

# Divided We Stand

Democrats and Republicans Diverge  
on US Foreign Policy

RESULTS OF THE 2020 CHICAGO  
COUNCIL SURVEY OF AMERICAN PUBLIC  
OPINION AND US FOREIGN POLICY

By Dina Smeltz,  
Ivo Daalder,  
Karl Friedhoff,  
Craig Kafura, and  
Brendan Helm

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Karl Friedhoff  
*Fellow, Public Opinion and  
Asia Policy*

Brendan Helm  
*Research Assistant*

Craig Kafura  
*Assistant Director, Public Opinion  
and Foreign Policy*

Charlie Rahr  
*Intern*

Giulia Shaughnessy  
*Intern*

Dina Smeltz  
*Senior Fellow, Public Opinion and  
Foreign Policy*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The worldwide spread of COVID-19 has reminded Americans that the United States is not immune to events that take place in other parts of the world. Far from heeding calls to retreat from international engagement, Americans remain supportive of an active US role in the world, with solid majorities supporting US security alliances and free trade as the best ways to maintain safety and prosperity. Most Americans also continue to believe that globalization is largely beneficial for the United States.

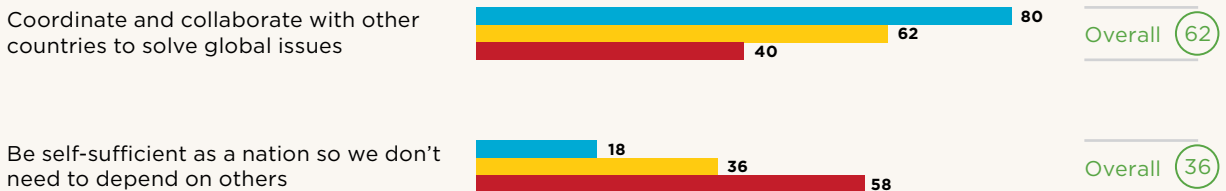
But there are profound differences between Democrats and Republicans on which foreign policy issues matter most today. And the parties are even more sharply divided on how the United States should deal with these issues and engage with the rest of the world. Generally speaking, Democrats prefer an internationalist approach: cooperating with other countries, amplifying US participation in international organizations and agreements, and providing aid to other nations. In contrast, Republicans prefer a nationalist approach: putting US interests above those of other countries, creating economic self-sufficiency, and taking a unilateral approach to diplomacy and global engagement (Figure A).

Figure A: **Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic**

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? The coronavirus outbreak has made it clear that it is more important for the United States to: (%)

n = 2,111

■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican



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The foreign policy positions of the two candidates in the 2020 presidential election mirror this public divide. President Donald J. Trump articulated a clear message favoring nationalism over multilateralism at the 74th United Nations General Assembly in 2019. He argued that the future belongs not to the “globalists” but to the “patriots,” going on to elaborate: “The future belongs to sovereign and independent nations who protect their citizens, respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique.”<sup>1</sup>

This agenda contrasts sharply with that put forth by the Democratic candidate. Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. has stated that his foreign policy will embrace the networks of partnerships and alliances the United States has built over the decades to enhance national security and freedom. “Working cooperatively with other nations,” Biden has argued, will “amplify our own strength, extend our presence around the globe, and magnify our impact while sharing global responsibilities with willing partners.”<sup>2</sup>

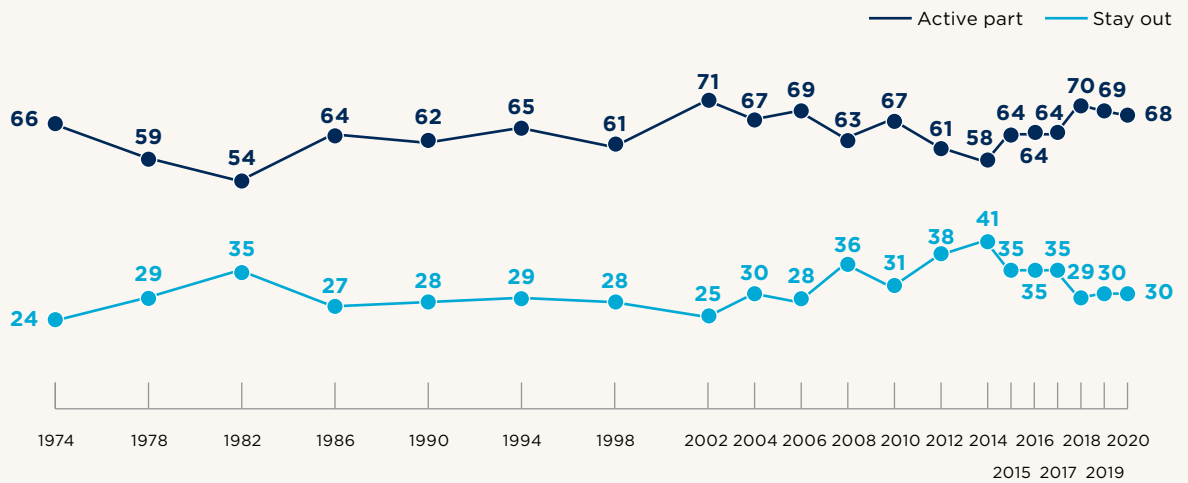
These two perspectives on US engagement in the world are poles apart, and the choices voters make this fall will therefore have far-reaching consequences for the direction of US foreign policy.

## Americans Want to Remain Engaged in World, Support Alliances and Trade

COVID-19 reached American shores at the start of 2020 and has inflicted untold damage on both lives and livelihoods. Within eight months, 6.6 million American citizens had been infected by the virus that causes COVID-19, more than 200,000 had died from it, and tens of millions had lost their jobs.<sup>3</sup> Yet Americans continue to reject a retreat from the world.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Americans across party lines continue to endorse robust US involvement and leadership internationally. Nearly seven in 10 (68%) maintain that the United States should take an active part in world affairs (Figure B), and 54 percent overall say that the United States should be more involved, not less, in addressing the world’s problems.

Figure B: **US Role in World Affairs**

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)  
n = 2,111



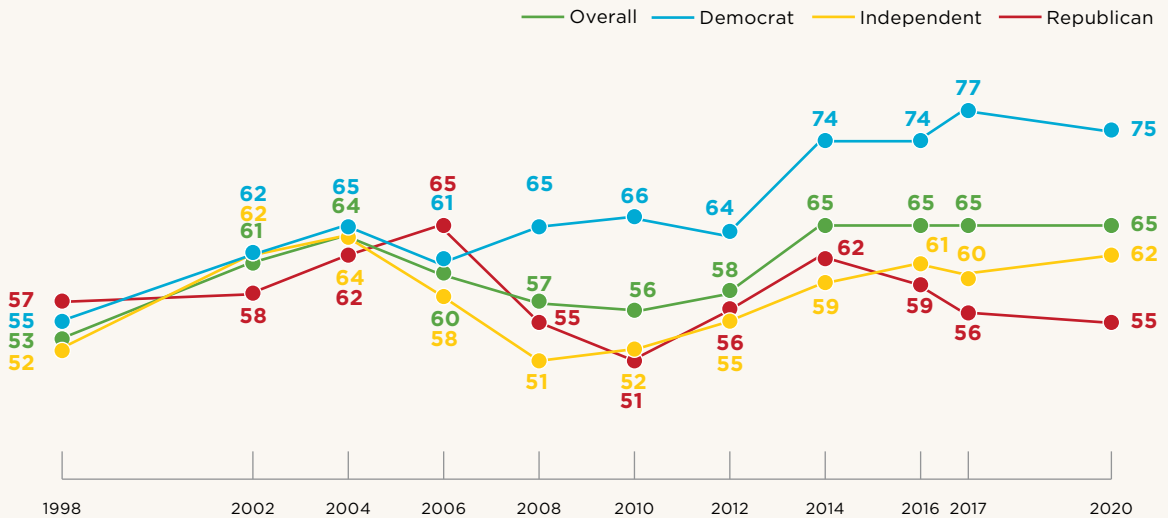
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Americans view alliances as a key part of that engagement. Solid majorities continue to say alliances in Europe (68%), East Asia (59%), and the Middle East (60%) mostly benefit the United States as well as its allies. About three-quarters still support maintaining or increasing the US commitment to NATO (73%). Seven in 10 Americans (71%) say that when dealing with international problems, the United States should be more willing to make decisions with its allies even if this means that the United States will sometimes have to go along with a policy that is not its first choice. On each of these questions, majorities of both Democrats and Republicans agree.

The US public also continues to support globalization and free trade (Figure C). Two-thirds of Americans still believe that globalization is beneficial to the United States (65%), and majorities believe that international trade is good for the economy (74%), consumers (82%), improving relations with other countries (85%), and creating jobs (59%) in the United States.

Figure C: **Effects of Globalization**

Turning to something else, 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? (% mostly good)  
n = 2,111



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## Partisan Differences on Top Threats Facing the Country

When it comes to the most important foreign policy issues affecting the United States, Democrats and Republicans are worlds apart. Democrats are most concerned about global problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic (which 87% see as a critical threat) and climate change (75%), followed by societal issues such as racial inequality (73%) and economic inequality (67%). Furthermore, seven in 10 Democrats (69%) are concerned about foreign interference in US elections (Figure D).

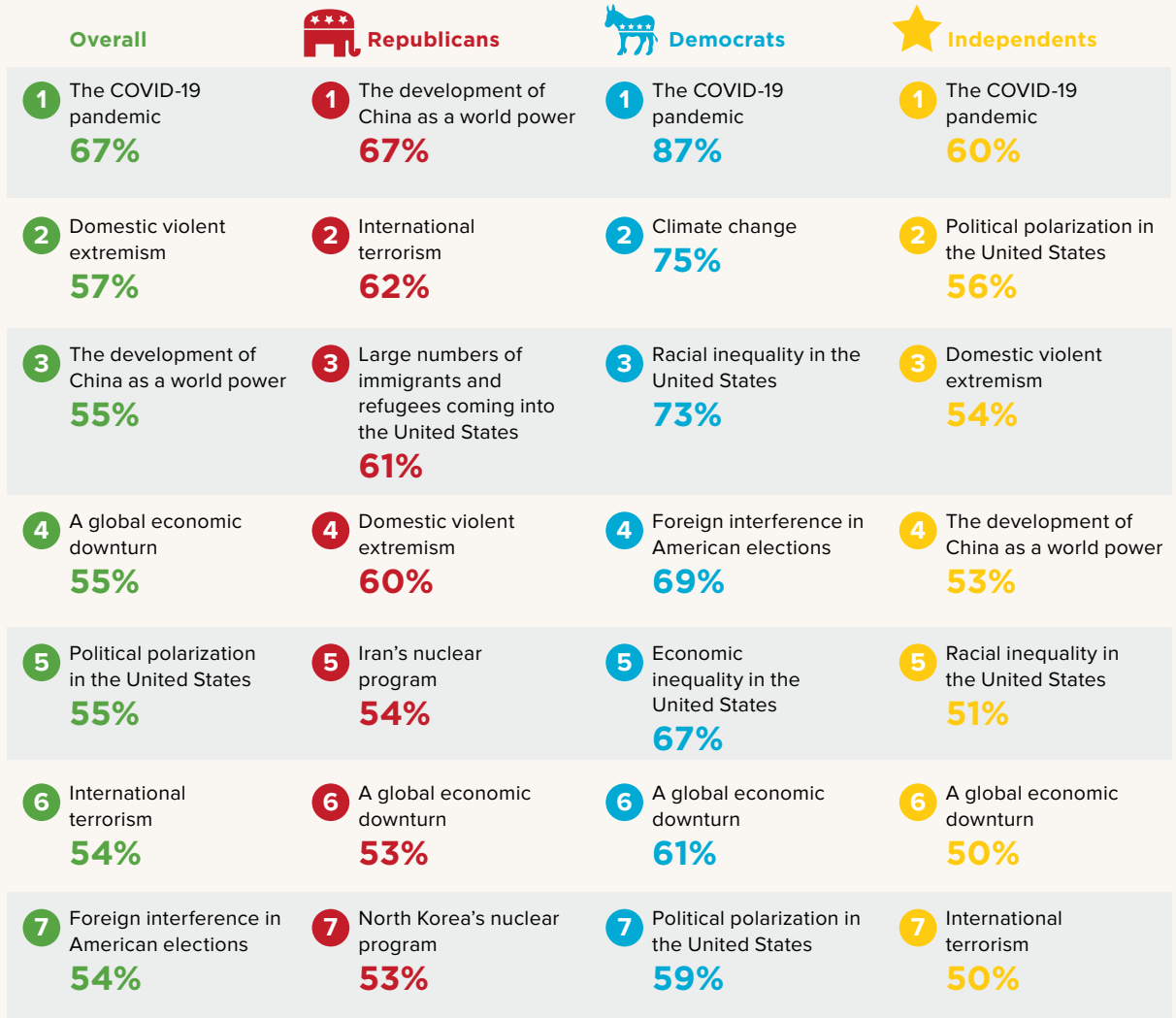
Republicans identify traditional security challenges as the most critical threats facing the country, including the development of China as a world power (67%), international terrorism<sup>5</sup> (62%), and Iran’s nuclear program (54%). Six in 10 also consider large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the country (61%) as a critical threat—a long-standing Republican concern.

Just as there are stark differences in how Democrats and Republicans want US policy to address the most pressing issues facing the country, there are also sharp differences in how they want the United States to engage with the rest of the world.

## Figure D: Top Seven Critical Threats

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all (% critical threat)

n varies



2020 Chicago Council Survey

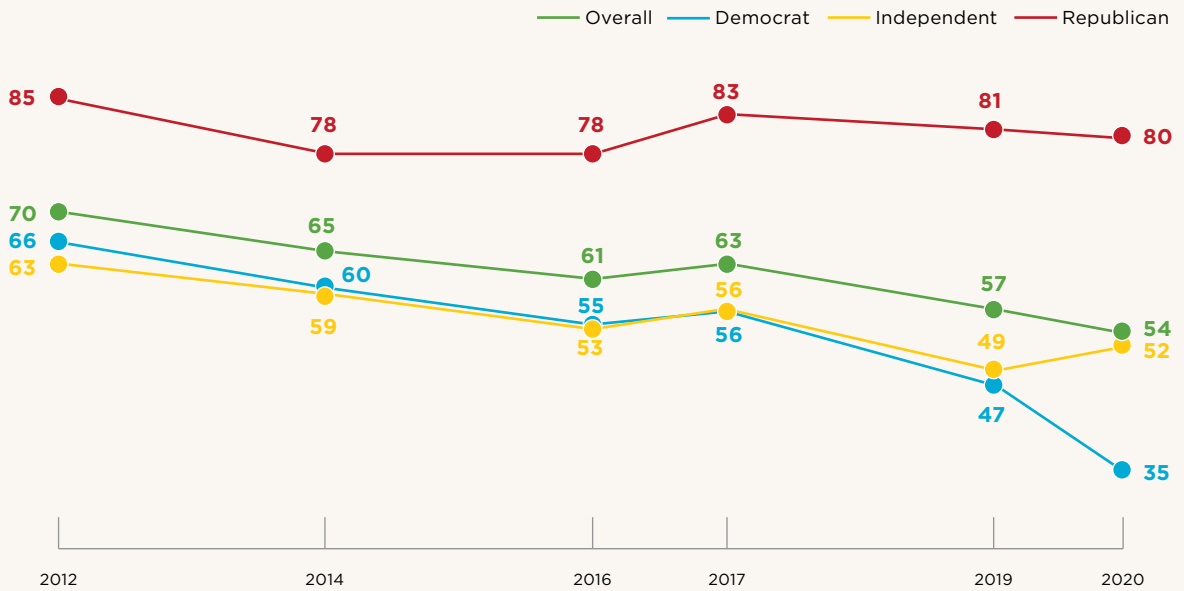
### Democrats Favor an Internationalist Approach: Diplomacy and Cooperation

A vast majority of Democrats (80%) say the COVID-19 outbreak has increased the importance of the United States coordinating and collaborating with other countries to solve global issues. Democrats' strong support for working through international organizations is likely rooted in the belief that the United States is no greater a country than others (64%)—a sentiment that has grown dramatically since 2017, when just 43 percent agreed (Figure E).

Figure E: **American Exceptionalism**

Some people say the United States has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world. Others say that every country is unique, and the United States is no greater than other nations. Which view is closer to your own? (% greatest country in the world)

n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

Democrats also strongly advocate addressing global problems by working within the international community, pursuing solutions such as increasing US participation in international organizations (63%), providing humanitarian aid (59%), and negotiating international agreements (55%). They also say that international organizations should be more involved, including the World Health Organization (71%), the United Nations (68%), and the World Trade Organization (53%). Compared with Republicans, they are more likely to strongly agree that “problems like climate change and pandemics are so big that no country can solve them alone, and international cooperation is the only way we can make progress in solving these problems” (72% of Democrats strongly agree, compared with 36% of Republicans).

One example is China. Despite the shared view among both Democrats and Republicans that Beijing is an unfair trade partner and mostly a rival to Washington, DC, most Democrats still favor a strategy of engagement over containment. In fact, six in 10 Democrats (60%) say that the United States should



pursue friendly engagement with China. Asked about specific policy proposals regarding China, a majority of Democrats oppose restricting the exchange of scientific research between the United States and China (57%) or limiting the number of students from China studying in the United States (64%).

Democrats' attitudes toward trade also reflect an internationalist orientation. A large majority of Democrats (75%) support the global production of various goods across several countries to ensure that a crisis or disaster does not hurt the supply of goods around the world. Only 24 percent favor the United States producing all its own goods. Seven in 10 Democrats (70%) also prefer that the United States coordinate the production of goods with other countries, even at the risk of having to rely on those countries if shortages arise. Just 28 percent of Democrats say that the United States should produce all its critical goods to ensure domestic supply, even if this means higher prices for US consumers.

Recent administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have favored the use of sanctions as an economic stick—but three in 10 Democrats (30%) think the United States should decrease the use of sanctions against other countries. This extends to placing tariffs on products imported from China, which 56 percent of Democrats oppose.

### Republicans Favor a Nationalist Approach: Self-Sufficiency and Independence

In contrast to the Democrats, a majority of Republicans (58%) believe the COVID-19 outbreak has made it more important for the United States to be self-sufficient as a nation. This perspective likely rests upon the idea that the United States is exceptional: 80 percent of Republicans say that the United States is the greatest country in the world, and close to half of Republicans (48%) agree that “the United States is rich and powerful enough to go it alone, without getting involved in the problems of the rest of the world.”

Republican views in favor of self-sufficiency are a function of their commitment to upholding US independence and sovereignty in international affairs. A majority of Republicans (61%) reject the idea that the United States should be more willing to make decisions within the United Nations if it means pursuing a policy that is not its first choice, putting them at direct odds with 63 percent of Democrats. In further contrast to Democrats, there is no Republican majority support for any international organization to be more involved in addressing the world's problems.

Republicans are more likely to identify China as a critical threat than any other threat presented in the survey (67%), and a significant majority say that the United States should actively seek to limit China's power and influence (64% versus 36%). Republicans also support restricting people-to-people exchanges with China: two-thirds are in favor of limiting the number of students from China in the United States (65%) and restricting the exchange of scientific research between the two countries (66%).

Perhaps because of their focus on security threats, Republicans favor more muscular approaches to addressing international challenges. To combat terrorism (which 62% of Republicans say is a critical threat), nearly nine in 10 Republicans want to increase or maintain the use of drone strikes against suspected terrorists. Republicans also support those same aggressive measures at home, with majorities supporting using US troops to suppress domestic protests (59%) and riots, looting, and vandalism (83%). Two in three also support an increase in funding for immigration enforcement (64%).

On trade, Republicans tend to favor protectionist policies. Two-thirds of Republicans (60%) want the United States to produce its own critical goods to ensure domestic supply rather than buying or selling overseas (versus 37% who want to coordinate production globally). However, Republicans are more divided on the best approach in a crisis or a disaster. About half of Republican supporters favor individual countries producing the goods they need (47%), while the other half favor many countries producing goods that are traded internationally (51%).

On trade with China, Republican preferences are the inverse of Democratic preferences. Majorities of Republicans support increasing tariffs on products imported from China (76%), and seven in 10 (70%) support significantly reducing trade between the United States and China, even if this leads to greater costs for American consumers.

### Conclusion

In recent years, commentators have questioned whether the American public is committed to remaining involved in world affairs or whether the country is drifting toward isolationism. But this isn't the most relevant question, as a majority of Americans continue to support global engagement. Rather, the most important question is how the United States should relate to the rest of the world. President Trump's foreign policy is largely based on the platform of "America First," emphasizing the central role of nationalism and sovereignty in US relations with other countries. In contrast, Biden has emphasized the importance of working with other countries to address global challenges such as COVID-19 and climate change. While these ideas no doubt reflect the candidates' perspectives on how the United States should engage with the world, they're perfectly tailored to appeal to their respective constituencies.

While Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have had some foreign policy differences in past elections, the differences have often been at the margins and within a common view of the international role of the United States as well as the threats the country faces. Today, the differences between the two candidates are glaring, reinforced by partisan preferences among the wider public. In November, voters will not only decide who will become the next US president but also help determine the path US foreign policy takes—either working in partnership with the international community or moving toward a greater degree of national self-reliance.

# BIPARTISAN IDEAS ON THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES: ENGAGEMENT, ALLIANCES, AND TRADE

The importance of foreign policy to the American public is always a point of debate during election years, but the COVID-19 outbreak has emphasized the way foreign policy impacts the lives of every American. At times, the pandemic has emphasized the ways in which foreign policy can affect the daily lives of the country's citizens. From debates over globalization and self-sufficiency to relations with China, America's dealings with the rest of the world have been a focal point throughout 2020.

## Continued Support for US International Engagement and Leadership

One potential response to the ongoing challenges facing the United States—and to the COVID-19 pandemic in particular—is for the United States to pursue isolationist policies. This would include shutting US borders and disconnecting from the world economy in an attempt to seek self-sufficiency and limit the country's exposure to foreign risks. Indeed, this is the approach pursued by the White House. But Americans broadly reject this kind of retreat from the world. Instead, the American public continues to support an active role in the world for the United States, US alliances around the world, and international trade.

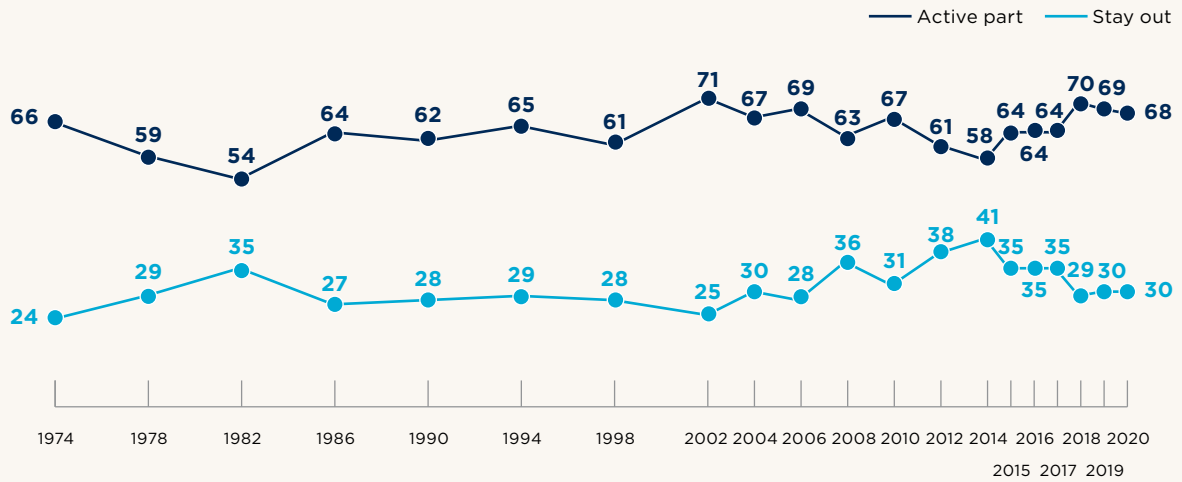
Majorities of Americans continue to favor US global engagement, with seven in 10 respondents overall (68%) saying that taking an active part in world affairs will be best for the future of the country (Figure 1). This result is in line with some of the highest readings in our survey over the past 46 years.

***One thing I believe that the pandemic has taught us is that we are part of one big world. We cannot go it alone and be successful.***

— 2020 Chicago Council Survey respondent

Figure 1: **US Role in World Affairs**

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)  
 n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

Americans want the United States to continue to lead abroad, but few want it to lead alone. In fact, majorities across the board prefer a shared leadership role for the United States (68%). Just 24 percent want the United States to take a dominant leadership role, and very few say the United States should have no global leadership role at all (6%). Furthermore, a majority of Americans believe the United States should be more involved in addressing global issues (54%), with another 25 percent saying it should be as involved as it is now.

Against the backdrop of current world crises, Americans believe that problems such as climate change and pandemics are too large for one country to handle alone. A strong majority (84%) agrees that international cooperation is the only way to solve such large global challenges. As one survey respondent notes, “Isolationism doesn’t work. Countries need to work together to solve large issues.”

## Continued Support for Alliances

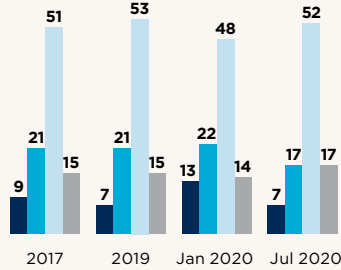
In addition to a shared commitment to international engagement, Americans strongly agree on the persisting value of alliances to the United States. Indeed, support for US security alliances around the world is at or near all-time highs (Figure 2). Consistent with this strong support, a majority of respondents say that the United States should be more willing to make decisions with its allies when dealing with international problems—even if this means sometimes going along with a policy that is not its first choice (71%, up from 66% in 2018). Likewise, nearly six in 10 say America should mainly consult with major allies before making foreign policy decisions (56%), rather than mainly making foreign policy decisions on its own (24%; 19% are unsure). And a majority of the public (76%) reject the notion that having allies is not worth the cost of defending them.

## Figure 2: Security Alliances

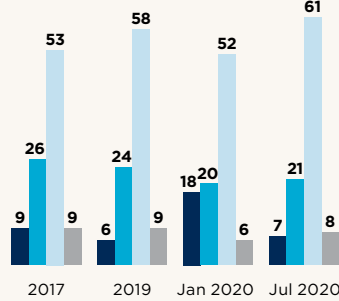
Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances? Do they: (%)

■ Mostly benefit the US ■ Mostly benefit our allies ■ Benefit both ■ Benefit neither

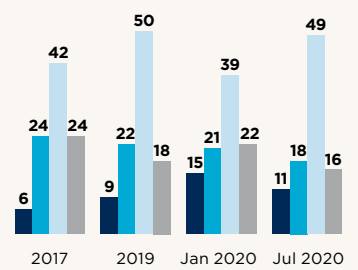
**East Asia** (n = 701)



**Europe** (n = 700)



**Middle East** (n = 710)



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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### US Alliances in East Asia

The Trump administration has argued that America’s allies in East Asia have taken unfair advantage of the United States. Currently, the US government is in negotiations with Japan and South Korea over the financial burden of hosting US troops, aiming to shift more responsibility to Tokyo and Seoul. But Americans see alliances in East Asia as a win-win: a majority of respondents say that alliances in East Asia either benefit both countries or mostly benefit the United States (59%). One respondent argues, “The United States benefits by having a strategic presence in Asia and allies who can represent its interests locally, as well as support US policies, further US interests, help with intelligence gathering, as well as expand trade.” To underscore American commitment to South Korea as an ally, Americans are also willing to send US troops to defend South Korea if it is attacked by North Korea (58%); a bare majority also see North Korea’s nuclear program as a critical threat to the United States (51%).

In addition to concerns about North Korea, China may be another reason for Americans’ embrace of their East Asian allies. Public attitudes toward China have become strikingly more unfavorable over the past two years. On a 0–100 scale, where 0 represents a very cold, unfavorable feeling and 100 represents a very warm, favorable feeling, Americans give China an average rating of 32, down from 45 in 2018 and a high of 53 in 1986. Nearly three in four also view China as both a rival to the United States (72%) and an unfair trading partner (73%). With Americans increasingly concerned about the rise of China (55% say it is a critical threat), a larger proportion of the public says that the United States should prioritize building up strong relations with traditional allies such as Japan and South Korea, even if this diminishes our relations with China (77% compared with 66% in 2018). In addition, while Taiwan is not a formal US ally, American public support for military action to defend the island from Chinese invasion is now at an all-time high (41%).

### The US Alliance in Europe

Despite strains between the United States and its European allies over recent years, the US alliance in the region remains popular with the public. A majority of Americans (68%) say the transatlantic alliance benefits both the United States and its allies or mostly benefits the United States (see Figure 2 on page 11). As one survey respondent elaborates in written comments, “If the United States and the European Union are strongly aligned, then it is more difficult for countries like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea to cause havoc at a global level. It also allows for more effective and unified responses to an issue that affects one or multiple nations within that alliance.”

Asked specifically about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Americans remain largely committed, as they have since 1974. A majority (73%) want to either maintain the US commitment to NATO or increase it, and 52 percent support the use of US troops if Russia invades a NATO ally, such as Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia. At the same time, however, more than half of Americans favor the decision to decrease the number of US troops in Germany (57%), with an additional 16 percent saying that all troops should be withdrawn from Germany. This could suggest that President Trump’s repeated criticism of Germany may have started to resonate publicly.<sup>6</sup>

### US Alliances in the Middle East

Six in 10 Americans think that both the United States and its allies in the Middle East benefit from their partnership or the United States alone mostly benefits. When asked about specific benefits of US alliances with Middle Eastern countries, several respondents point to preventing or combating terrorism. One participant notes that “Security benefits both the United States and the Middle East—we are all better protected against terrorists.” Another adds, “That part of the world seems to be critical to everyone’s security as terrorists from the region threaten everyone.”

Concerns about terrorism have subsided considerably since previous surveys, and current readings are at the lowest levels recorded since the Chicago Council began asking about the threat in 1998 (54%, down from 69% in 2019). Even so, a majority of Americans continue to favor using US troops to fight against violent Islamic extremist groups in Iraq and Syria (59%). In addition, 49 percent of respondents worry about the threat from Iran’s nuclear program (down from 57% in 2019). But some believe Iran is another destabilizing factor that makes alliances in this region important: “Israel and Saudi Arabia benefit from us; we benefit by them keeping Iran and its proxies out of the United States for the most part.”

***We need to lead by example. We need to protect the countries in the Middle East, and in turn, they will help to protect us.***

— 2020 Chicago Council Survey respondent

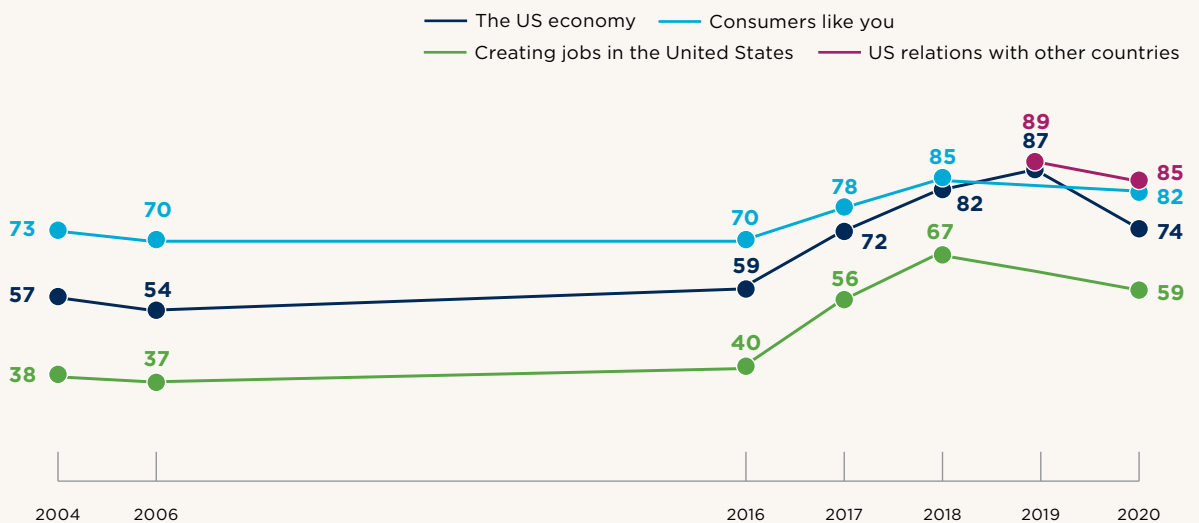
## Continued Embrace of Globalization and Trade amid the Pandemic

The events of the first half of 2020—a global pandemic and deep economic recession—have led to increased scrutiny of the effects of globalization and trade. Many commentators have speculated that the pandemic would bring about the end of globalization because it highlights the risks associated with specialized production of goods.<sup>7</sup> As COVID-19 spread, countries closed their borders to travel and prioritized national needs above international markets, resulting in worldwide shortages of personal protective equipment and other critical medical devices. There is similar speculation that national interests could limit global vaccine distribution, as nations that develop them will likely focus on inoculating their own populations first.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these predictions, and the dual shocks of the pandemic and recession, Americans as a whole continue to view US economic engagement abroad as worthwhile (Figure 3). Indeed, two-thirds (65%) say that globalization is mostly good for the United States. Majorities of Americans also continue to believe that international trade is good for creating jobs in the United States (59%), the US economy (74%), consumers (82%), and US relations with other countries (85%). While somewhat fewer say that international trade is good for the US economy and job creation than in 2019, current readings are still at relatively high points, reflecting a surge in positive evaluations of international trade since 2016.

Figure 3: **International Trade**

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for: (% good)  
n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

## Conclusion

Although confronted with the worst global health pandemic in a century, the worst recession since the Great Depression, and nationwide protests over racial injustice, Americans have not turned inward. The fact that support for international engagement and partnerships with allies remains stable despite these crises is remarkable. Far from seeking isolation from the rest of the world, Americans remain committed to an active foreign policy, to shared leadership with allies and partners around the globe, and to globalization and international trade.



**AMERICANS REMAIN COMMITTED** TO AN ACTIVE FOREIGN POLICY,  
TO SHARED LEADERSHIP WITH ALLIES AND PARTNERS AROUND THE  
GLOBE, AND TO GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE.



# PARTISAN DIFFERENCES ON THREATS AND FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES

While Americans across the political spectrum agree that the United States should remain engaged in the world, Democrats and Republicans diverge in their perceptions of the most alarming threats facing the country. Democrats identify challenges that tend to be global in nature as the most critical threats, but they are also concerned about societal challenges within the United States. Meanwhile, Republicans identify traditional security threats originating externally as the most critical for national security. (See sidebar "A Note about Independents" on page 18 for the top challenges among independents.)"

## Democrats Worry about Global and Domestic Problems

During this year's Democratic National Convention, party leaders focused on their perceptions of the top threats facing the country today, chiefly the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and social justice (Figure 4). These highlights also reflect the everyday concerns of Democrats.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the top-ranked threat facing the country among Democrats, with 87 percent describing it as critical. Climate change is a close second (75%); the gap between Democrats and Republicans on climate change as a critical threat is 54 percentage points—the largest partisan difference on critical threats in the 2020 survey.

Democrats are also concerned about the integrity of the upcoming presidential election. Seven in 10 Democrats describe foreign interference in US elections as a critical threat (69%). In addition, an August 2020 Pew survey found that 88 percent of Democrats say it is likely that Russia or other foreign governments will attempt to influence the election this November.<sup>9</sup>

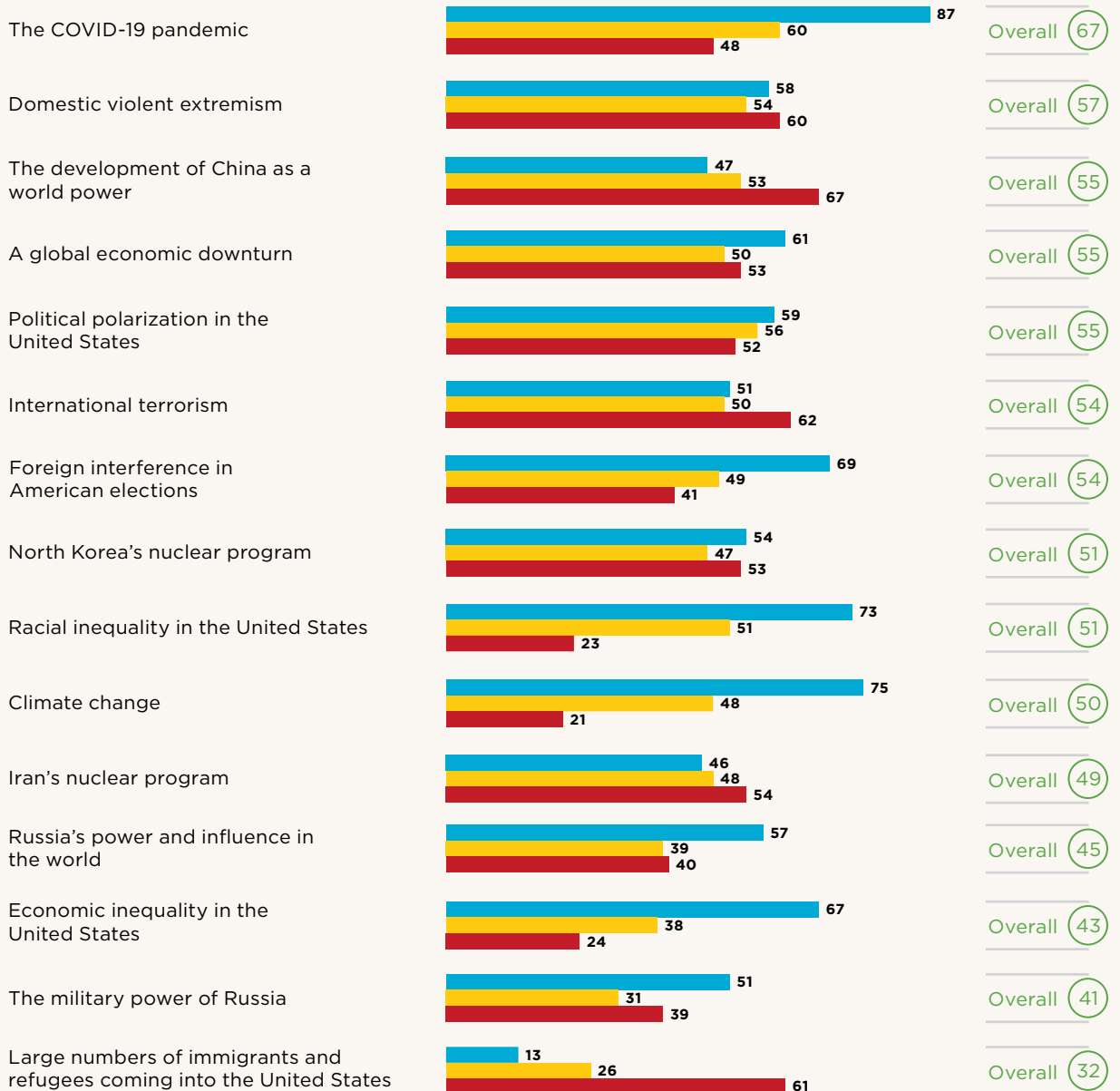
On the domestic front, Democrats view the challenges of racial (73%) and economic (67%) inequality in the United States as critical threats—views that are shared by few Republicans. In contrast, few Democrats (13%) view large numbers of immigrants and refugees entering the United States as a critical threat, while this is one of the top concerns among Republicans. In fact, a combined majority of Democrats favor increasing (43%) or maintaining (41%) current levels of legal immigration.

## Figure 4: Critical Threats

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)

n varies

■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican

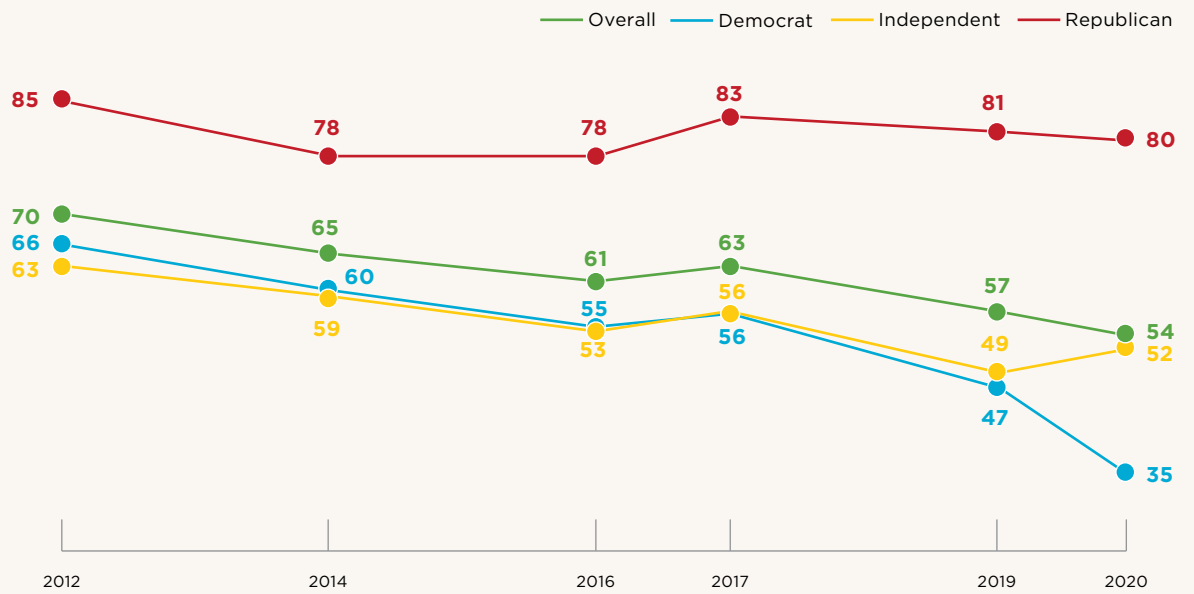


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The survey also reveals Democrats' deep disappointment with the way the current government is handling the issues they see as top threats (see Appendix Figure 1). Majorities say the US government's responses to the pandemic, climate change, election interference, and domestic inequality have been ineffective. This dissatisfaction, along with Democrats' well-documented dislike of President Trump,<sup>10</sup> has led to changes in the way they view their own country. A majority of Democrats now say that the United States is no greater than other countries (64%), a sentiment that has grown dramatically since 2017, when just 43 percent agreed (Figure 5). In 2012, just 34 percent of Democrats agreed with this idea, with two-thirds saying that the United States was the greatest country in the world.

Figure 5: **American Exceptionalism**

Some people say the United States has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world. Others say that every country is unique, and the United States is no greater than other nations. Which view is closer to your own? (% greatest country in the world)  
 n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

SIDEBAR **A NOTE ABOUT INDEPENDENTS**

Independents account for about a third of American adults in this survey sample (34% overall), but half of this third say they lean toward one of the parties (9% Democrat, 8% Republican). These proportions have been fairly consistent over the past 10 years, though a greater percentage of independents leaned toward either the Democratic or Republican party prior to that.

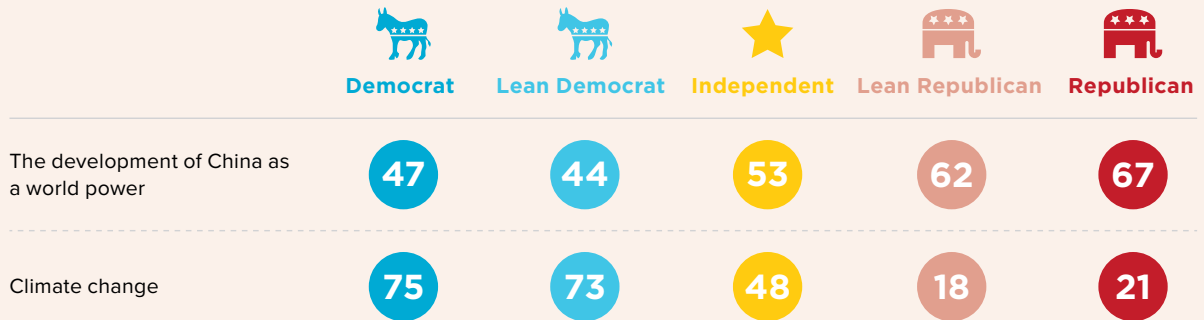
As might be expected, those leaning toward the Democratic party resemble Democrats in their views on foreign policy, while those leaning toward the Republican party resemble GOP supporters. The remaining 17 percent are “pure” independents—those who are less likely to be registered to vote, less likely to have voted in 2016, and most inclined to say the United States should stay out of world affairs.

Rather than leaning one way or the other, the views of pure independents tend to fall in between the two traditional party perspectives (see figure below).

For example, the opinions of independents who lean toward Democrats resemble those of outright Democrat supporters on the threat posed by the rise of China, while independents who lean toward Republicans have opinions that resemble those of outright Republicans, with non-leaning independents landing in the middle. Similarly, on climate change, the leaners’ perception of a critical threat falls very close to those of Democrats and Republicans. Slightly less than half of pure independents view climate change as a critical threat, placing them between the two poles.

Figure: **Threats according to independents and leaning partisans**

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)  
n varies



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***Working cooperatively with other nations that share our values and goals does not make the United States a chump. It makes us more secure and more successful. We amplify our own strength, extend our presence around the globe, and magnify our impact while sharing global responsibilities with willing partners.***

— Joseph R. Biden Jr.<sup>11</sup>

### Internationalist Approach to Foreign Policy

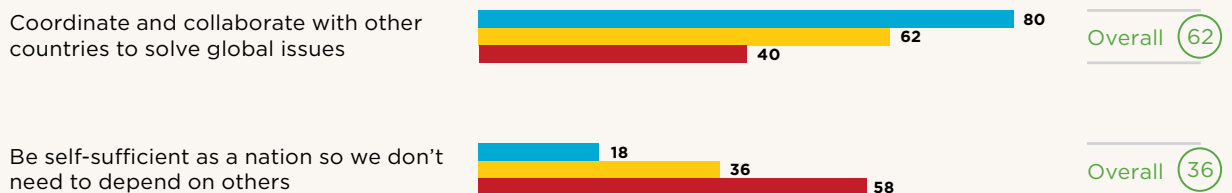
In the same way that Democrats and Republicans weigh domestic and international threats differently, they also diverge in their beliefs about how the United States should handle these challenges, the tools that Washington should use when crafting foreign policy, and how to engage with allies and rivals alike. Democrats believe that addressing these threats requires greater cooperation with the international community and a multilateral approach to global issues. In contrast, Republicans are more likely to opt for self-sufficiency and independence from international institutions and foreign entanglements.

Democrats' belief in greater international cooperation and multilateralism has been reinforced by the COVID-19 experience. Most say the coronavirus outbreak has made it clear that it is more important for the United States to collaborate with other countries to solve global issues than to be self-sufficient (80%). Just 18 percent say that the outbreak should spur more self-sufficiency and reduced reliance on other nations (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Lessons from the Coronavirus Pandemic**

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? The coronavirus outbreak has made it clear that it is more important for the United States to: (%)  
n = 2,111

■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican



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**Countries can no longer stand alone. The security of other countries strengthens us, and vice versa.**

— 2020 Chicago Council Survey respondent

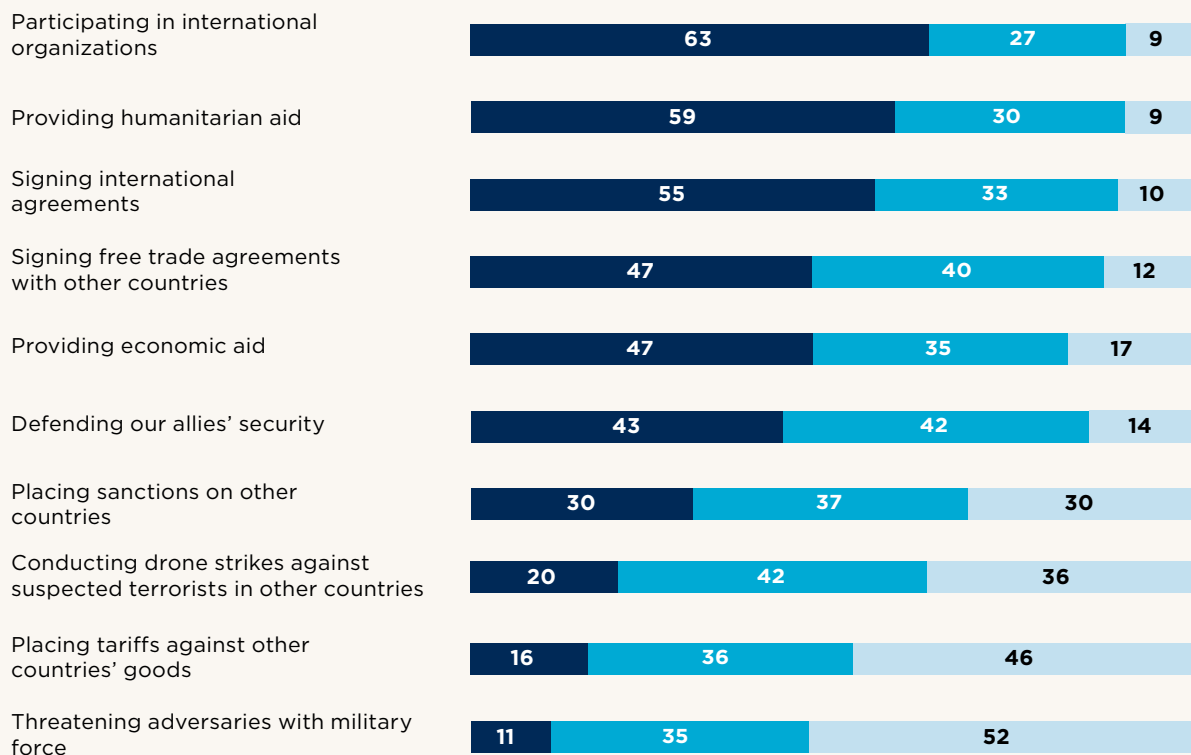
In turn, majorities of Democrats say the United States should participate more in international organizations (63%) and international agreements (55%) and believe it should provide humanitarian aid (59%) and economic aid (47%) to other countries (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Democrats' Approaches to Foreign Policy**

The United States uses different foreign policy approaches to achieve its foreign policy goals. Do you think the United States should use the following foreign policy approaches more than it does now, less than it does now, or the same as it does now? (%)

n = 702

■ More than now ■ Same as now ■ Less than now



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2020 Chicago Council Survey

Democrats also favor increasing the profile of international organizations in helping to solve world problems. Majorities of Democrats say the World Health Organization (71%), the United Nations (68%), and the World Trade Organization (53%) should be more involved in addressing the world's problems (see Figure 11 on page 28). For Democrats, participation in the United Nations is not only for symbolic value. A vast majority (84%) say the United States should be more willing to make decisions within the United Nations, even in the case of pursuing a policy that is not its first choice.

Democratic supporters rate the maintenance of existing alliances as the most effective tool to achieve US foreign policy goals (60% of respondents cite it as very effective; see Appendix Figure 2). Democratic backing for the transatlantic alliance is steadfast: a large majority (85%) want to maintain (31%) or increase (54%) the US commitment to NATO, and more than half (56%) favor using US troops if Russia invades a NATO ally, such as Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia. At the same time, nearly a third of Democrats approve of the recent US decision to reduce the US military presence in Germany (29%), and more than a third would support even further cuts or complete withdrawal (36%; see Appendix Figure 5).

On China, however, Democrats are prepared to take a softer approach. While both Democrats and Republicans view China as a rival of the United States, six in 10 Democrats (60%) continue to say that the United States should undertake friendly cooperation and engagement with China. A majority of Democrats also oppose restricting the exchange of scientific research (57%) or limiting the number of students from China studying in the United States (64%) (see sidebar “Party Supporters Are Not Completely Split on China” on page 30).

Democrats also want to cut back on some foreign policy approaches favored by Republicans. Approximately half of Democrats say the United States should threaten adversaries with military force less often (52%), cut back on tariffs against other countries' goods (46%), cut the defense budget (43%), and cut federal spending on immigration enforcement (49%; see sidebar “Partisan Spending Priorities” on pages 23–25).

### Democrats Believe Globalized Production Is Better for the United States

The Democrats' internationalist orientation is also reflected in their attitudes toward trade. They support the globalized production of goods and using free trade agreements more often as a diplomatic tool. And they disapprove of the use of tariffs against other countries.

Three-quarters of Democrats continue to say that globalization is mostly good for the United States (75%), consistent with views going back to 2014 (see Appendix Figure 3). In line with their high approval for an interconnected economy, Democrats are more comfortable with the production of goods in several countries than manufacturing all goods solely within the United States. In a question designed to tap into attitudes about the best way to organize supply chains, seven in 10 Democrats (70%) prefer that production be spread across many different countries, implying a willingness to rely on other countries if shortages were to arise (Figure 8). Only 28 percent say that the United States should produce and keep goods within the country, even if that might result in higher prices.

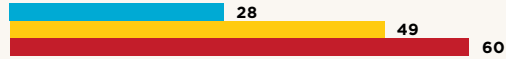
## Figure 8: Production of Goods

Right now different countries produce different goods, resulting in lower costs for consumers. Which one of the following two approaches would be better for the United States? (%)

n = 1,049

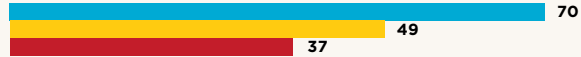
■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican

The United States produces critical goods here and does not buy or sell critical goods overseas, ensuring our own supply of goods, even if this means higher prices



Overall (44)

Countries agree to coordinate the production of critical goods globally, keeping prices low, even if this means relying on other countries' production if shortages arise



Overall (53)

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Moreover, a large majority of Democrats (75%) say that many countries should produce various goods to ensure that a crisis or disaster does not hurt the supply of goods around the world. Just 24 percent say that each country should make all the goods it needs (Figure 9).

## Figure 9: Supply Chains during Crisis

To ensure that a crisis or disaster in one place does not hurt the supply of goods around the world, which situation is better? (%)

n = 1,062

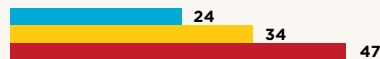
■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican

Many different countries around the world produce various goods



Overall (64)

Individual countries make all the goods they need themselves



Overall (34)

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Reflecting their support for international agreements generally, a plurality of Democrats believe that the country should advance American interests by pursuing more free trade agreements with other countries (47%). A plurality also favors reducing the use of tariffs against other countries' goods (46%)—aligning with their opposition to increasing US tariffs on Chinese imports (56%; see Figure 7 on page 20).

### Summary

Democrats view multilateralism as fundamental to American efforts to confront the most difficult challenges facing the nation. They also value international organizations and agreements as important elements of diplomacy, and they think the United States should continue to peacefully cooperate with China, rather than pursue a containment policy. Finally, they see trade and globalization holding clear benefits for the United States.<sup>12</sup>

## SIDEBAR **PARTISAN SPENDING PRIORITIES**

Dealing with the problems the United States faces doesn't stop with foreign policies. Domestic spending is also top of mind heading into the 2020 election.

Democrats' spending priorities are focused on domestic concerns, with large majorities wanting to expand spending on healthcare (89%), education (85%), Social Security (69%), and improving public infrastructure (69%). Few want to expand defense spending, and a plurality (43%) favors cuts. A plurality of Democrats also support cuts to federal spending on immigration enforcement (49%), as well as federal assistance to state and local police and law enforcement (40%; see Figure 1 on page 24).

Republican spending priorities also have a domestic tack, and there is some overlap with Democrats' priorities: majorities of Republicans want to expand federal spending on infrastructure (62%) and education (57%), and pluralities want to expand spending on healthcare (46%) and Social Security (48%).

Beyond that, however, there is less agreement. Majorities of Republicans want to increase spending on immigration enforcement (64%) and federal assistance to state and local police (50%), and four in 10 want to expand defense spending, all areas in which Democrats are more likely to favor spending cuts. These areas of spending align with Republican

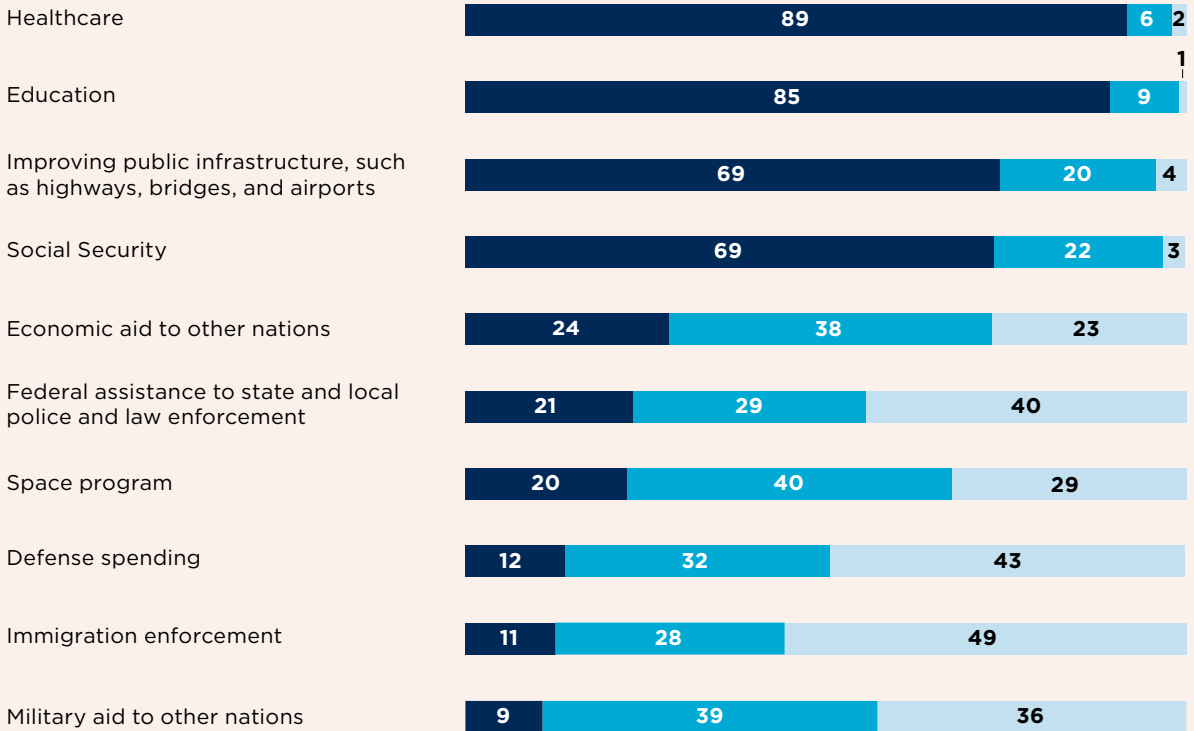
SIDEBAR **PARTISAN SPENDING PRIORITIES (CONT'D)**

Figure 1: **Democrats on Federal Programs**

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. (%)

n = 702

■ Expanded ■ Kept about the same ■ Cut back



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2020 Chicago Council Survey

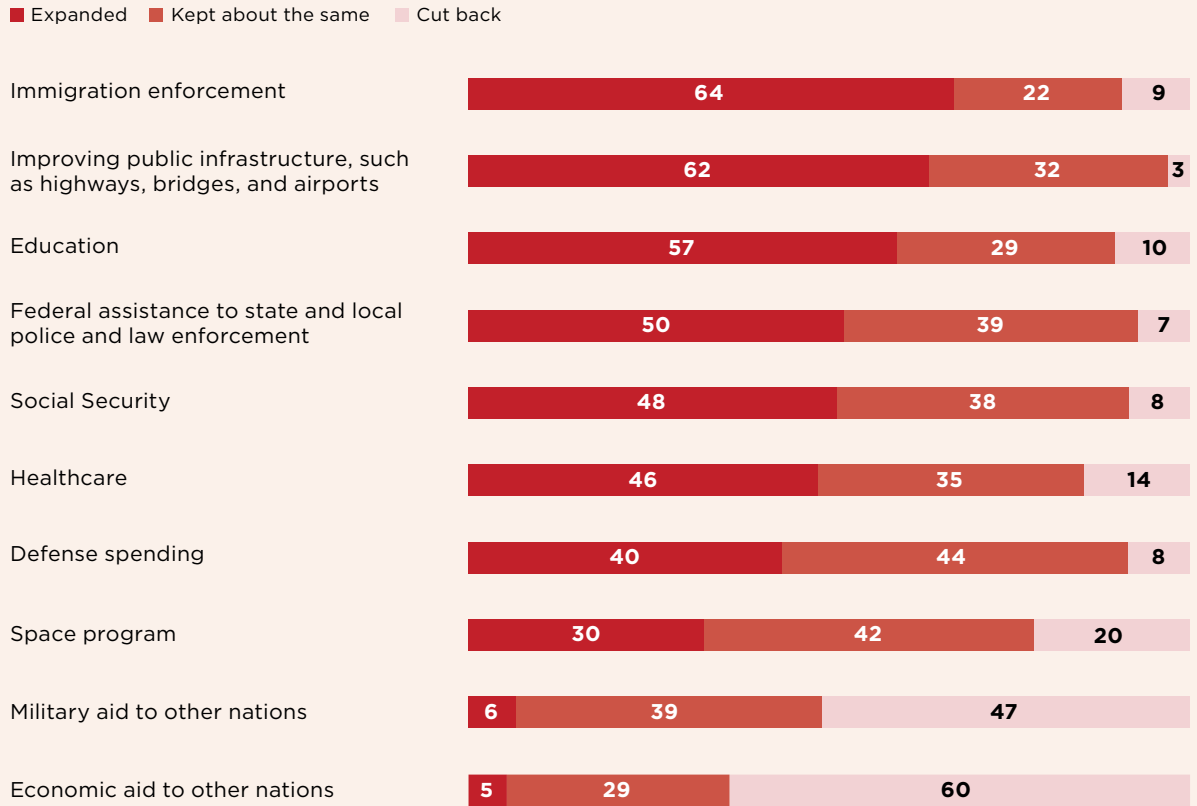
preferences for a more muscular approach to foreign policy, which applies to their views on domestic unrest as well (see Figure 2 on page 25). Majorities of Republicans favor the use of US troops to suppress riots, looting, and vandalism in the

United States (83%) as well as to suppress protests in the United States (59%). By contrast, majorities of Democrats oppose the domestic use of US military forces to suppress either riots (60%) or protests (81%).

SIDEBAR **PARTISAN SPENDING PRIORITIES (CONT'D)**

Figure 2: **Republicans on Federal Programs**

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. (%)  
n = 659



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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**Republicans See Threats Originating Externally**

While Democrats worry most about global and domestic challenges, Republicans tend to see the most urgent threats facing the country as coming from outside national borders. They view the development of China as a world power as the most serious threat facing the United States (67%, up 13 percentage points from 2019—a new high), followed by international terrorism (62%). While a majority of Democrats (51%) also cite international terrorism as a critical threat, it is not in their top 10 (see Figure 4 on page 16).

***Wise leaders always put the good of their own people and their own country first. The future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots. The future belongs to sovereign and independent nations who protect their citizens, respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique.***

— Donald J. Trump<sup>13</sup>

Six in 10 Republicans (61%) consider large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the country to be a critical threat to the United States, a long-standing partisan concern. A majority of Republicans say they are satisfied with government attention to this issue (56%), and two-thirds (64%) favor increasing federal spending on immigration enforcement (see sidebar “Partisan Spending Priorities” on pages 23–25).

Republicans do not share Democrats’ criticisms of the United States’ internal issues. Less than a quarter of Republicans say that economic inequality (24%) or racial inequality (23%) is a critical threat. And while about half of Republicans consider COVID-19 a critical threat (48%), a solid majority (63%) say the government response has been effective.

Domestic violent extremism is among top threats for both Democrats (58%) and Republicans (60%). However, these similar views belie the fact that Republicans and Democrats likely hold very different interpretations of the groups that might carry out acts associated with domestic violent extremism. Democrats are likely to consider such acts emanating from white supremacists; Republicans, on the other hand, likely have in mind groups such as anti-fascist protest movements or the looters taking advantage of protests around the country. On a related note, half of Republicans (50%) favor increasing federal spending to state and local police and law enforcement.

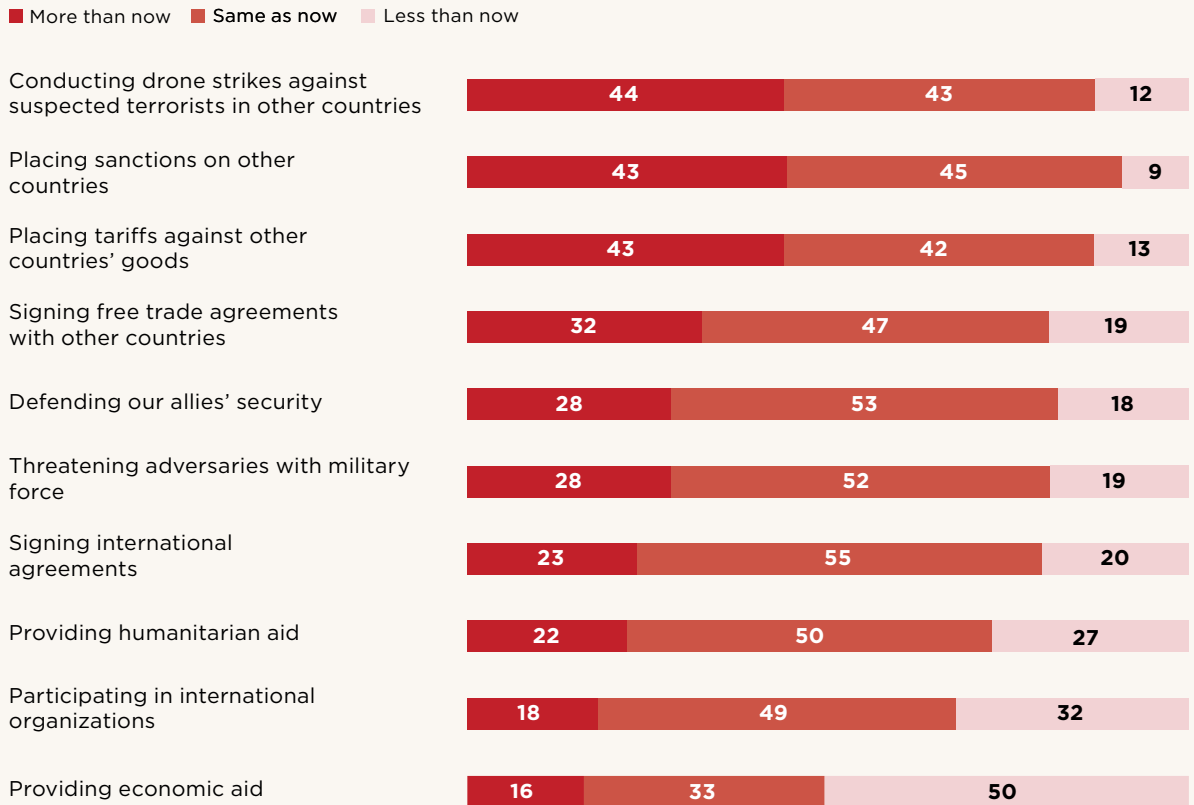
#### **A Nationalist Approach to Foreign Policy**

A large majority of Republicans say that the United States is the greatest country in the world (80%; see Figure 5 on page 17). This stance on American exceptionalism might lead them to believe that the United States does not need any help from other countries. A majority of Republicans say that the pandemic should motivate self-sufficiency to avoid national dependence on others (58%; see Figure 6 on page 19). To this point, 48 percent of Republicans agree that “the United States is rich and powerful enough to go it alone, without getting involved in the problems of the rest of the world.”

Republicans favor a nationalist foreign policy that hinges on self-reliance and autonomy and promotes the use of more direct, forceful means to achieve US goals (see Figure 10 on page 27). These means include maintaining superior military power, economic pressure, independence in decision making, and a more confrontational approach toward China (see sidebar “Party Supporters Are Not Completely Split on China” on page 30).

## Figure 10: **Republicans' Approaches to Foreign Policy**

The United States uses different foreign policy approaches to achieve its foreign policy goals. Do you think the United States should use the following foreign policy approaches more than it does now, less than it does now, or the same as it does now? (%)  
n = 659



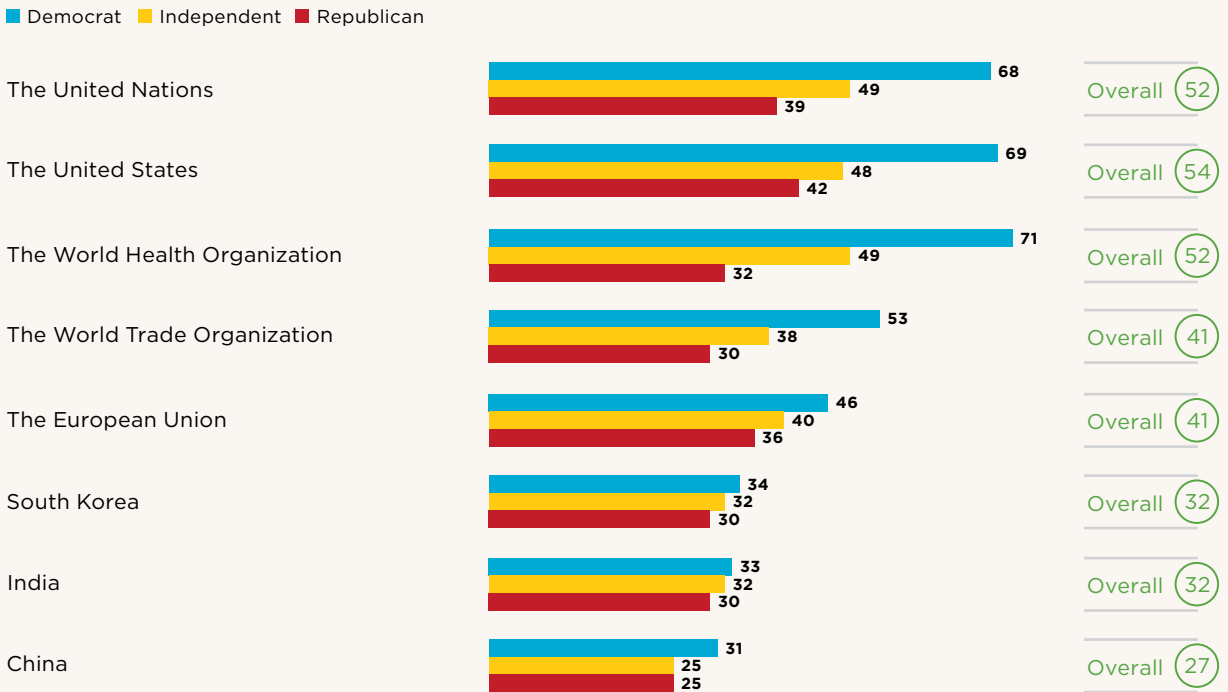
Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2020 Chicago Council Survey

Nearly half of Republicans are satisfied with current US involvement in international organizations (49%), and a third (32%) believe the United States should decrease its current participation (Figure 11). There is no majority support among Republicans for any international organization to be more involved in addressing the world's problems. A plurality says the World Health Organization should be less involved (39%) in addressing the world's problems, and Republicans are evenly split on the World Trade Organization, with 30 percent saying it should be more involved and 30 percent saying it should be less involved. Similar to Democrats, Republicans say that maintaining existing alliances is a very effective foreign policy tool (56% Republicans, 60% Democrats; see Appendix Figure 2). But there are large partisan differences on the degree to which partisans are committed to NATO. Six in 10 (60%) Republicans favor maintaining or increasing the US commitment—25 percentage points below Democratic support (85%). The level of support Republicans have for NATO has decreased 11 points

**Figure 11: Involvement in Addressing World Problems**

Should the following countries and international organizations be more involved, less involved, or as involved as they are now in addressing the world's problems? (% more involved)  
 n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

since 2019 and is the lowest since the question was first asked in 1974 (see Appendix Figure 4). Partisan differences are similar when it comes to using US troops to defend a NATO ally, such as Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia, from Russian invasion. Today, fewer than half of Republicans support defending their NATO ally (47%), a decrease of nine points over the past year. A majority of Republicans approve of the recent US decision to reduce the US military presence in Germany (51%), and about a third would support even further cuts (33%; see Appendix Figure 5).

Overall, Republicans favor more forceful measures to achieve US foreign policy goals. Since 1998, large majorities of Republicans have consistently said that maintaining superior military power worldwide is a very important goal for US foreign policy (70% in 2018).<sup>14</sup> In a separate question, majorities also think that maintaining US military superiority worldwide (80%) and conducting drone strikes against suspected terrorists in other countries (63%) are very effective ways to achieve US foreign policy goals (see Appendix Figure 2). In terms of the use of these foreign policy approaches, Republicans are most likely to say the United States should increase the use of drone strikes against terrorists (44%), sanctions

against other countries (43%), and tariffs against other countries' goods (43%). To support those policies, Republicans want to either maintain (44%) or expand (40%) defense spending.

A majority of Republicans also prefer a more confrontational approach with China (see sidebar "Party Supporters Are Not Completely Split on China" on page 30). Two-thirds (64%) say that the United States should actively seek to limit China's power and influence in the world (versus 33% who prefer engagement with Beijing). Furthermore, Republicans support scaling back people-to-people exchanges, with two-thirds (65%) in favor of limiting the number of students from China in the United States. That also extends to restricting the exchange of scientific research between the two countries (66% support among Republicans). Finally, a large majority of Republicans support increasing tariffs on products imported from China (76%) and significantly reducing trade between the United States and China, even if this leads to greater costs for American consumers (70%).

### Republicans Prefer to Produce Goods at Home

The aforementioned results suggest that Republicans may be more attuned to the vulnerabilities presented by globalization, especially given the economic shocks from the worldwide pandemic. A majority continue to say that globalization is mostly good for the United States (55%), consistent with past readings, though this is 20 percentage points lower than support among Democrats. And Republicans favor a made-in-America approach: a majority of Republicans think that in order to ensure the domestic supply of critical goods, the United States should produce critical goods domestically and not buy or sell critical goods overseas (60%). Four in 10 say that instead, production should be coordinated globally (37%; see Figure 8 on page 22).

Republicans are more split on the best path to take in a crisis or a disaster, however. About half of Republican supporters (47%) say it is best if individual countries produce all the goods they need internally, while the other half (51%) say it is best if many countries produce goods (see Figure 9 on page 22).

Republicans also view the use of economic statecraft differently than Democrats do. While a plurality of Democrats favor using free trade agreements (FTAs) more often, a majority of Republicans think the current level of trade agreements is sufficient (47% same as now, 32% think the United States should use FTAs more often).

A plurality of Republicans are also more likely to say that the United States should use tariffs against other countries' goods more than it does now (43%), compared with just 16 percent of Democrats. The current tariffs against Chinese goods are a live case: 76 percent of Republicans support increasing tariffs on Chinese imports.

### Summary

Republicans believe the United States is an exceptional country and want to protect its independence from the restraints of international organizations and treaties. They see forceful approaches as the most potent means of dealing with threats to the nation, whether that threat be the influence of China, terrorism, or immigration.

## PARTY SUPPORTERS ARE NOT COMPLETELY SPLIT ON CHINA

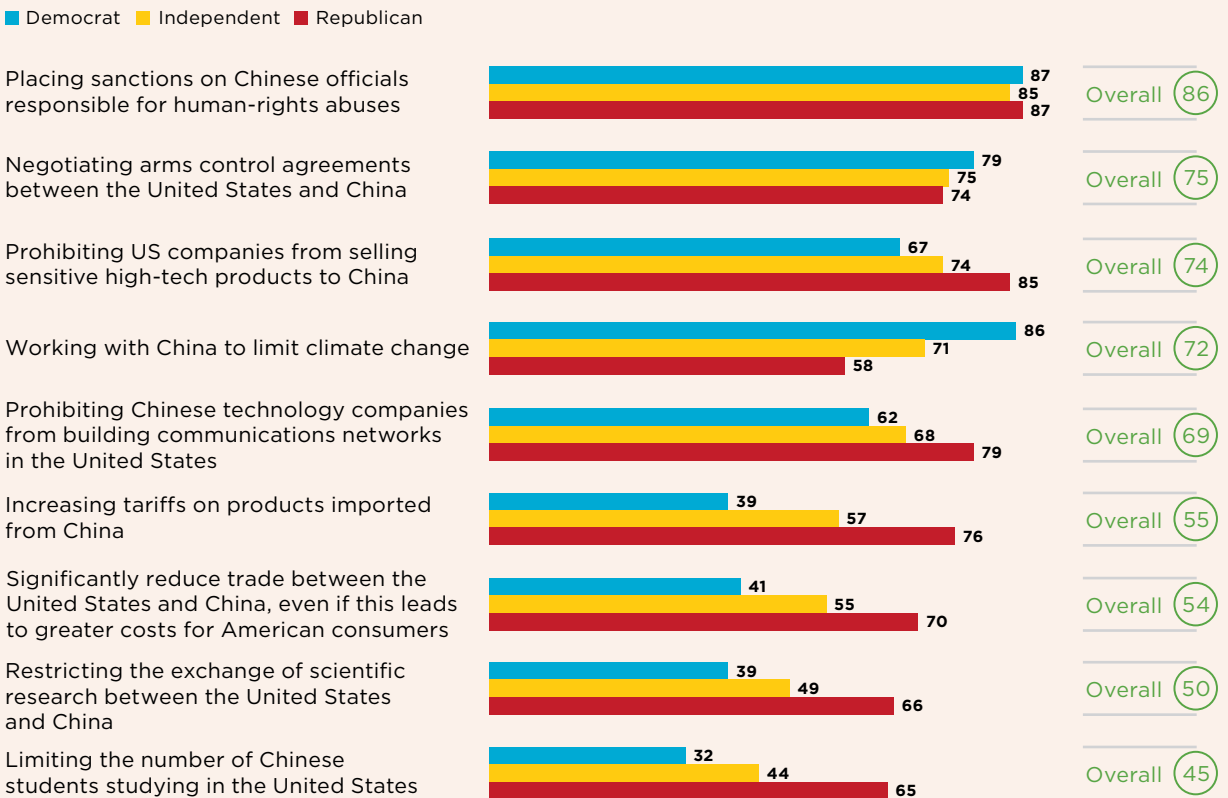
In dealing with China, majorities across party lines favor a certain range of both cooperative and forceful measures (see figure below). On the cooperative side, majorities of Democrats and Republicans alike support bilateral negotiations on arms control agreements and working with China to limit climate change. And on the forceful side, majorities favor sanctioning Chinese officials responsible for human-rights abuses, prohibiting

the sale of sensitive high-tech products to China, and prohibiting Chinese technology firms from building communication networks in the United States. Moreover, large majorities of Republicans (80%), Democrats (77%), and independents (77%) all agree on the priority for US policy in Asia: building up strong relations with traditional allies, rather than seeking a new partnership with China.

***In order to keep China's expansionist policy's in check, its important to maintain good relationships with pro-democracy nations.***  
 — 2020 Chicago Council Survey respondent

Figure: **US Policy toward China**

Would you support or oppose the following US policies toward China? (% support)  
 n varies (1,373 to 1,438)



2020 Chicago Council Survey



# CONCLUSION

This November, Americans will head to the polls—or mail in their ballots—for one of the most critical elections in US history. Just as the two parties present differing agendas for the country, partisans within the public hold divergent views on foreign policy priorities and how to address them.

Democrats want the country to pursue greater coordination with the international community through US alliances and global institutions, addressing nontraditional threats such as pandemics and climate change and sharing both the burdens and benefits of globalization. Republicans prefer that the United States undertake actions that would move the country toward being more self-sufficient, focusing on more traditional security threats, and using more muscular tools to achieve greater gains for the United States.

The differences between Democrats and Republicans in policy priorities and preferences have existed long before today. However, the ongoing domestic unrest in the United States, coupled with the coronavirus pandemic—a global health crisis on a scale not seen since the influenza of 1918—has brought those differences to the front of the debate. And while foreign policy is not normally at the top of the electoral agenda, this year, it is inextricably linked to the current state of affairs in the United States and the rest of the world. America’s handling of the pandemic has caused many Americans—and many more around the world—to question whether the United States is still capable of confronting significant global challenges.

The current presidential administration’s approach to alliances, trade, and diplomacy has been a sharp break with the past and further raises the stakes for the 2020 election. The public’s electoral choices will determine whether the United States will work within international institutions in partnership with other countries or move toward a greater degree of self-reliance and unilateralism. While the election will affect the course of domestic political debates within the country, it will also shape the role, policies, and reputation of the United States in the world.

# APPENDIX

## SIDEBAR PARTY COMPOSITION

The proportion of Americans supporting either of the two political parties has remained relatively consistent over the past 20 years, with about a third each self-describing as Democratic, Republican, or independent. But the demographic composition of self-identified party supporters has changed greatly since the first Chicago Council Survey, and these shifts seem to have had an effect on collective partisan attitudes.

In 1974, a large majority of Democrats identified themselves as white (84%), but there has been a significant increase in the diversity in Democratic support over the past 46 years (see Appendix Figure 6). Today, fewer than half of self-described Democrats are white (45%), while a nearly equal number identify as Black (22%) or Hispanic (22%). At the same time, supporters of the Democratic party are on average younger than either Republicans or independents. About half of Democrats are below the age of 45 (49%), compared with 39 percent of Republicans and 49 percent of independents (see Appendix Figure 7). And, in terms of education, Democratic supporters are more likely to have either completed some college (27%) or have a bachelor's degree or higher (37%; see About the Survey Sample on page 43).

The demographic characteristics of self-described Republican supporters, however, have not experienced nearly as much diversification since 1974. In 2020, 81 percent of Republican supporters report that they are white, while 10 percent are Black, and just 2 percent are Hispanic. By comparison, 95 percent of Republicans in 1974 were white, 3 percent were Hispanic, and 1 percent were Black.

Age is another differentiator (see Appendix Figure 7). A majority of Republicans are 45 or older (60%)—a large change from just 10 years ago (when 50% of Republicans were 45 or older) and an even

larger change from 1986 (when 57% were younger than 45). Levels of education have also changed among Republican party supporters: about a third currently report that their highest level of education is a high school diploma (33%) while another third have a bachelor's degree or higher (30%). Over the past decade, the proportion of Republicans who have completed at least some college has stayed relatively steady, while the proportion whose highest level of education is high school has increased.

While Democrats and Republicans have distinct beliefs that define their parties, the level of diversity and average age undoubtedly have an impact on the predominant views of the party. For example, nonwhite Americans are much more likely than white Americans to say that racial inequality (66% nonwhite, 42% white) or economic inequality (55% nonwhite, 37% white) is a critical threat to the United States. Nonwhite Americans are more likely to view COVID-19 or climate change as a critical threat (78% and 57%, respectively) than white people (61% and 46%). And 59 percent of white Americans say the United States is the greatest country in the world compared with 47 percent of nonwhite Americans (53 percent of nonwhites say instead that the United States is no greater than other countries).

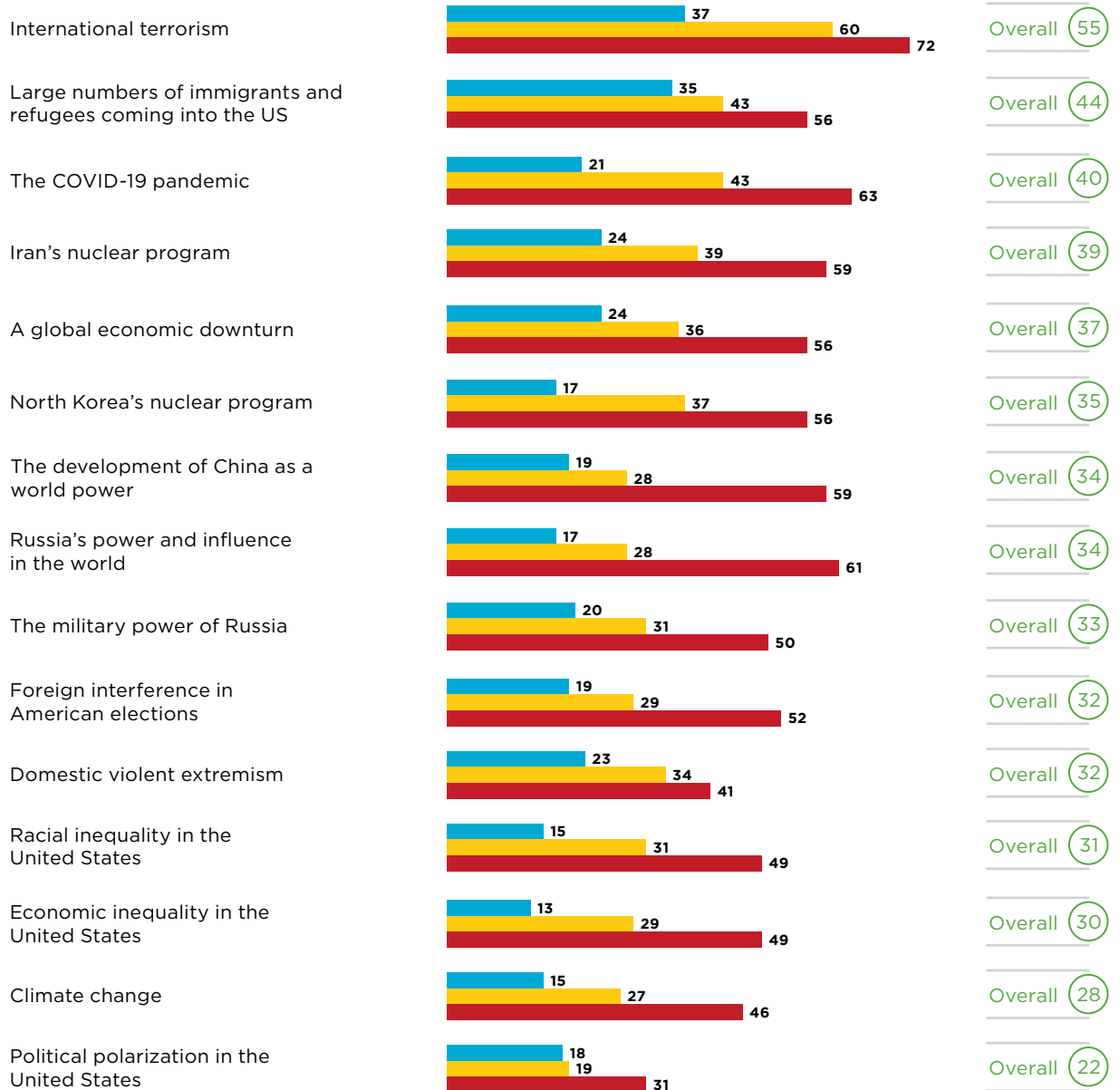
Similarly, those who are 45 or older are more likely than those who are younger than 45 to say that immigrants coming into the United States (51% who are 45 or older versus 35% who are younger than 45) or the development of China as a world power (61% 45 or older, 48% younger than 45) is a critical threat. On whether the United States is the greatest country, 64 percent of Americans over 45 years of age say that it is the greatest, compared with 43 percent of those younger than 45 (57% of younger Americans say the United States is no greater than other nations).

## Appendix Figure 1: US Effectiveness in Dealing with Threats

How effective do you think the US government is in dealing with the following threats? (% very + somewhat effective)

n varies

■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican



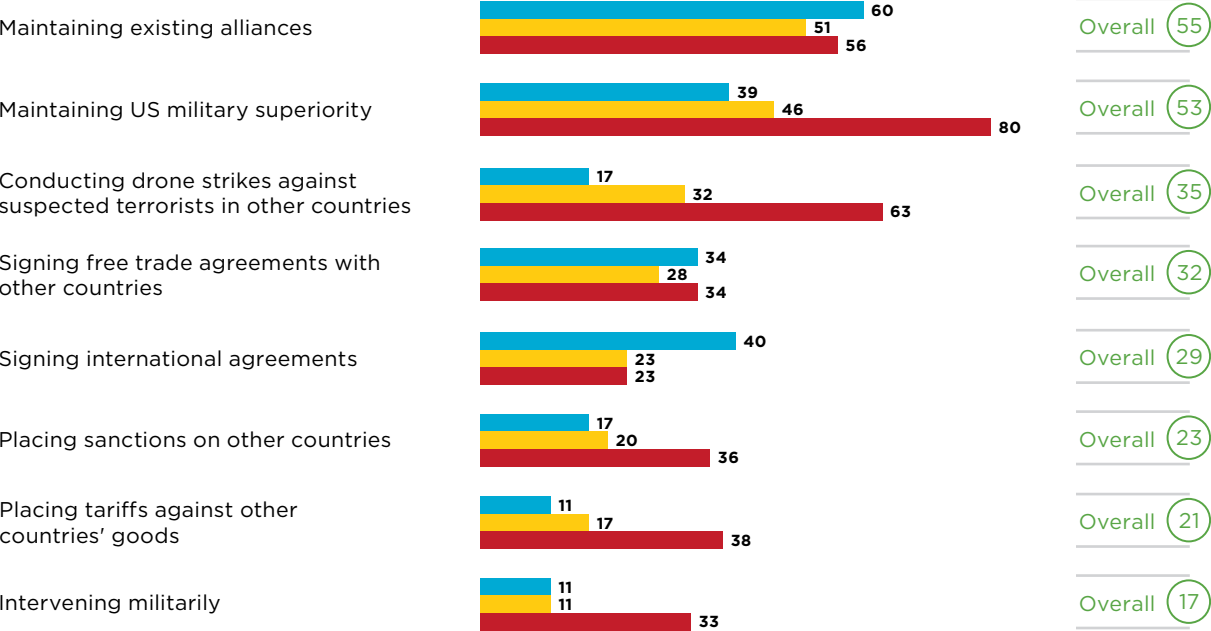
2020 Chicago Council Survey

## Appendix Figure 2: Efficacy of US Foreign Policy Tools

And how effective do you think each of the following approaches is to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States—very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not effective at all? (% very effective)

n = 1,019

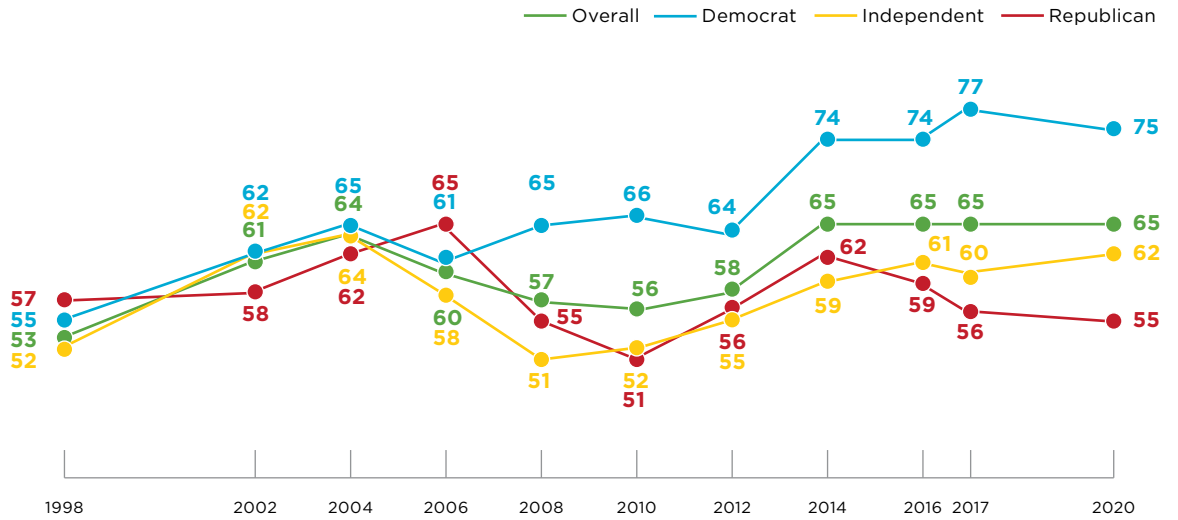
■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican



January 2020 Chicago Council Survey

### Appendix Figure 3: Effects of Globalization

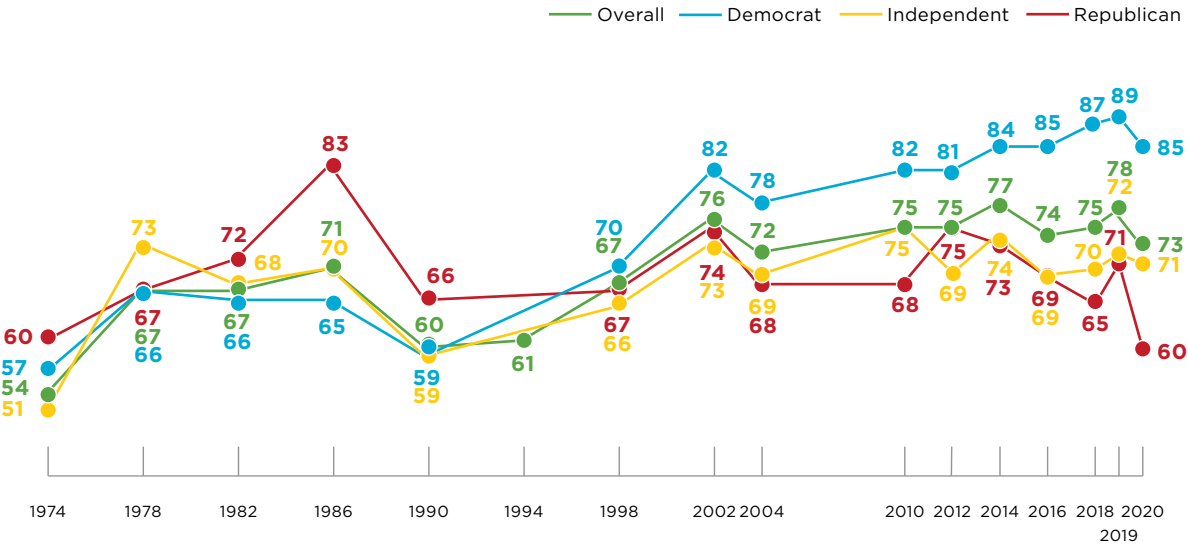
Turning to something else, do you believe that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for the United States? (% mostly good)  
 n = 2,111



2020 Chicago Council Survey

### Appendix Figure 4: Commitment to NATO

Do you feel we should increase our commitment to NATO, keep our commitment what it is now, decrease our commitment to NATO, or withdraw from NATO entirely? (% increase + keep same)  
 n = 2,111

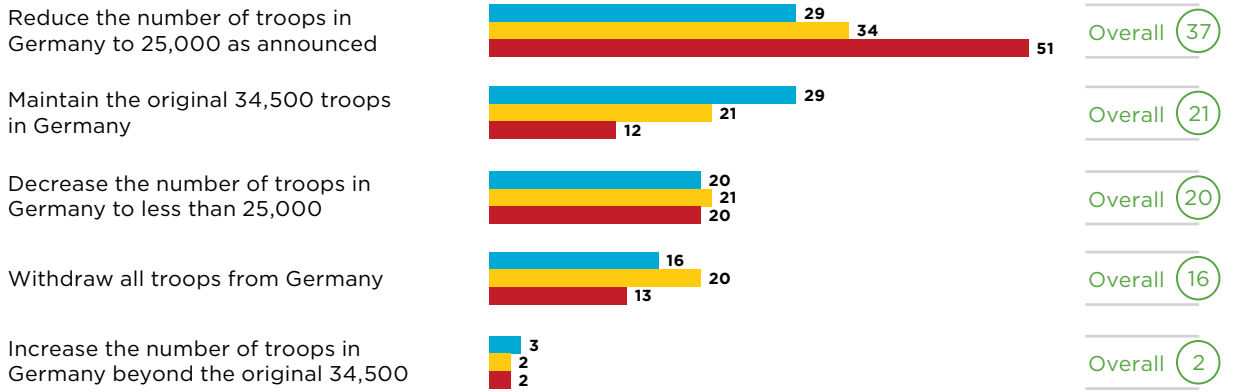


2020 Chicago Council Survey

## Appendix Figure 5: US Troop Levels in Germany

The United States recently announced it would reduce the US military presence in Germany from 34,500 to 25,000 US troops. In your view, the United States should: (%)  
n = 2,111

■ Democrat ■ Independent ■ Republican



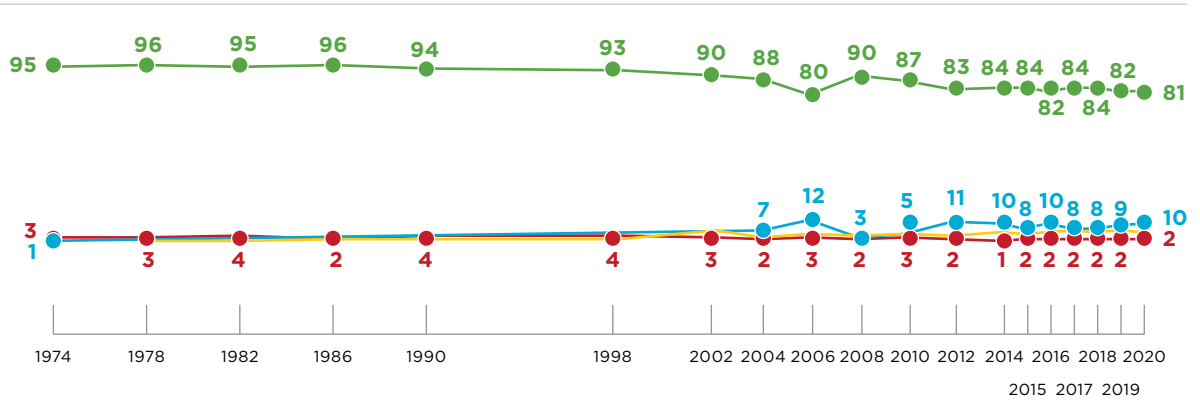
2020 Chicago Council Survey

## Appendix Figure 6: Race and Party Affiliation

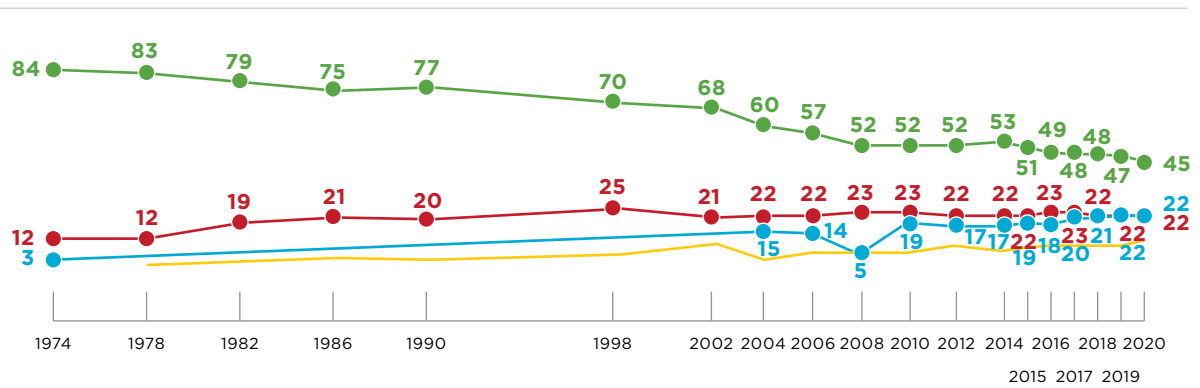
n = 2,111

— White — Black — Hispanic (Descent) — Other

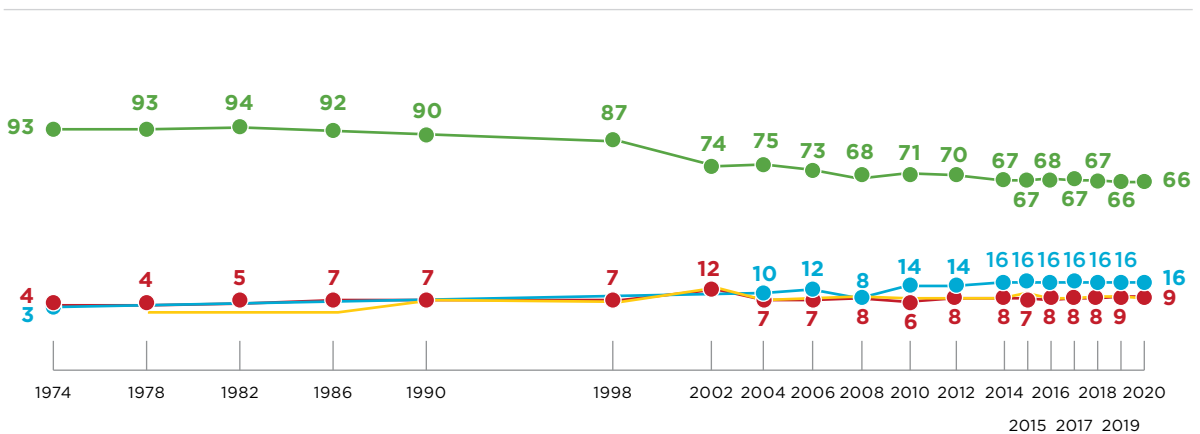
### Republicans



### Democrats



### Independents



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2020 Chicago Council Survey

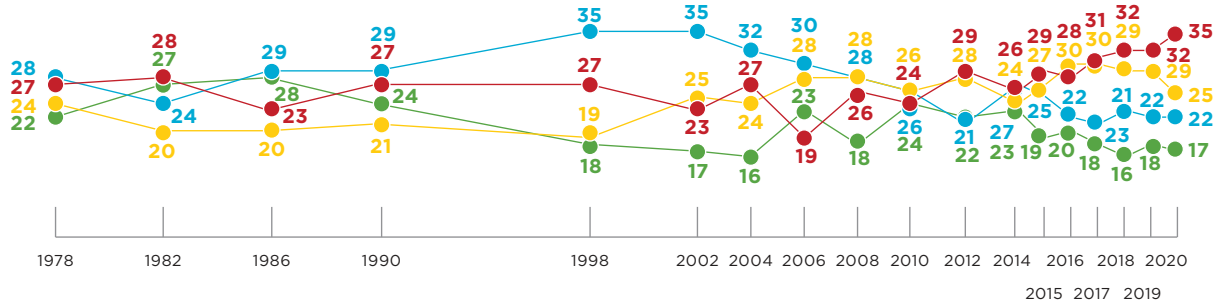


## Appendix Figure 7: American Politics and Age

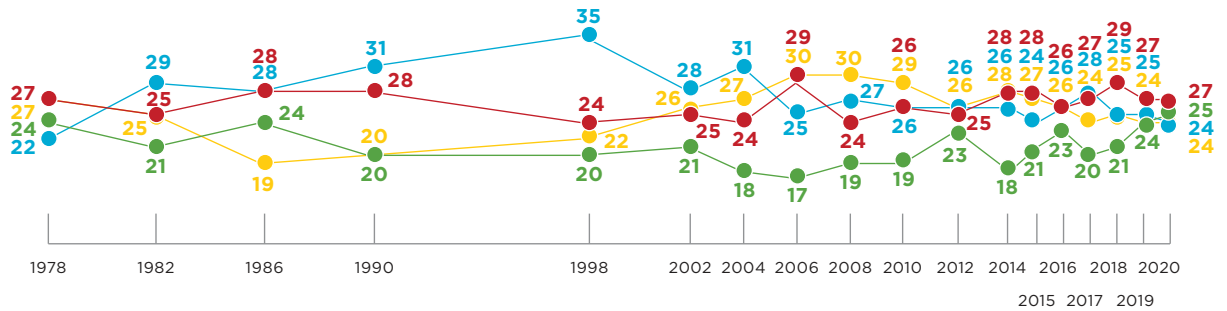
n = 2,111

18-29 30-44 45-59 60+

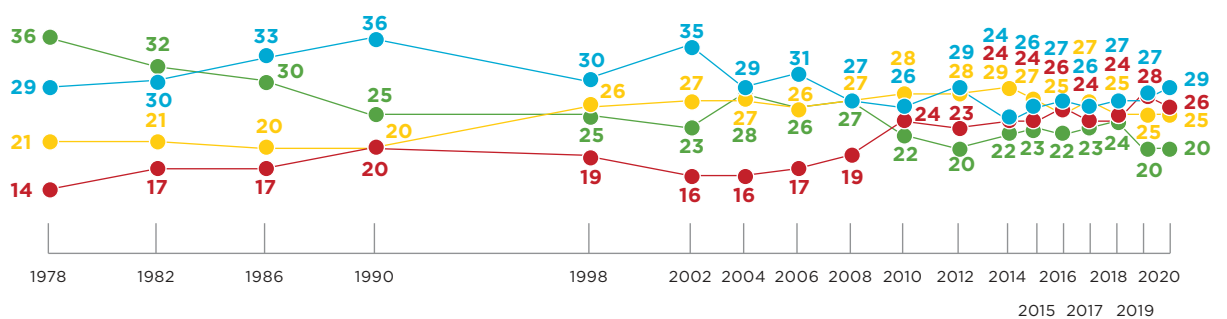
### Republicans



### Democrats



### Independents



Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2020 Chicago Council Survey

# METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the results of a survey commissioned by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The 2020 Chicago Council Survey, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy, is the latest in a series of wide-ranging surveys on American attitudes toward US foreign policy. The 2020 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family and the Korea Foundation.

The survey was conducted from July 2 to July 19, 2020, among a representative national sample of 2,111 adults. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 2.3$  percentage points, including a design effect of 1.2056. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answers to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?"

The survey was conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs, a polling, social science, and market research firm in Palo Alto, California, using a randomly selected sample of its large-scale nationwide research panel, KnowledgePanel® (KP). KnowledgePanel is the first and largest online research panel that is representative of the entire US population. Panel members are randomly recruited through probability-based sampling, and households are provided with access to the internet and hardware if needed.

Ipsos recruits panel members using address-based sampling methods to ensure full coverage of all households in the nation. Once household members are recruited for the panel and assigned to a study sample, they are notified by email to take the survey, or panelists can visit their online member page (instead of being contacted by telephone or postal mail).

The survey was fielded to a total of 3,472 panel members, yielding a total of 2,208 completed surveys (a completion rate of 63.6%). The median survey length was 24 minutes. Of the 2,208 total completed surveys, 97 cases were excluded for quality-control reasons, leaving a final sample size of 2,111 respondents.

Respondents were excluded if they failed at least one of three key checks:

- Respondents who completed the survey in eight minutes or less
- Respondents who refused to answer half or more of the items in the survey
- Respondents who failed three or four of the following checks:
  - Completed the survey faster than eight minutes
  - Refused or skipped question Q3\_1, which was specifically designed to make sure respondents were paying attention ("In order to make sure that your browser is working correctly, please select number 4 from the list below")
  - Refused one or more full survey batteries that included five items or more (there were 13 such lists)
  - Respondents who gave the same exact answer ("straight-lined") to every item on one of four grid questions in the survey (Q5, Q7D, Q8A, or Q802)

In general, the specific survey samples represent an equal probability selection method (EPSEM) sample from the panel for general population surveys. The raw distribution of KP mirrors that of US adults fairly closely, barring occasional disparities that may emerge for certain subgroups due to differential attrition.

Additional measures are undertaken to ensure selection of general population samples from KP behave as EPSEM, starting by weighting the pool of active members to the geodemographic benchmarks secured from the latest March supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) along several dimensions. Using the resulting weights as measures of size, in the next step a PPS (probability proportional to size) procedure is used to select study-specific samples. It is the application of this PPS methodology with the imposed size measures that produces fully self-weighting samples from KP, for which each sample member can carry a design weight of unity. Moreover, in instances for which a study design requires any form of oversampling of certain subgroups, such departures from an EPSEM design are accounted for by adjusting the design weights in reference to the CPS benchmarks for the population of interest.

The geodemographic benchmarks used to weight the active panel members for computation of size measures include:

- Gender (male, female)
- Age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59, and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic ethnicity (white, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; other, non-Hispanic; two or more races, non-Hispanic; Hispanic)
- Education (less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor’s degree or higher)
- Census region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Household income (less than \$10,000, \$10,000–\$24,999, \$25,000–\$49,999, \$50,000–\$74,999, \$75,000–\$99,999, \$100,000–\$149,999, \$150,000 or more)
- Homeownership status (own, rent/other)
- Metropolitan area (yes, no)
- Hispanic origin (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, other, non-Hispanic)

Once the study sample has been selected, the survey administered, and all the survey data edited and made final, design weights are adjusted to account for any differential nonresponse that may have resulted during the field period. Depending on the specific target population for a given study, geodemographic distributions for the corresponding population are obtained from the CPS, the American Community Survey (ACS), or in certain instances from the weighted KP profile data. For this purpose, an iterative proportional fitting (raking) procedure is used to produce the final weights. In the final step, calculated weights are examined to identify and, if necessary, trim outliers at the extreme upper and lower tails of the weight distribution. The resulting weights are then scaled to aggregate to the total sample size of all eligible respondents.

For this study, the following benchmark distributions of US adults (18 and older) from the March 2019 Current Population Survey (CPS) Supplement Data were used for the raking adjustment of weights:

- Gender (male, female) by age (18–29, 30–44, 45–59, 60+)
- Race/Hispanic ethnicity (white, non-Hispanic; Black, non-Hispanic; other, non-Hispanic; two or more races, non-Hispanic; Hispanic)
- Census region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West) by metropolitan status (metro, non-metro)
- Education (less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor’s degree or higher)
- Household income (less than \$25,000, \$25,000–\$49,999, \$50,000–\$74,999, \$75,000–\$99,999, \$100,000–\$149,999, \$150,000 or more)

For more information about the sample and survey methodology, please consult the Ipsos Panel Book at [www.ipsos.com](http://www.ipsos.com).

For more information about the Chicago Council Survey, please contact Dina Smeltz, Senior Fellow for Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, at [dsmeltz@thechicagocouncil.org](mailto:dsmeltz@thechicagocouncil.org), or Craig Kafura, Assistant Director of Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, at [ckafura@thechicagocouncil.org](mailto:ckafura@thechicagocouncil.org).

# ABOUT THE SURVEY SAMPLE

Weighted	Democrat	Independent	Republican		Democrat	Independent	Republican
<b>% of 2020 sample</b> n = 2,111	36	34	29	<b>Ideology (%)</b>			
<b>Average age</b>	46	47	51	Conservative	9	25	73
<b>Racial composition (%)</b>				Moderate	34	52	23
White, non-Hispanic	45	66	81	Liberal	57	21	2
Black, non-Hispanic	22	9	2	<b>Age (%)</b>			
Hispanic	22	16	10	18-29	25	20	18
Other, non-Hispanic	11	8	6	30-44	24	29	22
<b>Gender (%)</b>				45-59	24	25	25
Female	58	46	50	60+	27	26	35
Male	42	54	50	<b>Education (%)</b>			
<b>Education (%)</b>				High school or less	37	38	42
High school or less	37	38	42	Some college/ associate's degree	27	28	28
Some college/ associate's degree	27	28	28	College graduates	37	34	30
College graduates	37	34	30				

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

2020 Chicago Council Survey

# ABOUT THE CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEY

The Chicago Council Survey, conducted every four years since 1974, biennially since 2002, and now annually, is a trusted and widely cited source of longitudinal data on American public opinion about a broad range of US foreign policy and international issues. With its combination of time series and comprehensive coverage, the Chicago Council Survey is a valuable resource to policymakers, academics, media, and the general public because of its unique ability to capture the sense of particular eras—post-Vietnam War, post-Cold War, post-9/11—and to define critical shifts in American public thinking. The Chicago Council Surveys are highly respected and widely used in policy circles and academic research both in the United States and abroad. Several scholarly works have drawn on Chicago Council Survey data, including *The Foreign Policy Gap* (Page, Bouton), *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Holsti), *Faces of Internationalism* (Wittkopf), and *The Rational Public* (Page and Shapiro). All previous Chicago Council Survey data sets are available to the public via the Roper Center and ICPSR, and the 2020 data will soon be available at [www.thechicagocouncil.org](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org).

In addition to the annual Chicago Council Survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council's polling has often expanded to international polling in East Asia as well as in Mexico and Russia. The Council has also reintroduced a leaders' survey as an important component of the 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 Chicago Council Surveys. Besides these comprehensive reports, the Chicago Council Survey team publishes and disseminates short opinion briefs on topical issues such as international trade, immigration, North Korea's nuclear program, and tensions with China, Iran, and Russia. These short reports can be found on the Council's website and on the Chicago Council Survey blog, [www.thechicagocouncil.org/RunningNumbers](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/RunningNumbers).

# ENDNOTES

- 1 Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” White House, September 24, 2019, [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov).
- 2 Joseph R. Biden Jr., “Why America Must Lead Again: Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, [foreignaffairs.com](https://www.foreignaffairs.com).
- 3 Eli Rosenberg, “U.S. Economy Added 1.8 Million Jobs in July as It Worked to Recover from the Coronavirus Pandemic” *Washington Post*, August 7, 2020, [washingtonpost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com).
- 4 Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, Craig Kafura, and Brendan Helm, “Rejecting Retreat: Results of the 2019 Chicago Council Survey,” Chicago Council on Global Affairs, September 9, 2019, [thechicagocouncil.org](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org).
- 5 International terrorism and domestic violent extremism are also viewed by a majority of Democrats as critical threats, but Democrats do not rate these as highly relative to other threats as Republicans do.
- 6 In July 2020, President Trump announced cuts to US troop levels in Germany, calling for a reduction of US troops stationed there from 34,500 to 25,000, a cut of 9,500. In late July, while this survey was still in the field, US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper adjusted the total of troops being withdrawn to 11,900 to hit the 25,000-troop target. For more, see Ryan Browne and Zachary Cohen, “US to Withdraw Nearly 12,000 Troops from Germany in Move That Will Cost Billions and Take Years,” *CNN*, July 29, 2020, [CNN.com](https://www.cnn.com).
- 7 Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, “Will the Coronavirus End Globalization as We Know It?,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 16, 2020, [foreignaffairs.com](https://www.foreignaffairs.com).
- 8 Richard N. Haas, “Opinion: How Nationalism Could Ruin the COVID-19 Vaccine,” *MarketWatch*, July 16, 2020, [marketwatch.com](https://www.marketwatch.com).
- 9 Hannah Hartig, “75% of Americans Say It’s Likely That Russia or Other Governments Will Try to Influence 2020 Election,” *Pew Research Center*, August 18, 2020, [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org).
- 10 Amina Dunn, “Trump’s Approval Ratings So Far Are Unusually Stable—and Deeply Partisan,” *Pew Research Center*, August 24, 2020, [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org).
- 11 Biden, “Why America Must Lead Again.”
- 12 Previous Chicago Council Surveys have found Democrats much more likely than Republicans to endorse US participation in various international treaties. In 2018, for example, 83 percent of Democrats but only 46 percent of Republicans favored US participation in the Paris Agreement, and 82 percent of Democrats versus 53 percent of Republicans supported the US being part of the Iran nuclear agreement.
- 13 Trump, “Remarks by President Trump.”
- 14 For example, see *America Engaged: Results of the 2018 Chicago Council Survey* by Smeltz et al., or *America in the Age of Uncertainty: Results of the 2016 Chicago Council Survey* by Smeltz et al.

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**Additional reports based on surveys conducted by the Chicago Council are available at [www.thechicagocouncil.org](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org):**

“From an Urban-Suburban-Rural ‘Divide’ to Convergence?,” Alexander Hitch, Brendan Helm, Craig Kafura, August 12, 2020.

“Troop Withdrawal Likely to Undermine South Korean Public Support for Alliance with United States,” Karl Friedhoff, August 3, 2020.

“Majority of Iranians Oppose Development of Nuclear Weapons,” Dina Smeltz and Amir Farmanesh, March 31, 2020.

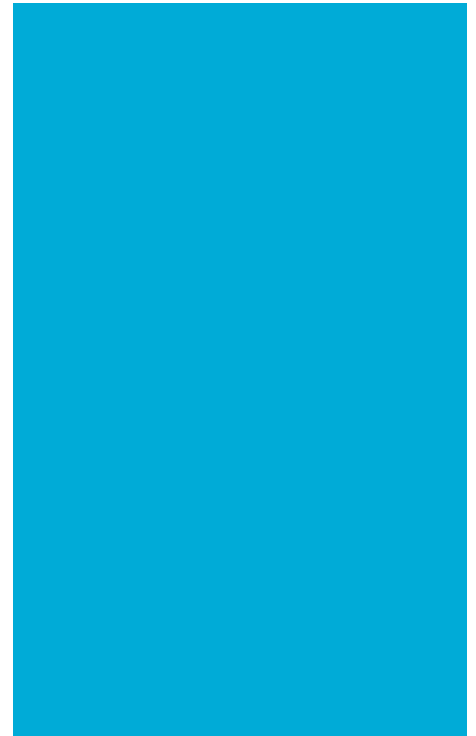
“Coming Together or Coming Apart?,” Joshua Busby, Craig Kafura, Dina Smeltz, Jordan Tama, Jonathan Monten, Joshua D. Kertzer, Brendan Helm, March 5, 2020.

“With Tensions Receding, Americans Lose Fear of North Korea,” Karl Friedhoff, February 26, 2020.

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**Chicago Council on Global Affairs**  
Two Prudential Plaza  
180 North Stetson Avenue  
Suite 1400  
Chicago, Illinois 60601



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