

Reagan Institute Summer Survey

Published June 2024

Six months out from another consequential presidential election, today’s global chaos has gripped the attention of the American people—defying the conventional wisdom that voters give little thought to foreign policy issues. From the conflict in the Middle East to Russia’s unprovoked war in Ukraine to increasing aggression from the Chinese Communist Party, Americans are yearning for a revival of Reaganesque principles.

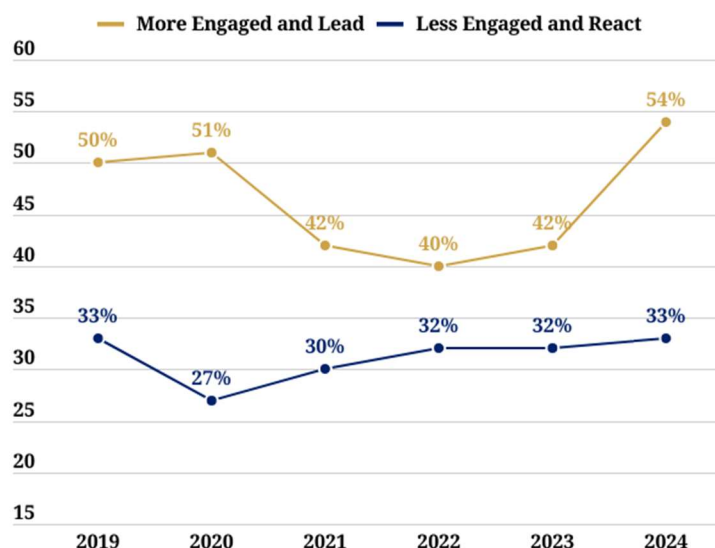
The latest Reagan Institute survey demonstrates a growing desire for American leadership in the world. The American people believe a strong U.S. role in international affairs benefits both our country and the world. Policymakers ought to take note of the widely held belief that a strong U.S. military is essential for maintaining peace and prosperity as well as the broad, bipartisan support for defending our NATO allies, providing security assistance to Ukraine and Israel, and taking serious measures to deter Chinese aggression.

Rising Support for American Leadership in the World

The percentage of Americans who think it is better for the United States to be more engaged and take the lead when it comes to international events is on the rise, increasing 12 points in just six months. A majority (54%) now expresses support for a more engaged U.S. foreign policy, up from 42% in November, including a majority of Democrats (66%) and a plurality of Republicans (49%). Most Americans think U.S. involvement in international events is beneficial for both the United States (57% overall, including 68% of Democrats and 53% of Republicans) and the world (61% overall, including 70% of Democrats and 59% of Republicans). A third of Americans think it would be better for the United States to be less engaged and react to international events, and similar minorities think U.S. engagement is harmful to the United States (33%) and the world (27%).

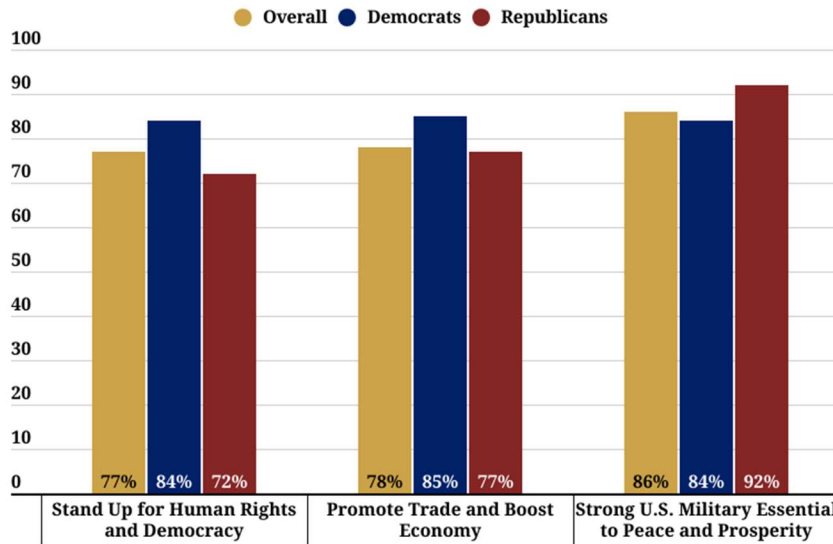
Americans are even more supportive of U.S. leadership when it comes to particular aspects of foreign policy. Over three-quarters believe U.S. leadership is essential for promoting trade and

Support for U.S. Global Engagement



boosting our economy (78%) and that America has a moral obligation to stand up for human rights and democracy around the world (77%). An even greater percentage (86%) believes that a strong U.S. military is essential to maintaining peace and prosperity, both at home and abroad—including supermajorities in each party (84% of Democrats and 92% of Republicans).

Agreement with Foreign Policy Principles

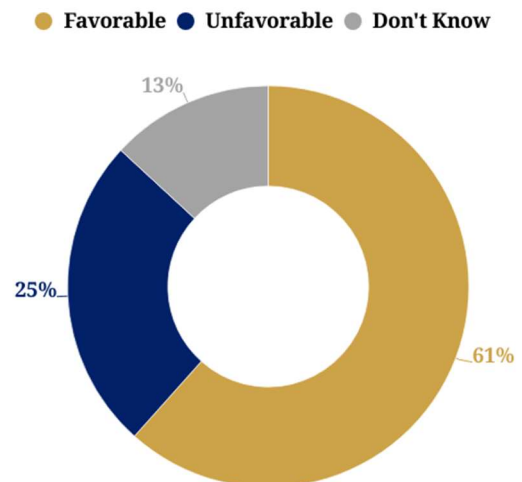


Consistent Favorability of NATO Alliance

As the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) marks its 75th anniversary this year, support for the alliance among the American people remains high, bipartisan, and remarkably consistent: six in ten have a favorable view of the alliance, which has been the case since the first Reagan Institute poll in 2018. Americans strongly support NATO’s collective defense principle, as set out in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Broad majorities of Americans (72% overall, including 82% of Democrats and 68% of Republicans) would support the United States responding with military force if a NATO ally in Europe were attacked.

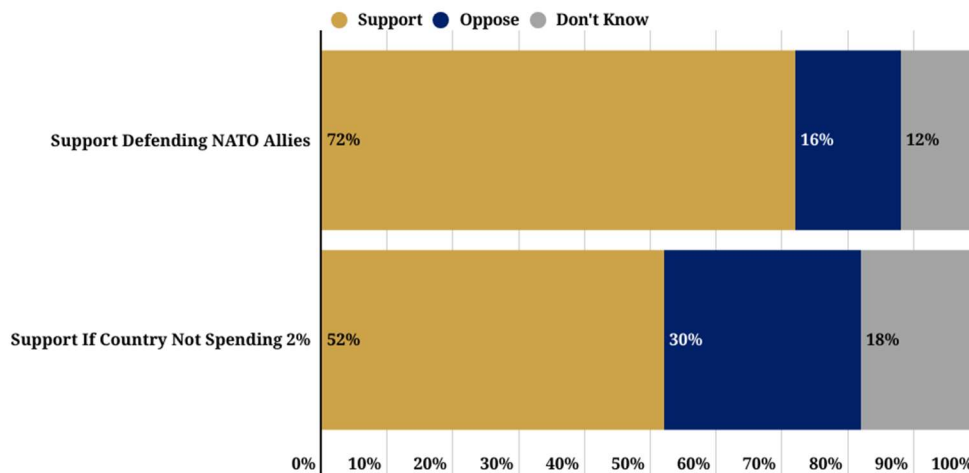
NATO allies, however, should take note that support for U.S. defense of European countries if attacked drops by 20 points to just 52% if that country is not spending at least 2% of its GDP on its own national defense, as all NATO countries have pledged to do. (The drop among Republicans is 27 points—down to only 46%.)

Views on NATO



Concerns about burden-sharing are driving concerns about the alliance among the American people. A majority of Americans (59%) think our NATO allies are not doing their fair share. About three-quarters (74%) regard the financial costs of NATO as a drawback for the United States, with agreement among Democrats (73%) and Republicans (75%). Three-quarters (76%) regard the possibility of committing the United States to a European war as one of the main disadvantages of our NATO membership (including 69% of Democrats and 83% of Republicans).

Support for Defending NATO Allies if Attacked

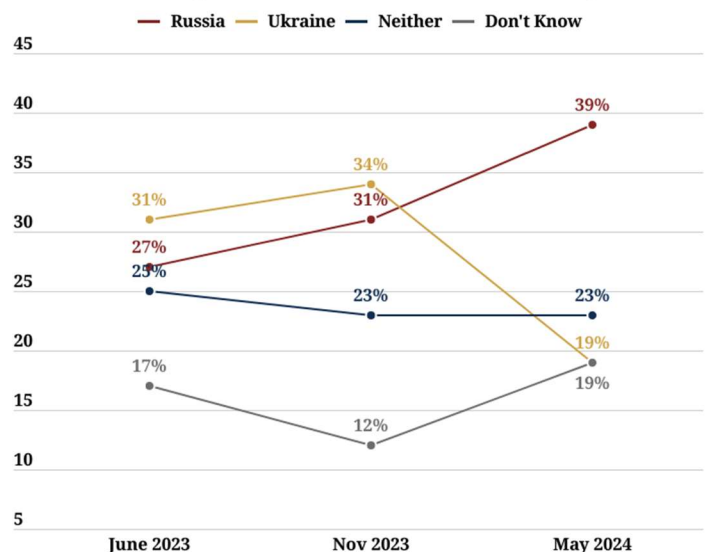


Nonetheless, Americans also recognize numerous benefits of NATO membership to the United States. Almost eight in ten (77%) say that having allies who will stand by us if we are attacked is one of the main benefits; almost seven in ten (69%) value NATO’s role in checking Russian power and expansionism; two-thirds (66%) regard NATO as beneficial to deterring violent conflict in Europe that would disrupt international trade; and six in ten (61%) see benefit in protecting freedom and democracy on the continent.

Steady Support for U.S. Military Aid to Ukraine

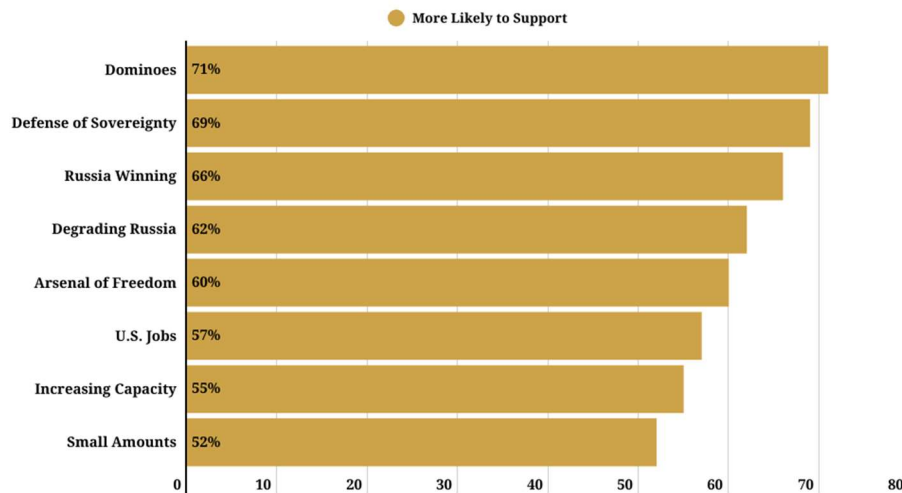
In the third year of the war in Ukraine, more Americans are starting to believe that Russia is winning the conflict—by a difference of 20 percentage points. Four in ten (39%) now say Russia is winning, up eight points since November and 12 points since last year. Only two in ten (19%) think that Ukraine is currently winning, which is down 15 points in the last six months. But 75% of Americans say it is important to the United States that Ukraine win the war, a number that has remained consistent since last year. Only seven percent say they want Russia to win the war, including only seven percent of Democrats and eight percent of Republicans.

Perception of Who Is Winning



Shifting perceptions of the war have not affected public support for the United States sending security assistance to Ukraine. Reagan Institute polling has shown that support to be remarkably consistent: 57% of Americans support the United States sending weapons to Ukraine, including a majority of Democrats (75%) and a plurality of Republicans (48%)—

Arguments that Built Support for Ukraine Aid



percentages that are within the margin of error of the responses to this question in previous Reagan Institute polls from November 2023, June 2023, and November 2022.

Several common arguments in favor of sending American military aid to Ukraine bolstered support—especially ones about the geopolitical benefits

of supporting Ukraine. The most effective argument in building support (71%) was that a Russian victory would put NATO allies at risk of attack, which would obligate the United States to join a war. About the same number (69%) said that the principle of national sovereignty and the idea that a nation has the right to protect its borders made them more likely to support Ukraine. Two-thirds (66%) say that they are more likely to support Ukraine after hearing that Russia could win the war if we do not provide aid.

Smaller but significant majorities said that they would be more likely to support aid to Ukraine after hearing about its benefits for American jobs and U.S. industrial capacity. The argument that 90% of Ukraine aid is actually spent in the United States and creates good manufacturing jobs at home made 57% more likely to support aid. A similar number (55%) said the idea that providing aid to Ukraine boosts our own capacity to produce weapons and ammunition here at home, helping us prepare our stockpiles to defend against adversaries like China, Iran, and North Korea, made them more likely to support aid.

Bipartisan Approval of Arming Israel with Partisan Divides on the Conflict

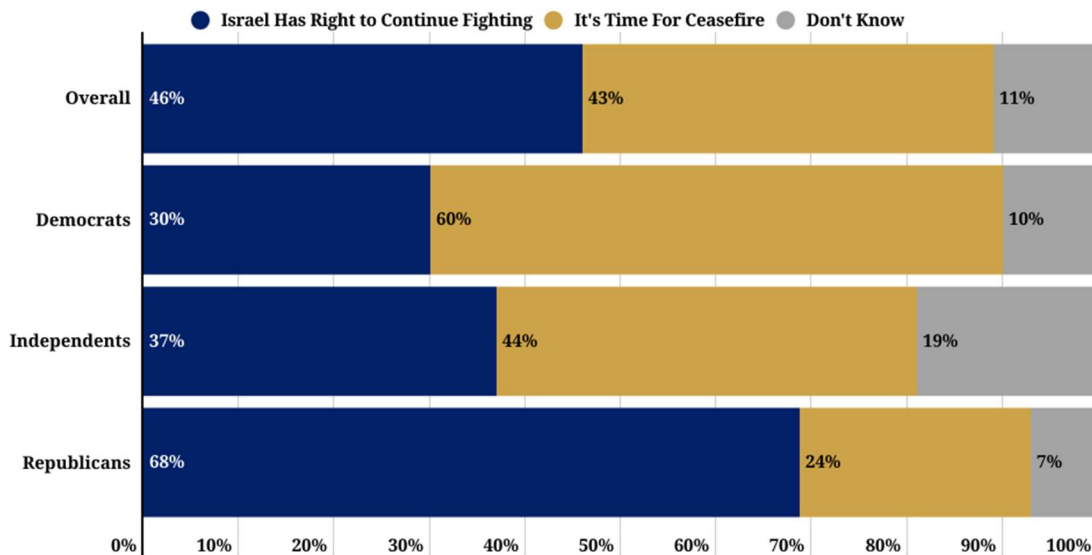
A bipartisan majority of Americans (56%) supports sending U.S. military aid to Israel—including 67% of Republicans and 50% of Democrats. Support for American military aid is even higher (68%) when asked specifically about sending missile defense systems to Israel to defend against drone and missile attacks by Iran. At the same time, three-quarters of Americans (75%) are concerned about humanitarian conditions in Gaza.

There is partisan polarization regarding how Israel has conducted the war against Hamas. Regarding Israel’s response to the October 7th attacks, a plurality of Democrats (48%) think the response has been too harsh, while only 18% of Republicans think the same. A greater number of Republicans (26%) believe Israel’s response has not been harsh enough. There

is also significant polarization on whether there should be a ceasefire in Gaza: 68% of Republicans say that Israel has the right to continue military action in Gaza until it removes the threat of Hamas, while only 24% of Republicans say it is time for a ceasefire. Conversely, 60% of Democrats say it is time for a ceasefire.

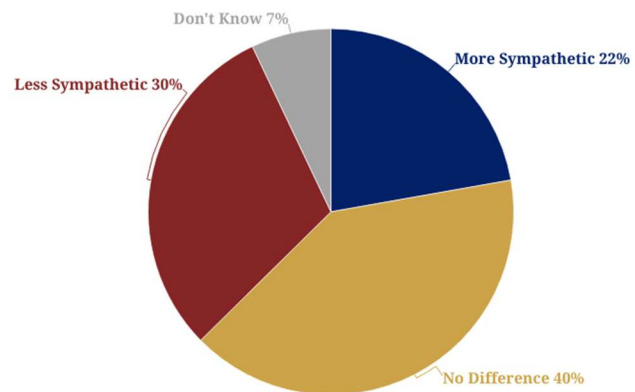
Americans' concerns regarding the conflict in the Middle East are varied. At the top of the list, 84% are concerned about possible terrorist attacks on Americans or U.S. interests in the Middle East. Nearly as many (81%) express concern about the United States being pulled into a broader war in the region. And 77% are concerned about increasing antisemitism in the United States.

Views on Future of the Middle East Conflict



The pro-Palestinian protests on American college campuses made no difference in support for the Palestinian cause among the broader population. Four in ten Americans said they were not moved one way or the other by the protests, and 30% said the protests made them less sympathetic to the Palestinian cause—only 22% said the protests made them more sympathetic. Among those whose positions did change as a result of the protests, there was a significant partisan split: 34% of Democrats said the protests made them more sympathetic, while 47% of Republicans said they were made less sympathetic. This partisan split mirrors the divide in perception over Israel's conduct in the war.

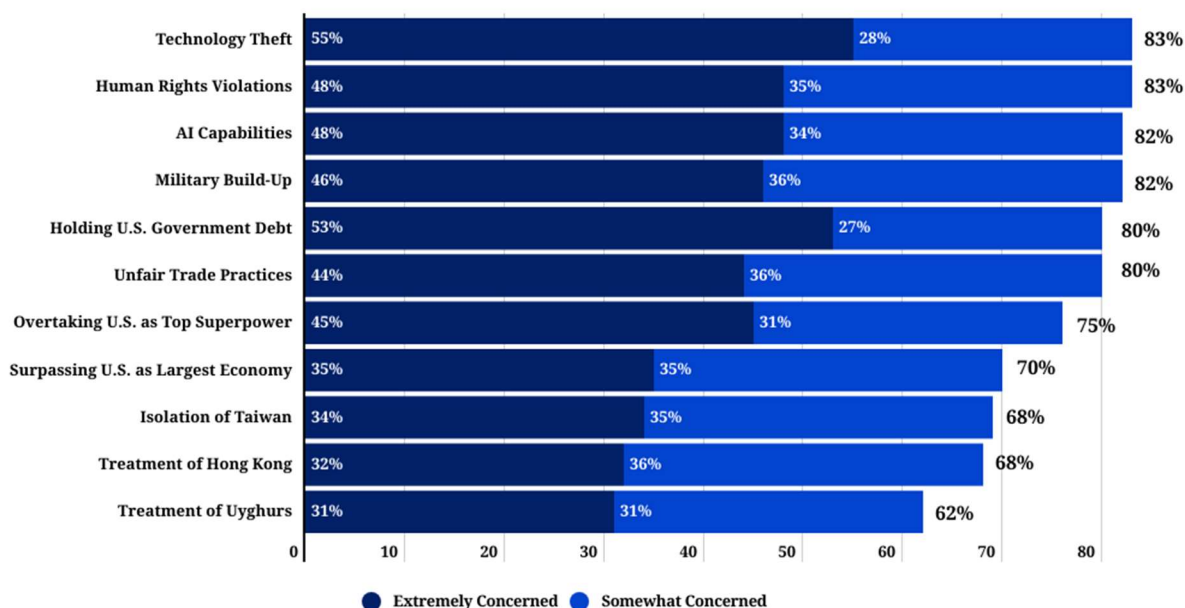
Effect of Campus Protests on Sympathy for Palestinian Cause



Multifaceted Concerns About China

The conflicts in the Middle East and Europe have not diminished Americans' awareness of and concern about the China threat. More than eight in ten Americans express concern about China's human rights violations (83%), technology theft (83%), military build-up (82%), unfair trade practices (80%), and holding of U.S. government debt (80%). Concern about China's development of artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities is on the rise, now at 82% and up by five points since 2020, amidst an increasing focus on the technological dimension of our strategic competition with China.

Top Concerns About China



Despite consensus on the China threat across bipartisan presidential administrations, more than half of Americans (56%) do not believe the United States has a clear strategy for managing its relationship with China, while only about a quarter (27%) think it does—these numbers have not shifted since 2022. There is a partisan gap, however, with almost seven in ten Republicans saying there is no clear China strategy, while Democrats are divided with 41% saying we do not have one and 38% saying we do. Despite the bipartisan consensus that China should be our primary national security focus, partisans remain divided on what that means for U.S. policy and strategy.

Bipartisan majorities, however, agree on the issue of deterring a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Most Americans (58%) support increasing the U.S. military presence near Taiwan in order to deter an invasion, and 56% support increasing U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Both concrete deterrence measures are supported by majorities of Democrats and Republicans.

Closer to home, despite the high-profile legislation against the popular social media app TikTok (banning the app unless it is sold to a U.S.-based parent company), opinion on banning TikTok has not moved since last year: 41% of Americans support banning TikTok, and 44% oppose a ban—largely divided among age demographics. However, when

informed of TikTok’s ownership by a Chinese company that is closely connected with their government and about both the potential national security and privacy concerns surrounding the app, support for a ban increases ten points to 51%, and opposition decreases to 39%.

Conclusion

As geopolitical crises break out and metastasize around the globe, we must not forget that Americans have overcome the challenges of a dangerous, chaotic world before—including in the 1980s. Upon accepting the nomination for president, Ronald Reagan explained at the Republican National Convention, **“We know only too well that war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they are weak. It is then that tyrants are tempted.”** Throughout his eight years in the White House, President Reagan restored the strength of those forces of freedom and ushered in a new era of global peace and stability.

Our survey shows that the American people want U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century to be aligned with President Reagan’s principle of peace through strength. Americans of all political stripes want our country to stand up to the tyrants in Moscow, Tehran, and Beijing, as well as the terrorists in the Middle East. This is not a reactionary view but an exponent of a broadly popular positive vision for U.S. foreign policy: a militarily and economically strong United States, confident in itself and in its values, ought to defend its security as well as democracy, human rights, and free enterprise around the world.

Polling Conducted By

