

# AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 1995

Edited by John E. Rielly



The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations

**AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION  
AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 1995**

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The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations  
116 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Phone: (312) 726-3860  
Fax: (312) 726-4491

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# INTRODUCTION

*The Chicago Council survey was conducted not quite two years after the inauguration of Governor Bill Clinton as president of the United States, and five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. This is the first survey since the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, and the second in which the U.S.-Soviet competition was not a dominant factor in shaping the attitudes of Americans.*

## THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

During the last four years the United States and its European allies have sought to support those in Russia seeking to build a democratic political system and market economy. Aid to Russia was strongly supported by the Bush administration and initially by the Clinton administration. During the past year, however, as President Boris Yeltsin's hold on power has become more tenuous, a more cautious stance has emerged, with greater recognition given to independent transformations in Ukraine and the Baltic states. Although the Clinton administration had opposed the eastward expansion of NATO so as not to provoke Russia, by the end of 1994 it endorsed, at least rhetorically, admission of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO.

When Russian troops moved to quell a secessionist move in Chechnya in December of 1994, the administration initially claimed it was an internal matter. But by mid-January, when televised reports showed widespread bloodshed, the administration distanced itself from the Yeltsin government. It called on Yeltsin to end bombing of the Chechnyan capital of Grozny and reach a truce. In the period since our data was collected in late autumn, attitudes toward Russia and President Yeltsin may have changed as a result.

The year 1993 witnessed a dramatic breakthrough in the decades-old conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The historic meeting between Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin held at the White House signaled the beginning of peace agreements reached throughout the region.

Although Saddam Hussein remains in power in Iraq and violence between Israelis and Palestinians is still erupting, news from the Middle East has been more encouraging during the past four years than at any time in recent decades. The Clinton administration is recognized for its role in bringing this about.

The period before the survey also witnessed a short-term American military involvement in Somalia in 1992-93, brief humanitarian intervention in Rwanda in the spring of 1994 and the landing of American troops in Haiti in late September 1994. Although the Haiti operation was accomplished without military confrontation, it drew criticism from Republican members of Congress.

American and European efforts to solve the crisis in Bosnia continued to be futile, with the Clinton administration's several initiatives proving unsuccessful. As the new Congress met in early 1995, Republican leaders were increasingly critical of the administration's policies, calling for a lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnians, something strongly resisted by America's European allies.

China policy has become increasingly important over the past four years. President Clinton eventually reversed his stance of linking trade policy with human rights, one of the most disputed issues in his administration's first two years. Disputes over Chinese practices on intellectual property rights and debt repayment remained unresolved by mid-February 1995.

Additional attention was focused on Asia by reports of the death of long-time North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung

and by the controversy over North Korea's suspected development of a nuclear weapons capability.

Two of the most impressive accomplishments of President Clinton's first two years in office were the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement and of the Uruguay Round GATT accords, both with strong bipartisan support. Such support was not forthcoming in late January this year for Clinton's rescue package for Mexico following the peso crisis.

## THE MOOD IN THE UNITED STATES

At the time this study was undertaken four years ago, the United States was entering a recession that would soon spread to most other OECD member nations. Today the recession has receded in most of the industrialized countries, including the United States, even if most have not returned to the prosperity levels of the previous decade. Unemployment continues to be over 10 percent in virtually all countries of the European Union, but has declined in the United States to under 8 percent.

Although the United States is still the world's largest debtor, the budget deficit is now declining and stands at under \$200 billion. The trade deficit is running well over \$100 billion a year. By objective standards of economic growth, inflation and unemployment, the United States was doing far better in the autumn of 1994 than four years earlier. Nevertheless, President Clinton's Democratic allies in Congress suffered an overwhelming defeat in the November elections. For the first time in four decades, Republicans captured majorities in both the House and Senate as well as a majority of the

nation's governorships. Foreign policy issues did not play a major role in the election, though the issue of presidential leadership was a factor. As the new year began, attention focused on whether the Clinton administration would be able to work with the new Congress, led by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole.

### THE SURVEY

This is the sixth public opinion survey and analysis sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The key question in all the surveys remains the extent to which the American public and leaders support an active role for the United States overseas. The report addresses such issues as the relationship between domestic and foreign policy priorities, the response to far-reaching changes in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, and shifts in foreign policy goals and priorities.

The principal data on which the survey is based were collected just 20 years after the first survey, carried out in the autumn of 1974. The second survey was conducted in 1978, the third in 1982, the fourth in 1986 and the fifth in 1990. The results of those surveys were summarized and published in 1975, 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1991 under the title "American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy."

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations commissioned the Gallup Organization to collect the data for this survey, using separate but similar questionnaires for the general public and a sample of national leaders. The survey of the public involved personal interviews with a stratified, systematic, random national sample of 1,492 American men and women 18 years of age and older. The questions were weighted to eliminate sampling distortion with respect to age, sex or race. The field work for the public survey was conducted between October 7 and October 25, 1994.

The leadership sample involved 383 individual interviews conducted by telephone between October 26 and December 7, 1994. The sample includ-

ed Americans in senior positions with knowledge of international affairs. We included roughly equal proportions from the House of Representatives, the Senate and the administration. Leaders were drawn from the Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs, and Armed Services committees of Congress and from international offices in the State, Treasury, Defense and other federal departments. Leaders were also drawn from the business community (international vice presidents of large corporations), the media (editors and columnists of major newspapers and magazines, television and radio news directors and network newscasters), academia (presidents and scholars from major colleges and universities) and private foreign policy institutes. A smaller number of leaders was drawn from national labor unions, churches and special interest groups relevant to foreign policy.

The content of the questionnaire was prepared after consultation with the Gallup Organization by the editor and the following consultants: Arthur Cyr, vice president and program director of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations; Catherine Hug, editorial consultant; Benjamin Page, Gordon Scott Fulcher Professor of Decision Making at Northwestern University; Bernard Roshco, former director of the Office of Opinion Analysis, U.S. Department of State; Trevor Tompson, doctoral student, Northwestern University.

The interviewing, tabulating of results and compiling of data were done through the facilities of the Gallup Organization. The analysis and interpretation of data presented in this report represent the joint efforts of the above consultants working with the editor. We have published the analysis as quickly as possible after the field work was completed. The response to earlier reports confirms our judgment that the advantages of a brief but timely summary analysis outweigh the disadvantages of doing a comprehensive study in so short a period of time. The report should be considered in that light. The data derived from this survey will be placed on deposit with the Inter-University Consortium for Political

and Social Research at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, the Roper Center for Public Opinion in Storrs, Connecticut, and NORC (National Opinion Research Center) at the University of Chicago. It will be available to scholars and other interested professionals. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points for the public sample and plus or minus five percentage points for the leadership sample.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to my principal collaborators: Arthur Cyr, Catherine Hug, Benjamin Page, Bernard Roshco and Trevor Tompson. I want to extend a special word of thanks to Catherine Hug for her consultation and for her years as editor at the Chicago Council. She lent her critical judgment to the substance of the report, designed and produced most of the graphics and was responsible for all aspects of the publication. Special thanks are also due to Maureen O'Connor and Elaine Kemna-Irish, who displayed both skill and persistence in preparing and processing the various drafts of the manuscript, and to Sarah Connor, Marilyn Cahill and Teresa Davis-Hurst for their help in the dissemination of the report. I also want to thank the Gallup Organization for their cooperation while working under a tight schedule, especially David Moore and Christine McCarty.

On behalf of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, I want to express our gratitude to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for providing the principal financing for the project. I also want to extend our thanks to the Information Office of the Commission of the European Union in Washington, D.C. for its financial assistance.

John E. Rielly, President  
February 15, 1995

# THE FINDINGS IN SUMMARY

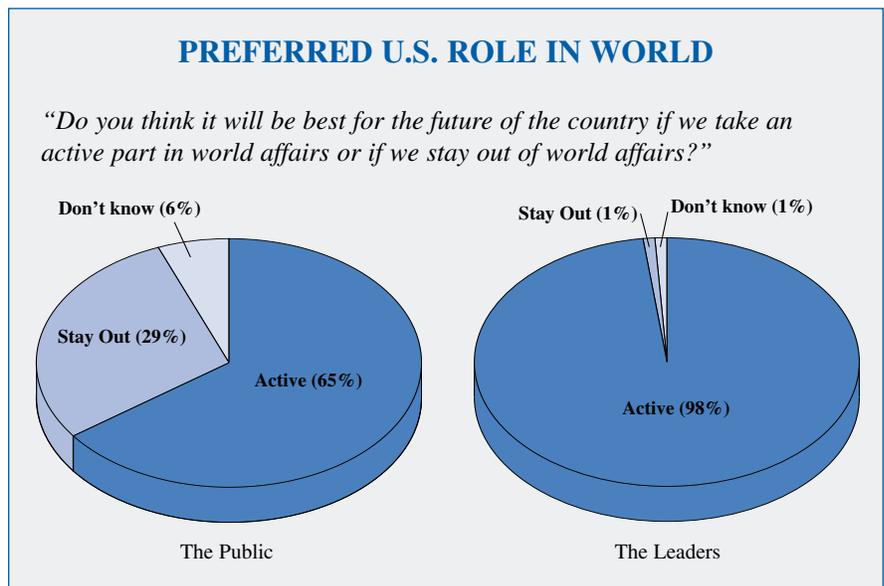
*With the Cold War over and the Soviet Union neither a perceived superpower threat nor a unified nation-state, the international political landscape has changed drastically in only a few short years. Despite these dramatic changes in the external environment, American attitudes have remained remarkably stable on a number of important questions. Neither old-fashioned isolationism nor activist interventionism has captured public interest. Based on this study, the attitudes of Americans at both the public and leadership levels reflect a “pragmatic internationalism.”*

## PRAGMATIC INTERNATIONALISM

Americans are committed to an active role for the United States in the world, to working with other countries through the United Nations and the NATO alliance, and to freer trade. At the same time, Americans are reluctant to become entangled in the affairs of other nations and to use military force where interests are not vital. Indeed, they are selective in identifying international issues or parts of the world as vital to the country. They are aware of the impact the international system has on life at home, but their focus has shifted toward that home life and feelings of personal economic vulnerability. Crime and unemployment are considered the biggest problems facing the country by the public. Foreign policy-related problems now constitute the smallest number of overall problems since 1978 for the public and the smallest ever among leaders. The preferred goals of foreign policy address matters directly related to local concerns: controlling and reducing illegal immigration and stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the country. Interest in local and state news, but not foreign news, has expanded.

## THE LONE SUPERPOWER

Despite their personal insecurity, Americans are confident about the capacity of the nation to influence events in the world at large. Approximately one-half the public and leaders believe the United States plays a more important and powerful role in the world today than it did 10 years ago, the highest numbers recorded in these surveys. Many people also



believe the United States will be even more influential 10 years from now. These results contrast with feelings of national insecurity and weakness recorded in the late 1970s.

The public sees the United States, China and Japan playing greater roles in 10 years, while the leaders envision a future world with China, Germany and Japan increasing in relative influence. This may reflect the leaders' greater awareness of the international economic environment, but also acknowledges the strong role the United States already plays in the world.

## REGIONAL ISSUES

The post Cold-War world is one of diverse regional concerns and some threats, but none comparable to that of the former Soviet Union. There is still a perceived nuclear threat, though its source is unclear. Preventing the spread

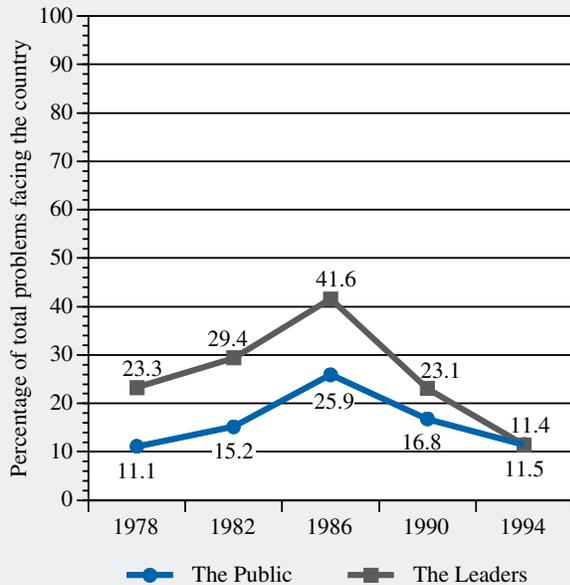
of nuclear weapons is considered one of the most important foreign policy goals by both the public and leaders.

Americans view Europe as more important to the United States than Asia, though by a narrow margin among the leaders. Economic unification of Europe is generally viewed as a good thing and concern about economic competition from the European Union has diminished. At the same time, concern about competition with Japan is still high among the public, and the concern about the power of China is growing.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is also viewed as a good thing by the public and leaders. Mexico is rated highly on both the vital interest and thermometer rankings, although the recent currency crisis provoked a divided response in the U.S. Congress and among the public in early 1995.

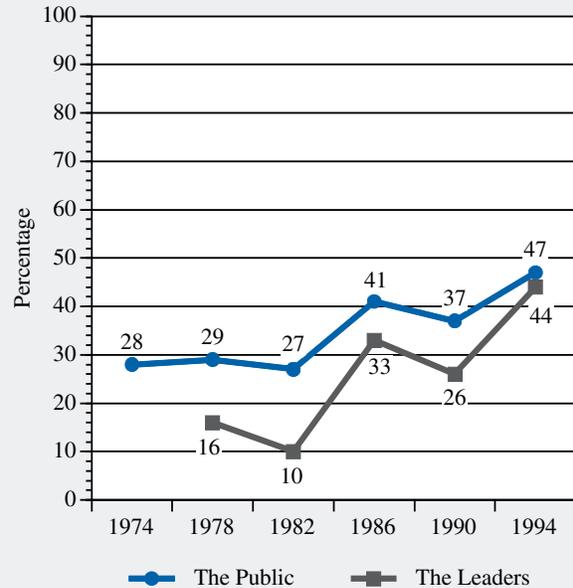
## FOREIGN PROBLEMS

*Foreign policy problems as a percentage of the total problems facing the country.*



## IMPORTANCE OF U.S. ROLE

*Respondents who say the U. S. plays a more important and powerful role as a world leader today than it did 10 years ago.*



In the Middle East, there is support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially among the leaders. It is unclear whether these views will hold up given the latest rash of violence between Israel and the Palestinians. Islamic fundamentalism is a matter of strong and growing concern. Middle East policy is an area where the Clinton administration receives relatively high marks on its performance.

### VITAL INTERESTS

As in the past, public and leaders see vital interests in various countries of the world, though in somewhat different orders of priority. The general public rates Japan, Saudi Arabia and Russia most important, followed by Kuwait and Mexico (tied) and Canada. The top countries for the leaders are Mexico and Russia (tied for first), followed by Japan, China, Saudi Arabia, Canada and Germany. Brazil, France and Poland rank relatively low on this scale.

On a thermometer of “feelings” toward world leaders and nations,

Americans show the warmest feelings for Pope John Paul II, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger tied with former President Jimmy Carter, former President George Bush and South African President Nelson Mandela. Nations viewed most warmly are Canada, Great Britain and Italy, followed by Germany and Mexico (tied). At the bottom of the scale are Haiti, Cuba, North Korea, Iran and—last—Iraq.

### SECURITY ISSUES

Americans are not reacting to the end of the Cold War or the collapse of the Soviet bloc with further calls for drastic defense cuts or withdrawal from alliances. There appears to be a solidification of support for current levels of defense after previous backing of cuts. Americans favor participation in the NATO alliance and in U.N. peacekeeping operations. The public is divided on whether to insist on a U.S. commander when troops are taking part in such operations.

Germany and Japan are viewed favorably overall by the leaders. A solid majority of leaders would encourage

both nations to play a more active military role in the world—though Canada receives much more encouragement for such action—and to hold seats on the U.N. Security Council.

General support remains for espionage by the CIA among the public. A plurality of the public, though only a minority of the leaders, believes the CIA should work inside other countries to weaken or overthrow governments unfriendly to the United States. There is majority support for spying on specific countries, including China, North Korea, Russia and even Japan.

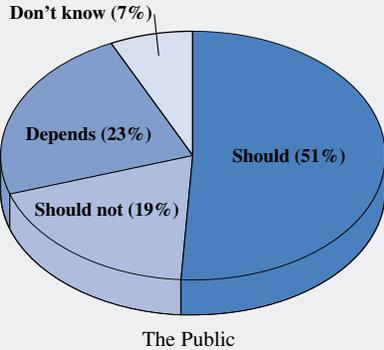
### ECONOMIC ISSUES

The public shows signs of economic concern, but no great sense of alarm. While the public is worried about Japan’s trading practices and about unemployment, it has not turned protectionist. In fact, support for tariffs has gone down among the public and leaders to its lowest levels.

Economic aid, as in the past, is not popular with the public. The public prefers to decrease or stop aid altogether to Egypt, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel, Russia and

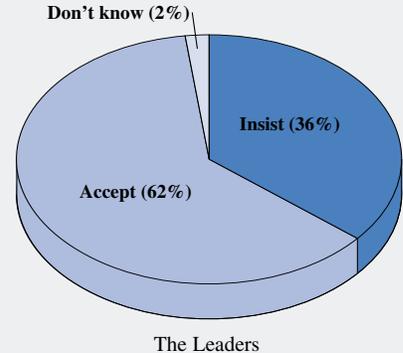
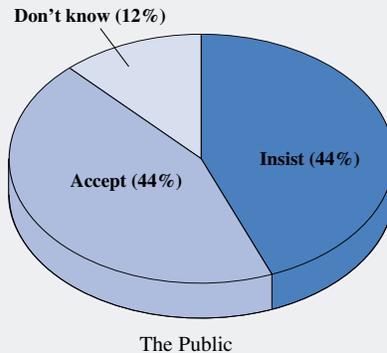
## U.N. PEACEKEEPING

Should the U.S. be part of a U.N. peacekeeping force in a troubled part of the world when asked?



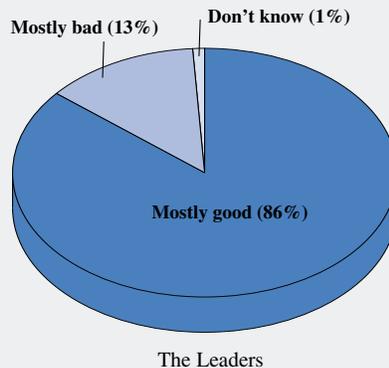
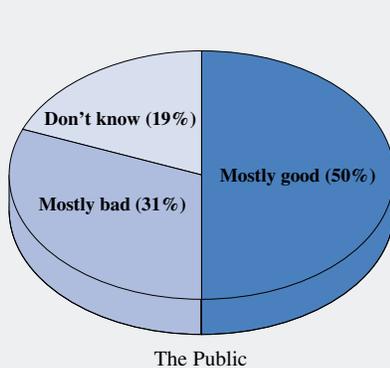
## COMMANDER FOR PEACEKEEPING

Should the U.S. insist a U.S. commander be in charge of a U.N. force when U.S. troops take part, or should we accept a commander appointed by the United Nations?



## NAFTA

Is NAFTA mostly good for the U.S. economy or mostly bad?



## LEADERSHIP

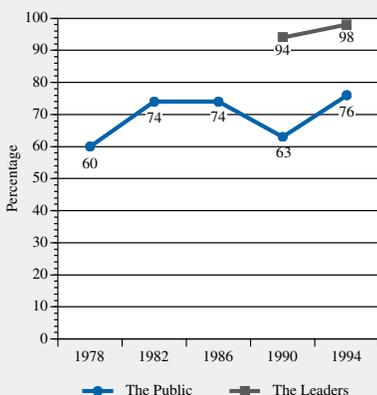
At a time when Americans perceive the greatest importance of the U.S. role as a world leader, many are disappointed in the performance of their president in foreign policy. The relative unhappiness is reflected in the list of problems facing the country. Weak leadership is cited as a major problem by notable numbers of the public and even more of the leaders. President Clinton receives some of the lowest ratings in these surveys for his handling of overall foreign policy. The leaders give the Clinton administration high marks for accomplishments in the Middle East and in international trade. The leaders give a divided response on handling of the North Korean nuclear threat.

The president is also ranked alongside nine other post-World War II presidents on his success in foreign policy. By almost every measure, he is ranked among the worst three. By one measure, George Bush, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, respectively, are at the top of the list of presidents considered either "very" or "somewhat" successful in the conduct of foreign policy, with Kennedy first when just the "very" successful category is considered.

Criticism of the administration does not translate into support for an activist Congress. There is a slight increase in the number who feel the role of Congress in foreign policy has become too strong.

## MEXICO

Vital interest in Mexico.



African countries. It would keep aid the same to the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe and to Latin American countries, and increase aid to no one. Among leaders, pluralities favor increases to Eastern Europe and the Palestinians.

Concern over the federal budget deficit has declined from four years ago. While Americans are aware of the impact of U.S. foreign policy on such matters as our overall economy, the value of the dollar, the price of gasoline and unemployment, the numbers have gone down from four years ago. This may reflect a waning of concern about the state of the national economy that was evident four years ago.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PRIORITY OF FOREIGN POLICY

*By placing foreign policy issues in the context of Americans' overall set of policy concerns, we can "map" the world view of the public and leaders. This chapter examines the priority Americans give foreign policy by reviewing the responses to three questions: How much attention is given to foreign policy news in contrast to domestic news? What are deemed the country's principal problems? Should the government expand or trim the funds it expends on various programs at home and abroad?*

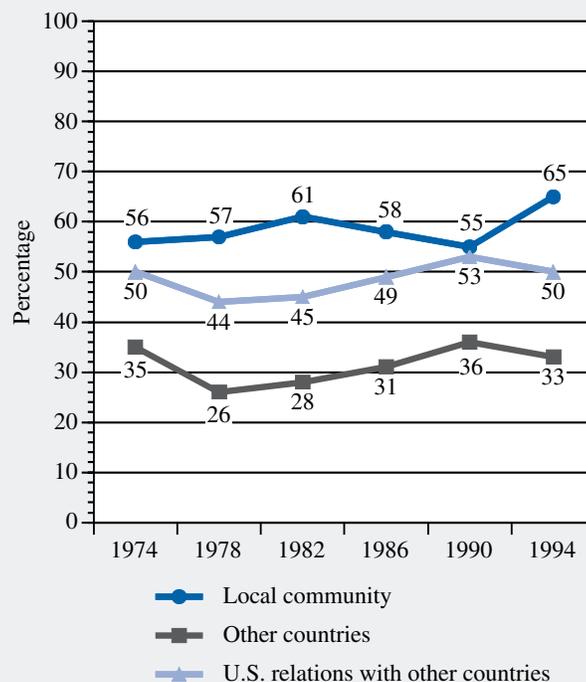
### INTEREST IN THE NEWS

The 1990 survey recorded the highest attentiveness to foreign news since 1974. Furthermore, the 1990 highs were accompanied by less intense interest in local and state news. That survey was conducted just one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall and during the official reunification of Germany. The breaking apart of the Eastern bloc and the dramatic transformation of former Soviet satellites into free societies had been reported regularly. The future of the Soviet Union itself was hanging in the balance. At the same time, U.S. troops were undertaking a massive movement to Saudi Arabia in preparation for ousting Iraq from Kuwait, and it was unclear what the troops there might face.

At the time of the current survey in October 1994, the end of the Cold War was old news, and earlier attempts to define a "New World Order" had faded from view. Without emphasis from a new president or a looming international crisis, foreign policy had become secondary to domestic issues like health care, budgets and crime. The survey was also conducted during one of the most heated mid-term elections in recent history, when the American people were preparing to throw out the Democratic majority in Congress. U.S. troops had undertaken a limited occupation of Haiti, but a last-minute deal made with Haiti's military leaders virtually assured a bloodless operation. Against this backdrop, the 1994 responses reveal a jump in interest in news at the local and state levels and a slight decline in international news interest.

**FIGURE I-1: INTEREST IN THE NEWS**

*Members of the public who are "very interested" in news about the following.*



Since 1974, our surveys have measured attentiveness to the news by asking respondents if they are "very interested," "somewhat interested," or "hardly interested at all" in news about "your local community," "your state," "national news," "news about other countries" and "news about the relations of the United States with other countries." Some of the results are summarized in Figure I-1.

The percentage "very" interested in local community news is up 10 per-

centage points, reaching the highest level ever recorded for any news category (65%). This follows a period of decline in local news interest from 1982 to 1990. Strong interest in news at the state level has increased nine points, reaching its highest level, at 51%. By contrast, the percentage "very" interested in national news stays constant over the last two surveys, at 55%. Absent the seismic events of four years ago, those "very" interested in news about other countries has

## FIGURE I-2: NATIONAL PROBLEMS

*“What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?”  
The answers listed are spontaneous responses.*

### The Public

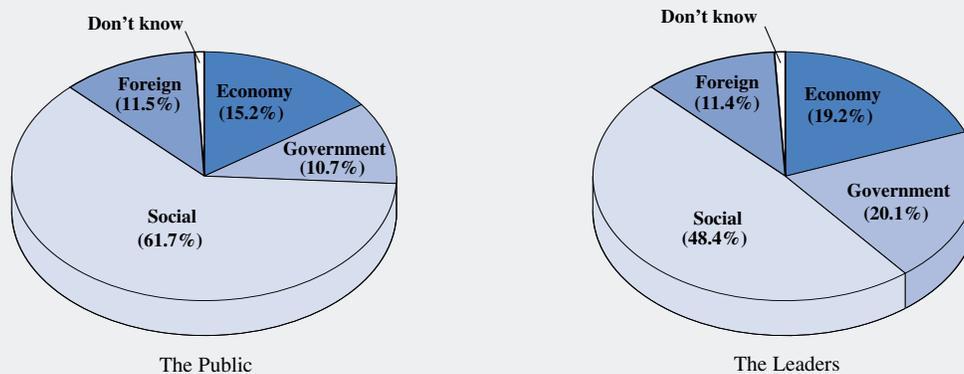
1. Crime (42%)
2. Unemployment (20%)
3. Health care/insurance (19%)
4. Drug abuse (18%)
5. Poverty: hunger, homelessness (15%)
6. Education: improving schools (12%)
7. Economy: unspecified (10%)
8. Dissatisfaction with government (9%)
9. Budget deficit (9%)
10. Immorality (8%)

### The Leaders

1. Crime (33%)
2. Economy: unspecified (23%)
3. Budget deficit (20%)
4. Education (15%)
5. Dissatisfaction with government (15%)
6. Immorality (13%)
7. Health care/insurance (13%)
8. Unemployment (11%)
9. Racism (7%)
10. Foreign relations/policy: unspecified (7%)

## FIGURE I-3: NATIONAL PROBLEM CATEGORIES

*“What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?”  
Responses are grouped into four categories: economy, government, social, and foreign policy.*



declined three points. The percentage “very” interested in news about U.S. relations with other countries also declined three percentage points, from a 1990 high of 53% to 50%, still the second highest level in 20 years. Despite the decline over the past four years, a review of changes in attentiveness to news over the past 20 years suggests that while interest in foreign news is not a growth entity, outright lack of interest in foreign news has diminished.

Interest in international news is partly a function of education. The farther from home the subject matter of a news story, the less interest it generates among the less educated. Sixty-five percent of high school graduates and 66% of college graduates say they are “very” interested in local news, while the percentage saying they are “hardly” interested is 5% for both groups. The percentage of high school graduates saying they are “very” interested in news about U.S. relations with other coun-

tries is 45%, compared to 57% for college graduates. The numbers “hardly” interested are 13% and 3%, respectively. The disparity increases regarding news about other countries, with 26% of high school graduates and 45% of college graduates saying they are “very” interested, and 25% of high school graduates and 8% of college graduates saying they are “hardly” interested.

## FOREIGN POLICY'S PLACE ON THE NATIONAL AGENDA

The national agenda is defined here as the issues that come to mind spontaneously when respondents are asked, "What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?" Because this question does not ask respondents to distinguish between foreign and domestic issues, the responses offer an insight into the relative priority the American public and leaders give to problems at home and abroad.

The 1991 report notes that while attentiveness to international news was up compared to 1986, concern about foreign policy problems had declined among leaders as well as the general public. The U.S.-Soviet political and military competition had receded dramatically and with it the public's concern about Cold-War issues, which had preoccupied both the public and leaders for four decades. With the complete disappearance of the Soviet Union since the 1990 survey, public concern about these issues has declined further.

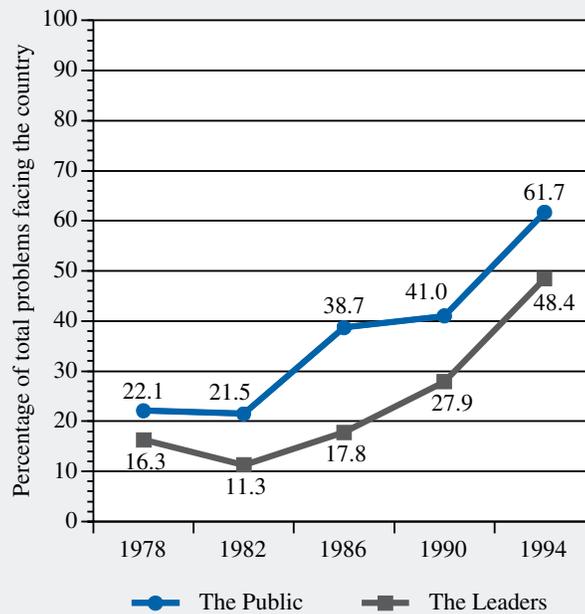
It is not surprising, therefore, that this time not one foreign policy concern appears on the public's top 10 list of problems facing the country (see Figure I-2). Even among the leaders, only one foreign policy issue appears among the first 10—foreign relations in general, which ranks 10th, mentioned by 7%. Crime leads both lists, mentioned by 42% of the public (up 27 points from 1990) and 33% of the leaders (up 28 points). It displaces the budget deficit as the issue with highest priority on both lists in 1990.

The public's trio of top problems appears to reflect personal concerns. The second-ranking problem is unemployment (ninth in 1990) and the third is health care and health insurance (not among the top 10 in 1990). The budget deficit has fallen to ninth place. Seemingly, interest in local news reflects the public's concern with problems that strike close to home.

Among leaders, after crime, the economy in general again takes second priority, mentioned by 23% (down 13 points from 1990). The budget deficit

### FIGURE I-4: SOCIAL PROBLEMS

*Social problems as a percentage of the total problems facing the country.*



has retreated to third place, mentioned by 20% (down 26 points).

The changing emphasis of public concerns has been tracked over the years by dividing all mentioned problems into four policy categories: economic, governmental, social and foreign. The numbers for each category as a percentage of the total problems listed are displayed in Figure I-3.

In this survey, six of the top 10 problems facing the country mentioned by the public are designated as social, two as economic and two as governmental. For the leaders, five of the top 10 problems are categorized as social problems, two as economic, two as governmental and one as foreign.

Problems designated "social" have increasingly dominated the agendas of both leaders and public during the 1980s and 1990s (see Figure I-4). With crime as the top concern of the public and leaders today, it is no surprise that social problems now constitute by far the largest category for both, encompassing more than three-fifths (61.7%) of the problems named by the public

and almost half (48.4%) of the problems named by leaders. Even when social items have another significant component—economic, for example—we consider them to have a distinctive impact on social relationships and the fabric of society. For example, "health care/health insurance" is classified as a social problem, as it was in the past.

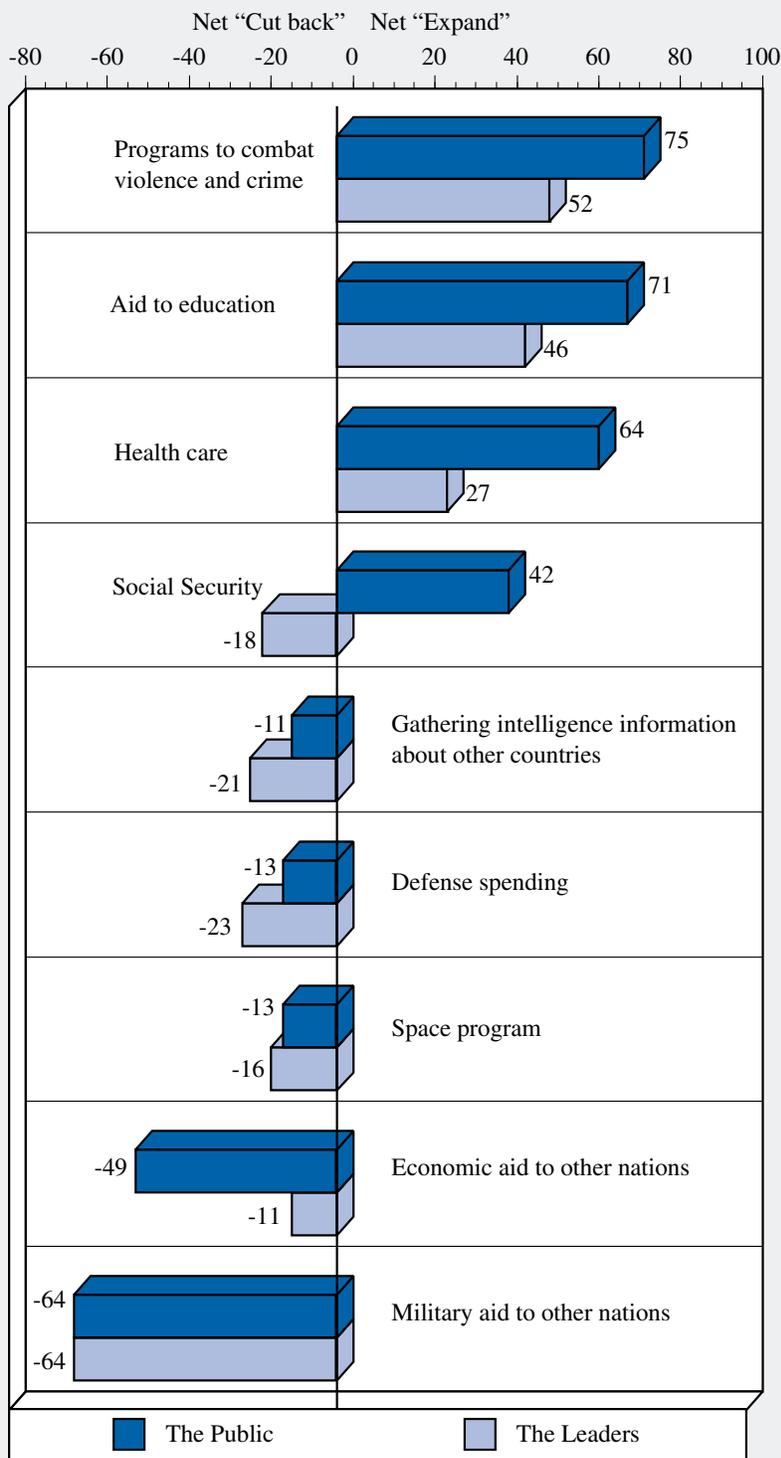
The foreign policy category, having declined further since 1990, now comprises the lowest percentage of total problems ever among leaders (11.4%) and the lowest since 1978 for the public (11.5%).

### PRIORITIES ASSIGNED TO FEDERAL SPENDING

Where people want to put their money certainly indicates their priorities. As in the past, an index of support for federal government expenditures is derived by subtracting the percentage that wants to "cut back" funding for a specific program from the percentage that wants to "expand." As usual, the preference for spending at home far exceeds the desire to spend abroad. The public and

**FIGURE I-5: SPENDING ON FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

*Should the following be expanded, cut back or kept about the same?  
Index: Percentage “expand” minus percentage “cut back.”*



leaders make similar choices for increased and reduced spending. The results are summarized in Figure I-5.

Spending preferences on domestic problems stand out. Among the public, a net 75% wants to increase spending on programs to combat violence and crime, a net 71% wants to increase spending on education (the same as in 1990), and a net 64% wants to expand spending on health care. Among leaders the figures are lower. The net figures for increasing aid to education is down from 73% in 1990 to 46% today.

The public’s desire to cut back defense spending has declined since the 1990 survey. The current net margin for reduced spending is 13%, down from 29% in 1990. A plurality (41%) prefers to keep it the same. Among leaders, the net preference for cuts in defense spending (23%) is larger than the public’s.

The public again prefers to cut aid to other nations by massive net margins, though not quite as large as last time. The net margin is 64% for cutting military aid (68% in 1990), and 49% for cutting economic aid (54% in 1990). Leaders’ sentiment for cutting military aid is, like the public’s, a net of 64% (73% in 1990). A notable reversal is found in leaders’ reduced support for economic aid. The net margin in favor of cutting aid is now 11%, compared to 1990’s net margin for raising aid of 22%.

As succeeding chapters will document, the American public and leaders have not closed their eyes to the world outside the United States. But their gaze is increasingly focused on problems closer to home.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE GOALS OF FOREIGN POLICY

When the Cold War ended, the foreign policy goals of competing with the Soviet Union and opposing communism, which had long preoccupied Americans, became irrelevant. Experts and citizens alike wondered what goals would take their place. How should the United States behave in a more complex and unpredictable, if perhaps less dangerous, post-Cold War world? The current survey indicates some answers are beginning to emerge. While Americans remain internationalist overall, in the absence of a clear external threat and with growing concern over domestic ills, they now prefer a set of goals that reflect a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy.

### INTERNATIONALISM

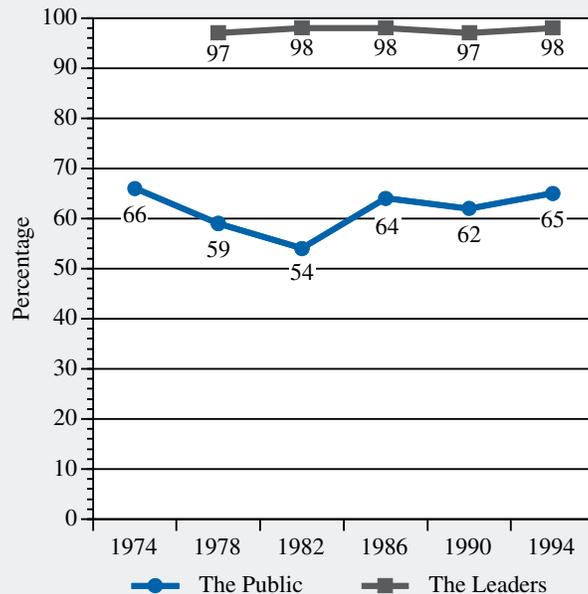
An important barometer of internationalism is whether people think it best for the future of the country to “take an active part” in world affairs or to “stay out” of world affairs. The proportion of people saying we should “take an active part” is illustrated in Figure II-1. As indicated, most of the American public and an overwhelming proportion of leaders favor an active role. Roughly two-thirds of the American public has maintained this view in most surveys carried out since World War II. The current figure of 65% is a shade below the pre-Vietnam War peak, but well up from the depressed levels of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The figure for leaders continues to hover near 100%.

Internationalist thinking varies with education. College graduates are most supportive of an active U.S. role in the world (80% in favor). Those without a high school diploma are less supportive, with 55% in favor and 33% against.

The survey results also indicate that large pluralities of the public and leaders believe the United States is playing a more important and powerful role as a world leader compared to 10 years ago. These figures are up from the last survey by 10 percentage points among the public and 18 points among leaders. The pessimism about the relative strength of the United States evident in the autumn of 1990—at a time of economic recession, steep trade imbalances, perceived threatening competition from Europe and Japan, and before the victory in the Persian Gulf War—has dissipated. Americans

**FIGURE II-1: PREFERRED U.S. ROLE**

*Respondents who favor an active role for the United States in world affairs.*



today are feeling more confident about their country's overall strength.

Furthermore, an overwhelming majority (73%) of the public and a plurality (43%) of leaders say the United States will play a greater role in the next 10 years than it does today. Forty-one percent of leaders believe that our role will be the same. Among the general public, no other country we asked about—Japan, China, Germany or Russia—is given such a strong prognosis.

### FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

Despite the continued strong support for an active role in the world, the public's more pragmatic approach is evident in its list of foreign policy problems. As in the past, we ask people to name two or three of the biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today (see Figure II-2). Fully 19% of the public feels the biggest problem is getting involved in the affairs of other countries. This is up from 6% in 1990. The second biggest problem, listed by 16%, is that too much foreign aid is being sent to other countries, down

## FIGURE II-2: FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

*“What do you feel are the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today?”  
The answers listed are spontaneous responses.*

### The Public

1. Getting involved in affairs of other countries (19%)
2. Foreign aid: too much sent to other countries (16%)
3. Immigration: illegal aliens (12%)
4. Iraq: Saddam Hussein, invasion of Kuwait (11%)
5. Our relationship with Haiti (10%)
6. International trade: free trade with all countries, some countries too strict with trade policies (8%)
7. Weak leadership (7%)
8. Balance of payments (6%)
9. Too much military involvement in other countries (6%)
10. Stronger foreign policy needed: U.S. is compromising (6%)

### The Leaders

1. International trade: free trade with all countries, some countries too strict with trade policies (24%)
2. Dealings with Russia (23%)
3. Weak leadership (19%)
4. Stronger foreign policy needed: U.S. is compromising (16%)
5. Relations with Bosnia (16%)
6. Arms control: nuclear weapons, too much military equipment sold or given to other countries (14%)
7. World economy (11%)
8. Mid-East situation: unspecified (7%)
9. Keeping peace (7%)
10. We act like the world’s police (6%)

two points from 1990. Significant numbers also object to too much military involvement in other countries (6%) and to a perceived U.S. role as “the world’s police” (4%).

Substantial numbers of Americans now focus on problems directly bearing on their lives and livelihoods: illegal immigration (cited by 12%, up from just 1% in 1990), free trade (8%) and the balance of payments or trade deficit (6%).

It is noteworthy that four of the foreign policy issues that most bedeviled the early Clinton administration—Bosnia, North Korea, Rwanda and Somalia—arouse little public concern in the survey. Only 3% of the public mentions Bosnia—where Serbs, Muslims and Croats have been at war for several years—as one of the biggest foreign policy problems. Only 2% cites the problem of North Korea, which has been suspected of acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. None at all mention Rwanda or Somalia.

Haiti, where U.S. troops landed just prior to the survey, is seen as a big problem by 10% of the public. This undoubtedly reflects the well-publicized involvement of U.S. troops and is in part linked to concern over illegal immigration. Similarly, the public’s relatively frequent mention of Iraq and Kuwait as a big foreign policy problem (11%) no doubt reflects the muscle-flexing by Saddam Hussein at the Kuwait border as this survey was being conducted.

Third World poverty drew mention by only 4% of the public. Nearly absent from the list of big problems (cited by 3% or fewer) are dangers of war, dealings with Russia, arms control, relations with Japan and China, world population, the global environment, human rights and relations with Europe.

In listing foreign policy problems, leaders cite almost a third more problems than does the public, though they list fewer than four years ago. Leaders

focus on broader issues of concern to the country: international trade (24%), dealings with Russia (23%), Bosnia (16%), arms control (14%) and the world economy (11%). As discussed in more detail below, 19% lists “weak leadership” and 16% cites a need for stronger foreign policy as two of the biggest problems, both up markedly from 1990.

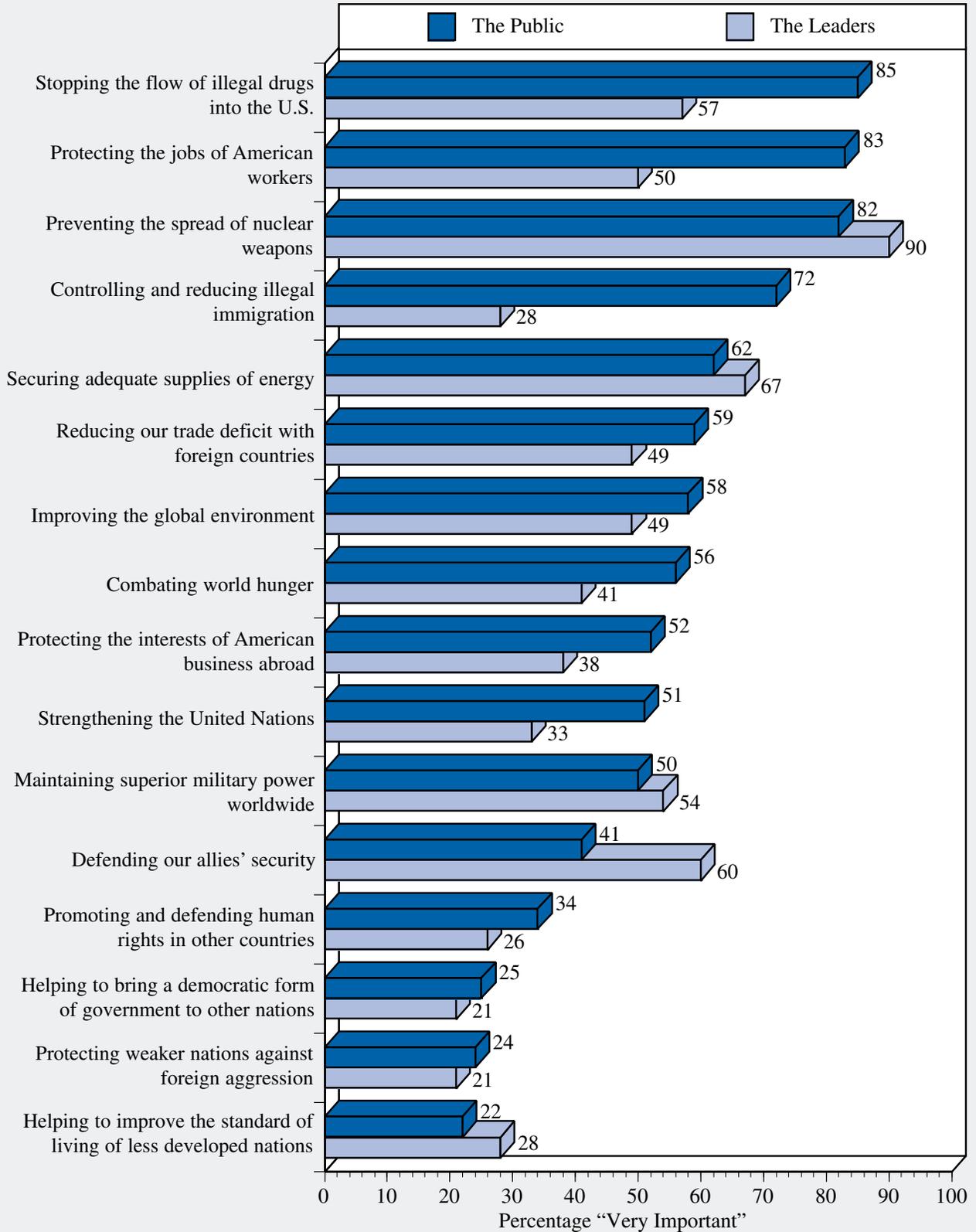
### FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The public and leaders are asked to rate the importance of 16 different foreign policy goals. The proportions of people citing particular goals as “very important” (as opposed to “somewhat important” or “not important at all”) are graphed in Figure II-3. These responses outline the parameters of pragmatic internationalism.

While self-interest has consistently dominated the public’s assessment of foreign policy priorities over the past decade, other motivations have also been evident. Today, however, support

### FIGURE II-3: FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The following should be a “very important” goal of the United States.



for many of the more altruistic goals among both the public and leaders has declined to the lowest level in two decades. There has been a substantial decline in public support for protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression (33-point drop), for promoting and defending human rights in other countries (24-point drop) and for helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations (19-point drop). A similar trend is evident among leaders.

The top goals of the public—stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, protecting the jobs of American workers, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and controlling and reducing illegal immigration—all have an impact close to home: drug abuse, wage and employment levels, nuclear attack or nuclear terrorism, and competition from immigrants. This suggests that pragmatic internationalism includes a strong element of material self-interest, using foreign policy as a tool to deal with domestic concerns.

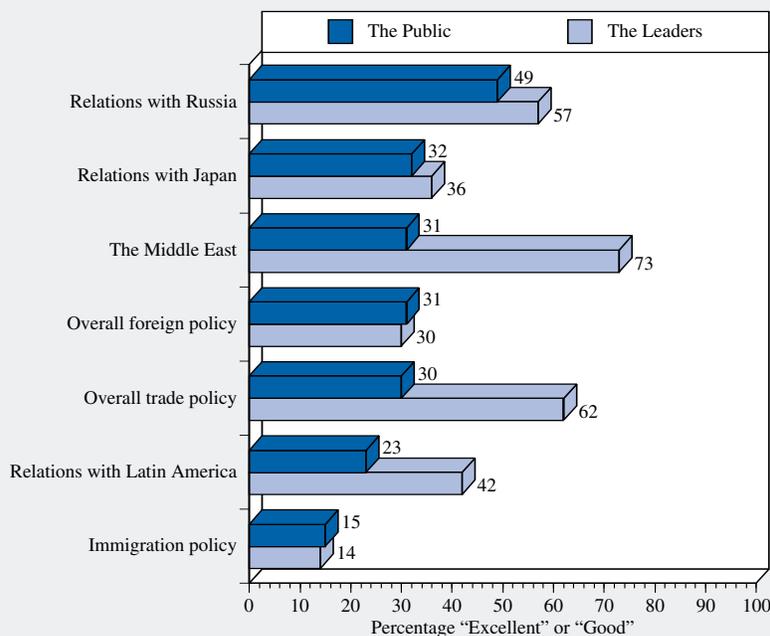
Americans also feel more strongly about their top priorities now than at any other time in our survey. This time, the public's top three goals are each listed as "very" important by over 80% of those questioned. The highest numbers reached in the past were 78% in 1978 for securing adequate supplies of energy and for protecting the jobs of American workers. In 1990, the top three goals received support from only 61% to 65% of respondents.

Americans do care about what happens to people abroad. Substantial numbers of people cite the goals of improving the global environment (58%) and combating world hunger (56%) as "very" important. The chief focus here, however, seems to be on famines and crises rather than on long-term development, since helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations is rated lowest on the public's list (22%).

The resistance to involvement in affairs of other countries seems focused on resistance to unilateral action. While 50% of the public rates maintaining superior military power as "very" important, there is surprisingly

## FIGURE II-4: ADMINISTRATION'S PERFORMANCE

*"Excellent" or "good" ratings given to the Clinton administration for handling of the following problems.*



strong support for strengthening the United Nations (51%, up 7 points since 1990). This suggests greater sympathy for collective peacekeeping through the United Nations.

Responses about foreign policy goals point unmistakably away from other altruistic forms of internationalism that in previous years were rated highly. Even defending our allies' security, rated "very" important by 61% of the public in 1990, has dropped to 41% in this survey. Rated lower yet is the importance of helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations (25%).

Leaders embrace a broader agenda, with substantially different emphases. By far the most important goal of leaders is preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Leaders choose securing adequate supplies of energy and defending allies' security as the next most important goals, substantially above stopping the inflow of illegal drugs and protecting the jobs of American workers, the public's top two. Improving the global environment comes out in the top half of the list,

though it has lost 23 percentage points since 1990, dropping from third to seventh place.

### ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE

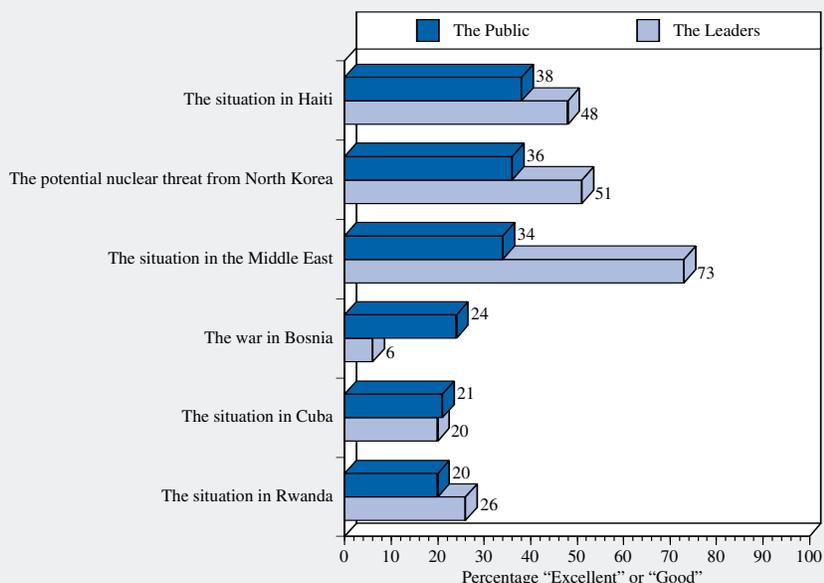
The Clinton administration has not translated these goals into foreign policy performance, according to the perceptions of the American public and leaders, and does less well than did the Bush administration in the autumn of 1990.

We ask the public and the leaders to rate the Clinton administration's handling of overall foreign policy and of problems in six other areas. The combination of responses gives a sense of how people think the administration has done. Results are given in Figure II-4.

Only 31% of the public rates the Clinton administration's handling of overall foreign policy as "good" or "excellent," down 14 percentage points from the Bush administration's ratings in 1990. Sixty-three percent of the public rates it "fair" or "poor." Similarly, only 32% gives high ratings to the administration's handling of relations

## FIGURE II-5: GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

*"Excellent" or "good" ratings given to the U.S. government response to the following situations.*



with Japan, only 31% to its handling of the Middle East and only 30% to overall trade policy. Even more dismal are ratings for the handling of relations with Latin America and of immigration policy (23% and 15% "good" or "excellent," respectively). On immigration fully 53% says "poor." The last two ratings reflect the recent sea-borne influx of refugees from Haiti and Cuba and concerns over illegal immigration from Mexico.

The only relative bright spot in public assessments of Clinton's performance concerns the handling of relations with Russia, which 49% calls "excellent" or "good" (41% "fair" or "poor"). Presumably, efforts to support President Boris Yeltsin in promoting a market economy and democracy in Russia, and to encourage nuclear disarmament have had a positive impact. Nevertheless, the figure is still 25 percentage points below the public's rating of the Bush administration's handling of relations with the Soviet Union in 1990, yet above that received by the Reagan administration in 1986.

The Clinton administration does not fare much better with leaders. Only 30% of leaders rate the handling of

overall foreign policy as "excellent" or "good," and only slightly more approve the handling of relations with Japan (36%) or with Latin America (42%). The leaders, like the public, are especially critical of Clinton's handling of immigration, with only 14% rating it "excellent" or "good" (39% "fair," 45% "poor").

On the other hand, 57% of leaders give high marks ("excellent" or "good") to the handling of relations with Russia, 62% to overall trade policy and fully 73% to the administration's handling of the Middle East. The ratings on both trade policy and the Middle East represent marked improvements (34 and 23 percentage points, respectively) from leaders' 1990 ratings of the Bush administration.

Why is there a substantial difference between the public's and the leaders' ratings of the Clinton administration's overall performance? Part of the answer may reflect differences in their goals and values. For example, the leaders show greater enthusiasm for the administration's achievement in trade policy (the NAFTA and GATT free trade accords) because international trade is also their biggest foreign policy

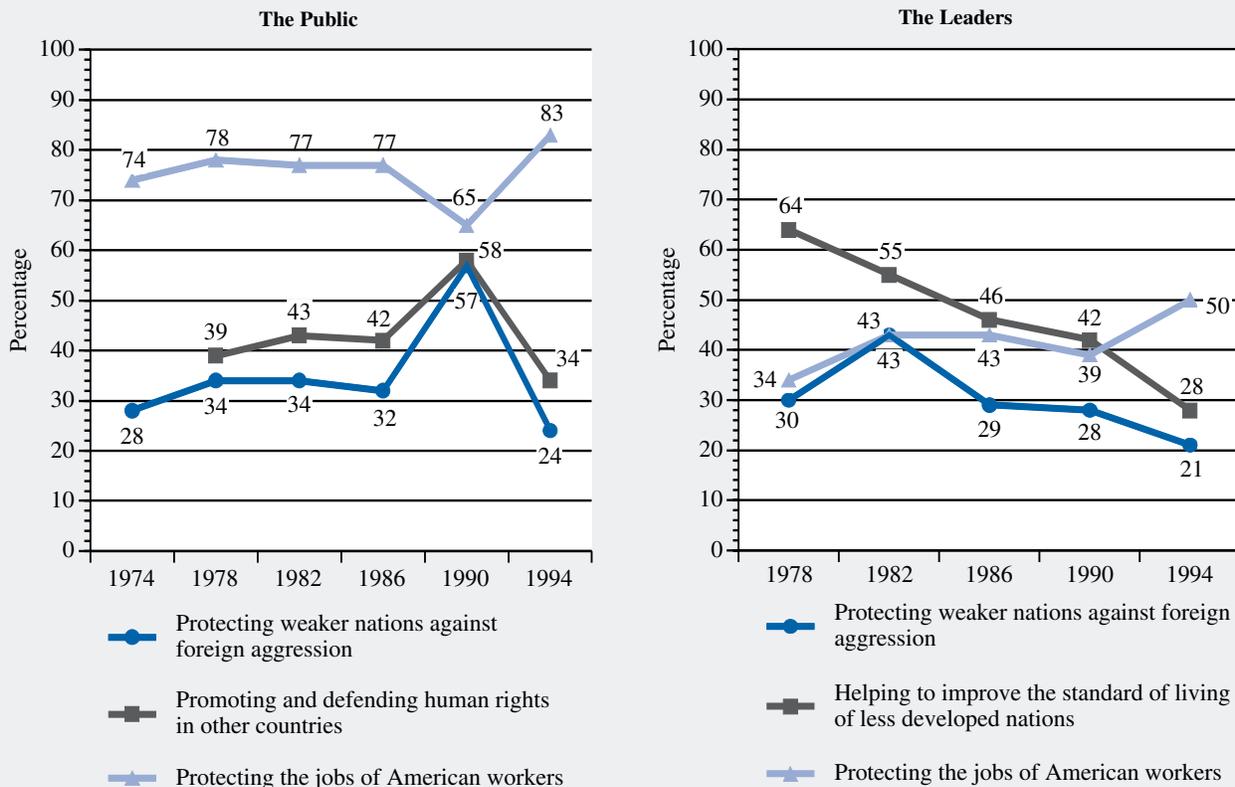
concern. But some differences may also reflect leaders' closer attention to issues and sharper distinctions among them. The leaders, for example, seem to have given the administration more credit for the 1993 peace agreement between Israel and the PLO.

Similar reactions are evident on the administration's handling of specific situations: the war in Bosnia, the potential nuclear threat from North Korea, the situations in Haiti, Cuba, and Rwanda, and the situation in the Middle East (see Figure II-5). In every case, more people among the public rate the government response as "fair" or "poor" than "excellent" or "good." The leaders draw sharper distinctions, giving particularly bleak assessments of Bosnia policy (59% "poor") and Cuba policy (39% "fair," 41% "poor"), but handing out higher marks on the Middle East (73% "good" or "excellent") and North Korea, where an agreement on nuclear restraint has been reached (51% "good" or "excellent").

When the public ranks American presidents of the past 50 years regarding their conduct of foreign policy, George Bush, by one measure, is at the top. He is regarded by 75% as either "very" or "somewhat" successful, and by 21% as "somewhat" or "very" unsuccessful. John Kennedy is second, with 69% "somewhat" or "very" successful, though he ranks first in the "very" successful category alone. Third is Ronald Reagan, with 68%. Bill Clinton is at the bottom of the scale, with 42% believing his foreign policy is either "somewhat" or "very" unsuccessful. It is important to note, however, that a substantial number of respondents answer "don't know" for presidents before Ronald Reagan (42% for Harry Truman, 38% for Dwight Eisenhower). Rankings are quite different when calculated with "don't know" responses omitted. Truman ranks first, with 90% "somewhat" or "very" successful, followed by Eisenhower (89%). By this measure, Lyndon Johnson ranks most unsuccessful in the conduct of foreign policy, followed by Gerald Ford and Bill Clinton.

**FIGURE II-6: TRENDS IN FOREIGN POLICY GOALS**

*Those who believe the following should be a “very important” goal of the United States.*



**CONCLUSION**

The dramatic changes of the past decade have tempered the internationalism of both the public and leaders. As will be detailed in later chapters, Americans are increasingly reluctant to shoulder the burdens of international leadership alone, but are willing to share responsibility through participation in multilateral organizations. As indicated in the last chapter, relief from competition with the Soviet Union and from any critical combat engagement of U.S. troops in the world, has shifted attention to domestic issues.

Yet this does not mean that Americans have become isolationist, despite the predictions of some observers in recent years. They still embrace an active world role for the United States, and predict growing importance in the future. The pessimism over perceived economic and political decline that prevailed during the recession of the early 1990s has

given way to increased national self-confidence. Pragmatic internationalism does not involve a rejection of international involvement, but focuses attention on goals that bear directly on the well-being of Americans: stopping the inflow of illegal drugs, protecting jobs, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, reducing illegal immigration, securing energy supplies, cutting trade deficits. As we will see, it also includes a continued commitment to diplomatic engagement, the NATO alliance, collective peacekeeping through the United Nations and a solid defense.

## CHAPTER THREE

# POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS

*At the end of 1994 the American public and leaders reacted to a global landscape drastically transformed from that of four years earlier. How has this affected American attitudes about other nations and leaders around the globe? Where in the world are America's most vital interests? How do Americans perceive U.S. relations with the rest of the world?*

### VITAL INTERESTS

Americans continue to believe that the United States has a vital interest in many countries of the world for political, economic and security reasons. Out of a list of 24 different countries, the general public sees a vital interest in 14 of them, ranging from Japan to Saudi Arabia, Israel and South Africa. The leaders believe the United States has a stake in 14 out of 18 countries, including China, Germany, France and Ukraine. The results are summarized in Figure III-1.

As in the past, the selection of countries reflects understandable perceptions of American interests. The public ranks Japan, Saudi Arabia and Russia as most vital to the interests of the United States. Kuwait, Mexico and Canada follow. These countries qualify as important military and economic partners of the United States. Other partners high on the list are Great Britain and Germany. Mexico and China are ranked substantially higher by the public this time than four years ago. South Korea is also substantially higher, reflecting heightened attention on the Korean Peninsula because of the death of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung and the alleged development of a nuclear military capability there.

Among leaders, Mexico and Russia emerge at the top of the vital interest list, followed by Japan, China and Saudi Arabia. In both 1986 and 1990, Germany and Japan were at the top of the leaders' list. While Germany is still ranked high, at 91%, it has slipped to seventh in the ratings. As in the public rankings, China's rating among leaders has jumped more than any other (from

73% in 1990, to 95% in 1994). Great Britain has dropped slightly, from 86% to 82%. Surprisingly, South Africa's rating has remained virtually unchanged, as has that of Brazil. Perceived vital interests in the Middle East are down among the public and up among the leaders compared to 1990. Mexico, always perceived as important, has risen in the ratings of both leaders and public, in part because of the attention focused on it in the debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement.

### THREATS TO U.S. VITAL INTERESTS

Public and leaders were asked about possible threats to the vital interests of the United States during the next 10 years. Figure III-2 summarizes the responses. Fear of the military power of Russia (formerly "Soviet Union") has declined even further since 1990, when the Eastern bloc had broken up but the Soviet Union still existed. A majority of leaders and a plurality of the public now see Russia as an "important" but not "critical" threat. Concern about economic competition from Europe as a "critical" threat has also declined, quite substantially among the leaders (down 30 percentage points). By contrast, concern about the development of China as a world power has gone up 30 points among leaders and 17 points among the public. The public is still concerned about economic competition from Japan as a "critical" threat (up 2 points from 1990 to 62%), while the figure for leaders has dropped 42 points to only 21%. The newest and most critical threat in the view of the leaders is the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers.

Among the public this item is tied for first with the threat of large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States.

### FEELING THERMOMETER FOR COUNTRIES

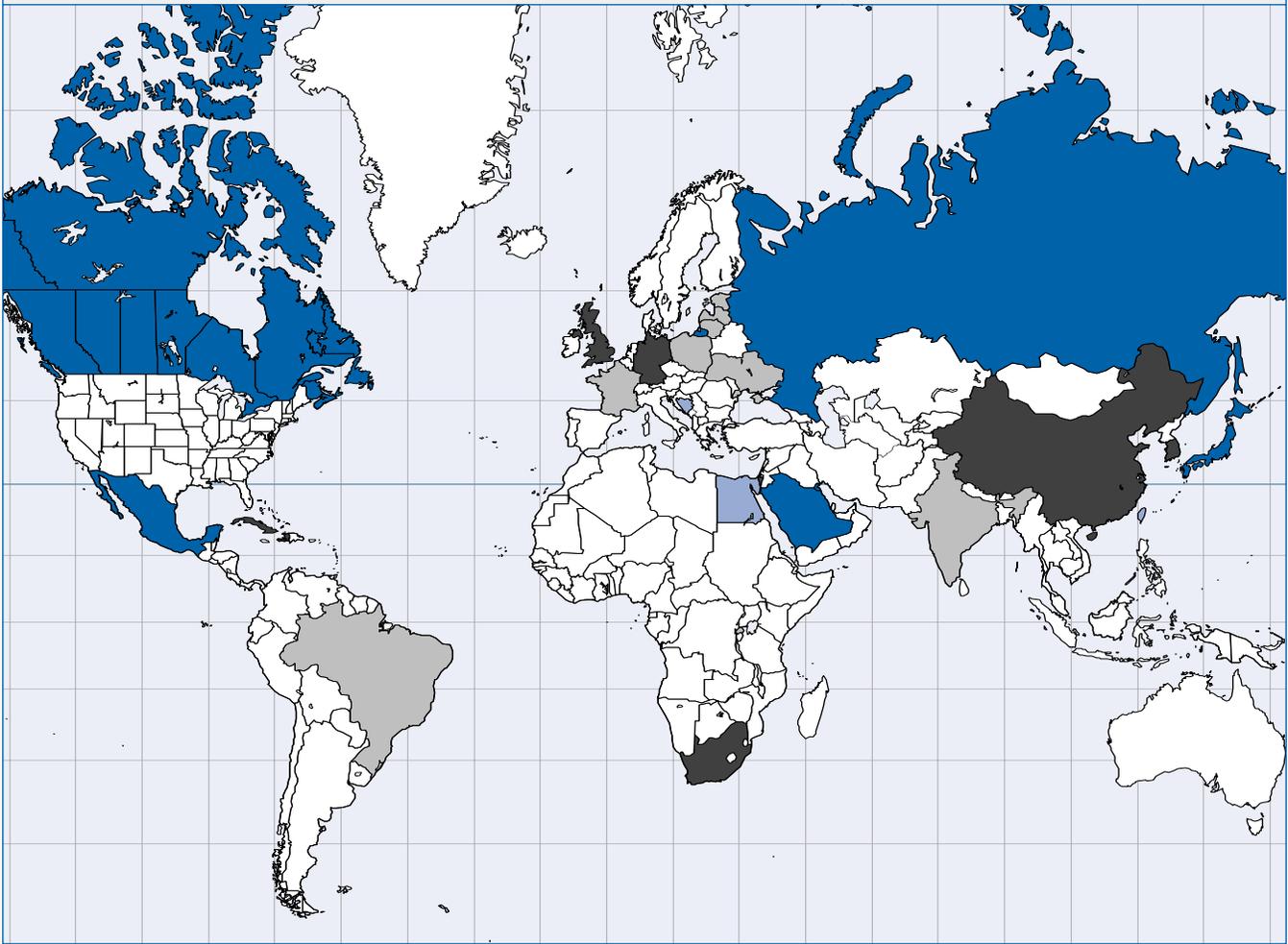
In addition to evaluating the importance of various countries in terms of U.S. vital interests, the public was asked to rate 17 countries on a "feeling thermometer," ranging from 0 to 100 degrees. A warm feeling toward a country is defined as a temperature above 50 degrees, which is neutral. The mean rating for each country is shown in Figure III-3. As in previous Chicago Council surveys, Canada and Great Britain come out at the top, followed by Italy and a tie between Germany and Mexico. The warm temperature for Russia represents a radical change from the early years of this survey when it received temperatures from 26 to 34 degrees. It has declined only slightly from four years ago. Japan and Saudi Arabia, which are near the top of the vital interest ratings, fall only in the middle of the temperature range. Not surprisingly, Iran and Iraq are at the bottom. For over a decade the American people have consistently shown warm feelings toward France and Brazil, which rank low on the vital interest chart.

### FEELING THERMOMETER FOR WORLD LEADERS

The public is also asked to rate a list of world leaders on the "feeling thermometer." The mean rating for each leader is also displayed in Figure III-3. Pope John Paul II, for the fourth time in

## FIGURE III-1: U.S. VITAL INTERESTS

*Perceptions of U.S. vital interests among the public.*



### The Public (shown above)

#### Over 70%

Japan	85
Saudi Arabia	83
Russia*	79
Kuwait	76
Mexico	76
Canada	71

#### 51% to 70%

Great Britain	69
China**	68
Cuba	67
Germany***	66
South Korea	65
Israel	64
South Africa	57
Haiti	56

#### 41% to 50%

Taiwan	49
Egypt	45
Bosnia	45

#### 40% or less

France	39
Rwanda	35
Ukraine	35
Brazil	35
India	31
Poland	31
The Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania & Estonia	29

### The Leaders

Russia*	98
Mexico	98
Japan	96
China**	95
Saudi Arabia	94
Canada	93
Germany***	91
South Korea	90
Israel	86
Great Britain	82
Egypt	78
Ukraine	66
France	59
South Africa	52
Brazil	49
Poland	46

The Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania & Estonia	34
Haiti	33

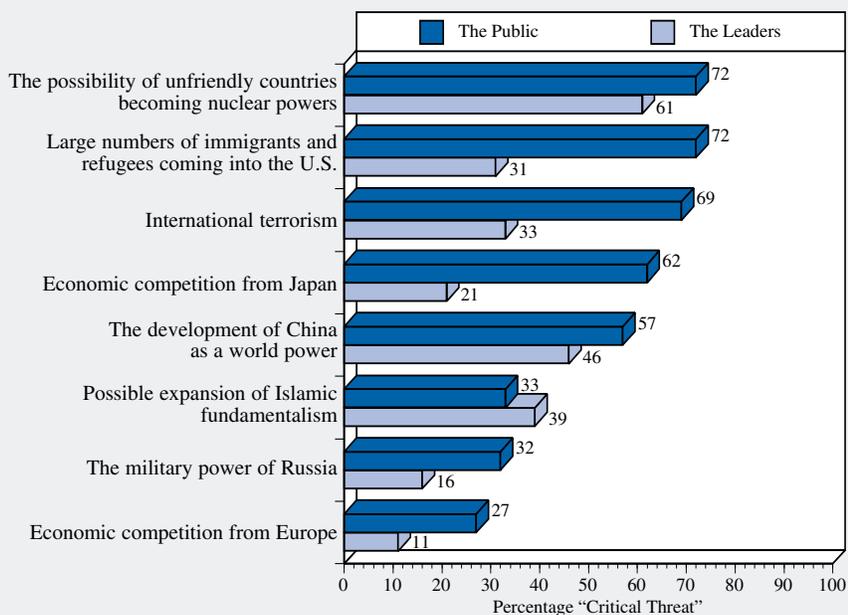
\* Prior to the 1994 survey this was the "Soviet Union."

\*\* Prior to the 1994 survey this was "The People's Republic of China."

\*\*\*Prior to the 1990 survey this was "West Germany."

**FIGURE III-2: THREATS TO U.S. VITAL INTERESTS**

*Percentage of those who view the following as "critical threats" to the United States.*



a row, emerges as the most popular leader, followed by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who are tied. Other than the Pope, President Nelson Mandela of South Africa emerges as the most highly rated foreign leader, followed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Former President George Bush comes after Carter and Kissinger, followed by President Clinton, whose lukewarm temperature reflects the mostly negative ratings his administration receives elsewhere in our survey.

Not surprisingly, Cuban President Fidel Castro and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein emerge once again at the bottom. Also near the bottom, just above Castro and Hussein, are President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti and Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat, who continues to be unpopular in the United States despite the peace agreement in the Middle East. More surprisingly, President Aristide has a strongly negative rating despite the Clinton administration's support to reinstall him in office as Haiti's legitimate president. In all five past Chicago Council surveys, those at the bottom of the feeling thermometer have been leaders identi-

fied as American enemies: Idi Amin of Uganda in 1978, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran in 1982, Libyan President Mu'ammarr Gaddafi and Cuba's Fidel Castro in 1986. Fidel Castro has remained close to the bottom for over a decade, joined by Saddam Hussein of Iraq in 1990 and 1994. Hussein received a record low for world leaders in 1990 (9 degrees) and now stands at 11 degrees.

**DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS**

Despite the cool feelings the public shows for North Korea and Cuba and the continued reign of communist regimes in these countries, pluralities favor establishing normal diplomatic relations with them (50% for North Korea and 46% for Cuba). The public also favors establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam (58%), but would not establish such relations with Iran (52% against). Opinion leaders agree that the United States should establish diplomatic relations with North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam (57%, 64% and 88%, respectively), but should not with Iran (57% against).

**U.S.—RUSSIAN RELATIONS**

As noted earlier, although the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union have changed the focus of American foreign policy dramatically, Russia is still considered one of the three most important countries in terms of U.S. vital interests. Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, at the time of the survey, was the most popular European leader. Although foreign aid is highly unpopular overall, 20% of the public and 40% of the leaders believe aid to Russia should be increased, while 34% of the public and 45% of the leaders think it should be kept the same, both comparatively high levels.

Russia also appears in the top third of countries on the thermometer, at 54 degrees, a temperature identical to that of Brazil and Israel. "Dealings with Russia" is still considered the second biggest foreign policy problem (for decidedly different reasons) by American leaders, although it is not in the top dozen foreign policy problems listed by the public.

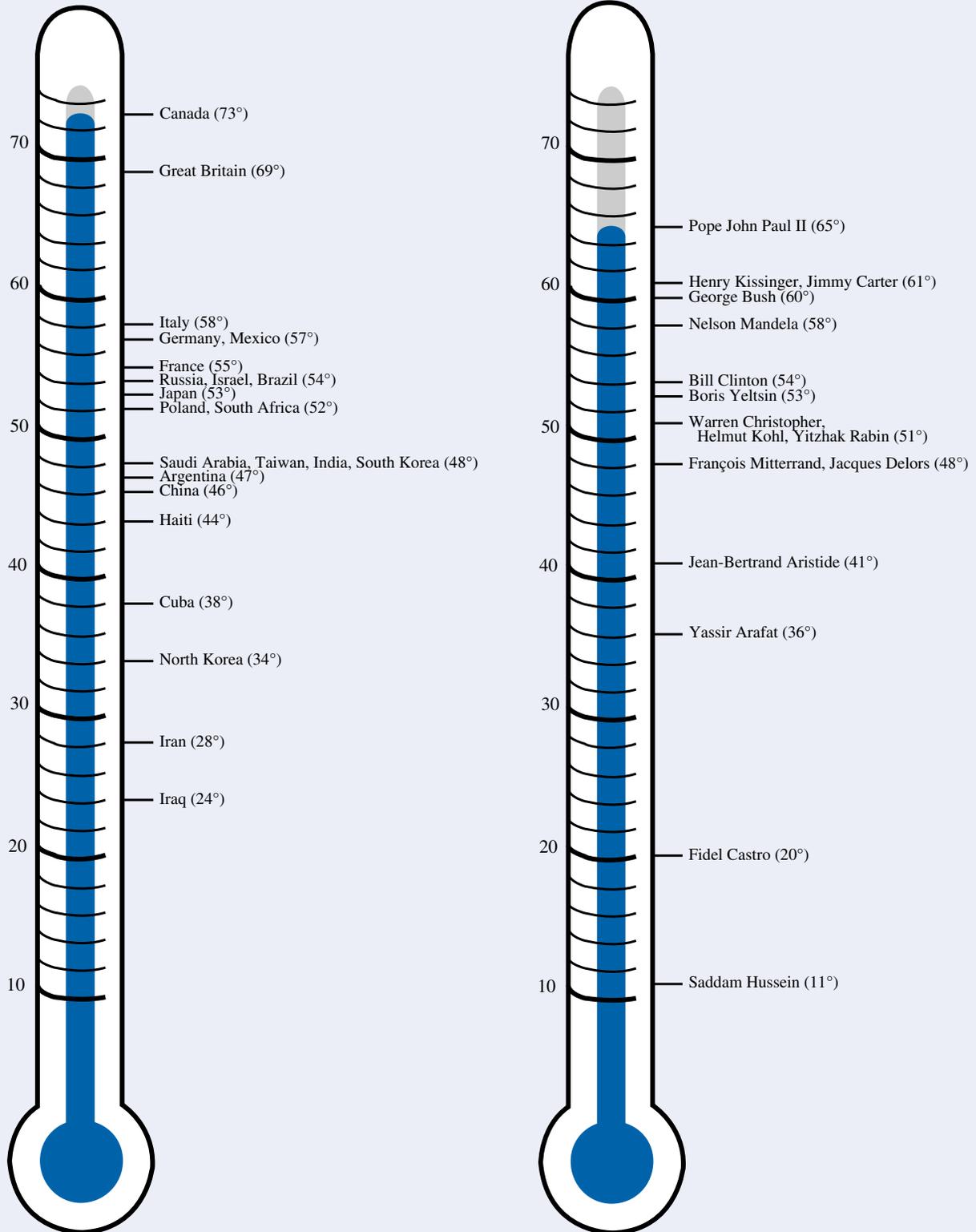
At the same time, wariness about Russia is widespread among both the public and leaders, with 81% of the public and 67% of the leaders responding that the military power of Russia represents either a critical or an important possible threat to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. Support for using American troops is highest in the case of a Russian invasion of Western Europe, with 54% of the public and 91% of the leaders in favor. Almost three-fifths of the leaders (59%) and slightly under half of the public (42%) favor expanding NATO to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, an action strongly opposed by Russia. Attitudes toward Russia are summarized on pages 24-25.

**EUROPE**

Whether ranked according to vital interests or feelings on a thermometer, European nations—especially Germany and Britain—remain America's closest friends. The end of the Cold War and the Soviet military threat has not produced a marked shift in attention away

### FIGURE III-3: THERMOMETER RATINGS

Mean temperature given to various countries and world leaders by the public. Neutral feelings are given 50 degrees, warm feelings more than 50 and cool feelings less than 50 degrees.



from Europe. Europe is still considered more important to the United States than Asia by a wide margin on the public side (49% to 21%) and by a small margin on the part of leaders (42% to 38%). As mentioned, concern about economic competition from Europe has lessened during the last four years. A solid plurality of the public (49%) thinks the economic unification of Europe is a good thing for the United States, with only 22% regarding it a bad thing. Leaders' positive evaluation of European unification has increased from 79% in 1990 to 85%, with only 12% considering it a bad thing for the United States. Similarly, the European Union receives a favorable rating on trade practices among leaders, particularly compared to Japan. Among the public, a small plurality (35% to 32%) believes it practices unfair trade, although the number is down five percentage points from 1990 and one-third responds "don't know." More than twice as many leaders (65%) believe that the European Union practices fair trade, with 27% taking the opposite view.

The end of the Cold War four years ago led to a call for cutbacks, especially on the part of leaders, in the level of U.S. commitment to NATO. This trend has slowed considerably. The number of leaders wanting to maintain the current level of commitment has gone from 35% in 1990 to 57%, with only 37% wanting to decrease it, as compared with 61% in 1990. As in 1990, a strong majority of the public (56%) is in favor of maintaining the same level of commitment, with 26% (27% in 1990) wanting to decrease it. As indicated in Chapter Five, fears expressed by European countries about Russia's historical expansionist tendencies have had strong resonance on this side of the Atlantic, especially among American leaders. Attitudes toward Europe are summarized on pages 24-25.

## **JAPAN**

The Council's survey in 1990 noted a strong feeling of economic vulnerability and concern about declining American

competitiveness, which resulted in a very critical attitude toward Japan. Four years ago Japan fared worse overall than any other major industrial country in critical attitudes. Today, although both the public and leaders remain critical of Japan on a number of issues, the concern about Japan has diminished.

Japan remains a key U.S. ally and trading partner and continues to be regarded as one of the three most important countries in terms of vital interest by both the public and leaders. The lukewarm thermometer rating in 1990 (52 degrees) is relatively unchanged (up to 53 degrees). Economic competition from Japan is considered a critical threat by almost two-thirds (62%) of the public, but only one-fifth (21%) of the leaders. The perception that Japan practices unfair trade with the United States is relatively unchanged, held by 71% of the public and 80% of the leaders.

Over the past two decades, the issue of whether Japan should expand its military role in the world has been a contentious one, with successive administrations until Bush pressuring Japan to do so. When the public is asked if Japan should be encouraged to play an increased military role, 39% responds affirmatively, while almost half (47%) believes it should be discouraged. Leaders favor the opposite, with over half (55%) stating that Japan should be encouraged to expand its military role, and 43% saying it should be discouraged. Leaders overwhelmingly favor permanent membership for Japan on the U.N. Security Council, with over three-quarters (77%) in favor and only one-fifth (21%) opposed.

Several factors may be influencing the reduction of concern about Japan. First, the improved U.S. economic position in the world and our growing importance as a world leader have weakened perceptions of the United States as economically vulnerable. The bursting of Japan's "bubble" economy and reports of continuing political scandal have added a degree of cynicism to the view of Japan as a mighty economic challenger. Finally, the growth of China and other nations as

economic competitors has diluted attention once solely focused on Japan. Attitudes toward Japan are summarized on pages 24-25.

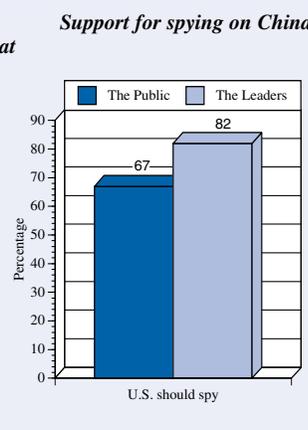
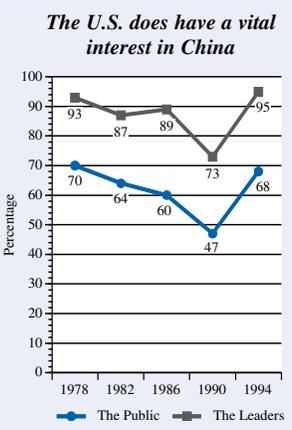
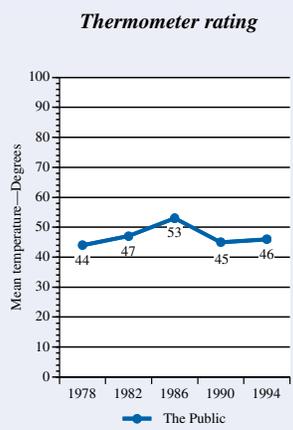
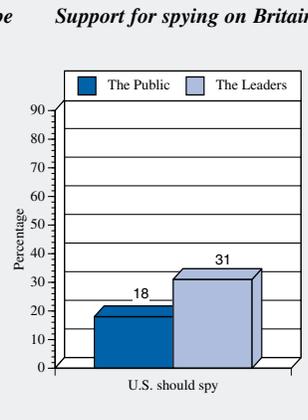
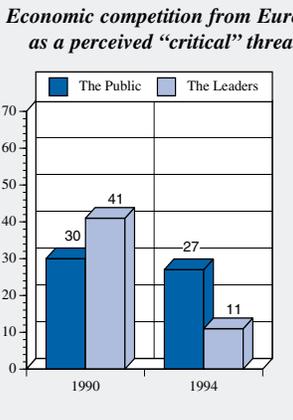
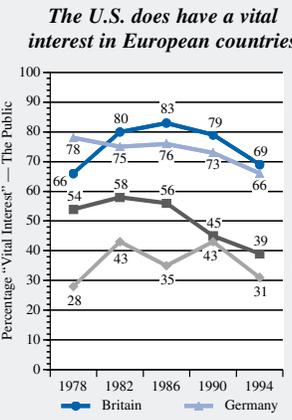
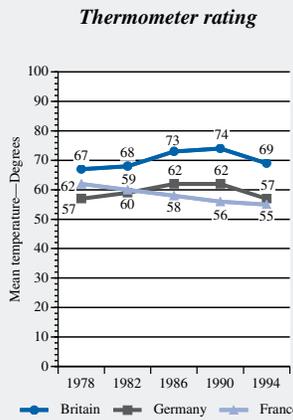
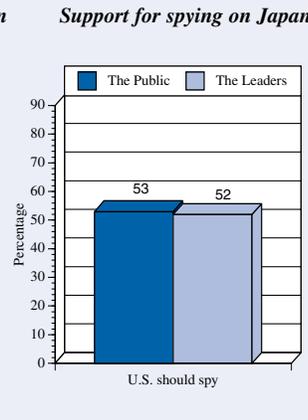
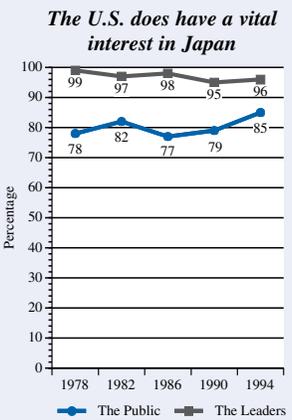
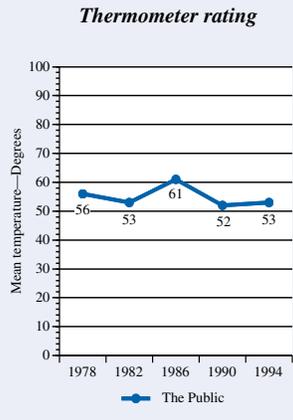
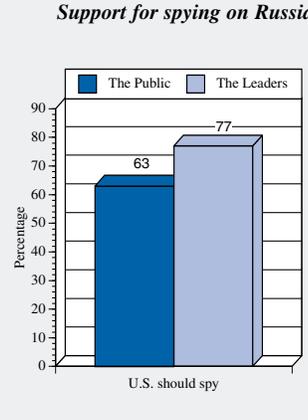
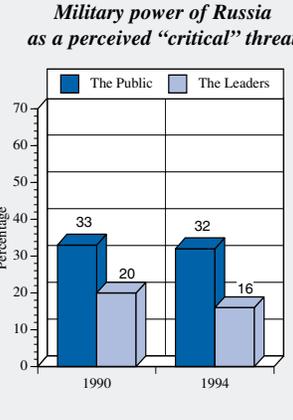
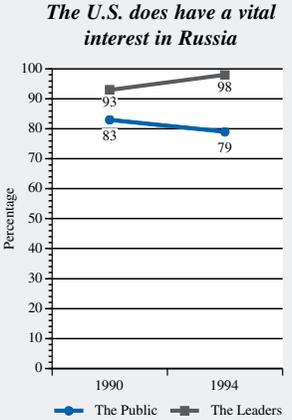
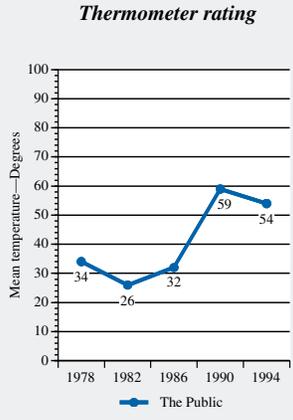
## **CHINA**

China is now one of the top five trading partners of the U.S. and, not surprisingly, is drawing significant attention as a growing power in Asia. Among both the public and leaders, China experienced the biggest change in perception among all countries. Two-thirds of the public (68%) believes we have a vital interest in China, up from 47% four years ago. A similar change has occurred among leaders, with 95% labeling China a vital interest, up from 73% in 1990.

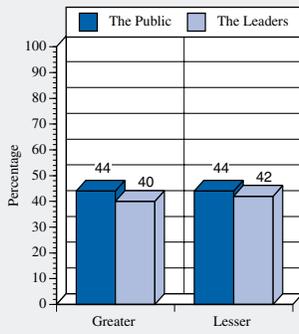
The importance accorded China by both public and leaders on the vital interest scale is not accompanied by "warm" feelings on behalf of the American public. China receives a slightly cool 46 degrees on the thermometer, among the bottom quarter of all countries ranked and just above Haiti. China's rating is relatively unchanged from four years ago (45 degrees in 1990). The clash between the Chinese government and Chinese students in Tiananmen Square took place over five years ago, yet remains prominent in debate. The ongoing dispute between the Clinton administration and Chinese government on trade and human rights issues, the massive U.S. trade deficits with China and the perception of China still as a "hard-line" communist dictatorship has undoubtedly kept the American public's view of China guarded.

Neither the public nor the leaders consider relations with China to be among the biggest foreign policy problems facing the U.S. today. China does not rank in the top 20 issues listed by the public, and is 11th (only 5%) among the leaders. Yet there is a substantial increase in concern about the development of China as a world power. Over half of the public now sees this as a possible critical threat to the vital interests of the U.S. (57%), a substantial increase (17 points) over four years ago. Slightly under half of

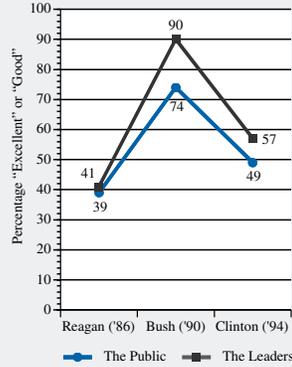
# RUSSIA JAPAN EUROPE CHINA



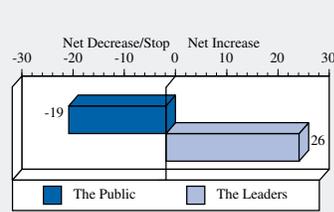
**Predicted role for Russia in 10 years compared to today**



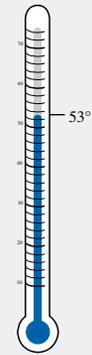
**Administration's handling of relations with Russia**



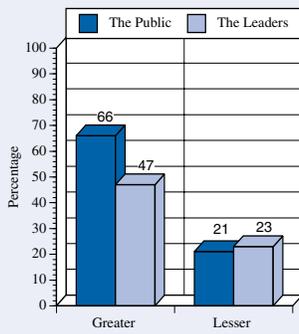
**Support for economic aid to Russia**



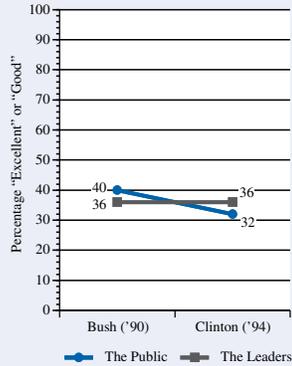
**Thermometer rating for Russian President Boris Yeltsin**



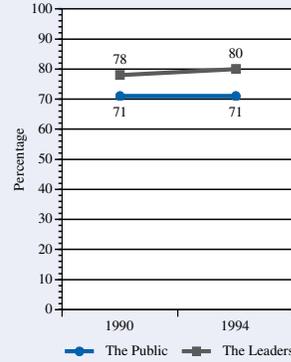
**Predicted role for Japan in 10 years compared to today**



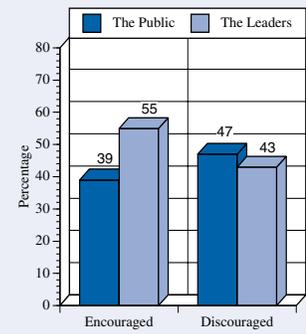
**Administration's handling of relations with Japan**



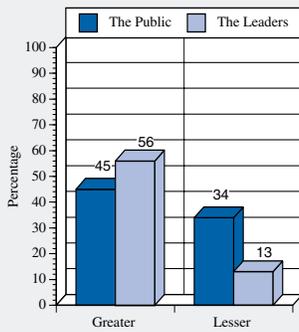
**Those who believe Japan practices unfair trade**



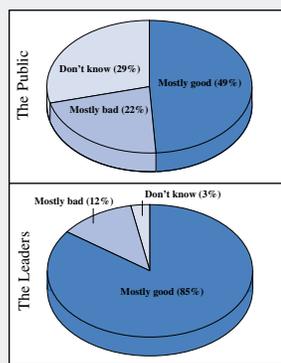
**Support for larger military role in world for Japan**



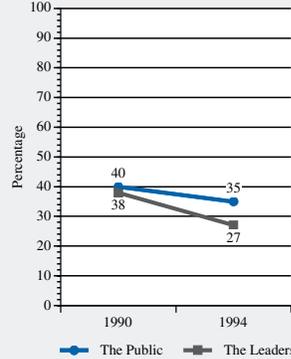
**Predicted role for Germany in 10 years compared to today**



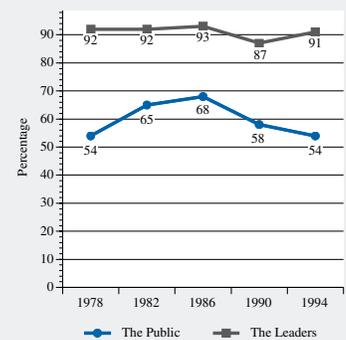
**European economic unification as good or bad for the U.S.**



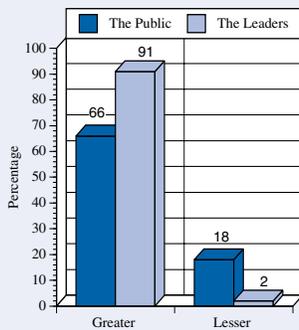
**Those who believe the EU practices unfair trade**



**Support for using troops if Russia invaded Western Europe**



**Predicted role for China in 10 years compared to today**



the leaders view China as a critical threat, a 30-point jump (from 16% to 46%) over four years ago. This is probably the strongest indicator of the shift in both public and leadership attitudes on China. For both the public and the leaders, China represents a greater threat than the military power of Russia. For the public, the threat of China as a world power is just slightly less than that of economic competition from Japan. And among leaders, the threat of China's power far exceeds that of economic competition from Japan. Attitudes toward China are summarized on pages 24-25.

### THE PERSIAN GULF

In the absence of events like the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990 and the Persian Gulf War in early 1991, the region had receded from the foreign policy agenda by 1994.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia continues to be among the top countries considered of vital interest by both public and leaders. Over half of the public (52%) and four-fifths of the leaders (84%) would favor the use of American troops in the case of an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. That is a higher figure than in the case of an Arab invasion of Israel or a North Korean invasion of South Korea. Kuwait is also one of the top five in the public rankings of vital interests.

Although concern about Iraq has substantially diminished, Iraq and Iran still emerge at the very bottom of the thermometer of countries, with Iran receiving a temperature of 28 degrees, and Iraq 24 degrees. Three widely perceived critical threats to the United States in the next 10 years have applicability to the Middle East. Almost three-quarters (72%) of the public and two-thirds (61%) of the leaders believe that the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers constitutes a critical threat. A third of the public and slightly more of the leaders (39%) believe that the possible expansion of Islamic fundamentalism could represent a critical threat.

A third possible critical threat is international terrorism, which over

two-thirds of the public and a third of the leaders see as critical. Here again, Iran, Iraq and Syria have been widely suspected of having supported and funded international terrorism.

### ISRAEL

Israel continues to be considered a key U.S. ally in the Middle East and ranks relatively high on both the vital interest scale and the thermometer of countries. Among the public there is little change from four years ago on either scale. Among leaders there is a substantial increase (from 78% to 86%) in the vital interest ranking.

Among world leaders, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ranks among the top four foreign leaders, substantially above the rating of Prime Minister Shamir in 1990. There is substantial public and leadership support (42% and 72%, respectively) for using American troops "if Arab forces invaded Israel," no significant change from four years ago. Despite the overall positive feelings toward Israel on the part of both leaders and public, just under half of the public (44%) and over half of the leaders (53%) believe the U.S. government should be secretly spying on the government of Israel.

On the question of aid to Israel, there are no significant changes. An identical 38% of the public favors keeping it the same in 1994 as in 1990, with 9% favoring an increase and 44% wanting to decrease or stop aid altogether. Among leaders, 45% favors keeping it the same (an increase of four points over 1990) and 50% favors decreasing or stopping it altogether (four points less than in 1990). Only 4% favors an increase.

By contrast, support for increasing aid to the Palestinians among leaders is significantly higher than for increasing aid to Israel (48% compared to 4%).

On the question of establishing an independent Palestinian State on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, an overwhelming four-fifths (81%) of leaders favor this. A plurality (39%) of the public favors it. In the public's case, however, 41% of the people are unsure of the issue. These attitudes may have

shifted given the recent violence which has stalled the peace process.

In conclusion, there is no massive shift in attitudes toward Israel by either the public or leaders. The leaders, always more critical in the past, are slightly more positive this time.

### CANADA

Canada has always received among the highest rankings both in terms of vital interests and "warm feelings." Canada is among the top six on the vital interest chart, cited by 71% of the public and 93% of the leaders. Once again, Canada emerges at the very top of the thermometer with a 73 degree temperature, only slightly below last time (76 degrees), but still well above any other country. As noted in the discussion of Mexico, the positive evaluation of the NAFTA agreement has undoubtedly influenced public and leadership attitudes toward Canada.

The debate about Quebec's role in the Canadian Federation, which has caused so much tension in Canada during the past year, has generated some interest in the United States. When the question is posed to the leaders as to their reaction "if Canada split up and Quebec became an independent country," less than half of the leaders (43%) say it would be mostly bad for the United States. It would not make any difference to exactly half, and it would be mostly good for the United States according to only 5%.

### MEXICO

The one Latin American country that has consistently been given a high priority by both the public and leaders is Mexico. This was true long before the crisis over the devaluation of the peso in January of 1995. Mexico is among the top five on the vital interest list for the public in 1994, a substantial increase (13 points) over four years ago. It is tied for first on the leaders' vital interest chart, at 98%, up four points from 1990. In terms of the public's feelings about Mexico, it comes out among the top five, at 57 degrees. Also of importance, both the public and the leaders register support for the

North American Free Trade Agreement. Despite a long history of public support for tariffs, half of the public (50%) believes that the NAFTA agreement is mostly good for the United States, and only 31% says that it is mostly bad. Not surprisingly, over three-quarters of the leaders (86%) favor it, with only 13% opposed. Another interesting indicator of Mexico's popularity is that only a third of the public (34%) and less than half of the leaders (46%) believe that the U.S. should be secretly spying on Mexico, while over half of both are opposed. This represents a substantially stronger opposition to spying than is the case with most other countries surveyed.

#### **BRAZIL**

Some major countries still rank low among the public on the vital interest chart. Brazil is in the bottom quarter of the countries listed by both public and leaders. This is consistent with its low rating in the past. Leaders, however, have always placed it higher than the public (49% in 1994). Brazil does favorably on the thermometer, on a par with Russia and Israel.

#### **CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

With the re-emergence of Haiti and Cuba as issues commanding the attention of the American public, U.S. policy toward Caribbean neighbors has once again come to the fore. Concern about Haiti and Cuba, however, appears linked to the explosive issue of immigration. Even though the spread of democracy in South America and the increase in both trade and investment between the U.S. and major South American countries have been highly positive developments, they received far less attention than the issues of Haiti and Cuba. These small island countries lie much closer to the United States and have been the source of recent inflows of immigrants, an issue seen by the public as the third most important foreign policy problem facing the country today. Whereas four years ago only 1% of respondents spontaneously listed immigration as a problem, today 12%

does so. For leaders it is not considered one of the "biggest" issues, absent from the top dozen foreign policy problems listed.

Furthermore, almost three-quarters of the public (72%) believes that "large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States" represents a possible critical threat to the United States in the next 10 years. Only a third of the leaders (31%) share this view. Given the public's concern about immigration, it is not surprising that Haiti is given a much higher vital interest rating by the public than by the leaders. Two-thirds of the public (67%) believes that the U.S. has a vital interest in Cuba, and 56% believes we have a vital interest in Haiti. Only a third of the leaders believe we have a vital interest in Haiti, and fully two-thirds of leaders (66%) say we do not. Although the public considers Haiti and Cuba important, they do not have warm feelings toward either country. Haiti (44 degrees) and Cuba (38 degrees) are at the bottom of the thermometer, with only North Korea, Iran and Iraq below them.

#### **AFRICA**

African countries have generally attracted less attention than other regions in previous Council surveys, and this continues with one exception. South Africa is now listed as a country where the U.S. has a vital interest by over half of the American public (57%), and the leaders (52%). This represents an increase of 4 points on the public side, and a slight increase on the leadership side. Other African countries in the past have received a much lower rating. Nigeria received 29% in 1990. Rwanda receives 35% in this survey.

Although interest in South Africa has increased, over two-thirds of the public (69%) and an overwhelming majority of the leaders (92%) would oppose the use of American troops if civil war broke out in South Africa. Eighteen percent of the American public would favor sending troops, as would 6% of the leaders. However, when this question is broken down between white and non-white

Americans, 32% of non-whites favor the use of troops in this situation, while only 16% of whites do.

#### **DRUGS**

One other issue that has drawn considerable attention in previous studies is the problem of international drug trafficking. Although it is not listed among the top 20 problems by the public or the leaders, stopping the flow of illegal drugs is the number one foreign policy goal identified as "very" important by the public. That goal ranks fourth among the leaders.

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

In analyzing political relationships, we encountered some ironical situations.

- Despite the desire of many to stay out of other countries' affairs, there is strong support for the United Nations and a sizable degree of willingness to place U.S. troops under a U.N. commander for peacekeeping operations.
- Despite the fact that North Korea is among Americans' least favorite countries, there is a basic willingness to normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea.
- Despite the fact that Yassir Arafat is among Americans' least admired world leaders, there is predominant support for an independent Palestinian state.
- Despite the fact that Japan is viewed as an unfair trader, posing a major economic challenge to the United States, there is a strong belief that Japan should have a place on the U.N. Security Council.
- Despite the fact that Americans are paying more attention than ever to local news, they still prefer to play an "active" role in world affairs.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS

Americans are more conscious than ever of global economic competition and interdependence. Over the past several years, controversies surrounding trade relations with Japan, the renewal of “most favored nation” trade status with China, the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, and the conclusion of the GATT negotiations after seven years of debate, have replaced the arms race, the communist threat and other Cold War matters in the headlines. Not surprisingly, Americans are now more concerned about economic than military competition.

### ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Four years ago we documented an increased feeling of economic vulnerability among Americans. More than two-thirds of the public believed the United States had declined as a world power because it was unable to solve its economic problems. Fear of economic competition from Japan and Europe was high. There was an increased number of people who felt that foreign policy had a major impact on our overall economy at home.

Today, however, that feeling of national economic vulnerability has diminished, even if personal vulnerability and job insecurity has not. Economic problems as a percentage of total problems facing the country are down, as are feelings of intimidation by Europe and Japan. The number that believes foreign policy has a major impact on the economy has dropped back to 1986 levels. Concern about inflation has dropped even further from four years ago, as has concern about industrial competitiveness. Even though fears of unemployment are up, the number listing it as a major problem (20%) is nowhere near the 1982 recessionary level (64%).

Despite the sense that the United States overall is faring better economically, our results indicate that personal insecurity among the public remains high. Fear of crime is in first place as one of the biggest problems facing the country, listed by a comparatively high 42% of the public, the second highest percentage ever for any problem facing the country. Unemployment is in second place. Most notably, protecting the jobs of American workers as a “very”

**FIGURE IV-1: IMPACT OF FOREIGN POLICY  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

*Percentage of the public that believes U.S. foreign policy has a major impact on the following.*

	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
Gasoline prices	87	85	81	68	88	65
Our overall economy	76	72	72	62	73	63
Value of the dollar abroad	78	82	72	62	65	62
Unemployment in the U.S.	60	51	66	56	60	58
Your own personal standard of living	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	38

important goal of foreign policy stands at an all time high.

There are some important distinctions between the public and leaders in their economic outlook. While unemployment ranks second on the public’s list of the country’s biggest problems, the economy in general ranks seventh. For leaders it is the reverse: the economy in general ranks second and unemployment ranks eighth.

Only a minority of the public thinks foreign policy has a significant impact on their personal well-being. While 63% of the public agrees that it has a major impact on “our overall

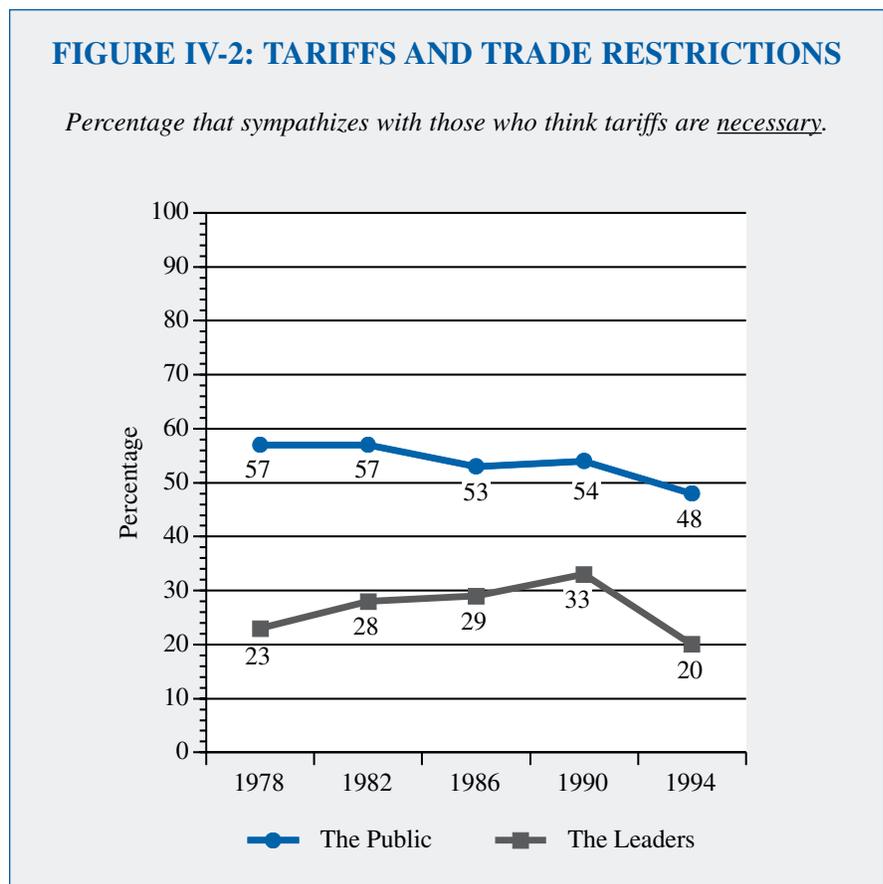
economy at home,” only 38% feels it has a major impact on “your own personal standard of living” (see Figure IV-1). This is further evidence of the public’s feeling that they are not necessarily sharing in the economic success of the country. Nevertheless, those likeliest to say foreign policy has a major impact on their standard of living are those with less than a college education and incomes under \$25,000. This item also evokes the largest number of those saying foreign policy has “no impact at all” (17%), a statement liberals are more likely to make than conservatives (23% versus 15%).

On the list of foreign policy problems for the general public, two of the top five can be considered related to economics. Foreign aid ranks second, cited by 16% (a decline of two percentage points since 1990). Immigration is third, named by 12% (up 11 points). International trade is sixth, named by 8% (a rise of three points). Leaders' broader economic emphasis is shown in the placement of international trade at the top of their list. Foreign aid among leaders is 13th and immigration is 21st. Concern with the world economy, mentioned by only 2% of the public, is seventh on the leaders' list, cited by 11%. Yet, concern related to the balance of payments and trade is eighth on the public's list, mentioned by 6%, and 24th on the leaders' list, mentioned by only 2%. On both lists the issue receives fewer mentions than ever before.

Turning from "problems" to "goals," the priority accorded primarily economic goals again reveals differences between the public and leaders. None of the top five goals considered "very" important by the leaders is primarily economic, either on a national or more personal level. However, two of the public's top five are directly related to their personal feelings of economic vulnerability: protecting the jobs of American workers and controlling and reducing immigration.

Perceptions of economic endangerment can be discerned in responses to the list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. The intense concern with their personal economic plight is illustrated by the threats deemed "critical" by large proportions of the public. "Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the U.S." is rated just as critical as the "possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers," both tying for first, at 72%. Among leaders, nuclear proliferation is considered a "critical" threat by 61%, while the immigration and refugee issue draws a high degree of concern from only 31%.

Evidence of a heightened awareness of more general economic over



military concerns is also clear. Almost twice as many members of the public see a critical threat to the United States in Japanese economic competition as in Russian military power, even though Russia is a highly unstable country that still possesses substantial nuclear arms. Leaders, however, are much less concerned about an economic threat from Japan than four years ago, with only 21% citing it a "critical" threat. This is still five points above the perceived threat from Russia. Only 4% of the public and 14% of leaders say that Japanese economic competition is not an important threat at all. Furthermore, Japan is regarded as a long-term, major competitor. Japan, a militarily non-nuclear power with constitutional restrictions on the use of its military, is presumed by 66% of the public to play a greater role in the world over the next 10 years, the second highest forecast after the United States.

News of economic transformation and growing markets in China make that country a looming presence for both public and leaders. Sixty-six per-

cent of the public and 91% of leaders forecast a greater role for China in a decade.

Concern about the threat of economic competition from Europe has receded, especially among the leaders. Only 27% of the public considers it a "critical" threat, down from 30% in 1990. Leaders are even less concerned, with 11% considering it a "critical" threat, as opposed to 41% in 1990.

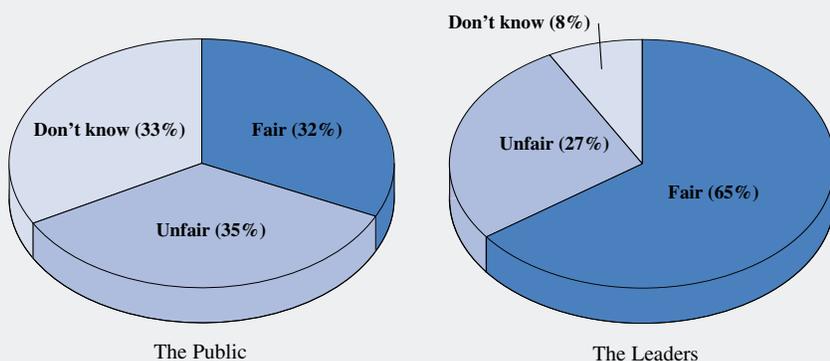
#### TRADE BARRIERS

Accompanying the concern about global economic competition is a surprising willingness among the public to reduce trade barriers (see Figure IV-2). Despite a long-held bias toward protectionism in the interest of "protecting jobs," readiness to eliminate tariffs has been slowly growing. Although retaining tariffs is supported by a plurality of the public (48%), this is the lowest figure ever recorded in our studies, having fallen below 50% for the first time. Similarly, sympathy for eliminating tariffs is at the highest level we've recorded, at 32%. Two groups with higher-

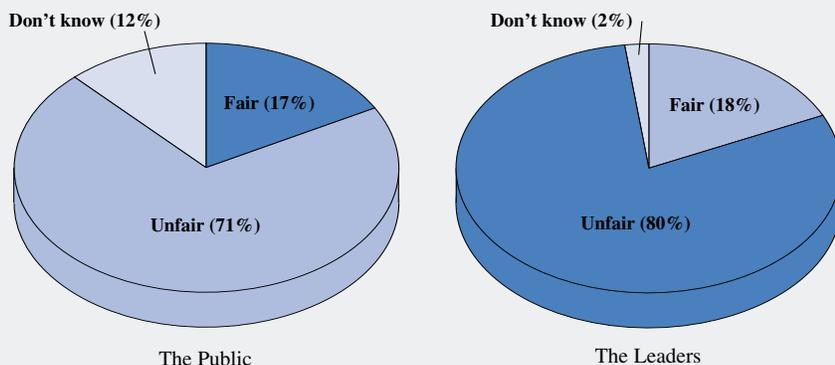
**FIGURE IV-3: TRADE WITH THE EU AND JAPAN**

*Do the countries of the European Union/does Japan practice fair or unfair trade with the United States?*

**THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**JAPAN**



than-average responses on both sides of the issue are the college educated (51% keep tariffs versus 39% drop them) and those with incomes above \$50,000 a year (53% keep tariffs versus 36% drop them). Overall, the net margin in favor of retaining tariffs among the public is 16%, down from 29% in 1990 and 35% in 1982.

As usual on tariffs, the attitudes of leaders and public are quite different, but the trend is the same. At least two-thirds of leaders have always supported eliminating tariffs, though the number dropped slightly in 1990. Today, over three-quarters would drop them, the highest number ever. Only 20% wants to retain them, the lowest number ever.

This puts leaders' net margin against tariffs at the highest level recorded for this question: 57% compared to 31% in 1990.

**TRADE REGIONS**

A new question asks for an evaluation of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. The public believes NAFTA is "mostly good" for the U.S. economy as opposed to "mostly bad" by 50% to 31%, and leaders by 86% to 13%. Whether these views have been affected by the subsequent currency crisis and the U.S. debate over a rescue package is unknown at this writing. As discussed in Chapter Three, Mexico, clearly for economic reasons, is

assigned a very high place as a U.S. vital interest (tied for fourth among the public and for first among leaders).

Attitudes toward European economic unification are almost identical to those on NAFTA. Asked if the economic unification of Western Europe is mostly a good thing or mostly a bad thing for the United States, the public responds favorably (49% to 22%), as do leaders (85% to 12%). This is a small increase in support over 1990.

**TRADE PRACTICES**

The public is less sure when asked if the European Union practices fair trade or unfair trade with the United States. The results are summarized in Figure IV-3. The number of those who think the EU is an unfair trader has dropped by five percentage points from 1990, although one-third of respondents "don't know." Leaders, who thought the balance was in favor of fair trade four years ago, feel even more strongly that way today (fair trade up nine points, unfair trade down 11).

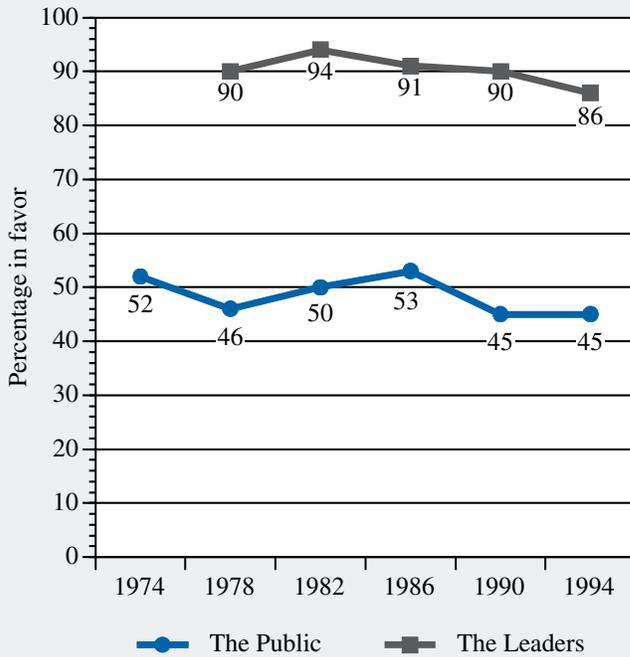
Public and leaders are in complete accord in their negative view of Japanese trading practices with the United States. By a substantial margin (matching 1990), the public continues to think that Japan is an unfair trader. Leaders concur to an even greater extent, as summarized in Figure IV-3. This is a slightly more negative view than was expressed in 1990. As with Mexico, Japan's economic importance is reflected in its high U.S. vital interest ranking. The public places Japan at the very head of the list, six percentage points higher than in 1990. Leaders rate Japan third as a vital interest, after Mexico and Russia. However, Americans distinguish between acknowledging a nation as a vital interest and feeling "warmly" toward it. Hard feelings toward Japan because of trade practices are reflected in its lukewarm, 53-degree thermometer rating.

**ECONOMIC AID**

Given that the public ranks foreign aid second among the country's principal foreign policy problems, it is not surprising to find substantial opposition to

### FIGURE IV-4: ECONOMIC AID

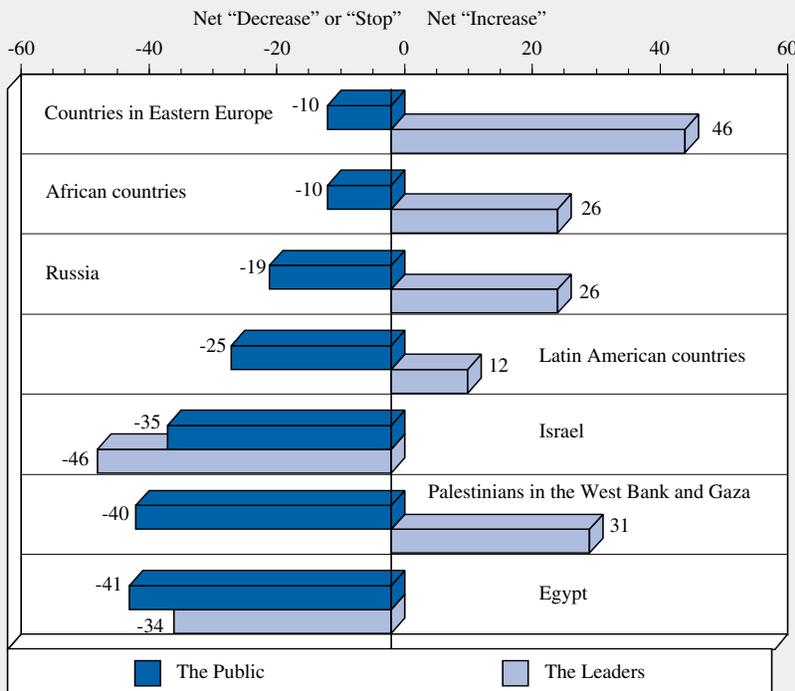
*Those who favor giving economic aid to other nations.*



it when polled separately. The question about foreign aid has been asked in every survey since 1974: “On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving economic aid to other nations?” The public’s response this time is an evenly divided 45% in favor and 45% opposed, the same response as in 1990. These figures represent the lowest levels of support over the course of these surveys. This time, economic aid is favored by more than 50% of college graduates, liberals, those who have traveled outside the United States and those earning more than \$50,000 a year. It is opposed by more than 50% of the unemployed, high school graduates, those living in the Midwest and those earning less than \$25,000 a year. Although leaders have always favored economic aid by a wide margin, support has dipped somewhat in this survey, with 86% in favor and 12% opposed, down from 90% and 9% in 1990. The largest number of leaders opposed to foreign aid comes from business (24%), followed by Congress (19%).

### FIGURE IV-5: ECONOMIC AID TO COUNTRIES

*Net support for economic aid to the following countries.*



As discussed in Chapter One, the question of support for economic aid is also asked in the context of a varied list of government programs. When weighed against domestic programs of high importance to the public, many more people (58%, down 3 points from 1990) want to cut back on spending for economic assistance than want to keep such spending the same (28%, up one point) or expand it (9%, up two points).

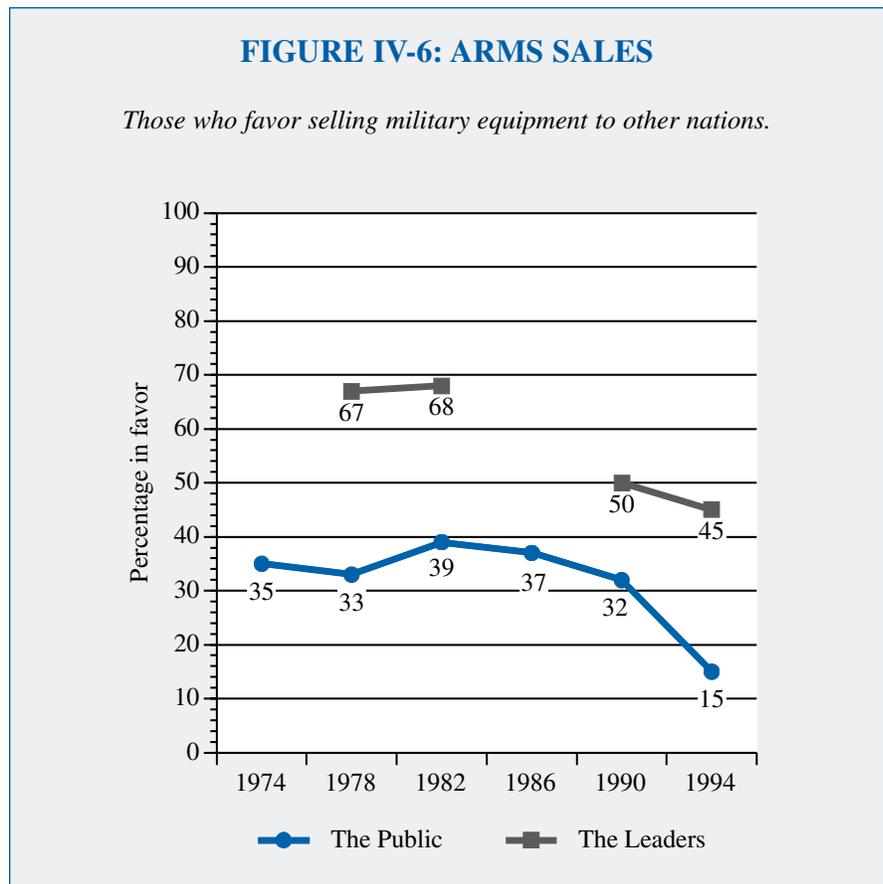
Views regarding economic aid are better understood if examined in terms of stated objectives and intended recipients. The public supports humanitarian aid far above developmental aid, presumably because the former is intended to ameliorate a short-term emergency, with any benefits quickly perceived, and the latter implies a long-term commitment, the results of which may be unclear. Thus, as we see in reviewing the public’s foreign-policy goals, “combating world hunger” is rated “very important” by 56% while “helping to improve the standard of living of less developed countries” is rated “very important” by 22%, down 19 points

from 1990 to the lowest figure for this goal recorded in these surveys. Leaders' responses are not very different, despite their greater stated willingness to give economic aid. Combating world hunger is rated "very important" by 41%, 15 points below the public, and 20 or more points below leaders' responses in the 1980s. Likewise, improving less developed nations' standard of living is rated "very important" by 28%, six points higher than the public, but 14 points lower than 1990 and the all-time low recorded for this question.

Another way to examine attitudes toward economic aid is to inquire whether aid to specific countries or regions should be "increased," "decreased," "kept about the same" or "stopped altogether." As usual, leaders favor aid more than the public. The public would increase aid to none of the seven countries, peoples or areas we asked about, and would keep aid the same only by slight margins to two of them (countries in Eastern Europe and Latin America). Pluralities favor cuts to the rest. The leaders would increase aid to Eastern Europe and the Palestinians, decrease it to Israel and keep the rest the same. Net margins for increasing versus decreasing aid are displayed in Figure IV-5.

As in 1990, public and leaders prefer to cut rather than increase aid to Israel. Forty-four percent of the public and 50% of leaders would decrease or stop aid to Israel, while 9% of the public and 4% of leaders would increase it. The public (and more leaders than in the past) now also favors cuts to Egypt. Forty-four percent of the public, four points more than in 1990, and 41% of leaders, up from 18% in 1990, would decrease or stop aid to Egypt. Only 3% of the public and 7% of leaders would increase it.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip fare better than Egypt and less well than Israel with the public, but get much more support than either country from leaders. Eight percent of the public (but 48% of leaders) would increase aid. Decreasing or stopping aid altogether to the Palestinians is



favored by 45% of the public and 17% of leaders.

African and Latin American countries, newly asked, fare somewhat better with the public than Middle East recipients. Increased aid for African countries is favored by 24% of the public (40% of leaders), while 34% of the public (14% of leaders) would decrease or stop it. For Latin American countries, increased aid is favored by 13% of the public (32% of leaders), and a decrease is favored by 38% of the public (20% of leaders).

The most favored recipients of aid on the survey list among both public and leaders are the "newly independent countries in Eastern Europe." Twenty-two percent of the public (54% of leaders) would increase aid to Eastern European countries, a decline of two points for the public and 20 points for leaders. Decreasing or ending aid is favored by 32% of the public and 8% of leaders.

Regarding aid to Russia, newly asked in this survey, 20% of the public and 40% of leaders favor an increase.

Whether these views are affected by the situation in Chechnya is not known at this writing. The preference for decreasing or ending aid to Russia is 39% among the public and 14% among leaders.

#### ARMS SALES

Over the years, the question of whether the U.S. should sell military equipment to other nations has consistently been opposed by the public and more supported by leaders. This time, public opposition is higher than ever, with 77% opposed and 15% in favor (in 1990, 59% opposed and 32% in favor). Leaders are now 51% opposed and 45% in favor, a reversal from 1990, when 50% favored and 47% opposed sales.

Men are likelier than women to support arms sales (20% versus 11%). Regionally, the South, despite its military tradition, shares the predominant view on arms sales, with 78% opposed and 16% in favor, and the Midwest shows the highest opposition (83%) and least support (12%).

# CHAPTER FIVE

## MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

The 1994 survey reflects both continuity and change on the subject of national security. For four decades, attitudes toward defense spending have been related to views about the Soviet Union. The world the public perceives and policy-makers address has now changed dramatically. In addition to the changes in the former Soviet Union, the unification of Germany and the opening of China are especially important for defense and security questions.

### AMERICAN POWER

One important characteristic of public opinion in the post-Cold War environment is the degree to which the U.S. is seen as a uniquely influential power in the world, the “only” remaining superpower. As mentioned previously, 47% of the public believes that the U.S. plays a more important and powerful role in the world today than 10 years ago, the highest percentage since this series began in 1974. Among leaders, only 26% felt the U.S. was playing a more important role in 1990, while 44% of leaders feel this way today.

This image of American strength is reinforced when people are asked how they see the international system unfolding over the next 10 years. The public is much more inclined than the leaders to see a distinctively influential role for the United States (see Figure V-1). When asked whether certain countries will play a greater role or a lesser role in the next 10 years than they do today, a striking 73% of the public predicts that the U.S. will play a greater role. Only 20% says the United States will play a lesser role. This is notably ahead of any other country in public

perception. Next are China and Japan, where 66% of the public in each case believes a greater role is in store. Only 45% feels that way about Germany, approximately on a par with Russia, where 44% predicts a greater role.

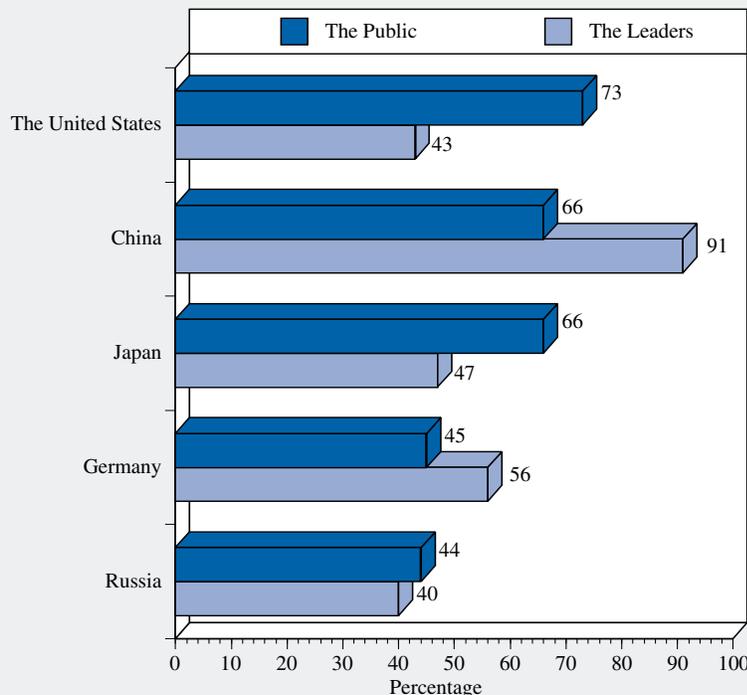
Only 43% of the leaders predict the United States will play a greater role in the world in 10 years, while 47% feels this way about Japan and a notable 56% about Germany. Most striking of all, 91% of the leaders predict China will play an expanded role in a decade. This no doubt reflects current economic interest in and optimism about China’s future role, though the survey question asks only about overall power, not economic or military capacities per se. Perhaps no less striking is the finding that 40% of the leaders believe that Russia, despite current political and economic challenges, will play a greater role in the future.

The perception of the United States as the only remaining superpower is consistent with the general increase in such sentiments during the decade of the 1980s. It contrasts with the apparent lack of confidence and feeling of relative weakness compared to the Soviet Union prevalent during the Ford and Carter administrations.

The end of the Cold War and of the Soviet Union as a nation-state may mean that military power, especially nuclear military power, is relatively less consequential in gauging the overall power and influence of any nation, including the United States. Clearly economic power has emerged as vastly more important than before.

**FIGURE V-1: FUTURE ROLE OF COUNTRIES**

*Those who believe the following countries will play a greater role in the next 10 years than they do today.*



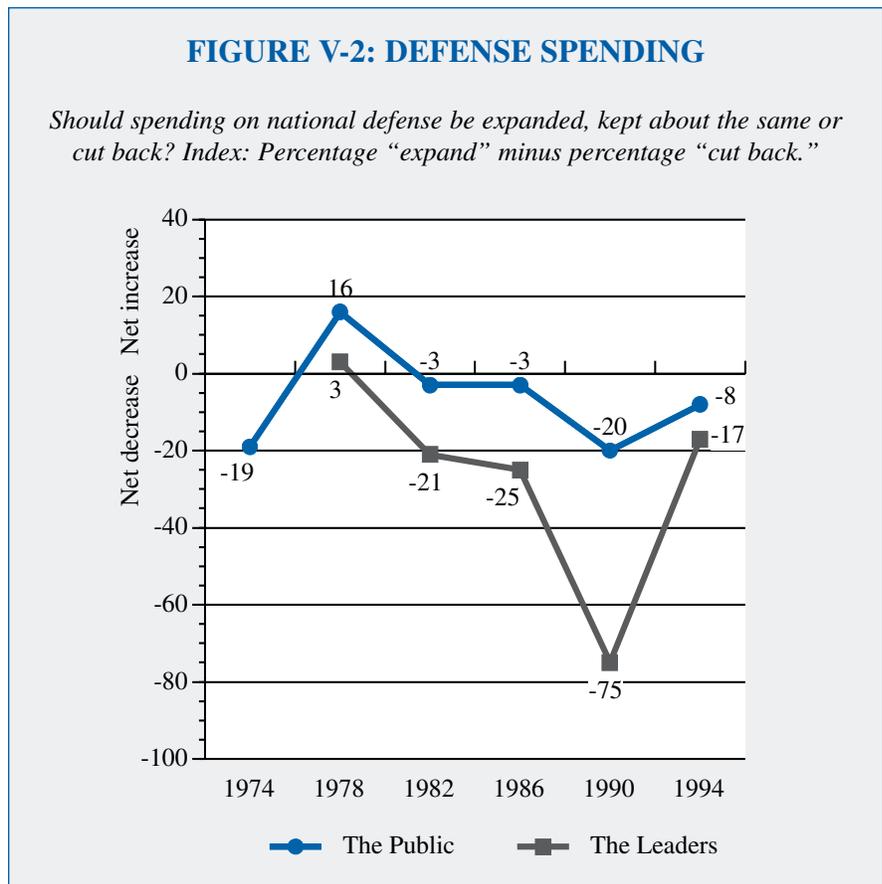
## DEFENSE SPENDING

Attitudes on defense spending have varied with the public's perception of the military balance and foreign threats, specifically in the past regarding the Soviet Union. By 1990, Americans felt the U.S.-Soviet military balance, previously a source of anxiety and sometimes a sense of inferiority, had been restored in favor of the United States. As a result, support for greater defense spending declined in 1990 compared with 1986, from 20% to 12% among the public, and from 12% to 2% among the leaders. Cuts were supported by 32% of the public and an overwhelming 77% of leaders in 1990.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, one might expect a further decline in support for defense spending, since the Soviet threat was the principal incentive for the large U.S. defense establishment. This has not occurred. At least half the public and leaders are now in favor of keeping spending levels the same. There is more support for increased defense spending compared with four years ago, even though more people still favor cutting back than expanding.

In all of our surveys, attitudes toward defense spending have been measured in two ways. First, respondents are asked whether defense spending, along with a number of other federal government programs, should be "expanded," "cut back" or "kept about the same." In this context, people are reminded about the many different programs that compete for support in the national budget, including such popular items as education and Social Security. When asked in this context, 34% of the public wants to cut back, down from 43% in 1990. By this measure, 38% of leaders want to cut defense, while 15% would increase it. The percentage of the public wanting to increase defense rose from 14% four years ago to 21%. A plurality of 41% favors keeping it the same.

The defense question is also asked separately, following questions about foreign policy and with no implied domestic trade-offs (see Figure V-2). By this measure, support for cuts goes



down slightly. Twenty-six percent of the public and 33% of the leaders want to cut back on defense. A total of 18% of the public wants to expand defense spending, compared with 12% in 1990. Sixteen percent of the leaders feel this way, compared with 2% in the earlier survey. Notable is the fact that support for increasing defense spending is greater when asked in the context of competing government programs. In the past, this has tended to discourage those who want to expand spending.

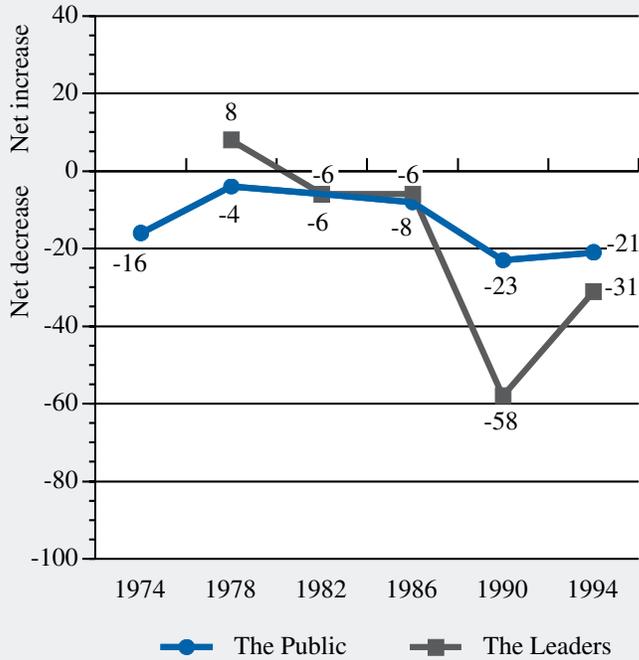
When those who want to expand are combined with those who want to keep defense spending the same, the results are equally instructive: this was 65% of the public response in 1990, 72% in 1994; 23% of the leadership response in 1990, 66% in 1994. Thus, those who expected that the end of the Cold War would bring about a fundamental change regarding defense—to a situation where there was virtually no public support for substantial spending—have clearly been mistaken. One must keep in mind that the leaders and public are conscious of the fact that

defense spending has already been going down dramatically under Bush and Clinton and therefore are generally not supportive of further cutbacks. Current attitudes of both the public and leaders seem reflected in the views of the newly elected Republican Congressional leaders, who are calling for a halt to further cuts. This position is increasingly favored by the Clinton administration, a shift from earlier plans for continued reductions in defense spending.

Since the 1970s, there have been marked shifts in the levels of defense spending preferred by Americans. During the period 1974 to 1978, there was a 19-point shift in favor of increased defense spending, from 13% to 32%, and a related decline in those who favored cutting back on defense, from 32% to 16%. Other polls indicated that the two years following the 1978 Council survey witnessed an even stronger surge in support for defense. A majority of the public held this view in 1980-81, then shifted to support for the status quo in the years from 1982 to

### FIGURE V-3: COMMITMENT TO NATO

*Should we increase our commitment to NATO, keep it what it is now, decrease it or withdraw entirely? Index: Percentage “expand” minus percentage “cut back” or “withdraw entirely.”*



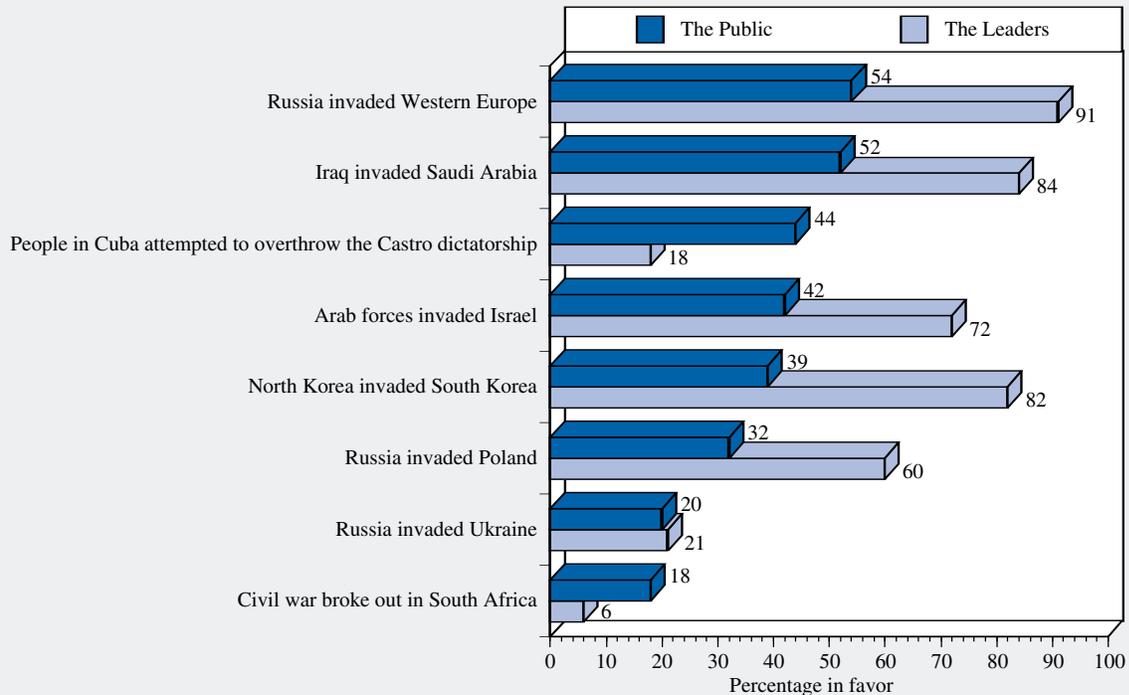
1986. The 1990 survey results showed a dramatic shift toward reducing defense. The 1994 results, contrary to what might be predicted from world developments, show notable moves toward increasing defense, perhaps in response to a more insecure world, perhaps in confirmation of the exceptional influence seen for the U.S. at present and in the future.

#### NATO

Support for defense is mirrored in support for the United States’ most significant regional security pact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see Figure V-3). A solid majority of the public (56%) wants to keep the commitment to the alliance the same, after a call for cutbacks in 1990. Among leaders, 57% wants to keep the same level of commitment, compared with only 35% who felt this way in 1990. Thirty-seven percent of leaders call for cutbacks today, compared to 61% in 1990. The shift away from further cuts in NATO no doubt reflects in part concern about insecurity in Europe encouraged by the

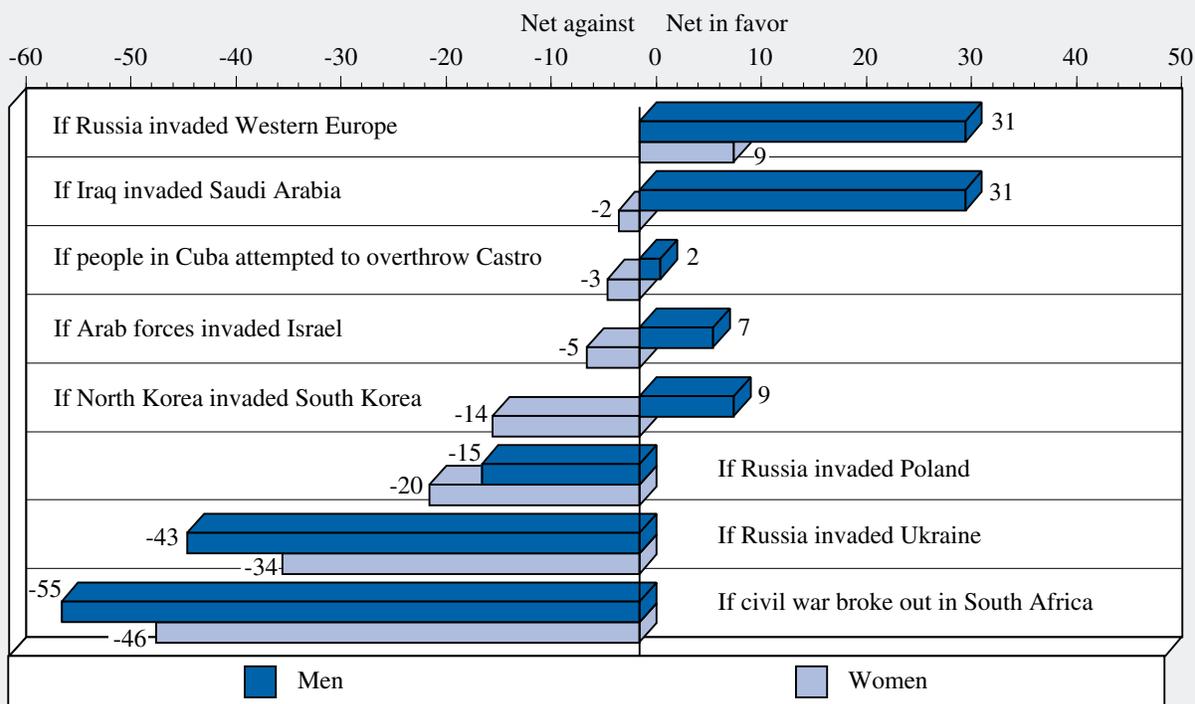
### FIGURE V-4: USE OF TROOPS

*Those who favor the use of U.S. troops in the following situations.*



**FIGURE V-5: USE OF TROOPS BY GENDER**

*Support for using troops in the following situations. Index: percentage “favor” minus percentage “oppose.”*



current Balkan war. Support for expansion of NATO to include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland varies. A plurality of the public (42%), but 59% of the leaders would include these countries.

**USE OF FORCE, WHEN AND HOW**

The long-term caution about direct military intervention elsewhere in the world still holds. Majorities of the public are willing to use troops only to defend Western Europe against an invasion by Russia (54%, down from 58% in 1990) and Saudi Arabia against an invasion by Iraq (52% in 1994 and 1990). The leaders, as usual, are more willing to use troops, with majorities in favor of defending Western Europe and Saudi Arabia as well as South Korea against the North (a striking 82%, up 25 points from 1990), Israel against the Arabs (72%, up two points) and Poland against Russia (60%, not asked in 1990). These attitudes are summarized in Figure V-4.

There are instructive distinctions concerning those more and those less

inclined to use troops. Perhaps the most dramatic division is along gender lines, with men consistently much more willing than women to use troops in various circumstances—the difference often involving almost 20 percentage points. Figure V-5 illustrates these differences. The split between men and women on use of force is especially great concerning areas of crisis importance (e.g., the Persian Gulf, the Korean Peninsula) or basic long-term policy concerns (e.g., a Russian invasion of Western Europe).

For each question, an index is calculated for males and females separately by subtracting those who were against using force from those in favor. By this measure, there is a 33-point spread between males and females regarding support for using troops if Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia, a 23-point difference regarding a North Korean invasion of South Korea and a 22-point spread regarding a Russian invasion of Western Europe.

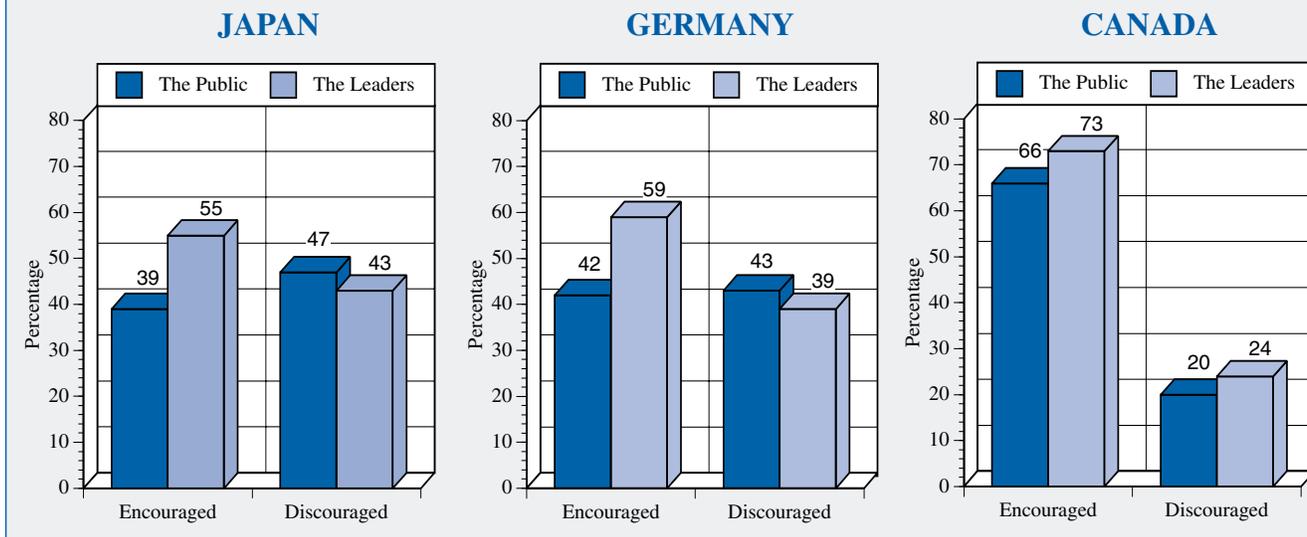
Striking differences are also evident along racial lines. Interestingly, the

greatest differences of opinion between whites and non-whites parallel those between men and women. Whites are more willing than non-whites to use troops by 18 points to defend Western Europe, by 14 points to defend South Korea and by 10 points to defend Saudi Arabia. Whites are 12 percentage points more willing than non-whites to use force to defend Israel against an Arab attack. The one case among the hypothetical situations polled where whites are less willing to use force is in the case of a civil war in South Africa, where 32% of non-whites but only 16% of whites are in favor of intervening with troops.

Other interesting differences appear along income and education lines, with lower income people and the less well educated much more reluctant to use troops in selected circumstances. These people are also much more likely to agree with the statement that the Vietnam War was “more than a mistake,” it was “fundamentally wrong and immoral.”

**FIGURE V-6: MILITARY ROLE FOR JAPAN, GERMANY, CANADA**

*Should Japan/Germany/Canada be encouraged or discouraged from playing an increased military role in the world?*



The public remains cautious about using U.S. military tools for broad international goals. As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, only 24% of the public concurs that protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression is a “very” important foreign policy goal, down from 57% in 1990. Forty-one percent feels defending our allies’ security is a “very” important goal, down from 61% four years ago. For the leaders, protecting weaker nations is considered “very” important by 21% (down 7 points from 1990), while defending U.S. allies is viewed as a high priority by 60% (up 4 points).

International peacekeeping efforts under the auspices of the United Nations are supported, with agreement from 51% of the public that the United States should participate in such efforts. Over three-fifths of leaders (62%) feel that we should accept commanders appointed by the United Nations in these efforts, while only 36% of leaders would insist on American commanders. The public splits equally on this question, with 44% opting to accept leaders appointed by the United Nations and 44% insisting on leadership by the United States. Thus, while there is increasing reluctance to use American military force unilaterally, there is continuing willingness to participate in

multilateral military efforts through the United Nations.

There is relative public caution about Germany or Japan playing a greater international military role, as Figure V-6 indicates. However, a majority of the leaders favor an expanded role for both. Not surprisingly, over two-thirds of both public and leaders support an expanded role for Canada, reflecting that country’s very different national history and active involvement in recent decades of peacekeeping.

**SPIES**

Considering the skepticism about American involvement in the affairs of other countries, there is surprising support for covert activity. On the question of the CIA working secretly inside other countries to weaken or bring down unfriendly governments, 48% of the public supports such activity, with only 40% opposed. In contrast, 59% of the leaders feel we should not be spying, with only 36% in favor. There has been a slight increase in the percentage favoring covert operations on both the public and leadership levels compared with responses in 1990.

Respondents are also asked whether we should be secretly spying on the governments of various coun-

tries. There is relatively strong support for spying on China (67% of the public, 82% of the leaders) and North Korea (66% and 89%). A majority of both would support spying on Russia and on Japan. By contrast, there is strong opposition by the public to spying on France (66%) and Great Britain (73%). Both are opposed to spying on Mexico.

**CONCLUSION**

The Cold War’s end has brought some shifts in American opinion, but not the dramatic changes that might be expected, given the drastically altered international political landscape. There is strong support for active involvement in the world, whether through military alliances, defense spending or espionage. While there is reluctance to use military force in the world, the overall attitudes of the American people reflect both stability and caution in the approach to international affairs.

# CHAPTER SIX

## GAPS IN FOREIGN POLICY PREFERENCES

*According to some political theorists, democracy involves harmony between what citizens want and what the government does. When democracy is working properly, there is general agreement between the policy preferences of ordinary citizens and those of political leaders. Such harmony can come about because leaders respond to the public and carry out its wishes, or because leaders chart the course they think best and persuade the public to go along. If large, persistent gaps exist between the views of the public and leaders, tension may increase. Whether the trouble is lack of communication, knowledge or concern on the part of leaders or the public, the gaps in opinion are instructive.*

### LEADERS, THE PUBLIC, AND DEMOCRACY

Our surveys over the past 20 years have consistently revealed differences between the foreign policy opinions of the general public and those of leaders. Some differences have been short-lived and relatively untroubling, e.g. the gaps in 1990 between leaders who saw the Cold War as over, and the general public, which was slower to abandon its wariness about the Soviet Union. But other gaps have been substantial and enduring.

We calculate the gaps by recomputing all percentages to exclude “don’t know” and “no opinion” responses, which are more common among the public than among leaders. For each survey question we then subtract the percentage of leaders taking a particular stand from the percentage of the public taking that same stand. The result, a percentage-point difference, has a positive sign if more members of the public than leaders take a particular position, and a negative sign if the opposite is true. A large percentage point difference indicates a large gap between the two. Some of the most substantial gaps are displayed in Figure VI-1.

### DOMESTIC PRIMACY

One persistent difference between leaders and the public, which has shown up in all our surveys since 1974, is that the leaders show a greater awareness than the public of foreign policy issues. The leaders pay more attention to events abroad, have more information and more opinions, and study foreign policy problems more

thoroughly. For example, in response to our open-ended question on foreign policy problems, the average leader mentions more problems than the public (see Chapter Two).

This difference, familiar in scholarly literature, is hardly surprising. Experts naturally focus on different issues than the general public. We chose our sample of leaders from government, the media, academia, business, and various foreign policy organizations precisely with the aim of studying people who are particularly attentive to foreign policy issues.

But the gaps between leaders and the public go beyond matters of interest and attention. They also concern many aspects of government policy, including trade-offs between foreign and domestic matters.

In every survey—especially in times of recession, but in relatively prosperous times as well—members of the public have wanted to put more money toward domestic problems and less toward foreign policy problems than the leaders have. This is true once again.

For example, there is a very large gap of 43 percentage points—one of the largest in our data—between the 51% of the general public and the 8% of the leaders wanting to expand Social Security (see Figure VI-1). In fact, many more leaders (25%) want to cut back Social Security than want to expand it, the opposite of the balance of opinion among the public. Large but less dramatic gaps exist between the proportions of public and leaders that want to expand other domestic programs, including health care (a gap of 28 per-

centage points), programs to combat violence and crime (20 points) and aid to education (17 points.) In each case, more members of the public than leaders want to expand these domestic programs.

Similarly, more members of the public than leaders want to cut foreign policy programs, particularly those that involve spending money or committing military force. This reflects a somewhat lower level of concern over foreign policy problems. Substantially fewer members of the public than leaders tend to see a “vital interest” for the United States in most parts of the world. There are gaps in the range of 15-20 percentage points with respect to Egypt, Ukraine, China, Germany, South Korea, and even Mexico and Canada. In each case, more leaders than members of the public perceive a vital interest. Of all the 18 countries for which we make comparisons, only in the cases of Haiti (by 29 percentage points) and South Africa (by 11 points) do more members of the public than leaders see a vital U.S. interest.

To be sure, the public is more prone than leaders to perceive “critical threats” to the United States from various sources, especially when they have distinct domestic implications. Fully 43 percentage points more of the public than leaders see economic competition from Japan as a critical threat, and an identical 43 points more see a critical threat from large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States. There is a similar, 37-percentage-point gap on the perceived threat of terrorism. But the tendency of the public to see more critical threats

## FIGURE VI-1: GAPS: THE PUBLIC & LEADERS

Gaps: “Public” percent minus “Leaders” percent. Percentages are of those holding an opinion. “Don’t know” responses are excluded.

	<b>Public</b>	<b>Leaders</b>	<b>Gap</b>
<b>Domestic Concerns</b>			
Expand Social Security	51%	8%	+43
Expand health care programs	75%	47%	+28
Immigrants and refugees a critical threat	74%	31%	+43
Controlling illegal immigration a very important goal	73%	28%	+45
Economic competition from Japan a critical threat	64%	21%	+43
Protecting jobs of American workers a very important goal	84%	51%	+33
Stopping the inflow of illegal drugs a very important goal	86%	57%	+29
<b>International Involvement and Concern</b>			
Best to take an active part in world affairs	69%	98%	-29
Egypt a vital U.S. interest	56%	78%	-22
Ukraine a vital U.S. interest	46%	67%	-21
Haiti a vital U.S. interest	63%	34%	+29
<b>Foreign Aid</b>			
Favor giving economic aid to other nations	50%	88%	-38
Cut back economic aid programs	62%	32%	+30
Increase economic aid to Palestinians	9%	49%	-40
Increase economic aid to E. Europe	26%	56%	-30
Favor selling military equipment to other nations	16%	47%	-31
<b>Use of Force (Favor use of U.S. troops if:)</b>			
North Korea invaded South Korea	45%	84%	-39
Russia invaded Western Europe	61%	92%	-31
Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia	58%	86%	-28
Arab forces invaded Israel	50%	74%	-24
Russia invaded Poland	39%	61%	-22
Cubans attempted to overthrow the Castro dictatorship	50%	19%	+31
<b>Diplomatic activity</b>			
Strengthening the United Nations a very important goal	53%	33%	+20
Favor restoring normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam	65	89%	-24
<b>Trade</b>			
Sympathize with eliminating tariffs	40%	79%	-39
NAFTA mostly good for U.S.	62%	87%	-25

from the other sources may reflect little more than acceptance of the extreme-sounding “critical threat” language. Other data point in the direction of lesser public concern over most foreign policy matters.

### FOREIGN POLICY AND DOMESTIC CONCERNS

The public’s brand of pragmatic internationalism, even more than the leaders’, tends to see foreign policy largely as an instrument for achieving personal economic security. This is suggested by the public’s much higher perceptions of critical threats from economic competition and immigration. It appears even more directly in the foreign policy goals the public rates as important.

There is a 45-percentage-point gap—the largest in our data—between the 73% of the public and the 28% of leaders who see controlling and reducing illegal immigration as a “very important” goal of U.S. foreign policy. Similarly, though both leaders and the public give high priority to protecting jobs of American workers, substantially more of the public (by 33 percentage points) does so. There is a similar 29-point gap on the importance of stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, and a smaller, 12-point gap on securing adequate supplies of energy, with the public more in favor of both.

The public’s heavy focus on protecting American jobs has long been reflected in more suspicion of free trade and more support for tariffs than is found among foreign policy leaders. Although both groups have recently shown more support for eliminating tariffs, the relative gap continues to exist. Leaders prefer to eliminate tariffs by 39 percentage points more than the public, and see NAFTA as mostly good for the U.S. economy by 25 points more. Fewer members of the public mention trade as one of our biggest foreign policy problems, a 16-point gap.

### RELUCTANCE TO COMMIT MONEY OR TROOPS ABROAD

As in past surveys, smaller proportions of the public than leaders agree it is

best for the United States to take an “active part” in world affairs. The gap now stands at 29 percentage points. The public is also more reluctant to commit resources abroad—especially money or U.S. troops.

As illustrated in Chapter Four, the public is considerably less supportive than leaders of foreign aid. There is a 38-percentage-point gap on favoring “giving economic aid to other nations” and a 30-point gap on cutting back economic aid programs. More members of the public than leaders (16% versus 5%) spontaneously mention “too much foreign aid” as one of the biggest foreign policy problems facing the country. There are significant gaps on aid to nearly every specific country or group we asked about. Forty percentage points fewer citizens than leaders want to increase aid to the Palestinians, 30 points fewer want to increase aid to Eastern Europe, 19 points fewer favor more aid to Russia, 18 points fewer prefer expanded aid to Latin America, and 15 points fewer are for increasing aid to Africa. Ten percentage points more of the public than leaders want to decrease or stop aid to Egypt, and there is virtually no difference on Israel. The public is also much more opposed than leaders, by 31 percentage points, to selling military equipment to other nations. In 1990, when we asked about arms sales to specific countries, the public opposition was greater than leaders’ in four out of five cases.

Another long-standing difference between leaders and the public is the public’s greater reluctance to commit U.S. troops abroad. This is evidenced by the 18-point gap on whether defending our allies’ security is a “very important” foreign policy goal, and by the 14-point gap on whether the Vietnam war was “fundamentally wrong and immoral” rather than just “a mistake.” Large gaps also exist in willingness to use troops in the following hypothetical situations: a North Korean invasion of South Korea (39-point gap), a Russian invasion of Western Europe (31 points), an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia (28 points), an Arab invasion of Israel (24 points), a Russian invasion of

Poland (22 points). Only in two cases is the gap reversed. Many more citizens than leaders (by 31 points) would use troops if people in Cuba attempted to overthrow the Castro dictatorship or if civil war broke out in South Africa (by 15 points).

Although the public is fairly receptive to collective security and peacekeeping through the United Nations and NATO, more members of the public than leaders (by 13 points) would insist that a U.S. commander be in charge of peacekeeping operations in which U.S. troops participate.

The public is also somewhat less eager than leaders to spy secretly on various foreign governments, including North Korea (by 19 percentage points), China (by 13 points), Russia (by 12 points) and Great Britain (by 11 points). This gap is reversed on Mexico, with 12 percentage points more of the public in favor of spying. More of the public than leaders (by 16 points) think the CIA should work secretly inside unfriendly countries to weaken or overthrow their governments.

Surveys in the 1980s showed the public more receptive than leaders to negotiations and peaceful relations with the Soviet Union. Now, however, somewhat fewer members of the public than leaders want to establish normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam (by 24 percentage points) or with Cuba (by 13 points).

Despite the primarily domestic focus of the public’s foreign policy attitudes and the relative reluctance to intervene abroad, there are more traces of altruism among the public than among leaders. More members of the public see as “very important” the goals of strengthening the United Nations (by 20 percentage points) and combating world hunger (by 16 points). By smaller margins, more members of the public view promoting and defending human rights in other countries, helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations, and protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression as “very important”—though not helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations.

## PERCEPTIONS

The general public differs from leaders in perceptions of other aspects of world affairs and U.S. foreign policy. More members of the public, for example, think the United States will play a greater role in the next 10 years than today (by 35 percentage points). More predict an increased role for Japan (by 29 points), and fewer (by 13 points) foresee a greater role for China. In line with concern about economic competition, fewer members of the public than leaders (by 18 percentage points) see the economic unification of Western Europe as “mostly a good thing” for the United States, and more of the public (by 22 points) see the countries of the European Union as practicing unfair trade with the United States.

Members of the public are harsher than leaders in their judgment of the Clinton administration’s handling of the Middle East overall (by 38 points) and the response of the U.S. government to “the situation in the Middle East” (by 34 points). The public gives lower marks to the administration’s handling of overall trade policy (by 29 points) and relations with Latin America (by 14 points). Yet, the public is more tolerant (by 22 points) of the government’s response to the war in Bosnia.

## CONCLUSION

The overall results of this survey show that the American people are now confident about the present and future role of their country, despite the perceived absence of strong foreign policy leadership from their president. The end of the Cold War has not shaken America’s fundamental commitment to maintaining an active role in world affairs, as recognition of global economic competition and interdependence has grown. Relief from the long competition with the Soviet Union and the lack of a clear external threat have made Americans more reluctant to use force abroad and become involved in the affairs of other countries. But they want to maintain current levels of defense in an uncertain world and are committed to diplomatic engagement through alliances and multilateral organizations.