

# Americans Largely Support Using US Troops to Defend Allies

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The US alliance system has been a pillar of US foreign relations over the past 70 years. But with the advent of former President Donald Trump as the leader of the Republican Party, there are now serious discussions about the US commitment to allies, the cost the United States pays to maintain such a system, and its effectiveness moving forward. While Americans overall see security alliances as beneficial to the United States, a significant portion of Republicans say these alliances mostly benefit US allies. Even so, Americans across the board remain supportive of maintaining long-term military bases abroad—a core component of the US alliance system.

## Key Findings

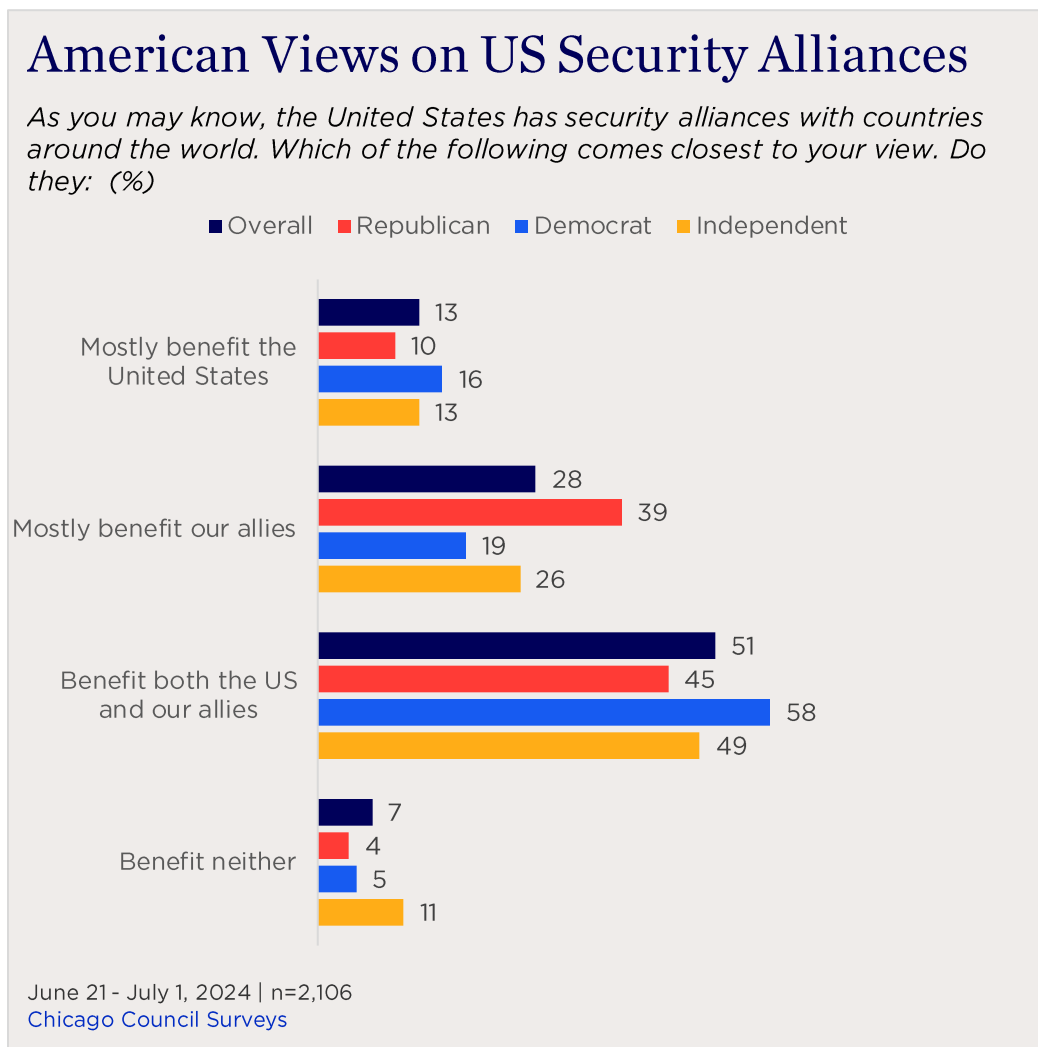
- A majority of all Americans (64%) say alliances either benefit the United States and its allies (51%) or mostly benefit the United States (13%).
- Republicans are more divided, with 39% saying alliances mostly benefit US allies versus 45 percent who think alliances benefit the United States and its allies.
- While Americans support the use of US troops to defend allies in specific scenarios, there is hesitance to engage China in a conflict. Just 44 percent say US troops should be used if China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands and 43 percent support the use of US troops if China invaded Taiwan.

## Security Alliances Seen as Beneficial

When it comes to views on security alliances, the American public is broadly positive on their benefits. Nearly two in three (64%) say security alliances either benefit both the United States and its allies (51%) or mostly benefit the

United States (13%). However, there are significant gaps between Republicans and Democrats. While a majority of Democrats (58%) see alliances as mutually beneficial, only 45 percent of Republicans say the same. Moreover, 39 percent of Republicans versus 19 percent of Democrats see alliances as one-sided, with those benefits accruing mostly to US allies.

This rise in views of alliances as one-sided is likely driven by Republican leadership messaging about the costs of alliances, especially in light of ongoing US support for Ukraine in the face of the Russian invasion. Moreover, both as president and as a candidate, Trump has accused Japan, South Korea, and NATO of free-riding as they underspend on their own defense.



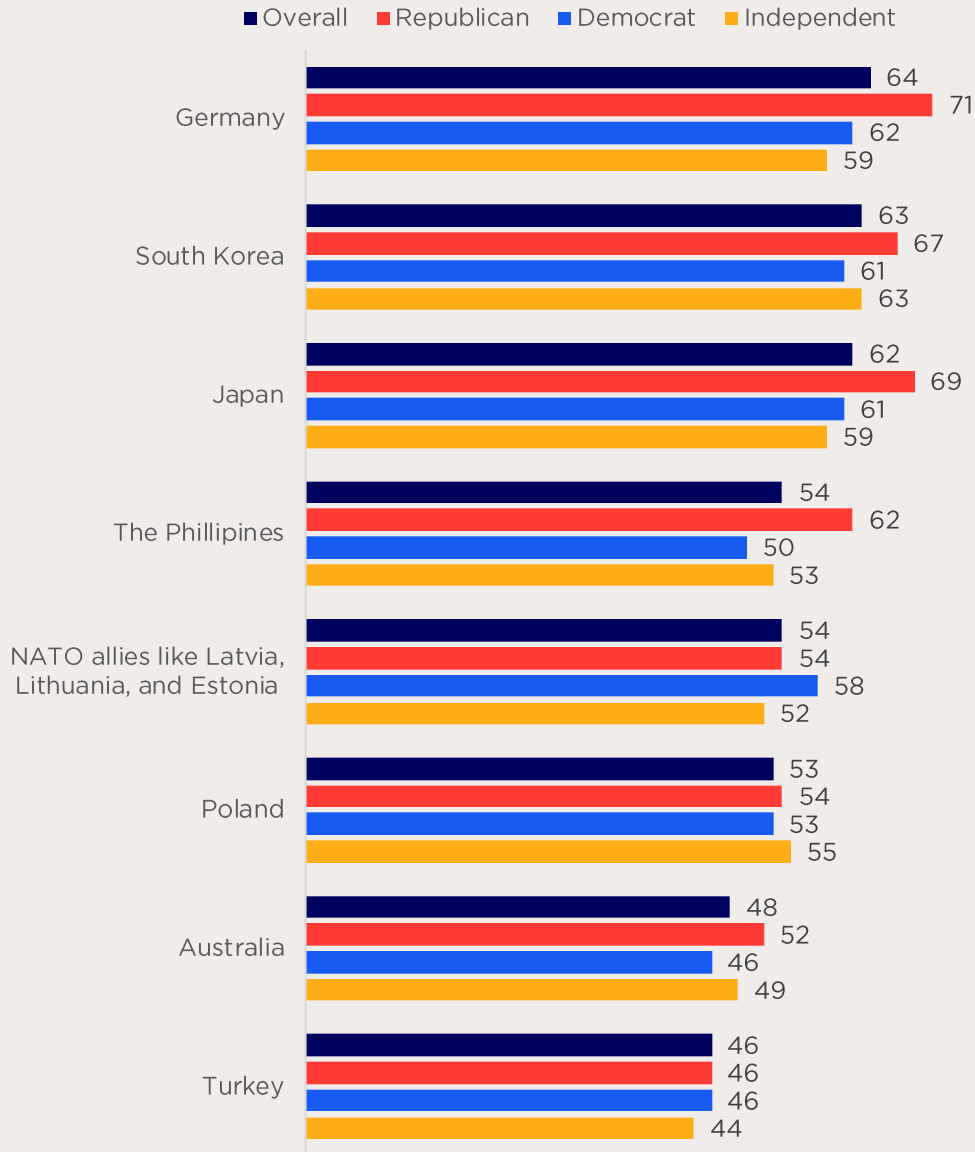
### Bipartisan Support for US Military Bases Abroad

Even as a greater portion of Republicans question the benefits of US alliances, this does not seem to dampen their support of US military bases abroad—a

defining feature of the US alliance system. This is likely tied to the importance Republicans place on the physical defense of the United States and military bases abroad being an important component in that defense. But it is not only Republicans that support US military bases abroad. Democrats also support most long-term military bases abroad with few exceptions. The two most notable: Australia, where 48 percent support long-term bases, and Turkey, where that number is 46 percent.

# Support for Long-term Military Bases By Country

Do you think the United States should or should not have long-term military bases in the following places? (% should have)



June 21 - July 1, 2024 | n=1,043  
Chicago Council Surveys

## American Public is Discerning When Using US Troops Abroad

Maintaining US alliances and military bases abroad comes with the inherent chance that at some point the troops stationed on those bases will be

involved in a conflict. This is mandated by the defense treaties the United States has signed and the credibility of that promise forms the backbone of the US alliance system. Overall, the American public is supportive of using US troops when an official ally is involved. This includes if Russia invaded a NATO ally like Germany (65%), if Russia invaded a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (54%), or if North Korea invaded South Korea (51%). There is one notable exception, however. If China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands, a minority of Americans (44%) support the use of US troops.

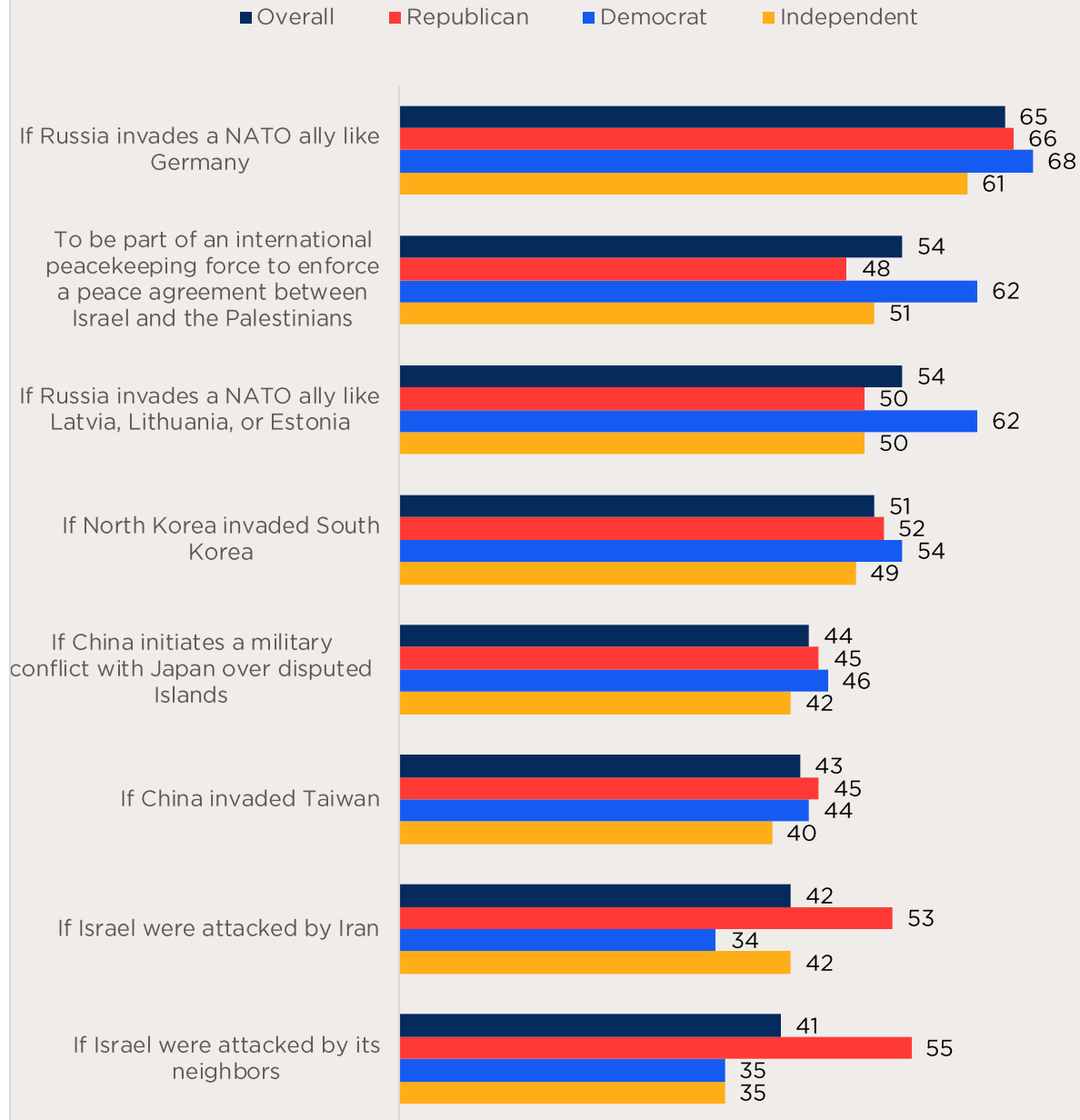
It is also noteworthy that only minorities support the use of US troops if a non-official ally is involved in the conflict scenario. If China invaded Taiwan, 43 percent of Americans support the use of US troops to defend Taiwan. And if Israel is attacked by Iran (42%) or its neighbors (41%)—a record low—minorities support the use of US troops to defend Israel. Of course, the lack of support may derive from different causes. Among the American public there is a hesitancy to get drawn into a conflict with a near-peer power like China. And for Israel, its ongoing invasion of Gaza seems to have depressed support. From 2015 to 2021, support was 53 percent for the scenario involving Israel being attacked by its neighbors.<sup>1</sup> There is also minority support for sending US troops to Ukraine to help the Ukrainian government defend itself against Russia (29%).

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for full trend results.

# Use of US Troops Abroad

*There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops: (% favor)*



June 21-July, 1, 2024 | n=1,050-2,106  
**CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS**

## Methodology

This analysis is based on data from the 2024 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2024 Chicago Council Survey was conducted June 21-July 1, 2024 by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, in both English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 2,106 adults aged 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 2.3$  percentage points including a design effect of 1.1229. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard partisan self-identification question: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”

The 2024 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family, the Korea Foundation, and the United States-Japan Foundation.

## About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at [thechicagocouncil.org](https://thechicagocouncil.org) and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

## About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

Established in 2018 with a transformative gift from the Crown Family, the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy is driven by the belief that the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. The centerpiece of the Lester Crown Center is its annual survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council Survey, which has been conducted since 1974. For the latest research from the Crown Center, follow [@ChiCouncilFP](https://twitter.com/ChiCouncilFP).

## Appendix

Q33S. As you may know, the United States has security alliances with countries around the world. Which of the following comes closest to your view. Do they:

Q33S. Opinions on US Security Alliances (%)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
Mostly benefit the United States	13	10	16	13	-6
Mostly benefit our allies	28	39	19	26	20
Benefit both the US and our allies	51	45	58	49	-13
Benefit neither	7	4	5	11	-1

Q40. Do you think the United States should or should not have long-term military bases in the following places?

Q40/1. Japan (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2002	63	67	60	63	7
2004	52	56	52	50	4
2006	57	66	52	57	14
2008	58	67	50	57	17
2010	49	56	46	47	10
2012	51	57	49	51	8
2014	55	59	50	56	9
2016	60	69	57	56	12
2018	65	72	65	61	7
2021 Trilateral	59	65	54	59	11
2022	67	72	64	66	8
2023	63	65	62	62	3
2024	62	69	61	59	8

Q40/3. South Korea (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2002	67	74	66	64	8
2004	62	71	62	56	9
2006	62	73	57	61	16
2008	63	72	59	59	13
2010	60	68	58	58	10
2012	60	68	57	58	11
2014	64	70	61	64	9
2016	70	76	70	64	6
2018	74	79	73	71	6
January 2020	69	80	65	65	15
2021 Trilateral	66	70	65	65	5
2022	72	77	72	69	5
2023	64	63	66	62	-3
2024	63	67	61	63	6



Q40/6. Germany (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2002	69	73	66	68	8
2004	57	62	44	53	9
2006	57	64	42	54	12
2008	59	64	44	53	10
2010	50	59	46	48	13
2012	51	54	50	51	4
2014	57	62	53	57	9
2016	61	70	58	56	12
2018	60	66	60	57	6
2022	68	71	68	66	3
2023	61	67	63	55	4
2024	64	71	62	59	9

Q40/7. Turkey (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2002	58	64	55	57	9
2004	46	56	44	42	12
2006	46	51	42	48	9
2008	49	56	44	48	12
2010	42	49	40	40	9
2012	40	45	39	38	6
2014	43	47	40	43	7
2018	53	59	51	50	8
2022	56	65	55	51	10
2023	50	48	51	50	-3
2024	46	46	46	44	0

Q40/8. Australia (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2012	40	44	38	39	6
2014	42	44	38	43	6
2016	46	53	42	45	11
2021 Trilateral	54	56	49	56	7
2022	56	64	51	55	13
2023	49	52	49	48	3
2024	48	52	46	49	6

Q40/10. Poland (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2014	37	39	32	39	0
2018	47	55	44	46	0
2022	62	68	59	61	9
2023	54	53	54	54	-1
2024	53	54	53	55	1

Q40/12. The Philippines (% should)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2014	51	59	45	51	14
2021	57	62	53	57	9
2024	54	62	50	53	12

Q40/15. NATO allies like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2022	65	67	67	61	0
2023	53	45	61	52	-16
2024	54	54	58	52	-4

**Summary of Q40 – 2024 data only**

Q40. Long-term military bases in the following places (% should have)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
Q40/1. Japan	62	69	61	59	8
Q40/3. South Korea	63	67	61	63	6
Q40/6. Germany	64	71	62	59	9
Q40/7. Turkey	46	46	46	44	0
Q40/8. Australia	48	52	46	49	6
Q40/10. Poland	53	54	53	55	1
Q40/12. The Philippines	54	62	50	53	12
Q40/15. NATO allies like Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia	54	54	58	52	-4

*Q30. There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using US troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of US troops:*

Q30/1. If North Korea invaded South Korea (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
1990	44	53	40	43	13
1994	39	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1998	30	33	28	33	5
2002	36	50	31	37	19
2004	43	49	43	39	6

2006	45	55	42	41	13
2008	41	51	32	45	19
2010	40	47	38	36	9
2012	41	51	40	36	11
2014	47	53	44	46	9
2015	47	53	50	42	3
2017	62	70	59	61	11
2018	64	70	63	61	7
2019	58	63	57	56	6
2020	58	57	58	58	-1
March 2021	53	57	51	53	6
2021	63	68	61	62	7
2022	55	54	58	53	-4
2023	50	46	57	48	-11
2024	51	52	54	49	-2

Q30/2. If China invaded Taiwan (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
1982	19	25	17	17	8
1986	19	22	18	18	4
1998	27	30	24	30	6
2002	31	39	24	32	14
2004	33	40	30	31	10
2006	32	39	31	29	8
2008	32	36	27	34	10
2010	25	34	21	21	13
2012	28	35	26	23	9
2013	23	26	19	25	7
2014	26	25	24	29	1
2015	28	28	29	28	1
2018	35	39	36	33	4
2019	38	42	38	35	4
2020	41	43	40	40	3
March 2021	42	47	37	42	10
July 2021	52	60	50	49	10
2022	44	44	46	42	-2
2024	43	45	44	40	1

Q30/3. To be part of an international peacekeeping force to enforce a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2002	65	63	73	60	-10
2004	52	49	55	50	-7
2006	51	45	55	53	-10
2008	51	47	60	48	-12
2010	49	47	56	46	-9
2012	50	51	55	45	-4

2014	50	46	59	42	-13
2019	59	61	64	52	-3
2024	54	48	62	51	-14

Q30/8. If Israel were attacked by its neighbors (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2010	47	60	41	42	19
2012	49	64	44	42	20
2014	45	52	41	44	11
2015	53	67	49	46	18
2018	53	69	45	50	24
2021	53	72	41	49	31
2024	41	55	35	35	20

Q30/8A. If Israel were attacked by Iran (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2024	42	53	34	42	21

Q30/14. If China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed Islands (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2015	33	32	33	33	-1
2017	40	45	35	41	10
2018	41	47	42	37	5
2019	43	48	40	41	8
March 2021	44	50	41	42	9
2023	43	45	45	41	0
2024	44	45	46	42	-1

Q30/13. If Russia invades a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2014	44	50	41	43	9
2015	45	45	51	40	-6
2017	52	54	52	51	2
2018	54	52	61	50	-9
2019	54	56	56	51	0
2020	52	47	56	52	-9
March 2021	44	44	44	44	0
July 2021	59	57	63	58	-6
March 2022	56	48	62	58	-14
2023	57	48	68	55	-20
2024	54	50	62	50	-12

Q30/13G. If Russia invades a NATO ally like Germany (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2023	64	64	69	60	-5
2024	65	66	68	61	-2

Q30/21. To stop immigrants coming into the US from Mexico (% favor)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2019	49	82	21	50	61
2023	47	79	23	44	56
2024	53	84	30	50	54

**Summary of Q30 – 2024 data only**

Q30. Favor use of US troops (%)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
Q30/1. If North Korea invaded South Korea	51	52	54	49	-2
Q30/2. If China invaded Taiwan	43	45	44	40	1
Q30/3. To be part of an international peacekeeping force to enforce a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians	54	48	62	51	-14
Q30/8. If Israel were attacked by its neighbors	41	55	35	35	20
Q30/8A. If Israel were attacked by Iran	42	53	34	42	21
Q30/14. If China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands	44	45	46	42	-1
Q30/13. If Russia invades a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia	54	50	62	50	-12
Q30/13G. If Russia invades a NATO ally like Germany	65	66	68	61	-2
Q30/21. To stop immigrants from coming into the US from Mexico	53	84	30	50	54

Q250. In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine, would you support or oppose the United States:

Q250/8. Sending US troops to Ukraine to help the Ukrainian government defend itself against Russia (% support)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2015	40	47	39	36	8
Mar 2022	36	34	42	33	-8
Jul 2022	38	34	42	37	-8
Nov 2022	32	26	34	33	-8
2023	26	20	34	25	-16
Feb 2024	28	21	35	26	-14
Jun 2024	29	23	36	26	-13