

# The New Faces of Internationalism: How Generational Change Is Reshaping American Foreign Policy Attitudes

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# **The New Faces of Internationalism: How Generational Change Is Reshaping American Foreign Policy Attitudes**

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## **Executive Summary**

Observers of American foreign policy have been worried for years about eroding public support for international engagement, especially in light of increasing public discontent after nearly two decades of military conflict since 9/11. Low support for international engagement and military intervention among younger Americans, in particular, has led some to worry that the age of American internationalism has passed. There is little agreement, however, about how serious the erosion of public support is and what its causes are.

Relying on an analysis of seven decades of polling data, we argue that generational effects have slowly reshaped patterns of American foreign policy preferences. Since World War II, Americans have come of age during periods increasingly less conducive to support of military intervention, leading them to adopt worldviews increasingly at odds with those carried by older Americans. As a result, the United States is undergoing a slow motion changing of the guard, as older and more hawkish Americans die and are replaced by younger, less hawkish ones.

These findings have important implications for the debate about the state of public support for American leadership of the liberal international order and the evolution of American foreign policy.

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Even before Donald Trump's election in 2016 many foreign policy observers had begun to worry about public support for international engagement and American leadership of the "liberal international order." As Ian Bremmer wrote in 2012, "In an age of austerity, Americans have less interest in helping manage turmoil in the Middle East, rivalries in East Asia, or humanitarian crises in Africa."<sup>1</sup> In 2013 the Pew Research Center reported that for the first time since the question was initially asked in 1964, a majority of the public – 52 percent – agreed that the United States should "mind its own business internationally," up from just 30 percent in 2002 in the wake of 9/11. That same year a survey of the members of the Council on Foreign Relations (comprised primarily of professionals working in the foreign policy establishment) found that 92 percent believed that, in recent years, "the American public has become less supportive of the U.S. taking an active role in world affairs."<sup>2</sup> As Figure 1 shows, in 2014 the Chicago Council on Global Affairs also recorded a near-record low, with just 58 percent saying the U.S. should take an "active part" in world affairs, a figure not seen since the years after the Vietnam War.<sup>3</sup> On the eve of the presidential election, a 2016 Pew study found that 57 percent of Americans thought the United States should "deal with its own problems" and let other countries deal with their own problems "as best they can," while 70 percent of the public wanted the next president to focus more on domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World* (Portfolio, 2012). p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, December 2013, "America's Place in the World," p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, and Craig Kafura, October 2014, "Foreign Policy in the Age of Retrenchment," Chicago Council on Global Affairs, p. 7.

affairs compared to just 17 percent who wanted the president to focus more on foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup>

### **Figure 1. Support for International Engagement, 1947 – 2019**

Against this backdrop, Trump's election stunned the foreign policy establishment. The fact that so many people voted for Trump and his "America First" vision suggested to many that fundamental forces were undermining American internationalism and that isolationism might be on the rise. Brookings Institution scholar Robert Kagan articulated the pessimists' case bluntly: "President Trump may not enjoy majority support these days, but there's good reason to believe his "America First" approach to the world does...The old consensus about America's role as upholder of global security has collapsed in both parties."<sup>5</sup> Reflecting in the *Wall Street Journal* on a 2019 survey illustrating a wide gap in support for international engagement between foreign policy elites and the public, Walter Russell Mead argued, "There is no more important question in world politics than this: Will U.S. public opinion continue to support an active and strategically focused foreign policy? During the Cold War and for 25 years after, there was rarely any doubt. While Americans argued—sometimes bitterly—over the country's overseas priorities, there was a broad consensus in both parties that

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<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center, April 2016, "Public Uncertain, Divided Over America's Place in the World," pp. 3, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Kagan, "'America First' Has Won," *New York Times*, September 24, 2018.

sustained engagement was necessary to protect U.S. interests. That consensus is more fragile today.”<sup>6</sup>

Despite these concerns, some observers have pointed to the rebound of public support for international engagement as evidence that the decline in internationalism is a non-story. In a recent report, for example, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs concluded that while “many policy watchers cautioned that the country was headed for a populist, unilateralist, and protectionist retreat from global leadership,” the reality was that, “To the contrary, most Americans have moved in the opposite direction. The largest majority since 1974 – except for just after the September 11 attacks – now support active US engagement in world affairs.”<sup>7</sup>

Others have suggested that the slump in support was significant, but reflected a temporary response to current conditions. The most popular argument along these lines is that the public remains committed to the broad strokes of American internationalism but has simply gotten tired of unpopular and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Absent those wars, or when confronted with a new threat – like the Islamic State – public support will rebound to historically normal levels. In a similar vein, research by Kertzer suggests that in addition to concerns about casualties and the costs of war, public support for “extroverted” foreign policies depends on the economic situation. In times of economic trouble, he finds that Americans are less likely to support taking an

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Russell Mead, “Allies Worry Over U.S. Public Opinion,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, Craig Kafura, and Lily Wojtowicz, “America Engaged,” Chicago Council on Global Affairs, October 2, 2018 p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Valentino, “At Home Abroad,” in Jeremi Suri and Benjamin Valentino, eds. *Sustainable Security: Rethinking American National Security Strategy* (Oxford University Press 2016), pp. 233-244.

active part in international affairs.<sup>9</sup> This sensitivity could help explain, for example, why support for international engagement hit a low point in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008-2009.

We argue that the relative stability of the topline figures obscures fundamental attitude shifts taking place across the generations. The United States is undergoing a slow motion changing of the guard as older, more internationalist, and more hawkish (i.e. supportive of the use of military force) Americans die and are replaced by younger, less internationalist and more dovish Americans. In 2012 the American National Election Study found that 49% of the youngest Americans in the survey (born after 1990) agreed the United States should “stay out of world affairs,” compared to just 29% of the oldest Americans (born between 1911 and 1926). Similarly, a 2017 Gallup poll found that 38% of Americans between 18 and 34 preferred the United States to play a minor role or no role in international affairs, compared to 22% of Americans 35 or older.<sup>10</sup>

Two primary mechanisms drive the creation of these attitudinal generation gaps. The first is demographic and social change. As the composition and social mores of successive American generations change, so do public attitudes. The second mechanism— cohort effects produced through political socialization – is the focus of this study.

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<sup>9</sup> Joshua D Kertzer, "Making sense of isolationism: foreign policy mood as a multilevel phenomenon." *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 75, no. 1 (2013), pp. 225-240.

<sup>10</sup> A. Trevor Thrall, Dina Smeltz, Erik Goepner, William Ruger, and Craig Kafura. "The Clash of Generations? Intergenerational Change and American Foreign Policy Views." *Chicago Council on Global Affairs* (2018); Lynn Vavreck, "Younger Americans Are Less Patriotic. At Least, in Some Ways," *New York Times*, July 4, 2014; Gary J. Gates, "Americans Still Support Major Role for US in Global Affairs," Gallup Organization, March 6, 2017, pp. 2-3.

The heart of our analytical framework is the “critical period” (or “impressionable years”) hypothesis, which holds that the state of the world and transformative events that occur during young adulthood produce outsized and permanent effects on people’s attitudes.<sup>11</sup> We believe that the socialization process plays an important role in explaining generation gaps on foreign policy, not only with respect to international engagement generally but also regarding preferred modes of engaging the world. Since the peak of American global power around 1950, the economic position of the United States relative to the rest of the world has declined significantly. World War II was also the last popular war Americans fought. Since then, military force has failed, occasionally quite visibly, to achieve U.S. objectives in Korea, Vietnam, and the war on terror. In addition, Americans born since the 1980s have come of age unencumbered by Cold War mindsets, which helped motivate and justify a good deal of American foreign policy for their elders. The upshot is that younger generations are less supportive of militant internationalism than older Americans.

This argument has important implications for the debate about the state of public support for American leadership of the liberal international project. Short term movements in public attitudes produced by current political, economic, or global conditions are important, but pulling out of the Middle East won’t reverse the underlying trend we discuss here. Nor do our findings suggest that improved communications to explain foreign policy are going to move the needle. Americans may

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of the critical period was introduced by the sociologist Karl Manheim [1927/28], “The Problem of Generations,” republished in Paul Kecskemeti, ed., *Karl Manheim: Essays* (London: Routledge 1952), pp. 276-322.



often be ignorant of the fine details of foreign policy, but deeply held worldviews cannot easily be reshaped by White House rhetoric.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The first section reviews the literature on foreign policy attitudes, advances our arguments about the role of historical change and political socialization, and outlines the hypotheses we test. Section two describes our data and analytical approach. After presenting our findings in section three, we conclude with a discussion on the implications of our work for the future of American foreign policy.

### **Explaining Generation Gaps in Public Support for International Engagement**

Research on foreign policy attitudes frames opinion formation as the interplay of individual, or micro-level factors, and contextual, or macro-level factors. We review those factors below, identifying the potential causal mechanisms behind generation gaps, before outlining our argument about how political socialization works to transform macro-level context into micro-level predispositions.

#### *Individual-level Factors*

Scholars have identified several factors that predispose people to support international engagement. The first cluster of variables can be seen as tapping into people's engagement and confidence in the American political system.<sup>12</sup> Studies have found, for

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<sup>12</sup> Andre Modigliani, "Hawks and Doves, Isolationism and Political Distrust: An Analysis of Public Opinion on Military Policy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (1972), pp. 960-978

example, that education, income, political knowledge, being white, being male, personal efficacy, ethnocentrism, nationalism (and/or patriotism), positive assessments of government efficacy, sharing the same party as the president, and positive subjective assessments of economic performance are all correlated with higher support of international engagement.<sup>13</sup>

A second important set of individual-level factors encompasses the abstract moral and ideological foundations of people's beliefs and preferences regarding foreign policy. These factors are less important for understanding who supports international engagement than for understanding what sort of international engagement people support. Conservative ideology is closely correlated with support of militant internationalism and skepticism about cooperative internationalism, while liberal ideology is most closely associated with opposition to militant internationalism and support for cooperative efforts.<sup>14</sup>

The large-scale changes to the composition of the American public since World War II suggest that individual-level factors may help explain generational attitude gaps. Thanks to increased immigration, rising education rates, and shifting social and political currents, America's population looks very different today on several dimensions that link to support for internationalism: race, education, ideology, and party identification.

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<sup>13</sup> Wittkopf, *Faces of Internationalism* and Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Joshua D. Kertzer, Kathleen E. Powers, Brian C. Rathbun, and Ravi Iyer. "Moral support: How moral values shape foreign policy attitudes." *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 76, No. 3 (2014), pp. 825-840; Brian C. Rathbun, Joshua D. Kertzer, Jason Reifler, Paul Goren, and Thomas J. Scotto. "Taking foreign policy personally: Personal values and foreign policy attitudes." *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 60, No. 1 (2016), pp. 124-137.

Some of these changes, such as higher levels of liberalism and education, historically have correlated with greater support for internationalism while others, such as the rising numbers of independents and people who feel disconnected from either party, suggest lower support for internationalism among younger Americans.

A second possibility for explaining generational attitude gaps via the individual level is that simply getting older promotes a more internationalist outlook. Every generation might start off relatively isolationist at age 18 but then slowly embrace higher levels of internationalism as they move through life. As young people acquire more education, find jobs, climb the economic ladder, and have children, their engagement with the political system is likely to rise, along with their incomes and sense of personal efficacy. Older people with more life experience, in turn, are better equipped to understand international affairs, the role of the United States in the world system, and the arguments made by political leaders about foreign policy. As people become parents and leaders, they may feel a deeper sense of responsibility to confront the world's problems or a growing appreciation of the connections between the outside world and domestic outcomes. It is important to note that aging effects are compatible with demographic changes and cohort effects; all could be operating at the same time.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For an excellent description and comparison of period, aging, and cohort effects see Pew Research Center, "The Whys and Hows of Generations Research," September 2015.

### *Macro-level Factors*

At the macro level, research has focused on two major contextual factors that explain rising and falling support for international engagement over time. The first of these is the international security environment, which produces mixed predictions. On the one hand, threats in the international environment can provide the motivation for engaging the world. During the Cold War, for example, politicians used the threat posed by the Soviet Union to justify all manner of American actions from supporting NATO and the United Nations to intervention in Korea and Vietnam and supporting rebels against communist governments. Moreover, during a crisis or at the outbreak of conflict, scholars have found that support for internationalism rises as Americans rally around the flag.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective the expectation is that Americans should respond to increased threat in the international arena with higher support for global engagement.

On the other hand, foreign policy is a dangerous and costly business, characterized by an unending stream of disputes, challenges, and the risk of war. From this perspective, the expectation is that the more dangerous the international environment appears, or the costlier American foreign policy seems, the more likely Americans are to turn inward. Following this logic Kertzer, for example, found that the level of hostility and turbulence in the international arena tended to correlate with more cautious attitudes and lower support for internationalist foreign policy.<sup>17</sup> Relatedly, one of the

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<sup>16</sup> Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*; John R. O'Neal and Anna Lillian Bryan, "The Rally 'Round the Flag Effect in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises, 1950-1985," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 17. No. 4 (1995), pp. 379-401.

<sup>17</sup> Kertzer, "Making Sense of Isolationism,"

most consistent findings of the foreign policy and public opinion literature is that when casualties mount and the prospects for success fade, public support for war erodes.<sup>18</sup>

The second major factor identified in the literature is the health of the domestic economy. When objective economic indicators are strong, Americans are more likely to support internationalism, whereas pessimistic assessments of economic conditions dampen support.<sup>19</sup> Like the individual-level factors described above, these findings support the general notion that confidence plays an important role in generating support for internationalism. Nincic's and Kertzer's conclusions echo similar findings with respect to opinions about a wide range of domestic political issues, including propensity to vote for the incumbent president, many of which hinge on the health of the economy.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the individual-level factors, these macro-level factors do not provide an obvious mechanism for producing generational attitude gaps. Instead, because contextual factors affect everyone across all ages at the same time, scholars typically use them to explain temporary shifts in public opinion (i.e. period effects). The competing influences of the international threat environment combine to explain, for example, why support for international engagement across all age groups spiked after

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<sup>18</sup> Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*; Dieuwertje Kuijpers, "Rally around All the Flags: The Effect of Military Casualties on Incumbent Popularity in Ten Countries 1990-2014," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2019, pp. 1-21; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler, "Success Matters," and Eichenberg, "Victory Has Many Friends."

<sup>19</sup> Miroslav Nincic, "Domestic Costs, the US Public, and the Isolationist Calculus," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 41, No. 4 (1997), pp. 593-609; Kertzer, "Making Sense of Isolationism,"

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Stuart N. Soroka, Dominik A. Stecula, and Christopher Wleizen, "It's (Change in) the (Future) Economy, Stupid: Economic Indicators, the Media, and Public Opinion," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (2015), pp. 457-474; Robert S. Erickson, Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson, *The Macro Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).

9/11, decayed after a decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and rose again in 2014 and 2015 with the emergence of the Islamic State.

### *Political Socialization*

We argue that over time the process of political socialization transforms some of these macro-level factors into permanent micro-level predispositions. The basic logic of political socialization is straightforward: the early events and experiences young people encounter often have an outsized – and permanent – impact on their worldviews and attitudes. Information and events that emerge after a person’s critical period will still influence attitudes and opinions, but those influences are more likely to be temporary and not so meaningful as those that occur during the critical period.<sup>21</sup> In a study of socialization and presidential voting across 60 years, for example, Ghitza and Gelman found that, “the foundation of partisan presidential voting trends peaks around the ages of 14-24.” Their model indicates that exposure to information about presidential performance at age 18 has roughly three times the impact on voting as information

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<sup>21</sup> On the development and use of political socialization theory see M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1981); Paul R. Abramson and Inglehart, *Value Change in Global Perspective* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 2009); Norman B. Ryder, “The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change,” *American Sociological Review* (1965), pp. 843-861; Danny Osborner, David Sears, and Nicholas Valentino, “The End of the Solidly Democratic South: The Impressionable-Years Hypothesis,” *Political Psychology*, Vol 32., No. 1 (February 2002), pp. 81-108; Michael X. Delli-Carpini, Age and History: Generations and Sociopolitical Change,” in *Political Learning in Adulthood: A Sourcebook of Theory and Research*, ed. Roberta S. Siegel (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1989), pp. 11-55. On socialization effects regarding war and other major events in particular see David Sears and Nicholas Valentino, “Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Preadult Socialization,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (March 1997), pp. 45-65; Howard Schuman and Amy Corning, “Generational Memory and the Critical Period: Evidence for National and World Events,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (2012), pp. 1-31; Howard Schuman and Cheryl Rieger, “Historical Analogies, Generational Effects, and Attitudes toward War,” *American Sociological Review*, Vo. 57, No. 3 (1992), pp. 315-326.

received at age 40, and that experiences past the age of 45 have no statistically significant impact at all.<sup>22</sup>

Thanks to technological, political, and social change, as well as to crises, wars, globalization, and economic cycles throughout the past 100 years, Americans of each new generation have experienced a very different world than their parents or grandparents did during their critical periods. And because young adults are at their most impressionable during these years, socialization produces shifts in people's baseline attitudes about a host of political, social, and cultural issues. Intergenerational attitude change is typically a gradual process. After all, each new generation has parents and grandparents whose own ideas and beliefs play an important role in the socialization process. Existing cultural and political institutions also work to shape attitudes and beliefs, limiting the rate of change. But generational change is also inevitable, since eventually the older generations must die and leave the field to the younger generations.<sup>23</sup>

Combining this framework with the macro-level factors discussed above suggests that while the major contextual factors produce temporary period effects for older Americans, they can also produce permanent cohort effects for younger Americans in their critical periods. Americans who came of age during periods in which conditions were generally conducive to internationalism – i.e., in which the United States enjoyed a

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<sup>22</sup> Ghitza, Yair, and Andrew Gelman. "The great society, Reagan's revolution, and generations of presidential voting." *Unpublished manuscript*, July 7, 2014. Available at [https://static01.nyt.com/newsgraphics/2014/07/06/generations2/assets/cohort\\_voting\\_20140707.pdf](https://static01.nyt.com/newsgraphics/2014/07/06/generations2/assets/cohort_voting_20140707.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Delli Carpini, "Age and History: Generations and Sociopolitical Change,"

robust economy and global economic dominance, successful military adventures abroad, and in which Americans had a high level of trust in their political leaders and system – should carry a stronger internationalist predisposition with them throughout their lives than those who come of age when conditions were less favorable.

Not only does this framework provide a general explanation for the emergence of generational attitude gaps, it also helps explain why younger Americans today exhibit lower levels of support for international engagement and the use of military force than their elders. Since World War II, the conditions identified by previous research have trended in a direction much less conducive to a confident internationalist outlook. On the economic front, since 1950 when America's global dominance reached its peak, the position of the United States relative to the rest of the world has declined significantly (see Figure 2). On the foreign policy front, World War II was the last popular major war the United States fought. Vietnam provided a serious challenge to the Cold War foreign policy consensus and produced a ten-year "Vietnam syndrome" that depressed support for international engagement. Since then, Americans have eventually come to believe that every military action lasting more than a few weeks was a mistake.

**Figure 2: U.S. Global Share of GDP, 1870 – 2019**

Additionally, as Figure 3 shows, the nation's preoccupation with international threats, broadly construed, has risen significantly since the 1940s. On the assumption that the public's perceptions of security – whether driven by domestic or international



concerns – play a key role in mediating support for international action, we created the “fear index,” a simple metric which tracks the percentage of stories each year in the *New York Times* that contain either the word “global” or “international” and one of four fear keywords (fear, risk, threat, or danger).<sup>24</sup> This broad brush approach lacks the specificity of measuring particular threats, but since most Americans pay relatively little attention to foreign affairs (or to most things that might be considered threats), this broad index likely does a better job at capturing the overall state of American confidence and concern about the international arena than more specific measures. As one would expect, the fear index moves up and down as major crises and wars come and go. But critically for our argument, the trend is that American discourse has become more preoccupied with fear, risk, threat, and danger over time, even during non-crisis periods and especially after the end of the Cold War and since 9/11. Lest one imagine that the sharp rise in the fear index over the past generation is somehow wildly off base, consider the findings of a 2019 Pew Research Center report entitled, “Looking to the Future, Public Sees an America in Decline on Many Fronts.” Among other things, the survey found that 60% of Americans believe that the United States will be less important in the world by 2050, more divided politically, suffering greater environmental degradation, and three quarters believe that wealth and income inequality will be more severe than today.<sup>25</sup> The youngest generations of Americans, then, have come of age

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<sup>24</sup> Though we do not report them here, we replicated the fear index trend using other news publications, including Factiva’s “Top U.S. Newspapers” database. The precise fear index figures vary depending on news source, but the patterns are the same.

<sup>25</sup> Parker, Morin, and Horowitz, 2019, “Looking to the Future, Public Sees an America in Decline on Many Fronts,” Pew Research Center 2019.

during periods where public discourse about the world has evinced a much more concerned tone than their parents and grandparents encountered.

Over the same period, Americans' faith in their own country appears to have eroded as well. American patriotism, or nationalism, has declined across the generations.

Millennial Americans are just half as likely (32%) to agree that the United States is the "greatest country in the world" as members of the Silent Generation (64%).<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile the confidence of Americans in their political system to do the right thing, a logical prerequisite for support of an extroverted foreign policy, has fallen considerably since the Vietnam era. According to Gallup, in 1973 52% of Americans had quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in the presidency and 42% had quite a lot or a great deal of confidence in Congress, for example, compared to just 38% and 11% respectively in 2019. Though confidence and trust in institutions can vary considerably from year to year depending on the circumstances, research indicates that here too generational effects are taking place. Younger Americans are among the least confident in institutions.<sup>27</sup>

### **Figure 3: American Fear Index 1923 – 2019**

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<sup>26</sup> Pew Research Center, "A Generational Gap in American Patriotism," July 3, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Gallup, "Confidence in Institutions," <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>; Twenge, Jean M., W. Keith Campbell, and Nathan T. Carter. "Declines in Trust in Others and Confidence in Institutions among American Adults and Late Adolescents, 1972–2012." *Psychological Science* Vol. 25, No. 10 (2014), pp. 1914-1923.

### *Summary of Arguments and Hypotheses*

In short, we argue that younger Americans are less supportive of international engagement than older Americans in large part because they are less confident in the nation's ability to conduct successful foreign policy and less certain of the utility of military force. This, in turn, stems from the fact that since World War II the United States' relative economic position in the world has declined significantly, public fears about the world have risen, overall public trust in political institutions and leaders has dropped considerably after the late 1960s, and because the United States has experienced far more costly failures than successes in foreign affairs.

Contrary to those who argue that there has been no real change over time in foreign policy attitudes, that aging effects will erase generational differences, or that partisan differences alone explain the existence of generation gaps, we hypothesize that cohort effects have produced meaningful generation gaps with respect to internationalism that will persist even after controlling for the standard array of factors believed to determine support for internationalism, including individual-level and macro-level factors (such as the impact of current events).

Second, we hypothesize that the conditions that produce these cohort effects during people's critical periods are those that relate to threats and to Americans' confidence in the nation's ability to manage international affairs. Periods of relative economic dominance and victory in war should promote higher lifetime support for international engagement, other things being equal, while shrinking economic power, higher levels of fear in public discourse, and the presence of unpopular and costly wars and other negative events should depress support. Specifically, we expect that:

H1: The higher the U.S. share of global GDP during a person's critical period, the higher support for internationalism he or she will display.

H2: The more fear-based language used in the media during a person's critical period, the lower support for internationalism he or she will display.

H3: The more unpopular wars like World War I, Vietnam, and the War on Terror experienced during a person's critical period, the lower support for internationalism he or she will display.

H4: The more significant, negative economic shocks such as the Great Depression and Great Recession experienced during a person's critical period, the lower support for internationalism he or she will display.

## **Data, Variables, and Methods**

The data for our study comes primarily from 21 surveys conducted from 1947 through 2017 by NORC at the University of Chicago (through 1974) and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (since 1974).<sup>28</sup> These surveys of American public opinion on foreign policy include our dependent variable—whether Americans think the U.S. should be active or stay out of world affairs—and important individual-level demographic information.

Following previous literature, we use the popular baseline question, “Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs?” to create our binary dependent variable, coding answers 0 for “stay out” and 1 for “be active.” Each of the surveys asked this question of respondents, providing 42,211 records taken at 21 unequally spaced intervals across 70 years for

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<sup>28</sup> The raw data from the 2018 Chicago Council on Global Affairs data was not yet available for analysis.

analysis. Across all surveys an average of 66 percent of respondents answered, “Be active” while 34 percent responded, “Stay out.”<sup>29</sup>

To assess the impact of micro-level variables, we included the standard set of individual-level demographic variables: education, income, political party, ideology, gender, age, race, and “inpartisan” (i.e., whether the respondent’s political party matches the president’s party affiliation). In order to make the most use of the Chicago Council and NORC surveys we made modifications to certain variables because their coding rules changed over time.

We tested the impact of the macro-level variables in two ways, looking for both period effects and cohort effects. To assess the period effects, we examine three pathways by which the environment might impact an individual’s likelihood of responding “be active” or “stay out” on any given survey. First, we measure America’s percentage share of the global gross domestic product in the year of the survey. This should proxy for U.S. economic hegemony and, indirectly, public confidence in the ability of the United States to achieve its foreign policy goals. We expect that a higher share of global GDP indicates the U.S. can “afford” to be active in world affairs and more Americans will respond “be active” as a result. The maximum score was 28 percent of global GDP in 1951 and the minimum score was recorded in 2012 and 2013 at 16

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<sup>29</sup> These percentages do not include respondents who did not answer either “be active” or “stay out” in an effort to remove potential bias resulting from survey design. The percentage of third answers, such as “refused to answer” and “not sure” varied substantially across the surveys from less than 1% in 2012, 2014, and 2016 to 11% in 1982 and 1998. Surveys up until 2002 included a “not sure” response. The surveys no longer included that response as of 2004, which likely influences the reported percentages for both “be active” and “stay out.”

percent of global GDP. We derived this variable from data available through the World Bank, Penn World Table, and Angus Maddison.

Second, we developed a current events variable to estimate the impact of threats and conflicts justifying international engagement on the one hand, and the impact of rising costs depressing support for engagement on the other hand. Wars like Korea and Vietnam, for example, we coded a 1 for their start year to reflect the rally around the flag effect and -1 in subsequent years to account for emerging public opposition to the rising costs of war.<sup>30</sup> The Great Depression and Great Recession, on the other hand, received a -1 for each year. For each survey year, we sum the impacts of each ongoing event to compute a final event variable score. If no significant event occurred in a given year, we recorded a score of 0.

Third, we assessed more general public perceptions of international risk by examining all news stories in the *New York Times* via the ProQuest Historical Database and the Factiva news database from 1923 through 2019. As noted, the fear index represents the percentage of *New York Times* stories containing either the word “global” or “international” and one or more of the keywords “fear,” “risk,” “threat,” or “danger.” Though admittedly a blunt measure, the index provides an efficient way to gauge the public’s exposure to fear-based language over time, and potentially its attitudes towards dangerous foreign policy undertakings.

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<sup>30</sup> Initially, we developed a critical period measure based on the number of U.S. military fatalities in each year of a military conflict. In nearly all model variations, this measure was statistically insignificant, suggesting that either this is a poor measure of wars’ effects on the broader U.S. population or war does not influence foreign policy preferences. The variable was derived from data in Nese F. DeBruyne, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, Congressional Research Service, September, 14, 2018.

To look for cohort effects and to test the impact of political socialization as an explanation for generational attitude gaps, we created a critical period version of each of the macro-level variables. For each respondent we recorded the average U.S. share of global GDP during his or her critical period (i.e. between ages 14 and 24), the average fear index score, and the average significant current events score.<sup>31</sup> In this manner, every survey respondent received a critical period score reflecting his or her actual lived experience, rather than being assigned a score based on membership in a particular generation. This strategy provides a more accurate and nuanced test of the political socialization hypothesis and avoids debate about drawing artificial or arbitrary boundaries among generations.

## **Methods**

We tested the models via logistic regression and multilevel modeling. We chose to duplicate efforts by using two different statistical techniques because each offers its own set of pros and cons. Experts caution, for instance, against using multilevel modeling when there are less than 10 to 25 higher level groupings because of imprecise estimates.<sup>32</sup> In that case, neither year nor generation should be used as a grouping level. Conversely, solely relying on logistic regression would yield results on whether

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<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that the literature does not establish any firm boundaries for the critical period. Scholars have variously operationalized it as anywhere between ten and thirty years of age. We define the critical period here as ages 14 to 24 following Ghitza and Gelman, "The Great Society, Reagan's Revolution, and Generations of Presidential Voting." We tested alternate specifications, however, which we report below.

<sup>32</sup> Snijders, Tom, and Roel Bosker. "Standard Errors and Sample Sizes for Two-Level Research." *Journal of Educational Statistics* 18, No. 3. (1993), p. 239; Paterson, Lindsay, Harvey Goldstein. "New Statistical Methods for Analysing Social Structures: An Introduction to Multilevel Models." *British Educational Research Journal* 17, no. 4 (1991), p. 391

generations differ, without providing information on the extent to which age, period effects and cohort effects explain the variation across generations. Finally, the use of two estimators provides potential insight into the robustness of explanatory variables.

At this point we add a methodological warning note. Thanks to the fact that age, period, and cohort are all directly related, it is exceedingly difficult to establish the source of effects on attitudes. The “identification problem,” in short, stems from the fact that  $\text{Period (i.e. survey year)} - \text{Age} = \text{Cohort year}$ , and thus standard regression analysis cannot reliably estimate effects for all three effects simultaneously. The best solution is to collect longitudinal panel data, in which cohorts born in every year are surveyed regularly over a long enough period of time to tease apart cohort effects from aging effects and period effects. Given the obvious expense of such a program, scholars have devised a number of methodological workarounds.<sup>33</sup>

Our approach on this front is fairly straightforward. Rather than use cohort birth years as independent variables, we use each person’s critical period score. Unlike calendar years, which are perfectly correlated with people’s age, critical period scores rise and fall depending on the environmental factors noted above. This allows us to test the impact of cohort effects without necessarily introducing multicollinearity problems into the regression analysis. Nonetheless, as with all analysis of cohorts, our work should be considered provisional and subject to the limits of available methods.

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<sup>33</sup> On the identification problem and potential solutions see Norval D. Glenn, “Cohort Analysts’ Futile Quest: Statistical Attempts to Separate Age, Period, and Cohort Effects,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (October 1976), pp. 900-904; Norval D. Glenn, *Cohort Analysis*, Vol. 5 (Sage Publishing 2005); Yang Yang and Kenneth C. Land, “Age-Period-Cohort Analysis: New Models, Methods, and Empirical Applications,” (New York: CRC Press 2013).



## Results

To begin, we investigate whether generational differences exhibit a statistically significant relationship with internationalism. Birth years for each generation followed Pew's guidance.<sup>34</sup> A simple calculation of generational means suggests that generational differences do in fact exist. As the figure below indicates, the average "be active" response by generation rises from Lost to Greatest to Silent generations and then descends with each following generation until arriving at the least "be active" generation—the Millennials. The trajectory of the generational change fits our argument about the socialization process and the importance of transformative events and sweeping changes in the economic and security circumstances of the United States. Figure 4 also deals a blow to the argument that current generation gaps are due merely to aging effects. Support for internationalism grew from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century peaking as U.S. economic dominance and military success reached its high point, and then waned as America's global position began to erode. It was not until after World War II that older Americans became consistently more likely to support internationalism than younger Americans.

**Figure 4: Support for International Engagement by Generation, 1947 – 2019**

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<sup>34</sup> This paper adopts the Pew Research Center's cut off points defining the generations, though our regression analysis uses birth year, not generation, so the precise boundaries do not impact our findings. Defining generations is as much art as science. In 2019 after considering the data at length, for example, Pew changed the cutoff for Millennials from 1997 to 1996. See Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," January 17, 2019.

We use hierarchical linear modeling to confirm the statistical significance of these gaps. In his study of support for international engagement using data from the American National Election Study, Kertzer grouped by survey year and found that it explained approximately seven percent of the variation in preferences.<sup>35</sup> Our analysis similarly found that survey year explained 6.6 percent of the variation in support, while our variable of interest—generations, accounted for 12.8 percent of the differences.

Our results indicate that cohort effects, in addition to period effects, age, and other demographic factors, help explain an individual’s preference for international engagement. Our main hypothesis—that cohort effects produce statistically significant differences in preferences—proved robust using both logistic regression and hierarchical linear modeling and varying model specifications. In the latter case, we ran models grouped by year and generation and we also included two specifications for critical period ages (i.e., 14 to 24 and 10 to 17). Table 1 presents those results, and a more detailed discussion follows.

#### **Table 1: Analysis of Cohort, Macro, and Micro-Level Impacts on Attitudes**

The models provide support for our argument that macro-level variables exert influence through critical period cohort effects. Regarding our specific cohort effect hypotheses, we find support for the enduring impact of America’s global economic position and public discussions of risks and threats. When America enjoyed a dominant

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<sup>35</sup> Kertzer, “Making Sense of Isolationism.”

economic position during a respondent's critical period, that person was more likely to answer "be active" later in life. Conversely, when the fear index rose during their critical period, he or she was less likely to reply "be active." Surprisingly, however, we do not find support for our hypothesis that experiencing negative global events and unpopular wars during the critical period depresses lifetime support for international engagement.

One of our macro-level variables also exerted period effects. The economic period effect was significant and positively associated with the probability of responding "be active." Again surprisingly, however, there does not appear to be a period effect for the fear index or significant events such as war. The findings about the impact of fear and conflict suggest fruitful lines for future research.

We also found all of the demographic variables to be statistically significant in the direction anticipated. Age, education, and income were all positively associated with an increased likelihood of answering "be active," as were being male, white, Republican, and having the same party identification as the incumbent president. Those who identified as liberals, however, expressed the highest probability of replying "be active" as compared to those identifying as conservatives or "middle of the road." Independents and those who identified as "middle of the road" ideologically were negatively correlated with support for international engagement as compared to both liberals and conservatives.

### **Shifting Faces of Internationalism**

Thus far our analysis will have stoked the fears of observers concerned that Millennials will not carry on the tradition of American foreign policy activism that has marked the

post-World War II era. Before making final judgments, however, it is important to take the analysis further. To this point we have focused on answers to a survey question that the Chicago Council on Global Affairs itself has acknowledged is quite vague. It is not clear what respondents mean when they answer “be active” or “stay out.” Does a “stay out” response represent a permanent preference for isolationism, or does it reflect dissatisfaction in the moment with a particular aspect of American foreign policy? Would a respondent, for example, who opposes using military force in the Middle East but supports free trade answer “stay out” of world affairs to express displeasure with war, or would she answer “be active” because the United States must continue trading regardless of what else is happening? After offering respondents the opportunity to provide open-ended explanations for their answers in the 2014 survey, the Chicago Council concluded that an answer of “stay out” was not typically a sign of general support for isolationism, but rather an expression of unhappiness with a more specific element of American foreign policy.<sup>36</sup>

To investigate whether generation gaps represent increasing isolationist tendencies or just growing opposition to specific elements of American foreign policy, we start by borrowing Eugene Wittkopf’s “faces of internationalism” framework to identify two important dimensions of public support for global engagement: support for using military force as part of foreign policy (militant internationalism) and support for using diplomacy and cooperative means as part of foreign policy (cooperative

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<sup>36</sup> Smeltz, Daalder, Kafura, “Foreign Policy in the Age of Retrenchment,” pp. 7-9

internationalism).<sup>37</sup> We also look at two more specific elements within the broad framework of cooperative internationalism: support for globalization/free trade and support for international action on climate change.

Patterns of generational attitude gaps on these specific dimensions of internationalism provide another partial test of our cohort effect hypotheses as well as a way to interpret the findings from the previous section. If younger Americans express less support for all these dimensions, it strengthens the argument that isolationism is on the rise. If a different pattern emerges, on the other hand, it strengthens the argument that growing opposition to a more specific element of American foreign policy is driving the changes. To measure support for these additional dimensions of internationalism we again rely on the Chicago Council surveys.

Table 2 provides a descriptive summary of shifting attitudes from ten surveys conducted across nearly twenty years, revealing that younger Americans remain supportive of *cooperative internationalism* across each dimension we assessed. A significant generation gap, however, has emerged regarding the utility of American military superiority, with Millennials the least likely to view it as an effective tool of foreign policy. Members of the Silent Generation are 70 percent more likely to say military superiority is “very effective” than are Millennials.

## **Table 2: Shifting Faces of Internationalism**

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<sup>37</sup> Wittkopf, *Faces of Internationalism*

More evidence that younger Americans are developing a different definition of international affairs comes from climate change attitudes. As Table 3 shows, Millennials are more likely to view climate change as a critical threat to American national interests than older Americans. In part as a result, they are also more supportive of taking action now, including participating in international agreements like the 2015 Paris Agreement, from which the Trump administration announced the U.S. withdrawal in 2017.

### **Table 3. Generation Gaps in Attitudes on Climate Change**

At this point it is also important to note that the shifting pattern of support for international engagement is not simply a partisan story. Overall, due to demographic shifts, a greater number of young Americans identify as liberal, which has an impact on the average position of the younger generations on foreign policy issues. But the generational pattern holds for Americans regardless of party identification. As Figure 5 illustrates, declining confidence in military superiority as a tool of foreign policy follows a roughly similar pattern across the generations for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.<sup>38</sup>

### **Figure 5. Confidence in Military Superiority by Generation and Party**

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<sup>38</sup> The same pattern holds across parties for many domains of international engagement. See Thrall, Trevor, D. Smeltz, E. Goepner, W. Ruger, and C. Kafura. "The Clash of Generations? Intergenerational Change and American Foreign Policy Views." *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs* (2018).

## **Conclusion**

We have argued that the United States is undergoing a slow-moving changing of the guard. Each year roughly two million older, more conservative, and more hawkish Americans pass on, replaced by younger, more liberal, and more dovish Americans. As the economic dominance and confident nationalism of the post-World War II years gave way to relative economic decline, increasing concerns about the international arena, and rising distrust in government, successive generations of Americans have grown up predisposed to be more skeptical of foreign policies involving the use of military force, a predisposition that also shows up in lower levels of support in surveys for international engagement.

Our results validate previous research about the macro- and micro-level sources of internationalism while providing support for our arguments about the role of political socialization. Public support for international engagement has always ebbed and flowed with changes in the international security environment, but over the long run a clear pattern has emerged that crosses party lines. Over the past 70 years, the political socialization process has transformed the events and experiences of the post-World War II era into individual predispositions that are very different from those developed by Americans who came of age before or during World War II. Today's youngest Americans are far more supportive of cooperative internationalism than they are of militant internationalism, and far less supportive of the use of military force than older Americans. Millennials and Generation Z, those who have come of age after the end of the Cold War, exhibit the lowest levels of support for today's highly militarized approach to foreign policy.

These findings have at least two important implications for American foreign policy. First, our analysis suggests that not only are real changes in the nature of public support for international engagement taking place, but also that the changes are likely to be permanent. Barring unforeseen events, younger Americans will carry their basic worldviews through life just as their elders have done. Though younger Americans suffer from the same sort of political polarization others do, the new pattern of internationalism affects Millennials and Generation Z of both parties. And as younger Americans become an ever-larger part of the electorate, the influence of their preferences on politics and policy will grow. Moreover, there is little reason to predict that the trend towards this new internationalism will change. The underlying conditions – America’s relative economic and military power, public confidence in the United States, and the demographic composition of the population – are extremely difficult to alter.

The second implication is that developing a new foreign policy consensus is likely to be difficult. Though there is a growing sense in Washington that United States grand strategy is due for change, the views of younger Americans are increasingly out of step with the traditional preferences of Washington elites. For many decades, polls have shown that political elites of both parties are far more supportive of international engagement (including military intervention) than the public and that a majority of the public, on the other hand, would prefer to focus the nation’s energy on domestic issues



rather than foreign affairs.<sup>39</sup> A Eurasia Group Foundation study in 2019, for example, found that almost five times as many foreign policy experts (47%) embraced an “indispensable America” worldview compared to the public (just 9.5%), and that 95% of foreign policy experts would support military retaliation against Russia if it attacked a NATO ally, compared with just 54% of the public. The study also found that younger Americans were the least supportive of military intervention. Similarly, a 2019 study by the Center for American Progress found that Millennials and Generation Z preferred, by 64% to 29%, to emphasize economic and diplomatic efforts rather than military action to protect American interests, while Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation were more evenly split, with 51% preferring economic and diplomatic efforts and 45% believing that the United States must always be ready to take military action.<sup>40</sup>

In short, older foreign policy leaders and their youngest constituents are increasingly on different pages. Many experts are concerned that younger Americans simply don’t understand the importance of American leadership and worry that they will not support what needs to be done to keep the United States safe and the world on track. Political leaders and their advisers may try to increase support for traditional foreign policies through rebranding or better communication, in an attempt to make the need for their

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<sup>39</sup> Benjamin I. Page and Jason Barabas, “Foreign Policy Gaps between Citizens and Leaders,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol 44. No. 3 (2000), pp. 339-364; Benjamin Page with Marshall Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect: What Americans Want from Our Leaders But Don’t Get* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2006).

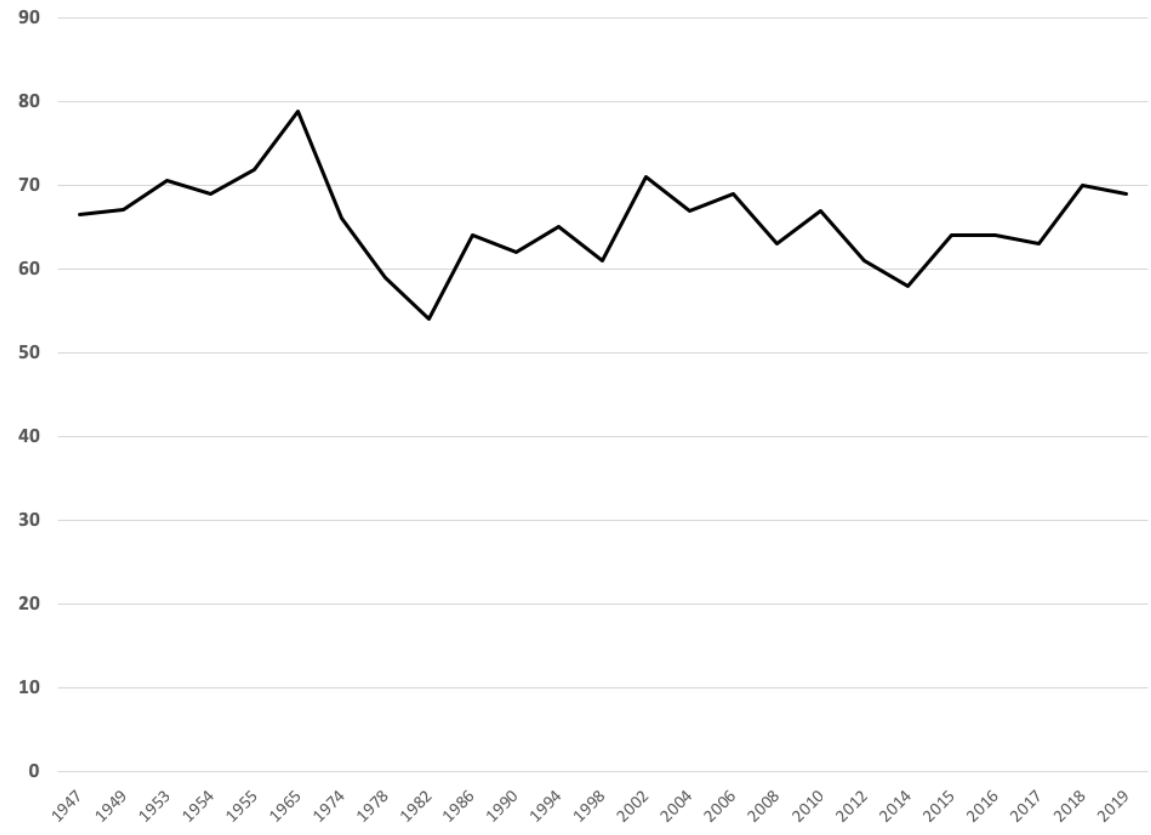
<sup>40</sup> Mark Hannah, “Worlds Apart: U.S. Foreign Policy and American Public Opinion,” Eurasia Group Foundation, February 2019; John Halpin, Brian Katulis, Peter Juul, Karl Agne, Jim Gerstein, and Nisha Jain, “America Adrift: How the U.S. Foreign Policy Debate Misses What Voters Really Want,” Center for American Progress, May 2019.

approach “clearer than the truth.” Given the permanent nature of people’s worldviews, however, such strategies are unlikely to have much impact on public attitudes.

At the same time, those observers who fear that younger Americans want to retreat from the world should take comfort in our findings. Strong evidence indicates that although younger Americans are less confident in the ability of military force to solve problems, they remain very supportive of various forms of international cooperation. Younger Americans don’t want the United States to disengage from the world as much as they want to change the manner in which the United States engages it.

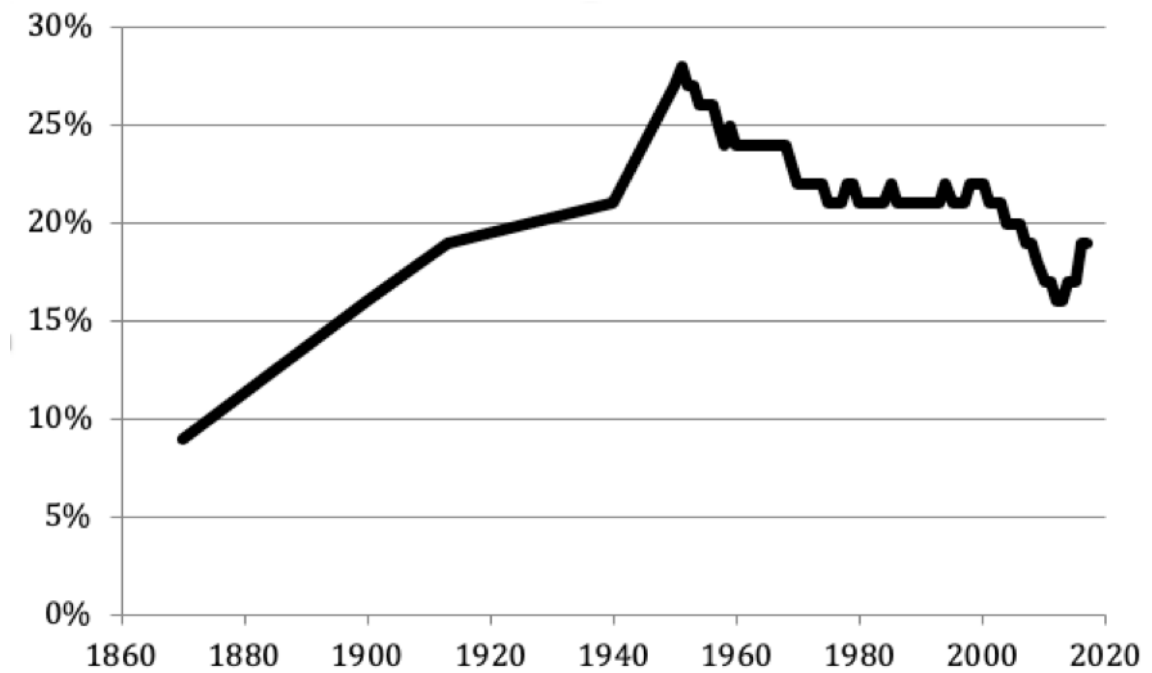
**Figure 1. American Support for Internationalism, 1947 – 2019**

*Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (% active part)*



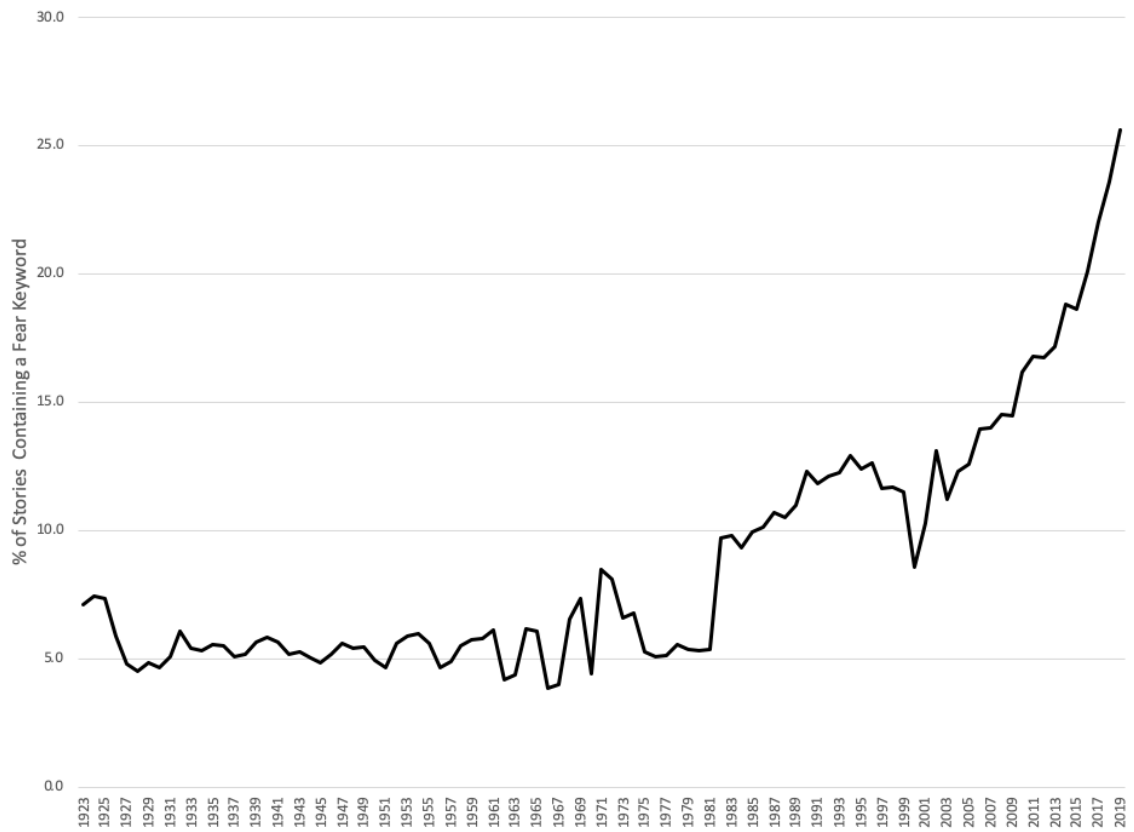
Source: NORC and CCGA

**Figure 2: U.S. Global Share of GDP, 1870 – 2019**



**Source:** World Bank, Penn World Table, and Angus Maddison.

**Figure 3: American Fear Index 1923 – 2019**

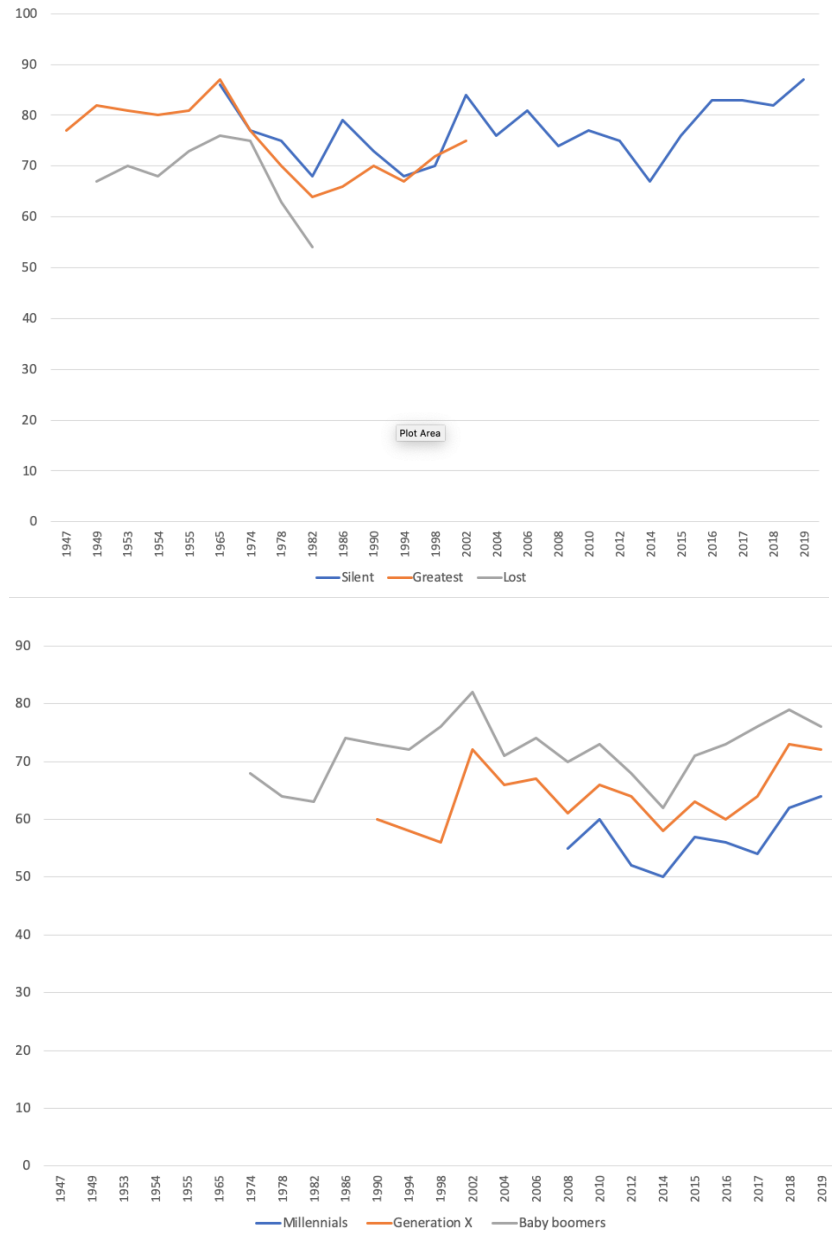


Source: Proquest Historical Database and Factiva

**Figure 4. American Support for International Engagement by Generation, 1947 –**

**2019**

*Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (% active part)*



Generations follow the Pew Center markers: Millennials born 1981 – 1996, Gen X 1965 – 1980, Baby Boomers 1946 – 1964, Silent 1929 – 1945, Greatest 1909 – 1928, and Lost 1893 – 1908. Source: NORC and Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Table 1: Analysis of Cohort, Macro, and Micro-Level Impacts on Attitudes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>Cohort Effect</b>				
U.S. share global GDP	.048 (.02)**	.082 (.01)**	.048 (.02)**	.049 (.02)**
Fear index	-.030 (.01)**	-.055 (.01)**	-.030 (.01)**	-.043 (.01)**
Negative events	.101 (.05)	.187 (.05)**	.101 (.05)	.128 (.05)
<b>Period Effect</b>				
U.S. share global GDP	.052 (.01)**	.056 (.01)**	.052 (.01)**	.071 (.02)**
Fear index	.003 (.01)	.114 (.05)*	.003 (.01)	.013 (.02)
Negative events	-.080 (.05)	.132 (.06)*	.080 (.05)	.074 (.19)
Presidential approval	.011 (.00)*	.013 (.00)**	.011 (.00)**	
Age	.009 (.00)**		.009 (.00)**	.006 (.00)**
Education	.340 (.02)**	.335 (.02)**	.340 (.00)**	.340 (.02)**
Income	.167 (.02)**	.154 (.02)**	.167 (.02)**	.168 (.02)**
Gender	.205 (.03)**	.191 (.03)**	.205 (.03)**	.207 (.03)**
Inpartisan	.272 (.04)**	.264 (.04)**	.272 (.04)**	.246 (.04)**
<b>Party</b>				
Independent/other	-.190 (.05)**	-.195 (.05)**	-.190 (.05)**	-.199 (.05)**
Democrat	-.187 (.05)**	-.188 (.05)**	-.187 (.05)**	-.175 (.05)**
<b>Ideology</b>				
Middle of the road	-.122 (.04)**	-.121 (.04)**	-.122 (.04)**	-.111 (.04)**
Liberal	.145 (.05)**	.121 (.05)*	.145 (.05)**	.147 (.05)**
<b>Race</b>				
Black	-.171 (.06)**	-.188 (.06)**	-.171 (.06)**	-.179 (.06)**
Other	-.085 (.05)	-.100 (.05)*	-.085 (.05)	-.074 (.05)

Observations	19831	19216	19831	19831
LL	-11362	-11056	-11364	-11340
Grouping variable			5 gens	13 years
Rho			.000	.028
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	.065	.063		

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*Note:* Column 1-2: Logit regressions (second model applied ages 10-17 as critical period; age removed due to multicollinearity); Columns 3-4: Hierarchical linear models (grouped by generations and years respectively). Coefficients reported. Standard errors in parentheses. Asterisks (\*, \*\*) indicate significance at the 5% and 1% level, respectively. All regressions include an intercept (not reported). The log likelihood is reported.



**Table 2. Shifting Faces of Internationalism**

*“Turning to something else, do you believe that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for the United States?”*

*“How effective do you think each of the following approaches are to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States?” [building new alliances with other countries]*

*“How effective do you think each of the following approaches are to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States?” [participating in international organizations]*

*“How effective do you think each of the following approaches are to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States?” [maintaining U.S. military superiority is]*

	% believe globalization has mostly good impact	% believe building new alliances is very effective	% believe participating in international organizations is very effective	% who believe maintaining military superiority is very effective
Millennials	67	31	24	33
Gen X	62	28	20	43
Boomers	57	28	21	51
Silent	60	28	22	56

Percentages reflect average of responses from 1998 – 2017.

Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs

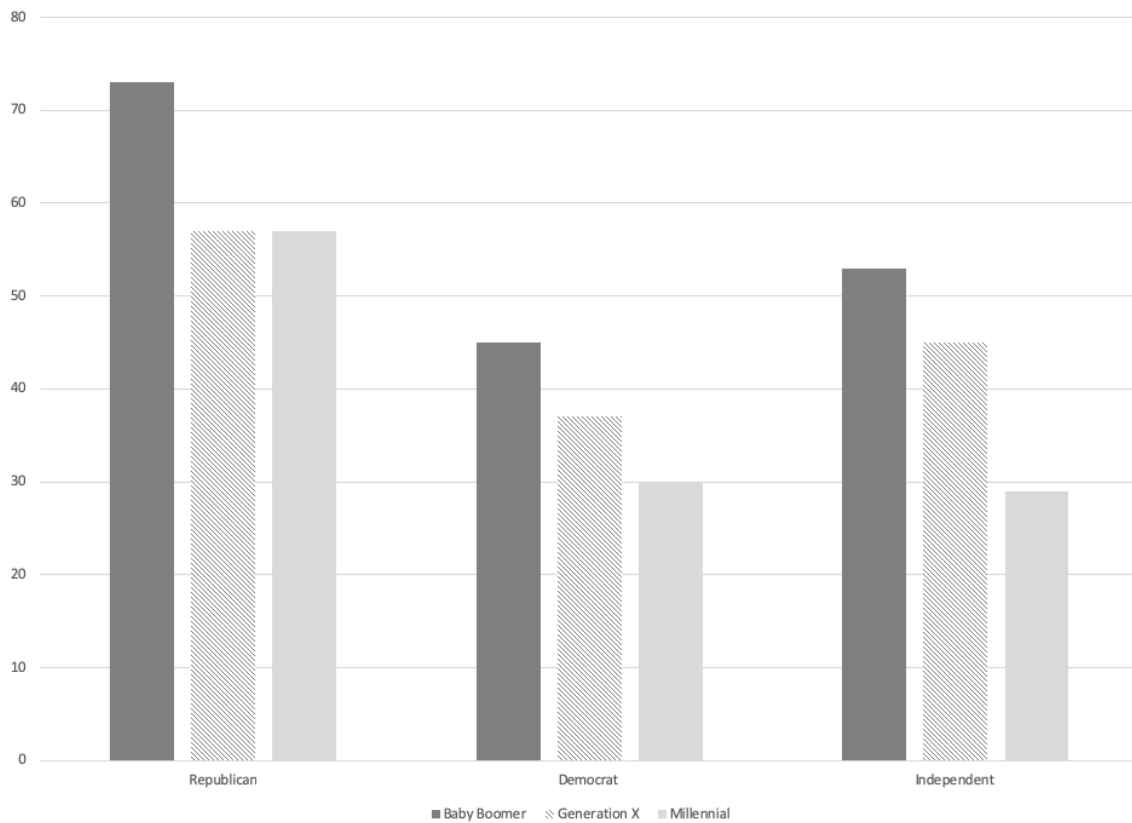
**Table 3. Generation Gaps in Attitudes on Climate Change**

	% who view climate change as a critical threat to American national interests	% who think U.S. should participate in Paris Agreement on greenhouse gases	% who think “we should try taking steps [to deal with climate change] now even if it involves significant costs”
Millennials	61	72	56
Gen X	56	66	51
Baby Boomers	51	67	48
Silent	39	61	43

Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2018 and 2019

**Figure 5. Confidence in Military Superiority by Generation and Party**

*How effective do you think each of the following approaches are to achieving the foreign policy goals of the United States? (% very effective)*



Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2017