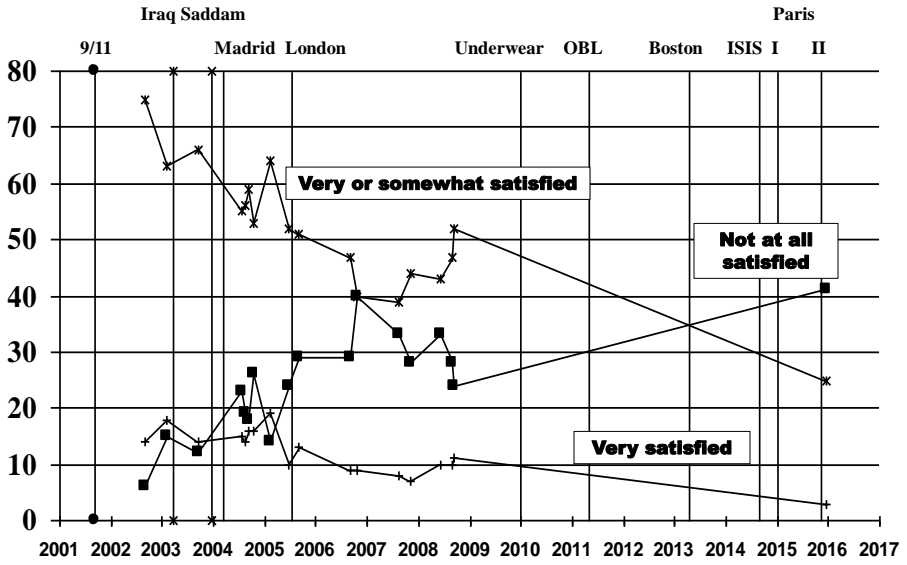
How likely is it that there will be further acts of terrorism in your community over the next several weeks: very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?



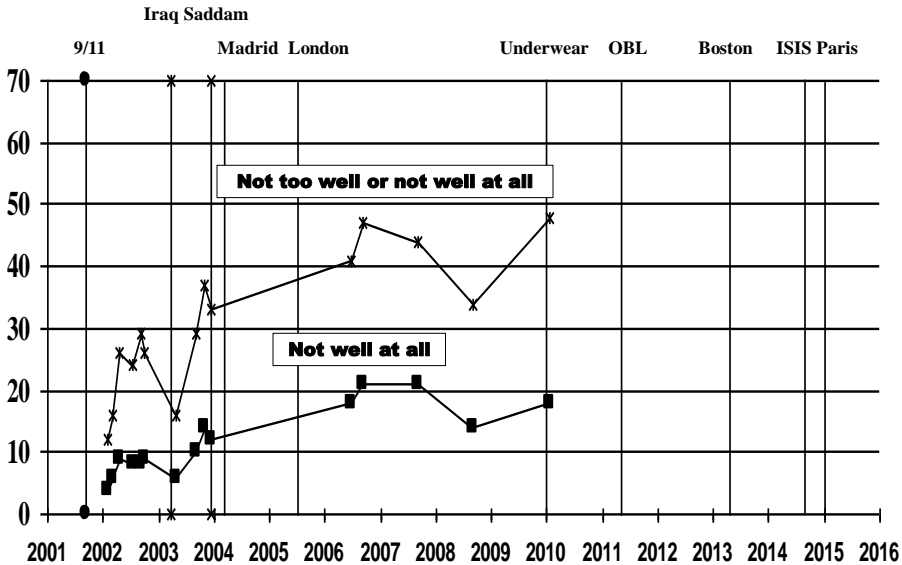
How likely do you think it is that there will be another terrorist attack in the United States within the next few months: very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely? CBS/NYT



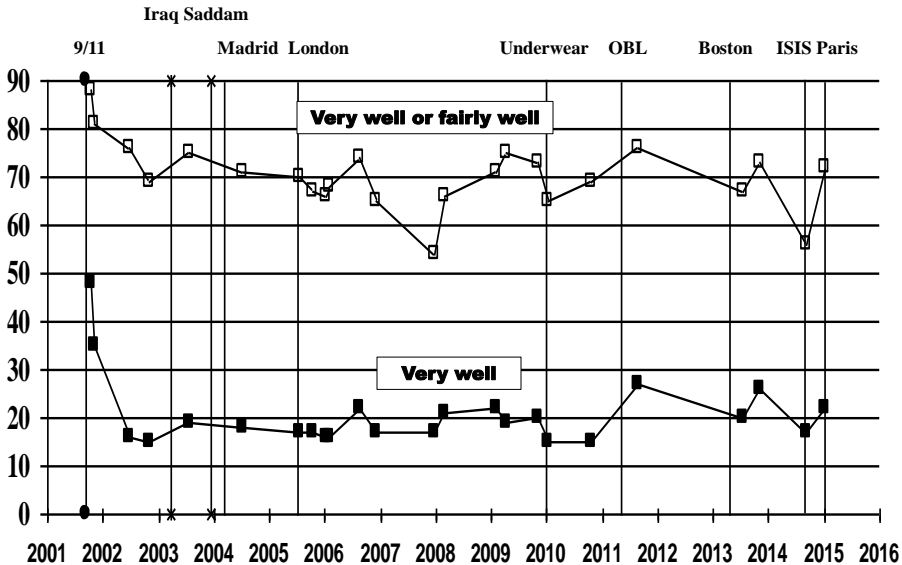
How satisfied are you with the way things are going for the U.S. in the war on terrorism? CNN/ORC/USA Today/Gallup



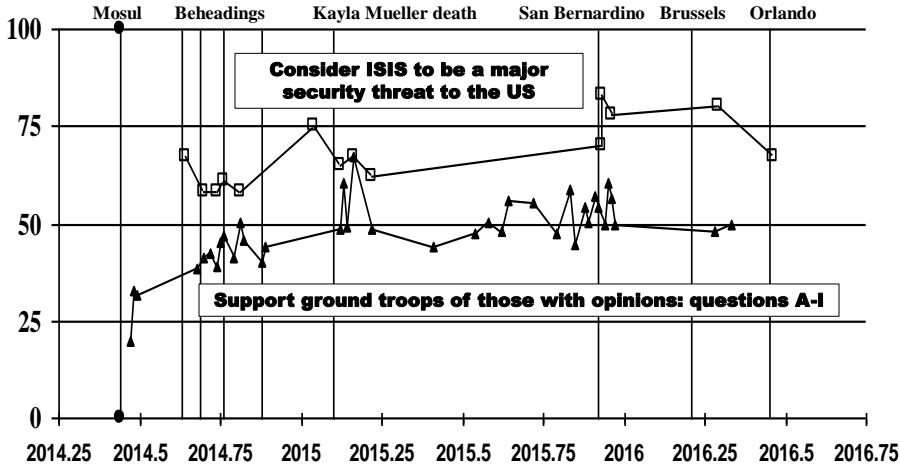
Do you think the U.S. campaign against terrorism is going very well, fairly well, not too well, or not well at all? ABC/WP



In general, how well do you think the U.S. government is doing in reducing the threat of terrorism? Pew



- A. In response to the recent violence in Iraq, do you favor or oppose the United States sending ground troops into Iraq? CBS/NYT
- B. Do you favor or oppose the United States sending ground troops into combat operations against ISIS forces in Iraq or Syria? CNN/ORC
- C. Do you favor or oppose the US sending ground troops into Iraq or Syria to fight ISIS (Islamic) militants? CBS/NYT
- D. Would you favor/support or oppose the United States sending ground troops to fight ISIS (Islamic militants) in Iraq and Syria? Reason-Rupe, Pew, Quinnipiac
- E. Do you think the United States military should have combat troops on the ground in Iraq or not? Quinnipiac
- F. Please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the United States taking that action in Iraq in response to the current situation...Putting US troops back on the ground. Fox
- G. Do you support or oppose the US sending ground troops back into Iraq to help the Iraqi government defeat Islamic militants? Quinnipiac
- H. Please tell me whether you favor or oppose each of the following...Sending US ground troops to Iraq or Syria. CNN/ORC
- I. Would you favor or oppose the United States sending ground troops to Iraq and Syria in order to assist groups in those countries that are fighting the Islamic militants (commonly known as ISIS)? Gallup



Please tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement:

ISIS (Islamic militants operating in Syria and Iraq) is a serious threat to the existence or survival of the US.

52% Agree strongly
25 Agree somewhat
13 Disagree somewhat
9 Disagree strongly
1 Not sure

TIPP/Investor's Business Daily Poll, March 28-April 2, 2016
Asked of those who are following news stories about ISIS very or somewhat closely (83% of the sample)