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## 6 in 10 Americans Now Oppose Obama's War in Libya

By Conor Friedersdorf

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Six in 10 Americans don't think the U.S. should be involved in Libya, according to [a new CBS News poll](#). It found that only 30 percent of Americans think we're doing the right thing by intervening militarily in that country. That includes majorities of Republicans, Democrats *and*

independents. As a point of comparison, 51 percent of Americans and a majority of Republicans think we're "doing the right thing" in Afghanistan. The Libya numbers are bad news for the man in the Oval Office.

What does it mean for a president seeking reelection to have launched a wildly unpopular war without congressional approval? That his Republican challengers should [run to President Obama's left](#) on at least some aspects of national security. It might've been awkward to do so given that much of Obama's national security strategy is identical to the one that Republicans praised under George W. Bush. But this affords a surprisingly easy opportunity to win support from an electorate that is tiring of expensive foreign wars: The GOP nominee need not disavow conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan that rank and file conservatives defended for so long. He or she need only rail against the expense, execution, and questionable strategic value of fighting in Libya.

Had President Obama made a case to Congress before involving America, he almost certainly would've received substantial support among Republicans. At the time, much of the conservative movement was criticizing him for "dithering." Said John Bolton in a March 18 [interview](#) with National Review: "We have lost a huge opportunity by waiting to act so late. A real president would have had his military plan ready to go the minute that resolution was adopted, and he would have implemented it." Since Obama didn't go to Congress, however, he has ensured that fewer Republicans were on record, reducing his cover, enabling his potential challengers to take a wait and see approach, and substantially increasing the chance that he'll pay a political price.

Unless you're a Republican who foolishly complained that President Obama was insufficiently hawkish -- like [Mitt Romney](#), for example -- the attack ads write themselves. In fact, Obama himself will end up having written some of them, since they're certain to use [his words](#): "The president does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation." It won't help him that senators from both parties are now [teaming up](#) to criticize the way he's handled this conflict. Meanwhile, between 10,000 and 15,000 people are [estimated killed](#) so far in Libya.

Isn't that the sort of thing that causes blowback?