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**Perceived Politicization Drives Declining Confidence in the U.S. Military, but Americans Continue to Support U.S. Leadership Abroad, Reveals 2022 Reagan National Defense Survey**

*A majority of Americans want the U.S. to continue standing with Ukraine to oppose Russian aggression while recognizing China poses the greatest threat to the U.S.*

**SIMI VALLEY, California** - The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute today released the results of its fifth annual National Defense Survey. The national public opinion poll reveals that Americans want the United States to lead in the world, act as an arsenal of democracy, and maintain its commitments to global alliances.

“Our survey shows that Americans are firmly resolved, as President Reagan was, that the United States has an obligation to fiercely protect our nation and freedom in the world,” said the Director of the Ronald Reagan Institute Roger Zakheim. “Forty years ago, President Reagan demanded we stand up against authoritarianism in all its forms. His legacy lives on through an American citizenry committed to global leadership and a military focused on defending freedom without the distraction of daily political whims.”

Notably, the Survey reflects trust and confidence in the United States military has declined by more than 20 points in recent years. The primary reason for this decline is the perceived politicization of the military.

The 2022 survey also examines Americans’ positions on the most pressing national security issues of our time, including support for Ukraine in its fight for freedom, views on NATO’s role and membership, resolve that China poses the great threat to the United States alongside uncertainty that America has a clear strategy to manage the tenuous relationship, as well as the longstanding favorability of President Reagan and his legacy.

A summary of the survey and the raw polling data are available online at: [www.reaganfoundation.org/defensesurvey](http://www.reaganfoundation.org/defensesurvey).

Key takeaways include:

- **Perceived Politicization Drives Declining Confidence in the Military.** Just four years ago, 70% of survey respondents said they had a great deal of trust and confidence in the military. However, that percentage steadily declined, and last year, for the first time, a minority of Americans had the highest level of confidence in the military, only 45%. This year, that trend appears to be stabilizing. Now 48% say they have a great deal of trust and confidence in the military.

According to the survey, a variety of factors are decreasing public confidence in the military, including perceptions by 62% of Americans that military leadership are becoming overly politicized. Nearly 60% of respondents say that performance and competence of presidents as commanders-in-chief is decreasing their confidence in the military and 55% say the performance and competence of the military’s civilian leadership is a concern.

Half (50%) say so-called “woke” practices undermine military effectiveness and 46% attribute decreasing confidence to so-called far-right or extremist individuals serving in the military.

Meanwhile, only 13% of 18 to 29-year-olds are personally highly willing to join the military, a quarter (25%) are only somewhat willing, 20% are not very willing, and about a quarter (26%) are not willing at all.

- **Americans Want to Continue Aiding Ukraine in Its Fight for Freedom.** Perceptions of Russia as an enemy reached a survey high of 82%, up from 65% just last year. Relatedly, 76% of Americans consider Ukraine an ally, a significant increase from 49% in 2021, and 67% are concerned about Russian victory in the war.

With regard to America sending military equipment and financial assistance to Ukraine, a majority (57%) believe the U.S. must continue to stand with the people of Ukraine and oppose Russian aggression in order to protect a friendly democracy and prevent future Russian threats to Europe. This includes 73% of Democrats and 51% of Republicans. Only a third (33%) believe America has enough problems at home and cannot afford to spend more on the conflict and risk further provoking Russia, including 19% of Democrats and 41% of Republicans.

- **A Majority of Americans Have a Favorable View of NATO.** Consistent with previous surveys, 60% of Americans have a favorable view of NATO and an even greater majority (72%) supports NATO Article 5 commitments (defined as the United States responding with military force if Russia attacked a NATO ally in Europe), including 81% of Democrats and 67% of Republicans.
- **Americans Believe the U.S. Lacks a Clear Strategy for the China Threat.** Americans are increasingly concerned about the threat posed by China. Three-quarters (75%) now view China as an enemy, up from 65% in 2021 and 55% in 2018. A plurality (43%) names China as the country that poses the greatest threat to the U.S. When asked if the U.S. has a clear strategy for managing its relationship with China, over half (54%) say no, while only 27% say yes, and 20% do not know.
- **Bipartisan Majorities of Americans Support Efforts to Deter a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan.** A large majority of Americans (70%) are concerned about the threat of China invading Taiwan in the next five years, and there is bipartisan support for efforts to deter an invasion with increased military presence near, and more arms sales to, Taiwan. If China were to invade Taiwan, 43% would support committing U.S. ground troops to the defense of Taiwan, while 36% would oppose.
- **President Reagan’s Legacy Lives On.** Americans continue to view President Reagan positively, with a 67% overall favorability. This includes a majority of Americans of all political stripes: 87% of Republicans, 62% of Independents, and 51% of Democrats.

This latest Reagan National Defense Survey was conducted between November 9 and November 17, 2022, by a bipartisan survey team at Beacon Research and Shaw & Company Research. It is based on the interviews of more than 2,500 U.S. adult citizens.

On Saturday, December 3, national security experts will discuss the survey results in a panel discussion at the [Reagan National Defense Forum](#) beginning at 7:15 AM PT. Moderated by CNN’s Abby Phillip, “Finger on The Pulse: Public Opinion on America’s Global Responsibilities,” will feature U.S. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA); U.S. Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE); Karl Rove, former special advisor and deputy chief of staff to President George W. Bush; and

Brad Smith, vice chair and president of Microsoft.

[RSVP](#) to watch the session virtually, as well as additional RNDP programming, live-streamed from the Reagan Library.

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**About the Reagan Foundation and Institute:**

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute is the nonprofit organization created by President Reagan himself and specifically charged by him with continuing his legacy and sharing his principles - individual liberty, economic opportunity, global democracy, and national pride. The Foundation is a non-partisan organization which sustains the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, CA, the Reagan Center for Public Affairs, the Presidential Learning Center, The Air Force One Pavilion, and the award-winning Discovery Center, as well as the Reagan Institute, which carries out the Foundation's work in Washington, D.C. The Reagan Library houses over 55 million pages of Gubernatorial, Presidential, and personal papers and over 60,000 gifts and artifacts chronicling the lives of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. It also serves as the final resting place of America's 40th President and his First Lady. [www.reaganfoundation.org](http://www.reaganfoundation.org).

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