



Partisan, Racial, and Generational Views on America's Global Role

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For the second year in a row, the Chicago Council and New America have partnered on a comprehensive study of American public opinion on foreign policy with an expanded look at the opinions of various racial and ethnic communities in the United States, as well as the views of younger Americans. This report focuses on how these different groups think broadly about the role of the United States in the world, its role as a global leader, and whether the United States is an exceptional nation.

The 2023 Chicago Council Survey, fielded September 7–18, 2023, finds that American support for active US engagement in the world continues to decline. While most White and Asian Americans still support an active role in the world for the country, Black and Hispanic Americans are now divided on the issue. These declines, and these differences, may reflect particular evaluations of the costs and the benefits to maintaining the US role in the world. Those costs also particularly resonate with younger Americans, who

are divided over whether the country should take an active part in world affairs. Yet across groups, majorities say the United States should play a shared, not dominant, leadership role and want the United States to be a world leader in economic and military strength, democratic values, and scientific and technological progress.

Key Findings

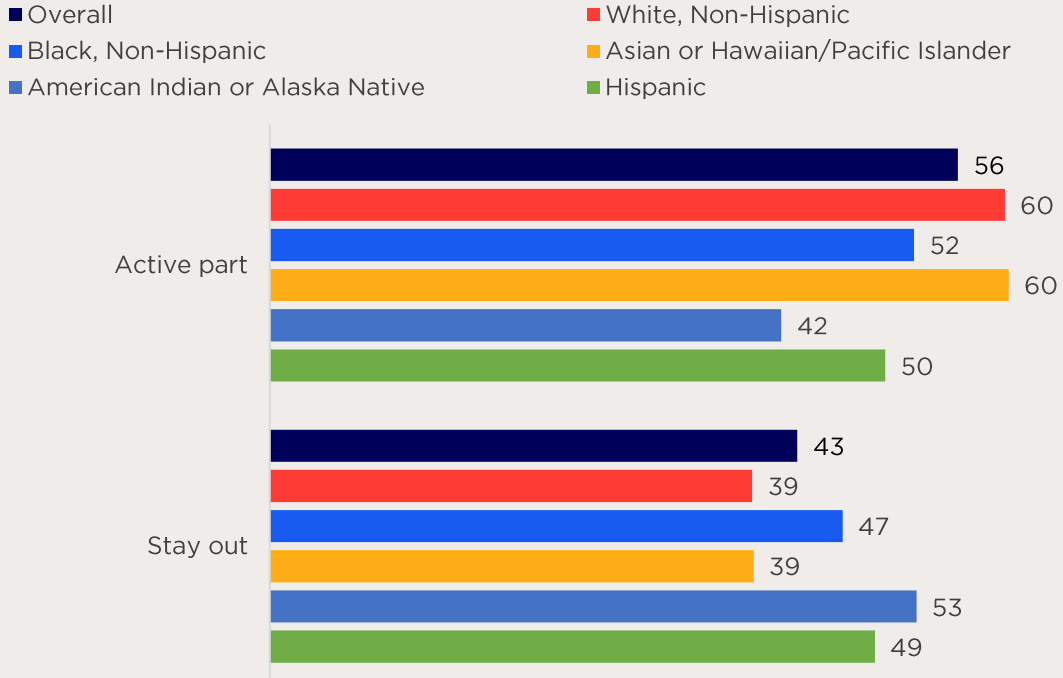
- White and Asian Americans (60% each) are more likely than Black (52%), Hispanic (50%), or Native Americans (42%) to favor an active part in world affairs for the United States.
- Millennials and Gen Z are divided over whether it is better for the future of the country to take an active part in, or stay out, of world affairs.
- While majorities of Asian (68%) and White Americans (61%) view the benefits of the US role in the world as outweighing the costs, Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans are divided on the question.
- There are certain issues that drive particular racial groups' views on US engagement:
 - White Americans are particularly concerned about immigration;
 - Asian Americans are focused on Asia and more supportive of US involvement in a Taiwan crisis;
 - African Americans are the most likely to say it is very important for the United States to be a world leader on human rights;
 - Hispanics are particularly supportive of US leadership on climate change, manufacturing, and humanitarian assistance.
- Across racial, ethnic, and generational lines, majorities say the United States should play a shared, not dominant, leadership role in the world.
- Majorities of all groups agree that it is very important for the United States to be a world leader in economic strength, military strength, democratic values, and scientific and technological progress.

Racial Groups' Views of the US Global Role

The 2023 Chicago Council Survey, conducted September 7–18, 2023, finds that White and Asian Americans (60% each) are more likely than Black (52%), Hispanic (50%), or Native Americans (42%) to favor an active part in world affairs for the United States. Indeed, Black and Hispanic Americans are divided on the question, with similar proportions preferring an active part in or staying out of world affairs.

Active Role in the World?

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)

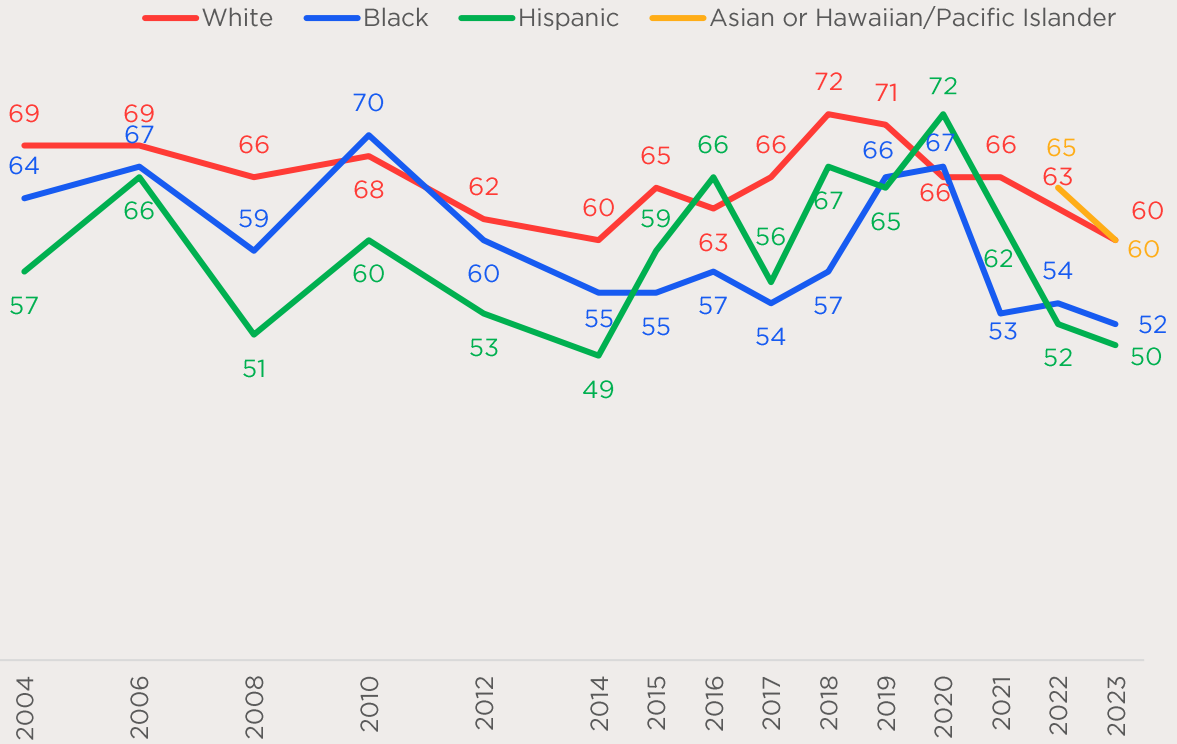


September 7-18, 2023 | n=3,242
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This difference between racial groups on the US role in the world is not entirely a new phenomenon, but it has grown in recent years. Looking back over the past two decades of Chicago Council Survey data, White Americans have tended to be more inclined to support an active role in the world for the United States than Black or Hispanic Americans. However, while Black and Hispanic support for an active role rose notably during the late 2010s, it declined just as rapidly after 2020, resulting in the low levels of support for an active role found today.

Active Role in World Affairs?

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (% active part)



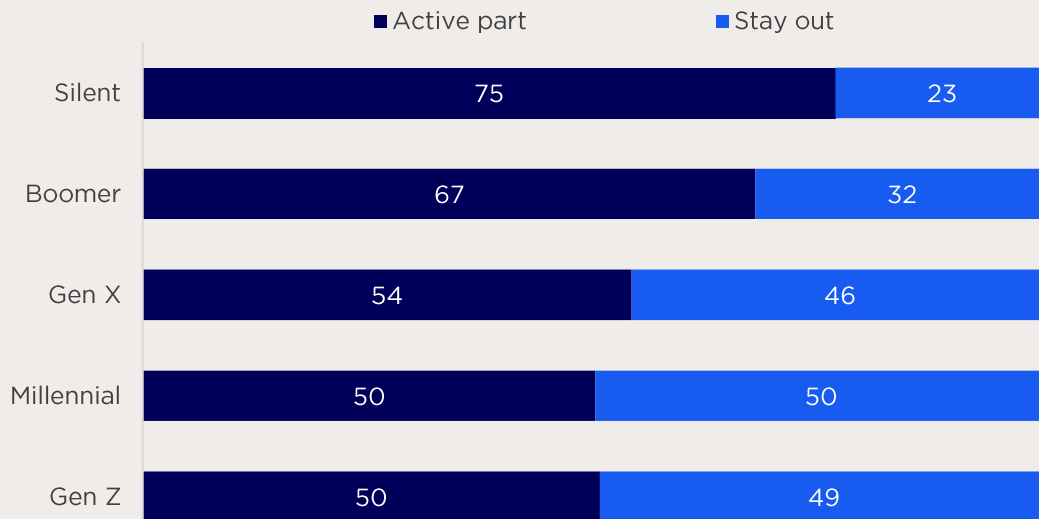
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Young Americans Also More Likely to Question Active US Engagement

Younger Americans are also less likely to prefer an active part in world affairs. As [prior Council analysis has found](#), each successive generation of Americans has been somewhat less likely than the preceding generation to say that an active part in the world is best for the country. Today, Millennials and Gen Z are divided on the proper role for the United States, while older Americans (Silents and Boomers) are more firmly in favor of an active role. For their part, Gen Xers are narrowly on the side of an active role—though their support for an active part has been steadily trending downward since 2018.

Generations and an Active US Role

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (%)



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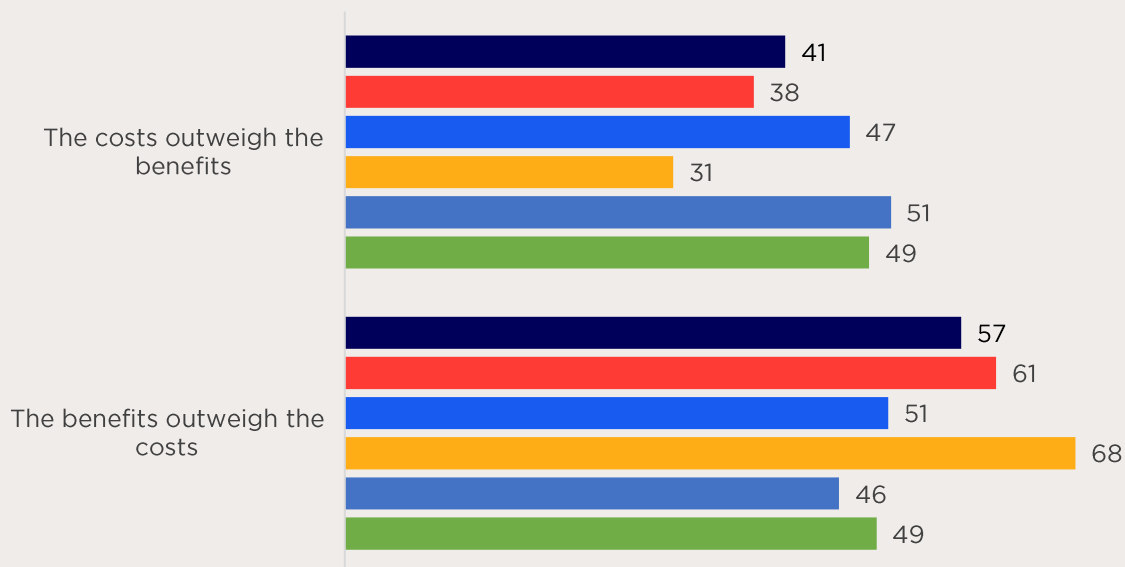
Costs of Maintaining US Role a Key Consideration

As the above analysis highlights, the costs of US foreign policy are a key factor for many Americans, and those who think the United States should stay out of world affairs are more likely than others to say that the costs of maintaining the US role in the world outweigh the benefits. While majorities of Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (AAPI) (68%) and White Americans (61%) view the benefits as outweighing the costs, Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans are divided on the question. One AAPI focus group participant succinctly stated, “We are not deriving benefit relative to the expenditures.”

More Costs or Benefits to US Role in World?

Overall, when it comes to maintaining the US role in the world, do you think: (%)

- Overall
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Asian or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic



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Front and center in Americans' minds right now when discussing the US role in the world is US assistance to Ukraine (and more recently to Israel). The 2023 Chicago Council Survey found that opposition to continued US assistance to Ukraine [contributes to preferences that the United States stay out of world affairs](#). Focusing on US contributions to countries currently in conflict, an African American discussant stated, "I personally feel we are spending entirely too much taxpayer money funding foreign wars. The current administration has basically bankrupted the US."

Other focus group participants criticized the United States for overstepping in foreign affairs at times by interfering in other countries' matters. "It isn't our place to dictate to other countries ... what THEY should do. It is patronizing in some instances," said a Black focus group participant, adding that "we don't always do what is right in our own country—who are we to make those decisions for others?" An AAPI discussant amplified this view: "The United States tries to get involved and tries to help (e.g., provide aid to Ukraine), but I think it ends up being meddlesome." Another person in the same AAPI group summarized, "The US butts its head into literally every foreign matter."

Economic concerns like [inflation](#) and a sense that the United States is spending abroad at the expense of improving the situation for Americans is on many focus group participants' minds. "The United States lost its focus on improving internal issues with more unnecessary secondary global issues," noted one AAPI respondent. A Hispanic participant agreed, "We have neglected our own development as a nation in favor of every other nation." "I think the United States does too much; we need to take care of our own," echoed a Black focus group member. A participant in the young adult focus group remarked along the same lines, "We spend more time and money on other countries than we do on our own people and our own country's problems."

By contrast, Americans who prefer an active part in the world support helping other countries, including providing Ukraine with economic assistance and additional arms and military supplies. "The US should take a more aggressive role in the conflicts in Ukraine, Sudan, and Israel," said one Hispanic participant. "Sitting back and waiting for the world to agree with us does nothing but allow and even excuse the violence." A Black participant added, "We should come to the aid of some countries [that] cannot protect themselves."

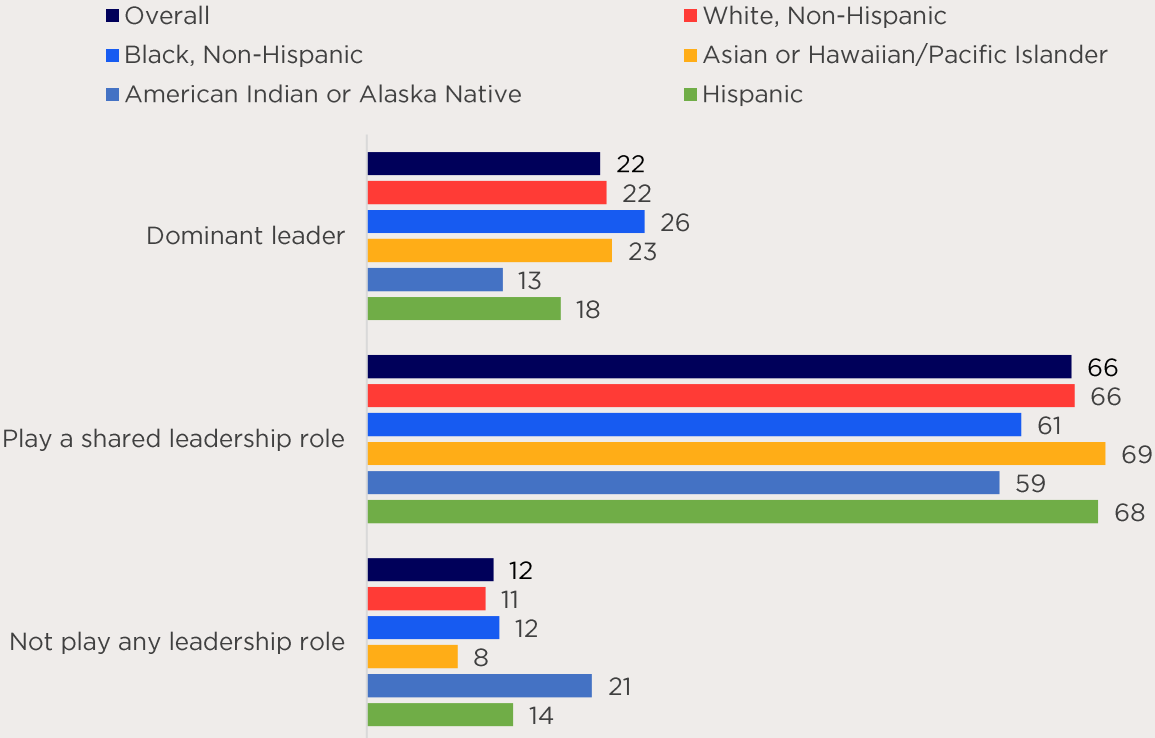
Some in the young adult focus group agreed, such as one participant who stated, "The Russians cannot be allowed to keep taking over countries as they have been doing. Israel cannot be allowed to slaughter Palestinian civilians who are innocent." Another corroborated this view: "While the United States is not and should not be the 'police force' of the world, there is clearly a need for increased demonstration of military and political strength to dissuade foreign nations from committing war crimes and closing off important trade routes."

Preference for Shared US Leadership Role across Groups

Despite different views on the role the United States should have in the world, Americans across racial and ethnic lines say the United States should play a shared leadership role. This is a deep consensus: even those Americans who prefer the United States stay out of world affairs say the nation should play a shared leadership role in the world, a finding that holds true across racial and ethnic groups.

US Leadership Role

What kind of leadership role should the United States play in the world? Should it be the dominant leader, or should it play a shared leadership role, or should it not play any leadership role? (%)



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Focus group participants offered varying reasons for wanting a shared leadership role. Many pointed to the fact that the United States can't solve all the world problems in isolation and working with other countries can be a force multiplier. "We can't handle all the problems by ourselves," noted one AAPI participant. A Hispanic participant agreed, "We need allies. We can't solve the world's problems on our own." Along the same lines, someone from the young adults group remarked, "The United States can do a lot by itself, but we could achieve a greater impact if other nations played a stronger role."

Others pointed to the burden-sharing aspects of working with other countries. In the Hispanic focus group, one person said it was important to "get the support of other allies, [their] money, and [their] military." Another person in the same group added, "We are no longer the power country we once were. We need to work along with other countries." And an individual in the AAPI group offered this: "Shared roles will entice other nations to be more open and pool their resources, which greatly enhances the outcome."

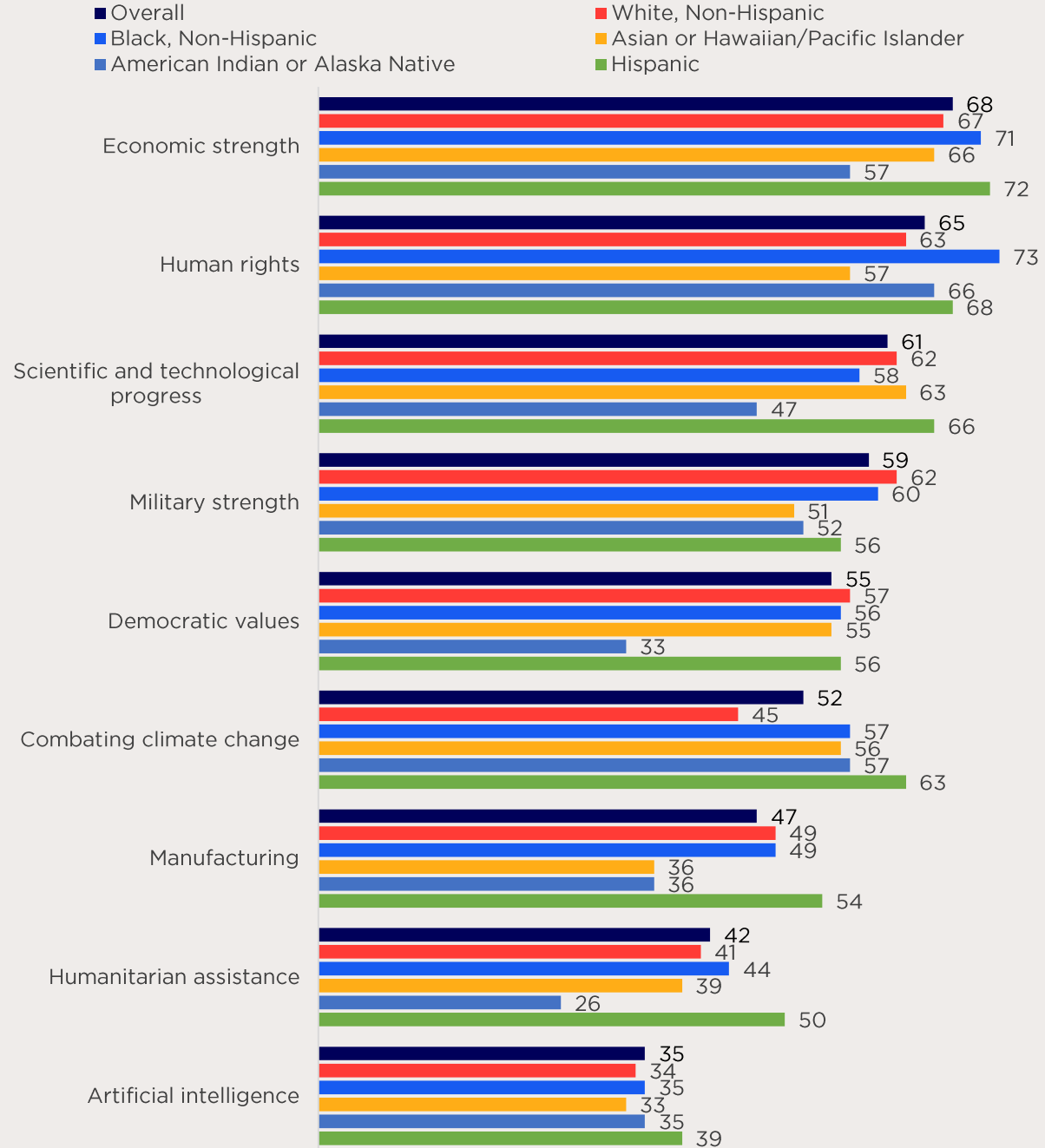
A few others thought working with other countries had a side benefit that would make sure the United States would be constrained from potential overreach. A Black focus group participant commented that “existing [international] structures are weak, but a US go-it-alone [approach] doesn’t work well, and [the United States] falls into selfishness or willful blindness.” A participant from the youth focus group had something similar to say: “We can’t be trusted to make a fully unbiased decision, and the US government is very known for going to war for its own benefit under the guise of freedom or anti-terrorism.”

Several focus group contributors noted that while it would be optimal for the United States to play a shared leadership role working within organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN) and they are not seen as effective. For example, one Hispanic participant noted that “because the UN and NATO don’t do anything we always have to save the day.” Someone from the young adult group agreed, saying, “We are not big enough to do it alone; we need allies but the UN and NATO seem to not do much. We need allies with teeth.”

While there is agreement on a shared leadership role for the United States, exactly what the United States should be a leader *in* varies somewhat across different racial and ethnic groups. Majorities of all groups agree that it is very important for the United States to be a world leader in economic strength, military strength, and human rights—with African Americans in particular viewing world leadership in human rights as very important for the country. Majorities of most groups also say it is very important for the US to be a world leader on scientific and technical progress, democratic values, and combating climate change—an especially important priority for Hispanics. Majorities of Hispanics also say it’s very important for the US to lead in manufacturing (54%) and humanitarian assistance (50%).

Very Important for US to be a World Leader in...

People have different ideas about the role of the United States in the world. How important do you feel it is for the United States to be a world leader in...? (% very important)



Different Factors Related to Views on an Active Role or Staying Out of World Affairs

An active part in the world, or staying out of world affairs, can mean different things to different people. This is especially true across different racial and generational groups, for whom different issues are more—or less—related to their views on the proper role in the world for the country.

There are some similarities. Across racial groups, those who want the US to take an active part in world affairs are more likely to view climate change and US political polarization as a critical threat to the United States, are more likely to say that US leaders are not paying enough attention to the issue of climate change, and more likely to say it's very important for the US to be a world leader in democratic values. By contrast, those who say the United States should stay out of world affairs are generally less likely to view various items as critical threats to the US, though White and Hispanic Americans are more likely to be concerned about a global economic downturn.

But some racial groups also have more specific and unique areas of difference when it comes to their views on the US role in the world.

Black Americans: American Exceptionalism

For most racial groups, views of the US as the greatest country in the world and preferences for an active part in the world are not particularly related. Black Americans are the exception. A majority of Black Americans who prefer an active US role in the world say the United States is the greatest country in the world (55%, vs. 44% no greater than other nations), while Black Americans who want the US to stay out of world affairs tend to say the United States is no greater than other nations (61%, vs. 38% greatest country).

“The US must be involved as the lead moderator and as the role model that other countries can look to and emulate,” said a Black focus group participant. “We set the example for democratic freedoms like speech and voting rights.”

Hispanic Americans: Heightened Economic Concerns

Among Hispanic Americans, economic concerns are more tightly connected to their views of the US role in the world than is true for other groups. Hispanics who want the US to stay out of world affairs are more likely than other Hispanics to name a global economic downturn as a critical threat (66%, vs. 58% of active-part Hispanics). Stay-out Hispanics are also somewhat different from other groups when it comes to US trade policy. Uniquely, half (52%) opt for a US trade policy with no restrictions to ensure consumers have the lowest prices and the most choices. By contrast, active-part Hispanics—

and majorities of every other group, regardless of their view of the US role in the world—prefer that US trade policy have restrictions on imported goods to protect American jobs.

In focus group discussions among Hispanics, economics and trade came up frequently. As one said, “At a purely transactional level, we can use our foreign policy to promote and advance U.S. security goals [and] promote free trade and trade policies.” And one participant who thought the US role was too big argued for “economic influence through free trade, [which] will spread more peace than being politically involved.”

White Americans: The Role of Immigration

For White Americans, views on immigration and whether the US should play an active part in world affairs also seem to be linked. White Americans who want the US to stay out of world affairs are far more likely to favor cuts to legal immigration (47%, vs. 26% among Whites who favor an active role for the US). Similarly, White Americans who want to stay out of world affairs are far more likely to oppose the United States accepting immigrants from a variety of countries and are far more likely to view large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the country as a critical threat (62%, vs. 37% of Whites who favor an active US role in the world). As one White focus group participant put it, “Immigration is a current threat and a problem to the US. Every other issue is foreign and not as big of a concern currently. We should deal with local issues before worrying about foreign issues that don’t affect us as much.”

Asian Americans: Staying Out—With One Critical Exception

Asian Americans who say the United States should stay out of world affairs generally look like other Americans when it comes to most policy issues. And like other Americans who say the US should stay out of world affairs, Asian Americans who want the US to stay out are less likely to view US security relationships as benefiting US security and less likely to support US bases overseas. However, were China to invade Taiwan, even Asian Americans who prefer to stay out of world affairs support a range of responses by the United States, including sending additional arms to Taiwan, using the US military to airlift supplies to Taiwan, and using the US Navy to break a blockade around the island. In such a crisis, the critical difference between Asian Americans who support an active role and those who prefer to stay out is whether or not to send US troops into the fight directly. Two-thirds (64%) of Asian Americans who prefer an active part would favor sending US troops to aid Taiwan defend itself against an invasion, compared to 37 percent of Asian Americans who prefer to stay out of world affairs.

“We need to maintain connections with allies, improve free trade, and bolster defenses of Ukraine and Taiwan, Japan, [and the] Philippines against illegal actions by dictatorial and fascist governments,” said one Asian American focus group participant. Another noted, “People seem to forget what happens when [the] US is isolationist....Have fun enjoying your ‘cost savings’ when you are living in a Russia- and China-controlled country.”

Millennials and Gen Z: Less Militaristic, More Cost-Conscious

Millennials and Gen Z don’t have a completely different worldview than other Americans. Analysis of the survey data finds the relationship between major foreign policy questions and their general views on an active part in or staying out of world affairs is similar to older generations. But as generational cohorts, they are generally less likely to support policies that involve military force or higher costs. For example, Millennials and Gen Z are less likely to support the US maintaining long-term military bases in a range of nations, less likely to support the use of US troops (though defending NATO allies is an exception), and less likely to support providing economic aid, F-16 jets, or cluster munitions to Ukraine.

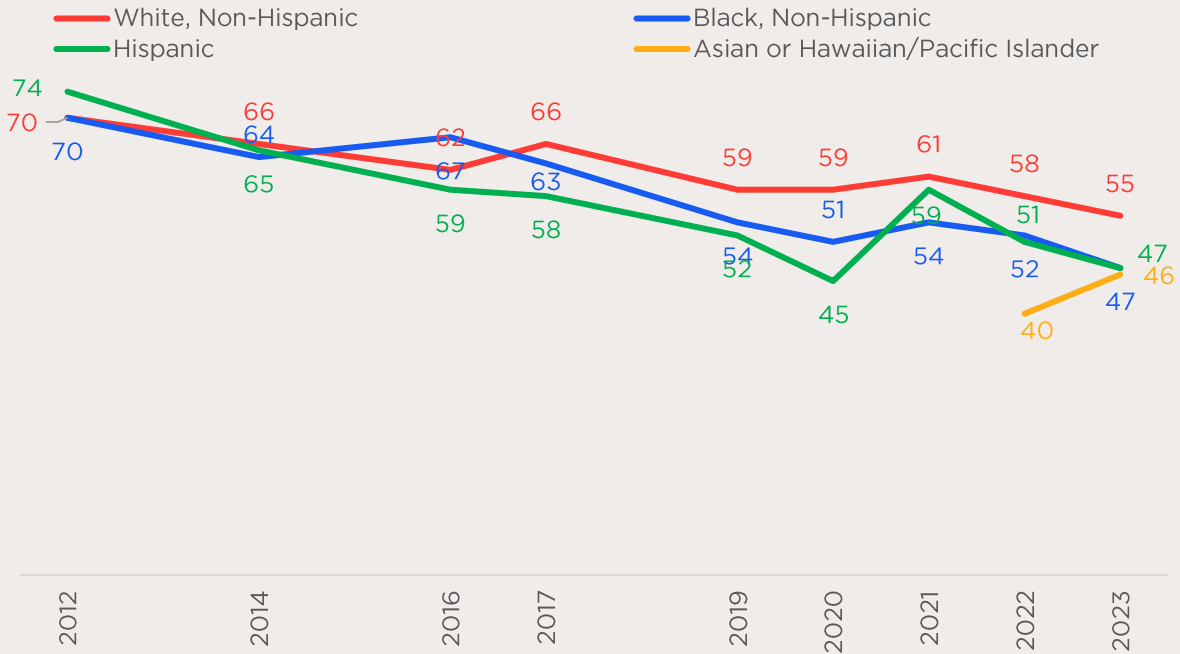
These younger generations may also be more sensitive to the costs involved: they are more likely than older generations to say that the costs of the US role in the world outweigh the benefits of that role, are more concerned than older generations about the prospect of a global economic downturn, and are more likely to favor a US trade policy that prioritizes low prices over protecting American jobs. As one youth focus group participant said, “The US role on the world stage can often draw resources and attention away from domestic issues. Though built on decades of commitments, it leads to difficult positions that result in little return as compared to what the same level of investment would provide in sorting out domestic affairs.”

Views of American Exceptionalism

One historic rationale for America’s active role in the world is that America is a unique and indispensable nation. However, this public conception of the country has been declining for the past ten years across racial and ethnic groups and across generational cohorts. A decade ago, large majorities of White, Black, and Hispanic Americans all saw the United States as the greatest country in the world. Today, while a majority of White Americans still view the US as the greatest country in the world (55%, a record low), slim majorities of Asian (53%), Black (52%), and Hispanic Americans (52%) all say the United States is no greater than other nations.

American Exceptionalism

Some people say the United States has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world. Others say that every country is unique, and the United States is no greater than other nations. Which view is closer to your own? (% greatest country in the

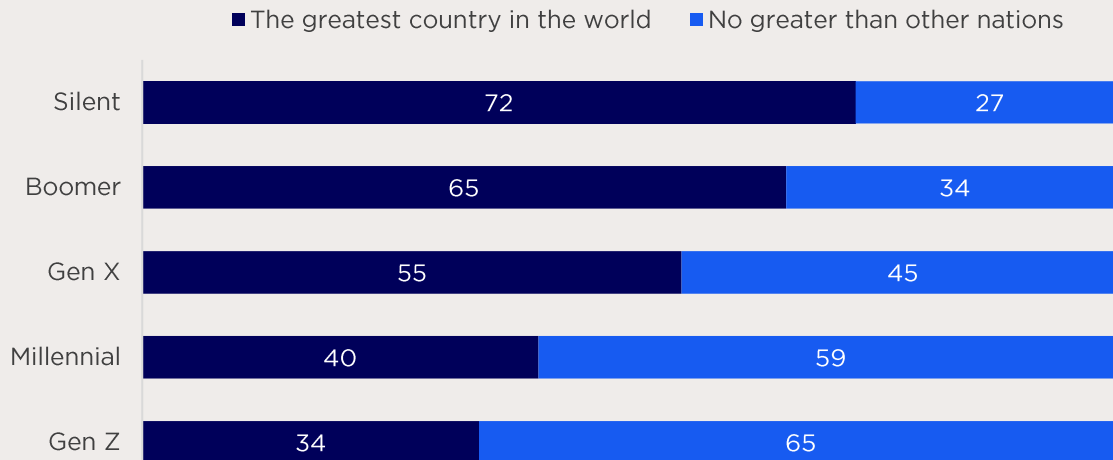


September 7-18, 2023 | n = 1,623
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While there are modest differences between racial and ethnic groups, the differences between generational cohorts are significantly larger. Large majorities of older Americans believe that the United States is the greatest country in the world, while majorities of younger Americans believe the United States is no greater than other nations. As one Millennial Asian-American focus group participant put it, “Americans as a whole seem too proud about how great their country is and use that bias to either insulate themselves or not care enough about what happens unless it affects them personally and economically.”

Generations and American Exceptionalism

Some people say the United States has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world. Others say that every country is unique, and the United States is no greater than other nations. Which view is closer to your own? (%)



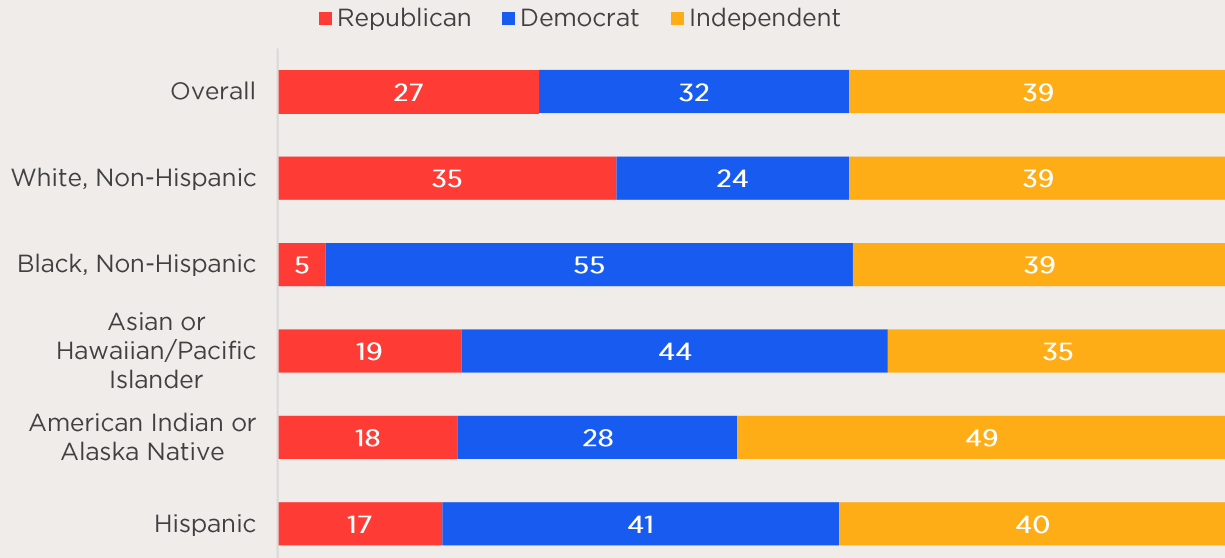
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Partisanship Plays a Significant Role in Views about US Role in the World

As with many policy issues, partisanship plays a significant role in shaping American views about the US role in the world, with Democrats (70%) far more likely than Republicans (47%) or Independents (53%) to say the United States should take an active part in world affairs. And compared to the overall American population (which is 32% Democratic, 27% Republican and 39% Independents), Black (55%), Hispanic (41%), and Asian Americans (44%) are more likely to self-identify as Democrats. However, even accounting for partisanship, there are notable differences between racial and ethnic groups when it comes to the US role in the world. Among both Democrats and Independents, White and Asian Americans are more inclined to support an active US role in the world than are Black or Hispanic Americans.

Partisan Affiliation by Race/Ethnicity

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what? (%)



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Conclusion

With ongoing conflicts in Europe and the Middle East—and the looming threat of conflict in Asia—Americans are perhaps more keenly aware now than in the past of the tradeoffs inherent in US foreign policy. And as the 2023 Chicago Council Survey data show, different racial and ethnic groups in the United States have slightly differing focuses and emphases as they think about US foreign policy and the US role in the world. These differing evaluations of the priorities of the country, and the appropriate costs to bear to pursue those priorities, lead to somewhat divergent opinions about the role of the United States abroad. They also lead different groups to prioritize US involvement in different regions of the world, priorities that bear directly on the key foreign policy debates of today—and often in differing directions from one another. Policymakers will face the challenging task of responding to these competing demands from different constituencies without overstressing the nation’s limited foreign policy resources.

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 2023 survey sample is composed of a main sample (n=2,184) and several supplementary “booster” oversamples that allow for more detailed demographic analysis: a Hispanic oversample (n=305), a Black American oversample (n=281), an American Indian/Alaskan Native oversample (n=123), a Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander oversample (n=129), and an Asian oversample (n=330). 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, racial, and age subgroups or for partial-sample items. Additionally, because the American Indian/Alaskan Native subsample is small and required significant weighting to match the population demographics noted in the March 2023 Current Population Survey Supplemental Data, conclusions drawn from this sample should be considered suggestive and interpreted with caution.

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?”

For generational results, Americans are categorized into generational cohorts based on their birth year. Those born between 1928 and 1945 are considered the Silent Generation; between 1946 and 1964 are considered the Baby Boomer Generation; between 1965 and 1980 are considered Generation X; between 1981 and 1996 are considered the Millennial Generation; and finally, those born after 1997 are considered Generation Z.

Following the 2023 Chicago Council Survey, Ipsos conducted four online focus groups among Hispanic Americans; Black Americans; Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander Americans (AAPI); and young Americans between the ages of 18–29, between March 13 and 19, 2024. Each of the respondents were members of the KnowledgePanel, Ipsos’ probability-based, online panel, and had previously completed the Chicago Council’s Annual Survey in September 2023. Respondents were recontacted in March 2024 to participate in an 80-minute, online focus group. Each group was conducted among 24 to 49 participants of like age, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Ipsos’ online focus

group methodology, called “Ipsos Ideation Exchange,” is built on the Converge platform. Respondents are led through a series of exercises, proctored by a human moderator. Respondents answer questions individually first, with respondents being able to see other participants’ responses and build on them. Respondents participate using a mix of open-end response, voting, rating, and ranking exercises.

The 2023 Chicago Council Survey is made possible by the generous support of the Crown family, the Korea Foundation, the United States-Japan Foundation, and New America.

[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).

[About New America](#)

New America is a think and action tank dedicated to renewing the Promise of America in an age of rapid technological and social change. Its work prioritizes care and family wellbeing, advances technology in the public interest, reimagines global cooperation, builds effective democracy, and ensures affordable and accessible education for all. Learn more at newamerica.org.

[About the Planetary Politics Initiative](#)

New America's Planetary Politics initiative is a call to action for reimagining a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable global order. As our world becomes hotter, wetter, and more digitalized and complex, the time to build a new vision for global cooperation attuned to today's environment—in preparation for tomorrow—is now.