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## **POLL: This Holiday, Americans Wish For A More Peaceful Approach to Foreign Policy**

*Results show voters favor an emphasis on diplomacy and trade and are skeptical of military intervention abroad.*

Arlington, Va., Dec. 22, 2016—The Charles Koch Institute and the Center for the National Interest today released a poll of 1,000 Americans that shows voters believe focusing on diplomacy and trade are better methods of improving U.S. security than military intervention.

“More than half of Americans think that U.S. foreign policy over the last 15 years has made us less safe,” said William Ruger, vice president for research and policy at the Charles Koch Institute. “Americans want the next administration to take a different approach, with many favoring more caution about committing military forces abroad while preferring greater burden sharing by our wealthy allies and diplomacy over regime change. This poll is the second since October where the Charles Koch Institute and the Center for the National Interest have identified Americans’ disenchantment with the status quo. The public’s call for peace and change reflect the same views they held before the election. It’s time that Washington listens to a public expressing greater prudence.”

“Americans see trade and diplomacy as contributing more to U.S. national security than regime change in foreign lands,” said Paul J. Saunders, executive director of the Center for the National Interest. “Voters also support a strong military and more balanced alliances—though many have reservations about unconditional commitments, particularly to some new U.S. allies. The incoming administration and Congress have an important opportunity to define a new model of American leadership that moves beyond the mistakes of the last two decades.”

Poll results show:

### ***Americans Still Believe Recent U.S. Foreign Policy Has Made Them Less Safe:***

- When asked if U.S. foreign policy over the last 15 years had made Americans more or less safe, a majority (52%) said less safe. Just 12% said more, while one quarter said U.S. foreign policy had no impact on their level of safety.
- When asked if U.S. foreign policy over the last 15 years had made the world more or less safe, 51% said less safe, 11% said more, and 24% said safety levels had stayed the same.
- These findings are largely the same as results from a joint CKI-CFTNI October poll.

***Americans Favor Peaceful Engagement Over Military Intervention:***

- More than two-thirds of respondents (70%) agreed with the statement, “The U.S. should work with existing governments and heads of state to try to promote peace” rather than seeking to oust government by force.
- When asked which of two options would make the United States safer, 49% said prioritizing diplomacy over military intervention while just 26% said prioritizing military power over diplomacy. Another 25% were not sure.
- When asked whether the U.S. government should increase U.S. military spending, decrease it, or keep spending the same, a plurality (40%) wanted to increase spending, while nearly half either wanted to keep it the same (32%) or cut it (17%). Another 12% were not sure.
- When asked which of two options would make the United States safer, only 20% said making more attempts at regime change would improve safety, while 45% said cutting the number of U.S. attempts at regime change would improve safety. 35% were not sure.
- More than half (54%) said working more through the United Nations would improve U.S. safety, while only 26% thought working less through the United Nations would be better. 24% were not sure.
- When asked broadly about what would make the United States safer, respondents preferred expanding U.S. alliance commitments (50%) to reducing U.S. alliance commitments (27%). However, Americans did not see U.S. commitments as necessarily unconditional. Only 26% of the respondents either somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, “In a military conflict between Russia and Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia, the United States should automatically defend that country with American military forces.” Thirty-two percent either somewhat or strongly disagreed.
- Increased trade should be part of the United States’ diplomatic efforts. More than half of respondents (55%) said increasing trade would improve U.S. safety. Only 22% said decreasing trade would make the country safer. Another 23% were not sure.
- Notwithstanding significant reservations about Russia, over half of voters see that country as a potential partner. When asked whether the United States should view Russia an adversary or as a potential partner, more than half either said Russia should be viewed as both (38%) or should be viewed as a potential partner (17%). Only 33% said Russia definitely should be viewed solely as an adversary. Another 12% said they were unsure.
- American voters are unsure about the U.S. relationship with China. When asked whether they viewed China as an ally, 93% of respondents said no. However, 89% also indicated they would not characterize China as an enemy. The most accepted term for China was “competitor”—42% of respondents said they agreed with that characterization.

***Americans Want Washington to Exercise Restraint Abroad:***

- When asked whether Congress should impeach a president who does not get congressional approval before committing the United States to military action abroad, a plurality (39%) said yes, while just 27% said no. Another 34% were not sure.

- When asked which of two options would make the United States safer, 45% of respondents said reducing U.S. military presence abroad, 31% said increasing it, and 24% said they did not know.
- When asked which of two options would make the United States safer, 40% of respondents said decreasing the use of U.S. military force for democracy promotion internationally, 31% said increasing it, and 29% were not sure.
- When asked about troop levels in Europe, three quarters said the United States should either keep levels the same as they are today (46%) or bring home at least some of the troops (28%). Only 12% said troop levels in Europe should be expanded. A plurality (44%) said the media had not provided enough information about recent U.S. troop deployments in Europe.
- When asked whether the United States should deploy ground troops to Syria, 55% of Americans said no, 23% said yes, and 23% were not sure. Those opposing ground troops in Syria increased by 4 percentage points since the October survey.
- When asked whether the United States should increase its military presence in the Middle East, only 22% of respondents said yes, while 35% said they would reduce U.S. presence in the Middle East. Another 29% said they wouldn't change troop levels.

***Voters Want President-Elect Donald Trump to Exercise Restraint and Audit the Military:***

- When asked whether President-elect Trump should audit the Pentagon, 57% said yes, 28% weren't sure, and 15% said no.
- Americans think our allies should shoulder more of the burden. When asked whether President-elect Trump should encourage NATO countries to increase or decrease their defense spending, only 8% said decrease while 41% said increase, and another 33% said President-elect Trump should encourage NATO countries to keep spending levels stable.
- When asked whether the Trump administration should strengthen the U.S. military's relationship with Saudi Arabia, only 20% said it should while 23% suggested the United States should loosen its ties with Saudi Arabia. One third (33%) said the relationship should be kept as is, while another 24% were not sure.
- When asked whether President-elect Trump should respect, renegotiate, or walk away from the Iran deal that lifted international sanctions on Iran in exchange for more scrutiny of their nuclear facilities, 32% said renegotiate, 28% said respect, 17% said walk away, and 23% were not sure.

Survey Sampling International fielded the nationwide survey of registered voters in December 2016. All participants were surveyed online. Quotas were used to obtain representative samples with respect to gender, broad geographic area, age, ethnic background, and education level. Results are un-weighted. The survey had 1,000 total respondents in English and Spanish, with a +/- 4 percentage points margin of error.

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