

# Chicago Council Survey

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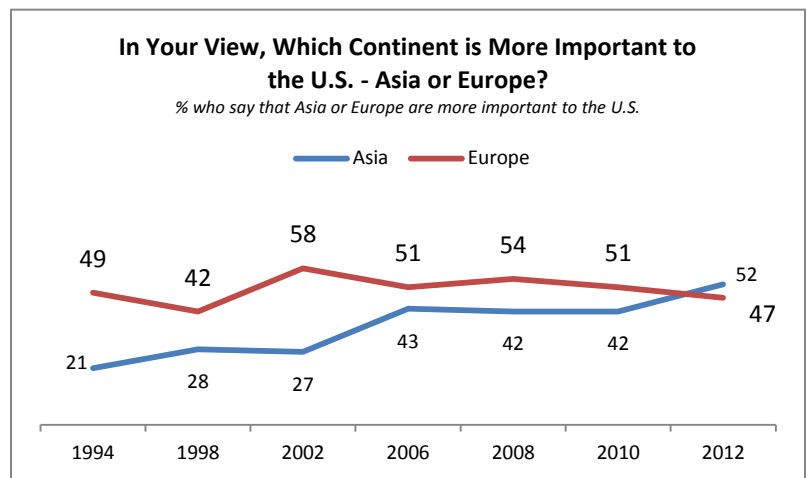
September 10, 2012

## Americans Shifting Focus to Asia

*The just-released Chicago Council 2012 Survey shows that after a decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, Americans recognize China's growing influence and Asia's importance (especially economic importance) to the United States. This shift signals a reorientation that is likely to become more pronounced in the future.*

### More Americans Now View Asia as More Important to U.S. than Europe

For the first time in Chicago Council Surveys going back to 1994, slightly more Americans select Asia (52%) over Europe (47%) when asked which continent is more important to the United States.



*Millennials* (18 to 29 year olds), as well as those under the age of forty-five, are more inclined to feel that Asia is more important to the United States than Europe (58% Asia to 40% Europe), while those sixty or older (along with those over forty-five more generally) most often name Europe (54% Europe to 46% Asia).

### China's Economic Power: Both an Opportunity and a Challenge

Three in four Americans (76%) now expect that someday China's economy will grow to be as large as the U.S. economy. For the most part, the public does not seem to view this development as entirely negative, even though a majority says that China practices unfair trade (67%).

- Consistent with previous surveys, about half of Americans believe Chinese economic growth will impact the United States in equally positive and negative ways (49%; 40% mostly negative; 9% mostly positive).
- Just over half (52%) see U.S. debt to China as a critical threat. Americans have become markedly more aware of the debt situation over time. In 2006, only 24 percent believed that China loans more money to the U.S. than the other way around, compared with 70 percent today.

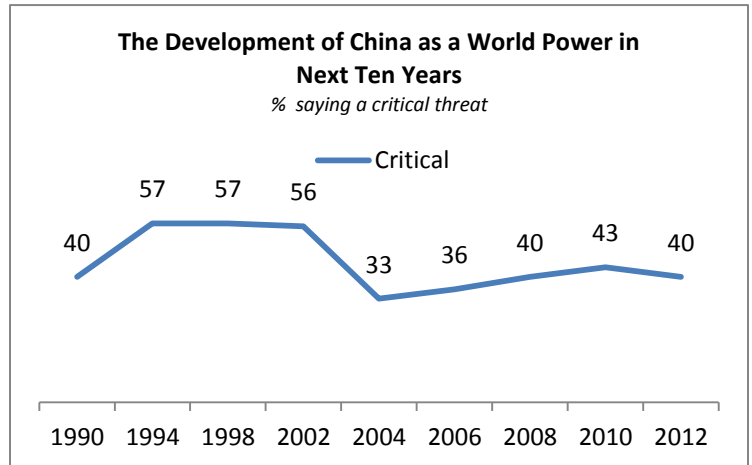
### Majority Support Friendly Engagement with China

While the American public is concerned about U.S. debt to China, this does not appear to have translated more broadly into overall fear of China. Only four in ten (40%) view China’s development as a world power as a critical threat, down from a majority in 2002 (56%).

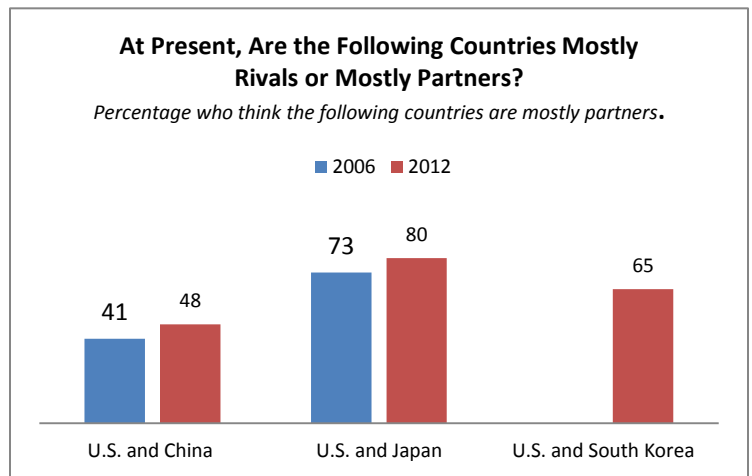
Most favor pursuing friendly cooperation and engagement (69%) over actively working to limit the growth of China’s power (28%).

### Japan and South Korea: Linchpins of U.S.-East Asia Policy

Americans highly value the relationships with their long-standing allies in East Asia, Japan and South Korea, both for economic and security reasons. A slight majority (53%) says the United States should put a higher priority on “building up our strong relations with traditional allies like South Korea and Japan, even if this might diminish U.S. relations with China,” rather than on “building a new partnership with China, even if this might diminish our relations with our traditional allies” (40%).



- Majorities consider the U.S. and Japan, and the U.S. and South Korea, to be mostly partners rather than rivals (80% Japan, 65% South Korea, compared to 48% China). More now than in 2006 consider China and Japan partners (only asked in 2012 for South Korea).



- Six in ten (56%) identify Japan as a top ten trading partner of the United States. A majority think South Korea is in at least the top twenty, though only 22 percent correctly identify it as a top ten trading partner (47% say it is in the top twenty).
- Majorities see Japan (63%) and South Korea (53%) as fair traders (63%). In the case of Japan, this is a dramatic turnaround from the early 1990s when only 17 percent saw Japan as a fair trader.

In general, most Americans perceive clear dividends from having a U.S. troop presence in East Asia, with 59 percent believing that it increases stability in the region. Six in ten continue to support bases in South Korea (60%), and more support than oppose continued bases in Japan (51% in favor, 46% opposed).

**Modest Support for the “Pivot” to Asia**

A majority favors shifting military and diplomatic resources away from the Middle East and Europe toward Asia, but this endorsement is rather soft (9% strongly, 45% somewhat). Americans may be reluctant to shift resources in this way, because the Middle East is seen as an equally important part of the world. When presented with three parts of the world and asked which is more important to the U.S., a slight plurality select Europe (39%), with the rest divided between Asia (31%) and the Middle East (29%).

How do you feel about the U.S. government’s plan to pivot our diplomatic and military resources away from the Middle East and Europe and more toward Asia?	
	Overall %
I strongly support it	9
I somewhat support it	45
I somewhat oppose it	33
I strongly oppose it	7
Not sure/decline	6

**A Note on Methods**

This report is based on the results of The Chicago Council’s 2012 biennial survey of public opinion conducted from May 25 to June 8, 2012. The survey probes American attitudes on a wide range of U.S. foreign policy issues. GFK Custom Research conducted the survey for The Chicago Council using a randomly selected sample of 1877 adults age 18 and older from their large-scale, nationwide research panel. The panel is recruited using stratified random digit dialing (RDD) telephone sampling. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.8%.

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The full report is available at [www.thechicagocouncil.org](http://www.thechicagocouncil.org).