

Americans Support Ukraine—but Not with US Troops or a No-Fly Zone

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In response to Russia's aggression toward Ukraine, the United States and its allies have imposed sanctions on Russia that are striking in their scope and severity and represent a broad effort to impose serious economic costs on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. For their part, a March 25-28 Chicago Council survey finds that Americans support all measures to help Ukraine and pressure Russia short of direct US involvement in a military conflict. And while the public views the broad sanctions imposed on Russia as generally effective at punishing, weakening, and deterring Russia from further aggression, they doubt that sanctions will be enough to persuade Moscow to withdraw troops from Ukraine—the key condition Americans identify as necessary for lifting sanctions.

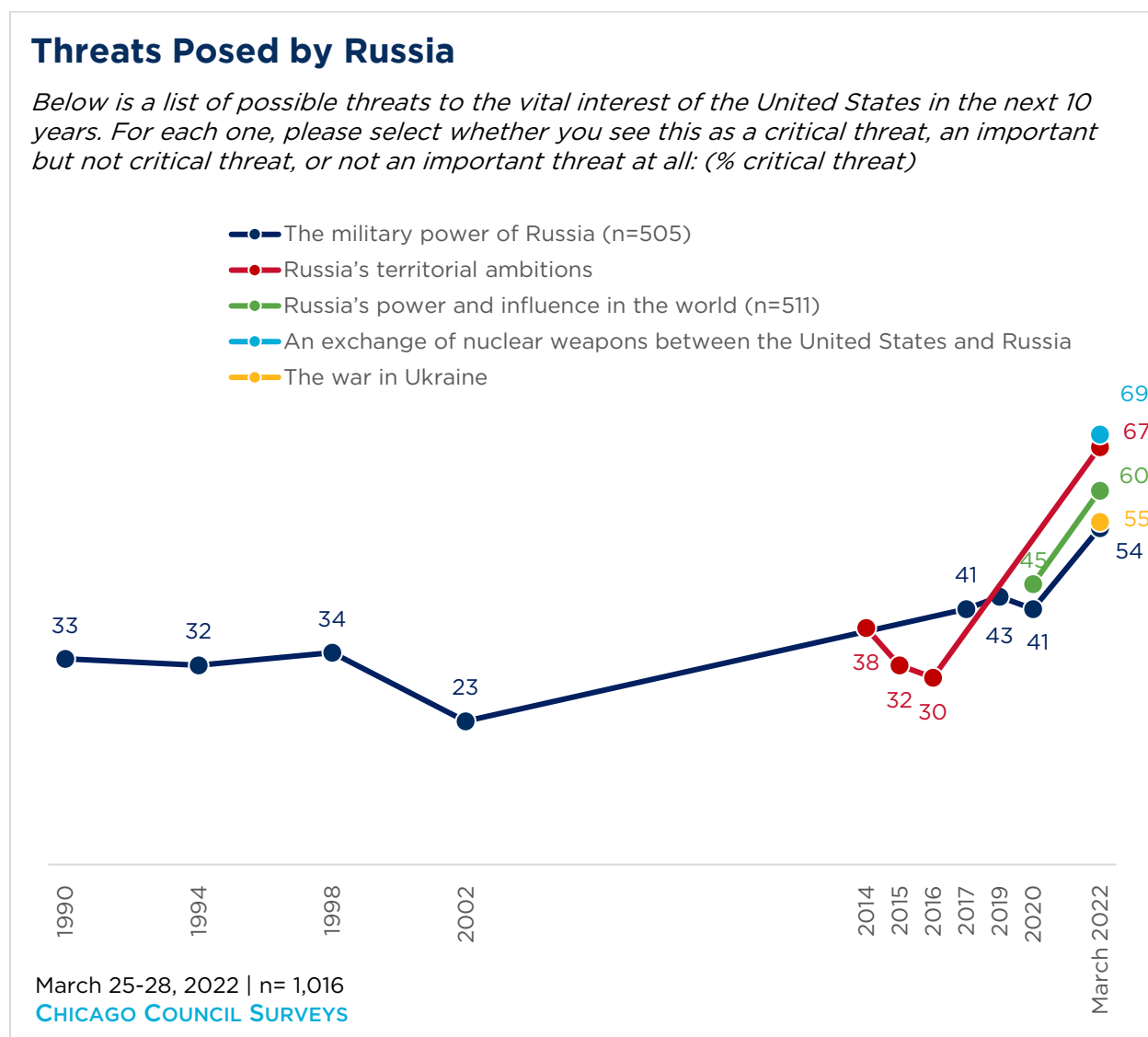
Key Findings

- Americans now see the risk of a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia (69%), Russian territorial ambitions (67%), Russian power and influence in the world (60%), and Russian military power (54%) as critical threats to the United States.
- To respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Americans support providing military (79%) and economic (78%) assistance to Ukraine, imposing sanctions on Russia (77%), and taking in Ukrainian refugees (74%).
- Americans see sanctions on Russia as an effective tool for weakening the Russian economy (77%), punishing Russia for invading Ukraine (67%), weakening Russia's ability to engage in future military actions (65%), and deterring Russia from taking military action against its NATO-member neighbors (60%).
- Two-thirds of Americans (67%) say the United States and other allied nations should require the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Ukraine before lifting sanctions.

Americans Now View Russian Ambitions and Power as a Critical Threat

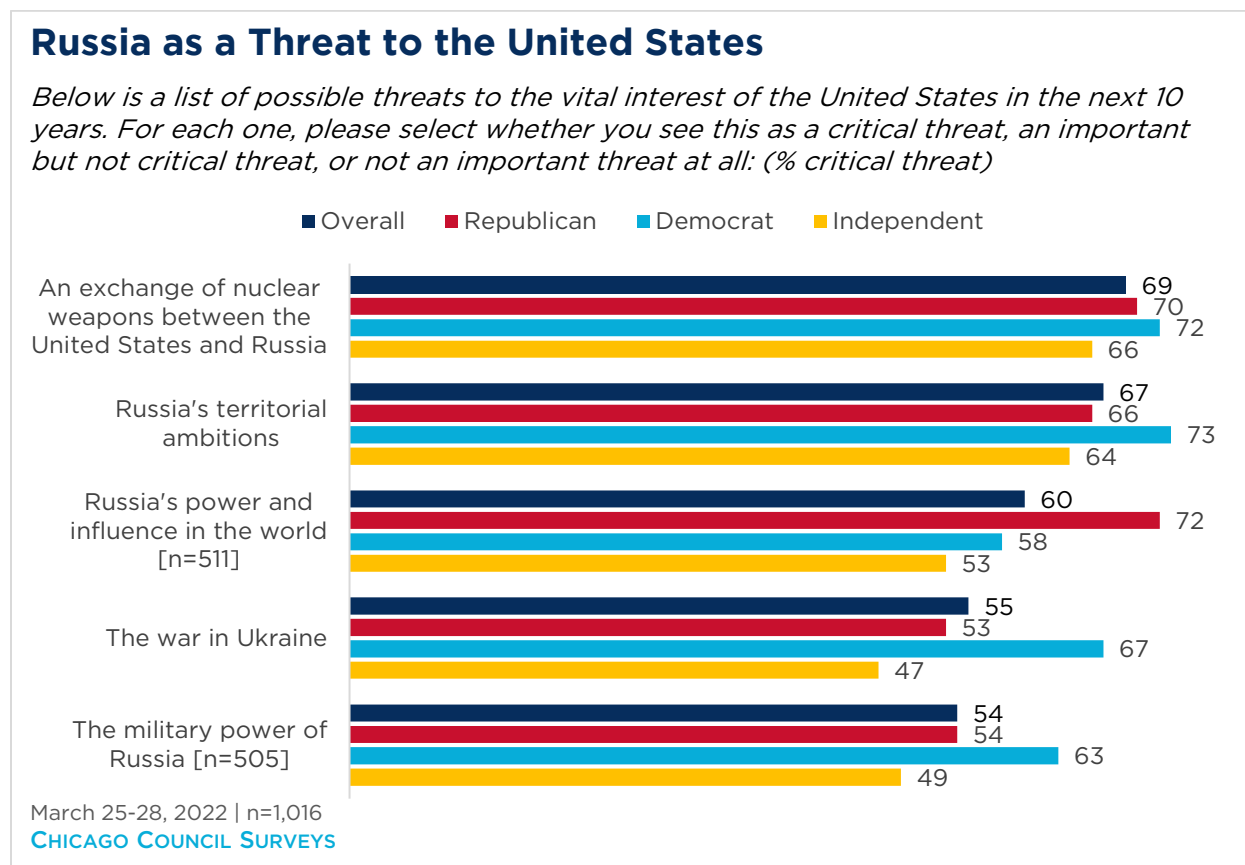
Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led Americans to see Russia as a greater threat to the United States than in the past. Two-thirds (67%) now say Russia's territorial ambitions present a critical threat to the United States, up from just 30 percent when last asked in 2016. Six in ten Americans (60%) see Russia's power and influence in the world as a critical threat, up from 45 percent in 2020. And a majority (54%) say the military power of Russia is a critical threat, up from 41 percent in 2020.

Americans are somewhat less concerned by the war in Ukraine itself, though not by much; a majority (55%) view it as a critical threat to US interests. And with Russia's recent [nuclear saber rattling](#), Americans are very concerned about the potential for the use of nuclear weapons: seven in ten Americans (69%) name the risk of a nuclear exchange between Russia and the United States as critical threat.



Russia's willingness to use military force to invade a neighboring sovereign country has clearly changed American perceptions in a way that even Russia's threats earlier in the year did not. In January, [according to Pew polling](#), only a quarter of Americans

(26%) viewed Russia’s military buildup near its border with Ukraine as a major threat to US interests. After the war began, the proportion viewing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a major threat nearly doubled to 50 percent.



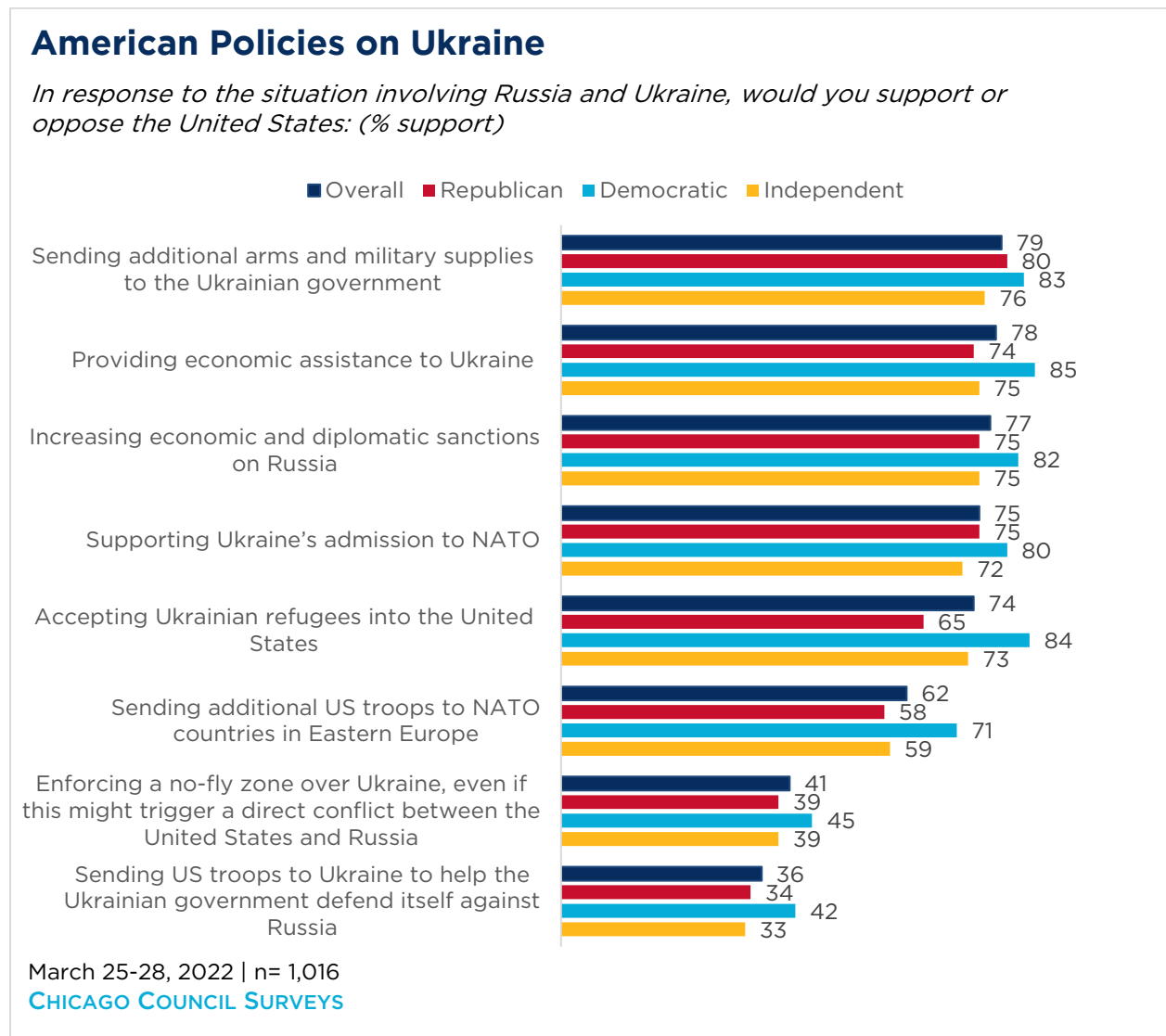
The sense of Russia as a threat to the United States also crosses party lines, though there are cases where one partisan group is more concerned than others. Republicans, for example, are notably more concerned than others about Russian power and influence in the world, while Democrats are more concerned about the war in Ukraine and Russian military power.

Americans Support All Measures Short of War in Response to Russian Aggression

This survey as well as those by several other polling organizations finds the American public supports a wide range of assistance to Ukraine. Large majorities of Americans support sending additional arms and military supplies to the Ukrainian government (79%), providing economic assistance to Ukraine (78%), and increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia (77%). And three-quarters of Americans (74%) support accepting refugees from Ukraine into the United States, including majorities of Democrats (84%), Independents (73%), and Republicans (65%).

Americans are also more supportive of assistance to Ukraine than they were in 2015, following Russia’s annexation of Crimea. At that time, while a majority supported

sanctions on Russia (60%), Americans were split on the question of economic assistance to Ukraine (50%), and only a minority favored providing arms and military supplies (40%). Today, majorities of Americans strongly support all three policies.



Three in four Americans (75%) also support Ukrainian membership in NATO, a long-standing Ukrainian aspiration [written into the Ukrainian constitution](#). But this question, like those asked in the past, does not mention that this means the United States and other NATO countries would be obliged to defend Ukraine. For this reason, Ukrainian membership has historically received [tepid support](#) from NATO leaders seeking to avoid being drawn into a direct military confrontation with Russia. At the same time, supporters of extending NATO membership to Ukraine [argue that had Ukraine been a NATO member](#), the alliance would have been able to deter Russia from invading.

Americans draw the line at the potential direct involvement of US forces in the conflict. Only four in ten (41%) support a no-fly zone over Ukraine, even if it might

trigger a direct US-Russia conflict, and just over a third (36%) favor sending US troops to Ukraine to help the Ukrainian government defend itself against the Russian invasion.¹ But Americans support a stronger US presence in Europe to defend their NATO allies: six in ten (62%) say the United States should send additional troops to NATO-member nations in Eastern Europe. And a majority (56%) support sending US troops to defend a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia if Russia were to invade them.

Russian Withdrawal from Ukraine Seen as Precondition for Lifting Sanctions

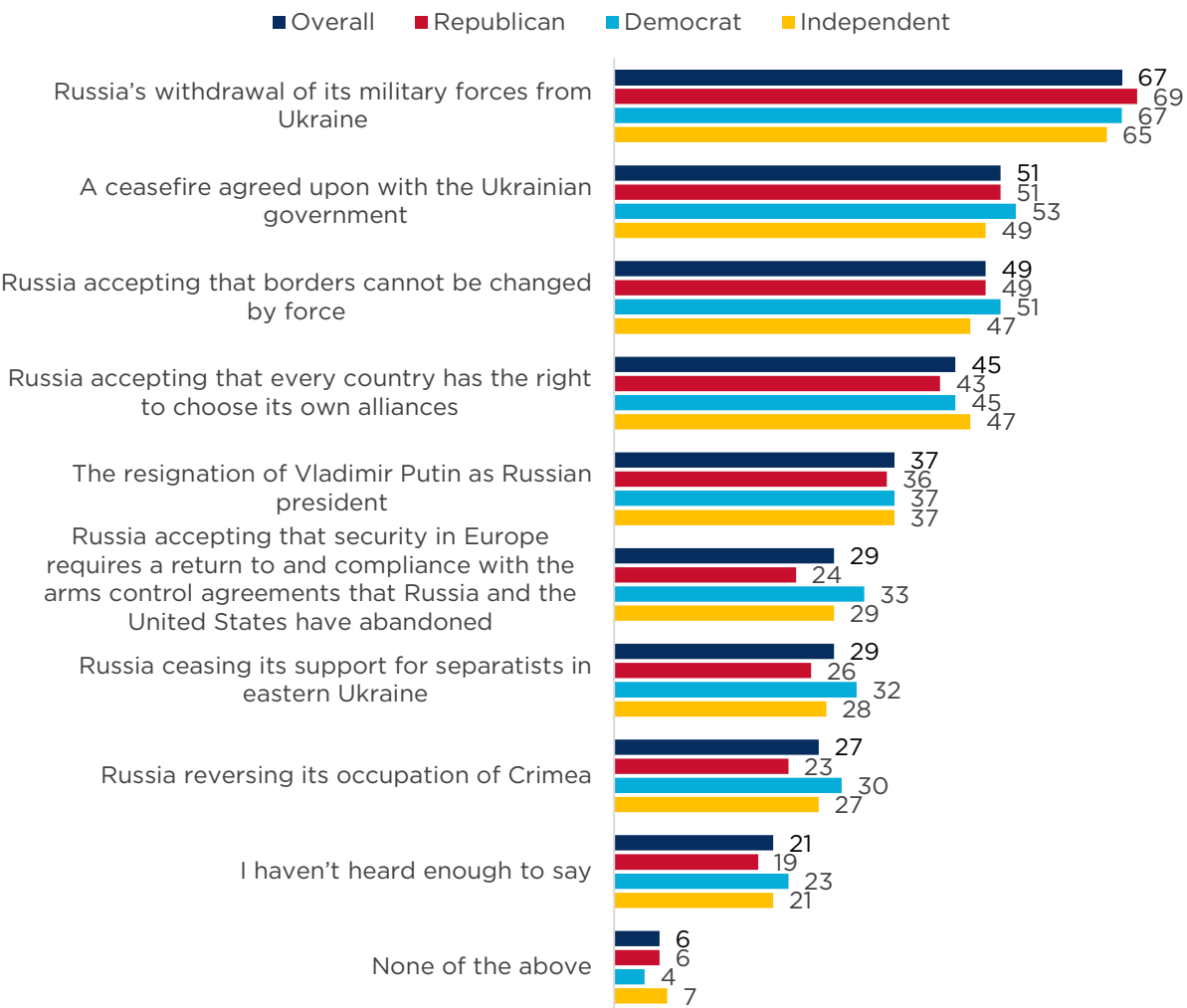
The United States and its allies have imposed sanctions on Russia so swiftly that [many wonder](#) at what point they will roll back some of the pressure. Some argue that while the sanctions themselves are justified, there is a [lack of clarity](#) among those imposing them on what Russia can do to get the sanctions lifted.

For Americans, the key condition is straightforward: two-thirds (67%) say the United States and other allied nations should require the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Ukraine before lifting sanctions. Half (51%) also point to a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, and nearly as many (49%) say Russia must accept the principle that national borders cannot be changed by the use of force. A smaller proportion (45%) would condition sanctions relief on Russia accepting that every country has the right to choose its own alliances—a key point of tension between Moscow and Kyiv in recent years.

¹ In a different question that preceded this list of various diplomatic and military options, Americans indicate higher support for providing direct military assistance to Ukraine. When asked whether Americans support or oppose “the use of US troops” in various conflict scenarios—and sending US troops is the only action provided in the question—51 percent say they would support using US troops to help Ukraine defend itself against Russia. A larger percentage support sending US troops to defend a NATO ally such as Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia from if it were invaded by Russia. This suggests that when force is the only option to take action in these scenarios, Americans are more likely to support it. But when diplomatic approaches are included as options, then Americans greatly prefer nonmilitary actions to resolve these situations.

Conditions for Lifting Sanctions on Russia

What conditions should the United States and other allied nations require for the lifting of sanctions on Russia? (%)



March 25-28, 2022 | n=1,016
 CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Other, more-expansive demands receive less backing by the American public as a trigger for sanctions relief. For example, while some commentators (and, [in a slip, President Joe Biden](#)) have called for an end to Vladimir Putin's leadership of Russia as part of a winddown of US pressure, only 37 percent of Americans would condition an end to sanctions on an end to his being in power. Nor do most Americans think Russia must first end its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine or reverse the occupation of Crimea.

The sanctions imposed on Russia will also have costs to Americans, particularly at the gas pump, but polls indicate that the public is willing to bear those costs. [Quinnipiac polling conducted March 4-6](#) found that the [ban on imports](#) of Russian oil, gas, and coal is broadly supported by majorities of Democrats (82%), Independents

(70%), and Republicans (66%), and a March 1-2 [NPR/PBS/Marist poll](#) found that seven in ten Americans (69%) support sanctions on Russia even at the cost of higher energy prices. A [March 16-28 University of Maryland survey](#) similarly found that most Americans (65%) are willing to bear at least some inflationary costs in order to help Ukraine. One reason for that support could be democratic solidarity. As a [March 7-8 survey by Reuters/Ipsos](#) found, nearly two-thirds of Americans (63%) say they are willing to pay more for fuel and gas because “it is worth it to defend another democratic country.”

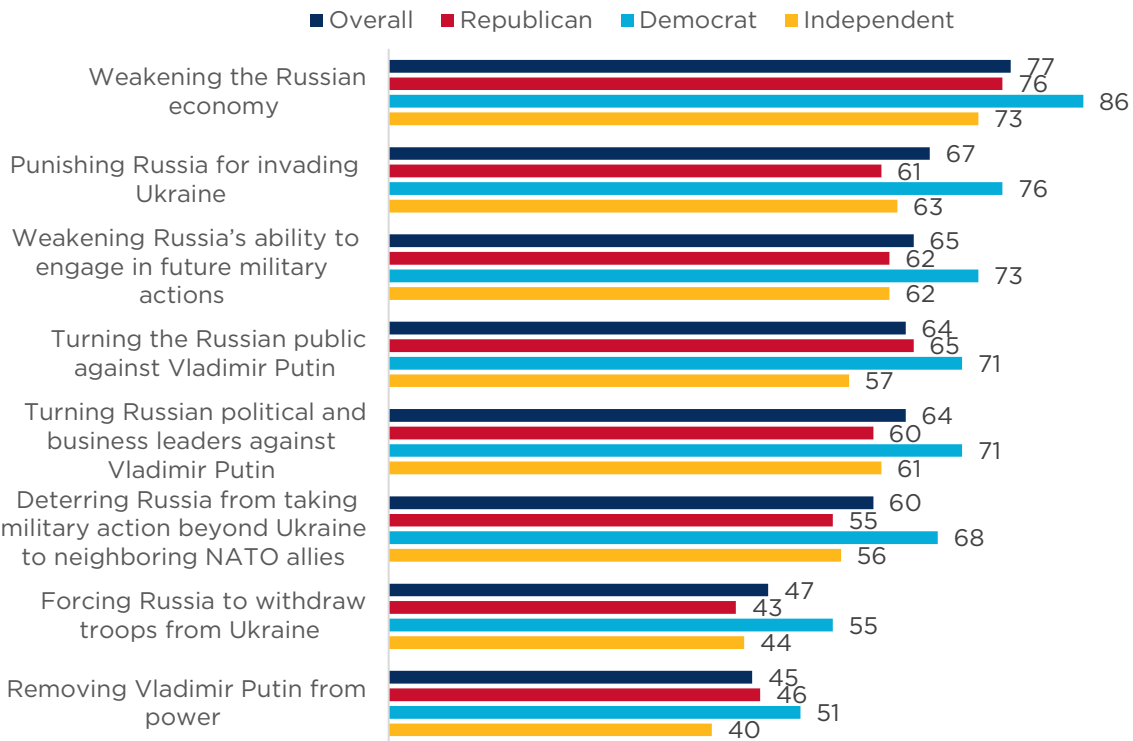
Sanctions Seen as Effective Tool to Punish, Weaken, and Deter Russia

Americans generally consider sanctions on Russia an effective (though not *very* effective) means of achieving a range of policy outcomes. These include weakening the Russian economy (77%), punishing Russia for invading Ukraine (67%), weakening Russia’s ability to engage in future military actions (65%), and deterring Russia from taking military action against its NATO-member neighbors (60%). However, Americans are split on whether the sanctions will be effective at forcing Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine: 47 percent say they will be effective in achieving a Russian withdrawal, while 50 percent say they will not.

Americans also expect the sanctions to have effects on the political dynamics inside Russia. Majorities believe the sanctions will be effective at turning the Russian public and Russian political and business leaders (64% each) against Putin. However, a narrow minority of Americans (45%) say the sanctions will be effective at removing Putin from power; a majority (52%) think they will be not very or not at all effective in forcing regime change inside Russia.

Efficacy of Sanctions

How effective do you think the sanctions imposed on Russia will be in achieving the following outcomes? (% very or somewhat effective)



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Conclusion

On balance, Americans are united in their condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine and feel threatened by Russian power, ambition, and the potential for escalation to a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia. The US public is also supportive of the sanctions and, at least for now, tolerant of gas-price increases as part of the consequences of those sanctions. In their view, any sanctions relief should be tied to a Russian withdrawal of troops from Ukraine and a ceasefire. In short, Americans appear invested in Ukraine in ways not previously seen.

Methodology

This report is based on results of a survey conducted March 25-28, 2022, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,016 adults, 18 or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 3.0 percentage points and is higher for subgroups or partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

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About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

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About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

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