

AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 1999

Edited by John E. Rielly



The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations

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The objective of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations is to promote, by all appropriate educational means, public understanding of the foreign policy of the United States. The Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization which seeks to present a discussion of major foreign policy issues through research, publications, speakers, seminars and conferences.

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THE SURVEY IN CONTEXT

The Chicago Council survey was conducted two years into the second term of President Bill Clinton and nine years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. This is the second survey since the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, and the third in which the U.S.–Soviet competition has not dominated the findings. In the four years since the last survey, a booming economy in the United States and the rapid pace of globalization strengthened the position of the United States as the world's only superpower. The United States was active on the international scene, troubleshooting problems in and relations with Russia, China, the Balkans, Northern Ireland, the Middle East and others.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Since the 1994 survey the weakening of President Boris Yeltsin in Russia continued as that country's economic and financial crisis deepened. Despite substantial support from the International Monetary Fund and key Western nations, Russia proved incapable of achieving a stable market economy. The United States and its allies proceeded with expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) over Russian protests, admitting the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into the alliance in 1998.

Despite successful visits by China President Jiang Zemin to the United States and President Bill Clinton to China, Clinton's policy of "constructive engagement" between the powers was being called into question. With U.S. trade deficits soaring, evidence that China had acquired high technology for military purposes from American sources and China's continuing suppression of dissidents was cooling the relationship.

In Europe, NATO intervention in the Balkans in 1995 resulted in a tenuous cease-fire, reached and codified in the Dayton Peace Accords. The bloodshed of earlier years in Bosnia was stopped, but in 1998 the efforts of dissidents in Kosovo determined to break away from Serbian control led to more bloodshed in the region. At the time of the survey, the crisis raged, with Serbian leader Slobodan Milosovic apparently backing down only after the threat of NATO air strikes.

In Northern Ireland, political parties reached a peace accord, helped along by the significant efforts of the United States.

The Middle East continued to draw foreign policy attention, including the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Under the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel was reluctant to implement key aspects of the historic peace agreement of 1993, while Chairman Yasir Arafat proved incapable of fully living up to security guarantees given to Israel. Under pressure from the U.S. government, Israel and the Palestinians agreed in 1998 to honor key parts of the Oslo peace accords after extended negotiations at the Wye Plantation in Maryland.

In Iraq, the United Nations continually faced defiance by President Saddam Hussein in efforts to monitor the status of Iraq's various weapons programs. At the end of 1998 Iraq's violations precipitated a limited missile attack by the United States and Great Britain, without broader support from U.N. members, including China, France and Russia. The military strikes on Iraq occurred after the public survey was completed, but while the leadership survey was still being conducted.

Also high in the minds of Americans during this survey were the recent terrorist attacks on two U.S. embassies in Africa, and retaliatory U.S. air strikes against suspected terrorist compounds in Afghanistan and the Sudan. With the target, terrorist leader Osama bin Ladin, still at large, fear of more terrorist activity against the United States was high. Also of concern were the nuclear weapons tests conducted by India and Pakistan in 1998, heightening fears of nuclear proliferation.

On the economic front, the European Union proceeded with plans to implement policies for monetary union and to officially launch its new currency (euro) in early 1999. A financial crisis in Asia erupted in 1997, with widespread declines in currency values, corporate financial bankruptcies and a dramatic drop in living standards in Thailand, Indonesia, Korea and Malaysia. Meanwhile, the Japanese economy continued in recession, inhibiting Japan from playing its expected role in the financial recovery of its neighbors.

THE MOOD IN THE UNITED STATES

At the time this study was undertaken, the United States was enjoying its greatest economic success in decades. The stock market was at an all-time high, unemployment was under 5% and the massive federal budget deficit was replaced by an estimated \$50-100 billion surplus. At the same time, the trade deficit in goods and commodities had ballooned to the level of \$250 billion annually, the highest ever, and the nation's savings rate sank to one of the lowest levels ever.

In November of 1996 President Clinton was re-elected by a decisive margin, although Congress continued to be controlled in both the House and Senate by Republicans. In January of 1998 a scandal involving President Clinton and a White House intern shifted the focus of national attention and became almost an obsession for the American press and the Washington establishment during the entire year. Despite apologies for wrongdoing, President Clinton's popularity remained high. The Democratic Party picked up

additional seats, though not a majority, in the Congress in the midterm election of November 1998, an historic result that would lead to the resignation of Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and increasing friction within the Republican Party in Congress. Partisanship intensified over the course of the year, and in December 1998 the House of Representatives, on a party-line vote, approved two articles of impeachment on President Clinton, sending them to the Senate for trial. The impeachment vote occurred after the public survey was completed but during the leadership survey.

Other top news stories during the survey included a return trip into space by a U.S. space shuttle crew with Senator John Glenn aboard, and devastation in Caribbean and Central American countries ravaged by hurricanes.

THE SURVEY

This is the seventh public opinion survey and analysis sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The key question in all the surveys remains the extent to which the American public and leaders support an active role for the United States overseas. The report addresses such issues as the relationship between domestic and foreign policy priorities, the relationship between economic and military power, and the response to far-reaching changes in Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Asia and elsewhere in the world.

Surveys have been conducted every four years since 1974, with the results summarized and published in 1975, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995 and now in 1999 under the title "American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy."

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations commissioned the Gallup Organization to collect the data for this survey, using separate but similar questionnaires for the general public and a sample of national leaders. The survey of the public involved personal interviews with a stratified, systematic, random national sample of 1,507

American men and women 18 years of age and older. The questions were weighted to eliminate sampling distortion with respect to age, sex or race. The fieldwork for the public survey was conducted between October 15 and November 10, 1998.

The leadership sample involved 379 individual interviews conducted by telephone between November 2 and December 21, 1998. The sample included Americans in senior positions with knowledge of international affairs. Roughly equal proportions were included from the House of Representatives, the Senate and the administration. Leaders were also drawn from the business community, the media, academia and private foreign policy institutes. A smaller number of leaders was drawn from national labor unions, churches and special interest groups relevant to foreign policy. Consultation on the questionnaire, interviewing, tabulating of results and compiling of data were done by the Gallup Organization.

The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points for the public sample and plus or minus five percentage points for the leadership sample.

THE REPORT

The content of the questionnaire and the analysis and interpretation of data presented in this report represent the joint efforts of the editor and the following consultants: Arthur I. Cyr, A.W. Clausen Distinguished Professor at Carthage College; Stephen J. Del Rosso Jr., program director of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations; April Kanne Donnellan, program officer of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations; Catherine Hug, consultant; Benjamin Page, Gordon Scott Fulcher Professor of Decision Making at Northwestern University; Richard Sobel, political scientist, Harvard University; and Jason Barabas, graduate student in political science at Northwestern University.

We have published the analysis as quickly as possible after the fieldwork was completed. In our experience, the

advantages of presenting a timely summary analysis outweigh the possible benefits of a longer-term examination of the findings. The report should be considered in that light. The data derived from this survey will be placed on deposit with the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the Roper Center for Public Opinion in Storrs, Connecticut, and NORC (National Opinion Research Center) at the University of Chicago. It will be available to scholars and other interested professionals. This report will also be available on the Internet at www.ccrf.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to my principal collaborators: Arthur Cyr, Stephen Del Rosso, April Kanne Donnellan, Benjamin Page, Richard Sobel and Jason Barabas. I want to extend a special word of thanks to Catherine Hug for her critical judgment on the substance of the report, major editing of the chapters, and important role in overseeing all aspects of this project. Special thanks are also due to Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Aimee Muñoz, whose additional support on this project has been invaluable. Deborah Kroll, Thomas J. Minar and April Kanne Donnellan played a major role in the dissemination of the report. I want to thank the Gallup Organization for their cooperation while working under a tight schedule, especially Lydia Saad and John McNee.

On behalf of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, I want to express my gratitude to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for providing the major share of financing for the project. I also want to thank the U.S.-Japan Foundation and the Information Office of the European Union in Washington, D.C., for their generous financial assistance.

John E. Rielly, President
February 12, 1999

THE FINDINGS IN SUMMARY

GUARDED ENGAGEMENT AT CENTURY'S END

As a new millennium approaches, Americans feel secure, prosperous and confident. They see the United States as the world's most important and powerful country, with the fear of armed threats from a rival superpower diminished. In an era of increasing globalization, Americans view economic rather than military power as the most significant measure of global strength. Apprehension about economic competition from Japan or Europe has dissipated, as have concerns about immigration. Nevertheless, Americans are alarmed by images of violence at home and abroad. They support measures to thwart terrorists, prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and keep defense strong, but shy away from using U.S. troops on foreign soil. American public and leadership opinion on foreign policy today reflects a "guarded engagement" by a largely satisfied superpower.

SUSTAINED INTERNATIONALISM

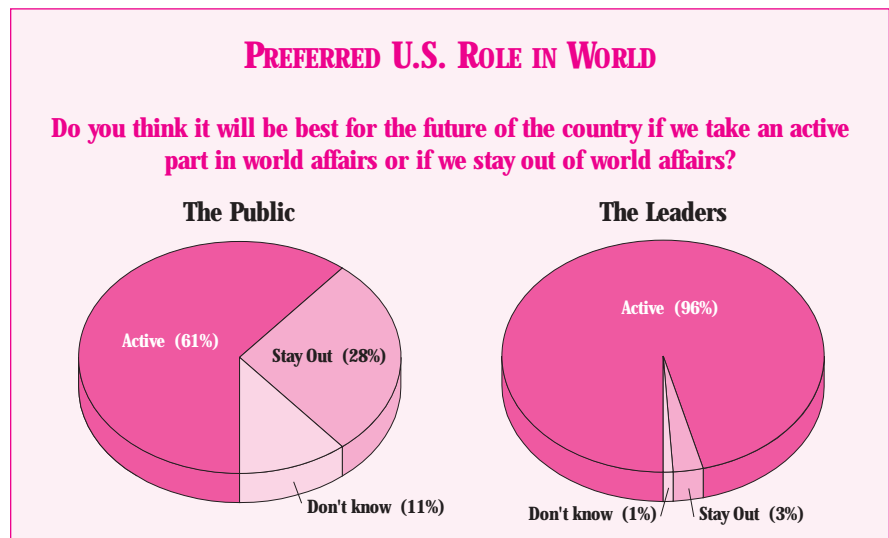
- As in all previous surveys, support for an active role for the United States in the world remains strong, with 61% of the public and 96% of leaders favoring such activism.
- Fifty percent of the public believe America plays a more important and powerful role as a world leader than 10 years ago, with more than three-quarters of the public (79%) and 71% of leaders foreseeing an even greater role for the country 10 years from now.

A (MOSTLY) SELF-SATISFIED SUPERPOWER

- The overall number of major foreign policy problems cited in the survey is down, suggesting a sense of relative security and satisfaction with the country's position in the world.
- President Clinton has made a dramatic comeback from four years ago in approval ratings on foreign policy. By one measure he has risen from eighth to first place among postwar presidents considered "very successful" in the conduct of foreign policy.

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

- A majority of the public (53%) believe there will be more bloodshed and violence in the 21st than the 20th century, while a plurality of leaders (40%) believe there will be less.
- The public considers international terrorism the number one critical threat to U.S. vital interests, followed by chemical and biological weapons, and the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers. Concern about the development of China as a world power is rising among leaders.



GUARDED ENGAGEMENT

- Overall public commitment to engagement coexists with reluctance to support the use of U.S. troops overseas, while leaders continue to be more willing to deploy troops abroad.
- Yet, in the fight against terrorism 74% of the public favor U.S. air strikes against terrorist training camps, and 57% favor the use of U.S. ground troops, the only circumstance in which the public favors such action. Even more (79%) favor diplomatic efforts to improve U.S. relations with potential adversary countries. Leaders agree.

PROTECTING INTERESTS

- Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons tops the list of goals the public perceives as "very important," followed by stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States and protecting the jobs of American workers.
- Among the lowest priorities are helping to improve the standard of living of

less developed nations, helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations, and protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression.

A PREFERENCE FOR MULTILATERALISM

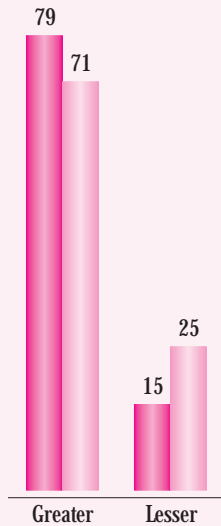
- Fifty-seven percent of the public agree that the United States should take part in U.N. peacekeeping forces, with only 20% preferring to leave the job to other countries
- Seventy-two percent of the public and 48% of leaders think the United States should not take action alone in responding to international crises if it does not have the support of allies.

ADJUSTING TO GLOBALIZATION

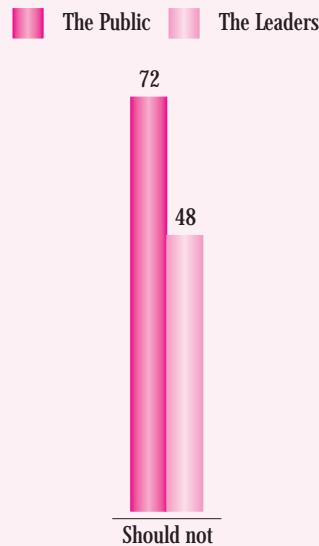
- Sixty-three percent of the public believe a country's economic strength is more important than its military strength as a measure of power and influence in the world, while leaders (89%) are even more overwhelmingly convinced of the power of economics.

GUARDED ENGAGEMENT OF A SATISFIED SUPERPOWER

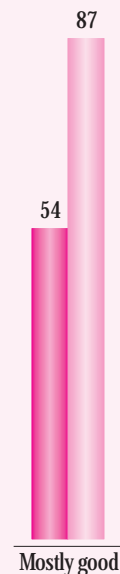
Predicted role for the United States in 10 years. (%)



Should the U.S. act alone if it does not have the support of allies? (%)



Is globalization mostly good or mostly bad for the United States? (%)



- On the question of globalization, 54% of the public and 87% of leaders believe it is mostly good for the United States. Among both the public and leaders, support for globalization correlates with support for international activism and multilateralism.

OLD FRIENDS, NEW RIVALS

Europe: The public ranks European nations as America's closest friends and allies. A plurality believe Europe is more important to the United States than Asia (42% vs. 28%). Yet the gap has narrowed, with Asia's importance up 7 points and Europe's down 7 points since 1994. Among leaders, the importance of Europe over Asia has increased from 42% to 51%.

Russia: Leaders rank dealings with Russia among the five biggest foreign policy problems, while the public is less concerned. A majority of the public (77%) and leaders (93%) still consider Russia a vital interest to the United States, even while there is relatively low concern about a military threat from Russia.

Japan: Only 14% of leaders (45% of the public) perceive economic competition from Japan as a critical threat. While public feelings toward Japan

remain lukewarm, it also remains the country considered most vital to American interests by the public and is a close second to China among leaders. A greater percentage of the public view Japan (47%) as more important to the United States than China (28%); leaders are split (48% Japan, 47% China).

China: Sixty-nine percent of the public and 97% of leaders believe that China will play a greater role in the next 10 years than today. A nearly equal percentage of the public (57%) and leaders (56%) consider China to be a possible critical threat to U.S. vital interests.

Israel: Israel continues to rank high as a vital interest for both the public and leaders, although public feelings about the country remain lukewarm. Public support for economic aid to Israel remains virtually unchanged from 1994, with a plurality believing aid levels should remain the same (42%).

Persian Gulf: In light of the U.S.–British attack on Iraq, which took place before the leadership survey was completed, leaders view Iraq as more threatening than the public, ranking relations with this country as the second biggest foreign policy problem. Leaders are more supportive of inter-

vention than the public if Iraq were to invade Saudi Arabia (79% to 46%).

BRACING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

- As the United States enjoys the strongest economic and military strength in decades, the survey findings point to some clouds on the horizon that warrant attention.
- During a period when the United States has been acting unilaterally in response to some crises abroad, nearly three-quarters of the public prefer that the United States act together with allies, not alone.
- Despite the perception of many vital interests around the world, public support for using troops to defend those interests has declined.
- At a time when most people believe increased global cooperation and strong leadership are needed to solve current problems and thereby prevent future violence and instability, continued public support for international involvement is encouraging. Nevertheless, the guarded nature of that engagement could prove problematic if global leadership requires tougher choices by the United States in the next century than it has faced thus far as the post-Cold War's only superpower.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRIORITY OF FOREIGN POLICY

Three main areas of questioning in this survey reveal where foreign policy issues figure in the broader scope of American concerns and priorities: attentiveness to various types of news, assessment of the country's biggest perceived problems, and desired levels of federal spending on a variety of programs. Other questions also shed light on the priority of foreign policy in America, including whether foreign policy positions influence presidential voting. This chapter examines these items as well as trends in political activity and the degree to which the general population stays informed. As in all of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations previous surveys, the American public in 1998 is vastly more concerned with domestic, particularly social, issues than with foreign affairs.

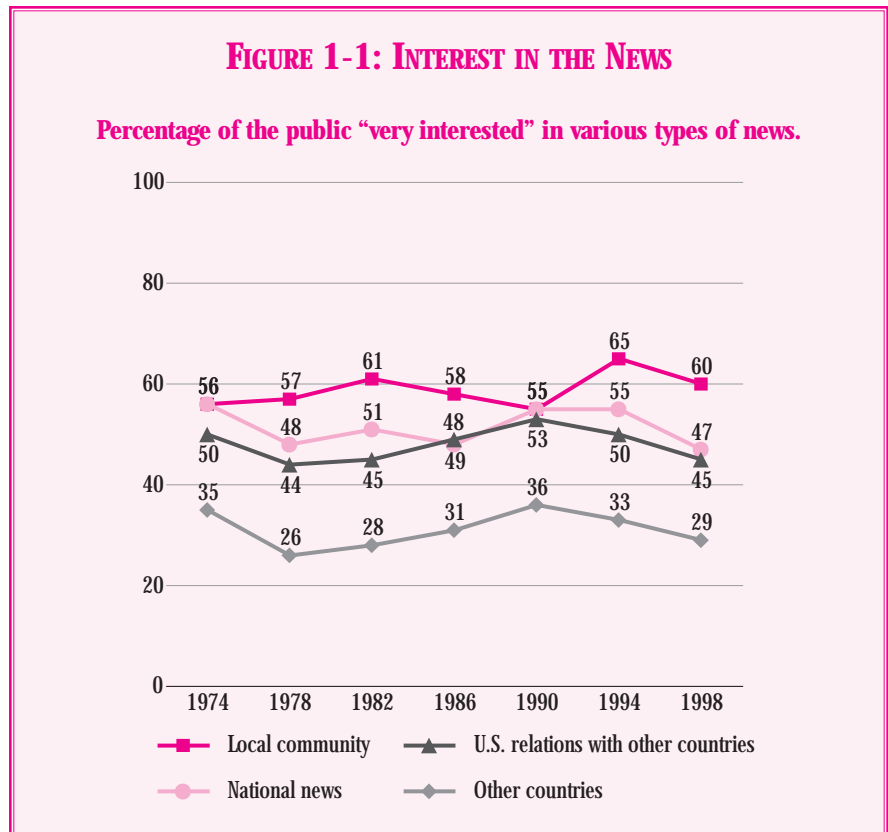
TURNING OFF THE NEWS

As part of the general population survey, people were asked how interested they are in reports about their local community, national news, news about other countries, and news about U.S. relations with other countries. At a time when President Clinton's impeachment battle in Congress and the midterm Congressional elections dominated news coverage, the public's attention to national news might have been expected to jump. Instead, interest in national news is down 8 percentage points from four years ago. This coincides with the general drop in the proportion "very interested" in any type of news. Those "very interested" in each news category fell from 4 to 8 percentage points from 1994, reflecting an overall decline in attentiveness to the news.

As in previous years, interest in local news ranks highest, with 60% "very interested," followed by national news at 47%. Only 29% of those ques-

Those "very interested" in each news category fell from 4 to 8 percentage points from 1994, reflecting an overall decline in attentiveness to the news.

tioned reflect a similar level of interest about news of other countries, although the figure rises to 45% when the topic is news about U.S. relations with other countries. Those with higher education levels or international travel experience are more apt (by as many as 7 percentage points) to follow news of other countries and U.S. relations with other countries, continuing a finding of earli-



er surveys. Figure 1-1 shows that the ranking of those "very interested" in the various types of news has been relatively stable since this survey began in 1974.

While the proportion of the public "very interested" in international news stories has been on the decline since 1990, the number of those claiming to be "hardly interested" has been going up. In this year's survey, results show the percentage of those "hardly interested" rising 3 points to 22% on interest in news of other countries, and 4 points to 14% on news of U.S. relations with other countries.

NATIONAL PROBLEMS

Every four years since 1974 the general population and the leadership have been asked to name the top two or three problems facing the country. This establishes the concerns and priorities on which people are most focused. The seven most commonly cited problems by the public and leaders are shown in Figure 1-2.

In the 1994 survey crime topped both the general public and leadership lists of items cited most often as among the biggest problems facing the country. Today, crime retains the top spot on the public's list, but has dropped signif-

icantly in the number of citations, from 42% to 26% of those surveyed. Interestingly, in the leadership survey crime has fallen from 33% to 6% since 1994, taking it out of the top 10 problems cited. This finding is no doubt related to statistics showing a drop in crime, including violent crime, throughout the country over the last few years. Clearly, however, there is a significant gap between the leadership and general public on the importance of this issue. The leaders listed education as their top issue, an increase from 15% in 1994 to 26% in 1998.

The second most cited national problem for the public (22%) revolves around matters related to President Clinton and the impeachment process. This item includes people who mention Clinton's personal problems (sexual indiscretions, lawsuits) as well as related issues (isn't doing his job, media focused on his problems) and the impeachment process itself. It is unclear how many people may be expressing negative sentiment toward Clinton personally versus toward Congress, the media and/or other players in the "drama." Nevertheless, this general sense of annoyance with the whole matter may be causing a "turning off" by the public, reflected in the declining attention to national and other types of news.

Among leaders, 13% mention matters surrounding President Clinton as one of the biggest national problems, placing this item among the five most common responses on the list. Even more mention dissatisfaction with government (14%) and immorality (14%), two categories that might arguably echo negative sentiment surrounding the presidential impeachment. These problem areas might, however, also reflect concerns about broader societal issues, whether raised by the Clinton scandal or not.

The finding of President Clinton and surrounding issues as a top national problem contrasts with Clinton's positive approval rating in numerous other polls as well as similar indicators in this report related to foreign policy (see Chapter 6).

FIGURE 1-2: NATIONAL PROBLEMS

What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?

Most common spontaneous responses.

The Public

- Crime (26%)
- The President/Bill Clinton¹ (22%)
- Drug abuse (21%)
- Education (15%)
- Poverty (11%)
- Economy: unspecified (11%)
- Immorality (11%)

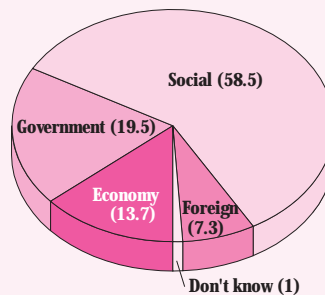
The Leaders

- Education (26%)
- Dissatisfaction with government (14%)
- Immorality (14%)
- Asian Economy (13%)
- The President/Bill Clinton¹ (13%)
- Economy: unspecified (12%)
- Health Care/Insurance (11%)

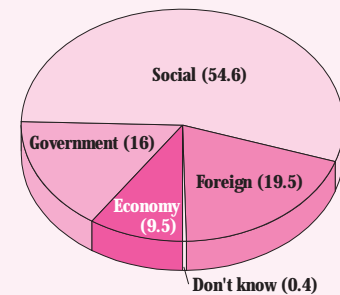
¹Responses for this item include anything related to matters surrounding the impeachment process of the president, including too much media attention, lawsuits, poor leadership, etc.

All responses are grouped into four main categories and displayed as a percentage of the total problems facing the country.

The Public



The Leaders



The total number of perceived problems facing the country is down, suggesting an increased satisfaction with life in America compared to previous years.

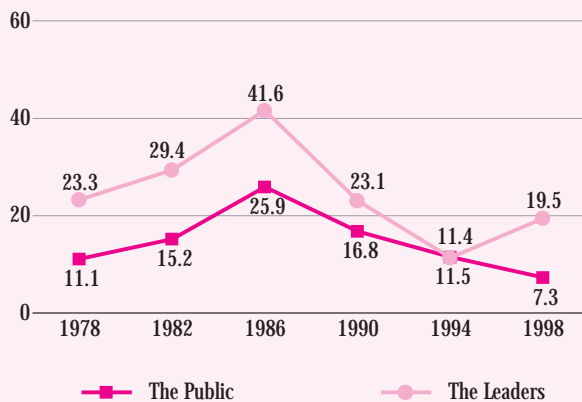
So where do foreign policy matters rank among the country's problems? Figure 1-2 groups the individual problems into larger categories (economic, governmental, social and foreign) to illustrate their relative priorities. Clearly, foreign policy problems today rank relatively low among the public as overall national concerns. The total number of perceived problems facing

the country is down, suggesting an increased satisfaction with life in America compared to previous years.

Domestic concerns remain foremost in people's minds. Social issues dominate, followed by government, including the concerns about matters surrounding the president. Foreign policy issues again make up the smallest portion (7.3%) of problems cited by the public. Not only is this the smallest piece of the pie, the number of foreign policy issues mentioned dropped nearly 50% from 1994. While this partly demonstrates a lack of interest in or attentiveness to these topics as shown earlier, other results in this survey suggest that the low concern about foreign policy matters reflects general satisfac-

FIGURE 1-3: FOREIGN PROBLEMS

Foreign problems as a percentage of the total problems facing the country.



tion with the handling of foreign policy and a belief that these matters do not currently pose a serious threat. Another explanation may be a declining sense of connection to problems around the world. In a post-Cold War world, without a clear-cut "us vs. them" mentality, the relevance of world events appears less evident for many Americans.

On the leaders' agenda, foreign policy issues have increased their share of the national problem pie, from 11.4% of total concerns raised in 1994, to 19.5% in 1998. The increase is due largely to drops in concern about the domestic economy, crime and the budget deficit, combined with stronger concern about the global economy, including the Asian economic crisis. Figure 1-3 displays the proportion of total problems facing the country that foreign policy matters have represented since 1978.

FEDERAL SPENDING PRIORITIES

Another way to determine the priority of foreign policy issues relative to the overall national agenda is to ask respondents whether they would expand, cut back or keep federal expenditures about the same on a variety of programs. Responses to these questions indicate a few significant changes. Figure 1-4 shows the net results for each program. These are

The low concern about foreign policy matters reflects general satisfaction with the handling of foreign policy.

determined by subtracting the percentage of those believing a program should be expanded from the percentage of those believing a program should be cut back. This method reflects how the forces wishing to cut back and expand programs act on balance in relation to the status quo (those who believe spending should stay about the same).

Domestic programs are the top candidates for expansion. The top three priorities for both leaders and the public are aid to education, health care, and programs to combat violence and crime. The latter program was the top candidate for expansion in 1994, followed by education and then health care. This shows that although the domestic agenda has shifted somewhat, the three top issues remain the same. In the area of social security, both the leaders and the public show a net desire to expand federal spending. For both groups there is a significant increase in those wanting to expand this program over four years ago, from 49% to 66% for the public and from 7% to 30% for leaders. The leadership

result is a reversal from a net "cut back" response of -18 in 1994 to +21—a swing of 39 points. A plurality of leaders (57%) prefer to keep spending the same.

The leaders made another major reversal from "cut back" to "expand" in one foreign policy area: economic aid to other nations. The swing of 32 points in net levels from -11 to +21 contrasts with the public's strong desire to cut back foreign economic aid. However, leaders overall still prefer to keep spending the same, and public sentiment in 1998 for cutting back is not as strong as in 1994, a net change of 14 points.

A desire to expand programs related to gathering intelligence about other countries represents an intriguing shift in both the public and leadership surveys. In 1994, the first year this type of federal program was considered, the results reflected on balance greater numbers favoring a cutback than an expansion of spending on intelligence (-11 for the public, -21 for the leaders), although a plurality of both wanted to keep it the same. This year, however, there are more public and leaders who would expand rather than cut back (+5 for the public and +19 for leaders), with a plurality (43% of the public and 49% of leaders) saying keep it the same. This switch might be linked to increasing concerns about terrorism that surface throughout this report.

Defense programs also show more public support for increased spending, resulting in a very small net balance (by 2 percentage points) in favor of expansion, the first since 1978. The leaders also moved toward greater spending (from net -23 in 1994 to -6 in 1998), but still come out negative on balance. Pluralities of both prefer to keep spending the same. Reflecting the new mood, President Clinton recently announced that he intends to increase federal defense spending substantially over the next few years.

Military aid to other nations, another foreign policy-related program, came out on the bottom of the scale again this year, although the numbers are slightly less negative on balance

than in 1994 (-47 for the leaders and -48 for the public in 1998; -64 for each in 1994). The space program, which might have been expected to become more popular in light of the successful John Glenn return to space in late October 1998, did move toward the “expand” side of the chart, but not overwhelmingly. While pluralities of the public and leaders favor keeping spending the same, on balance the rest of the leaders now desire to expand (+6), a relatively large swing of 22 points from 1994. The public came in at -6, still reflecting a desire on balance to cut back, but with a net increase of 7 points over the last survey.

ACTIVISM

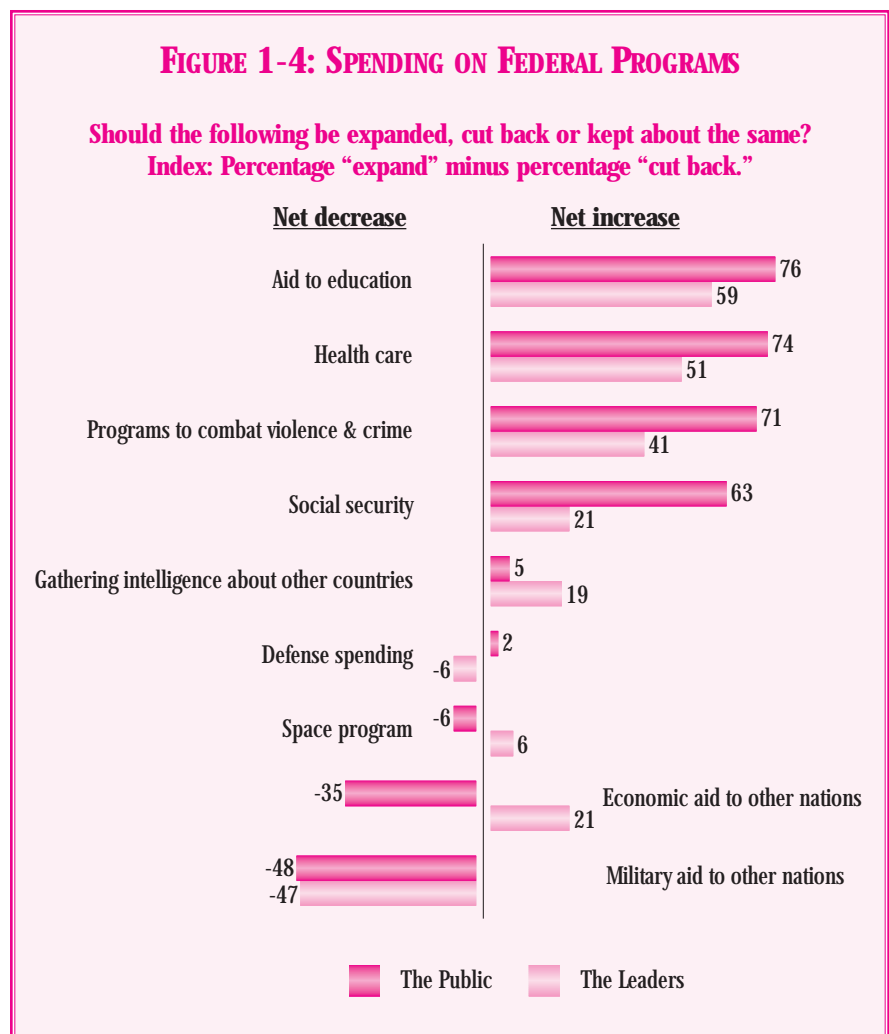
To help establish how much influence these opinions and priorities may exert on policy makers, this survey also explores respondents’ political activities. Reflecting the decline in attentiveness generally to the news, overall expressed political activism among the public is down. While about two-thirds say they have voted, less than one-fifth have worked for a political party or candidate, attended a political meeting, asked someone else to support a candidate or party, displayed campaign buttons or posters, or written to an elected official about a personal or political issue or problem. The percentage for every item is down 4 to 7 points from 1994.

“INFORMEDNESS”

Another measure of attentiveness is the level of “don’t know” responses given on various questions throughout the survey. “Don’t know” responses among the public are not uncommon, especially for questions on specific foreign policy issues requiring more detailed information. Some examples:

When asked whether they favor or oppose establishment of a Palestinian state, 38% of the general public does not know or does not respond, while only 5% of the opinion leaders are unsure or undecided.

When asked whether the United States should contribute more money to the International Monetary Fund (IMF),



24% of the general public does not know, compared to just 3% of the opinion leaders.

While some may find this troubling, the study shows that the level of “don’t know” responses has remained consistent over time, indicating that the public is no more or less informed today than in the past. As might be expected, respondents with higher levels of education generally have a lower “don’t know” response level.

ATTENTION TO LEADERSHIP

Although the public may not be paying undue attention to foreign policy issues, this does not mean they feel foreign policy is unimportant. In fact, it appears they are holding political leaders responsible. When asked if a candidate’s reputation for being especially concerned about foreign policy would make them more or less likely to vote for him or her for president, a plurality

(46%) of the public chose either “more likely” (37%) or “depends on positions” (9%). This suggests a clear potential impact of foreign policy issues on presidential voting. Only 8% said they would be less likely to vote for a candidate based on his or her reputation for being especially concerned with foreign policy.

While the public is less focused on global affairs than on domestic matters, whether because of general satisfaction, lack of knowledge or attentiveness, or perceived threat, leaders are paying more attention to these areas. This is especially true where there is a major potential economic impact on worldwide stability (Asian economic crisis, support for increased federal spending on economic aid). The public may not follow every nuance in international affairs, but as becomes clear in the next chapter, it does take note of U.S. leadership in the world.

CHAPTER TWO

THE U.S. ROLE IN THE WORLD

Four years ago we documented the disappearance in these surveys of the bipolar, Cold War world in which ideologies clashed and Soviet power challenged our own. As communist power and ideology faded from the scene and the United States emerged as the world's only superpower, American foreign policy—and the attitudes of the American public—became more pragmatic and differentiated. Now, as the century comes to a close, the American public sees the United States as a successful superpower that is playing a more important and decisive role in the world. To the average citizen—and leaders—there are some serious possible threats on the horizon, but few troubling foreign policy problems at the moment. Reflecting the declining attention to foreign policy is a decline in vital interest perceptions. The American public has remained internationalist, but places the highest priority on foreign policy goals aimed at protecting its interests rather than pursuing change abroad.

SUCCESSFUL SUPERPOWER

When Americans look at the world, they see their country unrivaled as an economic and military superpower. With the tensions of Cold War competition now nearly a decade behind them, more Americans than ever (50%) think that the United States is playing a more important and powerful role as a world leader today compared to 10 years ago (see Figure 2-1); few (19%) say less important. An overwhelming 79% of the public, up 6 points from our 1994 survey, believe the United States will be playing an even more powerful role 10 years from now. This sentiment is shared by 71% of leaders.

When considering the relative power of other countries in the next 10 years (see Figure 2-2), no country

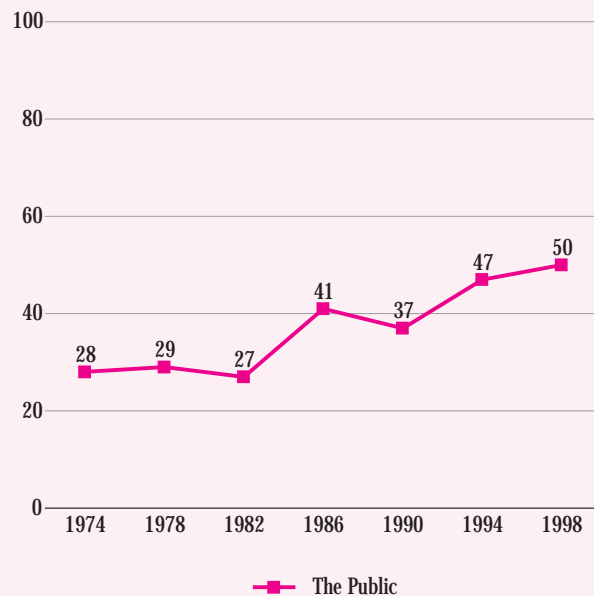
More Americans than ever think the United States is playing a more important and powerful role as a world leader.

among the other six asked about is so consistently predicted by the public to play a more powerful role in 10 years as the United States. Only China comes close, with 69% of the public expecting a greater role in the future, followed by Japan at 59%.

On some of these matters, however, the public and leaders markedly differ. A near unanimous 97% of the leaders are convinced that China is on the rise. Less than a majority of leaders (46%) see Japan's power increasing. The balance of opinion among the public holds that the power of Russia

FIGURE 2-1: IMPORTANCE OF U.S. ROLE IN WORLD

Percentage who think the United States plays a more important and powerful role as a world leader today than it did 10 years ago.



and Germany will stay about the same and that India and Brazil will actually play lesser roles in the next 10 years. The leaders agree with the public on Russia, although they disagree on the others—substantial majorities expect that Germany, India and Brazil will all play greater roles in the future.

FEW FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

Most Americans do not see the United States as facing major international problems. When asked to name the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States, fully one-fifth (21%) of the public do not name a single one. These "don't know"

responses, up 7 points since our last survey, probably reflect the generally low number of troubling news stories about foreign affairs. They are consistent with the lower attentiveness to international news and the low overall priority of foreign policy on the country's agenda. When fewer dramatic international crises are bedeviling the United States, public focus on foreign policy wanes. The findings suggest there is satisfaction with the U.S. position in the world, and even a measure of disconnection from international events, which seem to pose less of an immediate threat to people's lives.

Most of the foreign policy problems that the public does cite—seven of the 11 most common responses—involve matters of possible violence and conflict, but few bear directly on U.S. national security (see Figure 2-3). Most notable among these is the biggest perceived problem, international terrorism, mentioned by 12% of the public—up a sharp 11 percentage points since 1994. Great concern over terrorism is an important theme running through the general public survey, which was carried out not long after the bombing of American embassies in Africa and the retaliatory air strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan. Some of the 7% who mention arms control as a big problem have in mind nuclear weapons that could threaten Americans, another theme that recurs throughout the study. Relatedly, a few (4%) mention “war,” including the danger of nuclear war.

International economic concerns fueled by globalization are coming to the fore of the foreign policy agenda, particularly among leaders.

While some members of the public cite problems related to Russia, China, Israel, Bosnia, peacekeeping, and the United Nations, the relatively low number of such responses suggests these are seen as involving turmoil elsewhere that poses little imminent threat to the United States. As in earlier surveys, some members of the public mention a desire to stay out of the affairs of foreign countries. However, this is down 12 percentage points since 1994, perhaps reflecting decreased actual or potential exposure of U.S. troops to danger. Some also volunteer a preference to give less foreign aid, or to have less military involvement in other countries.

In terms of impact on the United States itself, the most-cited problems are economic—the world economy generally (11%), and the trade balance (10%). These are up substantially from our previous survey, each rivaling the

FIGURE 2-2: FUTURE ROLE OF COUNTRIES

Please tell me whether in your estimation the following countries will play a greater role or a lesser role in the next 10 years than they do today. (%)

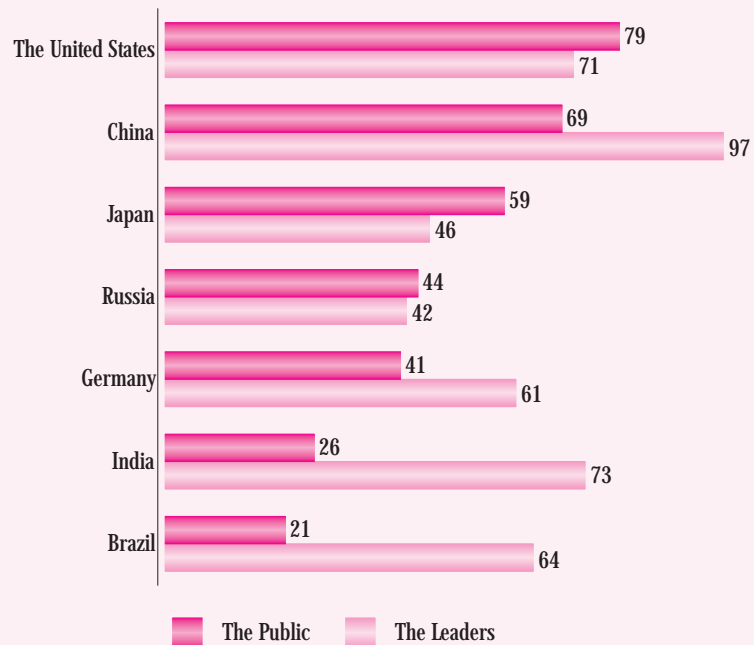


FIGURE 2-3: FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

What do you feel are the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today?

Most common spontaneous responses.

The Public

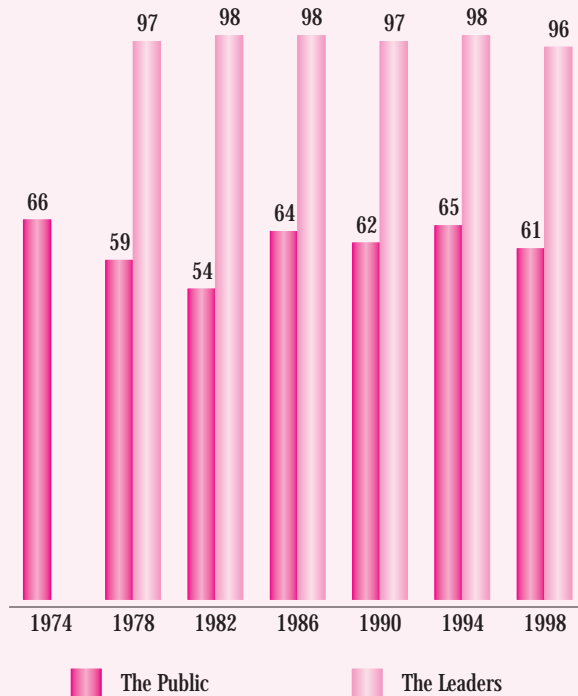
- Don't know (21%)
- Terrorism (12%)
- World economy (11%)
- Balance of payments (10%)
- Middle East situation (8%) (unspecified)
- Getting involved in the affairs of other countries (7%)
- Foreign aid (too much sent to other countries (7%)
- Arms control (7%)
- Iraq (4%)
- War (4%)
- Dealings with Russia (4%)

The Leaders

- World economy (21%)
- Iraq (18%)
- Arms control (15%)
- Dealings with Russia (13%)
- Japan/Asian economy/crisis (13%)
- Middle East situation (12%) (unspecified)
- Terrorism (10%)
- Relations with China (9%)
- U.S. role as world leader/world's police (8%)
- Stronger foreign policy needed (6%)
- Keeping peace (6%)
- International trade (6%)

FIGURE 2-4: PREFERRED U.S. ROLE IN WORLD

Percentage who favor an active part for the United States in world affairs.



concern about terrorism and together surpassing it. Some members of the public also mention immigration and drugs as problems (3% each). Yet taken separately or together, none of these concerns comes close in urgency to the widespread fears of nuclear annihilation that characterized the Cold War years.

The leaders pinpoint somewhat different problems than the general public. Leaders put concerns about the world economy (21%, up 10 points from 1994) at the top of the country's biggest foreign policy problems. This, together with frequent mentions of Japan and the Asian crisis (13%), illustrates the degree to which international economic concerns fueled by globalization are coming to the fore of the foreign policy agenda, particularly among leaders (see Chapter 3).

Other problems of concern to leaders include the 18% that mention Iraq (compared to 1% in 1994), where trouble over U.N. weapons inspections had flared up and the U.S. air attacks

Both the public and leaders cite fewer foreign policy problems of any sort, averaging less than two problems per respondent.

were launched after the public survey was completed but during the leadership survey. Many leaders mention arms control and nuclear weapons (15%), dealings with Russia (13%), the Middle East situation (12%), relations with China (9%), and a number of other specific topics. Terrorism (10%), though up sharply from the 1% of 1994, ranks lower on the leadership list than on the public list.

Like the general public, few leaders mention problems that represent immediate national security threats to the United States. Both the public and leaders cite fewer foreign policy problems of any sort, averaging less than two problems per respondent—down considerably from the Cold War years and down even since 1994.

INTERNATIONALISM

Despite the lower level of concern about problems on the foreign policy front and reduced attentiveness to those issues, Americans are not turning away from the world. The findings once again confirm what has been true for at least two-and-a-half decades: almost two-thirds of the public say it would be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs rather than stay out of world affairs (see Figure 2-4). Among those who hold opinions on the matter—that is, excluding “don’t know” responses—support for taking an active part rises to 69%. More internationalist responses are regularly given by those with the most education and the highest incomes.

Another familiar finding is that leaders much more uniformly than the public endorse an active role for the United States in world affairs, with 96% of the leadership sample saying it would be best for the future of the country if we take an active part.

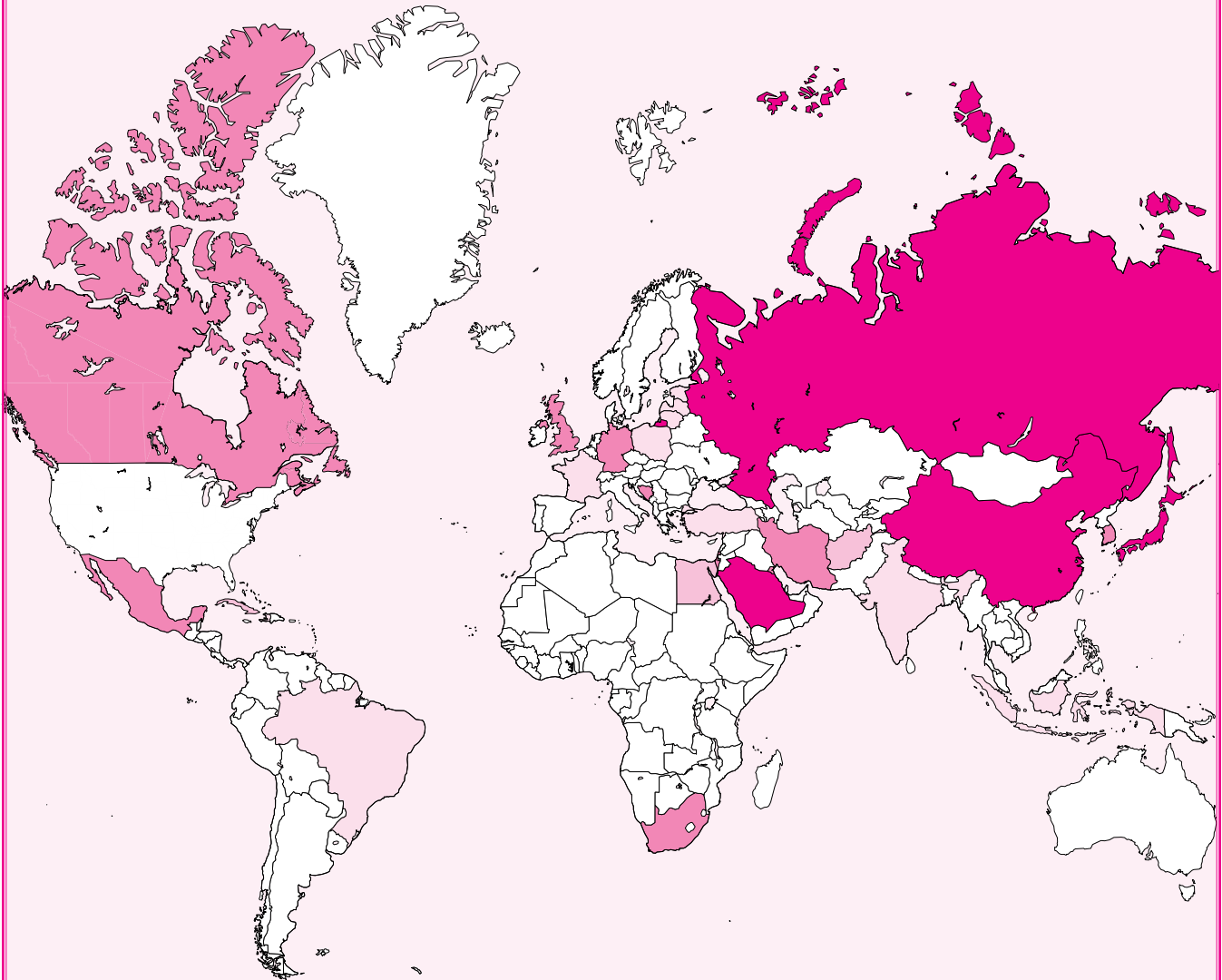
Concerns about the global economy that show up on the list of foreign policy problems suggest that the phenomenon of globalization has kept internationalist sentiment strong, even as traditional security concerns have declined in perceived importance. Among those in the public who believe the United States should take an active part in world affairs, 63% believe that globalization is mostly good for the United States, compared to 54% overall. See Chapter 3 for a further explanation of the correlation between internationalism and globalization.

MANY VITAL INTERESTS

A picture of exactly what kind of active role Americans are likely to favor emerges from public perceptions of U.S. vital interests. On a list of 26 countries (divided in half for separate subsamples of respondents), a majority of the public perceives a vital interest in more than half of them—15 of the 26 countries. Leaders see even more vital U.S. interests around the world—a majority of the leaders perceive vital interests in nearly all of the 19 countries they were asked about, with only

FIGURE 2-5: U.S. VITAL INTERESTS

Percentage who think the United States has a vital interest in each country.



The Public (shown above)

Over 70%		41% to 50%	
Japan	87	Cuba	50
Russia, Saudi Arabia	77	Egypt	46
China	74	Afghanistan	45
51% to 70%		40% or less	
Israel, Canada	69	France	37
Kuwait	68	India	36
Mexico, Great Britain	66	Indonesia, Brazil,	
Iran	61	Turkey	33
Germany	60	Haiti, Poland	31
South Korea	54	The Baltic countries	
South Africa, Taiwan	52	of Latvia, Lithuania	
Bosnia	51	& Estonia	27

The Leaders

China	95	Egypt	66
Japan	94	France	57
Russia, Mexico	93	South Africa	52
Canada	89	Indonesia	50
Saudi Arabia	88	Bosnia	48
Israel	86	Poland	42
Great Britain	84	The Baltic countries	
Germany	83	of Latvia, Lithuania	
South Korea	82	& Estonia	30
Brazil	75		
Iran	72		

Indonesia, Bosnia and Poland and the Baltic countries falling below the majority threshold.

As the map in Figure 2-5 indicates, the American public draws sharp distinctions among different countries of the world. At least three-quarters of the public see the United States as having vital interests in China, Japan, Russia and Saudi Arabia, whereas six countries on the list are considered vital by only a third or less of the public.

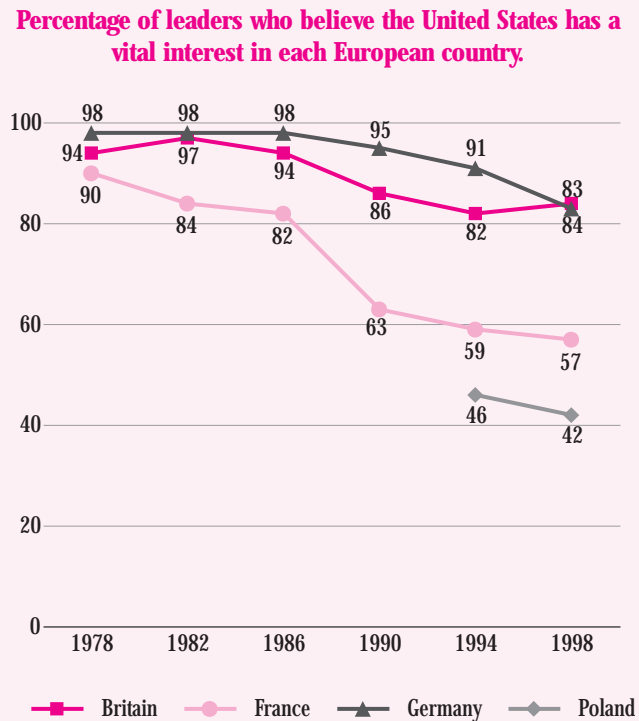
Among the public, perceptions of vital interests are down in 13 of the 22 countries for which there are trends, including U.S. friends, allies and neighbors as well as Russia. Many of the percentages are among the lowest recorded since 1978 in these surveys. Most notably, Cuba is down 17 points, South Korea is down 11, Mexico is down 10, Kuwait is down 8 and Saudi Arabia and Germany are down 6. Three countries (Brazil, Egypt and Poland) have remained about the same, with six countries registering an increase: Bosnia (+7), China (+6), Israel and India (+5), Taiwan (+3) and Japan (+2). Japan and China are at the highest levels since 1978.

The pattern among leaders is similar, with 11 of the 16 countries for which there are trends down anywhere from 2 to 12 percentage points. Egypt (-12), Germany (-8) and South Korea (-8) are down the most. Only two are up—Great Britain (+2) and most dramatically, Brazil (+26).

Clearly, the vital interest question did not simply invite a popularity contest. A large majority of Americans see vital interests in Iran and about half see them in Cuba, even though these two rank near the bottom of all countries in terms of the U.S. public's general esteem (see Chapter 5). France—toward which most Americans feel warmth and cultural admiration—comes out low on the vital interest scale.

Rather than affection or cultural closeness, vital interest perceptions reflect evaluations of a country's economic or security importance to the United States. Thus, Japan's key economic role, Russia's nuclear arsenal

FIGURE 2-6: VITAL INTERESTS IN EUROPE—THE LEADERS



Among the public, perceptions of vital interests are down in 13 of the 22 countries for which there are trends, including U.S. friends, allies and neighbors as well as Russia.

and political/economic turmoil, Saudi Arabia's oil and China's vast market and growing influence put them, in terms of public perceptions of vital interests, ahead of some close U.S. friends and allies in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. Most leaders agree with these judgments, though they place China at the very top and put Mexico higher on the list. (See Figure 2-6 for the leaders' rankings of vital interests in Europe.)

Similarly, the countries seen as vital interests by somewhat lower but still substantial proportions of the public—Israel, Canada, Kuwait, Mexico, Great Britain and Germany—are all of key economic, military, or political importance to the United States. Iran is also seen as a vital interest, a function

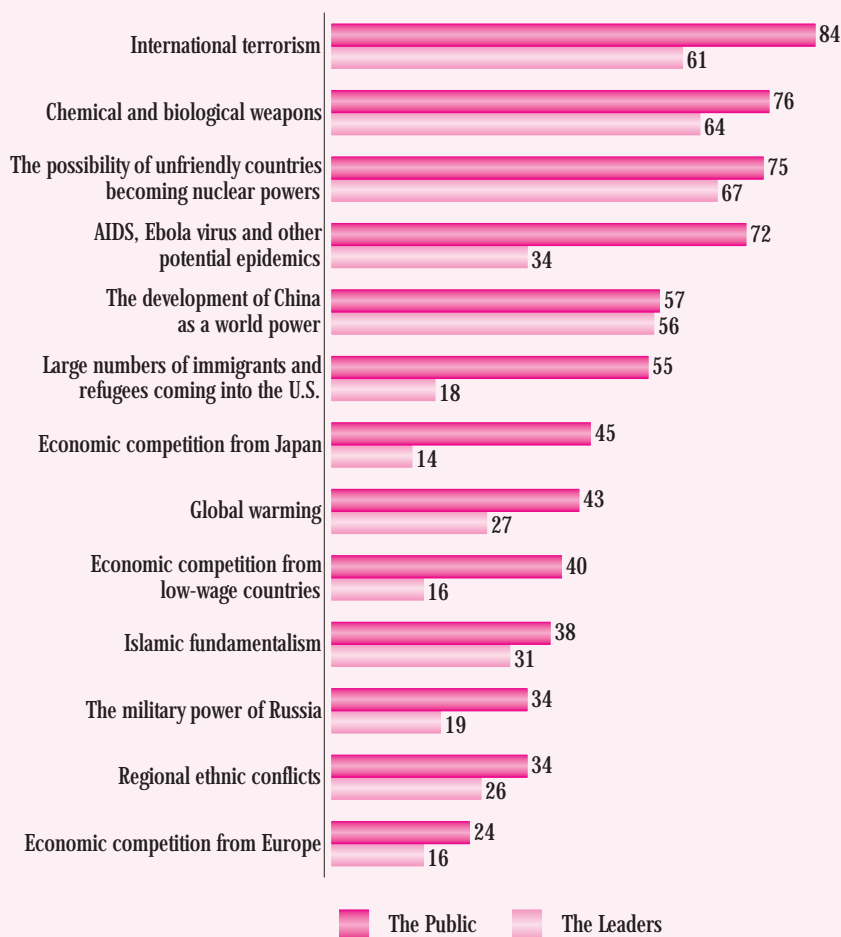
of its oil reserves, strategic importance in the Middle East and longstanding problematic relations with the United States, including perceived links to terrorism.

Even larger proportions of the leaders see vital interests in these countries. The gap between public and leadership perceptions is particularly wide with respect to Mexico, Germany, and Canada. The largest gap of all concerns Brazil, where fully 75% of leaders see vital U.S. interests, compared to 33% of the public. The leaders are no doubt more aware than the general public of the critical economic role of Brazil and the possibility of the Asian financial crisis spreading to Brazil and other South American countries.

Among the public as well as leaders, vital interest rankings tend to shift somewhat with world events. The most dramatic example in the survey is the steep decline (by 25 points) in public perceptions of a vital U.S. interest in Haiti. In 1994 Haiti was seen as politically unstable, causing an influx of refugees into the United States, and as an object of U.S. intervention. By 1998

FIGURE 2-7: THREATS TO U.S. VITAL INTERESTS

Percentage who view the following as “critical threats” to the United States.



Haiti had largely dropped from public view. On the flip side, it would appear that Afghanistan’s role as home base to terrorist Osama bin Ladin and target of recent U.S. air attacks led to a substantial public perception in the current survey (45%) of vital U.S. interests in Afghanistan. The focus in the Middle East peace process primarily on Israel and the Palestinians may account for the decline among leaders in perceptions of vital interests in Egypt and in Saudi Arabia.

POSSIBLE THREATS ON THE HORIZON

Despite the paucity of current foreign policy problems and the general decline in perceived vital interests, Americans are still wary of potential threats. The perceived “critical threats”

to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years are shown in Figure 2-7. Of the 13 possible threats asked about, six are considered critical by majorities of the public. For the public, the biggest jump in concern is for international terrorism, up 15 points since 1994 and landing at the top of the public’s list. Also up (by 3 points) is fear of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers. Of the items new to the list in this survey, those eliciting the greatest fears among the public are chemical and biological weapons and potential epidemics like AIDS and the Ebola virus.

Each of these perceived threats reflects the vulnerability of even the world’s sole superpower to powerful weapons wielded by small states or ter-

rorist groups, or in the case of epidemic diseases, to the forces of nature—none of which respects the traditional boundaries of nation-states. The focus on these threats, some of them rather remote, reflects both the perceived absence of great imminent dangers and a sensitivity to any sort of possible physical harm to Americans.

Smaller but still substantial fractions of the public see the development of China as a world power (57%) and large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S. (55%) as critical threats, although the latter is down 17 points from 1994.

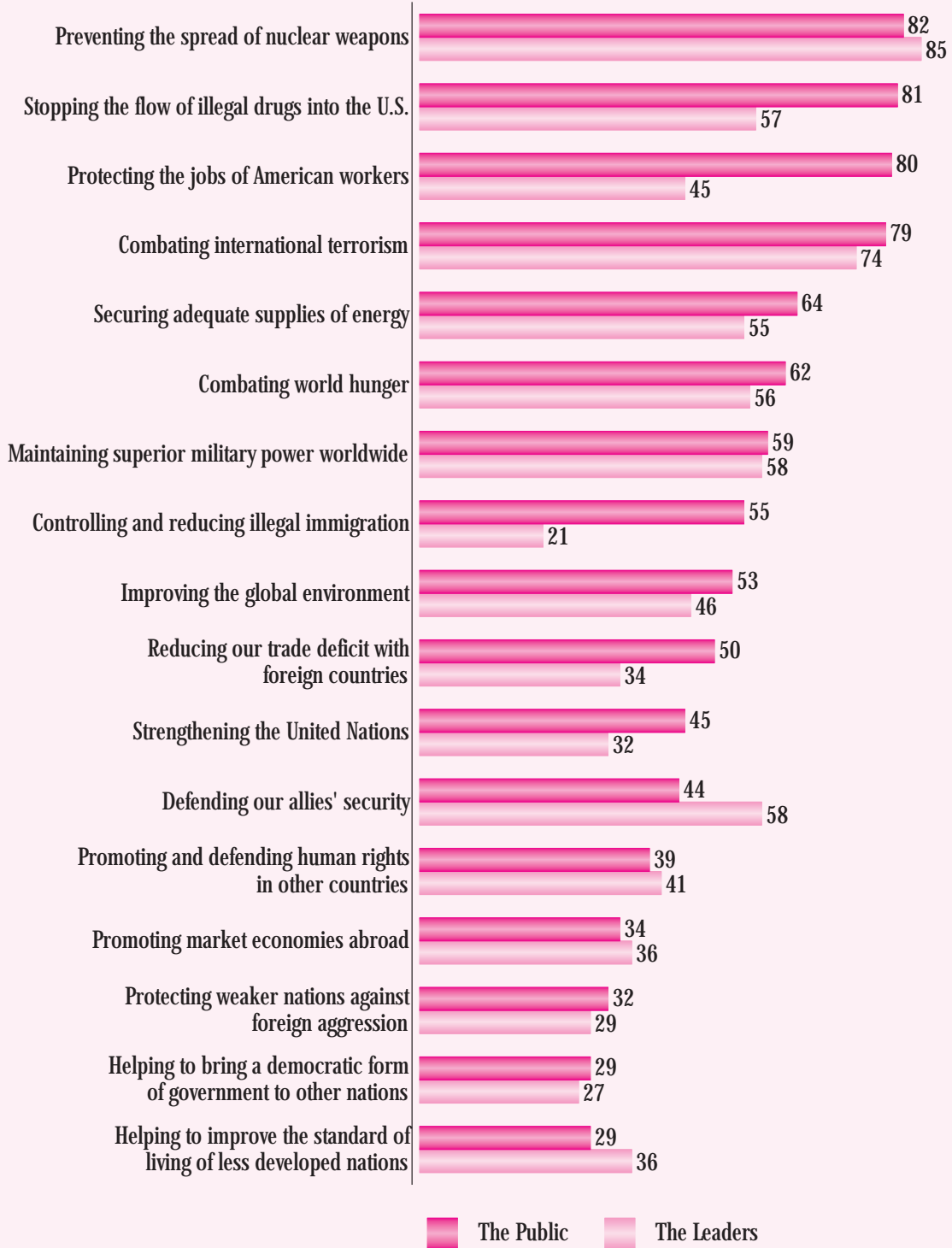
Considerably fewer worry about threats of economic competition from other countries. Concern about such competition from Japan is down from 62% in 1994 to 45%, and economic competition from Europe worries only 24% instead of 27%. Competition from low-wage countries, a new item this time, is considered a critical threat by 40% of the public. The low level of perceived economic threats from other countries—much diminished from earlier surveys—reflects a widespread public judgment that the United States is now predominant not only militarily but also economically.

The military power of Russia and regional ethnic conflicts also do not appear to concern very large portions of the public relative to the other items. A particularly interesting finding is that Americans distinguish sharply between terrorism, which is widely seen as a critical threat, and Islamic fundamentalism, which a much smaller fraction of the public (38%) see in those terms.

Concern about threats among leaders is lower than the public in every case, but higher than four years ago on some items. Majorities are concerned about four of the 13 possible threats, with the highest concerns much the same as the public. Nuclear proliferation is on top, up 6 points since 1994, followed by chemical and biological warfare (a new item), and international terrorism, up a remarkable 28 points. Also up substantially (10 points) is concern about the development of China as a world power.

FIGURE 2-8: FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

Percentage who think the following should be a “very important” goal of the United States.



Only small proportions of leaders perceive critical threats from any other sources—particularly not from economic competition of the kinds we asked about. In some cases (including economic competition, immigration and epidemics), the leaders are substantially less concerned than the public.

FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

American foreign policy concerns and priorities become clear from the public's and leaders' evaluation of a variety of foreign policy goals as "very important," "somewhat important," or "not important" at all (see Figure 2-8). Just as the American public perceives vital U.S. interests in many areas around the world, large majorities of the citizenry consider a wide range of foreign policy goals to be at least somewhat important. When we add together "very" and "somewhat" important responses we find that at least three-quarters of the public endorse as important every one of the 17 different goals we asked about. The same thing is true of leaders. Indeed, all but two of the goals are considered important by 86% or more of leaders.

Focusing on the proportion of people who rate each goal as "very important" reveals a clear priority ranking among goals. This ranking fits closely with the perceptions reported above concerning vital interests, problems, and threats. Both leaders and the general public put the highest priority on goals related to vital U.S. interests, to current foreign policy problems, and especially to potential future threats to vital interests.

PROTECTING AMERICANS

At the top of the list of goals, cited as very important by 82% of the public, is preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Close behind come stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States (81%), protecting the jobs of American workers (80%), and combating international terrorism (79%).

The leaders largely agree with the general public in their selection of top priorities, including nuclear proliferation and terrorism. But the leaders put

much less emphasis on protecting American jobs (only 45% "very important") and place higher relative priority on defending our allies' security and maintaining superior military power worldwide.

The ranking of goals, particularly among the general public, shows a strong emphasis on self-interest, with the highest goals addressing concerns about the economic and social well-being and the physical safety of Americans. After nuclear proliferation, drugs, jobs and terrorism, the goals seen as very important by the largest proportions of the public are securing adequate supplies of energy (64%), maintaining military superiority (59%), controlling and reducing illegal immigration (55%), improving the global environment (53%), and reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries

Leaders put much less emphasis on protecting American jobs and place higher relative priority on defending our allies' security and maintaining superior military power worldwide.

(50%)—all mostly self-interested goals. Again the leaders largely agree, though they put markedly less weight on controlling immigration and stopping drugs, and somewhat less emphasis on the trade deficit.

LIMITED ALTRUISM

Notably absent from this list of first-tier and second-tier priorities are goals that might be associated with altruistic internationalism, or goals that would primarily benefit others. For example, helping to improve the standard of living of less developed countries is seen as a very important goal by only 29% of the public; it shares the very bottom of the list with the aim of helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations. Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression does not do much better (32% "very important"); nor does the major Clinton administration objective of promoting market economies abroad (34%), or

promoting and defending human rights in other countries (39%).

Even the goal of strengthening the United Nations, which has regularly been embraced more warmly by the general public than by leaders, is called very important by only a moderate 45% of the public—down by 6 points since the post-Gulf War high in 1994. To be sure, a plurality of the public still call strengthening the United Nations "very" rather than "somewhat" important, and only 11% say not important at all, in line with other survey questions that signal strong support for the United Nations and for multilateralism generally.

The one clear exception to this pattern is the goal of combating world hunger, which is ranked rather high both by the public (62% "very important") and by the leaders (56%). In both cases these percentages are up significantly from four years ago. Among leaders the increase is a substantial 15 percentage points. Clearly, the issues of hunger and poverty abroad continue to arouse the humanitarian instincts of Americans.

To altruistic internationalists another hopeful sign may be the modest rises in priority attached to some of the goals, such as protecting weaker nations (up 8 points among the public), improving standards of living (up 7 points), and promoting human rights (up 5 points)—in addition to the 6-point rise in combating world hunger. Similar changes are evident among leaders, including a notable 15-point rise from four years ago in the percentage that consider promoting and defending human rights in other countries as very important.

The clear ranking of more self-interested goals at the top of the public's and leaders' foreign policy priorities supports the thesis of this report that Americans prefer a "guarded engagement." While clearly remaining committed to participating in world affairs, Americans prefer to do so mainly to defend their own interests and alleviate their fears rather than to foster change around the world according to an American model.

CHAPTER THREE

GLOBALIZATION AND FOREIGN POLICY

“Globalization” is becoming an increasingly widespread term to describe the evolution of international relations as well as the complex ways in which domestic and foreign policy are becoming interconnected. The term is most commonly associated with the steady growth in international trade and finance, which has become one of the most important long-term developments of post-World War II international relations. Yet more than commerce is involved in the increasing interpenetration of economies and societies. Globalization entails other distinctive developments, including the enormous expansion of international travel and transportation, communications and dissemination of information. The myriad aspects of globalization have reinforced the concepts of “internationalism” and “engagement” commonly associated with more traditional national and international security matters in foreign policy.

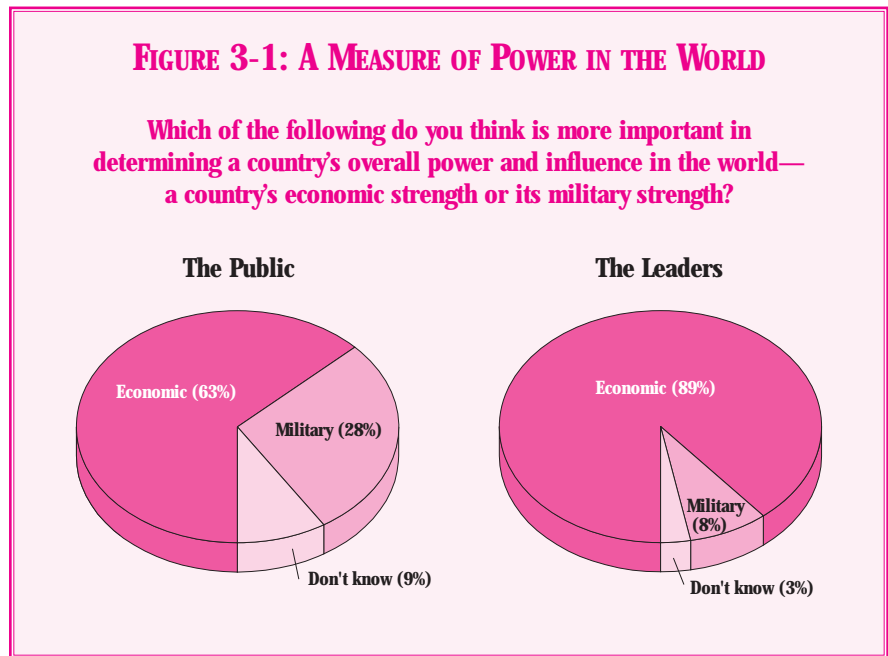
THE RISE OF ECONOMICS

The Council survey gauges public and leadership perceptions of these important international—and domestic—phenomena. On the question of whether a country’s economic or military strength is more important in determining a country’s overall power and influence in the world (see Figure 3-1), an extraordinary 63% of the public choose economic, compared with 28% choosing military strength. Leaders (89%) are even more overwhelmingly convinced of the power of economics in today’s globalized world.

People were also asked directly about whether or not globalization, “especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world,” is mostly good or mostly bad for the United States (see Figure 3-2). A total of 54% of the public and 87% of the leaders are positive about this trend, with only 20% and 12% respectively having negative attitudes.

These findings do not differ significantly by party affiliation, in contrast to security matters like defense spending and use of troops, on which Democrats and Republicans often disagree.

Education, on the other hand, is a significant factor in attitudes concerning globalization. Totals of 58% of college graduates and 68% of those with post-graduate experience are favorable to globalization, compared with 46% of high school graduates. International travel experience also predisposes respondents toward a favorable response, by 58% to 46%. Young people ages 18-29 generally favor globalization, with 52% saying it is mostly good. The same is true in other age



groups, with 56% of people 30-49 and 55% of those 50-64 agreeing it is mostly good.

Findings that Americans are positive about economic interdependence are congruent with other established

Among the public, U.S. foreign policy is viewed as having a major impact on our overall economy and on domestic unemployment.

evidence that Americans are relatively sophisticated about the importance of overseas developments for the U.S. domestic economy. Among the public, U.S. foreign policy is viewed as having a major impact on our overall economy (cited by 66%) and on domestic

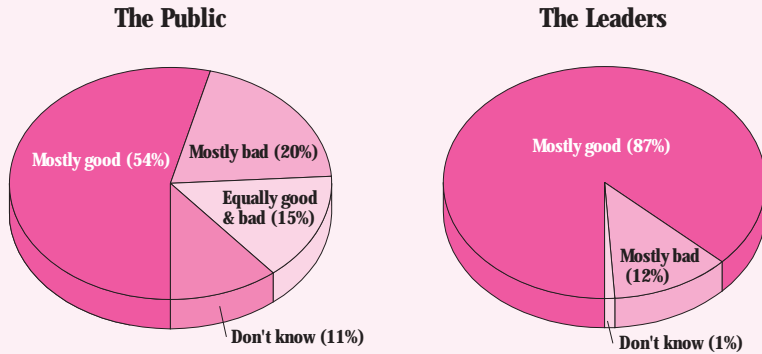
unemployment (54%), though a relatively small 36% feel the same way about influence on their own personal standard of living. The last response might suggest that while the public recognizes the international connections to the economy, the strong U.S. economy has thus far shielded them from any negative effects on their personal well being, which is seen as dependent on primarily local companies and institutions that have been faring well.

CONCERN ABOUT THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The emphasis on economic power in today’s world and recognition of increasing global interconnections make “globalization” a new topic of concern on the foreign policy agenda. Even though Americans are positive about globalization, in citing the two or

FIGURE 3-2: ATTITUDES ON GLOBALIZATION

Do you believe that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for the United States?



three biggest foreign policy problems confronting the United States, some aspect of the theme “world economy” is noted by 11% of the public, just behind “terrorism” as a common response. Concern over the world economy at this level contrasts with earlier polls. Only 2% cited this as a problem area in 1994, 3% in 1990 and 1% in 1986. Moreover, 10% of the public now also separately mention the balance of payments (trade deficit, excessive imports and related topics) as an area of concern. A total of 3% mention the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), or the need to keep jobs within the United States, as a priority concern. Taken together, concern about international economic matters as perceived foreign policy problems stands out in this survey over any previous study.

The perception of economics as a primary foreign policy concern is even more pronounced among leaders. A much increased total of 21% of leaders mentioned the world economy when asked for the biggest problem areas, placing it first on the list. Only 11% did so in 1994, 14% in 1990, and 8% in 1986. An additional 13% of leaders specifically mention the Japan/Asian economic crisis as a major foreign policy problem. In fact, the Asian economy is among the four most common

responses (13%) on the list of overall problems facing the country, where domestic issues generally predominate. Within the leadership sample, concern about the world economy as a foreign policy problem is concentrated in the business community, where 25% identify this as a problem, compared with 11% of labor representatives and 16% of those in government and academia.

In the minds of the public, the focus on the world economy as a foreign policy problem relates primarily to the effect of global financial crises on the domestic economy. This is evident when people were asked to evaluate the importance of foreign policy goals. Among the top foreign policy goals cited by the public as “very important” are protecting jobs of American workers (80% very important) and securing adequate supplies of energy (64%).

This increasing focus on international economic concerns corresponds with the reduction of traditional concerns about direct military threats (see Chapter 4).

DECLINE OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMPETITION

Concerns about instability in the global marketplace contrast with a lessened fear of economic competition from other countries (see Figure 3-3). Public concern about economic competition from Europe as a critical threat has declined during the past four years from 27% to 24%. Although the concern has increased slightly among leaders (from 11% to 16%), it remains far below the 41% reported in 1990.

FIGURE 3-3: ECONOMIC COMPETITION FROM JAPAN & EUROPE

Percentage who view economic competition from Japan and Europe as critical threats to U.S. vital interests.

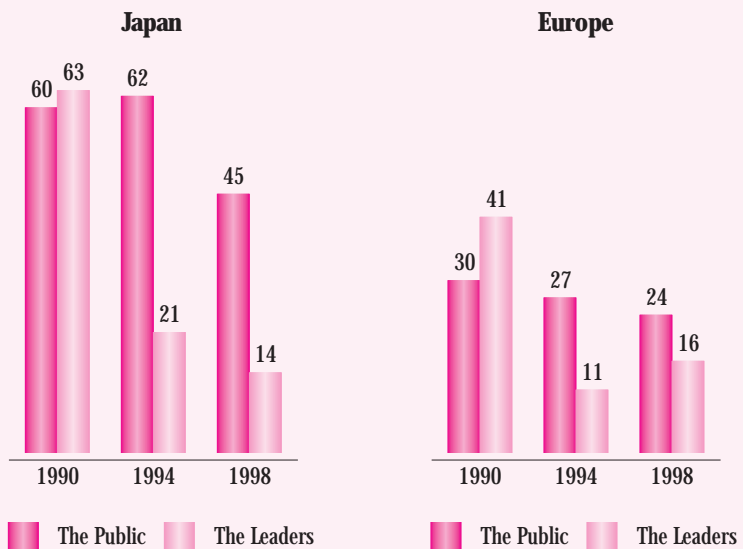
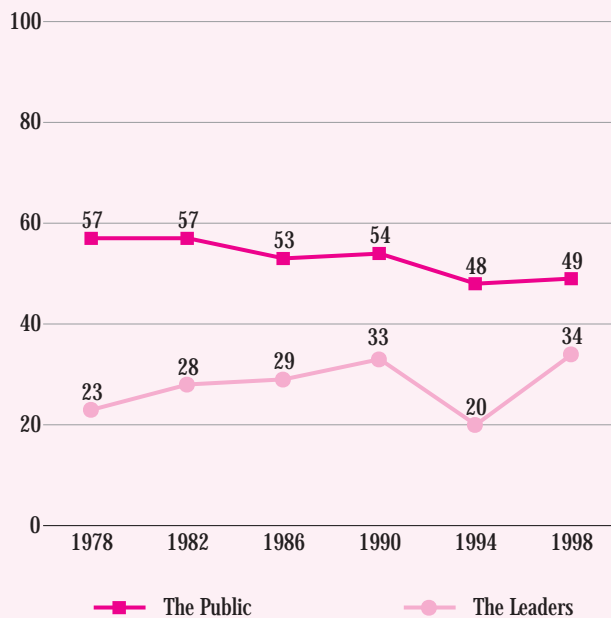


FIGURE 3-4: TARIFFS AND TRADE RESTRICTIONS

Percentage who sympathize with those who think tariffs are necessary.



Moreover, leaders express little concern about the European Monetary Union as a threat to the supremacy of the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency, with 63% saying it will not be a threat and 35% saying it will be. (This question was not asked of the public.)

America's economic success and Japan's continuing recession have mitigated fears of economic competition from Japan. Although public concern about such competition has not disappeared, the 45% who perceive it as a critical threat is down considerably from the 1994 level of 62%. Even fewer leaders see economic competition from Japan as a critical threat, dropping from 63% in 1990 to 21% in 1994 and 14% in 1998. While leaders may not consider economic competition from Japan a threat to the United States, they believe Japan plays a crucial economic role. When asked how important reform of Japan's economic and financial structures is in addressing the Asia economic crisis, three-quarters of leaders (75%) said this was "very important."

A similar pattern appears on trade practices. Significant majorities of both

While leaders may not consider economic competition from Japan a threat to the United States, they believe Japan plays a crucial economic role.

public and leaders believe the European Union practices fair trade and that Japan does not, though both of these significant trading powers are seen as practicing relatively more equitable trade than was the case four years ago. Fifty-four percent of the public, up from 32% in 1994, and 77% of leaders, up from 65%, believe the countries of the European Union practice fair trade. Although 55% of the public and 75% of leaders believe Japan practices unfair trade, the proportion thinking Japan practices fair trade is up from 17% to 31% among the public and from 18% to 22% among leaders.

GUARDING AMERICAN INTERESTS

The relative decline in concern over national economic competition is consistent with the findings that Americans

are feeling strong and confident with their position in the world, especially given that economic strength is seen as the more important measure of overall power and influence. Nevertheless, evidence of a generally relaxed attitude toward economic competitors coexists with a historic strain of protectionism among the public (see Figure 3-4). The public remains in favor of tariffs, with 49% believing they are necessary and 32% supporting elimination.

This sentiment may seem puzzling given the positive view of globalization and lessened concern over competition. The survey question asks if respondents' views are closer to those who say countries should eliminate their tariffs and restrictions on imported goods so the costs of goods would go down for everyone, or to those who say tariffs are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries from the competition of less expensive imports. Worded this way, the preference for protecting manufacturing jobs is consistent with public support for protecting the jobs of American workers as a major foreign policy goal. The plurality support for tariffs today, while important, represents less significant protectionist sentiment than has been expressed in earlier surveys in the 1970s and 1980s.

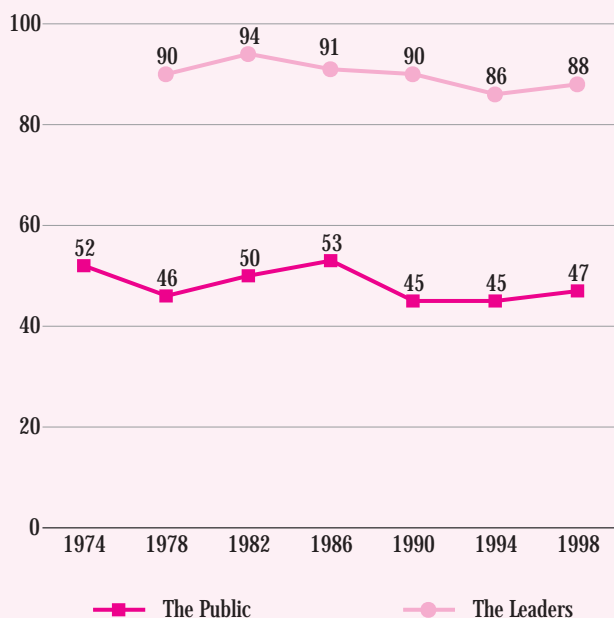
Among the leaders, a clear majority (62%) favor elimination of tariffs, as has historically been the case. Nevertheless, the gap between those who would eliminate tariffs and those who support them has narrowed from four years ago. A total of 34% now support tariffs, compared with 20% in 1994, and the 62% against tariffs is down 15 points from the 77% who felt that way in the earlier poll. The increase in the number of leaders who would support tariffs might be a reflection not of concern about economic competition in the traditional sense, but about the potential negative consequences of uncontrolled global financial exposure.

RELUCTANCE TO GIVE

Despite lessened fear of economic rivals and heightened economic confi-

FIGURES 3-5: ECONOMIC AID

Percentage who favor giving economic aid to other nations.



dence, Americans are still reluctant to support international economic assistance (see Figure 3-5). In the past three surveys since the end of the Cold War, the public has been split on the overall idea of giving economic aid to other nations (45% in favor and 45% opposed in 1991 and 1994, and 47% in favor and 45% opposed in 1998). During the 1970s and 1980s the balance was slightly in favor of aid. Yet in line with a strong historic trend, only 13% of the public today favor expanding current federal spending on foreign economic aid, while 48% want to cut it back.

On aid to specific countries, in all cases pluralities of the public favor keeping the level of economic aid the same, with the balance of others tilting toward cutbacks. The countries asked about were African countries, Egypt, Israel, Poland and Russia.

The lack of strong support for economic aid is consistent with the American national ethos of individual economic independence and responsibility, a concept perhaps transferred to nations in the global community. The sentiment is reflected in the response to

how the Russian economic crisis should be handled. A plurality of the public (38%) say Russia should solve its own problems, 34% say Europe should take the lead in providing assistance, and only 17% say the United States should take the lead in providing assistance to Russia.

The lack of strong support for economic aid is consistent with the public's unwillingness to bail out other countries suffering from financial crises.

Consistent with this is the public's unwillingness to bail out other countries suffering from financial crises, precipitated in part, ironically, by the process of globalization that the public generally supports. Only 25% of the public feel that the United States should contribute more money to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address global financial crises, while 51% are opposed (see Figure 3-6).

There are two notable exceptions to the public's aversion to financial

assistance. The first is in the fight against global hunger. A solid majority (62%) of the public believe that combating world hunger is a very important goal of foreign policy. While Americans apparently feel that nations should take responsibility for their own economic success, they also believe that no one deserves to go hungry.

The second exception involves the United Nations, on which public attitudes are supportive. A plurality of 48% of the public believe that the United States should pay back dues and other assessments currently owed to the United Nations, a total of approximately \$1.6 billion. This sentiment perhaps reflects a feeling of obligation for paying off debt, especially when it comes to a mission the public supports, like U.N. peacekeeping. The dues are perhaps viewed less as economic aid for unrecognized purposes as legitimate costs for the maintenance of world order and stability.

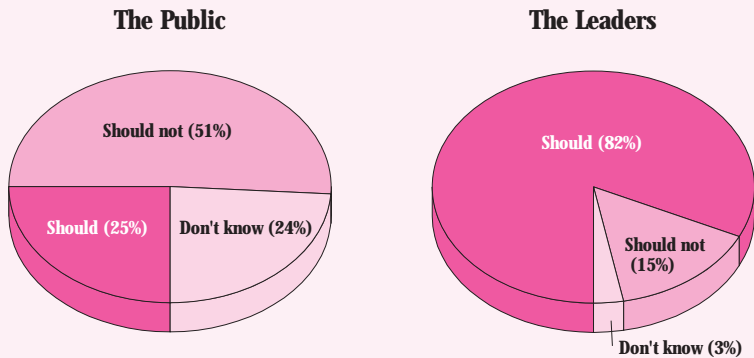
Leaders, by contrast, have a completely different view of economic aid. A striking 88% of leaders favor giving economic aid to other nations, with only 10% opposed. While 43% are happy with the current level of federal spending on economic aid, a balance of the others favor expanding it (38%), a rise of 18 points since 1994. Only 17% would cut back spending on economic aid, down 14 points from 1994. Leaders believe that Russia should receive assistance for its economic crisis, but prefer Europe to take the lead (44%) instead of the United States (34%). Only 17% think Russia should solve its problems alone. Regarding the IMF, an overwhelming 82% think the United States should contribute more money to meet world financial crises.

GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALISM

The international economic dimensions of foreign policy are not new. Initial U.S. commitment to an internationalist foreign policy following World War II had both economic and military components, each supported by the "bipartisanship" of the Marshall Plan era. That consensus disintegrated later during the Vietnam War, as the military

FIGURE 3-6: SUPPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Do you think the United States, along with other countries, should or should not contribute more money to the IMF to meet world financial crises?



dimensions of international engagement came to dominate foreign policy. Today, the “downsizing” of traditional national security concerns (see Chapter 4) has coincided with a “speeding up” of global economic integration and other international connections. After the Cold War, when some wondered if the United States would become isolationist, the forces of globalization are playing against any turning away from the world. Positive views of globalization are reinforcing internationalist sentiment on a bipartisan basis.

For example, enhanced international communication and travel are an

Positive views of globalization are reinforcing internationalist sentiment on a bipartisan basis.

important part of globalization. Fully half those who have traveled outside the U.S. evince a high interest in news about U.S. foreign relations, compared with 37% of those who have never traveled abroad. Foreign economic assistance is supported by 53% of those who have traveled, and only 38% of those who have not. Fifty-three percent

of international travelers believe the United States is a more important and powerful world leader than 10 years ago, compared with 46% of nontravelers. Not surprisingly, those who have been outside the country are consistently more likely to see a vital interest in other countries. While this implies that overseas experience makes people more internationally minded, it is also likely that internationally minded people travel more overseas. In any case, travel abroad correlates strongly with internationalism, and travel is a growing dimension in the contemporary world.

Likewise, the multiplicity of alliance structures, international institutional ties and other multilateral connections that have long been in place, reinforce support for globalization. Compared to the overall 54% of the public that believe globalization is mostly good, 64% of those who believe the United States should take part in international peacekeeping say globalization is mostly good. Similarly, 63% of those who think the U.S. should pay its U.N. dues, 63% of those who favor economic aid and 58% of those who would increase U.S. commitment to NATO say globalization is mostly good. Figure 3-7 shows more ways in which support for internationalism, multilateralism and globalization are mutually reinforcing.

Clearly, the forces of globalization are keeping internationalist sentiment among the public strong despite the declining connections they perceive to more traditional national security concerns (see Chapter 4). This is true at a time when the U.S. economy has largely withstood the negative impact of financial crises and recession in many other parts of the world.

If the U.S. economy remains strong, support for globalization and internationalism can be expected to continue. The real test will come if the United States is unable to stave off the ill effects of global economic turmoil.

FIGURE 3-7: GLOBALIZATION, INTERNATIONALISM, AND MULTILATERALISM

Among those who say globalization is “mostly good” for the United States ...		Compared to overall %
72%	Favor an active part for the United States in world affairs	61%
68%	Favor U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping forces	57%
57%	Think the United States should pay its back U.N. dues	48%
56%	Favor economic aid to other nations	47%
64%	Prefer to keep the level of commitment to NATO the same	59%

CHAPTER FOUR

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Americans feel more confident than in the recent past about the U.S. position in the world. While voicing less concern about traditional foreign policy problems and world events, the public shows a heightened fear of potential international violence and nontraditional threats. Even as Americans believe economic strength to be a more important measure of power in the world, support for a stronger defense is on the rise. Americans prefer most types of military involvement to be in a multilateral context, with only proportionate U.S. participation. With the perception of vital interests and willingness to use U.S. troops overseas declining, the pragmatic internationalism documented in this survey four years ago has turned into a more “guarded engagement.”

A DANGEROUS WORLD

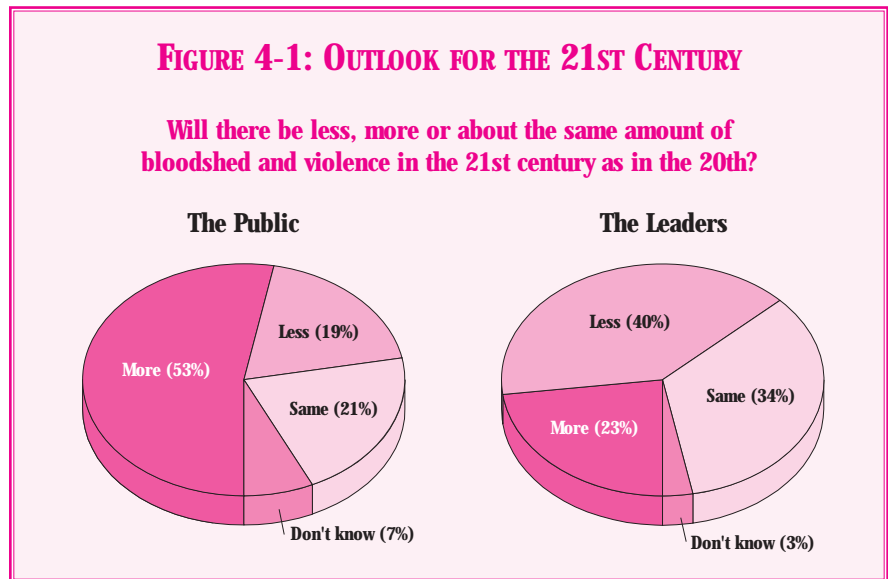
The American public and leaders prefer that the United States play an active part in world affairs, think it plays a more important and powerful role as a world leader today compared to 10 years ago, and believe it will play an even greater role in the next 10 years. These findings suggest a sense of growing preeminence for the country in the world.

Yet as the last decade of the 20th century ends, the public sees the next century as more fraught with perils than the current one (see Figure 4-1). A majority (53%) of the public predict there will be more bloodshed and violence in the 21st century than in the 20th. A plurality of leaders (40%) predict less.

THREATS ON THE HORIZON

These public concerns about future violence reflect fears about nuclear and terrorist threats, with more than 80% of both public and leaders saying that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons remains a very important goal of foreign policy, and almost as many members of the public and three-quarters of leaders thinking that combating international terrorism is also a very important goal. These findings, among others, point to the changed emphasis in security affairs, which was accelerated after the end of the Cold War, from wars between powerful nations to relatively nontraditional threats by nonstate groups and rogue nations.

Similarly, three-quarters of the public and two-thirds of the leaders, including 88% of those polled in the administration, think the possibility of



unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers is a critical threat. Nearly the same proportions are concerned about the spread of chemical and biological weapons. These concerns, along with increased fear of international terrorism, first on the public's list of critical threats and up 28 points from 1994 to third place for leaders, again reinforces

The findings point to the changed emphasis in security affairs from wars between powerful nations to relatively nontraditional threats by nonstate groups and rogue nations.

the change in threat perceptions from traditional military problems to nontraditional dangers.

There are some nuances. Among leaders, those polled in the administration and academia perceive terrorism

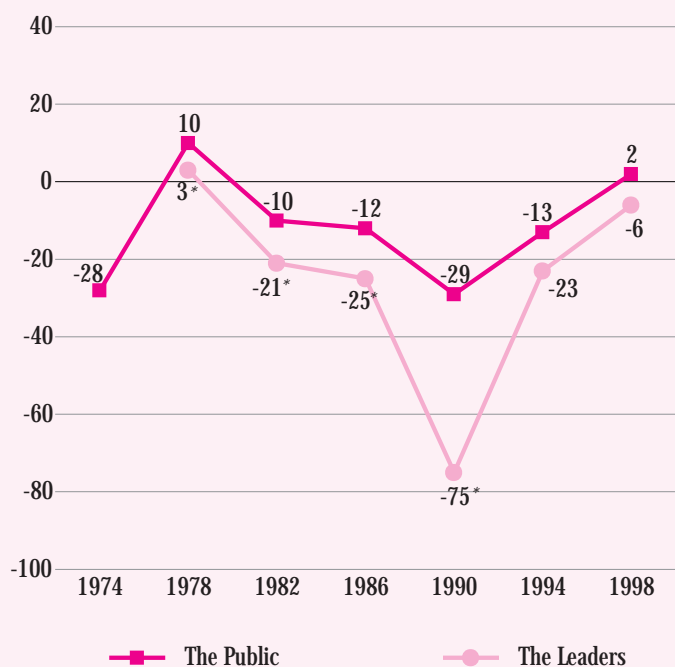
as a lesser problem, with 50% and 52% respectively characterizing it as an “important but not critical” threat. The 67% of the administration and 58% of academics also contrasts with the 74% of leaders overall and the 86% of leaders in the media that see combating terrorism as a very important goal.

TRADITIONAL THREATS REMAIN

While nontraditional threats have jumped in importance on the foreign policy agenda, more traditional concerns about national rivals have not completely disappeared. Majorities of the public and leaders view the development of China as a world power as a critical threat to U.S. vital interests. A third of the public still believe the military power of Russia is a critical threat. This points to some lingering Cold War-type concerns with potential rival powers. Many fewer leaders see Russian military power as a threat,

FIGURE 4-2: DEFENSE SPENDING

Should federal spending on national defense be expanded, kept about the same or cut back? Index: Percentage “expand” minus percentage “cut back.”



*Note: This question was asked in the context of many federal spending priorities, including popular domestic programs. *Figures for leaders prior to 1994 represent responses on a separate but identical question, not in the context of other spending priorities.*

including 46% of the administration who do not consider it an important threat at all. A sizable plurality of leaders overall (49%) see it as still an important but not critical threat.

Small proportions of the public (a third) and leaders (a quarter) consider regional ethnic conflicts a critical threat, as do 15% of those polled in Congress. Roughly one-third of leaders and the public see Islamic fundamentalism in the same light. This suggests an awareness but limited concern for ethnic or religious sources of conflict.

In short, the findings show that even in a more economically focused era, concern about traditional military threats, possibly requiring the use of troops, persist to varying degrees in the minds of the public alongside fears of other dangers.

MAINTAINING DEFENSE

In response to both potential military conflicts and nontraditional threats, preferences for a strong defense contin-

ue to appear in public and leadership attitudes. The aim of maintaining superior military power worldwide remains a very important foreign policy goal among growing groups of both the

For the first time since 1978 there is more support among the public for expanding defense spending than for cutting it back.

public (59%) and leaders (58%), despite their belief that economic strength is the greater measure of power and influence in the world. The desire to maintain superior military power is highest among strong Republicans in the public sample, with 72% believing this is a very important foreign policy goal. On the leadership side, three-quarters of those polled among foreign policy experts and in Congress say maintaining military power world is a very important goal.

Significantly, the occurrence this year for the first time since 1978 of more support among the public for expanding defense spending (30%, an increase of 9 points) than for cutting it back (28%) suggests a similar pattern, though pluralities favor keeping spending the same. Among leaders, 26% approve of an increase in defense spending (an 11-point increase), while 32% prefer cutting back. Figure 4-2 shows the balance over time between those favoring expanded spending and those wishing to cut back.

Reflecting the concern about defense, a long-standing trend in these surveys is low and decreasing support for selling military equipment abroad (14% in favor among the public). A majority of the public (56%) also prefer to cut back federal spending on military aid to other countries, even though the percentage favoring cutbacks dropped 12 points and the percentage willing to expand it grew 4 points. In line with the Clinton administration's 1999 budget proposals for increased defense spending are the proportions of the public (27%) and leaders (34%) willing to expand rather than cut back federal spending for gathering intelligence information about other countries. This may reflect changing perceptions of espionage, today focused on the need to address nontraditional threats by obtaining more knowledge about potential adversaries.

A PREFERENCE FOR MULTILATERALISM

In general, Americans prefer multilateral approaches to addressing international crises. The vast majority of the public (72%) think that in responding to international crises the United States should not take action alone if it does not have the support of its allies (see Figure 4-3). Only 21% are unilateralist, saying the United States should take action alone. Among leaders, sentiment is roughly split, with 44% for acting alone versus 48% against.

The survey also reveals significant support for U.N. peacekeeping efforts (see Figure 4-4). When asked if the United States should or should not be part of a U.N. international peacekeep-

ing force in a troubled part of the world, a majority (57%, up 6 points from 1994) agreed that the United States should take part. Only 20%, approximately the same as the previous survey, are opposed. The preference for multilateralism is also expressed in plurality public support (45%) for strengthening the United Nations as a very important foreign policy goal, though

Americans prefer multilateral approaches to addressing international crises.

lesser importance is attached to this by leaders (32%). A plurality of the public (48%) believe the United States should pay back the \$1.6 billion in dues it owes to the United Nations, with 38% opposed (see Figure 4-4).

The American public also remains strongly committed to NATO, arguably the most important military security involvement of the United States (see Figure 4-5). The 1998 survey reveals that 59% want to keep the current level of commitment to NATO the same, with another 9% favoring an increase. This total is 8 points higher for these two categories combined than was the case in 1990, and 7 points higher than in 1994. Among leaders, support for maintaining the current level of commitment to NATO has risen from 57% to 64% since 1994, and sentiment for decreasing the U.S. commitment or withdrawing entirely has declined from 37% to 28%; only 7% want to increase the commitment. This suggests that the Cold War NATO alliance is seen as holding continuing significance in the post-Cold War world.

GUARDED ENGAGEMENT: THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Perhaps the best example of recent U.S. multilateral engagement through an alliance involves the former Yugoslavia, a case illustrating both the potential and the limits of working in a multilateral context as well as the complexities of public attitudes about specific foreign policy crises. NATO became involved in active combat for

FIGURE 4-3: ACTING ALONE OR WITH ALLIES

In general, in responding to international crises, do you think the United States should or should not take action alone if it does not have the support of its allies?

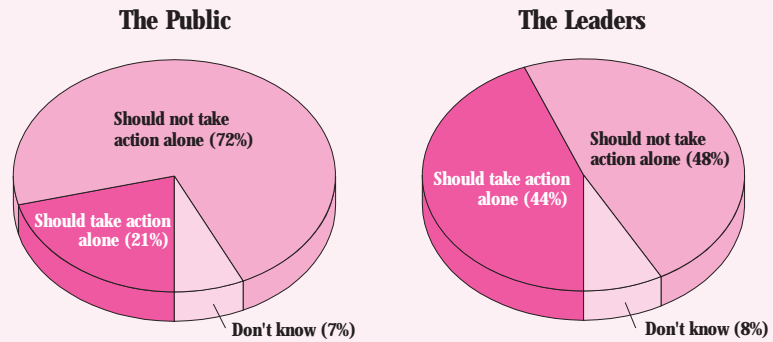
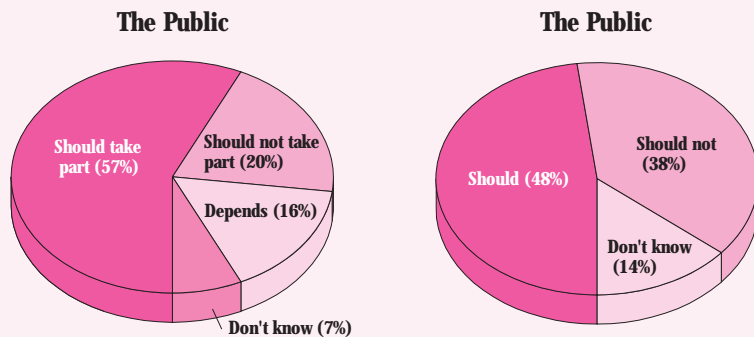


FIGURE 4-4: UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING AND DUES

When asked, should the United States take part in U.N. international peacekeeping forces in troubled parts of the world?
(Leaders not asked)

Should the United States go ahead and pay back the \$1.6 billion in back dues and assessments it owes the United Nations now or not?
(Leaders not asked)



the first time in its history to settle ongoing violence in Bosnia, several years after the crisis began. NATO helped to bring about a cease-fire and implement the Dayton peace accords. Not coincidentally, a majority of the public (51%, up 7 points since 1994), and a near majority of leaders (48% overall and 54% of the administration) now say the United States has a vital interest in Bosnia, reflecting President Clinton's arguments about U.S. interests in the region and perceptions of the relatively low costs of U.S. involvement.

Although a majority of the public think the U.S. should take part in peacekeeping efforts in general, only 26% of the American public and 26% of leaders give favorable ratings to the Clinton administration for handling of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. Admittedly, the killing of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo by Serbian forces that nearly precipitated U.S. air strikes against the country occurred during this survey, likely influencing the responses on that question. Other polls suggest more public support for U.S. troop par-

FIGURE 4-5: COMMITMENT TO NATO

Should we increase our commitment to NATO, keep it what it is now, decrease it or withdraw entirely? Index: Percentage “expand” minus percentage “cut back” or “withdraw entirely.”



ticipation and more recognition of success in Bosnia than this study. Nevertheless, while a majority of leaders (54%) support the sending of U.S. troops to stop the killing in Kosovo, including more than two-thirds of those polled in the administration, a plurality of the public (47%) would oppose this, and only a third are in favor. Those polled in Congress agree with the public, with a plurality (49%) opposing the use of troops in Kosovo. In short, there are limits to specific U.S. engagements even within relatively broad support for multilateral involvements.

RELUCTANCE TO SEND TROOPS ABROAD

Low support for use of troops even within a multilateral context suggests continuing concern for the risks to Americans in foreign interventions. In 1998 none of the potential foreign military conflicts posed in the survey found majority support among the public for using U.S. troops (see Figure 4-6). Interventions in case of an attack on Western Europe or Japan, which received the strongest support in the past, were not posed as realistic alternatives this time.

Although in both 1990 and 1994 a majority (52%) would have supported troop use for an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia, a plurality (46%) do so now. By contrast, 79% of leaders, a drop of 5 points, support this. While a majority of the public in 1994 (54%) would have approved the use of troops if Russia invaded Western Europe and 32% if Russia invaded Poland, only 28% approve of troop use in the face of Russia invading Poland today, compared with 58% of leaders. The much larger support among leaders for using troops if Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia, if Russia invaded Poland, and indeed in many other cases, reflects a long-standing trend in these surveys.

The lesser public support for troop use may indicate the pertinence of the “post-Vietnam syndrome,” or preferences to avoid undertaking major burdens in foreign interventions. In fact, over 63% of the public continue to agree (36% strongly) that “the Vietnam war was more than a mistake; it was

FIGURE 4-6: USE OF TROOPS

Percentage who favor the use of U.S. troops in various situations.

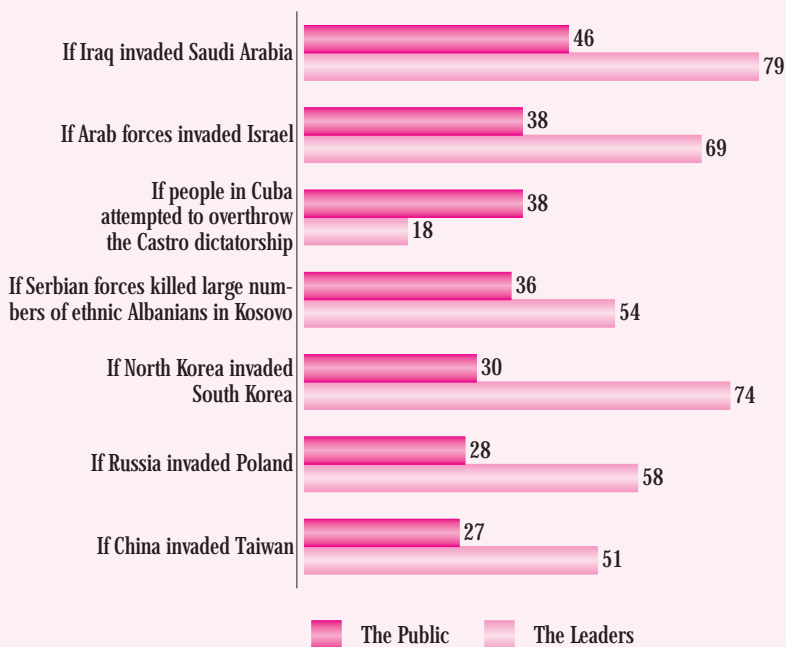
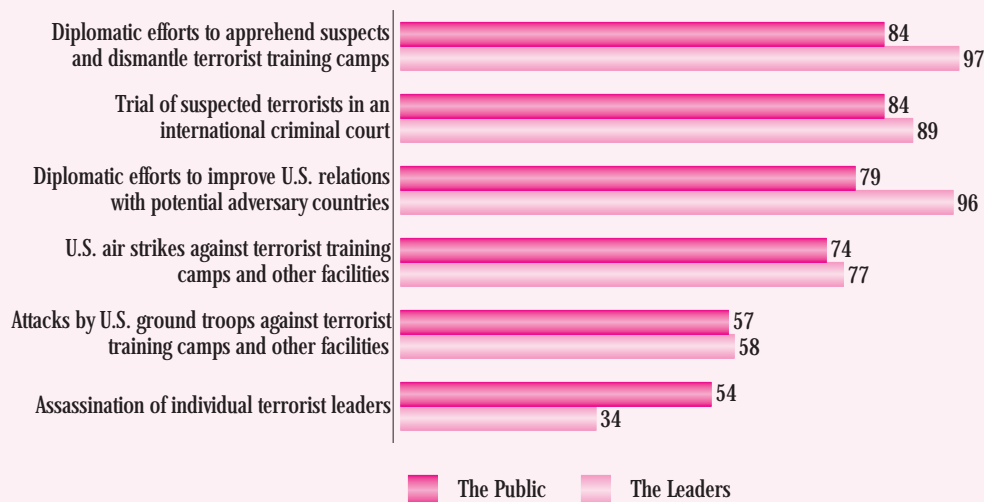


FIGURE 4-7: RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

Percentage in favor of the following measures to combat international terrorism.



fundamentally wrong and immoral," an increase of 4 points from 1994. Those agreeing strongly that Vietnam was wrong and immoral are even less likely than the overall public to approve of using U.S. troops abroad in defense of allies, as in the cases of defending Israel, Saudi Arabia or South Korea. Evaluation of the morality of Vietnam has less of an impact on attitudes toward potential troop use in internal military conflicts such as a revolution in Cuba or killing in Kosovo.

FORCE AGAINST TERRORISTS

There is a clear exception to the public's lack of support for troop use. In the battle against international terrorist threats the public is willing for the United States to use significant force. The sole scenario in which a majority of the public approves using U.S. ground troops in the 1998 survey is in an attack on terrorist training camps (57% public, 58% leaders). Three-quarters of both public (74%) and leaders (77%) approve of air strikes against terrorist training camps. A majority of the public (54%) even approve of the assassination of individual terrorist leaders, but almost two-thirds (63%) of U.S. leaders oppose this. The responses to terrorism are shown in Figure 4-7.

The sole scenario in which a majority of the public approves using U.S. ground troops in the 1998 survey is in an attack on terrorist training camps.

Strong support for potential military responses is still overshadowed by widespread preferences for judicial and diplomatic efforts to address the threats. Large proportions of both the public (84%) and leaders (89%) approve of trying suspected terrorists in an international criminal court, and 84% of the public and 97% of leaders approve of diplomatic efforts to apprehend suspects. Suggesting a more nuanced approach to a sensational problem is the approval of 79% of the public and 96% of leaders for diplomatic efforts to improve U.S. relations with potential adversary countries. In short, the high public concern about terrorism documented throughout the study is underscored by the willingness to use a variety of means to address it.

CAUTIOUS CONFIDENCE

At a time when economic concerns are coming to the fore of the foreign policy agenda, the "guarded engagement" evi-

dent in the American public's approach to military conflict is consistent with the approach on international economic matters, as described in Chapter 3. Low support for sending troops or military aid abroad mirror low support for economic aid to other countries and especially the public preference for leaving Russia to solve its own economic problems. Despite clear concern about international threats, including some residual concern about Russia's military power (likely a fear of its vulnerable nuclear arsenal and internal political instability), the public's cautious approach to international involvement suggests a reluctance to contribute disproportionately to solutions.

Clearly, the public prefers engagement to come under the umbrella of multilateral institutions like the United Nations or the NATO alliance. Inferentially, coalition with other military powers makes the use of force at least somewhat more acceptable to the public. Nevertheless, in the attitudes of "guarded engagement" lies a challenge for policy makers who support proactive American leadership in solving problems before they develop into larger crises.

CHAPTER FIVE

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Although there are no major shifts in American perceptions of the world since 1994, a narrowing gap for the public between the relative importance of Europe and Asia and a widening gap among leaders are significant. Also noteworthy are the contrasting views of the public and leaders concerning China and Japan as well as Brazil and India. A discernable decline in positive sentiments toward Russia is yet another indication of changing American attitudes almost a decade after the end of the Cold War.

COUNTRY THERMOMETER

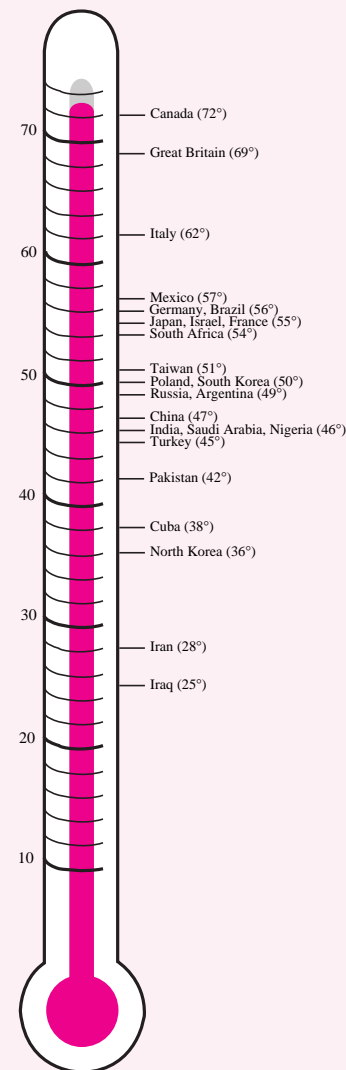
To gauge how the public perceives its various neighbors and allies, friends and foes around the world, the public was asked to rate 25 countries on a “feeling thermometer,” ranging from 0 to 100 degrees. A warm feeling toward a country is defined as a temperature above 50 degrees, which is neutral. The mean rating for each country is shown in Figure 5-1. As in previous Chicago Council surveys, Canada and Great Britain lead all other countries, followed by Italy (which registered the largest increase since 1994), Mexico, Germany and Brazil. Russia has lost ground since 1994, now surpassed by Brazil, Israel, Japan, Poland, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan. Yet Russia’s neutral temperature remains far above its Cold War average. Warm feelings persist for Brazil, as do neutral feelings for Poland, despite these countries’ low rankings on the vital interest list. China and Saudi Arabia, which fall in the cooler temperature range, are near the top of the public’s vital interest ratings, while India, with a similar temperature reading, scores near the bottom in terms of vital interests among the public. Turkey, appearing in this part of the survey for the first time, registers a temperature reading similar to that of India, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. Once again, Iran and Iraq have the lowest temperature ratings, below two other perennial American adversaries, North Korea and Cuba.

THERMOMETER FOR WORLD LEADERS

The public was also asked to rate a list of world leaders on the feeling thermometer. The mean rating for each

FIGURE 5-1: THERMOMETER COUNTRIES

Mean temperature from the public
 Neutral feelings = 50°
 Warm feelings = >50°
 Cool feelings = <50°



world leader is displayed in Figure 5-2. For the fifth consecutive time, Pope John Paul II is rated the most popular leader, followed, as in 1994, by former Presidents George Bush and Jimmy Carter, and South African President

Although slipping from the fifth to the sixth highest temperature this time, President Clinton rates four degrees higher than in 1994.

Nelson Mandela. Only a shade lower in the rankings are Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who both score about the same as President Bill Clinton. Although slipping from the fifth to the sixth highest temperature this time, President Clinton rates four degrees higher than in 1994. This increase has occurred despite concerns expressed elsewhere in the survey about matters related to Clinton’s personal life and the impeachment process, yet matches perceptions of the president’s conduct of foreign policy, for which he receives high marks in 1998 (see Chapter 6).

Reflecting Russia’s decline on the country thermometer, President Boris Yeltsin’s temperature (49°) is also down somewhat, although clustered in the neutral to slightly cool range with newly elected German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder (whose rating is similar to that of his long-serving predecessor, Helmut Kohl, in 1994), European Union President Jacques Santer and French President Jacques Chirac. The rankings of these European

leaders are generally affected by a higher level of "don't know" responses. Also in the slightly cool range is Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu (48°), whose sometimes controversial policies have attracted considerable media attention.

Consistent with the country temperature readings, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (12°) is again the least popular world leader, falling substantially below Cuban President Fidel

Castro. Despite a low overall reading, Castro registers a slight increase in popularity since 1994 (from 20° to 23°), perhaps bolstered by the 1998 visit to Cuba of the very popular Pope John Paul II. The signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Wye River peace agreement did not lessen the unfavorable feelings toward Palestinian Leader Yasir Arafat, who again falls in the distinctly cool range (38°), although slightly ahead of Chinese President Jiang Zemin and well ahead of Serbian President Slobodan Milosovic (33°). Reflecting a distinction between public perceptions of the ruling regime and the country more broadly, President Jiang registers a lower temperature (37°) than China's more neutral country thermometer reading (47°), although he paid a well-publicized visit to the United States in 1998.

they see more problems.

Public concern about economic competition from Europe has lessened during the past four years, from 27% in 1994 to 24% considering it a critical threat. While such concern has increased among opinion leaders (from

A plurality of the public believe that Europe is more important to the United States than Asia.

11% to 16%), it remains far below the 41% reported in 1990. On the issue of trade, there are considerable increases among both the public (from 32% to 54%) and leaders (from 65% to 77%) in the belief that the countries of the European Union practice fair trade.

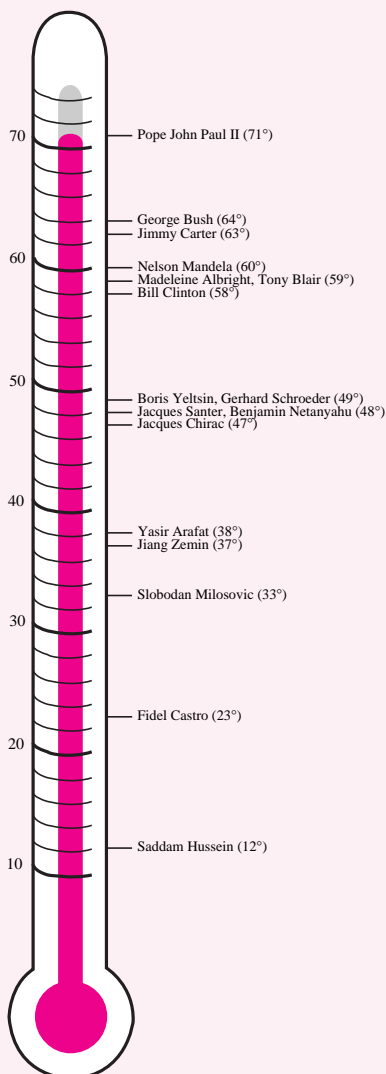
The agreement to expand NATO to include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland formed the backdrop to the question measuring the level of commitment to the U.S. and Europe's most important military alliance. Affected, at least in part, by some concern about Russia, both the public and leaders express an greater preference for maintaining the current commitment to NATO than they did in 1994, with leaders registering a slightly higher increase than the public. There also is a modest rise in support among both groups for increasing commitment levels, although overall preference for this option remains relatively low and still lags behind the number preferring to decrease the commitment or withdraw entirely (see also Chapter 4). With implications for an expanded NATO, less than a third of the public consider Poland or the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as vital interests. The same is true for leaders on the Baltic states, though slightly more see a vital interest in Poland (42%). Attitudes toward Europe are summarized on pages 30-31.

RUSSIA: END OF THE HONEYMOON?

The general optimism and good will that characterized U.S.-Russian relations in the immediate post-Cold War years appear to have dissipated some-

FIGURE 5-2: THERMOMETER WORLD LEADERS

Mean temperature from the public
 Neutral feelings = 50°
 Warm feelings = >50°
 Cool feelings = <50°



EUROPE: INCREASING COMITY

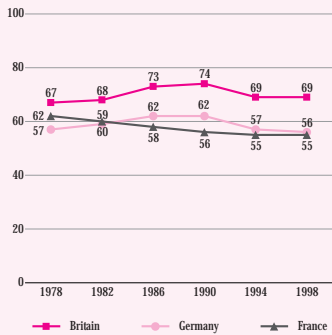
As in previous surveys, European nations remain America's closest friends and allies measured in terms of temperature readings on the feeling thermometer by the public. A plurality of the public also believe that Europe is more important to the United States than Asia (42% vs. 28%). However, during a year in which Asia suffered a major financial crisis, the gap has narrowed, with Asia's importance up 7 points and Europe's down 7 points since 1994.

Perhaps influenced by progress on European Monetary Union and the contrasting gloomy financial news from Asia, leaders register an increase in their assessment of Europe's importance over Asia, from 42% in 1994 to 51%. Asia's importance among leaders (37%) has remained largely the same as four years ago (38%).

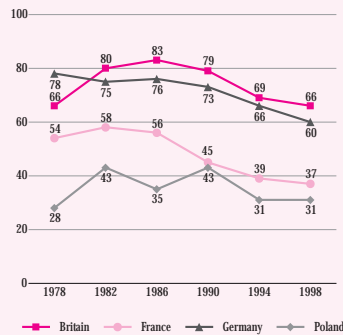
European countries score substantially lower in terms of vital interests than they do on the feeling thermometer. The top European vital interest for the public is Great Britain, tied with Mexico behind seven other countries. Although Americans have warm feelings for Europe, they see greater vital interests in other parts of the world, presumably because that is also where

EUROPE

Mean temperature in degrees for countries from the public. (50° = neutral)

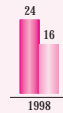


Percentage who see a U.S. vital interest in these countries.



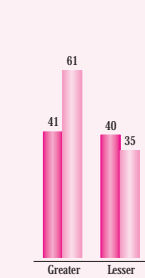
Perceived "critical" threat. (%)

Economic competition from Europe



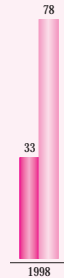
Role for countries in 10 years compared to today. (%)

(Germany)

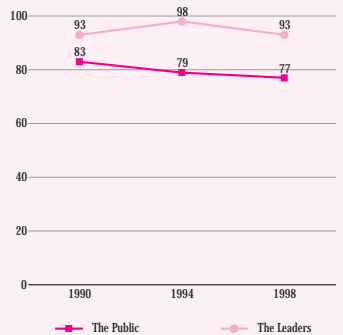
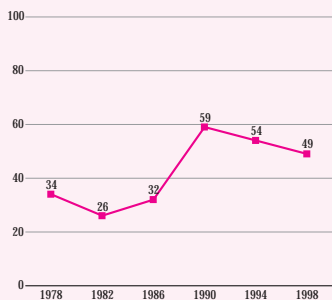


Administration's handling of relations as "good" or "excellent." (%)

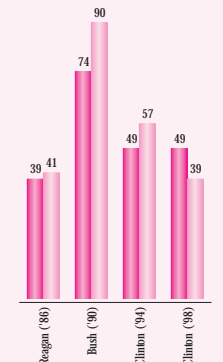
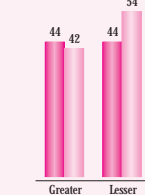
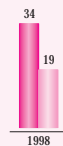
(Handling of "situation in Northern Ireland")



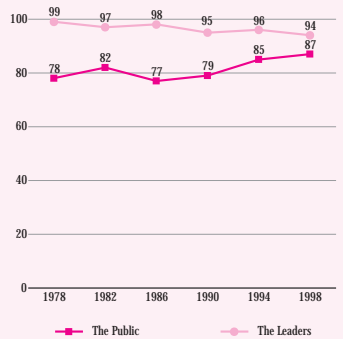
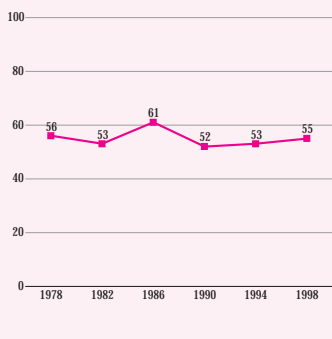
RUSSIA



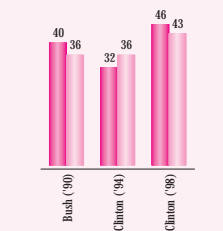
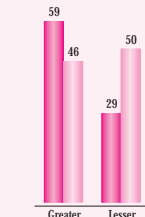
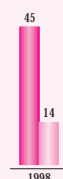
Military power of Russia



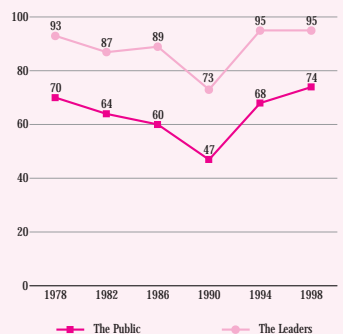
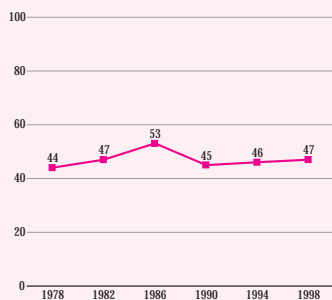
JAPAN



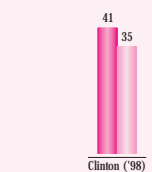
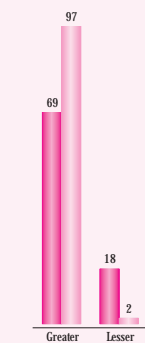
Economic competition from Japan



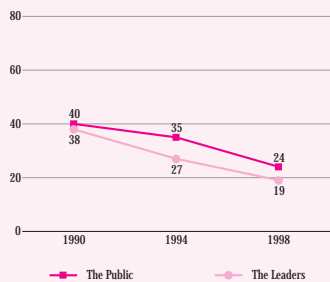
CHINA



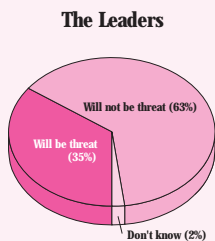
Development of China as a world power



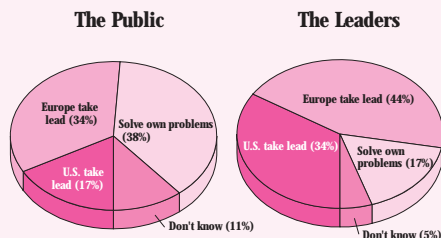
Percentage who believe European Union countries practice unfair trade.



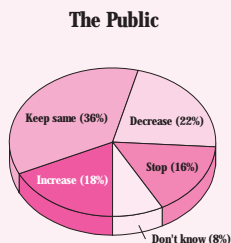
Will European Monetary Union be a threat to the U.S. dollar's supremacy as a reserve currency? (Leaders only)



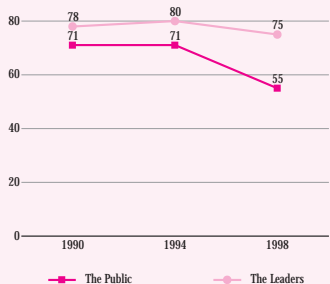
In response to the current Russian economic crisis, should the U.S. take the lead in providing assistance, should Europe take the lead, or should Russia solve its own problems?



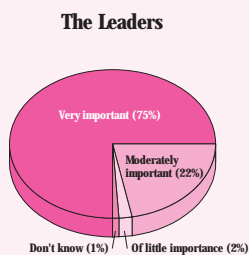
Should economic aid to Russia be increased, kept about the same, decreased or stopped altogether? (Public only)



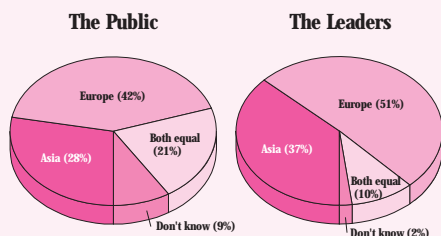
Percentage who believe Japan practices unfair trade.



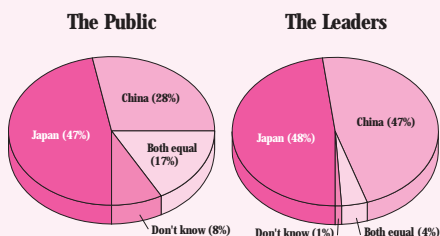
How important in addressing the Asian economic crisis is reform in Japan? (Leaders only)



Which continent is more important to the United States, Asia or Europe?



In terms of vital interests, which country is more important to the United States, Japan or China?



what, strained by Russia's economic woes, unstable domestic politics and foreign policy tensions. Although solid majorities of both the public (77%) and leaders (93%) still consider Russia of vital interest to the United States, levels are down slightly since 1994. Concern about the military power of Russia remains relatively low, with a third of the public and a fifth of leaders considering it a critical threat. However, consistent with the greater willingness of leaders to use U.S. troops in other parts of the world, many more leaders (58%) than the public (28%) favor the use of U.S. troops to counter a hypothetical Russian invasion of Poland. As NATO expands eastward, continued wariness about Russia is reflected in the leaders' ranking of dealings with Russia among the five biggest foreign policy problems. Many fewer members of the public cite this as a big concern.

As noted, temperature readings for both Russia and President Boris Yeltsin on the thermometer have dropped since 1994. Along with this relative decline in positive feelings and some concern about Russian behavior and stability, public support for economic aid to Russia remains low, with a plurality (38%) wanting to decrease or stop aid altogether. Further, a plurality of the public (38%) prefer that Russia solve its economic problems alone—an option with which leaders disagree (17%). A strong plurality of leaders believe that Europe should take the lead in responding to the current economic crisis (44%). More leaders agree that Russia is likely to play a lesser role in 10 years (54%) than a greater role (42%). Public attitudes on this question are evenly divided between those who predict that Russia will play a greater (44%) and lesser (44%) role. Attitudes toward Russia are summarized on pages 30-31.

JAPAN: DECLINING PREOCCUPATION

Buoyed by America's continuing economic success, much smaller proportions of both the public and leaders view Japan as a threat than in 1994. Although public concern about economic competition from Japan, which

suffered a major economic slump in 1998, has not disappeared, the 45% who perceive it as a critical threat is down considerably from the 62% of 1994. Concern among leaders is down to 14% from 21% in 1994. Consistent with these findings, there has been a significant increase since 1994 in the public's belief that Japan practices fair trade (from 17% to 31%), while leaders register a more modest increase (from 18% to 22%). Since 1994, decreased proportions of the public (59% from 66%) and leaders (46% from 47%) believe that Japan will play a greater role in the next 10 years.

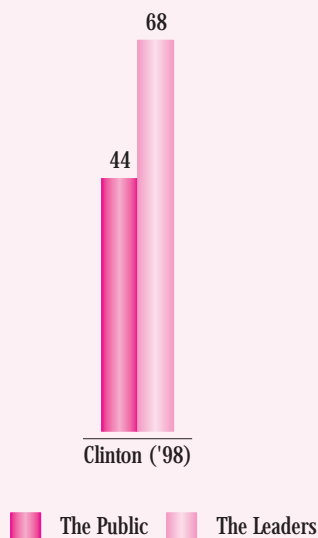
Japan's stature as a key U.S. ally and trading partner has not had a marked effect on the country's temperature rating, which continues in the lukewarm range (55°). However, Japan remains the country considered most vital to U.S. interests by the public and has supplanted Mexico and Russia to take second place behind China among leaders. Despite China's increasing political and economic assertiveness, a much higher percentage of the public view Japan (47%) as more important to the United States than China (28%), while leaders are split on this issue. Echoing Clinton administration views, a strong majority of leaders (75%) believe that reform of Japan's economic and financial structures is very important for addressing the Asian economic crisis. Attitudes about Japan are summarized on pages 30-31.

CHINA: MEASURED CONCERN

American attitudes toward China reflect an unease about this Asian giant's changing role in the world, fueled by concerns about human rights issues, trade and economic matters as well as lingering recollections of the 1989 Tiananmen Square violence. A discernable gap in public/leadership attitudes about China is evident in the fact that an equal percentage of leaders consider China and Japan to be more important than the other, while the public is more convinced of Japan's importance over China. Leaders almost unanimously consider China to be a vital interest to the United States (95%), while the pub-

FIGURE 5-3: PERFORMANCE ON PEACE PROCESS

Percentage who believe the Clinton administration's handling of the Arab/Israeli peace process has been "excellent" or "good."



A much higher percentage of the public view Japan as more important to the United States than China, while leaders are split on this issue.

lic, despite placing China relatively high (74%), is more restrained. Perhaps more telling, although a rather high and nearly equal percentage of both the public and leaders consider the development of China as a world power to be a critical threat to U.S. vital interests (57% and 56% respectively), the increase among leaders since 1994 is 10 points, while public attitudes did not change.

The relatively greater concern about China among leaders can also be seen in the 9%—almost double the 5% in 1994—who cite relations with China among the biggest foreign policy problems, compared with only 3% of the public. Although both figures are low, they do indicate a marginally greater

change among leaders, consistent with other findings. In addition, while 97% of leaders believe that China will play a greater role in the next 10 years, a notably smaller percentage of the public feel that way (69%). On the matter of economic sanctions, the greater willingness among the public to impose such sanctions on China (52%) than among leaders (36%) reflects the public's support for the use of economic sanctions in general. Conversely, more leaders (51%) than the public (27%) support the use of U.S. troops if China invades Taiwan. Attitudes toward China are summarized on pages 30-31.

INDIA: MIXED VIEWS

The dramatic nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in 1998 focused attention—and considerable concern—on South Asia. Although preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is rated as the number one U.S. foreign policy goal by both the public and leaders, only 36% of the public consider the United States to have a vital interest in India. As noted, India also receives a moderately cool reading (46°) on the thermometer. (India's South Asian rival, Pakistan receives an even cooler 42°.) There is a significant gap between public and leadership views on India's prospective role in the world, with 73% of leaders and only 26% of the public believing India will play a greater role in 10 years. However, it should be noted that a nearly equal percentage of the public (23%) answered "don't know" to this question.

ISRAEL: QUALIFIED SUPPORT

The Middle East situation is cited among the six most important foreign policy problems by the public and leaders. In a year marked by some progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and domestic tumult on the Israeli political scene, Israel continues to rank high on the vital interest scale for both the public and leaders, while in the somewhat warm range on the thermometer (55°). As noted, President Netanyahu also registers a slightly cool temperature reading on this scale (48°).

Public support for economic aid to Israel remains virtually unchanged from 1994, with a plurality believing aid levels should remain the same (42%), and substantially more favoring a decrease (23%) than an increase (10%). If Arab forces were to invade Israel, leaders strongly support intervention by American troops. While evenly divided on the issue in the past two surveys, a plurality of the public (49%) is now opposed to such intervention, with 38% in favor, a slight drop from 1994.

The Clinton administration's handling of the Arab/Israeli peace process receives a mixed review from the public, with 44% saying "good" or "excellent" and an equal number saying "fair" or "poor." The leaders give the administration more credit, with 68% "good" or "excellent" ratings (see Figure 5-3).

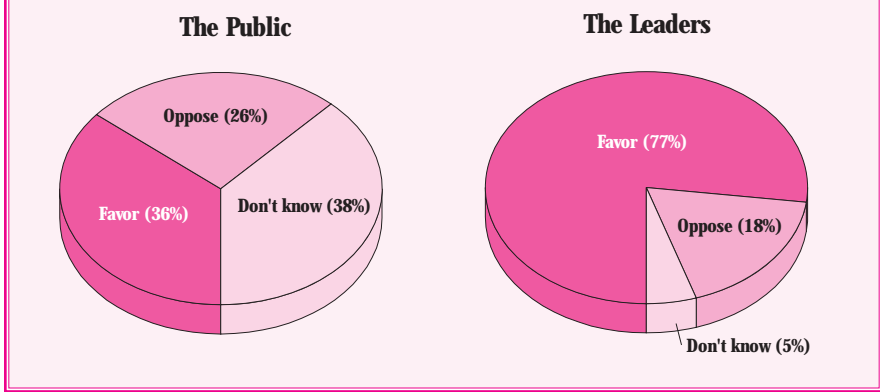
On a key issue in Israeli-Palestinian relations—whether an independent Palestinian state should be established on the West Bank and Gaza Strip—leaders are overwhelmingly in favor (77%), with only 18% opposed (see Figure 5-4). Survey respondents from the Clinton administration are more in favor (92%), while those from Congress are less so (64%). Support is much lower among the public (36%), with 26% opposed and a plurality offering no opinion at all (38%).

THE PERSIAN GULF: CRISIS REDUX

Unlike four years ago, a series of new crises involving Iraq raised the foreign policy profile of the region during 1998, particularly at the end of the year. The most dramatic of these, involving the U.S.–British attack on Iraq, occurred after the public survey had been conducted but before the leadership survey was fully completed. Not surprisingly, leaders view Iraq more threateningly than the public, ranking relations with this country as the second biggest foreign policy problem. As noted, both Iraq (25°) and President Saddam Hussein (12°) register the lowest thermometer readings. Consistent with the long-term trend concerning public and leadership attitudes about the use of U.S. troops

FIGURE 5-4: PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD

Do you favor or oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip?



abroad, leaders are significantly more supportive of intervention (79%) than the public (46%) if Iraq were to invade Saudi Arabia. In terms of vital interests, Saudi Arabia remains high among both leaders (88%) and the public (77%), while Kuwait has slipped somewhat among the public since 1994 (from 76% to 68%).

The level of concern about the broader implications of problems in the Persian Gulf can be inferred from public and leadership views on terrorism and nuclear, chemical and biological

weapons. These items are high as perceived critical threats, and countries of the region are strongly perceived as vital interests. However, Islamic fundamentalism, an indirectly related issue, receives relatively low scores as a possible critical threat. Concern about this issue among leaders has declined since 1994, from 39% to 31%, while the public registers a modest increase, from 33% to 38%, although still low in absolute terms. As noted, another Gulf state, Iran, is ranked high as a vital interest and low on the thermometer.

FIGURE 5-5: MEXICO

Percentage who believe the United States has a vital interest in Mexico.

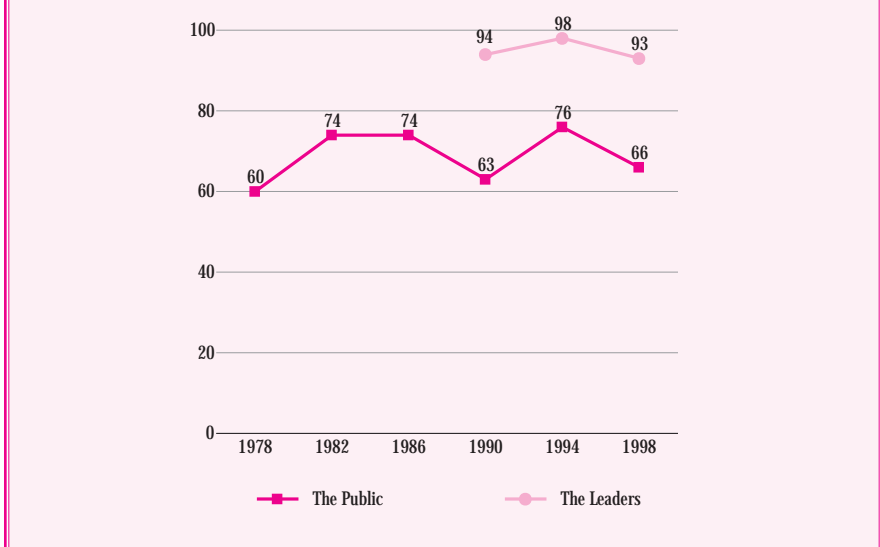
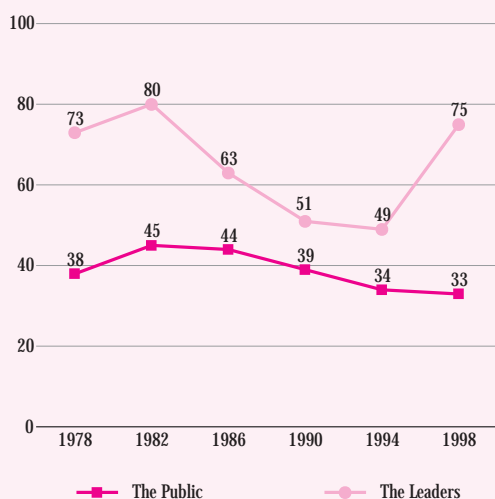


FIGURE 5-6: BRAZIL

Percentage who believe the United States has a vital interest in Brazil.



Despite challenges to the use of economic sanctions on many fronts, both the public and leaders support their imposition on Iraq and, to a somewhat lesser extent, on Iran.

MEXICO: POST-NAFTA COMPLACENCY

Six years after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and nearly four after resolution of the Mexican financial crisis, Mexico's perceived importance has diminished somewhat for the public, dropping 10 points since 1994 from 76% to 66% as a vital interest (see Figure 5-5). Leaders still rank Mexico among the top countries of vital interest (93%). Relevant to relations with Mexico and consistent with differences in the original NAFTA debate, more of the public (40%) view economic competition from low-wage countries as a critical threat than do leaders (16%).

BRAZIL: GROWING ATTENTION FROM LEADERS

In the wake of the re-election of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and of the Brazilian financial crisis, Brazil's profile has become considerably more prominent among leaders. A solid majority of leaders (75%—up from 49% in 1994) now consider Brazil

a vital interest, although only 33% of the public agrees (see Figure 5-6). Leaders also are much more inclined to believe that Brazil will play a greater role in the world in 10 years (64%) than the public (21%). As with India, a significant percentage of the public answered "don't know" to this question (29%). Brazil's 56° temperature on the thermometer is several degrees warmer than the near-neutral reading (49°) registered by Brazil's South American neighbor and key trading partner Argentina.

CUBA: DECLINING INTEREST

Pope John Paul II's 1998 visit to Cuba helped focus attention on the only remaining Communist-ruled country in the hemisphere. While Haiti, another Caribbean country that commanded headlines four years ago, has virtually disappeared as a foreign policy issue, Cuba continues to concern Americans—although to a lesser extent than in earlier years. Half of the public now view Cuba as a vital interest, down from 67% in 1994, while only a negligible percentage of the public and leaders consider this country as a major foreign policy problem. Some of this decline could be attributable to the substantial decrease since 1994 in pub-

lic and leadership concern about immigration. In a reversal of the usual gap on the issue of using American troops abroad, more of the public (38%) support such action if people in Cuba attempted to overthrow Castro than leaders (18%), even though a plurality of the public is still opposed (51%). As noted, both Cuba and its long-standing president, Fidel Castro, register low temperature readings on the thermometer.

CANADA: RELIABLE NEIGHBOR

Despite separatist rumblings in Quebec, the United States' biggest trading partner, close ally and neighbor continues to receive very favorable ratings from most Americans. Canada once again emerges at the very top of the thermometer (72°), and is also near the top of vital interest list among both the public (69%) and leaders (89%).

AFRICA: OVERLOOKED CONTINENT

President Clinton's much-publicized visit to Africa in 1998 appears not to have had a discernable effect on most Americans' traditionally low level of interest in Africa. However, South Africa continues to be considered a vital interest by more than half of the public and leaders. President Nelson Mandela is again among the top leaders on the thermometer at 60°. Nigeria, a major power in troubled central Africa, registers a slightly cool reading on the thermometer.

A plurality of the public (38%) believe that economic aid to African countries should remain the same. However, there are more people who would favor an increase in aid to African countries (24%) than to any other country asked about, even though slightly more would decrease or cut it altogether (29%). Also relevant to Africa, the public and leaders consider regional ethnic conflicts as at least important if not critical possible threats to U.S. vital interests, and they support efforts to combat world hunger. There also is a moderate increase among both groups for efforts to improve the living standards of less developed countries, though relative support is low.

CHAPTER SIX

MEASURING SUCCESS

When looking at how Americans perceive their place in the world and at their primary interests, goals and opinions about international policy matters, it is instructive to focus on whether the American people feel their interests are being represented and their opinions heard by those responsible for making policy. The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations study provides several different ways of assessing this question, from asking about the current administration's performance on foreign policy to evaluating the role of Congress and the media. In addition, the separate polling of the public and a foreign policy leadership sample provides a look at the gaps in opinion between them.

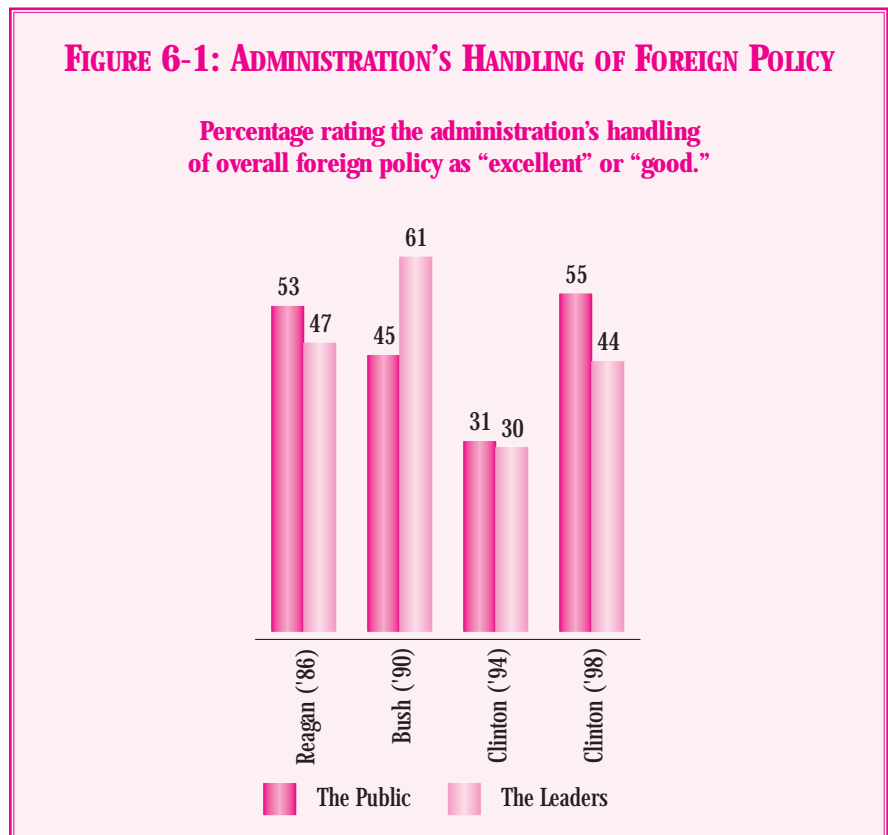
THE PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN POLICY

President Clinton is benefiting from the relative calm on the foreign policy front and the public's general satisfaction with the position of the country. Plagued by low ratings on foreign policy performance four years ago, Clinton now receives significantly higher marks from the public on overall foreign policy, and has also improved in the eyes of the leaders.

On the handling of "overall foreign policy" the Clinton administration's performance rating jumped 24 points, with 55% of the public rating it "excellent" or "good" (see Figure 6-1). This mark exceeds that given to either Ronald Reagan (53%) or George Bush (45%) by the public during their respective terms in office. Even among those with extreme opinions, Clinton still beats his two predecessors on foreign policy, with a higher number in the "excellent" category and the lower number in the "poor" category than either of them.

Leaders put Clinton 14 points ahead as "excellent" or "good" on "overall foreign policy" in 1998 over 1994, but at 44%, the number is still below that of Reagan in 1986 (47%) and Bush in 1990 (61%). This high mark for President Bush reflects the leaders' appreciation of his successful handling of "relations with the Soviet Union" (now "Russia") as the Cold War was coming to a close, an item for which Bush got his highest mark from both the leaders (90% "excellent" or "good") and the public (74% "excellent" or "good").

The public is also much happier today with the administration's han-



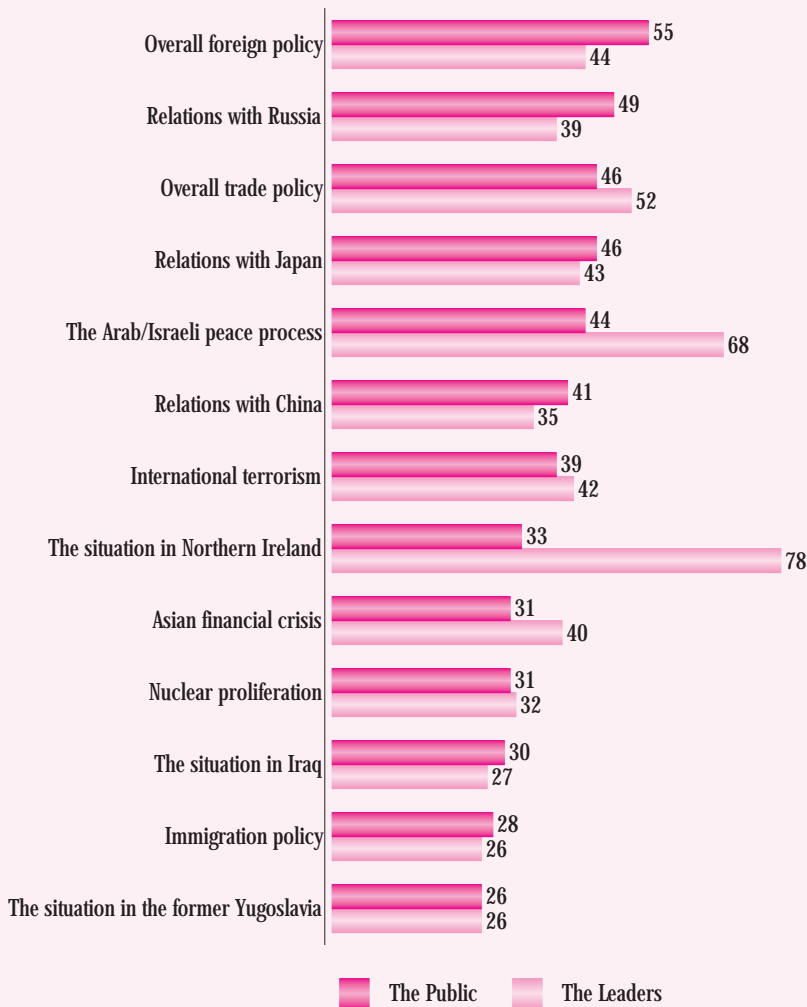
dling of "overall trade policy." The percentage rating it "excellent" or "good" jumped 16 points from 1994 to 46%, well above Reagan in 1986 (26%) or Bush in 1990 (21%). The leaders are less happy than they were four years ago on trade, dropping Clinton's rating from 62% in 1994 to 52% today. Nevertheless, overall trade policy is still one of the top three positive accomplishments of the current administration according to leaders, and is significantly better than that of Reagan (38%) or Bush (28%).

Despite the public's enthusiasm for the administration's performance on

overall foreign policy, they are less clear about what specifically the Clinton team has accomplished. On balance, the administration receives higher "excellent" or "good" ratings than "fair" or "poor" ratings on its handling of relations with Russia and relations with Japan, and comes out even on handling of the Arab/Israeli peace process. However, on the eight other specific items we asked about, the balance is reversed, although many include relatively high levels of "don't know" responses. In descending order of success are relations with China, international terrorism, the situation in

FIGURE 6-2: ADMINISTRATION'S PERFORMANCE

Percentage rating the Clinton administration's handling of the following items as "excellent" or "good."



Northern Ireland, Asian financial crisis, nuclear proliferation, the situation in Iraq, immigration policy and the situation in the former Yugoslavia. The most "poor" ratings from the public show up on the administration's handling of Iraq (32%), immigration (29%) and international terrorism (24%), although the largest proportion still lands in the "fair" category for all three. See Figure 6-2 for a summary of the administration's ratings of "good" or "excellent."

Leaders give the Clinton administration the most credit for its handling of the situation in Northern Ireland, with 78% rating it "excellent" or "good." This is followed by "the Arab/Israeli peace process at 68% and

overall trade policy at 52%, as mentioned earlier. On all other items, the balance is heavier on the "fair" or "poor" side of the equation, with Iraq receiving the most votes in the "poor" category (38%). Iraq is the only item on which a plurality of leaders rated the administration "poor." This issue was high in the minds of leaders during the polling because of the concurrent U.S.–British bombing of Iraq. The situation in the former Yugoslavia receives the next most "poor" rating (30%), outweighing those who say "excellent" or "good" by 4 points while a plurality of leaders say "fair" (42%). Killings of ethnic Albanians by Serbian forces in Kosovo that nearly precipitated U.S. air

strikes during the survey were no doubt affecting this response.

FIRST AMONG PEERS

President Clinton's rise in the foreign policy rankings is most striking when he is compared against a list of all 10 post–World War II presidents. The public was asked to rank the presidents as "very successful," "somewhat successful," "somewhat unsuccessful" or "very unsuccessful" in the conduct of foreign policy. When looking at the "very successful" responses (see Figure 6-3), Clinton jumps from eighth place in 1994 to first in 1998, surpassing President Kennedy, who ranked first in that category in 1994 and now places second. Third is Reagan, followed by Bush, Truman and Eisenhower.

By a different measure, when overall satisfaction is measured by combining responses to "somewhat" and "very" successful, Clinton still jumps from seventh place in 1994 to second in 1998, only behind President Bush, who was first in both surveys. It is important to note that the "don't know" responses for presidents prior to Jimmy Carter are comparatively high and getting higher. When the percentages are recalculated to include only those with opinions (excluding people who said "don't know"), the ranking turns out quite differently, though the reliability of the sample decreases. By this measure, Harry Truman receives the highest

The public appears to associate the perceived absence of international crises affecting them with the successful handling of foreign policy.

overall positive rating on his conduct of foreign policy (combining "very" and "somewhat" successful), followed by Eisenhower, Kennedy, Bush, and a tie between Reagan and Clinton. Nevertheless, the results show that by any measure, Bill Clinton has substantially improved his performance on foreign policy in the minds of the public since 1994.

FIGURE 6-3: PRESIDENTIAL FOREIGN POLICY SUCCESS

Ranking by the public of postwar presidents considered “very successful” in the conduct of foreign policy.*

	1998	1994
1.	Clinton	Kennedy
2.	Kennedy	Nixon
3.	Reagan	Truman
4.	Bush	Eisenhower
5.	Truman	Reagan
6.	Eisenhower	Bush
7.	Nixon	Carter
8.	Carter	Clinton
9.	Johnson	Johnson
10.	Ford	Ford

* “Don’t know” responses are higher for presidents prior to Carter.

SUCCESS IN THE ABSENCE OF PROBLEMS

What has precipitated this turnaround in the fortunes of Bill Clinton on foreign policy? As mentioned above, it is difficult to point to specific issues on which the president has scored decisive policy successes, since the public appears largely underwhelmed or even unaware of his specific achievements. Whereas President Bush could point to his success in handling relations with the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, among other things, for positive perceptions of his foreign policy record, Clinton’s success seems to ride on the absence of large, looming problems on the international front in the minds of the public. With “don’t know” as the most common response to the question of the biggest foreign policy problems facing the country, the public appears to associate the perceived absence of international crises affecting them with the successful handling of foreign policy.

Some credit is perhaps also due Secretary of State Madeleine Albright,

who has had a higher profile in the administration than her predecessor Warren Christopher and receives a highly favorable 59° mean temperature rating from the public, 8 degrees higher than Christopher in 1994. Finally, given the continued high ratings that Clinton has received on his performance as president across numerous other domestic polls in the face of impeachment, the possibility of a rally effect that carries over into his foreign policy performance cannot be discounted. Ironically, Clinton scores these high numbers at the same time that both the public and the leaders name matters surrounding “the President/Bill Clinton” as one of the biggest problems facing the country.

THE CONGRESS AND FOREIGN POLICY

Impeachment hearings were the preoccupation of the U.S. Congress during this survey, with representatives mired in a largely partisan debate on whether and how to proceed with a vote to impeach President Clinton. The public survey was completed more than a month prior to the actual impeachment vote. Voter turnout for the midterm elections favored the Democrats and was seen by many as a backlash by the public against the impeachment proceedings. Despite the contentious pub-

The public is the most satisfied it has been for 25 years about the role of Congress in making foreign policy.

lic attitudes toward events in Washington, the public did not carry those views over to the foreign policy arena. Our survey asks if Congress is playing too strong, too weak, or about the right role in determining foreign policy compared to the president. A stronger plurality of the public today (43%) believe that Congress is playing about the right role, up 10 points from four years ago and the highest number recorded since the surveys began in 1974. While slightly more people believe that the role of Congress is too strong on foreign policy (23%) than too weak (19%), our survey indicates that

the public is the most satisfied it has been for 24 years about the role of Congress in making foreign policy.

THE SOMEWHAT RELIABLE MEDIA

In order to find out if the American public believes it is getting the information it needs on foreign policy, a new question asks how reliable television, radio, the Internet, newspapers and news magazines are as accurate sources of foreign policy information. Large pluralities of the public view each of these media outlets as “somewhat reliable.”

Newspapers come in first as the most reliable source of foreign policy information, with 29% saying they are “very reliable.” This is followed by television at 28%, news magazines at 23%, radio at 19% and the Internet at 15%, although 44% of respondents answered “don’t know” when queried about the Internet. When the percentages are recalculated to exclude the “don’t know” factor, the Internet rises to a tie with news magazines and radio occupies the last spot, although the spread is only from 31% “very reliable” for newspapers to 21% for radio.

The Internet also receives the most votes as an unreliable source of foreign policy information, with 27% saying “not very reliable” when the “don’t knows” are excluded, the same number who say it is “very reliable.” While other opinion studies focusing specifically on the media have recently found an increasingly negative view among the public toward the news media, especially in light of the presidential sex scandal, the good news from this survey is that at least on foreign policy-related matters, the public is still quite confident in the media.

GROWING GAPS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND LEADERS

Another measure of success for American foreign policy is the extent to which the views and preferences of leaders—which tend to correspond with actual policy—also correspond to the opinions of ordinary citizens. In a democracy we expect policy to be generally congruent with public opinion.

FIGURE 6-4: GAPS IN OPINION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND LEADERS

Gaps: “Public” percent minus “Leaders” percent. Percentages are of those holding an opinion.
“Don’t know” responses are excluded.

	<u>Public</u>	<u>Leaders</u>	<u>Gap</u>
Domestic Concerns			
Social Security programs should be expanded.	69%	31%	38
Programs to combat crime should be expanded.	78%	51%	27
Large numbers of immigrants are a critical threat.	57%	18%	39
AIDS, Ebola and other potential epidemics are a critical threat.	74%	34%	40
Economic competition from low-wage countries is a critical threat.	42%	16%	26
International terrorism is a critical threat.	86%	61%	24
Protecting the jobs of American workers is a very important goal.	83%	45%	38
Controlling and reducing illegal immigration is a very important goal.	57%	21%	36
Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States is a very important goal.	84%	57%	27
Tariffs are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs.	60%	36%	24
International Involvement and Vital Interests			
It will be best for the country if we stay out of world affairs rather than take an active part.	32%	3%	29
The United States does not have a vital interest in Brazil.	58%	24%	34
The United States does not have a vital interest in Mexico.	29%	6%	23
Economic Relations			
Oppose giving economic aid to other nations.	49%	10%	39
Economic aid programs should be cut back.	50%	18%	32
The United States should not contribute more money to the IMF to meet world financial crises.	67%	16%	51
Russia should solve its problems alone (no U.S. or European lead in assistance).	42%	18%	25
Favor economic sanctions on Cuba.	66%	37%	29
Favor economic sanctions on China.	61%	37%	25
Economic competition from Japan is a critical threat.	47%	14%	32
Political Relations			
Oppose an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.	42%	19%	24
Administration’s handling of the situation in Northern Ireland is fair or poor.	58%	21%	36
Military Intervention			
Oppose troop use if North Korea invaded South Korea.	66%	25%	41
Oppose troop use if Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia.	48%	20%	28
Oppose troop use if Arab forces invaded Israel.	56%	29%	27
Oppose troop use if Russia invaded Poland.	66%	40%	26
Oppose troop use if China invaded Taiwan.	68%	48%	20
Favor troop use if people in Cuba attempted to overthrow the Castro dictatorship.	43%	18%	24
Military strength is more important than economic strength in determining a country’s power.	30%	8%	22
Favor assassination of individual terrorist leaders in order to combat international terrorism.	61%	35%	26
In international crises, do not take action alone without support of allies.	77%	52%	25
Perceptions of the World			
India will play a lesser role in the next 10 years.	67%	24%	42
Brazil will play a lesser role in the next 10 years.	71%	32%	38
There will be more bloodshed and violence in the 21st century than in the 20th century.	57%	24%	33

Despite the public's apparent satisfaction with the overall handling of foreign policy, a close look at the gaps between public and leadership opinion in this and, indeed, in previous Council surveys over the last 24 years, reveals important differences.

For the purposes of this section, the survey data are treated in a somewhat different way, with all percentages recalculated to exclude "don't know" responses. This permits clear comparisons of leadership and public views by focusing on those who hold an opinion, often a smaller portion of citizens than leaders. The precise extent of opinion gaps is then measured simply by subtracting the percentage of leaders who express a given view from the percentage of the public holding that same view. The size of gaps can be compared across issues, even if there are more "don't know" responses to one question than to another.

The main results are given in Figure 6-4, which presents every gap of 20 percentage points or more. As is evident from the table, there are many gaps between the opinions of leaders and the public: 34 of them, up from 26 in 1994. Fifteen of these gaps amount to 30 percentage points or more, about the same number as four years ago and more than in most previous years. The record number of gaps, however, came in 1990, a time of economic disquiet and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

DOMESTIC POLICY AND IMPACTS

In this survey, as in every one of the seven Council surveys since 1974, members of the general public put more emphasis on domestic issues than do leaders. A large majority of the public, for example, want to expand Social Security programs, whereas only a minority of leaders do, creating a large, 38-percentage-point gap between the two. Similarly, many more ordinary citizens than leaders want to expand programs to combat crime and violence, producing a 27-point gap. There is also a substantial 18-percentage-point gap concerning the expansion of health care programs, though it is not quite big enough to be included in the table.

Further, the public much more than leaders perceives threats and emphasizes goals related to the domestic impacts of international affairs. For example, many more citizens than leaders perceive large-scale immigration, epidemic diseases, international competition from low-wage countries, and international terrorism as critical threats. These gaps fall in the 24-to-40-percentage-point range.

Likewise, the public much more than leaders emphasizes the foreign policy goals of protecting the jobs of American workers, reducing illegal immigration, and stopping the flow of

As in every one of the seven Council surveys since 1974, members of the general public put more emphasis on domestic issues than do leaders.

illegal drugs into the United States. A considerably larger fraction of the public than of leaders see tariffs as necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs. Gaps concerning self-interest in foreign policy have appeared in previous surveys but are especially large and prevalent in the middle and late 1990s.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

As in the past, there exists a gap between the extremely high level of internationalism among leaders and the somewhat less high level among the public. The public is less prone—by 29 percentage points—to favor taking an active part in world affairs, though a substantial majority still does so. The public is also less likely than leaders to see a vital U.S. interest in Brazil or Mexico (although a large majority does perceive a vital interest in the case of Mexico). Indeed, the public is at least slightly less likely than the leaders to see a vital interest in nearly all of the 19 countries asked about in both samples, with Bosnia the most conspicuous exception.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Another familiar gap concerns foreign aid, about which the general public has

always been less enthusiastic than the leaders. Just as was true four years ago and in every survey since 1974, a 30-to-40-percentage-point larger proportion of the public than of leaders want to cut back economic aid to other countries or oppose such aid altogether. A larger percentage of the public than of leaders also feel that Russia should solve its problems alone, without either the United States or Europe taking the lead in assistance.

Two new sorts of gaps concerning economic relations appear in this survey. The largest of all the gaps is the 51-percentage-point difference between leaders, who strongly favor contributing more money to the International Monetary Fund to meet world financial crises, and the public, which strongly opposes this idea. The issue of economic sanctions—asked about for the first time in this survey—also divides leaders and public, with the public considerably more in favor of imposing economic sanctions on Cuba and China. More members of the public also continue to see economic competition from Japan as a critical threat, some years after most leaders have ceased to worry so much about it.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

The public is somewhat more likely than leaders to oppose an independent Palestinian state, though only a minority of either group does so. And the public is considerably less likely than leaders to credit the Clinton administration with "excellent" or "good" handling of the situation in Northern Ireland—producing a 36-point gap—perhaps because of continued news of violent conflict in Ireland and/or limited public awareness of the recent peace agreement.

MILITARY INTERVENTION

Many of the major opinion gaps between leaders and the public concern military intervention. As in previous surveys, in nearly every case in which we asked about the possible use of U.S. troops abroad, the general public is considerably less likely than leaders to favor using troops. In the case of

a hypothetical invasion of South Korea by North Korea, the gap amounts to fully 41 percentage points.

Substantial gaps also appear in the hypothetical cases of an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia, an invasion of Israel by Arab forces, a Russian invasion of Poland and a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Only in the case of a revolt in Cuba is this pattern reversed, with a substantially larger minority of the public willing to use troops—just as it more strongly favors economic sanctions against Cuba.

More of the public than leaders are favorable toward assassinating terrorist leaders, and more are inclined (though still as a small minority view) to see military strength rather than economic strength as crucial in determining a nation's power. But members of the public, more than leaders, oppose taking crisis action without the support of allies.

DIFFERING EXPECTATIONS

On more speculative issues, there are some gaps in expectations about the future. The public is markedly less sanguine than leaders about the possibility of India and Brazil playing greater roles in the future than at present, and many more citizens than leaders foresee a bloody 21st century.

CONCLUSION—LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

To some, the existence of so many gaps between leaders and the public may be troubling, although it can be argued that some of these gaps may reflect more detailed knowledge of policy issues among leaders than the public. This underscores the vital function of governmental leadership in terms of

educating and credibly persuading the public on matters of foreign policy.

Arguably, on some matters the public may be less aware of current international realities, which will eventually become clear. This might be true, for example, of those who worry excessively about economic competition from Japan, of the public's relative neglect of the importance of Brazil and failure to foresee the potential emergence of that country and of India as major powers, or of continuing concern about Cuba long after its revolutionary threat to the hemisphere has faded. Further, many members of the public may be unaware of the political, legal, moral and diplomatic ramifications of such policies as economic sanctions and assassination of enemy leaders.

Other cases, however, in which the public has long expressed different policy preferences from the leaders, raise the question whether policy makers have failed to respond to enduring opinions of the public that are grounded in experience and information.

The history of the past half century provides conflicting evidence, depending on circumstance, about whether government leaders should follow public opinion or act according to their expertise and experience. President Roosevelt's decision to assist the Allies in World War II prior to U.S. entry after Pearl Harbor reflects an approach of engaging the nation in the conflict while publicly denying that this would lead the United States into the war.

On the other hand, the Johnson administration's rapid loss of public support for the war in Vietnam after the 1968 Tet offensive demonstrates the difficulty of keeping policies and public opinion congruent. In very different cir-

cumstances, President George Bush decided in 1990 to go to war to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, even though there was not initially strong public support for this policy.

Our report does not give a definitive answer to these questions. The survey findings indicate that attention, awareness and concern about foreign policy issues are declining and certain gaps between leadership and public opinion are increasing. Assuming that looming problems on the international front deserve more attention than they are currently receiving from the public, especially to assure support for policies necessary to prevent the violence and conflict the public fears, the challenge for leaders is clear.

President Clinton enjoys a high rating from the public on overall foreign policy, even if it reflects satisfaction in the absence of major problems. This would suggest that the president has a base of public support for leadership initiatives and future crisis management. The true strength of such support, however, will only become apparent when tested by the need for leadership in a serious international crisis, if not by bold initiatives designed to prevent crises in the first place.

History, meanwhile, demonstrates that effective foreign policy, especially in crisis situations, involves far more than simply following public sentiments in making decisions. Leaders, especially when viewed publicly as credible and responsible, have considerable freedom to operate. At the same time, policies which over time are contrary to public sentiment will almost certainly fail—along with the leaders responsible for them.