

Americans Continue to See Benefits from US Alliances

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In recent years, some Republican leaders on Capitol Hill [have drifted away](#) from the US commitment to the NATO alliance, a remarkable shift influenced by the “America-First” policies of former President Donald Trump. A September 7–8 Chicago Council Survey finds that Republicans are more likely to question the benefits of the US-European alliance system now than in recent years, while their support for NATO and for US alliances in East Asia and the Middle East holds steady. At the same time, however, support defending allied countries has a partisan tinge that did not exist in previous surveys.

Key Findings

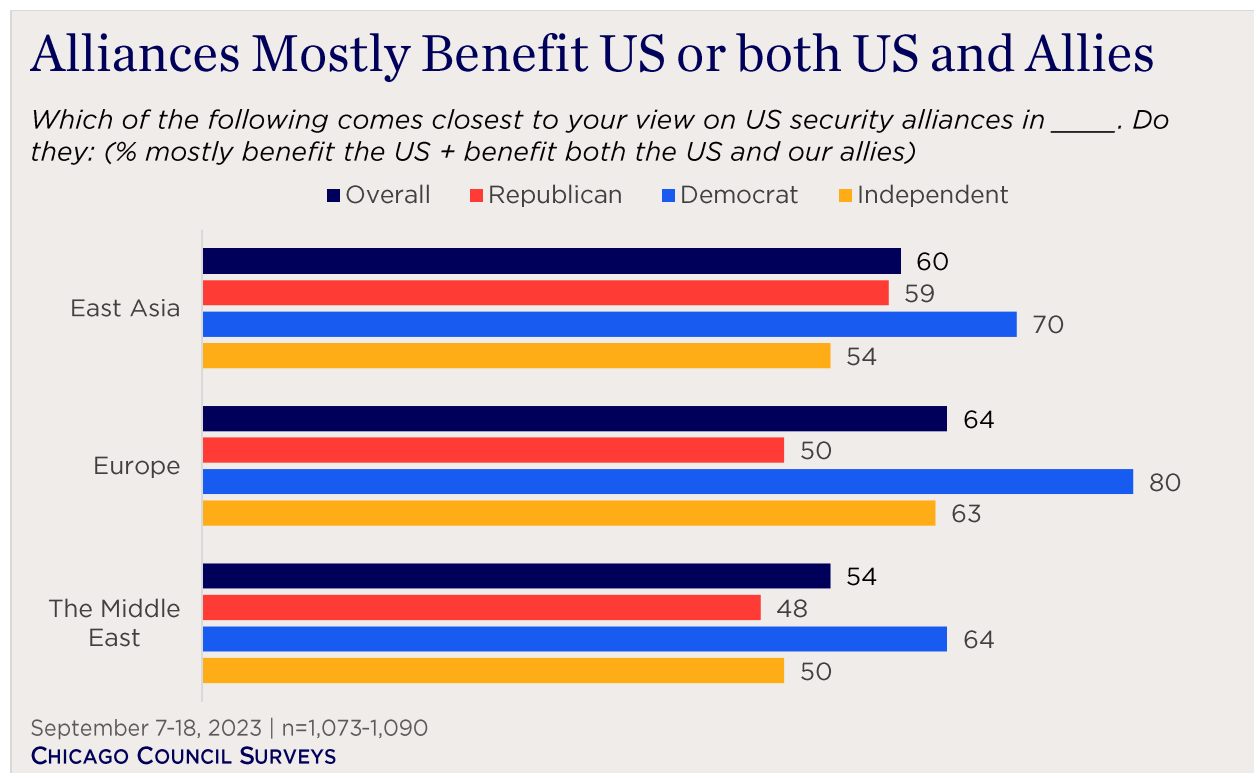
- Half of Republicans (50%) believe the United States primarily benefits or both the United States and European countries benefit most from the transatlantic alliances in Europe. By comparison, majorities of Democrats (80%) and Independents (63%) view America’s European alliances as either beneficial for the United States or benefitting both Europe and the United States.
- Majorities across the political spectrum say the United States should maintain or increase its commitment to NATO (92% of Democrats, 68% of Republicans, and 73% of Independents.)
- Seven in 10 Democrats (70%), six in 10 Republicans (59%), and a narrow majority of Independents (54%) think US alliances with East Asian countries are beneficial to the United States or to both the United States and allies.
- Two-thirds of Democrats (64%) and about half of Republicans (48%) and Independents (50%) view US alliances with Middle Eastern

countries as beneficial to the United States or both the United States and its regional allies.

- Support for sending US troops to help allies defend themselves if they are invaded has dropped since last year, and partisan divisions have grown.

Overall Majorities Consider the US Alliance System to Be Mutually Beneficial

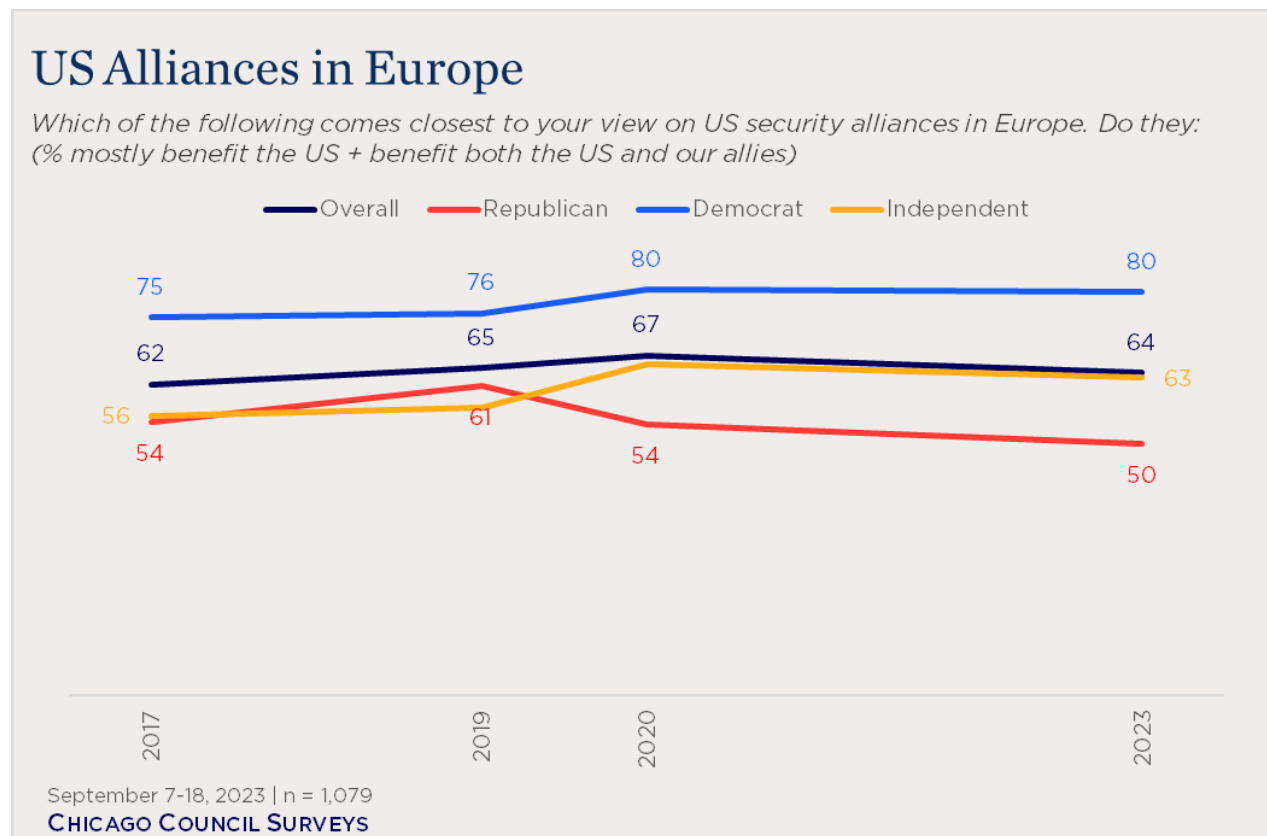
Majorities of Americans consider US alliances with European countries (64%), East Asian partners (60%), and countries in the Middle East (54%) to mostly benefit either the United States or to benefit both the United States and its allies. Overall attitudes toward these alliances remain fairly similar to past surveys going back to 2017. But there are some differences in longitudinal patterns of partisan support.



Alliances with Europe

Self-described Democrats are most convinced that US security alliances in Europe are beneficial (80%) to European allies and/or the United States, up slightly from 2017 when three in four (75%) agreed. Two-thirds of Independents (63%) also view America's European alliances as beneficial, an increase from the 56 percent who said the same in 2017. By contrast, half of Republicans (50%) believe the United States benefits from its European alliances, down from a high of 61 percent in 2019.

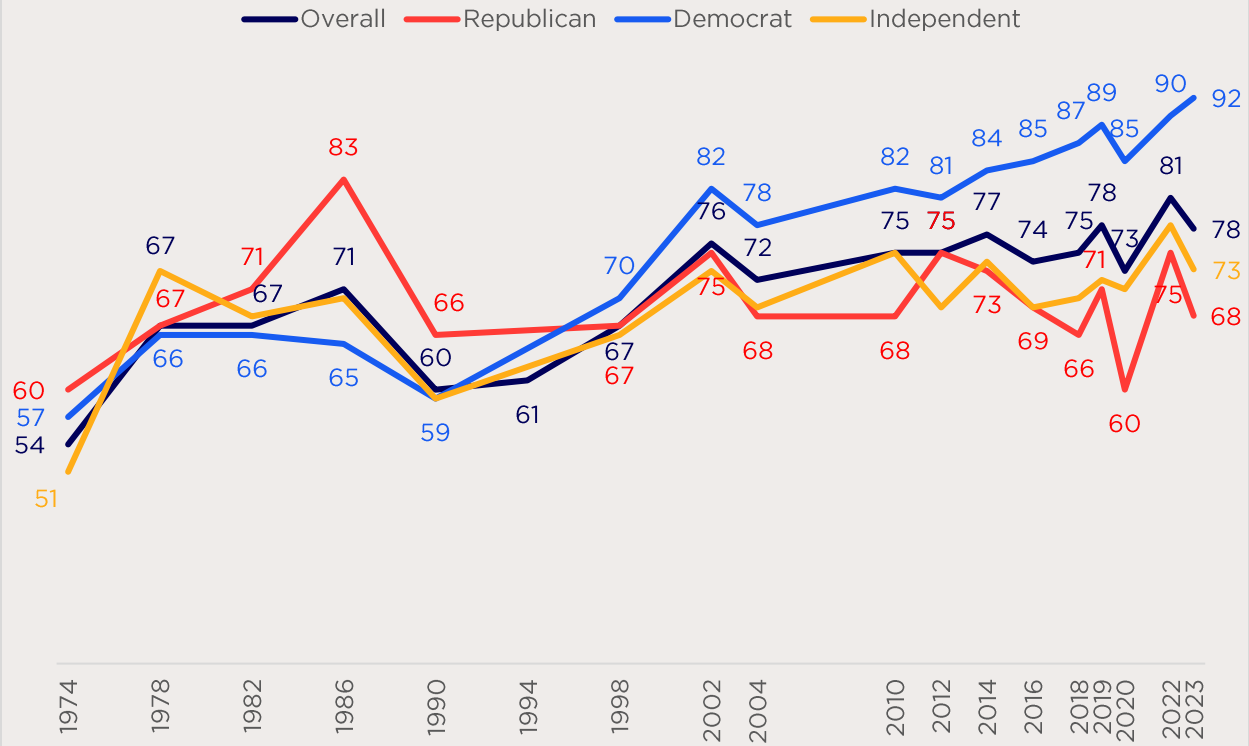
Republican support for the alliance with Europe may have dampened because of concerns about the financial and material costs of continued US assistance to Ukraine. A recent Washington Post-ABC News survey found 58 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents say they believe the United States is doing too much to help Ukraine, compared to 22 percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents. The September Chicago Council Survey shows nearly half of Republicans believe that European countries should be most responsible for helping Ukraine defend itself against Russia (46%), compared to just 15 percent of Democrats.



At the same time, however, US public support for NATO seems to remain solid. About eight in 10 Americans (78%) also say that the United States should maintain or increase its commitment to NATO, consistent with high percentages of support in recent years. Democrats are at an all-time high of 92 percent on this question, but solid majorities of Republicans (68%) and Independents (73%) also continue to agree. During the Cold War, Republicans were the most committed to NATO (see figure below). But since 1998, Democrats' support for the US commitment to the alliance has exceeded that of GOP supporters.

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?
(% maintain/increase)



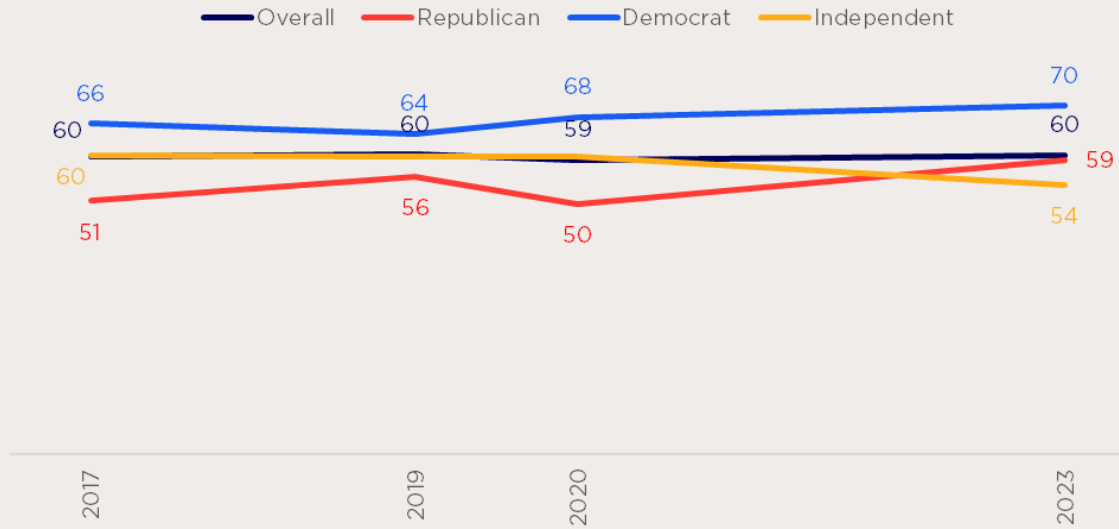
September 7-18, 2023 | n = 3,242
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Alliances with East Asia

Republicans have grown more supportive of alliances with East Asian countries (59%, up from 50% in 2020), while Independents (54%) are just slightly less likely now to say that these alliances are beneficial to East Asian allies and/or the United States alone (55%, down from 60% in 2020). Democrats have also become slightly more favorably inclined towards America’s East Asia alliances: seven in 10 (70%) say these alliances benefit both the United States and allies or mostly benefit the United States, up from 64 percent in 2019.

US Alliances in East Asia

Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances in East Asia. Do they:
(% mostly benefit the US + benefit both the US and our allies)



September 7-18, 2023 | n = 1,090
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

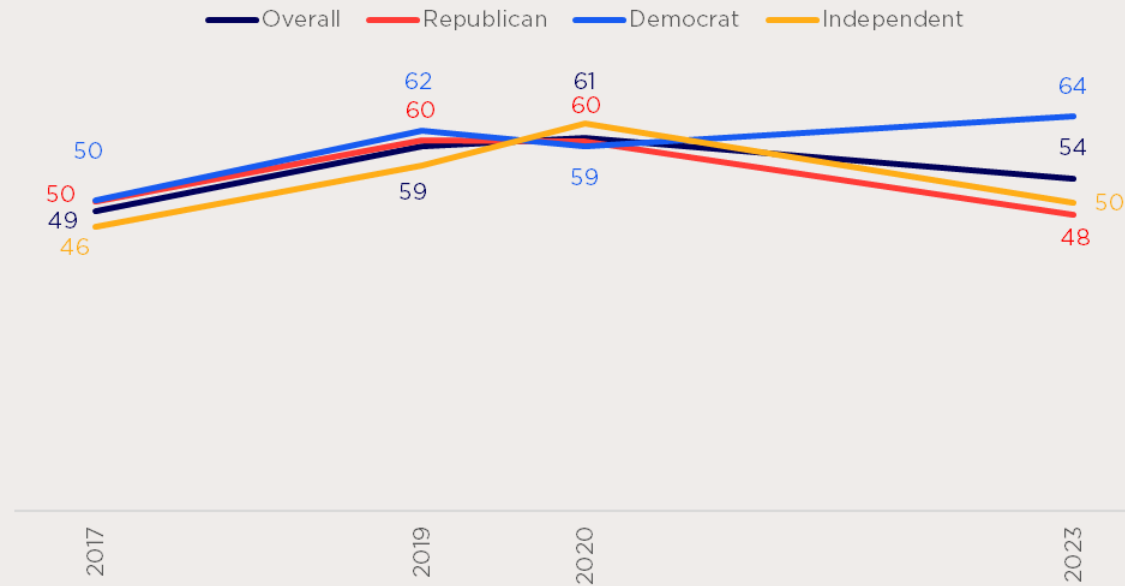
In addition, solid majorities of Americans say that the US security relationships with Japan (77%), South Korea (71%), and Taiwan (65%) do more to strengthen US national security than to weaken it.

Alliances with Middle Eastern Countries

There has been a bit more fluctuation in perceptions of US alliances in the Middle East. Overall, a narrow majority of Americans say that these alliances are beneficial to either the United States or the United States and its allies (54%), down from 2019 (59%) and 2020 (61%). Republican support has dropped significantly from 2020 (48% down from 60%) as has support among Independents (50% vs. 63%). By contrast, 64 percent of Democrats perceive benefits for the United States, an all-time high.

US Alliances in the Middle East

Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances in the Middle East. Do they: (% mostly benefit the US + benefit both the US and our allies)



September 7-18, 2023 | n = 1,073
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Whether Americans see US alliances in the Middle East as strengthening or weakening US national security varies based on the particular alliance. Two-thirds (64%) say that the US security relationship with Israel does more to strengthen than weaken US national security, including 76 percent of Republicans, 60 percent of Independents, and 58 percent of Democrats. On the other hand, fewer than half (45%) say that the US security relationship with Saudi Arabia does more to strengthen US national security (49% Democrats, 45% Republicans, 43% Independents).

Defending Allies

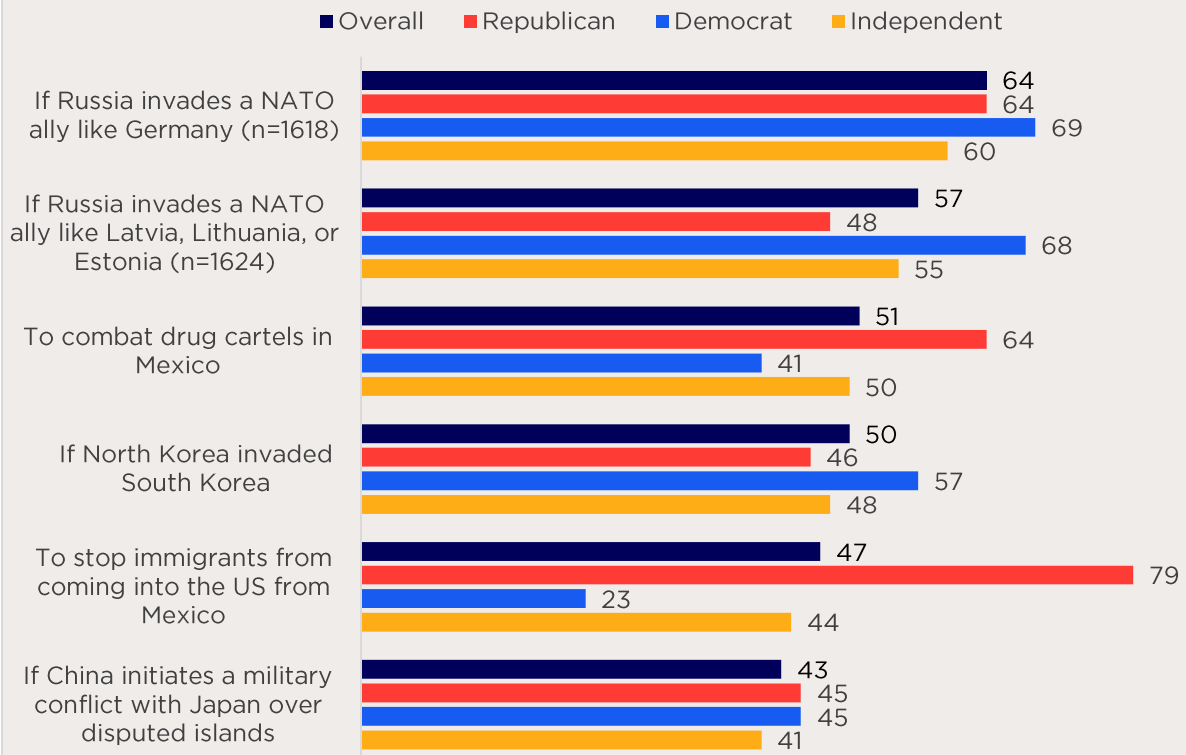
Overall majorities continue to support using US troops if Russia invades a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia (57%, compared to 56% in 2022), or Germany (64%, new question in this survey). Fewer now than a year ago are prepared to commit US troops to defend South Korea in the event of invasion by the North (50% favor, down from 63% in 2022). And a majority oppose using US troops if China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands (55%, 43% favor).

The recent survey highlights some growing partisan divisions on the use of force to protect allies. For example, about two-thirds of Democrats (68%) support using US troops to help defend one of the Baltic NATO members,

compared to 55 percent of Independents and 48 percent of Republicans. If North Korea invaded South Korea, 57 percent of Democrats support using US troops to defend Seoul, compared to 48 percent of Independents and 46 percent of Republicans.

Partisan Views on the Use of US Troops

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: (% support)



September 7-18, 2023 | n=3,242
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Appendix

US Security Alliances in Europe

Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances in Europe. Do they:

Mostly benefit the US (%)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	9	7	11	8	-4
2019	6	7	8	4	-1
January 2020	18	13	24	16	-11
2020	7	4	10	7	-6
2023	7	6	9	6	-3
Mostly benefit our allies (%)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	26	36	14	31	22
2019	24	32	12	30	20
January 2020	20	29	10	24	19
2020	21	41	7	20	34
2023	24	35	12	25	24
Benefit both (%)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	53	48	64	47	-16
2019	58	54	68	53	-14
January 2020	52	53	56	49	-3
2020	61	50	71	59	-21
2023	57	43	71	57	-28
Benefit neither (%)					
	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	9	6	9	11	-3
2019	9	5	10	13	-5
January 2020	6	3	6	8	-3
2020	8	2	8	12	-6
2023	10	13	6	10	7

US Security Alliances in East Asia

Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances in East Asia. Do they:

Mostly benefit the US (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	9	4	11	9	-7
2019	7	6	6	9	0
January 2020	13	10	16	11	-6
2020	7	3	9	8	-6
2023	9	6	9	10	-3

Mostly benefit our allies (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	21	33	15	18	18
2019	21	25	16	23	9
January 2020	22	26	18	22	8
2020	17	26	9	20	17
2023	21	25	14	23	11

Benefit both the US and our allies (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	51	47	55	51	-8
2019	53	50	58	51	-8
January 2020	48	49	50	46	-1
2020	52	47	59	52	-12
2023	52	53	61	45	-8

Benefit neither (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	15	10	16	17	-6
2019	15	15	16	14	-1
January 2020	4	13	12	17	1
2020	17	17	18	17	-1
2023	15	10	13	20	-3

US Security Alliances in the Middle East

Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances in the Middle East. Do they:

Mostly benefit the US (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	6	6	5	8	1
2019	9	9	7	11	2
January 2020	15	10	18	15	-8
2020	11	9	13	11	-4
2023	10	6	13	8	-7

Mostly benefit our allies (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	24	32	22	20	10
2019	22	25	20	22	5
January 2020	21	26	17	21	9
2020	18	21	18	16	3
2023	24	30	17	25	13

Benefit both the US and our allies (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	42	44	45	38	-1
2019	50	51	55	45	-4
January 2020	39	40	39	39	1
2020	49	51	46	52	5
2023	44	42	51	42	-9

Benefit neither (%)

	Overall	Republican	Democrat	Independent	R-D Gap
2017	24	15	25	30	-10
2019	18	14	17	21	-3
January 2020	22	23	23	21	0
2020	16	11	20	16	-9
2023	19	19	16	22	3

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from the 2023 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2023 Chicago Council Survey was conducted September 7-18, 2023 by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, in both English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 3,242 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 ± 2.0 percentage points including a design effect of 1.2908. 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 2023 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family, the Korea Foundation, and the United States-Japan Foundation.

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