



American Public Opinion on U.S.-China Policy

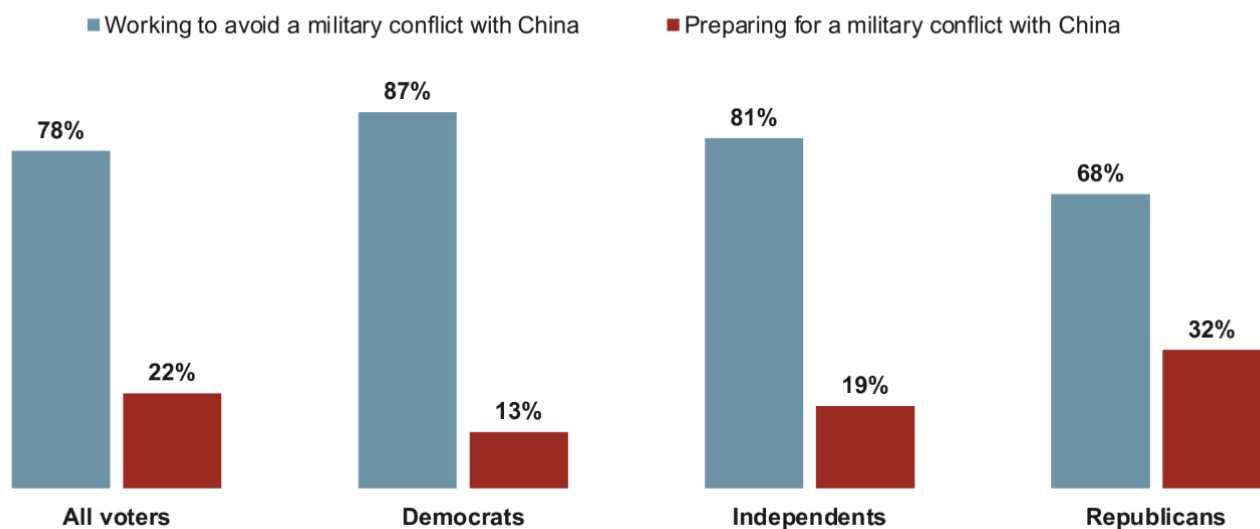
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National Security Action and Foreign Policy for America partnered with Hart Research and GBAO Strategies to learn more about voter opinions of U.S.-China policy. This project found that **while most voters see China as a competitor, they want a smart and firm approach that avoids war and invests in America's strengths.**

Key Findings

Overall U.S.-China Relationship

- Voters most want the U.S. approach toward China to be **smart, firm, strong, and diplomatic.**
 - Only 13% want an aggressive approach and a mere 5% want a confrontational one.
 - A clear majority (73%) says the U.S. should hold high-level diplomatic talks with China.
- **A majority of voters think there is at least a 50/50 chance the U.S. will be in a significant military conflict with China in the next ten years, and more than 70% consider avoiding war very important.**
 - 73% of Democrats and 73% of Republicans consider avoiding war very important.
 - Voters are more concerned about growing tensions escalating into conflict than about the U.S. not being strong enough or standing up to China, by a 16-point margin (58% to 42%).
 - 78% say our leaders should focus more on working to avoid a military conflict, while only 22% say leaders should focus more on preparing for one.



- **More voters consider China a “competitor” than an “enemy.”**
 - Only 21% of voters consider China an “enemy,” whereas 76% consider China a “competitor.”
 - Even among Republicans, only 30% consider China an “enemy.”
 - More voters consider Russia a major threat to the U.S. than China, by a 7-point margin (64% for Russia, 57% for China). Looking at party affiliation, 70% of Democrats view Russia as a major threat, whereas only 46% of Democrats and 53% of Independents (versus 70% of Republicans) view China as a major threat.

Voter Priorities

- **A vast majority of voters (>80-90%) support Biden administration actions toward China,** especially:
 - strengthening law enforcement against **industrial espionage**
 - **building up our alliances** in the Asia-Pacific region
 - **investing in key industries at home** and **reducing our reliance on China**
 - **rebuilding open lines of communication** to prevent unnecessary escalation or military confrontation
- The most important goals for voters regarding U.S.-China relations are:
 - protecting the U.S. from **spying, cyber attacks,** and **intellectual property theft**
 - **avoiding war**
 - **preventing fentanyl from entering the U.S.**
 - **reducing tensions**
- Among a range of U.S.-China priorities, **“supporting the rights and security of Taiwan” is very important for 32% of voters** — a comparatively lower priority. When asked about **potential actions in response to a hypothetical Chinese invasion of Taiwan, voters most support:**
 - working with allies to sanction the Chinese government (78%) and
 - sending weapons and military supplies, but not U.S. troops (65%).
 - By contrast, only 42% of voters support sending U.S. troops to support and defend Taiwan.
- **88% of non-AAPI voters believe the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes is a serious problem,** and 76% of AAPI voters are concerned that they or another AAPI individual they know may be targeted or discriminated against for their perceived race or ethnicity.
 - Voters clearly connect Trump to the rise in anti-Asian hate, and this concern is a top criticism of his China policy.

Most Effective Messages

The messages that most resonate strike a **balance between projecting U.S. strength and savvy engagement with China.** Many voters especially care about issues that directly affect their everyday lives and pocketbooks, such as intellectual property theft, fentanyl, and trade.

Statements with a **militaristic tone that heavily focus on confronting China as an “existential threat”**, or that **suggest a military conflict is inevitable, do not land well with voters.**

The **criticisms of Trump’s approach that most resonate** are his spread of anti-Asian bigotry, his praise of the Chinese government’s authoritarian behavior, his concessions and weakness toward China, and his aggressive and combative provocations.

Recommended Message Frames

- **INVEST AT HOME**: We are **investing here at home** in the industries and technology of the future, while **taking a strong stand against China’s unfair economic practices.**
- **COEXISTENCE/NO COLD WAR**: When it comes to China, the U.S. must **defend our interests** and **compete economically without veering into conflict. We must not let panic and fear drive foreign policy.**
- **RISKING WAR**: Finding common ground **serves our interests** more than scoring political points, **putting our troops in danger**, or making **war with a nuclear power** more likely.
- **PROTECTING AMERICAN INTERESTS**: We must **protect American interests and livelihoods**, including by stopping the flow of fentanyl, preventing intellectual property theft, and ensuring that our economic relationship with China benefits all Americans.
- **SMART AND STRONG**: We are taking a **smart and firm approach** that both **leverages diplomacy to achieve our goals** and **challenges China** when its government threatens our allies or goes against our values.
- **STRONG ALLIANCES, GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**: The U.S. must **strengthen our alliances** in the Asia-Pacific so China recognizes that **aggressive military actions will have consequences**. And we must continue **calling out human rights abuses** and **standing up for our values and democracies to protect freedom**, including in **Taiwan**.

Methodology

The national survey was conducted in early September 2023 by Hart Research Associates among over 1,200 registered voters, plus additional interviews to increase the sample sizes for AAPI voters (n=249), after a series of focus groups by GBAO Strategies.