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## ‘America First?’ Americans say yes on trade, but aren’t ready to give up on NATO, UN just yet

*Majority of Americans share Trump’s protectionist approach to trade, support 10-20% tariffs*

**February 7, 2017** – Putting foreign powers “on notice”, “taking names” at the United Nations, tense Oval Office phone conversations with long time allies and open talk of massive import tariffs on it’s third-biggest trading partner – if nothing else, the Trump administration has generated its share of headlines in a short time on the international stage.

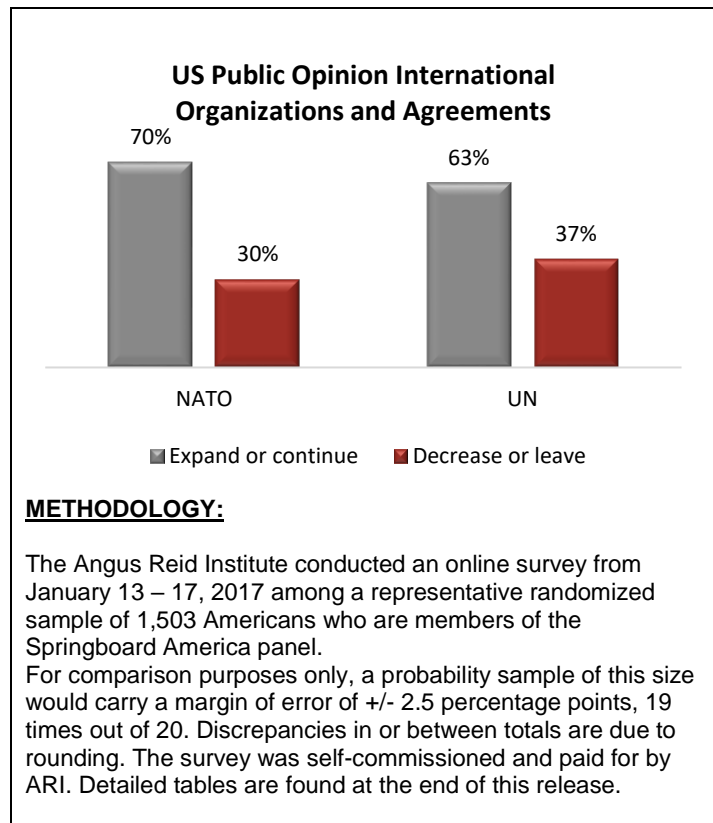
And while US public opinion would reflect support for some of the signals and tone coming from the President and his surrogates, on other fronts, a new poll of more than 1,500 Americans – part of the Angus Reid Institute’s [America Project](#) – finds majority support for maintaining the status quo, even as their commander-in-chief signals more sweeping changes.

When it comes to NAFTA, the UN, NATO and the Paris Climate Accord, a majority of Americans voice support for either expanding or continuing on with the approach to each, taken by government up to Trump’s election victory, rather than leaving or reducing participation. It is important to note however, that political lines divide sentiment: Trump supporters take a more isolationist view on each issue compared to those who supported Hillary Clinton during the campaign.

From an economic perspective, the ‘America First’ message garners much more resonance. Roughly half of all Americans support both new tariffs on foreign imports.

### Key Findings:

- Almost six-in-ten Americans (58%) say they want their government to focus on protecting U.S. markets from foreign imports, rather than expanding international trade





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- New tariffs on both raw materials and manufactured goods, similar to those proposed on Mexican goods, enjoy the support of roughly half of all Americans – including large numbers of those who say they opposed Donald Trump in last year’s election
- Across each institution or organization canvassed, the UN, NATO, NAFTA, and the Paris Accord on Climate Change, most Americans want to maintain or increase their country’s participation in these various international groups
- The largest split of opinion on these bodies is with respect to NAFTA. Overall, fewer than half (45%) favour maintaining the status quo on this trade deal, while close to that many (42%) would prefer to see either a decreased American commitment (24%) or a full U.S. withdrawal (18%)

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## **PART 1: TRADE**

### **Support for new import tariffs**

The White House set off a firestorm of controversy when it floated the idea of a twenty per cent tariff on goods coming from Mexico. The tax would, according to President Trump, ensure that Mexico pays for a border wall between the two countries. The proposal led Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto to cancel a planned meeting between the two leaders.

Though many have questioned the effect such a tariff would have on US jobs that rely on trade with Mexico, and the associated rise in prices on Mexican goods, Americans appear to be supportive of exploring such an option.

Regardless of targeting a specific nation, there is a strong appetite for applying new import tariffs – presented in this survey as between 10 and 20 per cent – on both manufactured goods and raw materials, with 54 per cent and 48 per cent of Americans, respectively, expressing support for such taxes:

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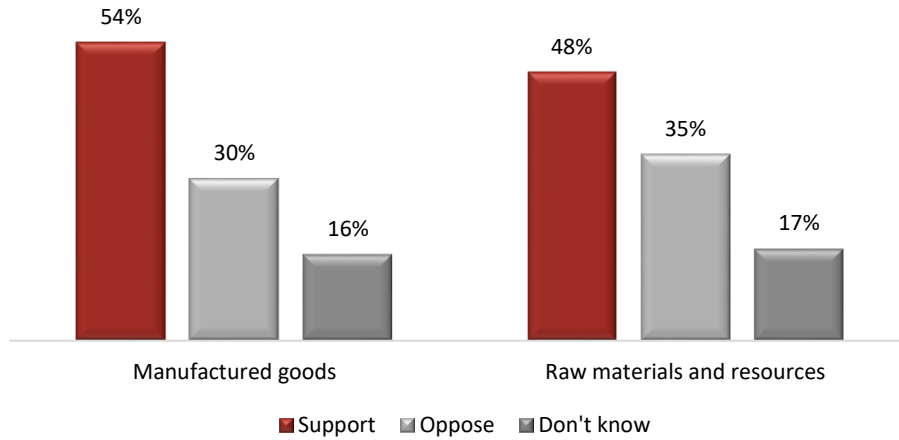
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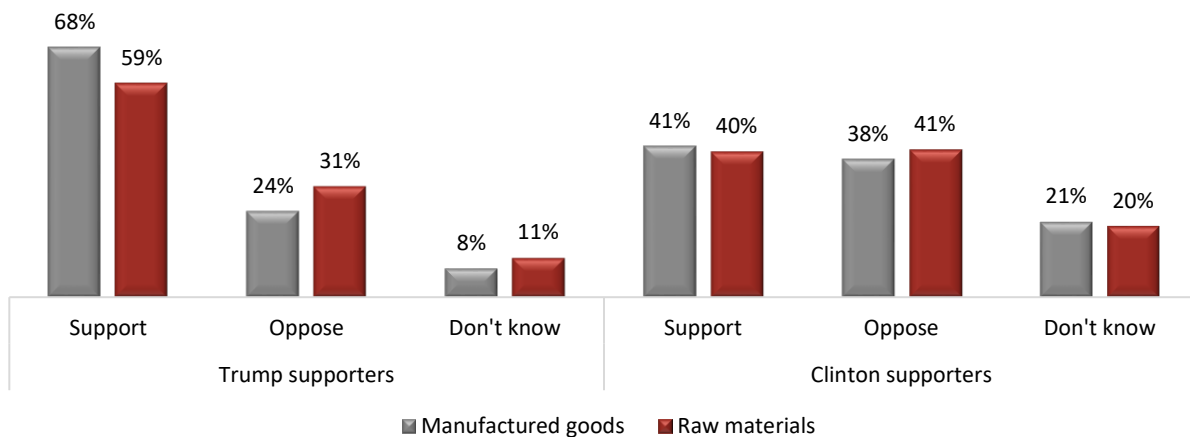
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Would you support or oppose new tariffs of, say, 10-20% being applied to:



Notably, as seen in the graph that follows, even those who indicated they were supporting Hillary Clinton in last year's election are divided on the issue, with roughly equal numbers backing and opposing a tax on each type of imports, and one-in-five expressing uncertainty. Supporters are defined by which candidate the respondent hoped to have won the election, not by whether they actively voted for that candidate.

Would you support or oppose new tariffs of, say, 10-20% being applied to:





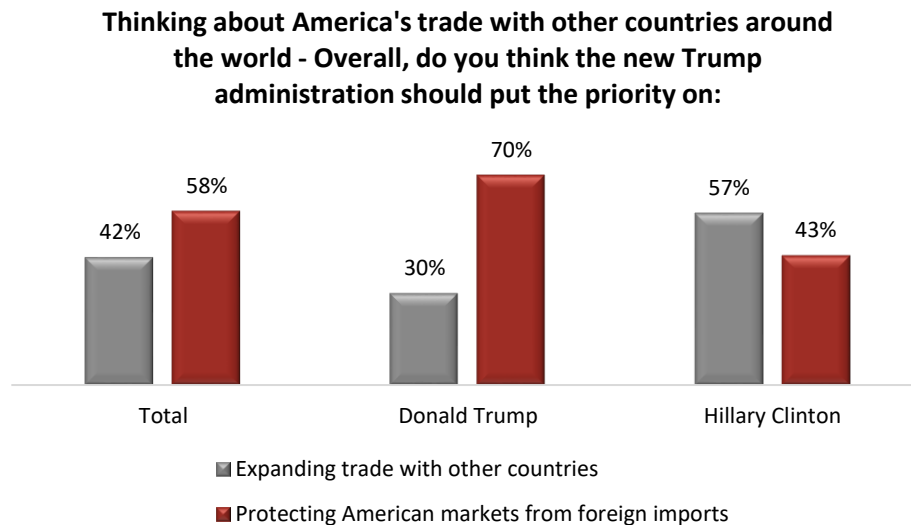
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## Enthusiasm for protectionism

When it comes to trade, the majority of Americans (58%) appear to align with President Trump's views, saying "protecting American markets from foreign imports" should be his administration's priority.

This protectionist viewpoint is especially prevalent among Trump supporters, more than two-thirds (68%) of whom see insulating their country from foreign imports as the priority, although a significant segment of Clinton supporters also agree:



## Views of NAFTA

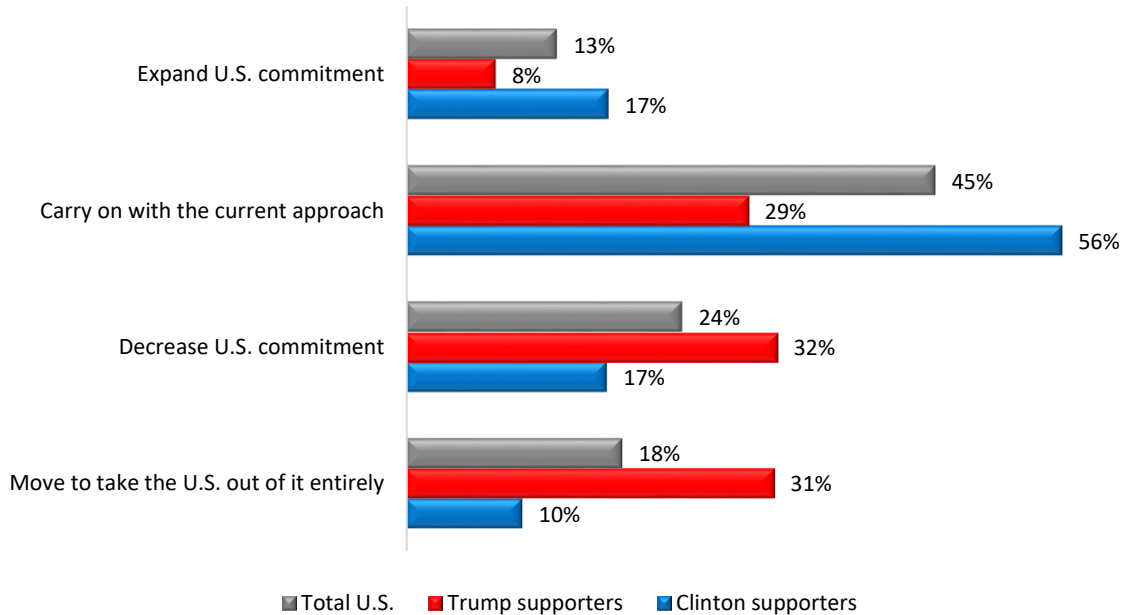
What follows from discussions of bilateral trade deals, tariffs and protectionism, is predictably low support for the North American Free Trade Agreement among Trump supporters. In fact, many Americans share their president's dim view of the three-country pact. Overall, fewer than half (45%) favour maintaining the status quo of the deal, and almost that many (42%) would prefer to see either a decreased American commitment (24%) or a full U.S. withdrawal (18%).

Fully six-in-ten Trump supporters would either decrease America's commitment to NAFTA (32%) or leave the deal entirely (31%). Only 29 per cent of Trump's base would carry on with NAFTA as is. Most Clinton supporters (56%), meanwhile, would stick with the NAFTA status quo, as seen in the following graph:



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**For NAFTA, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**



In addition to these views on NAFTA overall, this ARI poll also gauged Americans' views on the two other nations that make up the continental trade agreement: Canada and Mexico. These survey findings are presented in greater depth in [a recent Angus Reid Institute report](#).

Broadly speaking, Americans have a much more positive view of Canada than Mexico, and Trump's supporters are much more critical of America's southern neighbour than Clinton's. There is no such political divide when it comes to Americans' views of Canada.

**International Organizations and Agreements**

To what extent will Trump shake up the established world order? He questioned the efficacy of the United Nations and NATO throughout his campaign, and has shown similar hostility to the aforementioned ideas on free trade that have come to define the modern world.

However, during his first meeting with an international head of state, Theresa May of Britain, Trump appeared to walk back some of this campaign rhetoric when he [affirmed his support for NATO](#). The president's statements, though they may be at odds with many of his own supporters, are in line with majority US opinion.

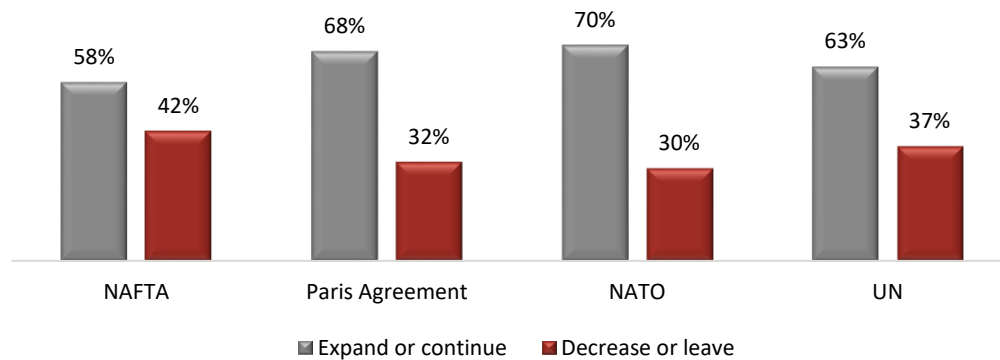


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Americans are more likely to favour maintaining the status quo, that is, the approach taken until Trump's inauguration, or expanding their country's commitment to each of four international organizations canvassed in this survey, as seen in the summary graph that follows.

### US Public Opinion International Organizations and Agreements



That said, there are significant political divisions over America's participation in these groups.

### Views of NATO

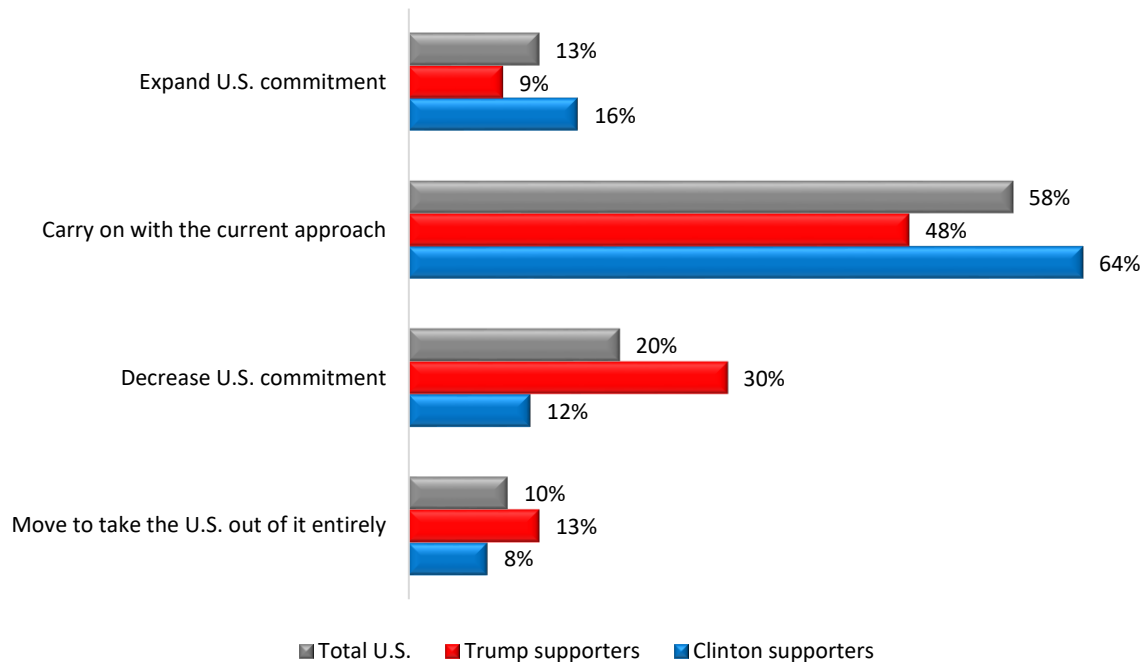
On multiple occasions, Trump has referred to NATO as "obsolete" and suggested that members of the alliance don't contribute sufficiently to maintaining it. On this he is correct, as only [5 of the 28](#) participating nations currently contribute funding at the level of two per cent of GDP – the targeted amount for members. Despite confirming his support for NATO post-election, Trump has nonetheless stated that participating countries who do not pay their fair share [may not be able to rely on US protection](#).

These statements may resonate with many, but overall, nearly six-in-ten Americans (58%) opt for the U.S. to carry on with the current approach towards the NATO alliance. Even among Trump supporters, almost half (48%) would like the new administration to "carry on with the current approach," though they are again less enthusiastic than those who preferred Hillary Clinton in last year's election:



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**For NATO, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**



**Views of the United Nations**

At her first speaking engagement with the United Nations, new US-UN ambassador Nikki Haley entered the global conversation by making it known that her country is “taking names” of those nations who don’t “have our back”.

Trump, himself, has described the United Nations as a “political game” and questioned whether the international body “ever settles anything” and has expressed resentment over the amount it costs the U.S.

Overall, half (49%) want to see the U.S. “carry on with the current approach”, taken by the previous government. Only one-in-seven (14%) are keen to see the U.S. step up its commitment to the UN, while almost four-in-ten would instead prefer for the U.S. to “decrease its commitment” (22%) or “take the U.S. out of it entirely” (15%).

Again, the political divide is key to understanding the public opinion landscape on this issue.

Roughly six-in-ten Trump supporters advocate a retreat from the United Nations – either a decreased commitment (33%) or full withdrawal (26%). In contrast, Clinton supporters (and others who did not

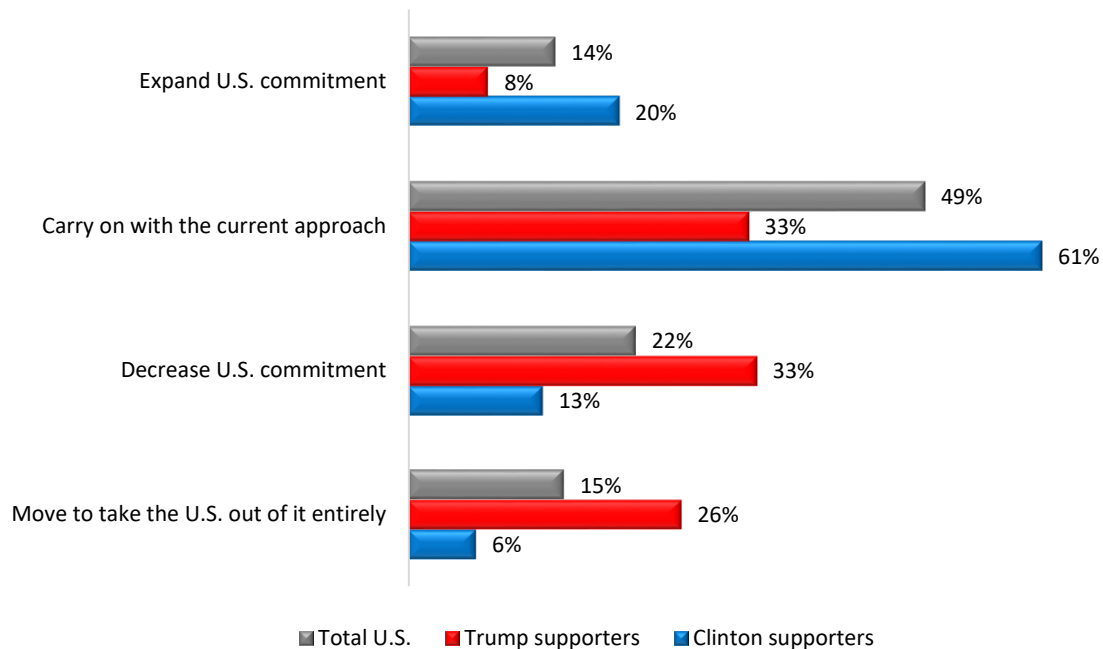


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support Trump) are just as adamant in wanting to see the U.S. stick with the status quo where the UN is concerned.

**For the UN, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**



It is worth noting however, that the forceful language used by new ambassador Haley will likely resonate with Trump supporters. His 'America First' message [has proven very popular](#) with the public.

### The Paris Agreement on Climate Change

Public opinion is broadly similar with respect to how the Trump administration should approach the 2016 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which committed signatory nations to reduce carbon emissions.

Overall, 45 per cent of Americans would hold fast to the agreement, while one-in-three would back away (17% partly, 15% entirely) and one-in-four (23%) would step up America's commitment.

Predictably, it is Clinton supporters who are most enthusiastic about an enhanced American commitment to the Paris Agreement. More than one-in-three (37%) choose this option, and fully half (50%) support holding fast to what was originally agreed upon in the French capital.

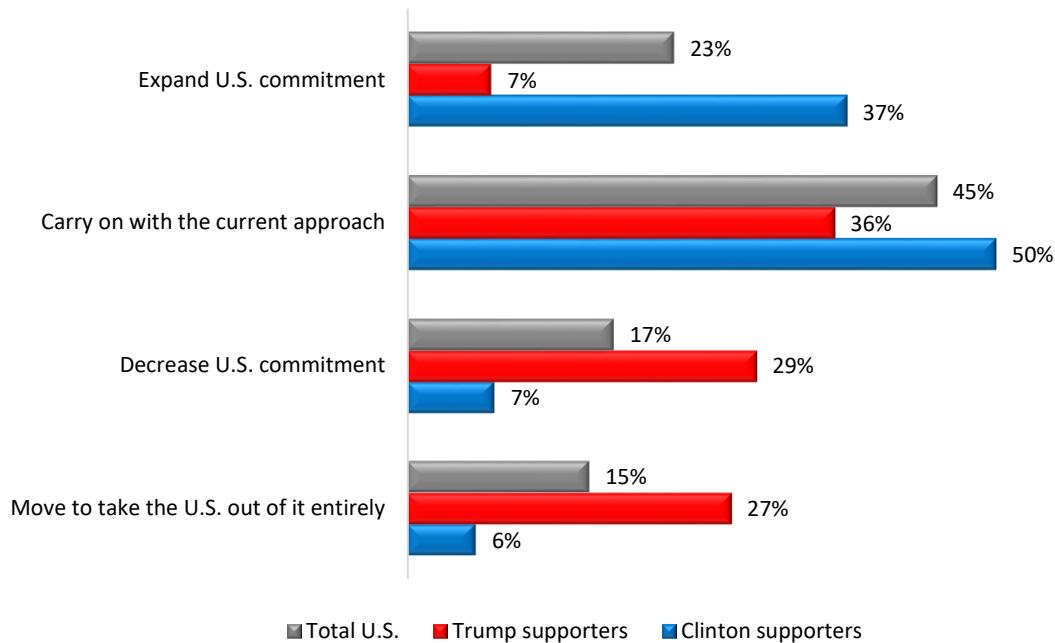
Most Trump supporters, meanwhile, would like to see the U.S. either decrease its commitment to Paris (29%) or remove itself from the accord entirely (27%):





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For the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:



The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).



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**For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**  
**(NATO – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Move to take the U.S. out of it entirely	10%	13%	8%	7%	8%
Decrease U.S. commitment	20%	30%	12%	18%	16%
Carry on with the current approach	58%	48%	64%	60%	66%
Expand U.S. commitment	13%	9%	16%	15%	9%

**For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**  
**(NAFTA – the North American Free Trade Agreement)**

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Move to take the U.S. out of it entirely	18%	31%	10%	13%	10%
Decrease U.S. commitment	24%	32%	17%	22%	20%
Carry on with the current approach	45%	29%	56%	49%	58%
Expand U.S. commitment	13%	8%	17%	16%	12%



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**For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**

**(The United Nations)**

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Move to take the U.S. out of it entirely	15%	26%	6%	13%	7%
Decrease U.S. commitment	22%	33%	13%	21%	12%
Carry on with the current approach	49%	33%	61%	50%	68%
Expand U.S. commitment	14%	8%	20%	15%	13%

**For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you think the incoming Trump administration should:**

**(The Paris Agreement on Climate Change)**

(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Move to take the U.S. out of it entirely	15%	27%	6%	15%	8%
Decrease U.S. commitment	17%	29%	7%	15%	13%
Carry on with the current approach	45%	36%	50%	43%	59%
Expand U.S. commitment	23%	7%	37%	27%	20%



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Thinking about America's trade with other countries around the world, overall, do you think the new Trump administration should put the priority on:					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
Expanding trade with other countries	42%	30%	57%	40%	37%
Protecting American markets from foreign imports	58%	70%	43%	60%	63%

Would you yourself support or oppose new tariffs of, say, 10-20% being applied to:					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1502)	2016 Presidential Election Preference			
		Donald Trump (565)	Hillary Clinton (552)	Other/Rather not say (213)	No one/Stayed undecided (172)
<b>Manufactured goods made elsewhere and being imported for sale in the U.S.</b>					
Strongly support new tariffs	22%	36%	12%	19%	15%
Moderately support	32%	33%	30%	38%	29%
Moderately oppose	17%	12%	21%	18%	17%
Strongly oppose new tariffs	13%	12%	17%	12%	8%
Don't know	16%	8%	21%	13%	31%
<b>Raw materials and resources (such as oil or fruit or lumber) being imported into the U.S.</b>					
Strongly support new tariffs	16%	24%	10%	15%	13%
Moderately support	31%	35%	30%	29%	28%
Moderately oppose	21%	18%	23%	25%	17%
Strongly oppose new tariffs	14%	12%	18%	15%	10%
Don't know	17%	11%	20%	16%	33%