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# RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

## THE TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP IN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION: ARE THE TIES WEAKENING?

Adam B. Siegel

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## ABSTRACT

This research memorandum examines the U.S. public's attitude toward Europe and NATO, and what this may portend for future U.S. security policy. This paper specifically discusses where American public opinion stands in the mid-1980s in light of shifting American trade patterns and demographics, and whether these shifts have had any discernible influence on the American public's view of the world.

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## INTRODUCTION

There is talk again about erosion in the political cohesion of the Western Alliance. The talk is not being generated by one issue or event, but rather by long-term trends that some think are troublesome.

Europe seems to be a main concern. Some view the Continent now, more than ever, as less certain about its future, unsure about the wisdom of postwar policies and arrangements, absorbed with internal problems, and therefore less willing to concern itself with the rest of the world. Of particular concern to some is that a generation of Europeans who had no direct personal experience with World War II and its immediate aftermath is coming to power--with apparently different perceptions than their elders about how to deal with the Soviet Union, the meanings of deterrence and detente, and the control and use of nuclear weapons.

Important as are the concerns about where Europe is headed, though, a new dimension is present in the discussion of Alliance cohesiveness, which may be even more important: Many on both sides of the Atlantic believe that the United States itself is turning away from Europe, an action that has powerful long-term consequences for the Western Alliance. At times, the view takes the form of a warning to European allies--that unless Europeans do more for their own and Alliance defense, the American people will no longer allow the United States to sacrifice so selflessly for a cluster of nations an ocean way. For some, however, there is a strong sense of inevitability; that is, no matter what the Europeans do, American interests are headed elsewhere. In this view, U.S. national interests are no longer dependent on or, for that matter, strongly focused upon Europe as they perhaps were at the end of World War II. The growing globalization of Soviet capabilities, for example, is used as evidence that U.S.-Soviet competition no longer centers so critically on the European landmass. The recent shift in American trade away from Europe (most prominently to the Pacific basin) is frequently offered as a prime example of a basic shift in U.S. interests.

An internal ingredient in this line of reasoning has to do with demographic trends within the United States. Some now argue that the westward movement of the demographic center of the nation, plus the increasingly non-European heritage of the U.S. population, is already leading to a lessened identity with and interest in European affairs. "Today the centers where opinion is formed in the United States are Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles," Helmut Schmidt, the former Chancellor of Germany, contends, "places where not very much is known about Europe."<sup>1</sup>

The convergence of several factors, then--both external and internal--have led many to conclude that a profound shift away from Europe in the American public's view of the world is in the making. But is it? Changes in trade patterns and American demographics are undeniable, but do they actually affect public attitudes the way some say they do?

This research memorandum, the first in a series of brief examinations of public opinion and the Western Alliance, looks at these questions. Are there evident shifts in American public opinion toward Europe that can be related to changes in population and commercial patterns?

## THE ARGUMENT PRESENTED

"There is a European fear that the center of gravity in the United States, both politically and economically, is moving from one coast to the other." In the words of a member of the Commission of European Communities, "Europe is the past; Europe is for the historians; Japan and Asia are for the doers."<sup>2</sup> In short, Europeans have not been ignorant of recent warnings by various U.S. commentators that America's focus is shifting toward the Pacific.

Foremost among these commentators is Lawrence Eagleburger, who, as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, warned at a seminar in January 1984 that U.S. policy might dictate a turn toward the Pacific Basin and away from Europe.<sup>3</sup> Though Eagleburger had to backpedal publicly soon after, reaffirming the political and security importance of NATO to the United States, his basic arguments remained intact.

It is my contention that the final fifteen years of the 20th century will be years of substantial--perhaps profound--change....

Demographic changes in the United States are easily understood.... Since our first census our demographic centre has been shifting Westward--a process that will continue, and carry with it a continuing shift in our political centre of gravity as well. Yet even this fact does not fully illustrate the importance of our West Coast. California would have one of the world's largest gross national products were it an independent nation....

Equally clearly, it is logical that our West Coast's economic commercial growth would increase the importance to us of a part of the world that, with today's communications, lies virtually at our doorstep....

It is little remarked, but nonetheless a remarkable fact, that since 1978 we have traded more with the Pacific Basin than with Europe....

...these trends...can, over time, diminish the character of the transatlantic relationship.<sup>4</sup>

Eagleburger was not alone in the government in stressing the growing importance of the Pacific to the United States. "We do more trade now with East Asia than we do with all of Europe, and we have for

several years. And those figures are continuing to diverge," Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. William J. Crowe, then Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific fleet, pointed out in late 1984. "We do \$60 billion worth of trade every year with Japan. It's the largest bilateral trade relationship in the history of the world and it's becoming larger."<sup>5</sup> The Far East "now represents 30 percent of our trade. And we're unequivocally committed to this region."<sup>6</sup> According to Crowe, the Western Pacific "is probably the brightest spot for Washington in the world."<sup>7</sup>

In the middle of 1984, 6 months after the "Eagleburger shock," another State Department official argued that "international relations need not be a zero-sum game." According to Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam:

It is often said that where you sit influences how you think. For two centuries, the east coast dominated U.S. foreign policy. Not surprisingly, Europe was at the core of our international relations.... Some well-known and influential thinkers...say America is reorienting itself from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Europe to Asia.

Economic power and influence--as well as people--have migrated south and west.... The center of gravity of U.S. trade seems to be shifting westward. The 'Far East' is now America's 'Near West.'<sup>8</sup>

Some commentators have been more explicit in their denigration of America's Atlantic ties. Several participants in a *Harpers* magazine forum proposed that the U.S. withdraw from NATO. As one stated:

I think it is not inconceivable that the United States would sit by and watch a Soviet attack, either conventional or nuclear, proceed against Western Europe....

Frankly, Europe does not matter that much to us economically. It is the Eastern or 'Pacific Rim'\* countries that will be increasingly important to us technologically and economically. China, with a billion people, is much more important than Europe. The case isn't compelling that we have to defend Europe....<sup>9</sup>

---

\* North and South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

In one respect, this is not a recent viewpoint. The "classic isolationist policy," Krauthammer has argued, is to shut "the Eastern door and pursue American destiny to the West, where American actions have traditionally been less encumbered." Gen. MacArthur argued that "our interests in Europe are at best an expensive form of philanthropy and that our true destiny is to go it alone in the Pacific and in East Asia."<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the most explicit recital of the argument can be found in a 1981 *Wall Street Journal* commentary entitled "Should the U.S. Pull Out of NATO?"

The time has come for the U.S. to end its ties with NATO.

...the move is justified simply in the pursuit of America's long-term strategic interests, taking account of any other realistic, attainable options.

The vast Pacific Basin lies at America's other shore. It too has many cultures that are influencing America. The U.S. is absorbing a great immigration. Few of these immigrants are any longer from Europe...Europe has given the U.S. much culturally but not everything; certainly it will give less in the future.

Economically, Europe is a good trading partner for the U.S. But Japan is a bigger trading partner than any country in Europe and soon will overwhelm Europe in this role. Southeast Asia has some of the fastest developing economies in the world and has more people than all of Western Europe. Then there is East Asia, so vast in its potential as to stagger the imagination. There is also the Pacific rim of South America and beyond that South Asia...

Indeed, when we measure the near-optimized markets of Europe and its 250 million persons against the near-unoptimized 1.5 billion to 2 billion people of the Pacific Basin alone, Europe seems a puny affair.

The U.S. must begin to view itself as a true global power. In this regard, politically and philosophically, Europe has little to give and something to detract. Future relations with Europe simply should be those of friends and equals in terms of trade and commerce rather than relationships based upon redundant military strategies.<sup>11</sup>

The demographic and trade trends behind these arguments cannot be denied. In the 1970s, the West Coast had the highest growth rate of any region in the nation--better than 20 percent over the decade--with the South being the second fastest region of growth.

Asians, now 1.8 percent of the U.S. population, are the fastest growing minority and have already surpassed "whites" in terms of median educational and income levels. The Hispanic population is also increasing much faster than the national average. Both of these minority groups are heavily concentrated in the West. In California, Asians account for over 5 percent of the state's population and Hispanics for over 15 percent, each more than 2.5 times the national average.<sup>12</sup>

Trade figures are even more dramatic. In 1980, the dollar value of U.S. trade with the Far East and with Europe was virtually equal. Three years later, trade with the Far East was 30 percent greater than U.S. trade with Western Europe, and the gap was widening (figure 1).

Still, not all is moving in a single direction. Other dimensions of trans-Atlantic interaction have, in fact, expanded. Travel to Western Europe as a percentage of total travel, for instance, increased during the 1970s (from under 13 percent to 16 percent at the end of the decade).<sup>13</sup> The last 20 years have seen an almost ten-fold increase in the number of visitors to the United States from Western Europe. The same time frame saw an almost exponential growth in the number of foreign students in the United States, including a four-fold increase in the number of Europeans studying in the United States. And the number of Americans studying in Europe nearly doubled.<sup>14</sup>

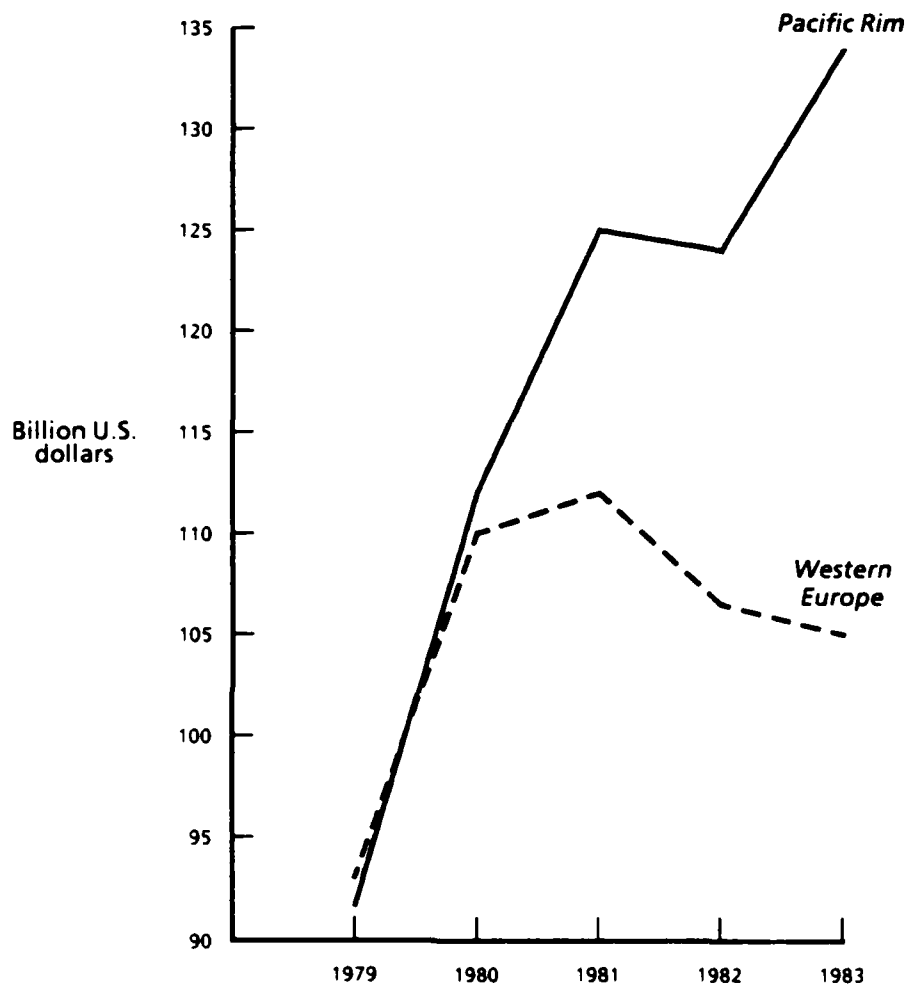


FIG. 1: THE SHIFT IN U.S. TRADE

SOURCE: Stanley R Sloan, *NATO's Future: Toward a New Trans-Atlantic Bargain*, National Defense University, Washington, DC, 1985, p. 110



## PUBLIC OPINION DISCUSSED

The key question, nevertheless, is what these trends mean for NATO. Stanley Sloan, an analyst with the Congressional Research Service, is convinced that, "perceptual, demographic, and economic factors are at work in the United States changing our 'gut' feelings about Europe. The old emotional foundations for the Alliance appear to be eroding in the United States...."<sup>15</sup>

Is this so? Has the westward move been political as well as physical? Are demographic and trade patterns reliable reflections of the national psyche?

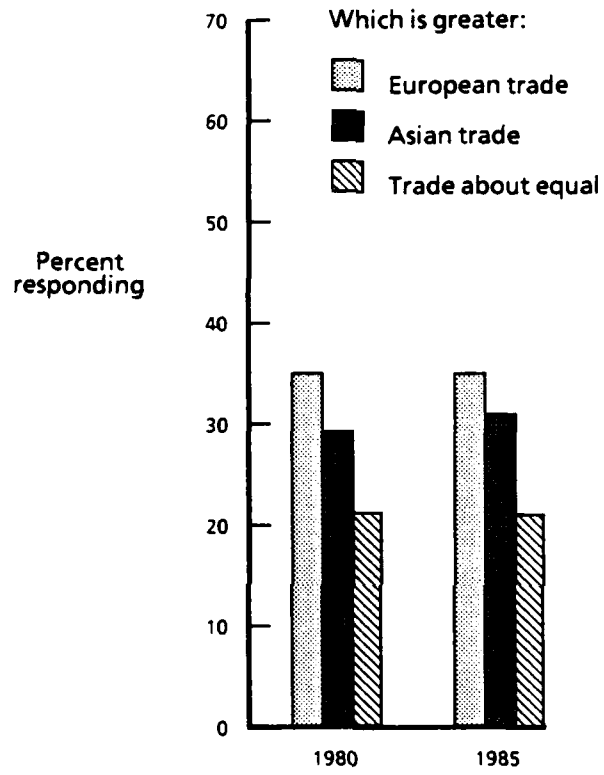
The answer, in a word, is no. Or at least, not yet. Major economic and demographic changes have not translated into any noticeable shift in public sentiment.

To begin with, most of these changes have yet to be noticed by the public. For example, while the Asian population is the fastest growing minority in the nation, this is not something most Americans realize. Less than a third of the persons queried in a series of polls by Potomac Associates over the past 5 years responded that "there has been an increase in the number of Asian people living" in their community (except in the west where over 50 percent responded affirmatively).<sup>16</sup> When it comes to the flow of trade, the public's perception lags notably behind the facts. In 1980, 35 percent of the population believed that "U.S. trade with Europe is considerably larger than U.S. trade with Asia" and, in 1985, well over half those polled felt that U.S. trade with Europe was either larger or about equal to that with Asia--identical to the response 5 years earlier.<sup>17</sup> The important point here is the trend of response, not the specific percentages of respondents, because these can vary greatly by slightly rephrasing or repositioning questions. When there was great change in the flow of U.S. trade, the response to this question was virtually identical--statistically, the public had no perception of such a change (figure 2).\*

Four times in the past decade Potomac Associates has asked whether Asia or Europe is more important to the United States (figure 3). The trend here is worth noting: Not only have the "friendly nations in Western Europe" consistently been perceived by a good-sized plurality to be more important to the promotion of U.S. interests, but also, in the most recent polling, nearly a majority perceive U.S. interests in this way. For the first time, a greater percentage thought that Western Europe was more important to the U.S. than Asia or that the Asian and European nations were equally important. Some analysts, it is true,

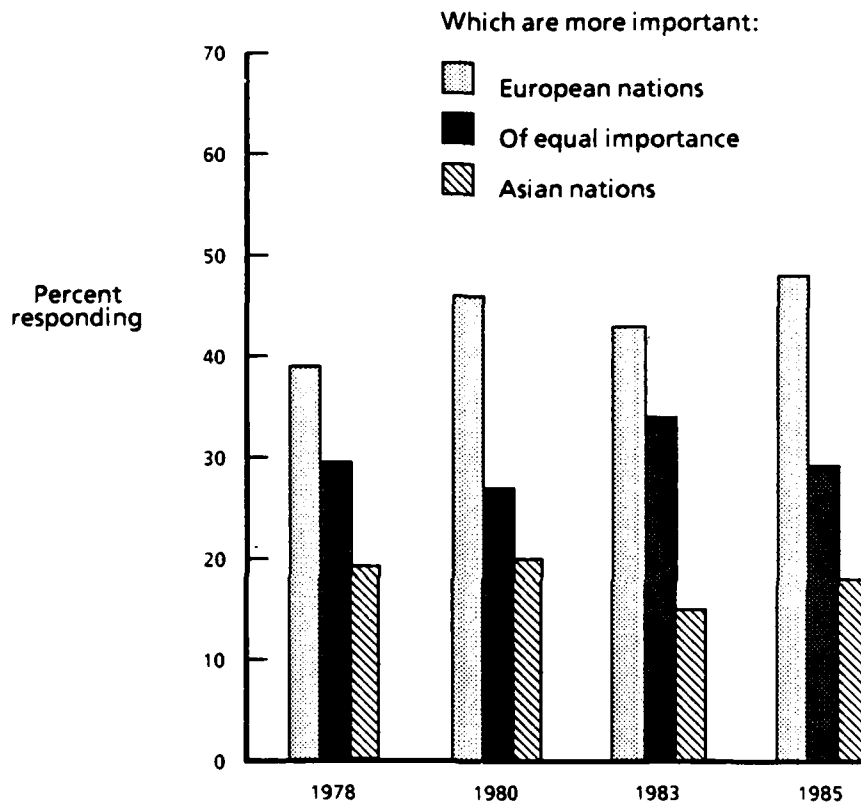
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\* Complete polling questions appear in appendix A.



**FIG. 2: U.S. PUBLIC OPINION ON U.S. TRADE WITH ASIA AND EUROPE**

SOURCE: Potomac Associates.



**FIG. 3: IMPORTANCE OF ASIA AND EUROPE TO THE U.S.**

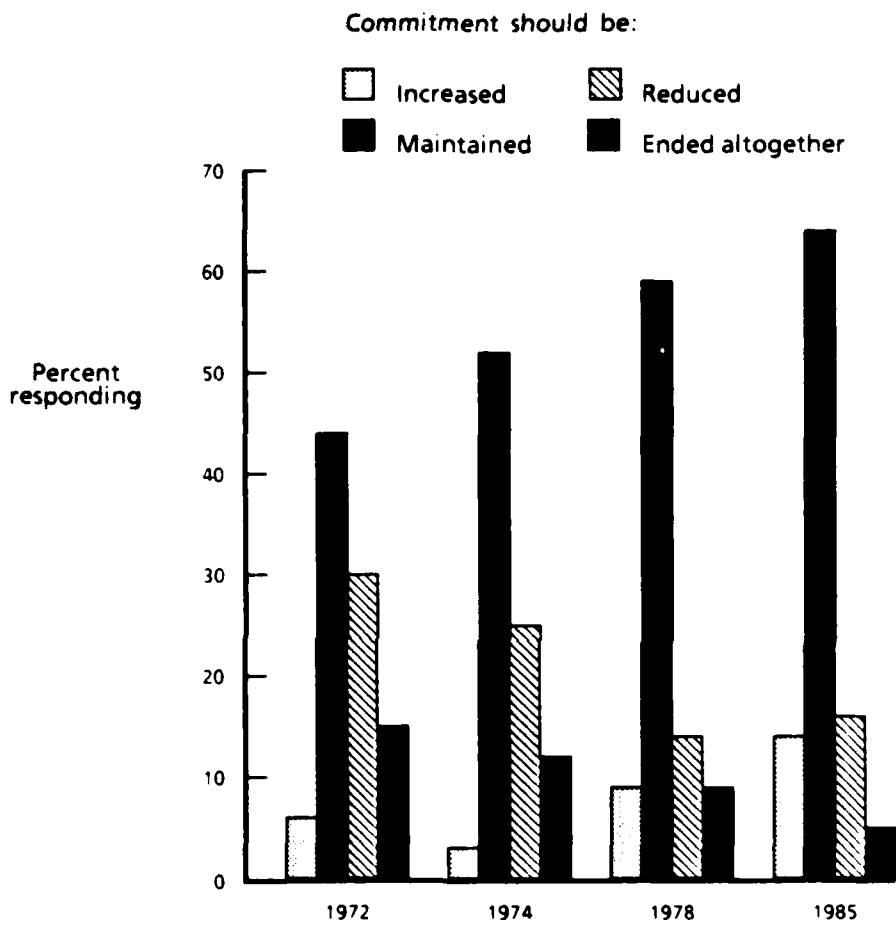
SOURCE: Potomac Associates.

argue that responses like these must be taken with a grain of salt, on the theory that the question itself mixes items with different terms of reference and is weighted toward Europe because security interests are focused there. The proposition, accordingly, is that, if security interests were removed, the response would almost be reversed.<sup>18</sup> This ignores, though, the plurality who view U.S.-European trade as being greater than U.S.-Asian trade, so there is no reason to expect any notable reversal in the public's response to this question, no matter how it is adjusted.

Other polls also show little movement away from Europe. A short series of questions specifically on the NATO alliance has been asked twice in the past 5 years by the Gallup organization. One question asked about the "condition of our relations" with our NATO allies. On both occasions (October 1982 and February 1984) more people felt relations were "worse" than 10 years before--but the differential had fallen from 36 percent in 1982 (in the middle of the pipeline controversy) to only 7 percent 2 years later. Another question asked about the importance of the Atlantic Alliance to the United States. When first asked in 1982, the public believed by a margin of 62-22 that the Alliance had become more important over a 10-year span. This margin increased to 74-17 in 1984.<sup>19</sup>

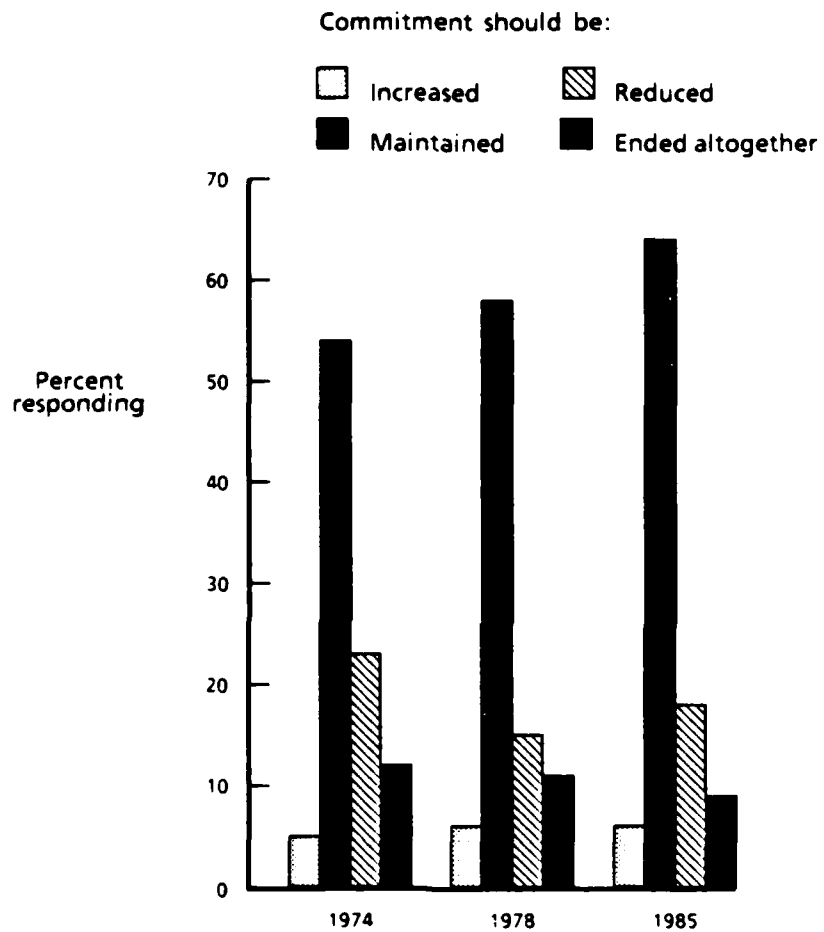
Another series of questions asked respondents to take a look back and decide whether the U.S. had taken the right action in a variety of events. In 1975 a majority (55-9) felt that the decision to "help form and become a member of NATO" was the right step for the U.S. to have taken; the 1984 response (58-7) was similar. On the decision to "help reconstruct Japan" the numbers were 46-21 in 1975 and 54-18 in 1984, and on "deciding to help reconstruct Europe with the Marshall Plan," 45-15 (1975) and 49-10 (1984).<sup>20</sup>

Questions about U.S. troop commitments abroad also brought informative responses. At no point since this polling began has less than a majority of respondents felt that U.S. commitment should be either maintained at its present level or increased (figures 4, 5, and 6). In 1972, at the tail end of the Mansfield "NATO-busting" years and in the middle of the Vietnam era, a bare majority favored our European commitment. Since then, support for the NATO commitment has sharply increased and, as of February 1985, nearly three-fourths of the public



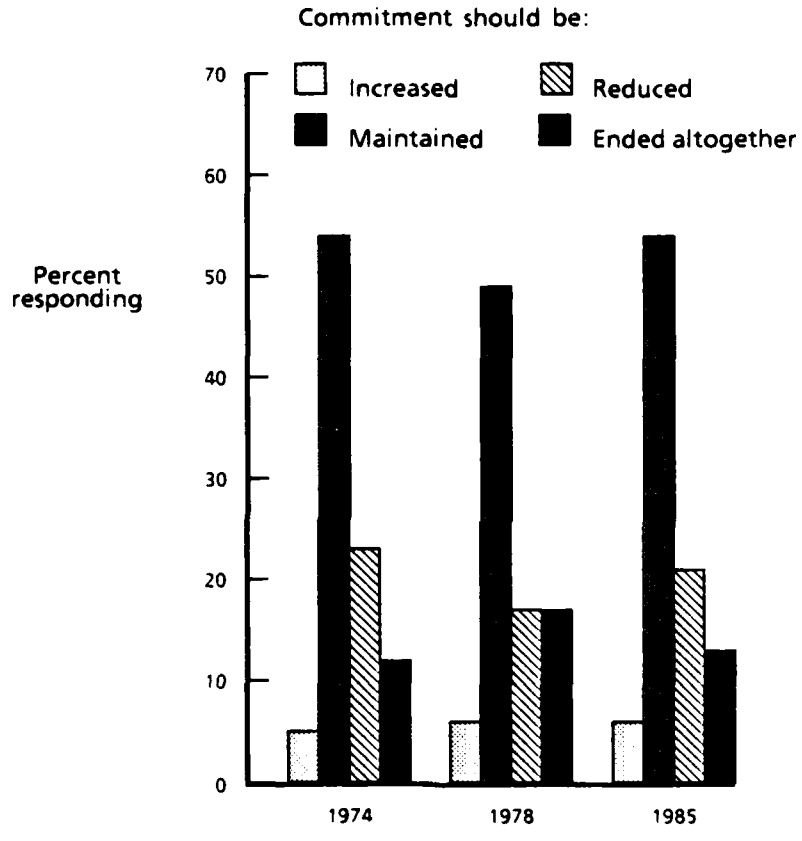
**FIG. 4: AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON U.S. TROOPS IN EUROPE**

SOURCE: Potomac Associates



**FIG. 5: AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON U.S. TROOPS IN ASIA**

SOURCE: Potomac Associates



**FIG. 6: AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON U.S. TROOPS  
IN SOUTH KOREA**

SOURCE: Potomac Associates

supported the stationing of U.S. troops in Western Europe.<sup>21</sup> The elite\* view of the Alliance has undergone much the same transition with increased support for the NATO commitment (table 1).<sup>22</sup>

The pattern for Asia (figure 5) is virtually the same as it is for Europe (figure 4), with this past year's results reflecting the greatest support for stationing troops in Asia ever recorded in American public-opinion polling. Support for U.S. forces stationed in South Korea has remained virtually the same over the past decade, although it was somewhat lower in 1978 with an increase in the number wanting the commitment "ended altogether" when President Carter was trying to reduce our presence there (figure 6). In 1974, support for U.S. troops stationed in both Asia and South Korea was greater than that for the troop commitment in Europe. The support for or opposition to an American presence in Europe has been much less stable than with Asia or Korea. With Korea, a bloc of slightly more than one-third is opposed to the U.S. commitment, with Japan slightly more than one-quarter, and with Europe it has varied from nearly one-half (1972) to just one-fifth (1985).

Table 1 demonstrates the "softness" of American public opinion on foreign policy. The public often seems to choose the most moderate response available, in this case to maintain "at the present level" our commitments abroad. The greater shift in responses to the questions on NATO might indicate a keener perception of our European commitment and the implications of the commitment. The weakness of the 60-percent support for U.S. troops in Korea (figure 6) becomes more obvious when compared to responses about the use of military force to defend South Korea (see table 2).

Considering that both major U.S. conflicts since the end of World War II occurred in Asia, it must be assumed that the presence of U.S. troops carries with it some risk of combat. Yet, over the past decade, not one poll showed the respondents supporting the use of military force to defend South Korea. Other polls indicate even less support for

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\* "Elite" refers to a leadership sample of people representing Americans in senior positions with knowledge of international affairs. These included leaders from the national political and governmental world--senators and representatives (members of the Foreign Relations, International Relations, and Armed Services Committees) and officials with international responsibilities from the State, Treasury, Defense and other departments. Participants were also drawn from the business community (chairmen, international vice presidents of large corporations as well as leaders of business associations); communications field (editors and publishers of major newspapers, wire service executives, television broadcasters); from education (presidents and scholars from major colleges and universities); and foreign policy institutes. A smaller number of leaders was also drawn from national unions, churches, voluntary organizations and other ethnic organizations.



TABLE 1

## PUBLIC/ELITE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NATO COMMITMENT

"Some people feel that NATO, the military organization of Western Europe and the United States, has outlived its usefulness and that the United States should withdraw militarily from NATO. Others say that NATO has discouraged the Russians from trying a military takeover in Western Europe. Do you feel we should increase our commitment to NATO, keep our commitment what it is now, decrease our commitment but still remain in NATO, or withdraw from NATO entirely?"

	<u>Dec 1974</u> CCFR	<u>Nov 1978</u> CCFR	<u>Apr 1982</u> (Roper)	<u>Nov 1982</u> CCFR
Public poll <sup>a</sup>				
Increase	4	9	11	9
Maintain	50	58	53	58
Decrease	13	9	12	11
Withdraw	7	4	7	4
Elite poll <sup>b</sup>				
Increase	5	21	--	7
Maintain	62	65	--	79
Decrease	29	12	--	12
Withdraw	2	1	--	1

SOURCE: Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs, Roper.

a. Public sample: CCFR: 1974, 1,513, 1978, 1,546; 1982, 1,547.  
Roper: 2,000.

b. Sample: CCFR: 1974, 328; 1978, 366; 1982, 341.

TABLE 2  
PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD MILITARY ASSISTANCE  
(Percent)

Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: The United States should come to the defense of \_\_\_\_\_ with military force.<sup>a</sup>

	Year										
	<u>72</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>84</u>	<u>85</u>
Major European allies (if attacked by the USSR)											
Agree	52	48	48	56	62	64	74	64	65	69	76
Disagree	32	34	34	27	26	26	19	25	25	18	16
Japan (if attacked by the USSR or China)											
Agree	43	37	42	45	50	54	68	54	57	59	70
Disagree	40	42	39	37	35	35	28	30	29	26	21
South Korea (if attacked by North Korea)											
Agree	--	--	--	--	32	32	38	•33	--	36	41
Disagree	--	--	--	--	52	56	51	47	--	48	48

SOURCE: Gallup polls.

a. Sample size of 1,400 to 1,600 persons nationwide.

"sending American troops" to South Korea. (When the use of "American troops" is specified, support for intervention falls by 10 percent or more.) In a recent (March 1985) poll, less than one-fourth of the respondents supported sending troops to South Korea. In the same poll, 53 percent supported sending troops to Western Europe and 35 percent opposed it.<sup>23</sup>

The public has consistently supported the use of military force in coming to the defense of the major European Allies and of Japan since the polls began (table 2). For Western European Allies the support has been 5 to 15 percent greater than that for Japan. These results tie in with the general isolationist mood of the nation better than with any specific policy issues. The nadir of support came at the height of the Vietnam "malaise;" since then, support has been growing, with one large jump in 1980 just after the invasion of Afghanistan. This growth in support on issues of U.S. international activity has been across the board, though the public is more selective about military activity: Respondents to a February 1985 *New York Times* poll would send "American troops" if Canada (by an 84-11 margin) or Europe (54-32) were invaded; would send advisors to El Salvador 58-32 but would not (32-57) send combat troops; and would not favor (33-53) the "use of American troops" if the Arabs cut off Western Europe's oil supply (up from 21-56 in 1974).

Public attitudes do not, however, fall clearly into categories such as "Europe" vs. "Asia," or the "Atlantic" vs. the "Pacific Rim." According to Alvin Richman, a senior public opinion analyst with the State Department, "the public and elites look at the world very differently. While the elite view the world regionally, as areas of interest, the public looks at the world in a piecemeal form--the public has formed opinions about individual nations, not regions. And even where there is a general image, specific country images override regional ones."<sup>24</sup>

In this respect, the high degree of support for the defense of Japan makes sense because, in the public eye, Japan ranks very high. When Gallup in mid-1984 asked which nations were "very important" to the U.S., Japan ranked third (71 percent) behind Canada (78 percent) and Great Britain (72 percent). In many polls, Japan ranks just below these two nations, and is the highest-ranked non-Anglo-Saxon nation. Another Gallup poll ranked Japan fourth (68 percent) in terms of positive image after Canada (85 percent), Australia (74 percent), and Great Britain (70 percent).<sup>25</sup> In still another series on whether ties should be strengthened with other nations, Japan came behind West Germany (figure 7) and Russia in the last three pollings.<sup>26</sup> In a set of Roper polls, respondents were asked to rate ten nations on a scale from "close ally" to "enemy"; adding together the "close ally" and "friend" responses, Japan consistently received the second-greatest response, after Great Britain (figure 8). Using just the "close ally" responses, Japan either tied with West Germany (16 percent "close ally" responses

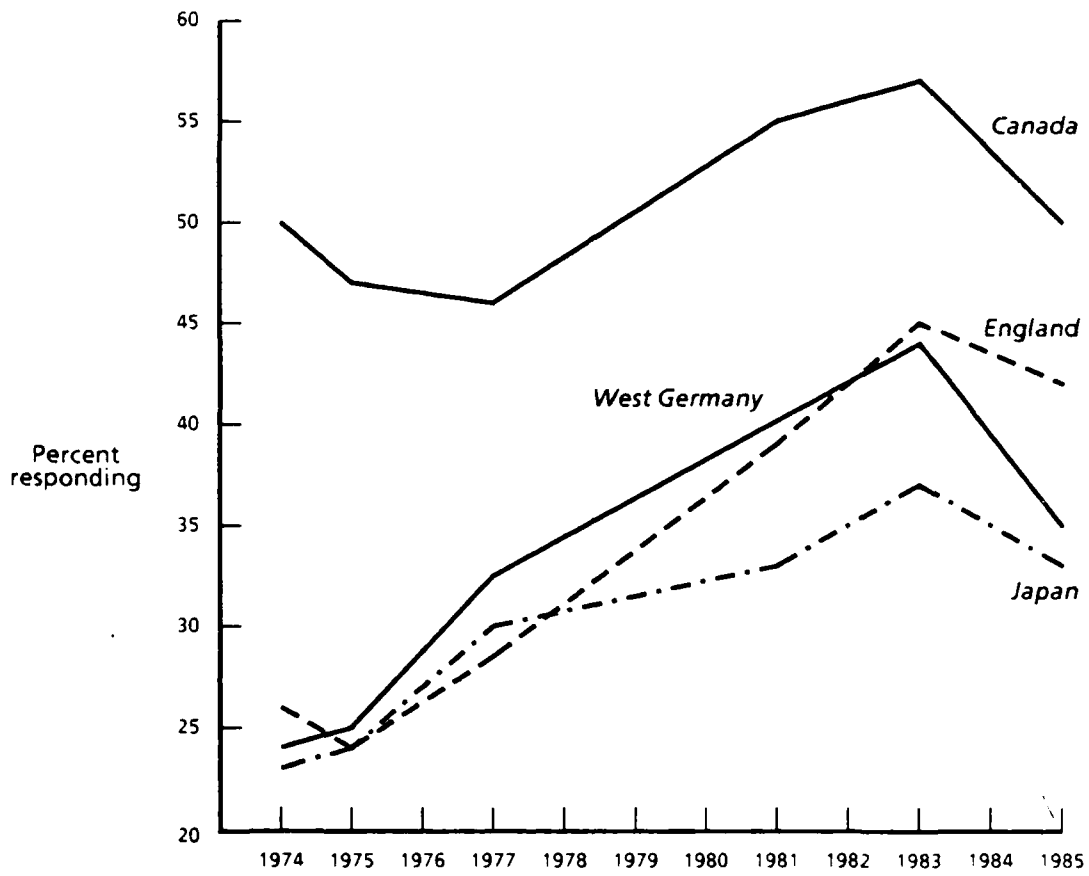
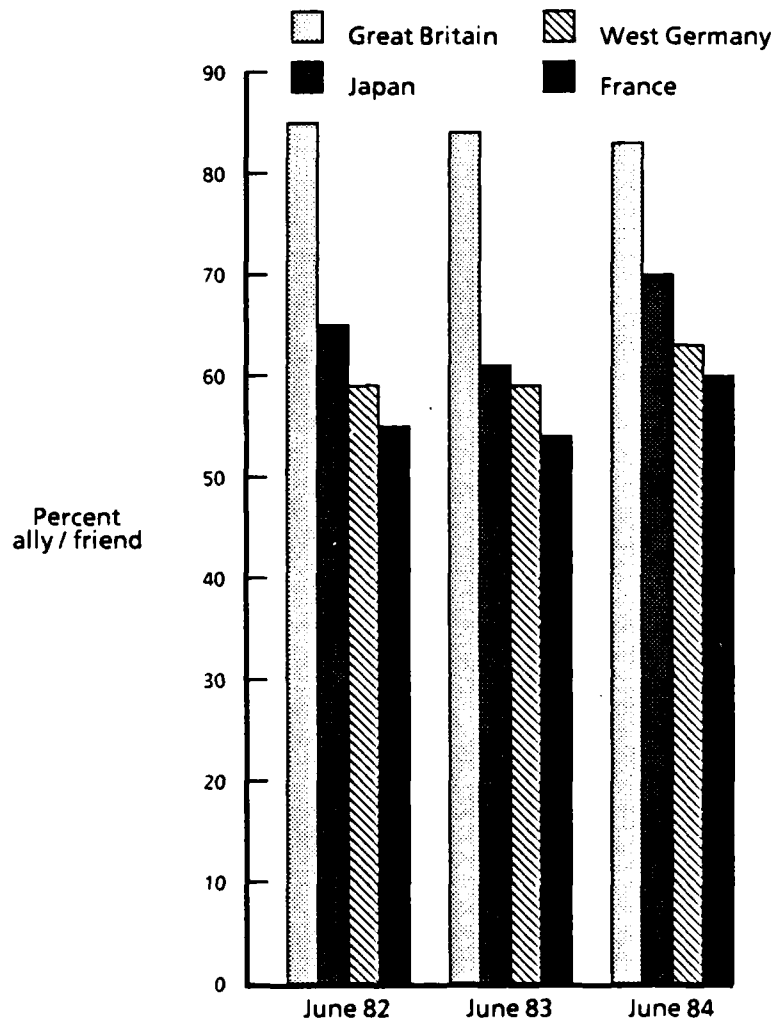


FIG. 7: NATIONS WITH WHICH AMERICA SHOULD STRENGTHEN TIES

SOURCE: Roper Report 85-2



**FIG. 8: AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ON U.S. ALLIES AND FRIENDS**

SOURCE: Roper Report 84-6.

in 1982) or was a "close third" (21 to 19 percent, respectively). Japan is alone in Asia in this respect. Except when asked which nations will gain in importance in the future (the PRC is rated highly here) or on "nations viewed positively" (Australia is rated highly), Japan is the only "Pacific Rim" nation found in the upper reaches in any poll.

What effects, in general, do demographics play in these results? William Watts, president of Potomac Associates, recently suggested that:

By and large, geographic breakdowns are no longer a factor in responses on international relations. Geography has very little to do with it. This is truly a change over the past 10 to 15 years that has come from two factors: (1) international affairs reporting is becoming relatively homogeneous across the country; and (2) there is a growing awareness of U.S. involvement overseas.<sup>27</sup>

If this were so, the southward and westward movement of the demographic center of the nation would have little meaning in terms of the American public's view of the world.

Frequently, there do seem to be geographic differences results from polls on international affairs; however, these are not significant. Other demographic factors are more evident. According to William Watts, the three most consistent are respondents' level of education, affluence, and social status and employment positions. (For each factor, the "higher" a respondent's level, the more positive/internationalist the respondent is.)

## CONCLUSIONS

The high visibility of Japan in public opinion polls and the slight "Pacific bias" of the West are not enough to portray a great shift in American public opinion toward "Pacific Rim" nations nor are they any indication of a shift coming any time soon. Indeed, the trends in polls to date suggest a more pro- rather than anti-Europe sentiment in the United States.

The fact that the public has not shifted away from the Atlantic does not mean that it will not, however, but only that it has not done so yet. The arguments that proponents of the "Pacific Rim" present would seem at a minimum to be premature:

- The U.S. is trading more with the "Pacific Rim" and will be more important as each year passes

It is irrefutable that the dollar amount of trade with the Pacific Rim nations has well surpassed that of U.S. trade with Europe. The effect this will have on public opinion is not known. For the moment, the public has no perception that a turnaround in U.S. trade patterns has occurred. Until it does, this is unlikely to affect public attitudes.

- Demographic changes are occurring in the United States that will turn the American public away from Europe.

The increasing homogeneity of international affairs reporting combined with the relative lack of regional differences in the perception of foreign policy will most probably mute whatever effects this shift might have. The growth of the Asian population is another matter; the effects of this growth have yet to appear--the question here is just how great an effect the Asian population will have upon the formulation of American public opinion.

- The Soviet military threat in the Pacific is growing.

The effects upon public opinion will most probably be minimal. Clearly, the most eye-catching Soviet threat exists on the central front and in nuclear weapons. Militarily, the public's eye will remain focused on Central Europe where the greatest danger seems to exist.

Changes in Washington, though, are more significant. The virtual absence of the "old east-coast foreign policy elite" from the past two administrations, and the increasing debate over the maritime strategy, no doubt have meant some tilt in the "Euro-centric" caliber of U.S. foreign policy, but unless that tilt finds voice in strong Presidential endorsement, it is not likely to show up in public attitudes. Nearly three-quarters of the populace have a "great deal" or "fair amount" of confidence in the President's handling of foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> As Watts puts it: "support will follow the President when the hypothetical becomes reality."<sup>30</sup>

Yet, even if the President began a major policy shift toward Asia the public response cannot fully be foreseen. President Carter's attempt to withdraw our commitment in South Korea was frustrated partly by the public's dedication to maintaining that commitment. Public support for NATO is greater than it was for South Korea and, unless masterfully orchestrated, a great public outcry could be expected over any such attempt.

The frequent criticism of the European allies is often reflected in poll results. For example, a January 1982 NBC poll recorded 80 percent of the populace dissatisfied with the level of support the Allies gave general American foreign policy; in another 1982 poll, by the Atlantic Institute, over two-thirds of the respondents felt that Europeans were not shouldering enough of the burden for Western security.<sup>31</sup> Funds to support U.S. commitment to NATO could become the topic of major debate in times of budget austerity. But too much can be made of this. At the same time that allied support (or lack of it) and burden-sharing among the Allies were gaining prominence, even larger majorities were supporting this nation's NATO commitment, according to the polls.

The thesis that American interests and biases are shifting toward Asia, advanced by many commentators in the United States today, may have strong arguments behind it, but the American public does not seem to share the views of these commentators--at least not yet. Taking an extensive look through records on American public opinion, there is no evidence that the American public is following these commentators on their westward trek. As of this date, all trends in American public opinion currently point toward a reaffirmation of the Atlantic alliance.



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9. Harry R. Breck, "Forum: Should the U.S. Stay in NATO?," *Harper's*, April 1984, 36.
10. Charles Krauthammer, "Isolationism, Left and Right," *The New Republic*, 4 March 1985, 18, 21.
11. Ronald C. Nairn, "Should the U.S. Pull Out of NATO?," *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 December 1981, 30.
12. Figures extracted from *State Demographics* (Homewood, IL: Dow, Jones, Irwin: 1984).
13. Figures extracted from *Information Please Almanac*, 1982, 303, 1973, 379.
14. David Calleo, "The Demands of Alliance," *Political Science Quarterly*, Spring 1983, 5.
15. Stanley R. Sloan, *NATO's Future--Toward a New Transatlantic Bargain* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1985), 110.

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16. William Watts, "The United States and Asia: Changing American Perspectives" (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Associates, May 1985), 9-10.
17. *Ibid.*, 26-27.
18. Lawrence Krause, comments 17 May 1985 on release of "The United States and Asia:...."
19. *Gallup Report International*, Vol. II, No. 2, 6-7.
20. *Roper Report*, 84-8, 15.
21. The number of polls on the question of the troop commitment in Europe is relatively sparse. As William Schneider, an AEI fellow, wrote: "Perhaps even more revealing is the scarcity of survey data concerning U.S. relations with its allies.... The fact that the Atlantic Alliance is seldom the subject of polling inquiries is evidence that it is not an issue of major interest or controversy in the United States.... [A]lliance relationships probably are not matters of serious concern to Americans. This does not mean that they do not support the Alliance. They do quite strongly.... It is not, however, an issue of major public attention or debate." From William Schneider, "Peace and Strength: American Public Opinion on National Security," *The Public and Atlantic Defense* (eds. Gregory Flynn and Hans Rattinger), Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Allanheld, 1985, 355.
22. See John E. Rielly, *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1983*, (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1983), and Alvin Richman, "Active and Passive: Mapping Distinctions Between Elite and General Public Opinion on American Foreign Policy," presented at the International Studies Association Convention, Washington, D.C., March 1985.
23. *Roper Report*, 85-4.
24. Conversation with author, May 1985.
25. John Hughes, "Americans Rank Canada, Britain, and Japan as Most Important Countries to U.S.," U.S. Department of State Information Memorandum, No. W0019C, 15 August 1984.
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28. *Ibid.*
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30. William Watts, 17 May 1985. An example of how a president leads public opinion on foreign policy matters can be seen in the dramatic turnaround public opinion took on the PRC during the Carter presidency.
31. Catherine McArdle Kelleher, "America Looks at Europe: Change and Continuity in the 1980s," *The Washington Post Quarterly*, Winter 1984, 33-49.

APPENDIX A  
COMPLETE QUESTIONS FROM POLLS

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COMPLETE QUESTIONS FROM POLLS

Figure 2: In terms of total U.S. foreign trade, including both exports and imports, which of the following statements do you think is most accurate:

- U.S. trade with Europe is considerably larger than U.S. trade with Asia;
- U.S. trade with Asia is considerably larger than U.S. trade with Europe;
- U.S. trade with Europe and Asia are about equal.

Figure 3: The United States has strong political, economic, and national defense ties with friendly nations in Western Europe, on the one hand, and with friendly nations in and near Asia, on the other hand. Thinking about each of these two areas from the standpoint of promoting our own political, economic, and national defense interests, which do you think is more important to the United States--friendly nations in Western Europe or friendly nations in Asia?

Figure 4: As you probably know, the United States now has substantial military forces stationed in Western Europe for defense purposes. Under present circumstances, do you think the commitment of American forces in Europe should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether?

[1972 wording: "As you may know, the United States now has substantial forces stationed in Western Europe as part of NATO's defense against the danger of Soviet aggression. Do you think America's contribution of ground troops now serving in Europe should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether?"]

Figure 5: The United States also has substantial forces stationed in Asia for defense purposes, including Japan and South Korea. Under present circumstances, do you think the commitment of American forces in Japan should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether?

[1974 wording: "The United States also has substantial military forces stationed in Asia for defense purposes, including in Japan, South Korea, and Thailand. Under present circumstances, do you think the commitment of American forces should be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether?"]

Figure 6: And what about South Korea? Should the commitment of American forces there be increased, kept at the present level, reduced, or ended altogether?

Figure 7: The United States has forged ties of varying degrees with different nations in the world. Here is a list of a few countries. (Card shown respondent.) Would you read down that list and tell me for each country what you think would be best for us in the long run--to strengthen our ties, or to continue things about as they are, or to lessen our commitments to them?

Figure 8: The United States has relations with many different nations in the world. Here is a list of a few countries. (Card shown respondent.) Would you read down that list and tell me for each country whether that country is a--close ally, friend, neutral, mainly unfriendly, or an enemy of the United States?

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