



D.C.'s New Guard: What Does the Next Generation of American Leaders Think?

A Survey Project Conducted by
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What does it mean that the future President of the U.S. just tweeted about Justin Bieber and grew up watching Iraq War reports on YouTube?

In 2011, a “silver tsunami” will hit the United States: the oldest Baby Boomers will reach the United States’ legal retirement age of 65. As the Boomers leave the scene, a new generation will begin to take over. But while the generation that directly follows the Boomers, Generation X, may be “of age”, there is a good chance that it will not actually shape public life and leadership as much the following generation, the Echo Boomers, also known as the “Millennials”.

The Millennials are the generational cohort born from roughly 1980 to 2005, in an “echo” of the Boomer generation. But as with other generations, it’s not the exact date of birth that matters as much as their mindset and transformative experiences. The other names that the Millennials go by illustrate: Generation Y, the 9/11 Generation, the Facebook Generation, etc. Even prevailing popular culture neatly illustrates the difference. Which resonates more to you: the Beatles, Pearl Jam or High School Musical? How you answer is a pretty good indicator of which generation you belong to, not just because of differing musical taste, but because the symbolism that these three different types of music each evoke reveals the different mentality that Boomers, Gen X and the Millennials bring to the world.

The demographic power of the Millennials is far greater than many realize. This generational cohort is about 30% larger than the Baby Boomers in terms of raw numbers and three times the size of Generation X. Social and political changes ranging from the unlikely rise of Barack Obama in the 2008 election to the Facebook phenomenon evidence how this generation is just starting to flex its demographic muscles. As more and more Millennials come of age and then enter and advance in the workforce and electorate, they will have a political, economic and social weight not seen since

the Baby Boomers and the indelible mark they left on American and global politics starting in the 1960s.

Recently, the corporate world has begun to realize that Millennials bring new issues and new challenges as well as new opportunities to the marketplace. Indeed, a multi-billion dollar industry of firms has already sprung up around how best to teach, lead and integrate this new generation into the workplace. Those corporations that succeed at both utilizing the talents of the generation as well as marketing towards them, like Google has done so far, will thrive. Those that fail will be like the RCAs or Kodaks of past generations.

But the foreign policy studies world has given little thought or examination to this rising generation, many of whom are just starting to advance through the ranks. We live in the era of White House staffers who have only operated in post 9/11 world politics, congressional staffers who think it normal to tweet during Senate hearings, and young military officers in Afghanistan who relax after a day of counterinsurgency by playing video games back at their Forward Operating Base. These youngsters will one day become National Security Advisors, Senate appropriators, and flag officers, who, as they rise in their careers, may face everything from the actual melting of the Arctic to a world in which China’s economy may surpass that of the United States.

But what do we actually know about the views and values of this rising generation of leaders? The answer is very little. Most studies ignore them and indeed, most polling tends to focus on overall population surveys, not delineating the next generation. Young leaders in specific garner even less attention. In fact, the current state of understanding is perhaps best captured by an article on *Foreign Policy* magazine’s website which

¹ Eric E. Schmidt, “Truth or Consequences” *Forbes*, August 30, 2010.



asked: “How do Millennials Think About International Relations?”² The article offered up several cogent hypotheses of events that might shape Millennial views (9/11, war in Iraq, etc.), but then left the question open, to be answered by individual Millennials in the website’s comments section.

It was to explore what these young leaders, who one day will be D.C.’s new guard, actually think that drove this project. This survey of attitudes of the next generation of leaders is not just fascinating in and of itself, but also could prove potentially useful in everything from voting pattern prediction and analysis to geopolitical forecasting. Indeed, a crucial flaw of so much of the literature about where the U.S. and the world is headed in the next few decades (written by authors like Thomas Freidman, Paul Krugman, Fareed Zakaria, Paul Kennedy, Thomas Barnett, Thomas Frank, Anne Coulter, Bernard and Jonah Goldberg, Hara Marano, Mark Steyn, etc.) is that the authors put themselves in that future, when it is actually the next generation, e.g. their research assistants, who will be running it.

The following study is significant for what it is, but also should be judged by what it is not. It is a look at a subset of young leaders’ identities and attitudes. It is *not* a survey of overall youth or general population attitudes, but rather only a set of youngsters who have been judged by their peers as having leadership qualities and have already demonstrated an interest in the world of policy and politics. To put it another way, it’s a survey of the type of kids who run for student government and choose to spend their summer vacations working in Washington. While we can’t be certain that this pool of over 1,000 young Americans definitively has a future president, senator, UN ambassador, or chairman of the Joint Chiefs in it (though it is important to note that a number of past and current presidents, ambassadors, generals, and senators would have been captured in similar studies at this very same point in their youth), it is a group composed of youth who already have the

“Washington bug” and have set themselves towards a career in politics and policy.

It is a look at these young leaders’ attitudes towards key issues at a certain period, both in American history and their own lives. But the key issues at this time and their attitudes towards them are *not* set in stone. Indeed, the Baby Boomer experience illustrates how key issues, as well as attitudes, can change dramatically for a nation. A survey of young Baby Boomer leaders at this stage, for instance, likely would have focused on Vietnam and the Cold War on the foreign policy stage. The Boomers certainly shaped these issues, but the very same generation ended up dealing with Iraq, 9/11, and globalization, when they reached their heights of power. Notably, though, it was the formative experiences and attitudes forged in the era of Vietnam and the Cold War that continued to shape how Baby Boomer leaders (from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush) reacted to new issues and challenges.

The survey captures attitudes towards key areas of policy and geopolitics. It does *not* directly predict policy and geopolitics. Reacting to World War I and the Depression, the young generation of the 1920 and 30s, for example, would have shown very high levels of isolationism (something eerily repeated among this generation of youth). They certainly shaped an American foreign policy that reflected this isolationism. But in so doing, the resultant inward looking foreign policy didn’t handle well the emerging challenges of fascism, eventually leading to World War II and a reversal of policy that culminated with America’s rise as a global power.

In short, the following survey results shed light on the attitudes and values of an emerging generation of leaders at an important time in American and global history. Nothing more and nothing less. For that reason, we hope you’ll find the results like we find these kids. The best descriptor is perhaps one of the few slang words that means the same thing to Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials: cool.³

² Available at: http://drezner.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/08/23/how_do_generations_think_about_international_relations

³ In case you need a definition: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=cool>



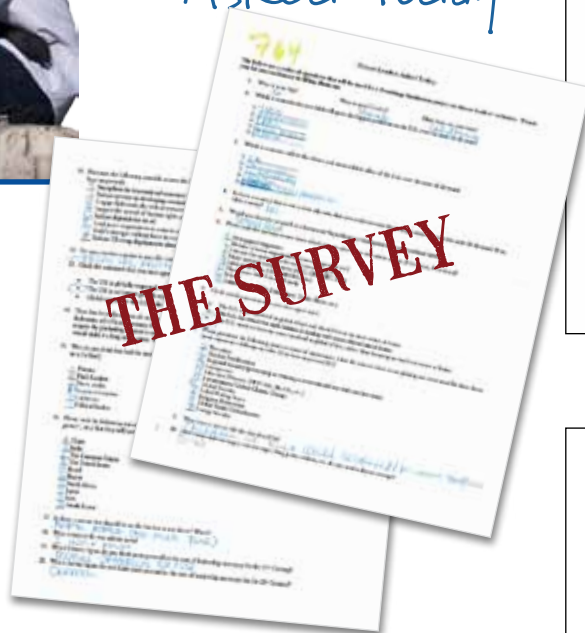
Our Search for the Leaders of Tomorrow

— Asked Today



Sourcing primarily from attendees at the National Student Leadership Conference, as well as the Americans for Informed Democracy young leaders' courses, and DC internship programs, we surveyed 1,057 young American leaders.

Our thinking was that this approach was a more representative gathering of future leader attitudes than general teen surveys, as: 1) they have been identified as such by their peers, and 2) they have shown enough interest in the field of policy and politics to spend their summer vacations in D.C. (i.e., they've got the 'bug' already). That is, we can't guarantee we have the future Bill Clinton or Barack Obama (who attended similar programs) in this pool, but we do know we have the views of a variety of their future advisors, diplomats, journalists, etc.



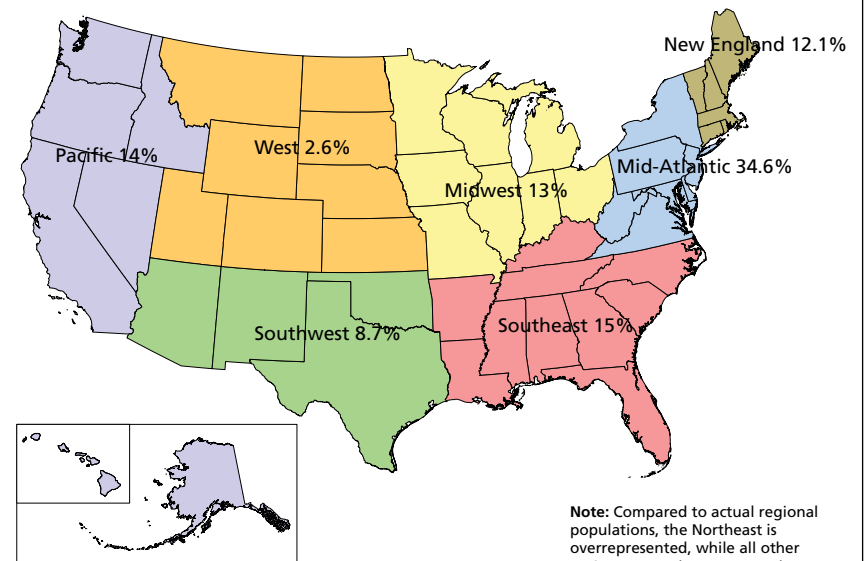
1,057
young American leaders

Average age
16.4

THE SURVEY POOL BY **GENDER**



ROUGH **GEOGRAPHIC** DISTRIBUTION



Note: Compared to actual regional populations, the Northeast is overrepresented, while all other regions are underrepresented.

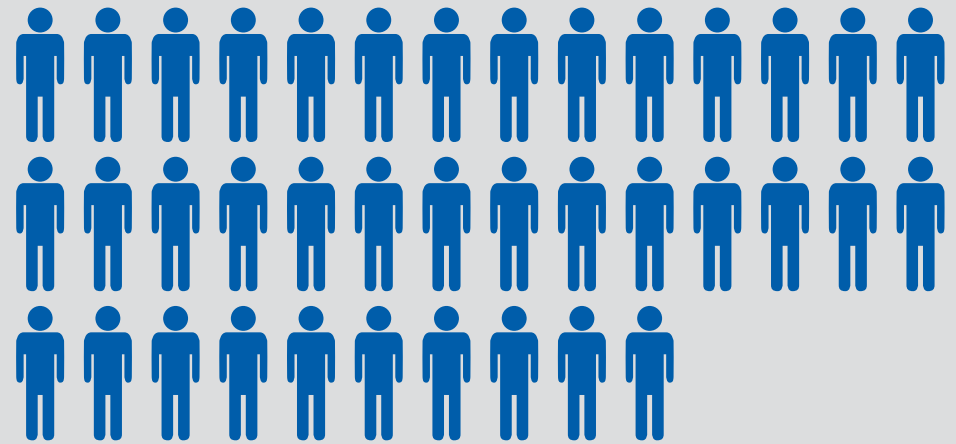
POLITICAL Self-Affiliation *of These Young Leaders*

We asked the young leaders: "Would you describe yourself as a Democrat, Republican or Independent in your political views?"

Of these 1,057 young leaders who have shown interest in careers in politics and policy, 38.2% identified themselves as Democrats, 28.8% as Independents, and 26.4% as Republican. While the large cohort that identified themselves as Democrat may not be surprising to some, it is actually different than the trends in the prior Generation X, which showed more conservative attitudes, growing up in the Reagan-era. The large Independent cohort of youth leaders who opted not to affiliate with a political party (which may be even larger, given the number of non-respondents to this one particular question) is notable.

Even more significant, though, is that an incredibly strong alignment was later evidenced between the young leaders who saw themselves as Democrats and Independents in how they answered the ensuing policy questions. In question after question, these young leaders answered in almost the same exact percentages, as opposed to young leaders who identified as young Republicans. While the obvious way to view this is as a "good news" story for the future of the Democratic party (that a strong majority of young American leaders share its beliefs), it is also a "bad news" story in that a strong, and arguably determinate, swing percentage of young American leaders may share similar beliefs but don't want to identify themselves as Democrats.

DEMOCRAT 38%



REPUBLICAN 26%



INDEPENDENT 29%



Their Changing Patterns of Communication

The 20th century witnessed a fundamental change in how young leaders communicate—letters, telephone calls and gatherings at the mall now seem primitive compared to text messaging and internet chat rooms. More recent advances in and ease of access to cell phone and online technology has allowed the Millennials to digitally communicate with more frequency and speed than ever before. We asked the young leaders: “How many email messages, text messages, blog posts, twitters, etc. do you send a day on average?”

The results were astounding, and even more so when we broke the data down by when they took the survey. Among those who took the survey in 2008 and 2009, the mean number of texts per day was 39.4, with a median of 20. Of the young leaders, 58.5% were sending less than 25 a day, 23.4% were sending between 25 and 50 messages a day, and 17.8% were sending over 50 messages a day. Of note, many asked in their responses questions like, “What are tweets?”

In 2010, the numbers had significantly grown as the technology and youth reliance on it proliferated. The mean had jumped to 78.9 messages a day (nearly 40 messages sent a day more on average) and the median was 35, an increase of 15 a day. Even more astonishing, 29% of the young leaders were now sending over 100 messages a day. These numbers may even be greater in that the data does not reflect the many respondents who wrote non-numeric answers like “too many to count” or “infinity.”



An average of
39 messages
sent a day

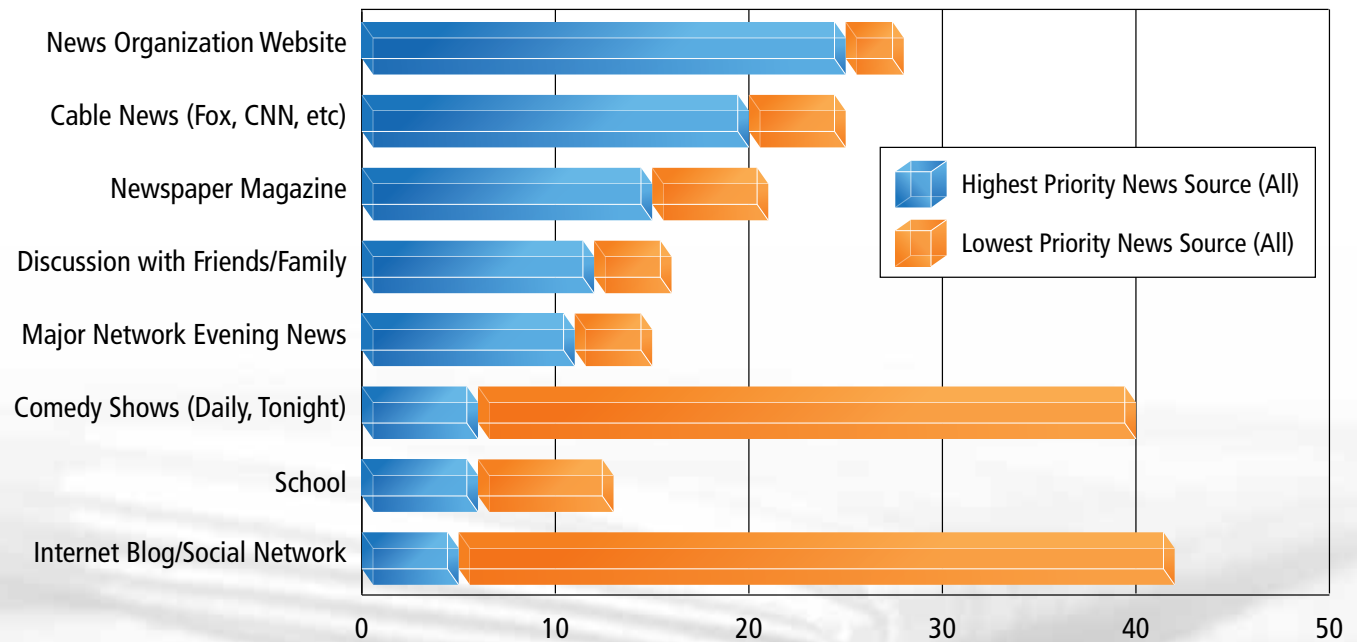
An average of
79 messages
sent a day

Where They Get Their NEWS?

As important as how one communicates is in the information age, the source of that information also matters greatly. Giving the young leaders eight options that ranged from cable news to blogs, we asked them to “rank the primary source from which you get your news on current events.”

Their responses point to a more discerning group of news consumers than perhaps popularly perceived. Despite the array of new technologies that enable the near instantaneous sharing of information across previously unimagined distances and from any number of connected sources, these young leaders still look to traditional news organizations as their sources for what is going on in the world. The difference is the medium is shifting. While blogs and social networks ranked at the bottom of the generation’s list of primary news sources, news organization websites, cable news, and newspapers and magazines can be found atop. The traditional evening news did not fare well, coming in fifth place. A slight partisan divide is evident, however: nearly a quarter of Democrats and Independents preferred news websites the most, while almost 30% of Republicans chose cable news.

It is also interesting to note that, contrary to the way they are often portrayed, comedy shows with popular late night hosts such as Jon Stewart and Jay Leno fare almost as poorly as online social media—both were ranked as the “lowest priority news source” by over one-third of respondents and did especially poor among Republican respondents. Again, it is important to note that the survey pool was not a pool of overall youth, but youth who have already evidenced leadership skills and an interest in politics and policy and so may be taking a more serious approach to their news than the comedy shows are designed to provide.



25%

Looked to News Organization Websites



3%

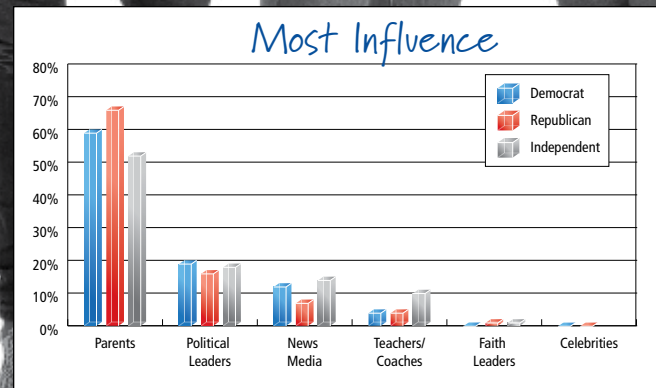
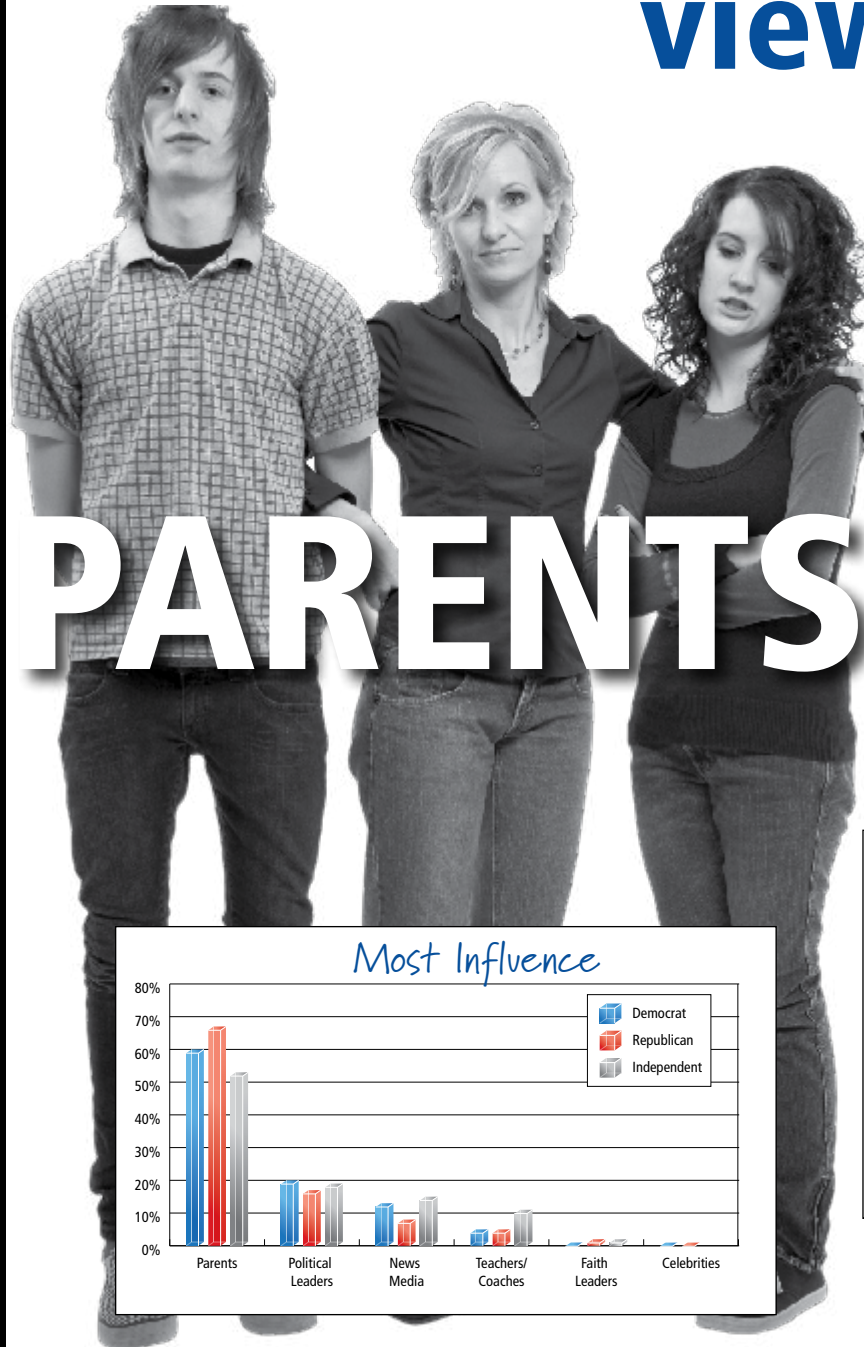
Looked to Social Media for News



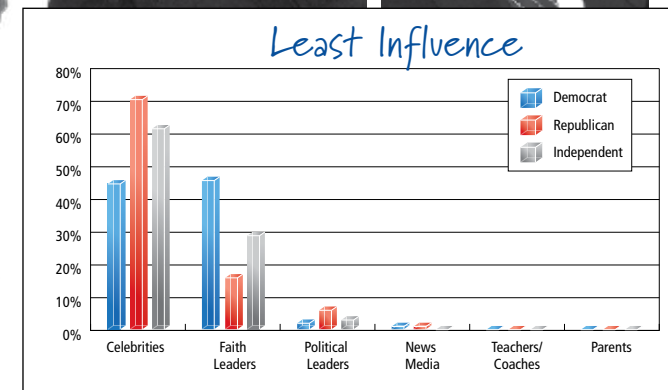
Who Influences Their **political views** Most?

When the young leaders were asked to rank who they "think has had the most influence in shaping your political views," parents far and away exerted the most sway over their children's political beliefs, with 61% ranking their parents as having the greatest influence on their political views. Political leaders ranked next with 19% indicating them as their number one influence. The media places a distant third with only 12% of the vote. These numbers are in stark contrast to sentiments typically expressed by members of the Baby Boomer generation when they were young, who tended to take an approach based on whatever was the opposite of their parents.

Perhaps of even more note is the limited influence of faith leaders and celebrities, who are often described as playing a magnified role in our politics. Only about one percent total ranked them as having the greatest impact on their politics, an aversion that becomes even more marked when we examined the results for "least influence." About 58% ranked celebrities as the least likely to influence their political beliefs, while one-third said faith leaders, placing both groups squarely at the bottom.



Who Doesn't?



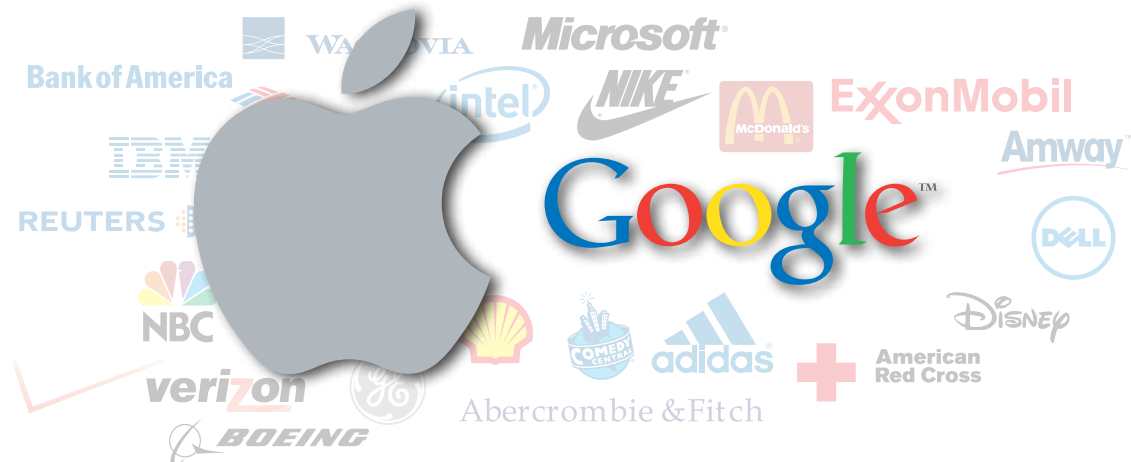
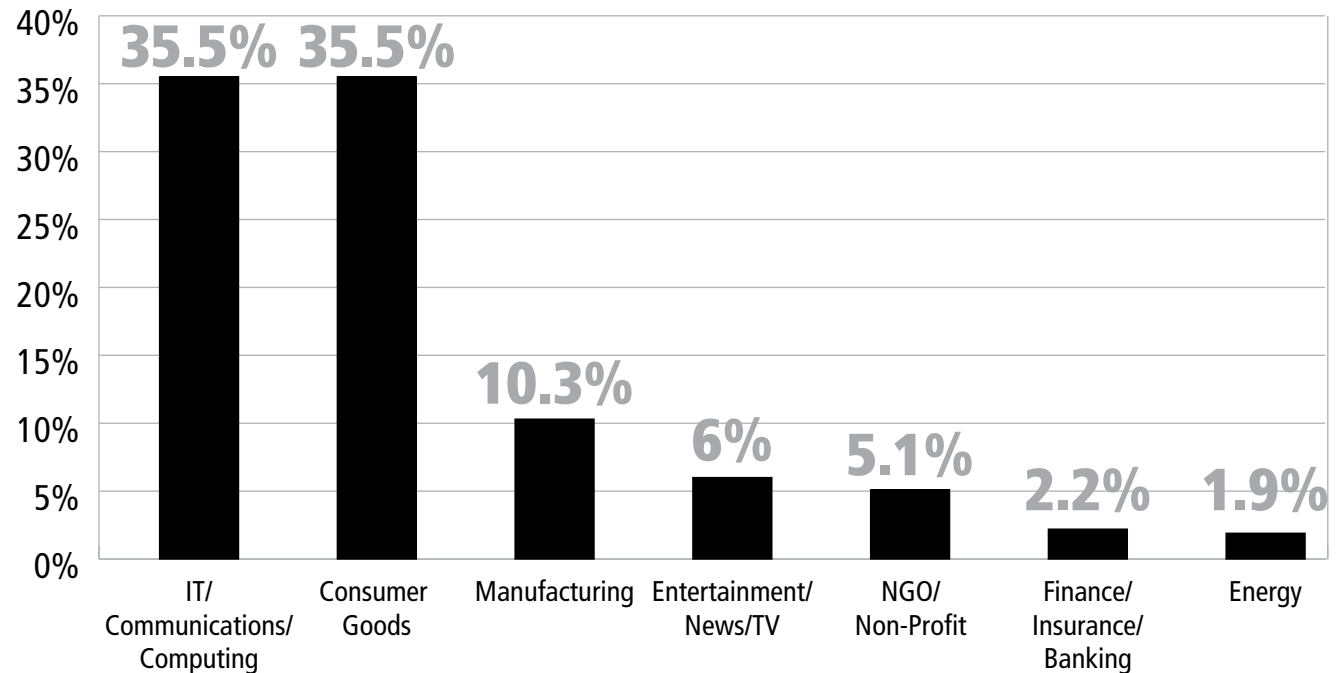
What Companies Do They Admire Most?

The companies and organizations that a generation admires can illustrate much about their times and values. During the Boomer period, for example, companies like General Motors, General Electric, Coca Cola and Standard Oil dominated the landscape.

The young leaders were asked an open question, "What company do you admire most?" The results ranged widely, incorporating everything from Intel to Gazprom. Apple and Google were far and away the most popular picks, with 14.5% and 7.5% of responses respectively.

Because there was such a variety of responses, it proved more useful to categorize the answers by sector. More than 35% of our young leaders ranked the sector of information technology, communications and computing companies. And 35.5% named consumer goods companies as those they admire most. For a group that spends hours using their smart phones and may never have visited the reference section of the local library, it is only natural that many Millennials appreciate most companies which enable their ability to discover, use and communicate information digitally. As a generation that also tends to have more disposable income than those that came before it and regularly experiences television and internet advertising explicitly directed towards them as the consumer, it is no wonder they respect companies that have given them ever-better gadgets and greater material comfort.

By comparison (and again, in contrast to perceptions in prior generations), banks/financial companies and energy companies fared poorly, with just two percent of the young leaders finding companies in those sectors as the ones they admired most. Such episodes as the global financial meltdown, climate change and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill may be shaping factors here.

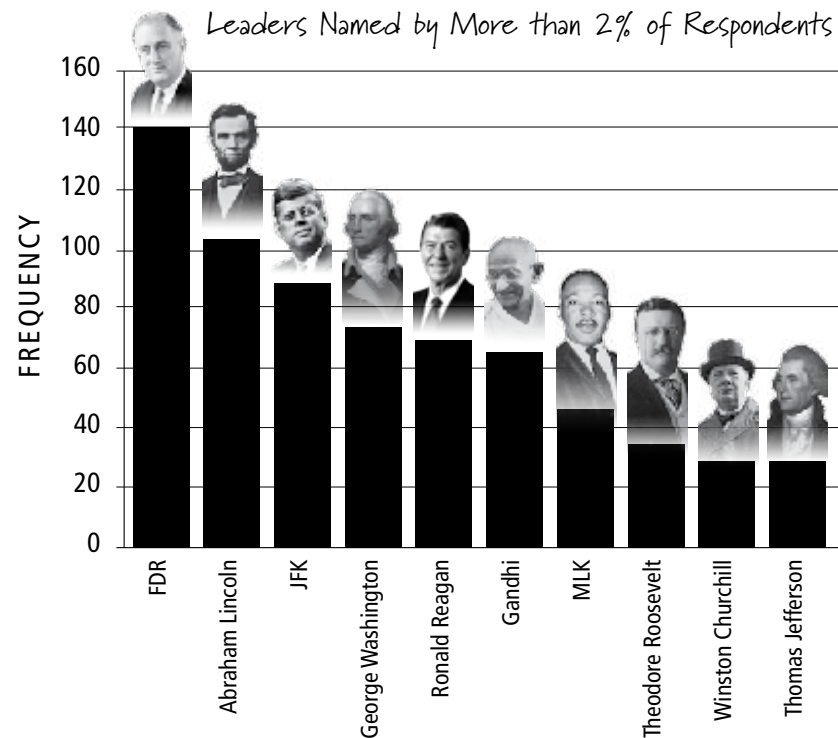


Who are Their Ideal Leaders from History?

"What historic figures personify the leadership needed for the 21st century?"

The models that a young leader looks to as their guide can have a huge influence on the type of leader they become later on. These models also illustrate the way they see the world and what values matter most to them at this stage. So we asked the young leaders an open question of "Which historic figure do you think most personifies the sort of leadership necessary for the 21st century?"

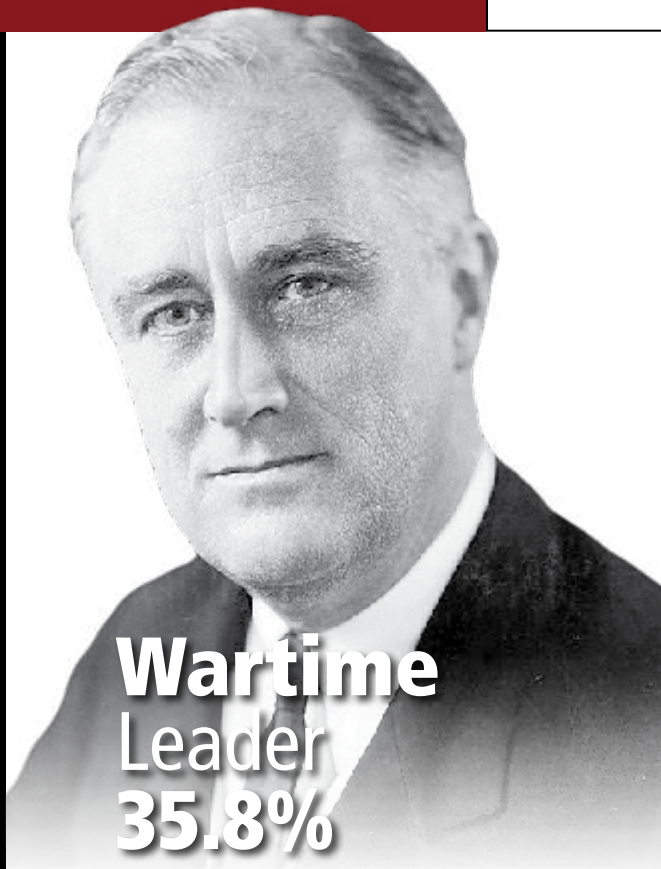
The responses varied widely, with Franklin Delano Roosevelt (15.6%), Abraham Lincoln (11.4%) and JFK (9.9%) being the top vote-getters. Among the variety of historic figures getting just one vote were Cicero, Harvey Milk, Margaret Thatcher and Tupac Shakur.



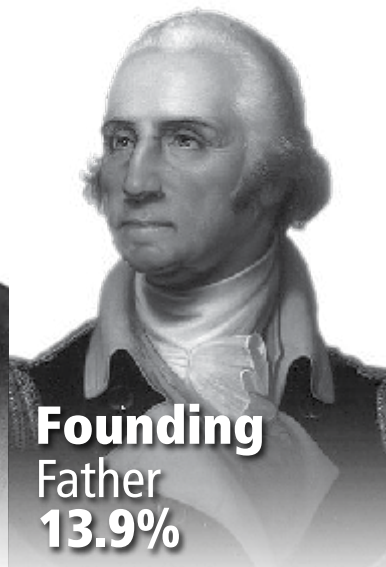
An Interesting Breakdown by Sector

When the responses were divided into categories that better situate the chosen individuals by historical circumstances and responsibilities, a clearer picture of the Millennials' perspectives emerges.

Just under 36% of the young leaders picked a military leader or civilian leader closely associated with wartime as their ideal model, like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Dwight Eisenhower and Woodrow Wilson. This is less surprising when one factors in that the United States these young leaders have grown up in has been at war for a majority of their lives. Fourteen percent chose a founding father such as Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe and Alexander Hamilton. Another 10% chose leaders of social change such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and Gandhi, and just over one percent suggested that a religious figure such as Mother Theresa or the Prophet Mohammed personified the leadership needed for the 21st century.



**Wartime
Leader
35.8%**



**Founding
Father
13.9%**



**Social Change
Leader
9.6%**



**Religious
Figure
1.2%**

Who are Their Ideal Leaders Today?

Contemporary leadership models equally speak to what appeals to and what will shape a young leader. We therefore asked the open question, "Which current figure do you think personifies the sort of leadership necessary for the 21st century?"

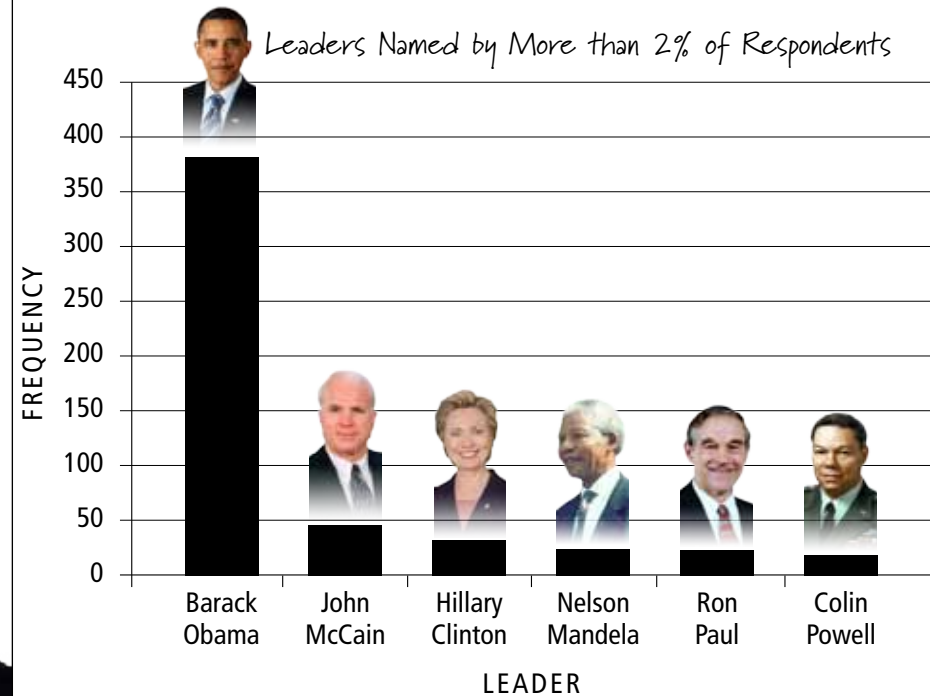
The results were striking, especially in comparison to the spread across historic figures. More than 49% chose Barack Obama, well past any other leader named. Interestingly, of the young leaders who chose Obama as their ideal leadership model, 62.8% were Democrats, 28.5% were independents and 8.7% were Republicans. The next closest leader named was his 2008 campaign opponent John McCain with 5.5% favoring him as their model leader. Al Gore, Bill Clinton, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Nelson Mandela and Hillary Clinton were the other leaders who were listed as models by between five and one percent of the youth in the survey.

Just as intriguing as those who were viewed as ideal 21st century leaders are those who did not make the cut, often contrary to media depictions. Only 3.4% chose an individual who could be described as a celebrity (Bono being an example), only 2.8% a military leader (notably General David Petraeus, who is often depicted as a potential future presidential candidate in the media, received only one vote from the young leaders; Admiral Michael Mullen had three), 2.1% chose a businessman (Bill Gates leading this category with six votes), and just 1.2% chose a political pundit (Glenn Beck and Jon Stewart leading this category with two votes each; Rush Limbaugh with one). Notably, only nine out of the 1,057 young leaders in the pool (of whom about a third were young Republicans) identified former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin as their ideal leader for the 21st century.



49.3%

What Current Figures Personify the Leadership Needed for the 21st Century?



Contrary to popular reporting, who they **don't** see as leader models.



Who

*They Think Will
Be the Future*

PROBLEM COUNTRIES

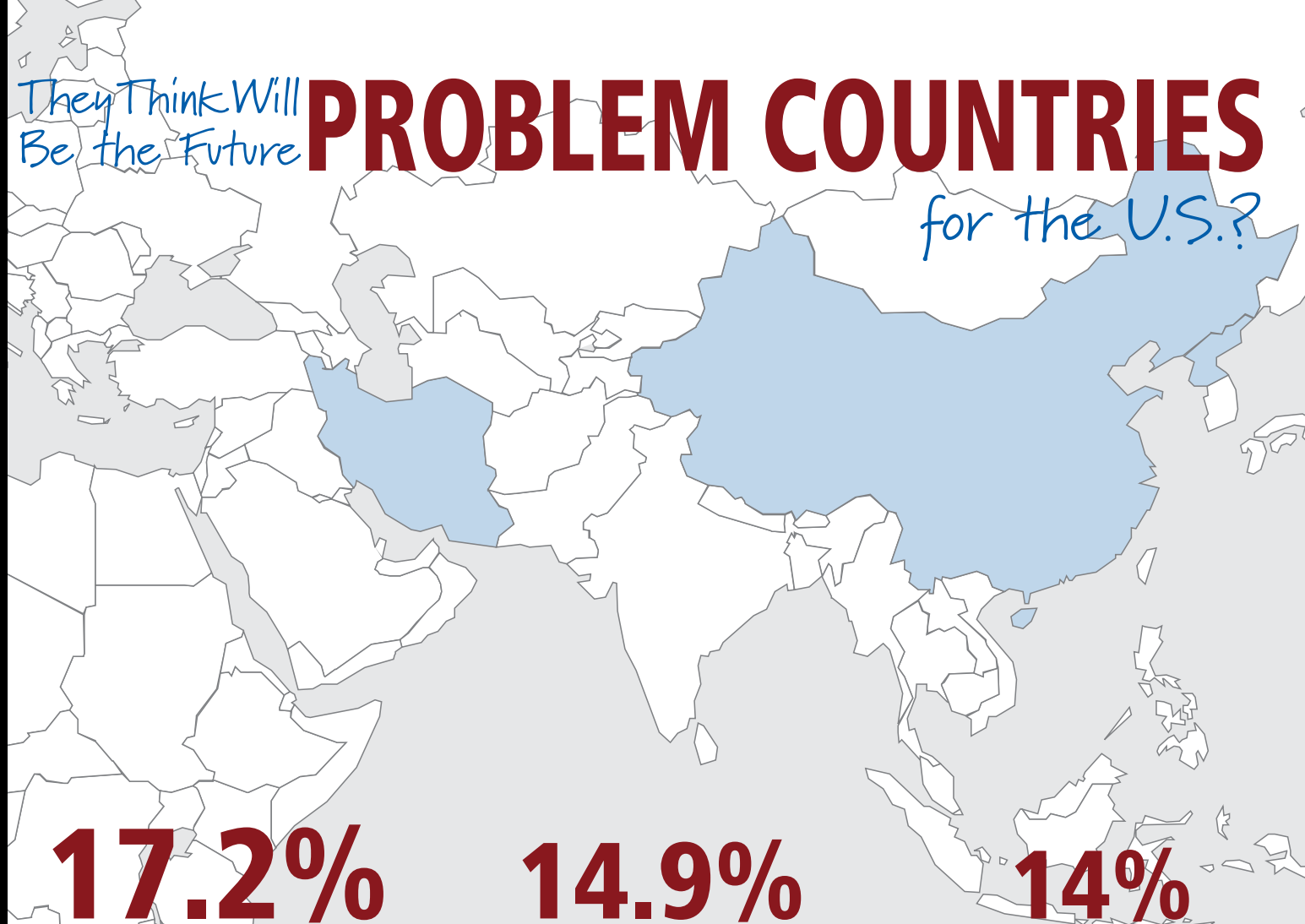
for the U.S.?

The youths' views of America's role in the world and their sense of the likely friends and foes it would be dealing with when they moved into policy leadership roles were fascinating.

They were first asked an open-ended question, "Which five countries do you think will pose the biggest problems to the U.S. over the next 10-20 years?"

Iran (17.2%), China (14.9%), and North Korea (14%) were the three states identified most frequently by the young leaders as being likely problematic in the future. Others that ranked above three percent included Iraq, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Venezuela and Israel.

Notably, the political identity of a young leader did not shape their answer here. All political parties identified the same top four countries and in the same order: Iran, China, North Korea, Iraq, and only differed by 1.25 percentage points in their rankings (Young Democrats ranked Afghanistan as #5 and Russia as #6 while young Independents and Republicans ranked Russia as #5 and Afghanistan as #6).

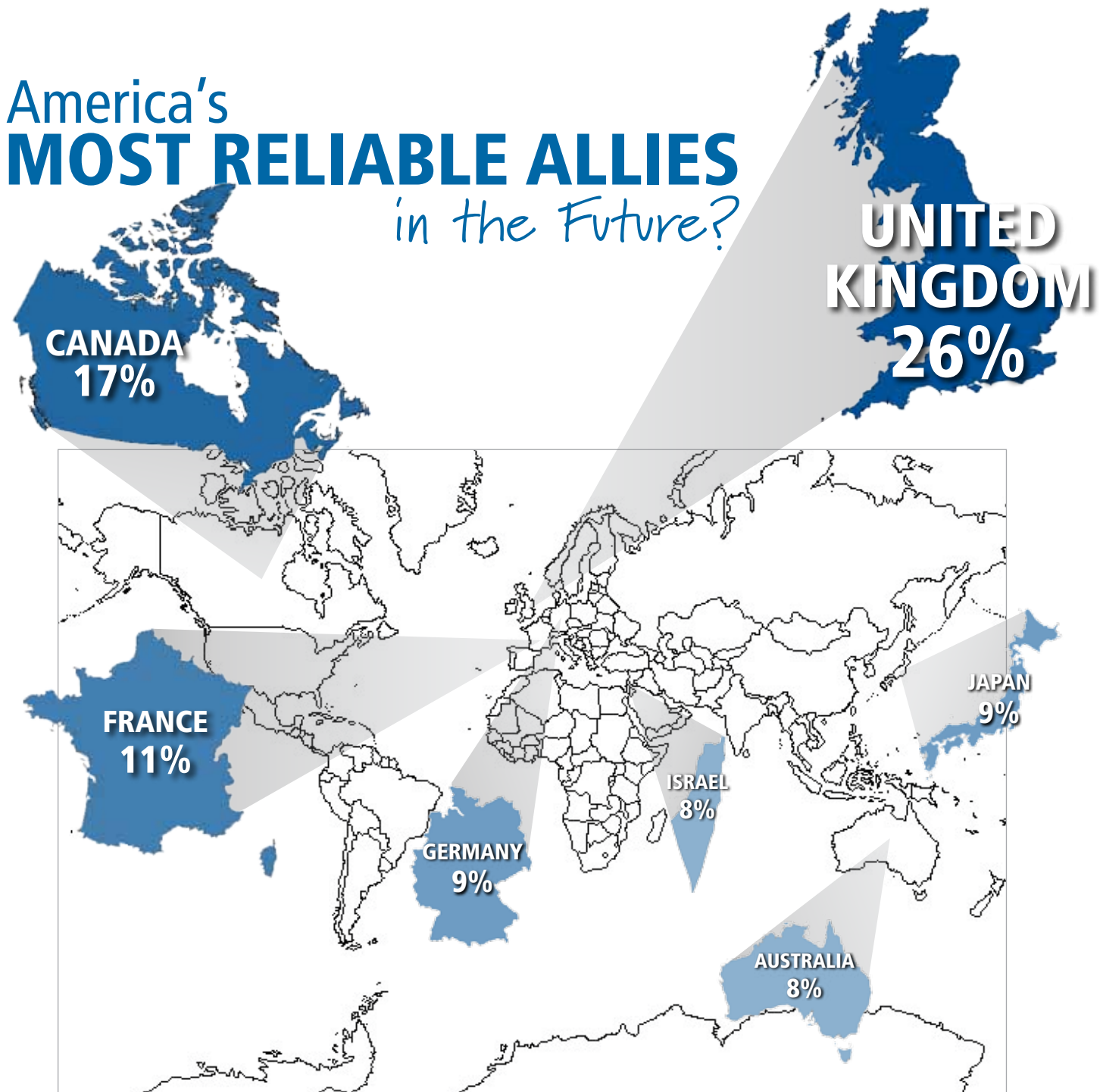


Who They See as

America's **MOST RELIABLE ALLIES** in the Future?

The young leaders were also asked their views of future friends who America would turn to for help in facing its challenges. The open question was asked, "Which five countries will be the closest and most reliable allies of the U.S. over the next 10-20 years?"

Unsurprisingly, the United Kingdom was named most frequently, with 26% of the young leaders identifying it, followed by Canada at 17%. Perhaps the biggest surprise was France coming in at 11%. Other states coming in above three percent were Japan, Germany, Israel, Australia and China.

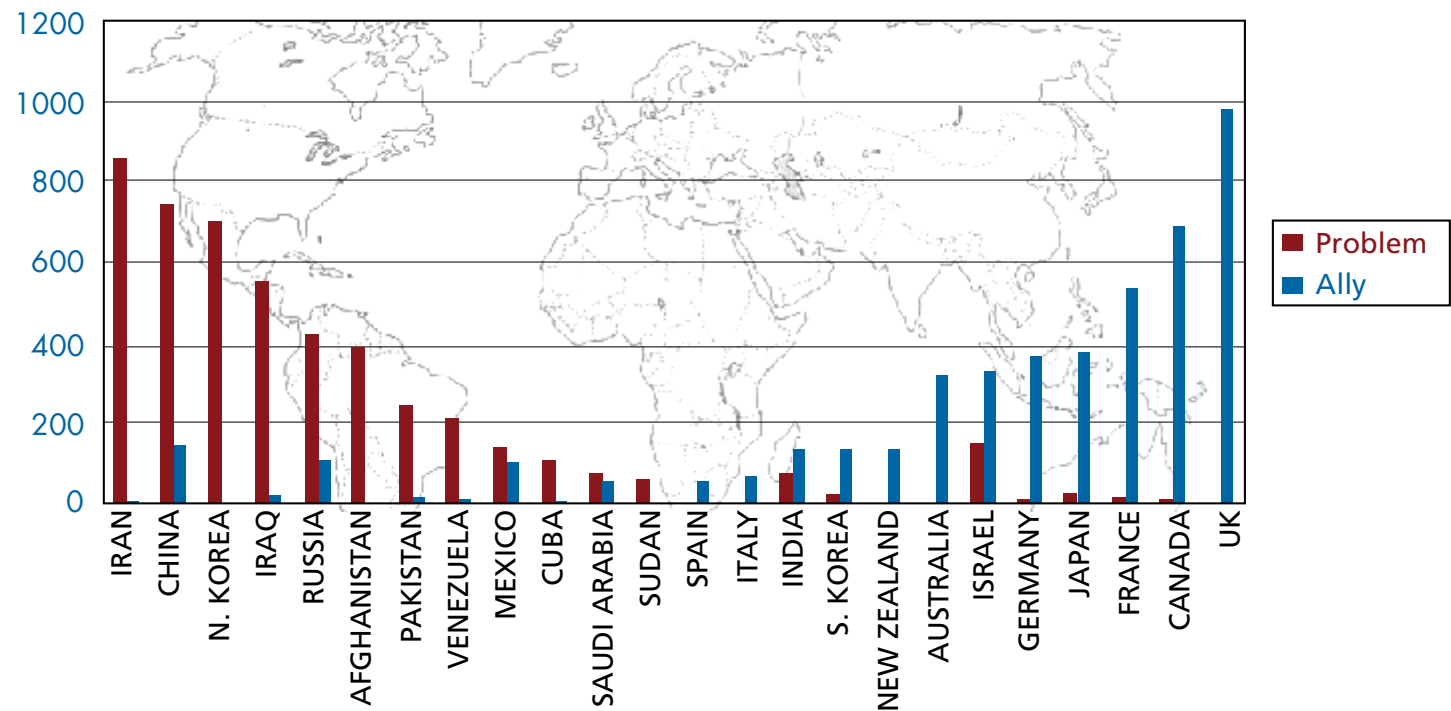


COMPARING ALLIES *and* PROBLEM STATES

As plays out in global politics, a number of states were identified by the young leaders in both the most likely problem and most likely ally categories. Countries about whom the young leaders had these mixed sentiments included China, Russia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, India and Israel (including its Palestinian territories). The order in which they are listed reflects the balance of problem versus ally perceptions, with China receiving the second most “problem” votes overall (but still a sizable group also thought they would be “friends”), and Israel in the opposite corner, with more “friend” nominations but a large number of problem votes as well.

A few other items stand out. As in U.S. policy overall, it was interesting that the emerging global power of Brazil didn’t garner a significant number of votes in either category, the only one of the so-called emerging BRIC world powers to be viewed as neither a major future ally or problem.

The mixed sentiments towards China are equally reflective of general policy, but stand very much in contrast to other surveys of adults. A recent Chicago Council on Global Affairs general population survey of 2,500 adults found a significant majority had positive views of China’s future. By comparison, this set of over 1,000 young American politically inclined leaders ranked China far more as a potential future problem.



The young leaders had the strongest mixed sentiments regarding China, Russia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, India and Israel (and the Palestinian Territories).

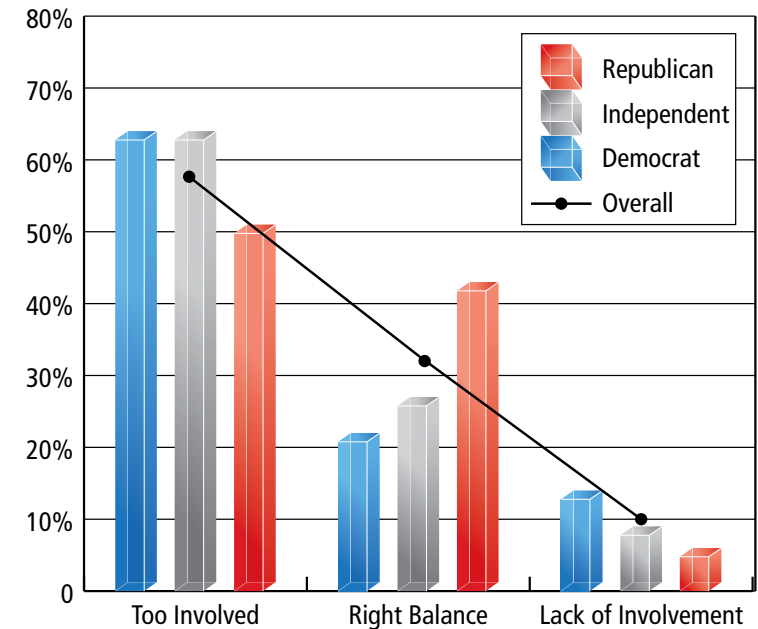
How Involved Should the U.S. be in GLOBAL AFFAIRS?

America is a global power but has had periods of isolationism. Given that dichotomy, we asked the youth leaders which statement they most agreed with:

- "The U.S. is too involved in global affairs and should focus on more issues at home."
- "The U.S. has struck the right balance in dealing with issues abroad and at home."
- "The U.S. needs to become more involved in global affairs, rather than focusing so much on issues at home."

The answers were striking, particularly because the respondents grew up in an era of globalization and two foreign wars. Further, leaders, even youth leaders, typically take a more global outlook than the general population in surveys. That said, almost 58% of the young leaders in this survey agreed with the statement that the U.S. is too involved in global affairs and should do more at home. Alternatively, 32.4% thought the U.S. had "struck the right balance" between issues at home and abroad, while only 10% thought that the United States should be more globally proactive.

This isolationist sentiment among the younger generation stands in stark comparison to the Chicago Council's recent 2010 polling of older Americans, which found that 67% wanted America to have an active role in the world and only 31% thought we should limit our involvement, a near exact reverse. The older generation survey concluded that there was "persisting support for an internationalist foreign policy at levels unchanged from the past," but this perceived persistence is certainly not there among the young leaders.



57.6% think U.S. is "too involved in global affairs"

It is also interesting to note that the young leaders who identified themselves as Democrats and Independents were significantly more likely to think the United States is too involved than their Republican peers, with about 64% of both Democrats and Independents indicating foreign over-involvement versus more than half of Republicans believing America has achieved the

"right balance" between foreign and domestic affairs. On the one hand, this could reveal a partisan backlash against prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq launched under a Republican administration, but could also indicate that many believe American intervention abroad, while not necessarily a terrible thing, has recently assumed a more disturbing form.

How *does the* WORLD *See* US?

To gauge their perceptions of how the United States is viewed by the rest of the world, the young leaders were asked to indicate which statement they most agree with:

- "The U.S. is globally respected, a beacon on the hill that citizens of other countries admire."
- "The U.S. is no longer globally respected; its standing in the world has been tarnished over the last decade."
- "Global respect for the U.S. is the same as it ever was."

Their answers reflect some rather harsh perceptions. As a generation that overwhelmingly thinks the nation is too involved in world affairs, however, the Millennials' belief that the "U.S. is no longer globally respected" perhaps should come as little shock.

Almost three quarters of our survey-takers, 73.5%, responded that respect for America has significantly declined, with a mere 15.8% and 10.7% believing that it is unchanged, or at a high level. A similar partisan divide also emerges, with 82% of Democrats and 75% of Independents likely to believe respect for America has dipped versus 59% of Republicans.

Overall, this is a significant shift from prior generations, which tended to believe the United States was viewed more as a "shining beacon on the hill." It also indicates that a set of young leaders who admired Obama's



73% Think "U.S. is no longer globally respected"

16% Think "Global respect for the U.S. is the same as it ever was"

leadership skills didn't conclude that the mere fact that he was elected changed global perceptions of America. The differing contexts of the unity of the Cold War versus the discord of the Iraq War or the symbolism of blue jeans versus orange jumpsuits in the global media may be an explanation. Of note, these young leaders' views were

much more aligned with the prevailing global attitudes towards America found in surveys in other countries. That is, the young American leaders believed we are viewed the way we actually are. In a sense, the data thus showed a mix of pessimism, with realism.

11% Think "U.S. is globally respected"

What They See as the

The United States and the world in general face both new and persistent threats, ranging from the decades-old concern over nuclear proliferation to the resurgent anxiety over terrorism. Other challenges include troublesome issues such as immigration, infectious diseases and energy security. What these leaders think are important priorities (or not) and how they handle these problems will have a lasting impact on future international relations and global welfare. So we asked the young leaders "Prioritize the following issues in terms of importance. How do you see these issues playing out over your life time, from most important challenge to solve (1) to least important (11)?"

It is not surprising that these young leaders, shaped early in their lives by the dramatic events of 9/11, see terrorism as the most important challenge. Over 30% of our leaders ranked terrorism as the most important priority, followed by environment/ climate change (12.8%), nuclear proliferation (11.5%) and global poverty (10.9%). While comparable adult polling also stresses the relative importance of terrorism and nuclear proliferation, the Millennials' interest in the environment and climate change as a top priority stands out.

Equally interesting is what issues the young leaders saw as the least important priorities to tackle. Immigration received 16.1% of all #11 rankings, followed by religious extremism (14.3%) and failed/failing states (13.9%). These are issues often highlighted by leaders on the left and right, but not resonating as priorities among the young leaders.

TOP Challenges *for the* Future?



Ranked as Least Important



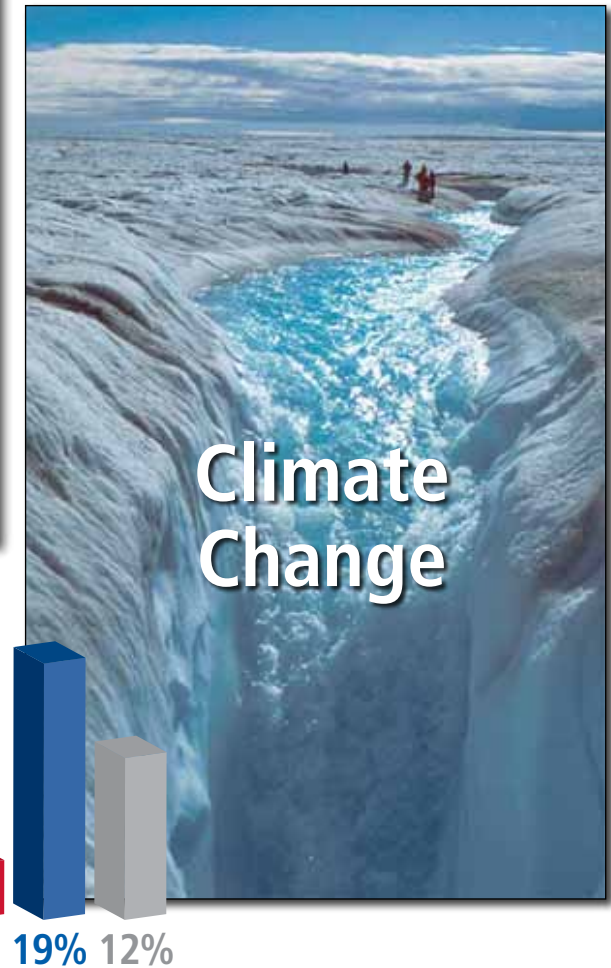
A Partisan

SPLIT

in *HOW* the Challenges are Viewed

Greater exploration was required to explain the partisan split in how the young leaders prioritized issues. What the survey results revealed is that although the young Democrat, Independent and Republican leaders all agree that terrorism is the most important future challenge, they do so at divergent levels. While 52% of Republicans ranked terrorism as the highest priority, only 20% of Democrats and 25% of Independents ranked it as such, spreading their top rankings wider. Similarly, concern over the environment/climate change is anything but consistent among the parties. Nearly 20% of Democrats and 12% of Independents said the environment is their number one priority compared to only 3.6% of young Republicans.

When asked what future challenge is of least concern, the results are equally uneven across the political spectrum. Young Democrats ranked immigration, regional security, religious extremism and failed/failing states as four least important challenges (#11 ranking, ~50% of the total responses), while young Independents ranked immigration, failed/failing states, religious extremism and regional security as their least important (#11 ranking, 50% total responses), meaning that the two groups (which make up approximately three quarters of the overall pool) had the same bottom preferences, just in slightly different order. By comparison, 26.6% of young Republicans ranked environment as the least important priority overall followed by religious extremism, failed/failing states and infectious diseases. In short, the numbers show general agreement on some priorities, but a young Republican minority diverging on the environment and immigration.



How They See TERRORISM



"Do you envision a point in your life that terrorism will no longer be a threat?"

84%

The general agreement on terrorism was striking. The youth, therefore, were asked, "Do you envision a point in your life time at which terrorism will no longer be a threat?"

Nearly 85% of Millennial respondents cannot envision a point in their lives when terrorism will no longer be a danger, proving just how ubiquitous the threat has become for young people after 9/11. This combination of priority and permanence is interesting and may have growing impact on America's future policies and political landscape. For example, the announcement of an Orange Alert was one of the many shaping factors in the run up to the 2004 election (the last election that none of these youth was eligible to vote in). But in their lives, almost every day has been an Orange Alert day. This sense of permanence and cross-partisan prioritization may indicate the power of terrorism as a wedge political issue is passing, as is the validity of promising to "win" any "war on terrorism."



What **ACTIONS** Should the U.S. Prioritize in its Foreign Policy?

But what should the U.S. do to face its challenges? The young leaders were asked to "Prioritize the following possible actions the U.S. should take to prevent future conflicts?" ranking the following options as most to least important:

- "Strengthen the international economic system and solve challenges of globalization"
- "Reduce poverty in developing countries"
- "Engage diplomatically with adversaries"
- "Support the spread of human rights and democracy"
- "Reduce dependence on oil"
- "Lead peace negotiations to current conflicts"
- "Build a stronger military force to ensure deterrence"
- "Reduce U.S. troop deployments abroad."

The top three actions receiving most important rankings were reduce oil dependence (24.3%), strengthen international economic system (20.9%) and engage diplomatically with adversaries (13.7%). By contrast, those policy options most frequently ranked at the bottom as the least important were to build a stronger military (46%), reduce U.S. troops abroad (23.8%) and reduce poverty (10.9%).



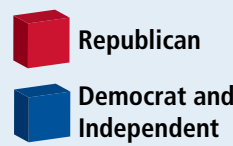
Ranked as Least Important



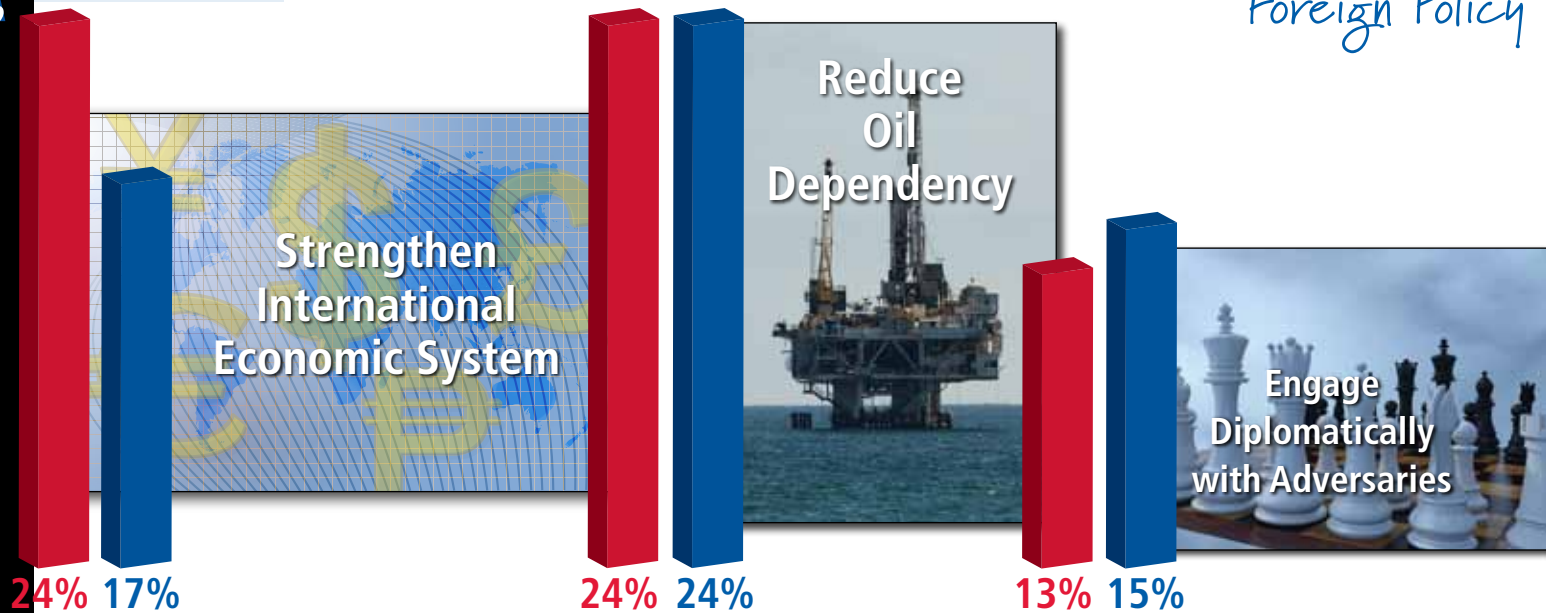
AN AGENDA FOR ACTION?

When these rankings on policy options were broken down by partisan identity, an interesting outcome was revealed, which might even point to an agenda for action.

To begin, the young Democrat and young Independent numbers were again almost perfectly aligned, giving a strong majority view on priority policy actions compared to the quarter of the young leaders who identified as young Republicans. But even across this divide there was strong agreement on the top priority actions to take. Strengthening the international economic system and reducing oil dependency, two security-related strategies with tremendous near and long-term consequences for American power, received broad support from both Democratic, Independent and Republican young leaders. The fact that nearly a quarter of each party agreed that America's most important action to take was to reduce oil dependency is a clear sign that efforts on this front may have significant support in the future. Its relationship to views on other issues (such as the acceptance of terrorism for decades to come and need to focus more on issues at home versus abroad) is also evident. The young leaders also reached a fairly strong degree of consensus across party lines over the value of engaging diplomatically with adversaries, something that had been a point of contention in the 2008 campaign but was ranked by even 13% of young Republicans as their most important policy action.



Partisan Agreement on What They View as Most Important Foreign Policy



Partisan Split on Least Important Foreign Policy



Where the parties split, however, is on the options they believe are least important. These reveal the more conventional hard versus soft power divide that colors American politics. 18% of young Republicans indicated that "building a stronger military force/deterrent" should be the country's number one policy to prioritize. Only two percent of Democrats and Independents agreed. This

division was also mirrored on options like "reducing U.S. troop deployments abroad" as well as "reducing poverty." Essentially, the good news here is that there is a broad consensus on the most important actions to undertake; the question is whether the split over other policy options will prevent this consensus from activating into real policy.

Who *they Think*

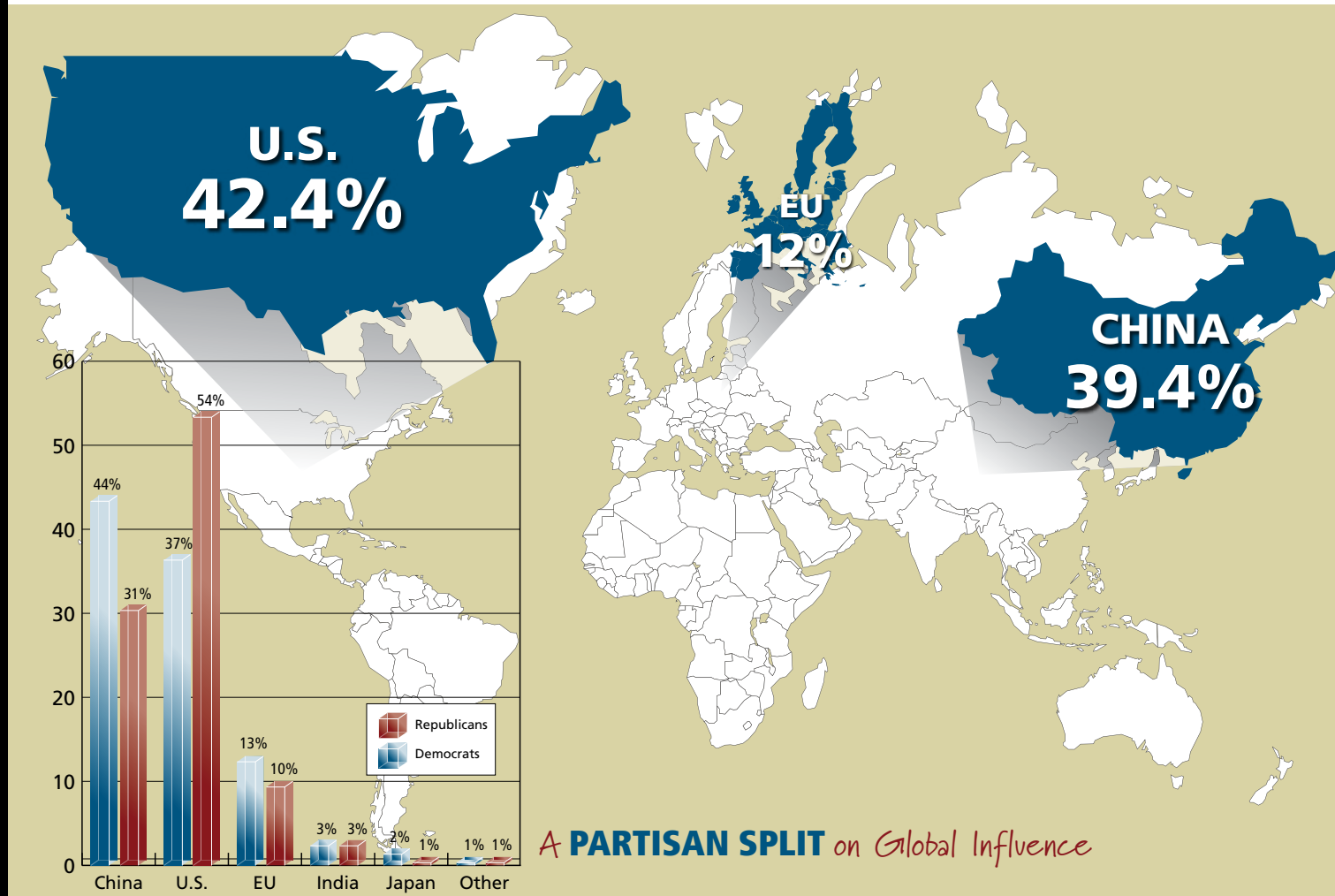
One of the most important aspects of the Millennial generation is not only their demographic weight in numbers, but also that their rise is taking place during a period of massive change in the geopolitical landscape. As experts in geopolitics have recently stressed the rise of Asian giants and the prospects for a united European continent, it was important to gauge our young leaders' perceptions of shifting global power dynamics and their implications for America's international roles and responsibilities. So we asked the young leaders to rank ten top world powers "by how much global influence (political, economic, military, "soft power", etc.) that they will have in the year 2025?"

The young leaders' responses showed that like geopolitics, their sense of the future has moved towards the East. 42% of the young American leaders thought that America will wield the most global influence in 2025. Notably, this is only three percent more than those who thought China would be the most influential nation by the time they were in policy and political positions. Only 12% thought the European Union would be dominant, while India and Japan were even farther behind in the survey. BRIC's other two unofficial member countries, Russia and Brazil, each received less than one percent of responses. At the other end of the power spectrum, South Africa, South Korea and Iran were most frequently ranked as those countries least likely to exercise significant influence in 2025.

Once again, however, the partisan divide deserves mention. Yet again young

Will **RUN** Their **WORLD?**

"Who Will Wield the Most **Global Influence** (political, economic, military, "soft power", etc.) in 2025?"



A PARTISAN SPLIT on Global Influence

Democrats and Independents were almost perfectly aligned in their answers (with 94% having the very same rankings). Even more, their split with young Republicans revealed something more notable going on in attitudes. While the overall survey of young leaders saw America as just slightly more likely to be the most powerful nation in 2025, among young Democrats and Independents, China was actually ranked higher more frequently. 44% and 42% of Democrats and Independents, versus 31% of Republicans, ranked China ahead of the United States. More young Democrats and Independents tended

to put the U.S. in second place; it was the 54% of young Republicans who ranked the U.S. first that drove the overall numbers. One could explain this as anything from an expression of realism or pessimism among young Democrats and Independents to Republican positivism or hyper-patriotism, but the potential alignment of the two groups' perceptions here (on America falling behind) with their similarly divergent attitudes towards isolationism (worrying that we are doing too much abroad versus needing to focus more on matters at home) may also be at play.

An **UNTAPPED POTENTIAL** of **PUBLIC SERVICE**

The next generation of leaders shows a fascinating array of opinions, values, and even wisdom, but what many have found is that they also show a great deal of promise. But how might this promise be tapped into the nation's service? This question is all the more important as those now serving in the public sector begin to age out. Leaders at organizations that range from USAID to the Pentagon's contract officer workforce have all recently lamented that a majority of their workforce is already eligible for retirement or will be within the next few years.

One option that has been floated to face this challenge is the creation of some type of public service university or scholarship program that would be used as a recruiting and training ground for future diplomats, aid officials, treasury, homeland security experts, etc. So we asked the young leaders if they would be interested in such a program, but with the proviso that "Much like the military academies, it would be free, but, in turn, require the graduating student to commit to serve in the government for five years after their graduation, in the hopes that they would make it a long-term career."

A remarkable 71% of the Millennial leaders responded positively. Acknowledging that these kids already have "the bug" of interest in politics and policy, the interest in such a program that would require such a significant commitment to government work is still significant. It runs counter to the prior Generation X's focus on lucrative career goals as well as the idea



Interested in attending a public service university scholarship program, that then required five years of government service after graduation

once expressed by Ronald Reagan that "The best minds are not in government. If any were, business would hire them away." At least for this generation, the best young minds, at least as so far determined by their peers, are quite interested in desire the kind of public service work that molds and executes policy.



The critical question that this data (and indeed the other survey results) poses is whether the current generation of organizations and leaders will be able to positively respond? Will these young leaders and the changes they embody ultimately be viewed as part of a crucial turning point in America's history, or as a lost opportunity?