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# Americans Divided over US Military Forces in Germany

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Over the past three years, US relations with Germany have become increasingly strained, with President Trump criticizing Berlin for failing to reach the NATO benchmark of 2 percent of a country's economic output on defense. Moreover, the Trump Administration has continually threatened to impose tariffs on European industries and [German automakers in particular](#), a move that would deal a serious blow to the export-reliant German economy. The American public, meanwhile, sees the US-German relationship as good for US national security but is narrowly divided over US military forces in Germany.

## Key Findings:

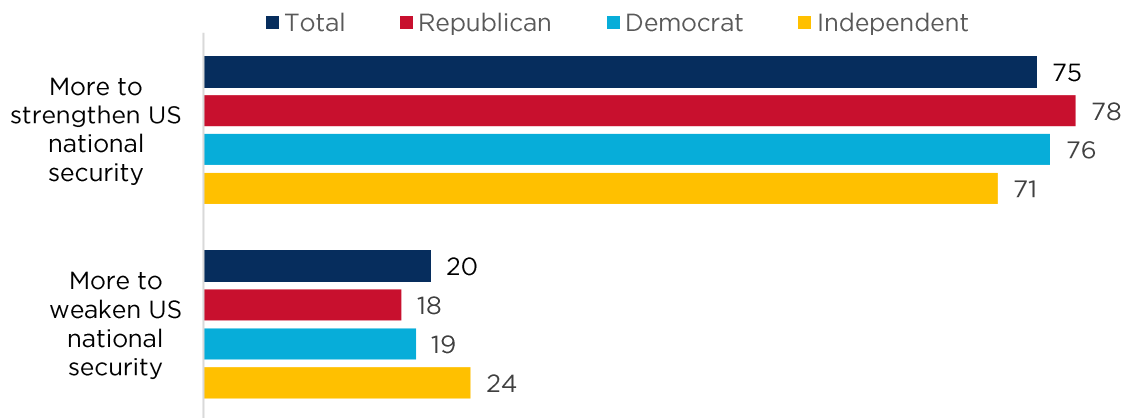
- Three in four Americans (75%) say the US relationship with Germany strengthens US national security, a view that holds across party lines.
- However, Americans are divided over the US military's presence in Germany: 47 percent favor increasing or maintaining US forces, while 50 percent favor decreasing or withdrawing them altogether.
- Nearly nine in ten Americans (87%), across party lines, favor the US engaging in trade with Germany

## Americans Say US-Germany Relationship Good for US National Security

Americans and Germans view the bilateral relationship in starkly different terms, according to a 2018 joint survey from the [Pew Research Center](#) and [Körber-Stiftung](#), with seven in ten Americans (70%) saying relations are good, while seven in ten Germans say they are bad (73%). New Chicago Council Survey results find that three in four Americans (75%) say the US relationship with Germany does more to strengthen US national security, while only two in ten (20%) say it does more to weaken US national security. This view of the US-Germany relationship as being good for US national security holds true across partisan lines. Clear majorities of Republicans (78%), Democrats (76%), and Independents (71%) all see the US-Germany relationship as strengthening US security.

## US-Germany Relationship and US National Security

Does the US relationship with the following countries do more to strengthen US national security or weaken US national security? **Germany (%)**



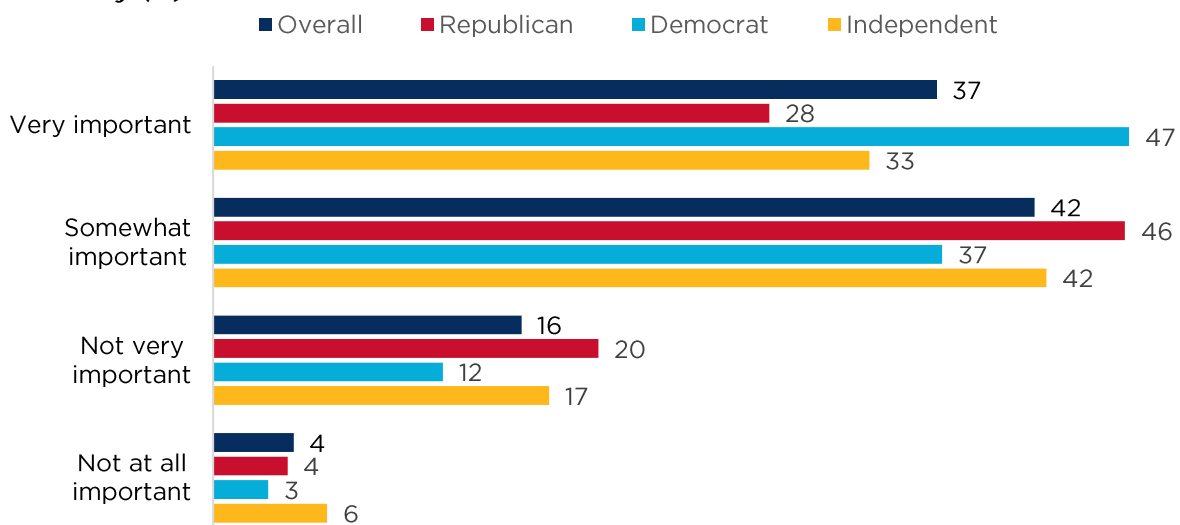
June 7-20, 2019 | n = 2,059

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There are somewhat greater partisan differences when it comes to the importance of the US-Germany relationship for US national security. As the 2018 Chicago Council Survey found, while Americans of all partisan affiliations see the relationship as important for US security, Democrats were more likely to say that it was very important, while Republicans were more likely to say it was somewhat important for US security.

## US-Germany Security Relationship

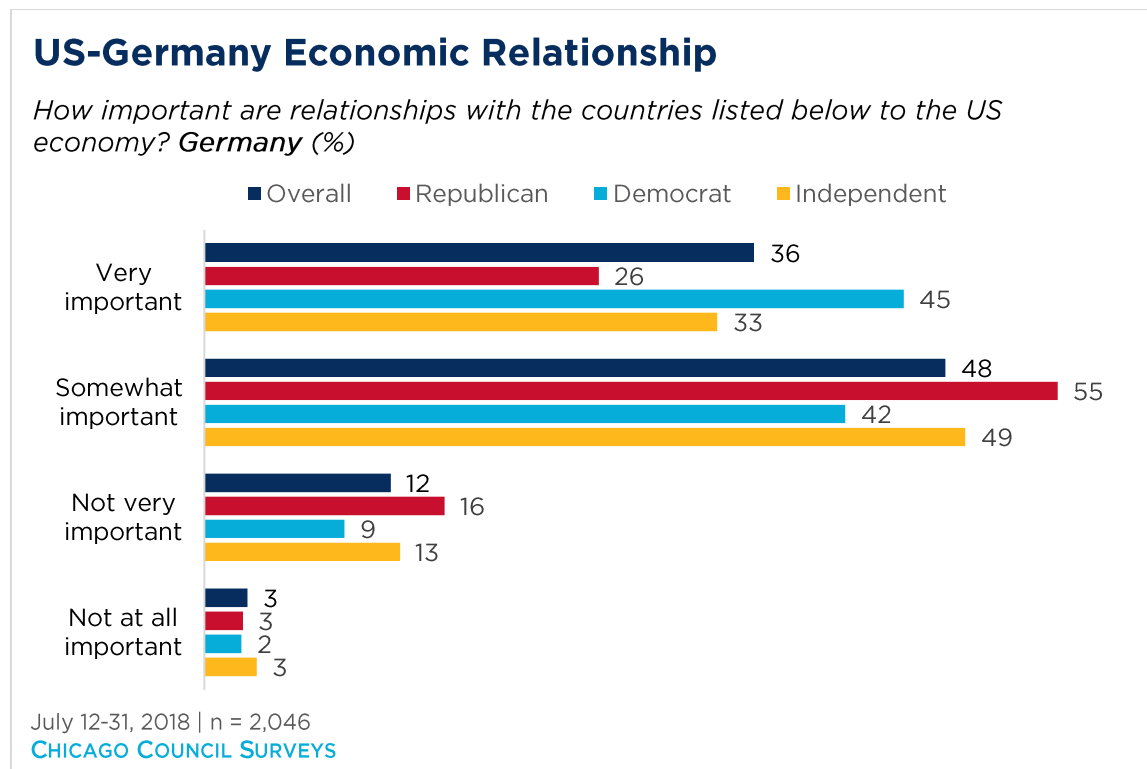
How important are relationships with the countries listed below for US security? **Germany (%)**



July 12-31, 2018 | n = 2,046

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Partisan divisions around the US-Germany economic relationship were similar, with Democrats more likely to see the US-Germany relationship as very important for the US economy. However, Americans of all partisan affiliations support the US engaging in trade with Germany (87%, across partisan lines).



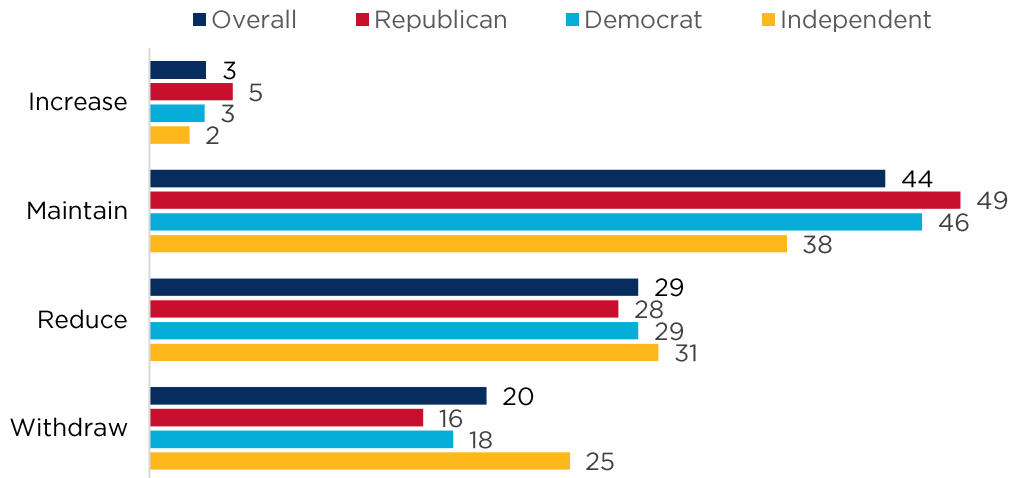
### Americans Divided over US Military Forces in Germany

In remarks to German media this August, US Ambassador to Germany [Richard Grenell](#) said it was “offensive to assume that the US taxpayer must continue to pay to have 50,000-plus Americans in Germany” and claimed Americans “are growing very annoyed” by German failures at “meeting its NATO obligations.” Substantial changes to US basing policy in Germany would have broader ramifications for the US military presence in Europe: the country is home to the largest number of US troops of any European country and hosts US European Command (EUCOM) in Stuttgart.

While Americans value the US relationship with Germany, they are divided over US military forces currently based in Germany. Few want to increase the US military presence (3%), and more than four in ten (44%) favor maintaining US military forces in Germany. However, three in ten (29%) favor reducing US troops in Germany, and an additional two in ten (20%) favor withdrawing US troops altogether. When combined, half of Americans (50%) favor reducing or withdrawing US troops, while 47 percent favor increasing or maintaining them. Republicans are more likely to favor increasing or maintaining US military forces in Germany (54%), while Democrats are divided (50%). Among Independents, a majority favor reducing or withdrawing military forces (56%, vs. 41% increase or maintain).

## US Military Forces in Germany

Should the United States increase, maintain, reduce, or withdraw its military forces from the following countries or regions: **Germany** (%)

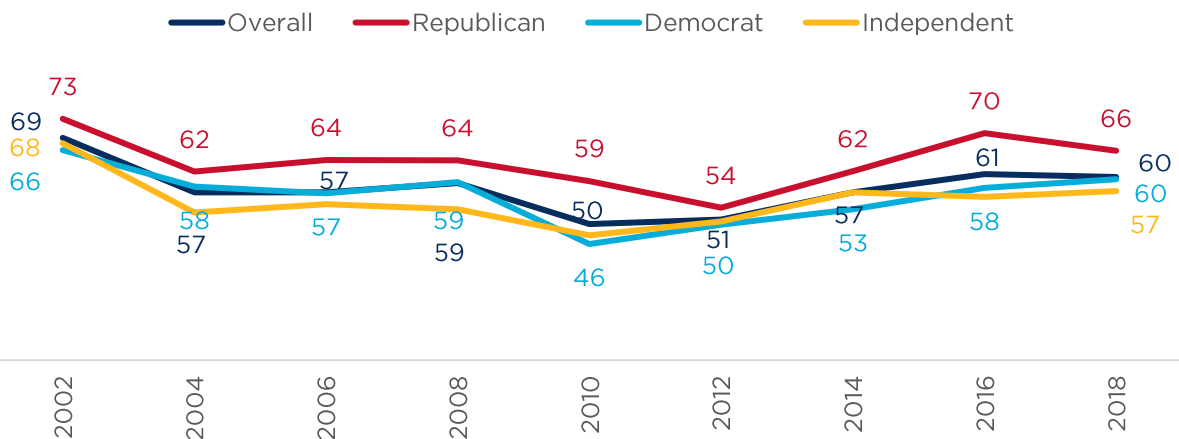


June 7-20, 2019 | n = 2,059  
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

These results form an interesting parallel with previous Chicago Council Survey results on US bases in Germany. In the 2018 Chicago Council Survey, six in ten Americans (60%) said the US should have long-term bases in Germany. That support held across partisan lines, with majorities of Republicans (66%), Democrats (60%), and Independents (57%) all favoring US bases in Germany.

## US Bases in Germany

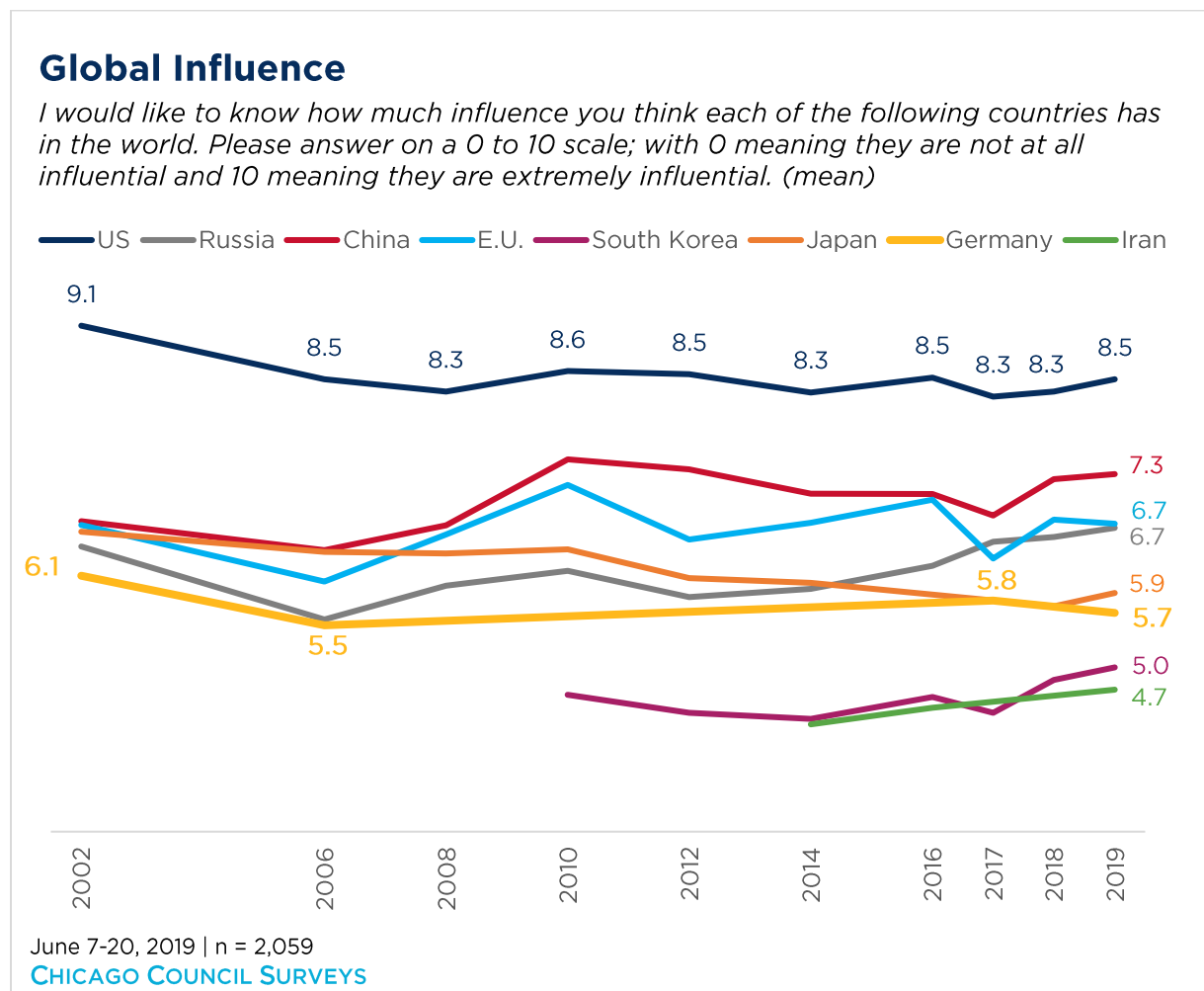
Do you think the United States should or should not have long-term military bases in the following places? **Germany** (% should have)



July 12-31, 2018 | n = 2,046  
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## Germany: A Moderately Influential Presence on the World Stage

Americans have a moderate view of Germany's international influence. When asked to rate German influence in the world on a zero to ten scale, with zero representing no influence and ten representing a lot of influence, Americans give Germany an average rating of 5.7. This is in line with past American estimates of German international influence and puts it roughly on par with Japan. While seen as less influential than some of the major global powers, such as Russia, China, or the European Union as a whole, Germany is seen as more influential than South Korea, another key US ally, or Iran.



Americans see German influence remaining stable in the future. When asked to rate countries' influence in ten years' time on the same zero to ten scale, Americans say that influence will remain at a similar level as it is today, giving Germany an average future influence of 5.7. Partisan differences on perceptions of German influence have grown since the Council first asked about German international influence in 2002. Today, Democrats rate German influence an average of 5.9, down slightly from their 2002 rating of 6.2. Republican perceptions of German influence have declined more significantly, from 6.0 in 2002 to 5.4 today.

## Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2019 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2019 Chicago Council Survey was conducted June 7-20, 2019 by IPSOS using their large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 2,059 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 2.3$ , including a design effect of 1.1607. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Additional results come from the 2018 Chicago Council Survey, conducted by GfK Custom Research using their large-scale, nationwide online research panel July 12-31, 2018 among a weighted national sample of 2,046 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is  $\pm 2.37$ , including a design effect of 1.1954.

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

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## About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

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