

American Sociological Association Statement Against the War on Iraq

Passed in 2003 as a mail ballot as an ASA Resolution

Preamble

According to the by-laws of the ASA, members may circulate a resolution and if it secures the signatures of 3% of the membership eligible to vote it comes to Council. Council can then either endorse the resolution as is (with a vote of a majority of a quorum) on behalf of the membership or refer the resolution to the membership for a vote. In the latter case the decision of the majority of voting members is binding on the ASA.

Member Resolution

The member resolution against the war in Iraq satisfied the 3% requirement. The resolution was initiated by members of Sociologists and Political Scientists

Without Borders:

Judith Blau, UNC-Chapel Hill

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva , Stanford University

Walda Katz-Fishman, Howard University and Project South

Tanya Golash-Boza, UNC, Chapel Hill

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Resolution

The American Sociological Association comprises sociologists and kindred professionals who study, among other things, war and peace, democracy and totalitarianism, conflict resolution and violence, systems of inequality and their effects, states and legal orders, nationalism, and nation-building.

We believe that foreign interventions that do not have the support of the world community create more problems than solutions. President Bush's and Prime Minister Blair's decision to invade Iraq against the wishes of most of the nations of the world will undermine the already weakened UN, the League of Arab States, and the rule of international law, and will bring more harm than good to the Iraqi people.

We also believe that the threat of terrorism is not ameliorated by this intervention in Iraq. Instead of lessening the risk of terrorist attacks, this invasion could serve as the spark for multiple attacks in years to come.

This statement is not issued, and should not be construed in any way, as supporting the dictatorship of President Hussein or his regime. Our major concern with Bush and Blair's policy is not the stated end but with the means.

Hence, the American Sociological Association calls for an immediate end to the war against Iraq.

Council Deliberations

On March 31st, 2003, ASA Council conducted a meeting by teleconference at which 13 out of 19 members were present. Because of the gravity of the issues at stake and in the interests of broader involvement and discussion among ASA members, Council decided to put the member resolution to a vote of the membership that would determine whether the statement should be adopted by the ASA.

While Council recognizes the serious consequences of the war not only for Iraqi people and American combatants but also for the world at large, it also urges the membership to consider a broad range of issues when voting on the Resolution.

(a) To what extent should ASA restrict its official public statements to questions around which there exist unambiguous and consensual scientific evidence? In the case of the Amicus Brief on Affirmative Action there is a general consensus in the discipline on the relevant data and conclusions, but in the case of the consequences of the Iraq War there would be no consensus about the relevant data or their interpretation.

(b) To what extent should the ASA attempt to form and express a common moral stance about public issues? Some Council members regard the Association as an organization within civil society, with a responsibility to the wider democratic process, while others think that the Association should be careful about adopting a public position that is based on opinion (as opposed to sociological research and analysis). Many other professional associations believe that they should confine public statements to matters that are of direct and immediate concern to the profession.

(c) To what extent should the ASA be concerned about possible adverse effects on the discipline of sociology when it takes public positions? Such repercussions might range from something as concrete as the withdrawal of funding to sociologists to something as amorphous as the reduction of the credibility of

sociologists. On the other hand among some publics the Association's reputation might be enhanced.