

New PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll Finds If Diplomacy Fails With N. Korea, Only a Minority Supports Moving Toward Military Action If S. Korea Opposed

Following up on the PIPA/KN January poll that found a very large majority in favor of the US negotiating with North Korea, the new February 12-18 poll found that only a minority of 37% would support moving toward military action if South Korea were opposed.

Initially a modest majority (54%) said that if US diplomatic and economic efforts fail to stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, it would favor the US "moving toward" military action. However, if South Korea would be opposed—which in fact it is—the percentage drops to 37%, with 51% opposed and 12% unsure.

It should be noted that the 54% initially expressed support for "moving toward" military action, not necessarily military action per se. In a February Los Angeles Times poll only 37% said that the U.S. should "take military action against North Korea" if diplomacy fails.

It should also be noted, though, that if military action against North Korea is presented as a UN operation, not simply a US operation, support for military action can be much higher. When a January Time/CNN poll asked about the "the US-along with the UN...tak[ing] military action to destroy North Korea's nuclear facilities" if the North Korea was producing radioactive material to make bombs, 62% expressed support.

Ratings of US handling of relations with North Korea have taken a sharp drop since January, with a plurality of 42% now giving it a negative rating (neutral 21%, positive 33%). The overall net rating—percentage giving a positive rating minus percentage giving a negative rating—has slipped 10 percentage points from plus 1 to minus 9.

Other findings:

--Four out of five respondents knew that the US has troops based in South Korea.

--A modest majority (53%) said the US could successfully fight wars against Iraq and North Korea at the same time.