

United in strife: British and American public opinion in an age of uncertainty

Research digest

Atlantic Future Forum, 28th-30th September 2022



London | Washington, DC

Introduction

'The Special Relationship', 'our strongest ally', 'our transatlantic partners'. We all know the words that politicians on either side of the pond use to describe the other.

But we know less about the average Brit or American's view. How do those on the streets of York or New York, Darlington or Detroit, Birmingham or Birmingham, view their relationship between each other? How do they view the world as the 2020s turn into a new decade of economic and military strife?

To mark the occasion of the Atlantic Future Forum, an annual gathering of British and American policymakers and government representatives, **J.L. Partners has conducted a representative opinion poll of the public on either side of the Atlantic.**

It finds, where the transatlantic relationship is concerned, a heartening picture. Both countries credit the other with responding best to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Both countries see the same strengths in the other. Both countries want to see more co-operation on issues ranging from energy resource sharing to free trade. And there is readiness to work together militarily should Putin invade a NATO country on Europe's eastern borders.

But there are sharp reminders of difficulties ahead too. Both populations feel a third world war is highly likely. As inflation bites, there are signs that Americans and Brits are becoming fatigued with the sacrifices made at home for the Ukrainian people. People are split on how to respond to China, should the country invade Taiwan.

And while the British public see Putin's Russia as the largest threat to democracy, the American public name their own political parties - the Republicans and Democrats - as the biggest risk to democratic freedom.

As elites make decisions, they must know their public. This research sets out the world through their eyes: of a transatlantic public who are united as allies, yet distinctly unsure of their own countries' futures from within.

J.L. Partners, 26th September 2022

Methodology

- ▶ J.L. Partners conducted two nationally representative polls of U.S. and UK adults between 16th-18th August 2022 in advance of the Atlantic Future Forum.
- ▶ The polls were conducted online, with 1,039 completes in the UK and 1,023 in the U.S.
- ▶ Surveys were quota-ed on age, gender, region and past vote (2019 and 2020 respectively) and weighted to age, gender and region.
- ▶ The margin of error for each poll is 3.1%.
- ▶ Full data tables are available at <http://www.jlpartners.co.uk>
- ▶ J.L. Partners is an accredited member of the British Polling Council and Market Research Society, with offices in London and Washington, DC.

The key numbers

Only 15%

Of Americans think free trade is always a good thing



57% 67%

Prefer protectionist policies over free trade ones



"Think NATO is a good thing"



68% 49%



Support for more UK-US cooperation in:

Trade, energy, intelligence, and technology



50% 40%

Support for less cooperation with Russia across all aspects polled



64% 59%

Support an expansion of NATO



What is the biggest threat to Western democracy?

Republican voters:

Democrats (27%)

Democrat voters:

Republicans (27%)

What is the biggest threat to Western democracy?



Putin (30%)



Domestic political rivals (27%)

"Europe was too soft in its response to Russian invasion"



49%



45%

Think the U.S. helped Ukraine most (40%)

Think the UK helped Ukraine most (30%)



40% 50%

Are apathetic about China-facing initiatives (AUKUS/Western belt & road, Indo-Pacific involvement)



54% 61%

Believe there is likely to be a third world war in the next five years

Sanction China if it invades Taiwan



78% 72%



"We shouldn't have boots on the ground in Taiwan in the event of an invasion"

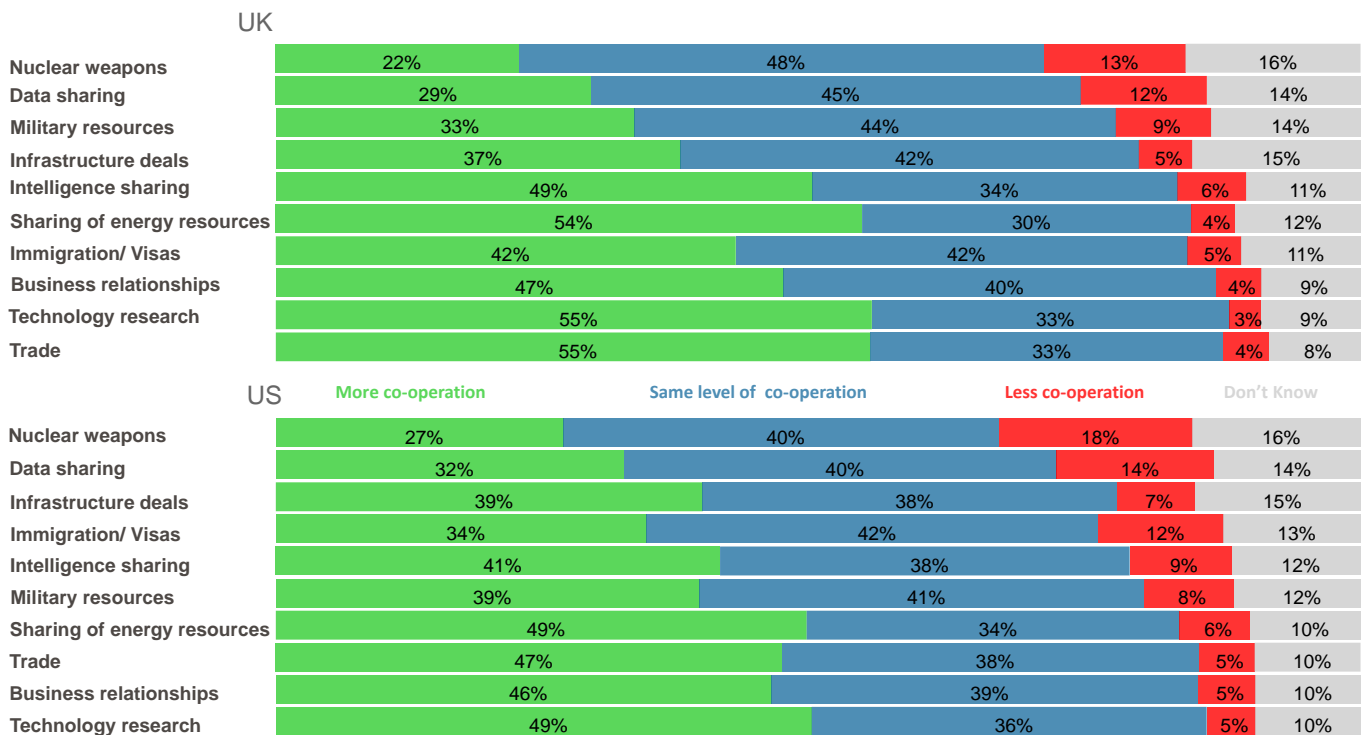


70% 57%

1. Americans and Britons alike want more transatlantic cooperation on trade, technology and energy

- ▶ The polls asked both countries' public to choose whether they wanted more, less or the same amount of cooperation on a range of issues.
- ▶ Both American and British adults want to see more cooperation on **trade, business relationships, intelligence sharing, and technology research.**
- ▶ And, ahead of a difficult winter for energy prices, 54% of Brits and 49% of Americans also supported more cooperation on energy resource sharing.

Thinking about the relationship between the USA and the UK, for each of the following would you like to see more or less co-operation between the two countries, or about the same as there is now?

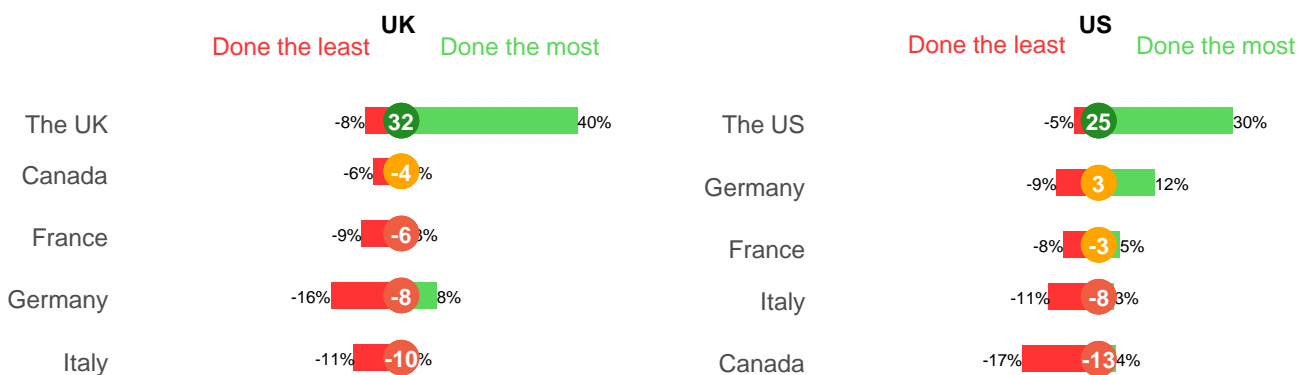


- ▶ On other issues, people would prefer transatlantic cooperation stays as it is. Most wanted to see cooperation remain the way it is currently for **military resources, nuclear weapons, and data sharing.**
- ▶ Just over four in ten British people want to see closer relations on visas and immigration – but Americans would prefer the relationship remains the same.
- ▶ **In no area did most people want to see a more distant relationship across the Atlantic.**

3. UK and U.S. name each other the MVP on helping Ukraine

- ▶ The poll asked both countries' publics to say which country they feel had done the most and which they feel had done the least in terms of its response to the invasion of Ukraine.
- ▶ In America, **30% chose the UK as the country that has done the most**, placing it at the top of the list of countries overall. In the UK, **40% chose the U.S.**, also taking pole position.

Of the following countries, which country do you feel has done the most in its response to the invasion of Ukraine? And which do you feel has done the least?

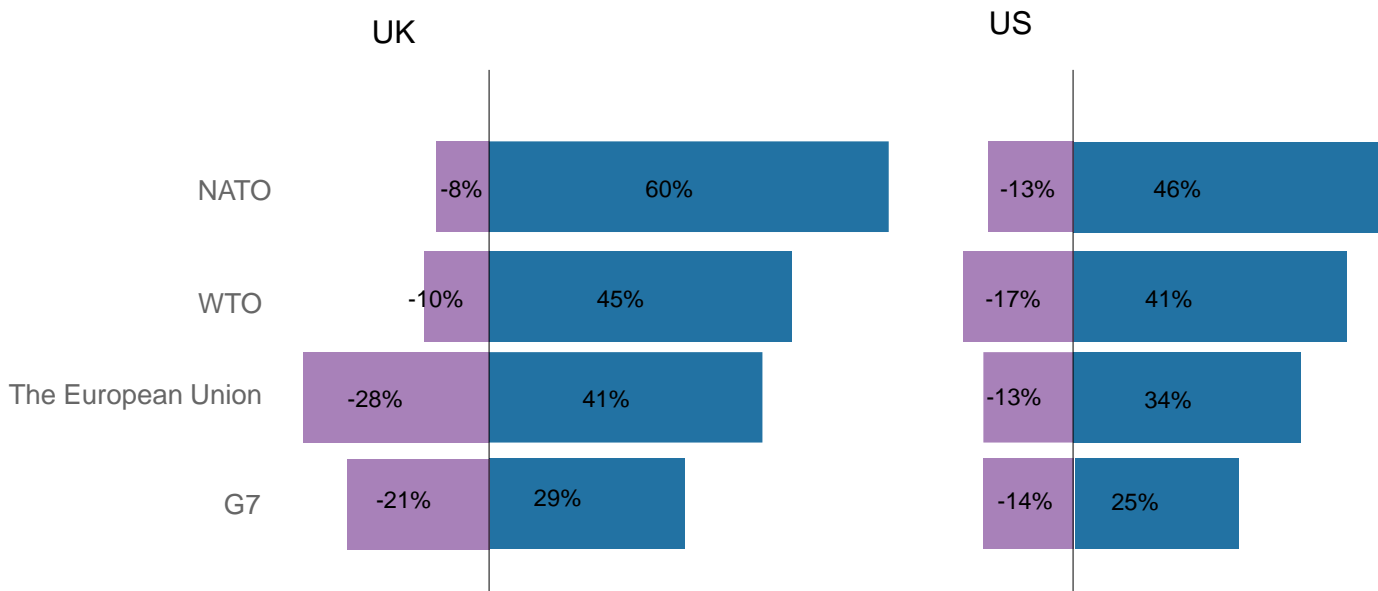


- ▶ The British public feel **Germany** has done the least, chosen by 16%.
- ▶ American ire is directed at **Canada**, with 17% saying their Canadian neighbours have done the least to help.

4. There is a high level of confidence in NATO across the Atlantic, with support for its expansion

- ▶ People were asked for their levels of confidence in NATO, and a number of other international organisations.
- ▶ **Confidence in NATO is high on both sides of the pond**, but more so in the UK, with 60% expressing confidence in the UK and 46% in the U.S.
- ▶ But only 8% of Brits and 13% of Americans say they lack confidence in the institution, and it scores higher than the WTO, the European Union, or the G7.

For each of the following organisations, please say how confident you are in their ability to fulfil their purpose.

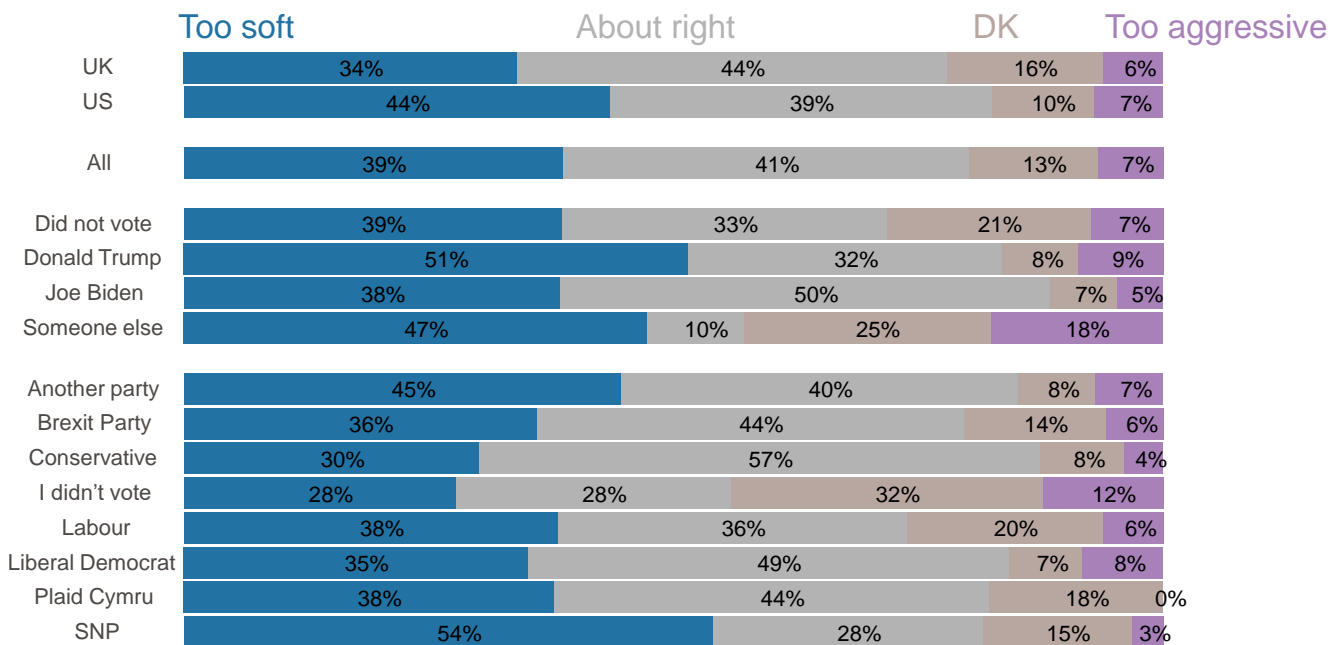


- ▶ There is a **high level of support for more countries, including those in Eastern Europe, joining NATO.**
- ▶ Just under two-thirds, 64%, support this in the UK, while just under six in ten Americans (59%) support the expansion of NATO.

5. Americans fear their country is being too soft on Russia and China

- ▶ The poll asked people to say whether they felt their own country was being too soft, too aggressive, or about right in its treatment of Russia and China.
- ▶ For Russia, **44% of Americans said it was being too soft**, 39% about right, and only 7% too aggressive.
- ▶ The British public are more likely to feel their government has got the balance right on Russia: 44% say the UK has got it about right, 34% too soft, and only 6% too aggressive.
- ▶ **And on China, the same applies:** 44% of Americans feel their country is being too soft, 37% about right, and only 6% too aggressive - while 38% of Brits feel their country has got the balance right.
- ▶ 2020 Trump voters are the most likely to feel the U.S. is being soft on Russia and China, **but it is also the view of almost four in ten of those who voted for Biden in 2020.**

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view on how the [USA/UK] is dealing with Russia at the moment?

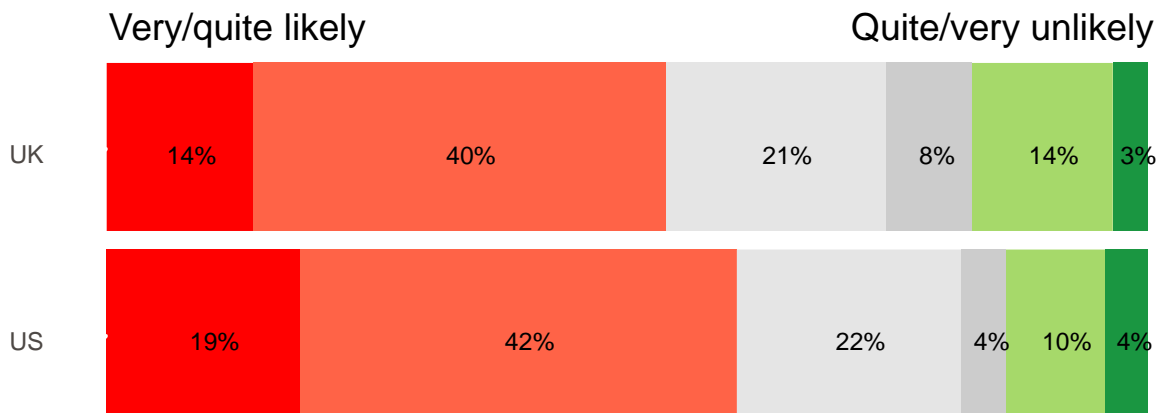


- ▶ Both countries are even more damning of the European approach to Russia and China.
- ▶ Almost half of Brits (49%) and Americans (45%) feel **European powers are being too soft on Putin's country**, while a third of Brits and four in ten Americans feel they are being too soft on China.

6. Both sides of the Atlantic are braced for war

- ▶ The poll asked both countries' publics to say how likely they thought it was that there would be a major global conflict in the next five years.
- ▶ In Britain, **54% said it was very or quite likely**, with only just under one in five (17%) saying it would be unlikely.
- ▶ Americans are even more pessimistic, **with 61% saying World War Three is likely in the next five years**, with only 14% saying it is unlikely.

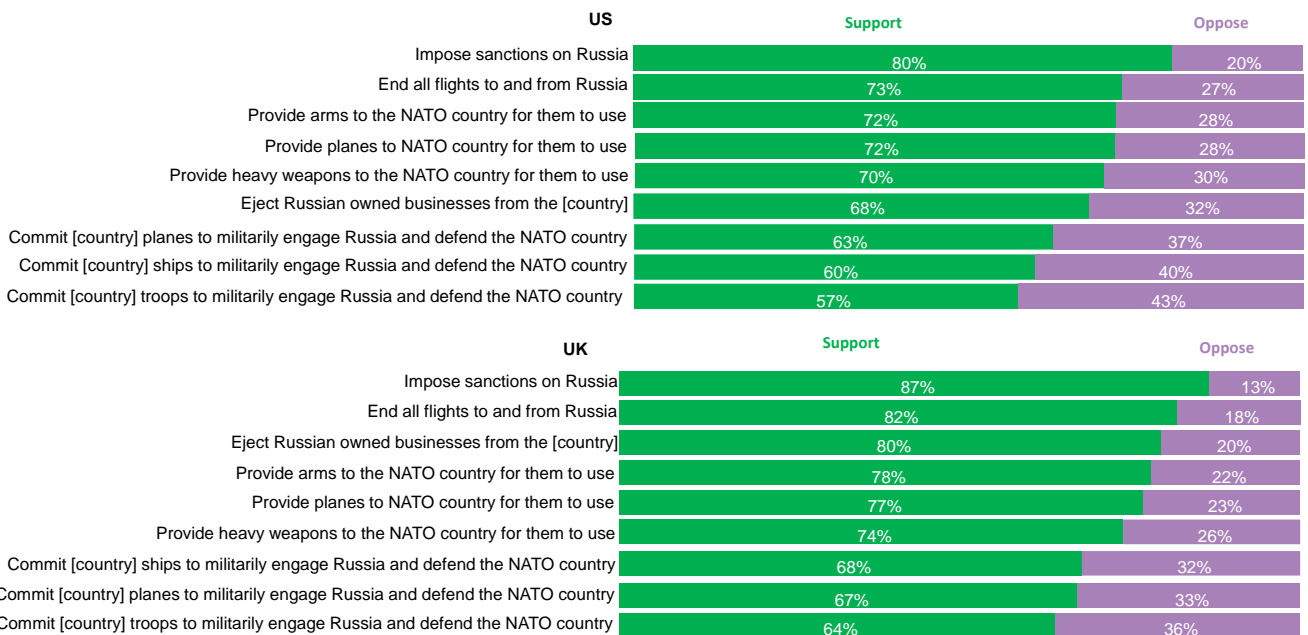
How likely or unlikely do you think it is that there will be a major global conflict or a third world war in the next five years?



7. Britons and Americans back sending troops to fight Russia should Putin invade NATO territory

- ▶ Respondents were asked to choose a range of options they think should take place if Russia invaded an Eastern European NATO country.
- ▶ There is very significant support – as high as 87% – for **sanctions, ending flights, and providing arms, heavy weapons and planes to the country in question.**

If Russia were to invade a NATO country in Eastern Europe, what do you think your country's response should be? Check all that apply.

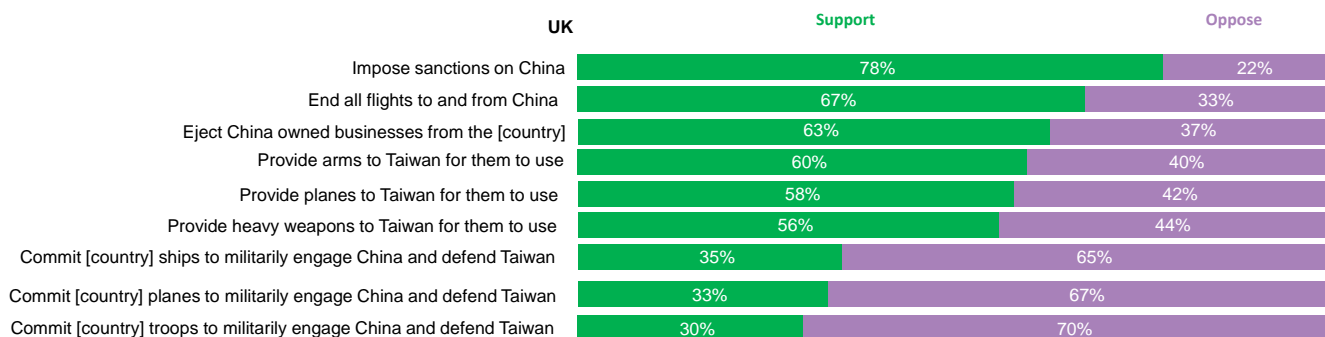
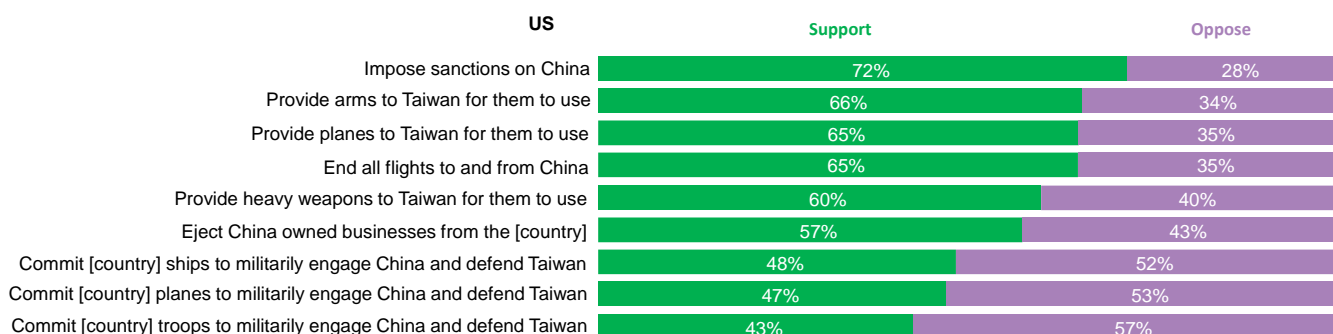


- ▶ There is also support for **expelling Russian-owned businesses from British or American soil**, with 80% of Brits and 68% of Americans agreeing.
- ▶ But most strikingly, **more than half the public support sending ground troops to militarily engage Russia and defend the NATO alliance.** Almost two thirds of Brits agree (64%), as do 57% of Americans. There is also majority support for sending planes and warships to engage Putin's forces.

8. But there is little appetite for war should China invade Taiwan

- ▶ In the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, there is widespread support for **sanctions, ejecting China-owned businesses, ending flights, and arming Taiwan with small arms, heavy weapons, and planes in both countries.**
- ▶ But unlike in relation to Russia, there is little enthusiasm to military engage China.
- ▶ **Seven in ten Brits (70%) and 57% of Americans oppose sending ground troops in such an event.** Two-thirds of British people also oppose using planes or warships to engage the enemy, as do just over half of Americans.

If China were to invade Taiwan, what do you think your country's response should be? Check all that apply.



9. Signs of Ukraine fatigue as the transatlantic public looks to winter and rising costs

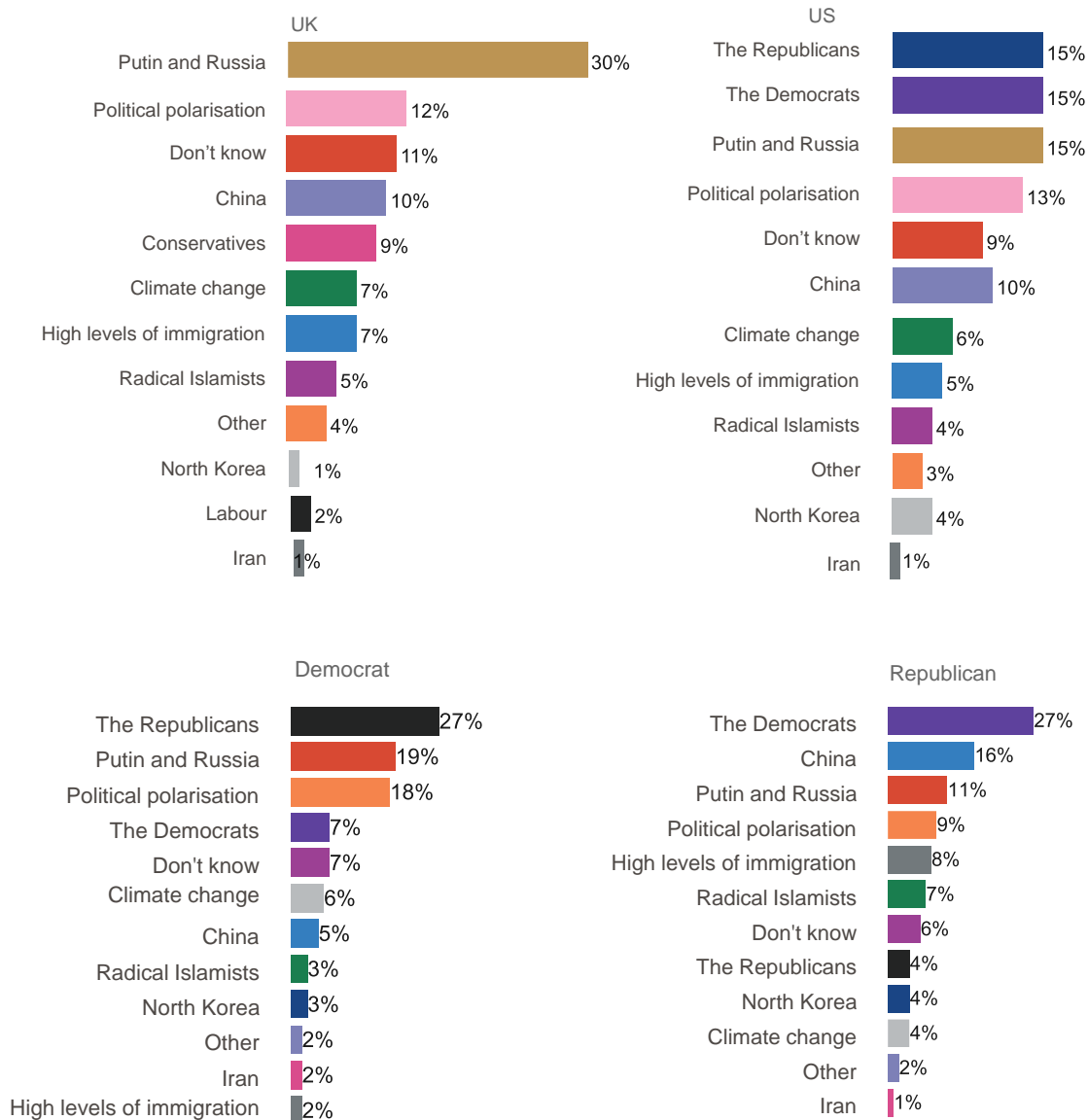
- ▶ Americans and Brits were asked to choose between two statements: “We should prioritise helping Ukraine even if it means rising costs in my country” and “We should prioritise getting costs down in the even if it means not helping Ukraine”.
- ▶ In the U.S., **58% chose getting costs down even if it means not helping Ukraine.**
- ▶ While 42% said helping Ukraine should be the priority even if it means rising costs.
- ▶ In the UK, **opinion was split down the middle**, with 50% opting for the first statement and 50% opting for the second.



10. Britons identify Putin as top risk to democracy; Americans choose Democrats and Republicans

- ▶ The poll asked both countries' publics to select what they felt was the biggest risk to Western democracy.
- ▶ In the UK, the top option was **Putin and Russia** (30%). Political polarisation followed on 12%, and China was on 10%.
- ▶ In the U.S., though 15% choose Putin, 15% also choose the **Democrats**, and another 15% choose the **Republicans**.
- ▶ And when asking only supporters of the two main parties, the picture is more stark, with Democrats the top choice of Republicans and Republicans the top choice of Democrats.

What do you think is the biggest threat to Western democracy?



Contacts

James Johnson Co-Founder



jjohnson@jlp partners.co.uk

[@jamesjohnson252](https://twitter.com/jamesjohnson252)

James Johnson is a political adviser and pollster, having previously served as the Senior Opinion Research and Strategy Adviser at 10 Downing Street.

In that capacity he conducted opinion research and private polling, and presented recommendations to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

James is a founding partner of J.L. Partners and also provides media commentary on the latest political and electoral developments. He now leads JLP's expansion into the United States.

Dr. Tom Lubbock Co-Founder



tlubbock@jlp partners.co.uk

[@tmlbk](https://twitter.com/tmlbk)

Dr Tom Lubbock is a public opinion specialist having previously worked as an academic behavioural scientist at the University of Oxford, specialising in research methods and referendum campaigns.

Between 2017-2019 he ran analytics and polling at Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ), working on tracking polling for the Prime Minister and end to end segmentations.

Tom is a founding partner of J.L. Partners. As one of the most highly rated data scientists in the industry, Tom leads JLP's quantitative and modelling work.



London | Washington, DC

