



Global Stewardship Initiative

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4/30/98

Melanne

I wasn't sure if you had seen this poll on
U.N. dues which also asks about Mexico
City policy. If you want a copy of the full
report, please call 202/232-7500.

I hope all is well.

Susan



PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY ATTITUDES

A joint program of the Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland

NEWS RELEASE

Release: Immediate

Re: NEW POLL ON UN DUES
AND IMF FUNDING

For further information:
please contact Steven Kull
at 202-232-7500

Date: April 24, 1998

New Poll Finds:

Majority Favors Paying UN Dues; Abortion Amendment Unpopular

Public Support for IMF Funding Low, But Higher Among Informed

College Park, MD: As Congress reconvenes after its spring break, two unresolved issues await the House of Representatives: the controversy about funding US dues to the United Nations and about depositing new funds with the International Monetary Fund as part of a response to the financial crisis in Asia.

A new poll by the Program on International Policy Attitudes conducted a nationwide poll on these issues. On the question of UN dues, key findings were:

- 60% support paying UN dues in full.
- An additional 18% say they would support paying dues contingent on the UN making financial reforms. Thus 78% would likely want to see the UN-dues legislation pass.
- At the same time, 53% are uncomfortable with making UN dues conditional.
- A significant minority supports the controversial proposed amendment related to abortion, but 58% support paying UN dues and do not support the amendment.

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PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL POLICY ATTITUDES

A joint program of the Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland

Americans on UN Dues and IMF Funding

A STUDY OF US PUBLIC ATTITUDES

April 24, 1998

Principal Investigator
Steven Kull

Overview

As Congress reconvenes after its spring break, two unresolved issues await the House of Representatives: the controversy about funding US dues to the United Nations, and the question of whether to deposit new funds with the International Monetary Fund as part of a response to the financial crisis in Asia.

The UN dues issue is complicated politically. After an extensive set of negotiations, the Senate achieved a bipartisan agreement to pay most of US arrears to the UN, contingent on a set of demands that the UN make a number of financial reforms. When this legislation reached the House it was derailed in November by an effort to attach an amendment affecting the US foreign aid program. This amendment would require the US to withhold funds from international family planning organizations involved in abortion (also known as 'Mexico City policy'). While the amendment includes a range of constraints, the debate about this issue has focused especially on the prohibition on funds going to organizations that discuss abortion as an alternative with their clients. Because President Clinton has said that he will veto any legislation that includes such an amendment, its attachment would likely kill the UN funding legislation.

The IMF funding issue is a bit less complicated, though no less controversial. In the wake of the Asian crisis, the Clinton administration has agreed for the US to deposit \$18 billion, together with another \$72 billion from other countries, as part of an effort to back up the currencies and the economies of countries whose economies are at risk of collapse. The Senate has approved this legislation, but it has encountered substantial resistance in the House.

So where does the American public come out on these issues? While these issues are not highly prominent in the minds of Americans, they do engage the public's values. These issues were explored in a recent study by the Program on International Policy Attitudes. Briefly stated, on the question of UN dues the findings of the study suggest that:

- A substantial majority supports paying UN dues in full, while an additional portion would support

doing so if it were contingent on the UN making some financial reforms. Thus it appears likely that a very strong majority would want to see the current legislation pass—even though a majority is also uncomfortable making the payment of UN dues conditional.

- A significant minority of those who favor paying UN dues also supports attaching the abortion-related amendment, described above, to the UN dues legislation, though this would jeopardize the UN dues legislation becoming law. Nonetheless, overall, a modest majority would favor paying UN dues and would not support attaching the abortion-related amendment.

On the question of IMF funding:

- Initially a modest majority opposes the US depositing money with the IMF in response to the Asian financial crisis. However, among those who are paying attention to the issue a strong majority favors it, and when respondents are given some basic information about the issue and go through a process of evaluating pro and con arguments, support rises to a modest majority.

The study included a nationwide poll of 900 randomly selected adults conducted April 16-20, 1998 and a review of existing polling data. In many cases poll questions were only asked to two-thirds of the sample so that for each question the margin of error is plus or minus 4% or less.

Note: The findings reported here are of a random sample of the American population. In this poll, as in most telephone polls with random samples, the average education level is slightly higher than for the general population reported by the US Census, but slightly lower than the level found by voter exit polls which measure the American electorate. Based on the findings in this poll, as well as other polls, it is likely that if the sample more exactly reflected the general population as stated in the US Census, support for paying UN dues and for IMF funding would be several percentage points lower, while if it more exactly reflected the American electorate shown in voter exit polls, support would be several percentage points higher.

UN Dues

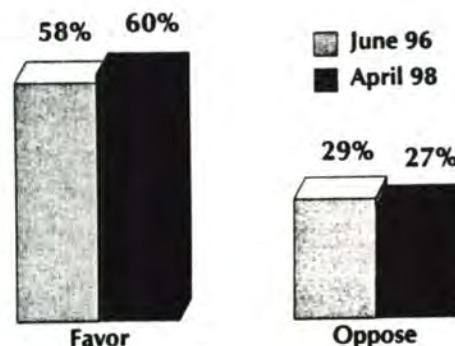
1 A majority supports paying UN dues in full.

Asked, "Do you favor or oppose the US paying its UN dues in full?" 60% said they favored doing so (32% strongly) with 27% opposed (16% strongly). This number is up slightly from a June 1996 PIPA poll when, in response to the same wording, 58% said they favored it.

When presented pro and con arguments, respondents find arguments in favor of paying UN dues more convincing. A pro argument that confirmed the value of the general idea of the UN, saying that "The US ... one of the original founders of the UN ... has benefited from its existence," argued that "The US has an obligation to... pay its full dues," and was found convincing by an overwhelming 73%. A con argument that challenged the idea of the UN by saying that "The UN is ... meddling in areas where the US, not the UN, should be taking the lead," was found convincing by just 28%, while 69% found it unconvincing.

A pro argument—currently in use by a number of proponents of paying UN dues—that doing so is "a good investment" because due to UN negotiations with Saddam Hussein, "it became unnecessary for the US to mount a large and costly military action," was found convincing by a more modest 52%.* The argument that that paying UN dues "is a bad investment" because "the UN is ineffective and wasteful" was found convincing by only 28%.

Do you favor or oppose paying UN dues in full?



After hearing pro and con arguments, when respondents were asked about paying UN dues, 66% said they favored doing so—a 6% increase.

Earlier research suggests that Americans will support paying UN dues even when they are faced with making tradeoffs against domestic items. In a June 1996 PIPA poll, respondents were asked to make a budget for the twelve largest items in the discretionary budget. An overwhelming 78% either main-

* The modest level of support for this argument most likely reflects the persuasiveness of the "investment" case, rather than reservations about UN involvement in Iraq. In a February 1998 PIPA poll that asked about UN Secretary General's recently negotiated agreement with Saddam Hussein, only 25% said that "This is an example of the US giving up too much control of its foreign policy to the UN... the US, not the UN should be dealing with Iraq," while 71% said that "This is an example of the kind of thing the UN should do...it was a good idea to give the UN a chance to work things out diplomatically."

Response to Pro and Con Arguments On Paying UN Dues - Percent Finding Argument Convincing -

PRO

The US was one of the original founders of the UN and has benefited from its existence. The US has an obligation to meet its commitment to pay its full dues, just like all the other member countries. 73%

Because the UN successfully got Saddam Hussein to allow in weapons inspectors, it became unnecessary for the US to mount a large and costly military action. For this and other reasons, it is a good investment for the US to pay its UN dues. 52%

CON

The UN is becoming too powerful. It is meddling in areas where the US, not the UN, should be taking the lead. To make sure that the UN does not gain too much control over US foreign policy, we should stop giving it money. 28%

Because the UN is ineffective and wasteful, the US does not get a good return on its money. Therefore it is a bad investment and the US should not feel obliged to pay all of its UN dues. 28%

3 Americans On UN Dues and IMF Funding

tained (38%) or increased (40%) spending on the UN and UN peacekeeping. Most striking, on average, spending on the UN and UN peacekeeping was increased 295%.

Earlier research also suggests that candidates that support paying UN dues are more likely to get support than those who oppose paying. In a September 1996 poll, PIPA tested the issue of UN dues in the context of a hypothetical congressional election, by presenting respondents with two sharply worded political ads (see table). A majority of 56% said they would be more inclined to vote for the incumbent who favored paying dues, as compared to 37% who favored the challenger who called for holding back.

A key question here is why support for paying UN dues in full is only at 60%. Polls have consistently shown that more than four out of five Americans support US membership in the UN. In a September 1997 Pew poll, 83% said they thought that "strengthening the United Nations" should be a somewhat or very important foreign policy goal for the US. Why then does a smaller number support paying dues in full?

One factor that may diminish support for paying UN dues in full is the perception that the UN is wasteful or inefficient. While the argument against paying UN dues based on this concern was found convincing by only 28%, as will be discussed below, when paying UN dues was made contingent on the UN making financial reforms, a significant minority shifted from opposing to favoring paying UN dues—thus raising the support for paying dues, at least under some conditions, to a very strong majority.

Another key reason may be that some respondents who say they oppose paying UN dues in full are expressing an objection to the portion of dues they believe the US is paying. In a June 1995 Times Mirror poll, "as compared to other major countries," 60% said "the United States pays more than its fair share for United Nations activities."

However, when Americans are given correct information about the actual proportion of the US contribution, a majority embraces it as fair. In the June 1996 PIPA poll, respondents were told that "In fact, UN dues are assessed according to a country's share of the world economy or GNP. The US is assessed 25% because that is its share of the world economy." Fifty-six percent found the method fair, while just 37% found it unfair. (Apparently it is critical that Americans understand that there is a direct relationship between the percentage of dues and the percentage of world GNP, because a November 1997 CNN/USA Today poll that did not clarify this relationship found that 52% of respondents felt that a 25% share for the US was "too much.")

2 On balance, a modest majority opposes with holding UN dues as a means of pressing the UN to make financial reforms. However, this is not a fully crystallized position, as the public is easily swayed by poll questions that highlight different perspectives on this approach.

When respondents were presented a question that posed both sides of the debate about making the payment of UN dues contingent on financial reform, a modest majority opposed such an approach. Respon-

Response to Candidates Who Favor Or Oppose Paying UN Dues

Respondents were asked for which candidate they would most likely vote based on hearing the following political ads

Ad From Candidate Opposing UN Dues	Candidate Preferred by:	Ad From Candidate Favoring UN Dues	Candidate Preferred by:
Congressman Allen—he's voted again and again to pour billions of your tax money into the UN. Each time Congress has voted to hold back US payments to the UN until financial discipline is restored, Allen has voted the other way. Stop your tax dollars from supporting UN bureaucracy and waste. Vote for Tom Miller this November.	37%	Congressman Allen knows that America keeps its promises. But his opponent, Tom Miller, wants to break an American commitment by refusing to pay our dues to the United Nations, thought the amount is just 1% of what we spend on defense. What other promises would Miller want our country to break? Don't make Uncle Sam a deadbeat—reelect Congressman Allen.	56%

dents were told that "Some say the US should hold back paying its UN dues so as to pressure the UN to become more efficient and that this is the only way to get results. Others argue that the new Secretary General Kofi Annan has recently begun a new program for reforming its operations and that withholding dues is too high-handed a way to apply pressure." They were then asked, "Do you think the US should or should not hold back paying UN dues as a way of pressuring it to become more efficient?" Fifty-three percent said the US should not hold back while 40% said it should.

However, earlier polls show that the public is quite responsive to poll questions that stress different perspectives on such an approach, suggesting that the opposition is not a well-established position. For example, poll questions that underscore the benefits of withholding dues so as to achieve reforms elicit substantial support. A February 1997 Time/CNN poll that asked whether the US should "pay its back dues" or "not pay back dues until it carries out reforms that the US has requested" elicited a plurality of 47% in favor of withholding dues. When, in a November 1997 CNN/USA Today poll, this approach was given further legitimacy by making the (incorrect) assertion that "the United States has withheld more than one billion dollars in dues over the past few years to force the UN to change its financial practices," 63% said they favored "this decision by the US."*

On the other hand, when poll questions highlight the generic norm of paying dues, a strong majority rejects the notion of making payment of UN dues conditional. In response to an April 1996 Wirthlin question that did not mention the US specifically, 78% said "UN member states should always pay their full dues to the UN on schedule" while just 13% embraced the idea of a "a country...hold[ing] back" dues to promote changes. Subsequently, when respondents were asked, "Do you believe the United States should always pay its full dues to the UN on schedule, or should the United States hold back its dues to pressure other members to agree to changes it believes are needed?" 64% said that the US should always pay, while 28% said that the US should hold back.

When these two values—seeking financial reforms and complying with the norm of paying UN dues with-

out conditions—were played off against each other in the current poll, the value of paying dues without conditions prevailed, though only by a modest margin. The fact that Americans are so responsive to different ways of framing the question suggest that it is not an issue that they have thought through very deeply.

3 If payment of UN dues is contingent on the UN making financial reforms, a significant minority who initially opposed paying UN dues will change its position to favor it. Thus an overwhelming majority is willing to support paying UN dues under some conditions.

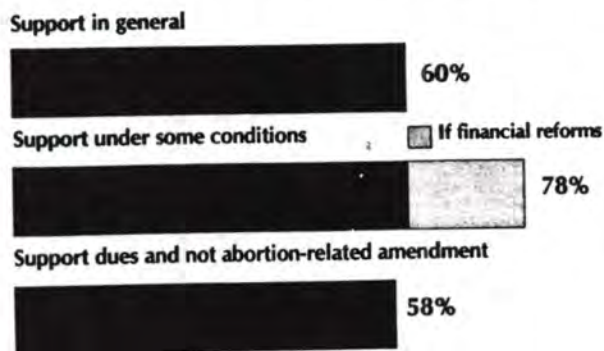
Though the majority leans against making payment of UN dues contingent on UN financial reforms, the prospect of doing so expands the base of support for paying dues. Those who initially said they opposed paying UN dues or did not answer were told, "At present there is a bill before Congress that would have the US pay most of its back dues to the UN, but only on the condition that the UN makes some financial reforms." Of this group, 45% (18% of the total sample) said they favored Congress passing this legislation.

Adding together the 60% who initially favored paying UN dues and the 18% who favored doing so on the condition that the UN make financial reforms, it appears that 78% favor paying UN dues under some conditions. This suggests that, though a substantial portion of the public might feel somewhat uncomfortable with the features of the legislation that require the UN to make reforms, it is likely that a very strong majority would prefer to see it passed.

This high level of support for paying UN dues is consistent with poll questions that have asked about general support for US participation in the UN. As discussed above, overwhelming majorities favor the US being a member of the UN and support the UN becoming stronger.

* It has not been US policy to withhold dues in the effort to force the UN to change its financial practices. The executive branch has favored the unconditional payment of UN dues, while members of Congress have favored withholding dues for a variety of reasons. The legislative package currently under consideration would impose, for the first time, conditions on the UN regarding its financial practices.

Support for Paying UN Dues



4 A significant minority of those who favor paying UN dues also favors a legislative amendment that restricts US funds from going to international family planning organizations that discuss abortion with their clients, though this would jeopardize the UN dues legislation becoming law. Nonetheless, overall, a modest majority would favor paying UN dues and would not support attaching the abortion-related amendment.

Respondents who said they favored the general policy of withholding US funds from international family planning organizations that discuss abortion with their clients, and who said they favored paying UN dues—either in principle or as part of a financial reform package—were told that some members of Congress have said they will only vote for paying UN dues if it includes an amendment that would also make the abortion-related policy into law. Respondents were also told that other members of Congress and President Clinton oppose the amendment, so that if it is added, the bill to pay UN dues will probably not become law. Twenty-six percent of those who favored paying UN dues (20% of the entire sample) said they did favor adding this restriction, even though they had been reminded that it could seriously jeopardize passage of the UN dues legislation. Thus, linking the issue of abortion does weaken support for the UN dues legislation.

Nonetheless, even if those who favor the abortion-related amendment are subtracted from the 78% who would likely support the UN dues legislation, this still leaves a majority of 58% who would favor paying UN dues and who do not support the abortion-related amendment.

IMF Funding

1 Initially a modest majority opposes the US depositing money with the IMF in response to the Asian financial crisis. However, among those who are paying attention to the issue, a strong majority favors it. Also, when respondents are given some basic information about the issue and go through a process of evaluating pro and con arguments, support rises to an overall majority.

When first asked whether "Congress should or should not approve of depositing additional money with the International Monetary Fund to help back up the economies of Asian countries," a modest majority of 56% said that Congress should not approve, while 38% said that Congress should approve it. Similarly, a December 1997 NBC/Wall Street Journal poll that asked: "Should the United States participate with the International Monetary Fund and other nations in a plan to lend money to countries that suffer financial collapse, such as South Korea and Thailand?" found 51% saying the US should not participate and 34% saying that it should.

However, attitudes about this issue seem to be significantly affected by the degree of information respondents have on the issue and how much they have deliberated on it. Among respondents who say they have been paying attention to the issue a majority is supportive, and if respondents receive basic information and are given the opportunity to evaluate pro and con arguments support rises to a majority.

Attention to this issue is relatively high. When asked how much they have heard about this issue 48% say that they have heard "some" (34%) or "a great deal" (14%) about the issue, while 52% say they have heard "not very much" (33%) and 19% "nothing at all." This is a high level of attention as compared to other international issues.

Among those who say they have heard some or a great deal on the issue of IMF funding a modest majority of 52% favors it, while among those who say they have heard not very much or nothing at all support is just 26%.

Furthermore, as respondents receive more information about the issue, support goes up. Respon-

Response to Pro and Con Arguments On IMF Funding - Percent Finding Argument Convincing -

PRO

If the International Monetary Fund does not back up the Asian economies, they will likely go into a severe depression. To prevent large-scale human suffering, the US should join with other countries in the effort to help these countries through this difficult time.

60%

If the International Monetary Fund does not back up the Asian economies, they will likely go into a depression and these countries will cut way back on buying US products. This will hurt the US economy and many Americans will lose their jobs. Thus it is a wise business decision for the US to put up some money as a form of insurance.

56%

CON

The US and other countries should not try to rescue the countries of Asia from their own bad economic decisions. It is better to let things take their own course and maybe then the Asians will learn from their mistakes.

46%

If the International Monetary Fund backs up the Asian economies, it is really just trying to protect the investors on Wall Street and elsewhere who made risky investments. The US should not put its money at risk to try to cover for the poor investment decisions of high-flying investors.

47%

dents were read the following statement:

According to the agreement the US would deposit 20% of the money, while other countries would deposit the rest. This money would not be given to these Asian countries, but would be put at risk. If the Asian economies recover, the US would get all its money back. However if things get much worse, the US could lose this money.

Respondents were then read a series of pro and con arguments. As shown in the chart on this page, the pro arguments were found to be more convincing than the con arguments. Both pro arguments elicited majority support, and both con arguments did not.

After going through the process of hearing the pro and con arguments, support for IMF funding went up to a majority of 56% with 40% opposed—an 18% jump.

2 A large majority overestimates how much the US would deposit with the IMF as compared to other countries, and this diminishes support. Among those who correctly estimate the US share, a majority favors depositing funds. When respondents hear information about the size of the US portion, support goes up significantly.

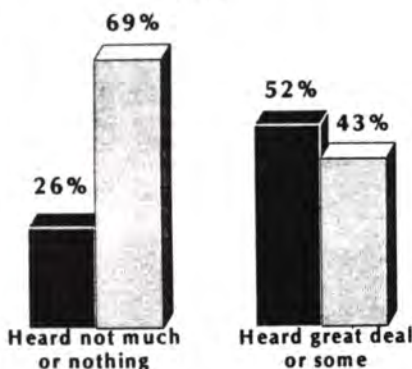
Before receiving any information, respondents were asked to estimate the US share of the funds to go to the IMF in response to the Asian crisis. Only 28% correctly chose the option of "about a quarter" (the actual amount is 20%). Sixty-six percent overestimated by saying "about half" (36%), "about three-quarters" (25%) or "all" (5%).

Apparently this misperception diminishes support. Among those who overestimated the US share only 32% favored IMF funding, while among those who correctly estimated the US share 52% favored it.

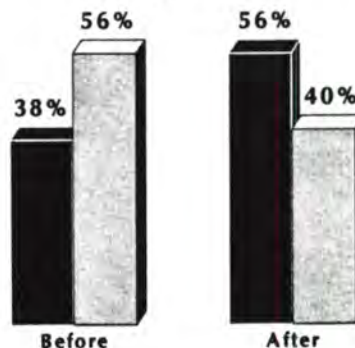
Support for IMF Funding in Response to Asian Crisis

■ Favor □ Oppose

Effect of prior attention to issue



Effect of hearing information and arguments



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The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) is a joint program of the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland and the Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes. PIPA undertakes research on American attitudes in both the public and in the policymaking community toward a variety of international and foreign policy issues. It seeks to disseminate its findings to members of government, the press, and the public, as well as academia.

The Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), at the University of Maryland's School for Public Affairs, pursues policy-oriented scholarship on major issues facing the United States in the global arena. Using its research, forums, and publications, CISSM links the University and the policy community to improve communication between scholars and practitioners.

The Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes (CSPA) is an independent nonprofit organization of social science researchers devoted to increasing understanding of public and elite attitudes shaping contemporary public policy. Using innovative research methods, CSPA seeks not only to examine overt policy opinions or positions, but to reveal the underlying values, assumptions, and feelings that sustain opinions.

Acknowledgements

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Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, and Monica Wolford designed the questionnaire and wrote the analysis.

I.M. Destler, Ivo Daalder, Fran Burwell and Fred Steeper contributed to the development of the questionnaire.

Karin Johnston and Giselle Goicochea contributed to the production of the report.

CCI Communication Inc. carried out the telephone interviewing. Scientific Samples supplied the random-digit sample.

The search of existing poll data was done with the aid of the Roper POLL database.