

# Townhall

## How Millennials and Generation Z View Foreign Policy

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August 9, 2018

**Washington D.C.-** On Thursday, The Charles Koch Institute and The Cato Institute co-hosted a panel discussion in the Russell Senate Office Building, on how American policy views have changed from the boomer generation to millennials to generation Z.

The panel included William Kruger of the Charles Koch Institute and Trevor Thrall of the Cato Institute who recently co-authored a study which analyzes decades' worth of survey data related to Americans' views on foreign policy, and how these views have evolved over the centuries.

“Their research reveals stark generational gaps in public opinion about American exceptionalism, global leadership, and the use of military force. Furthermore, the report establishes that demographic change and generational replacement will impact the future of foreign policy. Their conclusions will interest anyone concerned with the maintenance of U.S. military superiority, the existing alliance structure, and the overall direction of our country’s conduct in global affairs,” as stated in the [event description](#).

Thrall opened the discussion laying out the data. Overwhelmingly, Americans favor U.S. engagement. Factoring for partisanship, millennials and Generation Y are less likely to favor engagement than the boomer generation.

However, millennials and generation Z are more likely to feel threatened by climate change than boomers are. Generation Z and millennials are less likely to favor military engagement than previous generations. On the other hand, millennials and generation Z are overwhelmingly supportive of free trade.

According to polling studies conducted by the Koch Institute the majority of Americans don’t think that our foreign policy approaches are making the U.S. or the world broadly safer, over the past 15-20 years.

It would seem that Americans are ready for a broader approach when it comes to foreign policy approaches said William Kruger of the Koch institute, when addressing what a new approach to foreign policy might look like, in light of the data laid out by Thrall

According to polling research, 47% of millennials believe that the US should stay out of world affairs, as compared to only 51 percent who believe that the US should play an active role in world affairs.

Furthermore, millennials are friendlier towards cutting defense spending than previous generations. Millennials are less accepting of American exceptionalism, which impacts America's role in foreign policy.

Furthermore, millennials and generation Z are advocates of less militarized foreign policy. Kruger refers to the millennial generation as "cautious millennials."

There are unintended consequences of America's role in the world which brings limitations on what we can achieve. The boomer generation clashes with millennials and generation Z over what America's role in the world should be. Each generation has competing visions, concerning what America's role in the world should be.

Kruger fears that partisanship could mitigate each generation's view of America's role on the international stage in the future. Will democrats be as opposed to engagement in foreign policy as they are under this Republican administration?

Kruger asserts that the millennial view of America's engagement in foreign policy is not naive. He asserts that the millennial view has been shaped by experience seen by the millennial generation such as Iraq and Libya. Thrall asserts that difference in views of foreign policy is not an age thing, because the only time the difference shows up is in the views on military engagement.

Kruger and Thrall agreed that moving forward we need to develop a "more realistic view of America's role" on the international stage without throwing out the good parts, of the previous generations overall view on American foreign policy.