



EXECUTIVE MEMORANDUM

To: Whom It May Concern
From: Daron Shaw, Chris Anderson & Terry Classen
Date: June 18, 2026
Subject: Results from the Reagan Institute Summer Survey

Overview

From May 26-June 3, 2026, the Ronald Reagan Institute sponsored a national poll to assess the priorities and opinions of Americans across a wide array of foreign policy issues. The poll builds on the Summer 2023-25 surveys, which focused on broad foreign policy attitudes, as well as surveys conducted in support of the Reagan National Defense Forum since 2018, which explored defense policy issues in greater depth. The purpose of these surveys is to provide politicians, policymakers, and experts with timely and scientifically valid information about what Americans believe about key foreign policy issues.

Over those seven days, the bi-partisan team of Beacon Research (D) and Shaw & Company Research (R) interviewed 1,555 adults from across the United States. The total sample included a base sample of 1,254 U.S. adults, and, for the first time, an oversample of 301 interviews with MAGA Republicans under age 30. Combined with MAGA Republicans under age 30 who occurred naturally in the base sample, this yields 338 total interviews with this subgroup.

The poll gauged opinions on a variety of issues, including America's global leadership, concerns and priorities, expansionism and intervention, tariffs, and views on Iran, Israel, NATO, Venezuela, Cuba, Ukraine and China. There were even questions on the 250th anniversary of America's declaration of independence. Below we identify and discuss key findings.

U.S. Foreign Policy Philosophy & Goals

As we move further away from the Cold War and as party coalitions continue to shift, it is often unclear what the American public thinks about how our country should engage with the rest of the world. In the Summer 2026 survey, we asked a simple philosophical question about American foreign policy: "When it comes to international events, do you think it is better for the United States to be more engaged and take the lead, or to be less engaged and react to events?" Just under two-thirds (61%) of respondents said it is better for the U.S. to be more engaged and take the lead, while around one quarter (27%) said it is better to be less engaged and react to events. The 61% opting for engagement and leadership represents a 7-point jump from Summer 2024, when 54% held that opinion, but is down from 64% in Summer 2025. Support for the less engaged option decreased by 6 points from Summer 2024, from 33% to 27%.

The breakdown of opinion by party identification reveals that Republicans have become more likely than Democrats to support a more engaged foreign policy. Seventy-one percent of Republicans tilt toward greater engagement, compared to 55% of Democrats. Perhaps surprisingly, 76% of MAGA supporters say they prefer a more engaged foreign policy, compared to 60% of non-

MAGA Republicans. Independents are the most conflicted on the question, with slightly less than half (47%) supporting greater engagement, and 36% supporting less engagement.

The trend numbers reveal that Republicans—and especially MAGA Republicans—have moved to a pro-engagement stance since 2024. In May 2024, 48% of Republicans preferred greater engagement in foreign policy whereas today it is 71%, an increase of 23 points in two years.

The survey explores support for the various particular forms of what greater U.S. foreign policy engagement could mean in practice. The statement garnering the highest level of agreement is that “a strong U.S. military is essential for maintaining peace and prosperity at home and abroad,” with 82% agreeing (54% strongly). Statements focusing on standing up for democracy and human rights (81% agree, 49% strongly) and promoting trade and economic prosperity (81% agree, 46% strongly) also receive high levels of agreement. The most notable partisan difference is that Republicans are more likely to agree that a strong military is necessary for peace and prosperity (90% to 76% for Democrats).

Curiously perhaps, almost two-thirds (65%) also agree with a central isolationist principle—that the U.S. is better off withdrawing from international affairs and should focus more on problems at home. This sentiment is most prevalent among those under 45 years of age (74% agree), while partisan differences—as well as MAGA and non-MAGA—are minimal. However, the fact that Americans can hold contrary views at the same time should not obscure the fact that there is more support (and more intense support) for engagement rather than isolationist principles.

Compared to 2025, strong agreement with specific engagement principles is down between -1 point (the U.S. has a moral obligation to stand up for human rights and democracy) to -5 points (a strong U.S. military is essential to maintaining peace and prosperity) whereas strong agreement with the isolationist principle has increased by 6 points. As might be expected, this is largely a partisan story with the efficacy of standing up for human rights and democracy at its core. Since Summer 2025, strong agreement among Republicans has increased by 8 points for this principle, while it has declined by 10 points among Democrats. Conversely, while strong agreement for the isolationist principle has flatlined among Republicans (-1), it increased by 13 points (to 36%) among Democrats.

When asked about the impact of U.S. engagement on the world, 59% say it has been mostly beneficial compared to 33% mostly harmful. When asked about its impact on the U.S., 57% say it has been positive compared to 34% negative.

The American public is more mixed on the question of acting decisively with strength to head off threats versus showing restraint to avoid creating bigger problems down the road. Forty-six percent chose decisive action while 49% prefer restraint. This item is clearly driven by perceptions of the Trump administration’s policies: two-thirds of Democrats (66%) prefer restraint compared to 64% of Republicans preferring decisive action. Among MAGA Republicans, 72% favor decisive action. However, there is an acute age divide within MAGA, as decisive action beats restraint by only 7 points (52% to 45%) among under 30 MAGA supporters while it wins by 47 points among the entirety of the cohort.

Foreign Policy Priorities

Respondents were asked about what U.S. foreign policy should be focusing on, and almost two-thirds put fighting terrorist networks (62% major focus) and combatting drug trafficking networks (60%) at the head of the list. The next tier of priorities includes securing the border and reducing illegal immigration (49% major focus), countering Russian military power (46%), countering Chinese military power (46%), countering Iran's power in the Middle East (45%), and promoting freedom and democracy in authoritarian countries (42%), and defending people facing religious persecution in other countries (39% major focus). The third and final tier is providing foreign aid to other countries (33%).

Despite the perception that Americans do not support promoting democracy abroad, 60% believe that such funding is beneficial, while one-third (34%) do not think it is worth the expense. This is further evidenced by the fact that 61% say the U.S. would be better off if more countries were free (13% say we would be worse off and 23% say it would leave us about the same).

Expansionism and Intervention

Interestingly, support for territorial expansion has increased since last year. Almost two-thirds (63%) say they support re-acquiring the Panama Canal to protect strategic transit and to counter Chinese influence over the Canal, while more than half (53%) say they support acquiring Greenland to provide critical minerals and to increase access to the Arctic.

Context and information matters, though. When informed that the U.S. already has access to critical minerals and the Arctic based on current agreements with Greenland, NATO and Denmark, just under two-thirds (63%) do not favor acquiring Greenland.

The importance of context is also evident when it comes to actions against Venezuela and Cuba. Roughly seven in ten support prosecuting Venezuelan officials for narco-terrorism and drug-trafficking. About the same support prosecuting Cuban officials for attacks on Americans and human rights abuses. A less robust majority (58%) supports using military force to remove Maduro from power in Venezuela. Just over half (52%) support using military force to remove the current Cuban government from power.

Iran and the Middle East

In general, Americans approve of U.S. military actions against Iran: 54% approve versus 45% disapprove. Almost 90% of MAGA Republicans approve, whereas 68% of Democrats and 52% of independents disapprove. To be clear, this item does not ask about the efficacy of the decision to attack. Rather, it asks the respondent to render a verdict on military actions, which almost certainly includes judgments of the performance of the military. As such, these numbers should not be directly compared to the dozens of other surveys that have explicitly asked about whether we should be in Iran or how the current administration is handling the issue.

When queried about the relative importance of distinct outcomes in Iran, respondents prioritize preventing a wider war in the Middle East (69% extremely or very important), ensuring the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz (68%), ending the conflict as quickly as possible even if key U.S. goals are not fulfilled (64%), and permanently ending Iran's nuclear weapons program (63%).

Below these, Americans want to degrade Iran's ability to fund terrorist groups (62% extremely/very important), destroy Iran's offensive missile program (59%), and support the Iranian people in their efforts to secure freedom and democracy (57%).

The poll asked respondents to select among three options to end the conflict in Iran: (1) Iran's current regime remains in place in exchange for verifiable limits on its nuclear and weapons programs, (2) Iran's current regime remains in place but is significantly diminished militarily and economically, and (3) Iran's current regime is replaced by one more favorable to the U.S. The first option is preferred by 39%, the second by 16%, and the third by 36%. The take-away point is that Americans want the Iranian regime substantively diminished, although a plurality prefers a negotiated settlement even if it leaves the regime in place.

The preference for a negotiated settlement versus regime change coincides with party identification. Half (50%) of Republicans prefer regime change, while half of Democrats (52%) prefer a negotiated settlement.

Thinking about the nettlesome point of the Strait of Hormuz, a solid majority of Americans say they have several concerns. Seventy percent are extremely/very concerned about gas prices in the U.S., 69% say they are concerned about the safety of American forces in the region, 67% are concerned about the American economy more generally, and 66% are concerned about the outbreak of a wider war.

Respondents are also sensitive to the depletion of U.S. military weapons due to the Iranian conflict. Close to nine-in-ten (85%) say it is at least somewhat important that the U.S. expand its domestic capacity to produce military equipment (63% extremely/very important).

Israel-Palestine

Americans' net support for Israel has declined slightly over the last year. When asked whether you support or oppose the U.S. sending weapons to Israel, 50% support and 46% oppose (net +4). That is down from +8 in Summer 2025 and +21 in Summer 2024. Sixty-eight percent of Republicans support sending weapons, including 73% of MAGA Republicans. Sixty percent of Democrats oppose the U.S. providing weapons to Israel.

Similarly, although 33% say the U.S. is currently striking the right balance between supporting the Israel in its actions against Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, 39% say the U.S. should do less (21% say the U.S. should do more). Fifty percent of Democrats say we should do less, whereas only 27% of Republicans (23% of MAGA Republicans) say this.

Russia-Ukraine

Americans continue to support sending U.S. weapons to Ukraine. Currently, 58% support this action while 34% oppose it. Furthermore, this number has been fairly stable over time, despite a spike upwards in support in the November 2025 survey. Support has never dropped below 55%.

Respondents continue to support an outcome in which Ukraine retains its full territory (41%). Lesser percentages prefer conceding territory to Russia in exchange for a longstanding ceasefire and security guarantees from Western countries to prevent further Russian aggression (24%) or a

longstanding ceasefire along current frontlines without formally recognizing Russian control of annexed territories (25%).

The Ukraine-Russia war highlights broader ambivalence about U.S. commitments to European security. For example, the country is divided on the question of continued American troop presence in Europe. Roughly equal numbers of people support increasing (43%) versus decreasing (46%) U.S. troop presence in Europe to counter Russian aggression. This is an instance in which partisan identities do not necessarily distinguish attitudes: 46% of Democrats support increasing troop presence compared to 44% of Republicans. MAGA supporters are less enthused, as only 43% support increasing the number of American troops in Europe. More impactful is age. For instance, 56% of under 30 MAGA Republicans support *increasing* U.S. troops in Europe to counter the Russians.

Attitudes towards NATO

Logically, support for greater U.S. engagement with foreign affairs would seem to suggest support for a military alliance like NATO. The data indicate that this is indeed the case, as almost two-thirds of Americans (63%) have a favorable view of the alliance whereas slightly over a quarter have an unfavorable view (26%). These numbers are largely unchanged since 2021 (60% favorable, 22% unfavorable). While Democrats are more favorably inclined towards NATO (80% favorable), a majority of Republicans also rate the treaty favorably (52%).

Furthermore, there is substantial opposition to the possibility that the U.S. would withdraw from NATO: 55% would oppose such a move, compared to 37% who would support it. Indeed, 37% say they strongly oppose such a move, with only 18% strongly supporting it.

It is, however, true that Republicans are much more open to withdrawing from NATO than Democrats. Indeed, 56% of Republicans would support withdrawing, including 63% of MAGA Republicans. Younger MAGA Republicans are somewhat less skeptical as “only” 56% support withdrawing from the alliance.

But what about the core premise of the alliance itself: are Americans in favor of honoring our commitment to respond if any country in the alliance is attacked? Currently, 72% support honoring this commitment, while 20% oppose. These numbers are virtually unchanged from 2025. This support extends across all demographic and partisan sub-groups. Even groups that have historically been skeptical of internationalism display solid support for honoring our Article V commitments, including 65% of those under the age of 30, 67% of non-college respondents and 64% of independents.

Once again, the data indicates that messaging does matter. Roughly two-thirds of respondents say they are more likely to support continued U.S. participation in NATO if they learn some basic facts about the alliance:

- NATO allies strengthen America's defense industrial base, giving the U.S. greater access to military manufacturing, technology, and equipment (66% more likely);
- Arctic security is becoming more important, and most Arctic territory is controlled by NATO allies (65% more likely);
- NATO's presence in Europe deters further Russian aggression (65% more likely);

- After 9/11, NATO invoked its collective defense commitment, and allies supported the U.S. in Afghanistan (64% more likely);
- NATO members have recently increased their own defense spending in response to U.S. insistence (60% more likely).

China

Americans are quite concerned about an array of threats coming from the Chinese Communist Party. The top five concerns about China, in order, are (1) the Chinese government purchasing land in the U.S. (55% extremely concerned), (2) the Chinese government's ability to spy on U.S. citizens (53%), (3) China's role in the flow of fentanyl entering the U.S. (52%), technology theft and unfair trade practices (46%), and (5) China developing AI technology more advanced than that of the U.S. (45%).

These concerns are manifest in broader attitudes about the Trump administration's posture towards China. While 44% say President Trump's approach is about right, 33% say it is not tough enough on China, including 37% of Democrats and 44% of independents.

Almost six in ten (59%) support putting public pressure on China to release political prisoners such as Jimmy Lai and Ezra Jin even if it increases tensions with China.

There is mixed support—48% support versus 44% oppose—for a potential trade deal with China in which the U.S. eases restrictions on selling advanced technology that could have military uses, in exchange for China providing access to rare earth minerals and buying more American farm products. Despite plurality support overall for such a deal, 24% strongly oppose it compared to 15% strongly supporting it.

Political and demographic differences on a hypothetical China deal are striking. Six in ten citizens under 45 years of age support the deal, while 53% of those 45 years of age or older oppose it. Sixty-one percent of Republicans support the deal, compared to only 39% of Democrats and only 36% of independents. Republican support is not crosscut by MAGA support: 61% of MAGA Republicans support the deal, as do 58% of MAGA supporters who are under 30 years of age.

Tariffs

On the question of whether tariffs should be used as a foreign policy tool, support is underwater by 4 points. Half (50%) oppose tariffs, while 46% support them. This perhaps reflects the fact that just under half (46%) say the impact of tariffs on their personal situation has been negative. In contrast, just under one-quarter (24%) say they have been helpful and 29% say they have had no impact.

Drilling down even further, when asked about the likelihood of their community or industry losing jobs due to tariffs, about half (48%) said that this is likely, including 62% of Hispanics and 63% of Black respondents.

America at 250

Respondents were asked whether the U.S. has been mostly a force for good since 1776: almost three-quarters (73%) said yes, while 22% said no. Young people were the most skeptical about America's historical impact, with 59% of those under 30 agreeing that America has had a positive impact whereas 35% say it has had a negative impact. This compares with 88% of seniors saying positive and only 8% saying negative. There is also a slight partisan divide, as Republicans are +68 positive while Democrats are +43 and independents are +24.

Thinking about President Reagan's famous description of America as a "shining city upon a hill," 62% of respondents say this phrase describes the U.S. very or somewhat well—36% say not too well or not well at all. This question, however, produces more partisan effects. Although 81% of Republicans, including 86% of MAGA Republicans say it fits, less than half of Democrats and independents agree (48% and 49%, respectively).

MAGA Breakout

There has been considerable interest in discerning the attitudes and policy preferences of supporters of the “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) movement. To this end, and as noted throughout the preceding memo, this survey includes a breakout of MAGA supporters and an oversample of young (under 30 years of age) MAGA supporters. Several findings merit mention.

1. Across the board, MAGA supporters think the U.S. should be engaged in the world and take the lead when it comes to foreign affairs. This position garners the support of just under three in four, irrespective of the age cohort.
 - Younger MAGA members, though, are significantly more ambivalent about the efficacy of American involvement on the world stage, with roughly 30% saying it has been harmful.
 - These younger MAGA supporters are also mixed on whether the U.S should act decisively to deal with threats (52%) or whether the U.S. is better off showing restraint (45%).
2. Despite the conventional wisdom suggesting otherwise, MAGA supporters are more favorable than unfavorable towards NATO (48% favorable, 39% unfavorable). Younger MAGA supporters have especially favorable views of the alliance (62% favorable, 31% unfavorable). It is also the case that close to seven in ten MAGA supporters (both young and older) support NATO’s collective defense principle. Still, support for withdrawing from NATO is prevalent throughout the MAGA movement, as 63% favor a withdrawal, including 56% of younger MAGA supporters.
3. On Iran, younger MAGA supporters are roughly 15 points less likely than the broader MAGA segment to say they approve of military actions against Iran, although 73% still register approval. The main difference in priorities when it comes to Iran is that around four in ten young MAGA supporters see any given priority as extremely important, whereas the broader MAGA cohort sees the nuclear threat, reducing Iran’s military capacities, and keeping the oil flowing through the Strait of Hormuz as particularly important. Unsurprisingly, younger MAGA supporters are also less likely to insist on regime change as part of the outcome in Iran.
4. MAGA supporters think President Trump has it “about right” on China (about 60%). However, younger MAGA supporters are much less likely to say they are “extremely concerned” about specific aspects of the China threat. This difference ranges from 28 points less saying they are extremely concerned to 12 points, depending on the specific item.

In sum, the data indicate that MAGA supporters have rallied behind President Trump and his assertive foreign policy positions across the globe. Younger MAGA supporters offer similar attitudes, with some interesting departures. They are less likely to express strong interest in, or concerns about, foreign threats. They are more supportive of NATO and see Russia as a comparable, if not greater threat, than China. They are more equivocal about the impact of the U.S. on foreign situations and, as such, are more willing to consider deals that may compromise some national goals.

Methodology

This survey was conducted from May 26-June 3, 2026. The total sample includes 1,555 respondents (margin of error +/- 2.5 points at the 95% confidence level). It relies on a mixed-mode design, with 501 responses collected by live telephone interviewers (cell and landline), 903 interviews from our online panel, and 151 from text-to-web. The telephone portion of the survey is a probability sample, relying on a multi-stage cluster design. Fifty percent of the calls were completed via landline and 50 percent were completed via cell phone. On average, the interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. To ensure that results accurately reflect the demographics of the country, they were weighted by age/gender, race/region, and education targets drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey. The probability sample was then used to calibrate the non-probability online sample (conducted over the same dates) by key demographic and attitudinal variables. Some questions were asked of half the respondents, with an associated margin of error of +/- 4 points. The margin of error for sub-groups is larger.

The survey includes an oversample of 331 MAGA Republicans under 30 years of age (the total number is 338 due to the inclusion of a handful of these individuals from the broader poll). The margin of error for this group is +/- 5.0 points.