

Majorities Support Bases and Defense of Key Allied Nations

Craig Kafura, Assistant Director, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

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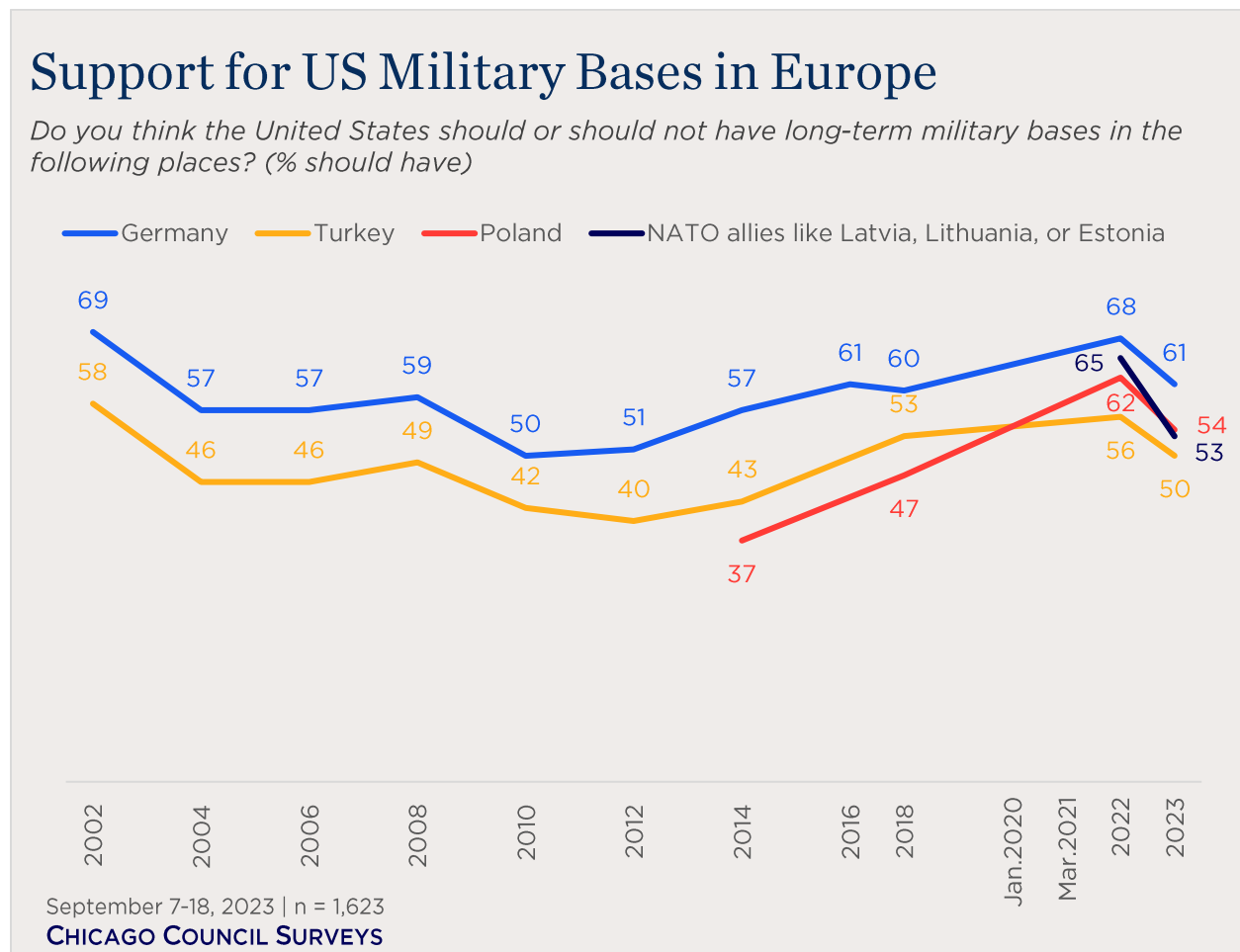
The 2023 Chicago Council Survey, conducted September 7–18, 2023, finds Americans overall favor long-term bases in key allied nations around the world and support the use of US troops to defend allies if they are attacked. However, there are also growing partisan divisions over whether or not to defend US allies in Europe and Asia.

Key Findings

- Americans support long-term US military bases in key allied nations in Europe and Asia on a bipartisan basis—except for Baltic NATO allies, where Democrats (61%) and Independents (52%) support and a narrow majority of Republicans oppose (53%) bases.
- Majorities of Americans favor using US troops should Russia invade NATO allies such as Germany (64%) or the Baltic nations of Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (57%), while half (50%) favor doing so if North Korea invaded South Korea.
- Democrats (68%) and Independents (55%) are more likely to support defending NATO allies in the Baltics than are Republicans (48%).
- Similarly, Democrats favor defending South Korea from North Korean invasion (57%), while Republicans tend to oppose doing so (53%); Independents are divided (48% favor, 51% oppose).
- Republicans are far more enthusiastic about using US troops to stop migration from Mexico (79%) and to combat Mexican cartels (64%) than are Democrats and Independents.

Majorities Support US Military Bases Abroad, but at Lower Levels

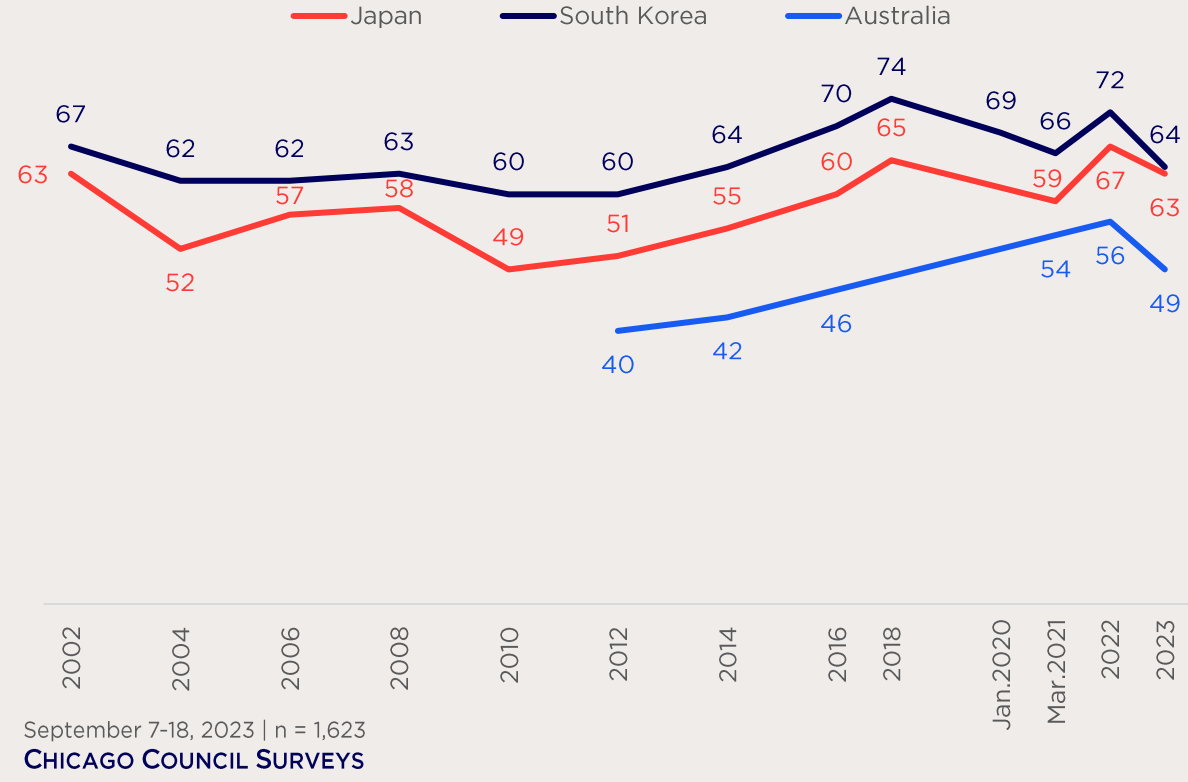
A majority of Americans continue to support US bases in Germany (61%), Poland (54%), and in NATO allies like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (53%). Yet support has declined from 2022 for all three: six points for Poland, down seven points for Germany, and down 12 for the NATO Baltic nations. These drops occur across all party lines. Additionally, the public is now divided over whether the US should have bases in Turkey (50% should, 48% should not), down from the 56 percent who favored Turkish bases in 2022. However, this still represents a higher level of support than has been typical over the past two decades.



Support for US bases in Asia has also declined over the past year. Though majorities of Americans continue to support US bases in South Korea (64%) and Japan (63%), that reflects declines of six and four percentage points, respectively. And Americans are now evenly divided over whether the US should or should not have long-term military bases in Australia (49% each), a decline of seven percentage points from 2022.

Support for US Military Bases in Asia

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

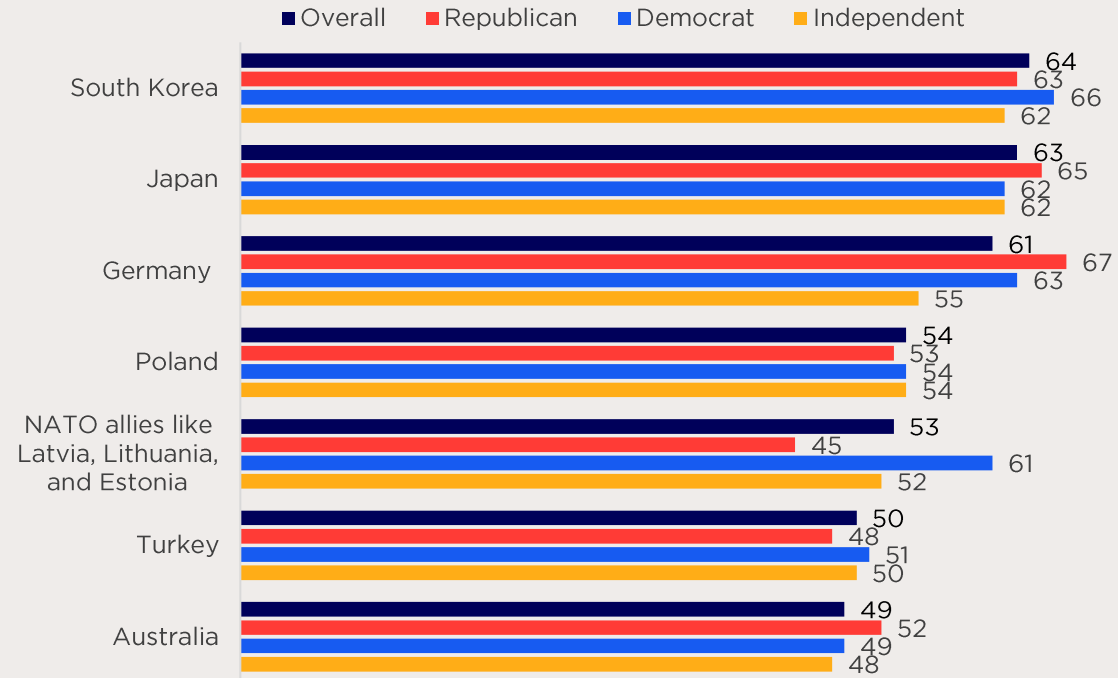


Bipartisan Support for US Bases in Asia and Europe

In general, US bases abroad are an issue with bipartisan support among the public. As the 2023 survey reveals, similar majorities of Americans across party lines favor US bases in South Korea, Japan, and Poland, with majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents all agree the US should have bases in those nations. Bases in Turkey and Australia, however, divide all three partisan groups.

Support for US Military Bases Abroad

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



September 7-18, 2023 | n=1,623
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Two cases stand out as exceptions to this general consensus on US bases. One is Germany, where Republicans and Democrats are both more likely to favor having US bases in Germany than are independents. The second, and most notable, is in the case of America’s NATO Baltic allies. While six in 10 Democrats (61%) and a narrow majority of Independents (52%) say the US should have bases there, a majority of Republicans (53%) say the US should *not* have bases there. This may be an effect of the war in Ukraine, and the prospect that an expanded war could involve both these Baltic nations and the US forces stationed there.

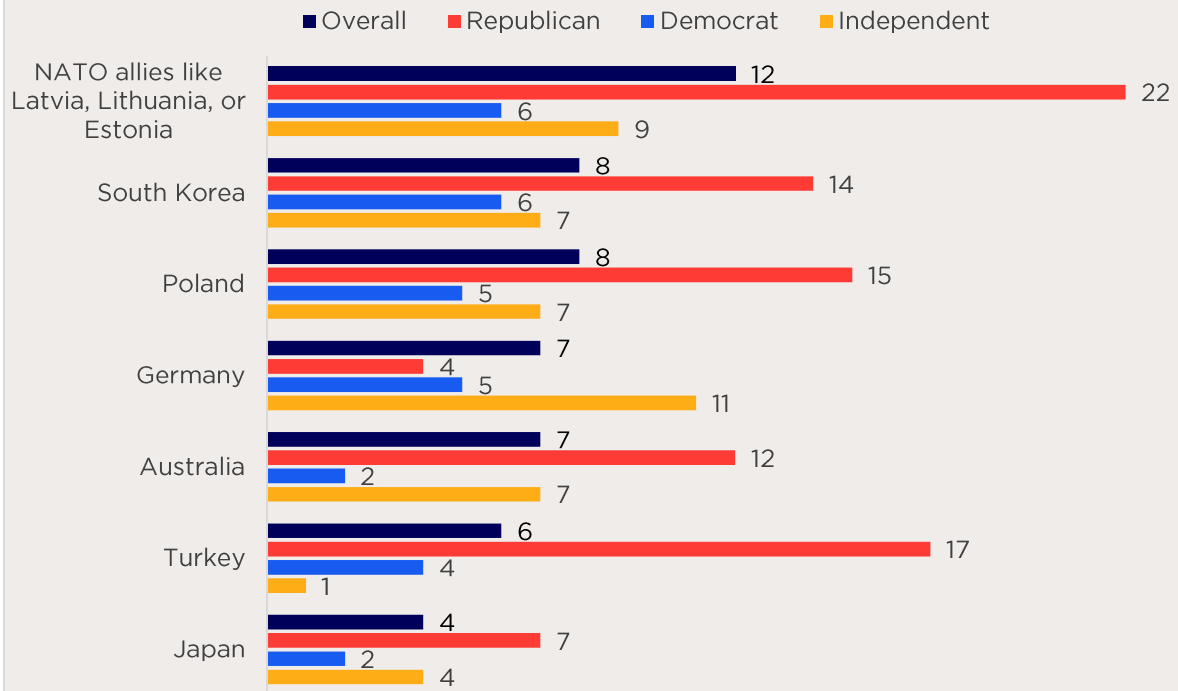
Differential Partisan Declines in US Base Support

The similar level of support for US bases across partisan groups is a departure from the norm. Historically, Republicans have tended to be more supportive of US bases abroad than Independents or Democrats. That is no longer the case. As noted earlier, support for US bases around the world has declined over the past year. However, these declines have taken place to a far greater degree among Republicans than among Democrats or Independents, with support for bases in Germany the sole exception. In Asia, Republican support

fell for bases in Japan (65%, down from 72%), South Korea (63%, from 77%), and Australia (52%, down from 64%). And in Europe, there have been even greater declines in Republican support for bases in Poland (53%, down from 68%), Turkey (48%, down from 65%), and in US NATO Baltic allies like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (45%, down from 67%).

Differential Partisan Declines in US Base Support

Do you think the United States should or should not have long-term military bases in the following places? (Decline in % should have from 2022 to 2023)

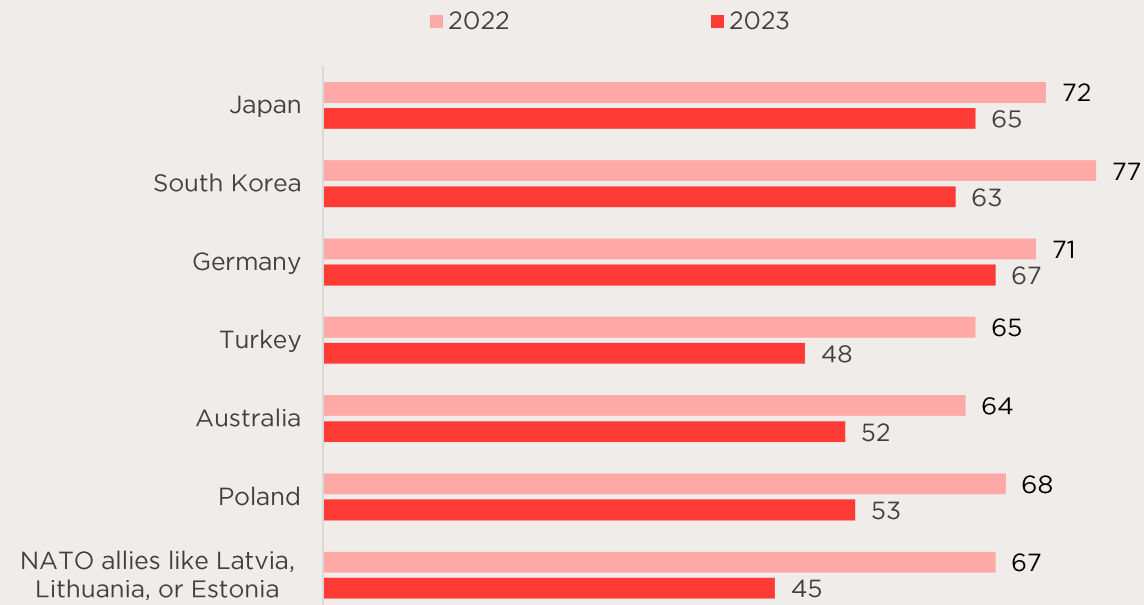


September 7-18, 2023 | n=3,242

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Republican Support for US Bases: 2022 vs. 2023

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



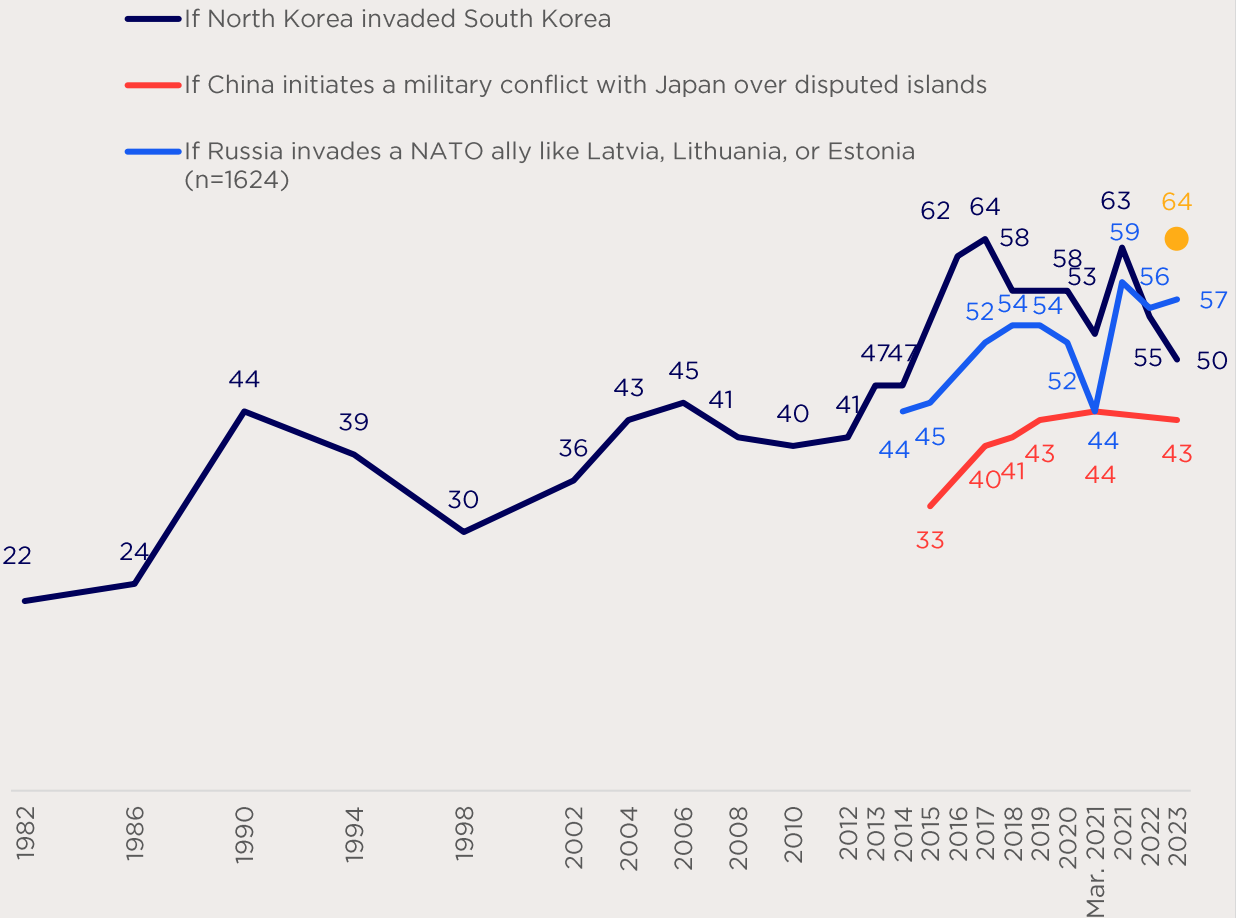
September 7-18, 2023 | n=430
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Public Supports Using US Troops to Defend Allies in Europe, Divided on Korea

A majority of Americans (57%) continue to favor using US troops if Russia invades a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia, and an even higher proportion (64%) favor the use of US troops if Germany were invaded by Russia. The public is less inclined to get involved in conflicts in Asia. Americans are divided on whether or not to commit US troops to defend South Korea in the event of invasion by the North (50% favor, 49% oppose), and a majority oppose using US troops if China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands (55%, 43% favor).

Uses of US Troops to Defend US Allies

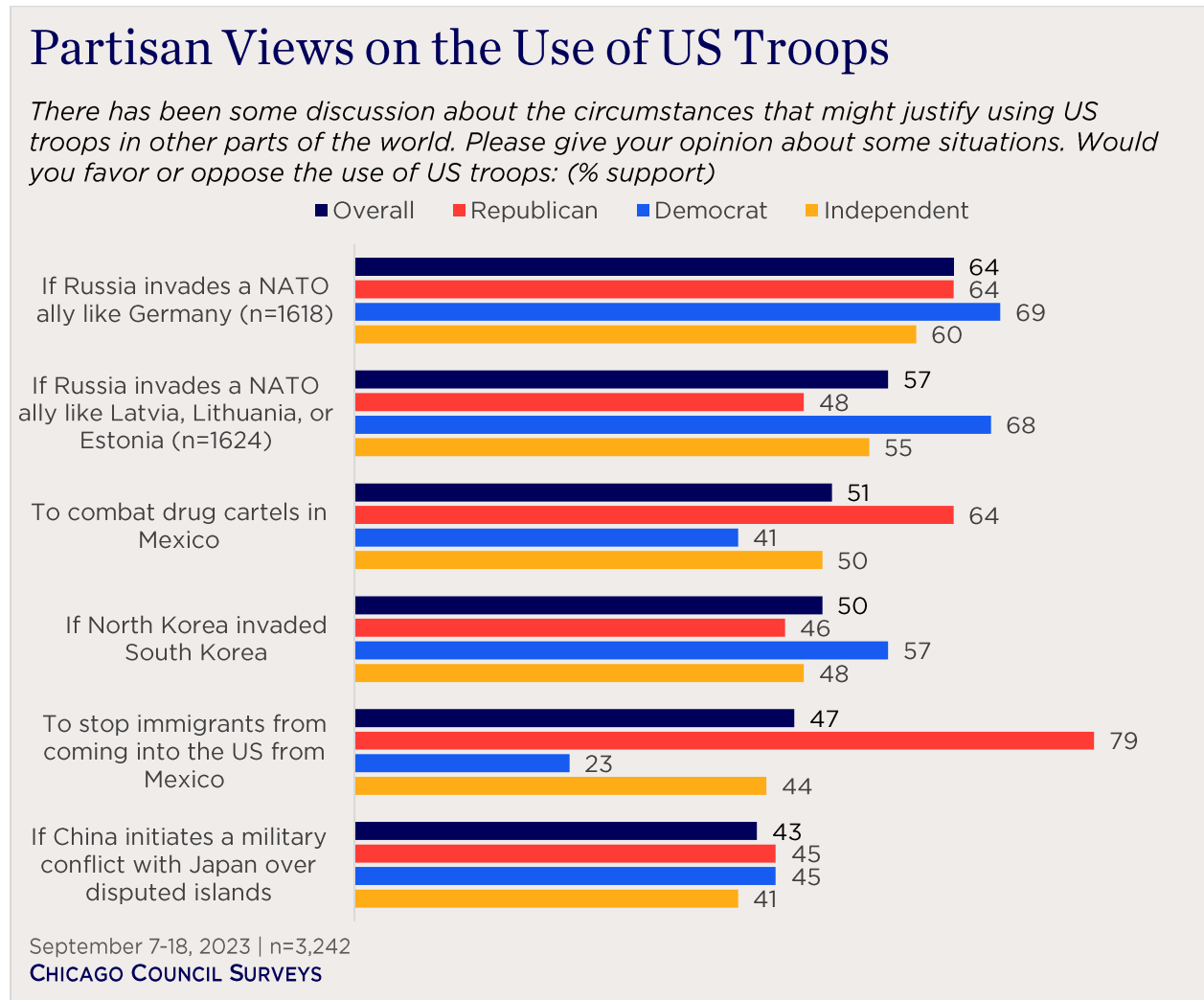
There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using U.S. troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of U.S. troops: (% favor)



September 7-18, 2023 | n = 3,242
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One factor playing a greater role in public support for defending US allies than in the past: partisanship. While majorities of Democrats favor using US troops if Russia were to invade a NATO ally in the Baltics or if North Korea were to invade South Korea, narrow majorities of Republicans oppose doing so in both cases. Instead, Republicans are far more enthusiastic about using US troops to stop migration from Mexico (79%) and to combat Mexican cartels (64%), while majorities of Democrats oppose both of these policies (76% and 59%, respectively). For their part, Independents are divided on using US troops to combat Mexican drug cartels (50% favor, 48% oppose), and a

majority oppose using the military to stop immigration from Mexico (55%, 44% favor).

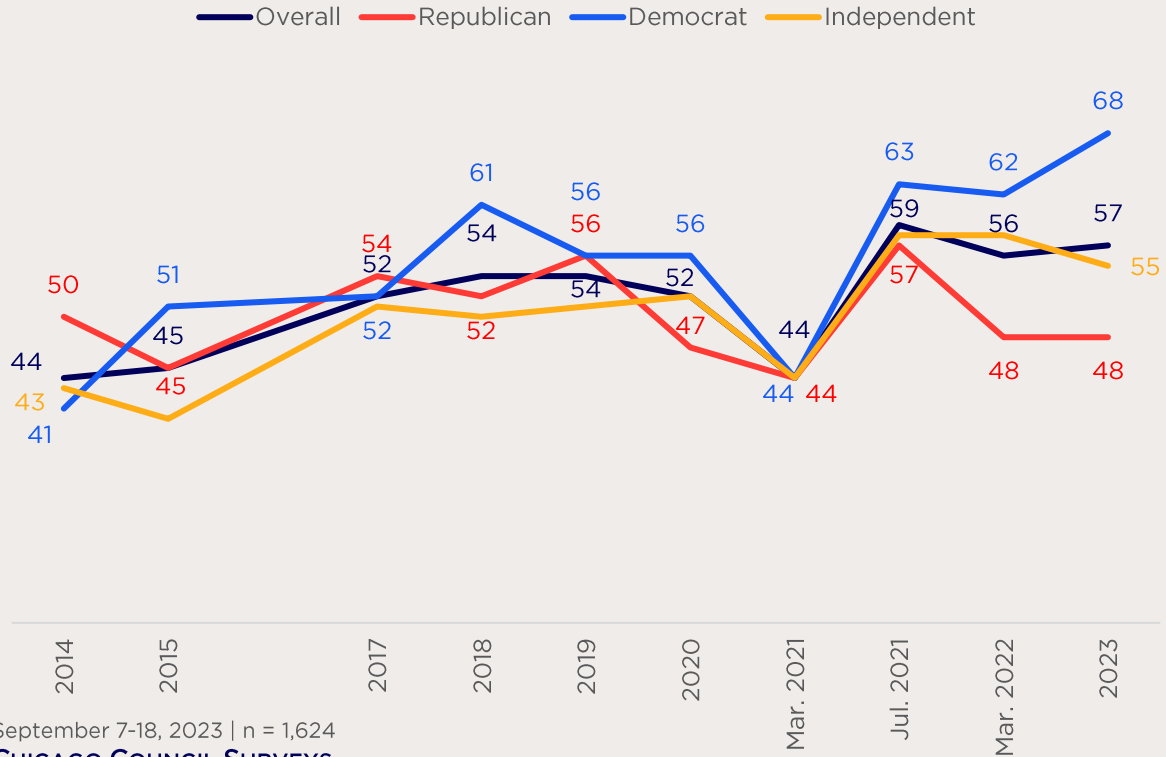


Growing Partisan Divisions on Defending Allies in Europe, Asia

These partisan divisions on coming to the defense of US allies are a new development. In the 2021 Chicago Council Survey, majorities of both Democrats (63%) and Republicans (57%) favored coming to the defense of America’s NATO allies in the Baltics. Since the outbreak of the war, Democrats have become more likely to support sending US troops to defend Baltic NATO allied nations from Russia, while Republicans have shifted to opposing US intervention.

US Defense of NATO Baltic Allies

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using U.S. troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of U.S. troops: If Russia invades a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia (% favor)

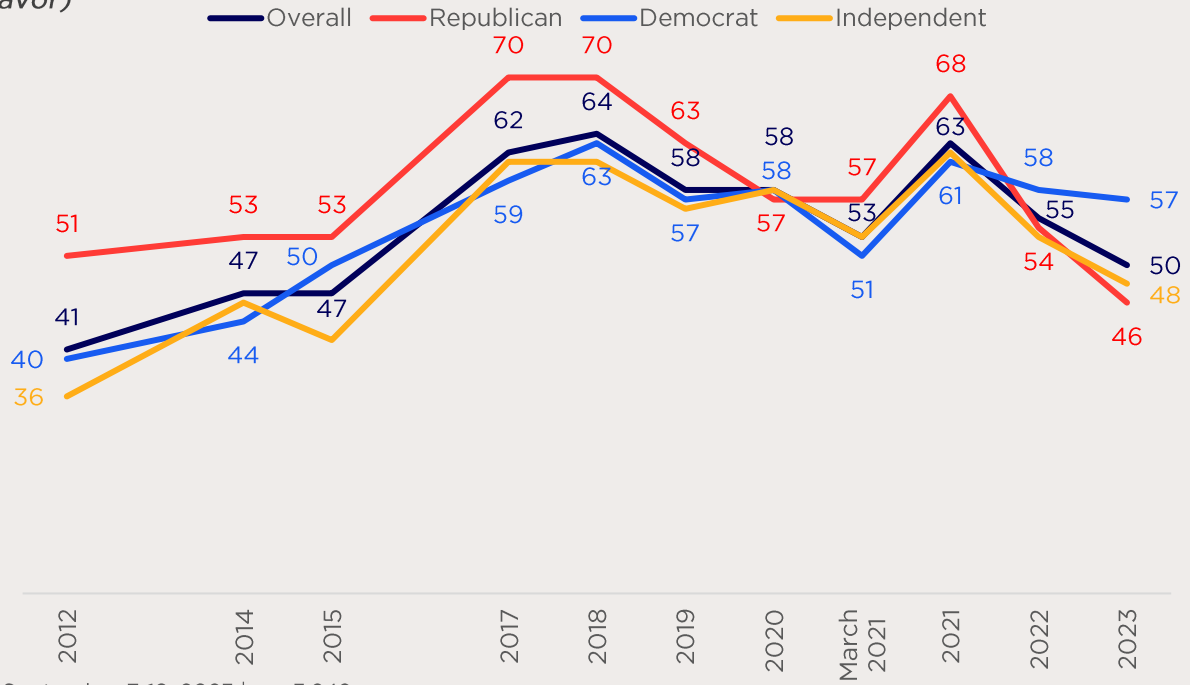


September 7-18, 2023 | n = 1,624
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Nor are the Baltic states the only nations subject to this increasing partisan gap. In 2021, large majorities of both Republicans (68%) and Democrats (61%) both favored using US troops to defend South Korea from invasion by North Korea. Today, a narrow majority of Republicans oppose involving US troops in such a conflict (53%, 46% favor), a decline of 22 percentage points. Democrats (57%) continue to support defending South Korea; Independents are divided (48% favor, 51% oppose).

Use of US Troops to Defend South Korea?

There has been some discussion about the circumstances that might justify using U.S. troops in other parts of the world. Please give your opinion about some situations. Would you favor or oppose the use of U.S. troops: If North Korea invaded South Korea (% favor)



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Conclusion

It is possible that the ongoing war in Ukraine has highlighted the costs to the United States of coming to the aid of US allies, and that the nature of the debate over Ukraine—in which Democrats are more unified while Republicans are more internally divided—is having knock-on effects in other debates about US involvement in international conflicts. If so, these partisan divisions may continue and potentially grow as the war in Ukraine continues.

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.

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 and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

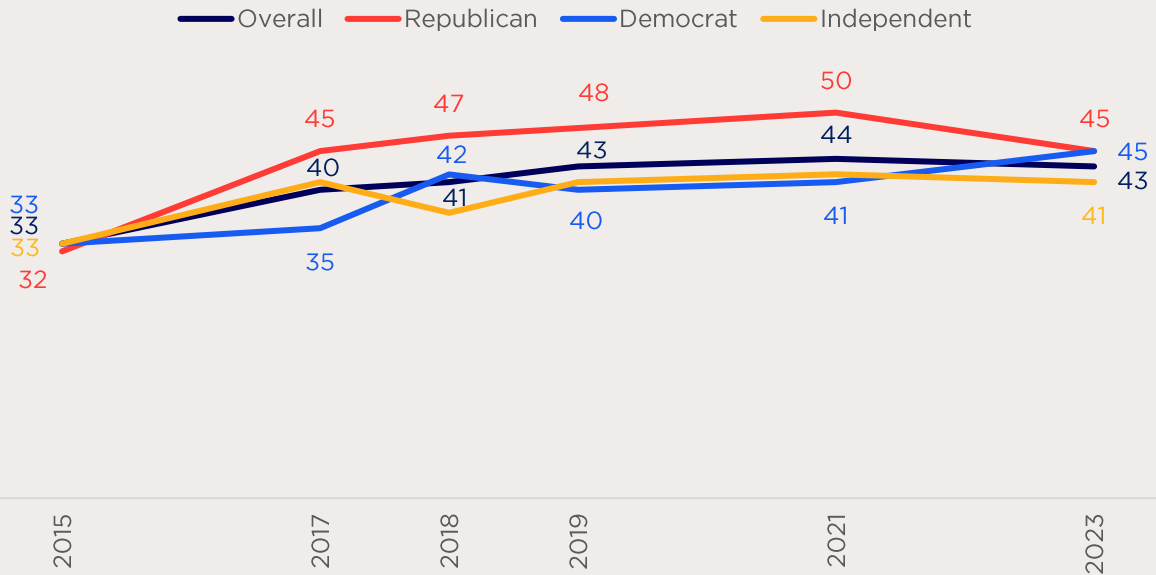
About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

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

US Involvement in Japan-China Conflict

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: If China initiates a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands (% favor)



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