America Isolationism: Myth or Reality?

- AAPOR Conference
- May 2014
- Dina Smeltz, Senior Fellow on Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs
- Gregory Holyk, Research Analyst, Langer Research Associates

Chicago Council Survey 2012
- Total Sample Size: 1,877
  - 1,790 adult respondents, nationally representative
  - An oversample of 175 “Millennials” (18-29)
  - Full sample margin of error +/- 3%
- Fielding Dates: May 25 – June 8, 2012
- Fielding Method:
  - GfK Custom Research
  - Randomly selected sample of GfK’s nationwide research panel
  - Survey administered over the internet

WSJ/NBC Poll 4/14: “Americans Want to Pull Back from World Stage, Poll Says”

Chicago Council Survey 2012: Overall Support for Continued US Engagement

Do you think it is best for the future of our country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs?

Who Wants to Stay Out of World Affairs?

- Open Ends: Those who want to focus on domestic problems; Those who prefer that the US interfere less internationally; and those think other countries depend on the US
- Age 18-29
- Less Educated
- Democrats/Independents more than GOP
  - But still majorities among all three partisan groups

What Factors Contribute to Foreign Policy Mood?

- Experience of Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan
- Declining Desire to Use Force
- Diminished Sense of Threat
- Macro-level domestic conditions, especially economic

Experience of Recent Wars

Costs of War in Afghanistan Perceived To Be Greater than Benefits
Experience of Recent Wars

Costs of War in Iraq Perceived To Be Greater than Benefits

Declining Desire to Use Force

Declining Sense of Threat

Economic Conditions Another Factor

- Lower Incomes More Likely to Say Stay Out of World Affairs
- Loss of American Jobs Highest Threat
- Related to Decline in Support for Defense Spending and Economic Aid to other countries
Economic Conditions

“Staying Out” of World Affairs Higher among Lower Incomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Staying Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%–19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%–29%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%–49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%–69%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%–89%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>90%+</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Best for the future of the country to take an active part in world affairs- by income

- Lower incomes: 52%
- Upper incomes: 22%

Protecting Jobs Highest Goal

Foreign Policy Goals (% very important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the jobs of American workers</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing the spread of nuclear weapons</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combating international terrorism</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining superior military power worldwide</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combating and reducing illegal immigration</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combating world hunger</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening the United Nations</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting climate change</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting and defending human rights in other countries</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaying to bring a democratic form of government</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economic Conditions

Less Active Role ≠ Retreat

Americans Still Express Desire to Engage

- 61% active role
- Americans support strong U.S. leadership abroad (82%), but are comfortable with rising regional powers and want more cooperation
- Want a shared leadership role, not US dominance
- Support a diplomacy-first response to international crises

Americans Value Military Superiority But also Support Diplomatic Efforts

- Americans view U.S. military superiority as the most effective approach to achieving foreign policy goals
- But majorities also consider non-military approaches somewhat effective

Effectiveness of Approaches in Achieving Foreign Policy Goals of the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining U.S. military superiority</td>
<td>Very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building alliances with new countries</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing free trade agreements with other countries</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting democracy in other countries</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating stronger international peer relationships</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving international trade disputes</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening the United Nations</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting climate change</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting and defending human rights in other countries</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaying to bring a democratic form of government</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Americans Support Engagement in Non-Forceful Ways, Even with Hostile Nations

- Treaties
- Alliances, international orgs
- Support overseas military presence
- Positive toward globalization
- Favor dialogue with hostile actors
- Prefer diplomatic solutions to international crises

Americans Support Dialogue with Actors Hostile to US

- Public endorses diplomatic engagement with leaders of hostile nations and groups
- Support lower for engagement with non-state actors

Americans Prefer Diplomacy-First Approach to Delicate Situations

- Strong majorities of Americans support diplomatic engagement and sanctions to deal with Iran’s nuclear program, but prefer multilateral action
- 45% support a military strike if under UN authority

Support for UN Security Actions to Stop Iran’s Nuclear Program (% strongly or somewhat support):
- Continue diplomatic efforts to get Iran to stop enriching uranium: 80%
- Impose tighter economic sanctions on Iran: 80%
- Authorize military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities: 69%
- Not pressure Iran to stop enriching uranium: 83%

Support for Actions with Respect to Syria (%):
- Increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Syria: 82%
- Enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria: 68%
- Sending arms and supplies to anti-government groups in Syria: 67%
- Bombing Syrian air defenses: 37%
- Sending troops into Syria: 15%
Willing to Support Use of Force if Security Is Threatened/ Humanitarian Crises

More Inclined to Support Use of Force in a Multilateral Framework

Even Those Who Want to “Stay out” of World Affairs Support Engagement

- Majorities among those who want to stay out of world affairs still express support for:
  - Strong US leadership in the world
  - Actions against terrorism
  - Humanitarian interventions
  - International treaties and agreements

Majority of Those Who Want to “Stay out” of World Affairs Support Strong US Leadership

How desirable is that the U.S. exert strong leadership in world affairs?

- Desirable: 25%
- Undesirable: 14%
Those Who Want to “Stay out” of World Affairs Favor Use of Force for Key Anti-Terror Measures

Majorities of Those Who Want to “Stay Out” of World Affairs Favor Treaties

Majorities of Those Who Want to “Stay Out” of World Affairs Support Use of Force for Humanitarian Efforts & Protecting Oil Supply

Conclusions

- Sobered by the experience of two wars and economic setbacks, Americans want to be engaged in the world, but in more selective and less costly ways
- Americans seek a foreign policy characterized by:
  - Extensive use of diplomatic resources
  - Cooperation with other nations
  - Selective, multilateral uses of force
STAY TUNED FOR NEW 2014 RESULTS

- dsmeltz@thechicagocouncil.org
- @roguepollster
- www.runningnumbers.org

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