

NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT

RESULTS OF THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION'S 2011 NATIONAL OPINION SURVEY

GREAT DECISIONS 2011



F O R E I G N P O L I C Y A S S O C I A T I O N
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OPINION BALLOTS have been included with the Foreign Policy Association's *Great Decisions* since 1955 to enable participants to make their views known. Each year FPA sends the National Opinion Ballot Report to the White House, the departments of State and Defense, members of Congress, the media and concerned citizens.

about GREAT DECISIONS balloters...

A. How many years have you participated in the GREAT DECISIONS program (that is, attended one or more discussion sessions)?

This is the first year I have participated. 26%
 I participated in one previous year. 14%
 I participated in more than one previous year. 61%

B. What is your sex?

Female 59.5%
 Male 40.5%

C. Have you been abroad during the last two years?

Yes 51%
 No 49%

D. Do you know, or are you learning, a foreign language?

Yes 46%
 No 54%

E. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

Some high school 0.3%
 High school degree 1.4%
 Some college 9%
 College graduate 36%
 Advanced degree 53%

F. How often are you asked for your opinion on foreign policy?

Often 16%
 Sometimes 49%
 Hardly ever 35%

G. How many hours, on average, do you spend reading one GREAT DECISIONS chapter?

Less than 1 hr. 14%
 1–2 hrs. 60%
 3–4 hrs. 23%
 More than 4 hrs. 3%

H. Do you have access to the internet (check all that apply)?

Yes, at home. 69%
 Yes, at work. 9%
 Yes, at school. 4%
 Yes, at the library or internet café. 14%
 No. 4%

I. Would you say you have or have not changed your opinion in a fairly significant way as a result of taking part in the GREAT DECISIONS program?

Have 49%
 Have not 29%
 Uncertain 22%

The NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT was prepared by the Foreign Policy Association: Karen M. Rohan, Editor in Chief; Leslie Huang, Assistant Editor

Ballots received by June 30 were tabulated by Peter Abrams Research Services, NYC.

(Totals may not equal 100% because percentages are rounded.)

Additional copies of this report may be obtained free of charge from the Foreign Policy Association, 470 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016-6819.

To find out more about GREAT DECISIONS or to access this report, please visit www.fpa.org.

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Ballot Report Highlights

OPINION BALLOTS are included in each GREAT DECISIONS, a 120-page briefing book prepared annually by the nonpartisan, not-for-profit Foreign Policy Association. This year, 20,061 ballots were returned by Great Decisions program participants, who took part in the study and discussion of eight major foreign policy topics. An average of 2,500 ballots were returned for a given topic. The five states whose residents submitted the largest number of ballots are, in decreasing order, Florida, California, New York, Colorado and Arizona, accounting for approximately 43 percent of all ballots submitted. The largest number of ballots were returned for the “rebuilding Haiti” and “national security” topics.

The ballots cast by participants in the Foreign Policy Association’s study and discussion programs include:

Support for:

- ✓ An emphasis on counterinsurgency capability (COIN) in addition to traditionalist military strategy
- ✓ Channeling aid to Haiti through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- ✓ Promoting the leadership of a strong Germany in Europe
- ✓ Prioritization of U.S. relations with Russia and Turkey over relations with other states in the Caucasus
- ✓ U.S. participation in international financial regulatory regimes
- ✓ Enlisting China’s influence to halt North Korean nuclear proliferation

Opposition to:

- ✓ U.S. military involvement in an international mission in Somalia
- ✓ Supplying arms to Georgia in light of Russia’s objections

Comments from Balloters

“Our group found the essays in the book informative, useful and thought provoking... and significantly added to our awareness and knowledge”

—balloters from Oakton, VA

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WHEN AN EARTHQUAKE devastated Haiti in January 2010, the United States and the international community responded with assistance. Nearly two years later, despite infusions of donor aid, hundreds of thousands of Haitians are still homeless and vulnerable to disease. With the uncertain political future of Haiti in the hands of the untested government of Michel Martelly, a majority of GREAT DECISIONS respondents favor the provision of aid through means other than direct aid to the Haitian government—43 percent of respondents favor delivering aid through NGOs, while another 16 percent support providing non-cash aid directly to those affected by the earthquake.

The results suggest a trend toward engaging with international challenges through multilateral rather than unilateral action. An overwhelming majority of respondents believe that the U.S. role in the rebuilding of Haiti should be limited to the context of the United Nations mission (42 percent) or through a multilateral regional process (42 percent).

Those surveyed appear to reject the prospect of a U.S.-dominated nation-building effort in Haiti, and only 2 percent of respondents believe the U.S. should take a direct leadership role in the reconstruction effort. Consistent with these results, a narrow majority of respondents, 51 percent, believe that decision-making about the reconstruction effort should rest with the Haitian people, with voluntary guidance from external sources.

ISSUE A: How should the U.S. government and the international community provide aid to Haiti? (Select one)

Directly to the Haitian government.	2%
Channel aid through NGOs, with initial pre-screening of NGOs.	43%
Give non-cash aid directly to the Haitian people.	16%
Provide 50% of aid to the government, 50% aid to NGOs.	23%
Other	16%

ISSUE B: As part of its assistance to Haiti, the U.S. should subsidize a program for Haitian expatriates living in the U.S. with appropriate skills to return to Haiti to help with reconstruction.

Agree	74.5%
Disagree	25.5%

ISSUE C: Decisions made with respect to rebuilding Haiti should be made by: (Select one)

Haitians should have the right to determine their priorities without external interference.	7%
Haitians should be the primary decisionmakers, with voluntary guidance from a select group of external organizations and individuals.	51%
Given limited government capacity, these decisions should be made jointly with equal veto power between Haitians and external representatives.	35%
Since money and resources will be external, these decisions should primarily be made by a select group of external representatives.	6%

ISSUE D: In the reconstruction of Haiti, what should be the extent of the U.S. role? (Select one)

Given its geographical proximity and U.S. capabilities, the U.S. should take a dominant leadership role with respect to Haiti’s rebuilding.	3%
It should be a regional process, but with the U.S. at the helm. The U.S. should have greater decisionmaking authority as the majority contributor of resources.	14%
It should be an extensively regional proceeding, with participation from nations across the hemisphere, and a multilateral decisionmaking process.	42%
Given prior experience with Haiti and nation building, it should be led by the United Nations through its stabilization mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH.	42%

TEN YEARS after September 11, 2001, national security remains at the forefront of American concerns. The U.S. faces winding down two costly wars and readying itself for emerging threats. Respondents are most concerned with the spread of nuclear weapons and homegrown terrorism, while North Korea and Yemen ranked among the least wor-

risome. A plurality of 49 percent believe the Obama Administration’s greatest priority should be reducing the defense budget or increasing taxes. In addition to trimming expenditures, an overwhelming 71 percent of respondents are in favor of a combination of counterinsurgency capability and traditionalist military strategy, with an emphasis on the former.

ISSUE A: In your opinion, which strategy should shape the future of the U.S. military? (Select one)

- Counterinsurgency capability (COIN), which recognizes the additional labor required to engage in “irregular warfare.” 15%
- Traditionalist strategy, which focuses on sustaining military capability and combined arms warfare. 4%
- Both, with emphasis on COIN. 71%
- Both, with emphasis on traditionalist strategy. 10%

ISSUE B: In your opinion, which of the following policies should be the Obama Administration’s greatest priority? (Select one)

- Cuts in defense spending and/or raising taxes 49%
- Nuclear abolition 8%
- Containment of Iran 10%
- Resolution of the Israel-Palestine dispute 15%
- Denuclearization of North Korea 4%
- Other 16%

ISSUE C: Given that America’s fiscal imbalance is potentially the most urgent national security “threat” today, rank the following in terms of their effect on the general fear level in the U.S. (Rank from 1 to 7, with 1 being the greatest and 7 the least)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spread of nuclear weapons	31%	22%	18%	11%	8%	6%	4%
Cyberspace activity	21%	20%	16%	12%	12%	10%	10%
Homegrown terrorism	30%	21%	14%	10%	9%	8%	7%
Iran	9%	16%	22%	24%	18%	8%	2%
North Korea	3%	9%	16%	23%	24%	20%	6%
Yemen	1%	2%	4%	9%	17%	32%	37%
A disgruntled China	9%	10%	10%	11%	12%	15%	34%

ISSUE D: Which of the following aspects of the intelligence/security bureaucracy presents the most significant hindrance to the successful execution of post-9/11 security? (Select one)

- Excessive bureaucracy and jurisdictional disputes, such as those between different agencies and officials, such as Leon Panetta and Dennis Blair’s confrontation. 29%
- Lack of coordination/cooperation between agencies, such as problems with information sharing. 54%
- Outdated strategies from the cold-war era. 13%
- Other 4%

PLAGUED BY CIVIL WARS, genocide, starvation, piracy and state failure, the Horn of Africa is one of the world’s most troubled regions. In the face of these grim prospects, the international community has worked to stabilize Sudan. A broad majority of 66 percent of GREAT DECISIONS respondents reject the possibility of U.S. military involvement in a mission in Somalia, a result that suggests that balloters are turning away from the prospect of com-

mitting American troops to more overseas conflicts. Similarly, a total of 66 percent of respondents agree or agree strongly that the U.S. should stop trying to keep Somalia afloat. A smaller plurality of respondents, 46 percent, reject the option of providing assistance to Somalia in the form of military or economic aid. Taken together, these results are a strong indicator that GREAT DECISIONS respondents have lost their appetite for involvement in the Horn of Africa region.

ISSUE A: Would you support future U.S. military involvement as part of an international mission to address governance failures in Somalia?

Yes	14.5%
No	66%
Not sure	20%

ISSUE B: The U.S. and the international community should stop trying to reconstitute what has proven to be a failed state in the case of Somalia.

Agree strongly	15%
Agree	51%
Disagree	30%
Disagree strongly	4%

ISSUE C: Short of direct recognition, should the U.S. support the greater legitimization of Somaliland and Puntland by supplying direct economic and military aid to these regions?

Yes	23%
No	46%
Not sure	31%

ISSUE D: Rank in order of priority U.S. interests in the region: (1 being the highest and 6 being the lowest priority.)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Preventing al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups from establishing a base in Somalia.	33%	21%	16%	15%	13%	2%
Creating the conditions for effective domestic governance in Somalia.	16%	17%	24%	22%	20%	1%
Ensuring a stable and peaceful Sudan, regardless of the outcome of the referendum.	7%	17%	21%	30%	25%	1%
Humanitarian and economic aid for some of the poorest countries in the world.	24%	20%	23%	16%	16%	1%
Ensuring safe passage of oil and other goods travelling through the Gulf of Aden and the Bab al-Mandeb strait.	26%	26%	14%	13%	20%	1%
Other	13%	4%	9%	10%	11%	52%

THE INTERTWINED RELATIONSHIP between banks and governments has ensured that the effects of the 2007–08 financial crisis continue to reverberate through the world after three years. The catastrophes of Ireland and Greece have caused members of the eurozone to reevaluate the risks and benefits associated with the shared currency.

A narrow plurality of 44 percent of GREAT DECISIONS ballot respondents believe that the home governments of failed banking institutions should be accountable for international losses. A larger plurality of 50 percent of respondents believe that interdependence of governments and banks should be reduced, and a more decisive majority of 54 percent of respondents support U.S. participation in binding international financial regulatory regimes.

ISSUE A: In situations such as the Icelandic banking crisis, the failing bank’s home government should bear the burden of repaying losses incurred by its international investors.

Strongly agree	9%
Agree	44%
Disagree	39%
Strongly disagree	8%

ISSUE B: In your opinion, should there be a concerted effort to reduce the interdependence of governments and banks?

Yes	50%
No	28%
Not sure	22%

ISSUE C: Should the U.S. participate in treaty-based (binding) cross-border financial regulatory regimes?

Yes	54%
No	19%
Not sure	27%



"PUBLIC OPINION POLLS LOOK GOOD. INSTEAD OF HATING WALL STREET, PEOPLE NOW HATE BRITISH PETROLEUM."

HARLEY SCHWADRON

GERMANY'S STRONG ECONOMY has made it a bulwark of the European Union. Though Germany and the U.S. enjoyed a peculiar friendship after the end of the cold war, in recent years Germany has departed from its NATO allies—including the U.S.—by insisting on multilateral rather than self-interested foreign policy.

Although German and U.S. interests sometimes diverge, there is broad support among GREAT DECISIONS respondents for U.S. promotion of strong German leadership in Europe. A majority of balloters also believe that U.S. policy should focus on German interests, a result that suggests that respondents value the German-U.S. friendship highly.

Opinions are fairly evenly split, however, on the question of Germany's reduced military spending, an issue that affects the level of Germany's involvement in multilateral action such as NATO's campaign

in Afghanistan, as well as Europe's ability to defend itself against threats from Russia or elsewhere. Germany's opposition to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 had cast a pall on transatlantic relations, and Germany's nonparticipation in NATO bombing campaigns in Libya brought this controversial issue back to the fore in 2011. A plurality of respondents believe that Germany's reductions to its military budget will have no effect, but equal numbers of respondents believe that these budget cuts will leave Europe open to attack—or leave the door open for a militaristic Germany.

Because its economy has weathered the economic crisis better than many of its eurozone neighbors, Germany is in a unique position to influence European monetary policy and the terms of bailouts for countries like Iceland, Ireland, Greece and Portugal. Considerable challenges still face Germany at home, such as the rise of politicians opposed to multiculturalism.

ISSUE A: The U.S. should promote the leadership of a strong Germany within Europe.

Agree	70%
Disagree	13%
Not sure	17%

ISSUE B: Germany's insistence on austerity measures for crisis-prone countries as well as fiscal conservatism in its own country is, primarily: (Select one)

Ignorant of the needs of the troubled euro-zone economy and detrimental to the recovery of the global economy.	8.5%
Rational and conducive to a more responsible global economy in the future.	91.5%

ISSUE C: The impact of Germany's actions to reduce military spending is, for the U.S.:(Select one)

A positive step, lessening the threat of a resurgence of German militarism.	32%
Dangerous, leaving Europe vulnerable in the event of an attack.	32%
No real effect.	37%

ISSUE D: The impact of Germany's actions to reduce military spending is, for the U.S.: (Select one)

A positive step, lessening the threat of a resurgence of German militarism.	32%
Dangerous, leaving Europe vulnerable in the event of an attack.	32%
No real effect.	37%

ISSUE E: Should U.S. policy focus and prioritize issues of concern to Germany (i.e., climate change and international criminal law) in order to strengthen the political relationship?

Yes	62%
No	18%
Not sure	20%

SANCTIONS ARE an oft-touted tool of multilateralism, a bulwark of concerted action to thwart security threats, nuclear proliferation and rogue states that threaten the world order. Faced with the persistent cases of Iran and North Korea, the international community, through the UN as well as unilateral action, has imposed economic sanctions such as trade embargoes. Although the case of Libya in 2003 was a “success story” for sanctions and disarmament, sanctions have also been ineffective against intractable countries.

ISSUE A: To what degree do you feel that U.S./EU/UN economic sanctions against nuclear proliferators represent an effective policy tool for dealing with “rogue states” that pursue nuclear weapons? (Select one)

- They represent the best option available. 12%
- They are not necessarily the best choice, but one of the only tools we have. 68%
- They have proven ineffective time and again and are a waste of time and political and diplomatic resources. 20%

ISSUE B: To what extent do you feel that the current military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq are the main factor in discouraging U.S. military action toward Iran? (Select one)

- They are absolutely the main reason why we are not at war with Iran. 7%
- They are part of the reason, but other independent factors such as the economy and Iranian capabilities also play a role. 69%
- They are not really relevant to the discussion on Iran. 24%



GREAT DECISIONS respondents express skepticism about the effectiveness of sanctions: a decisive 68 percent of balloters believe that sanctions are not necessarily the best tool, but recognize that there are limited options available for dealing with rogue states. Furthermore, a majority of 55 percent of respondents believe that nonproliferation/containment is not a realistic policy goal. In the case of North Korea, over 60 years of persistent sanctions have not succeeded. A plurality of respondents believe that the U.S. should enlist China to combat the threat of North Korea.

ISSUE C: How realistic is the goal of nuclear nonproliferation and containing nuclear weapons to just the nine de facto nuclear nations on the scene today? (UN Security Council permanent members, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea) (Select one)

- This is a realistic goal that the U.S. can achieve by working with others in the common interest of global security. 24%
- Ideally, this is an achievable goal, but the U.S. has many other more important priorities to address, both at home and abroad. 22%
- This is ultimately an unrealistic goal. The temptation for other states to acquire nuclear weapons will prove too strong. 55%

ISSUE D: Which of the following U.S. policies would be most effective in stopping North Korean proliferation? (Select one)

- Signing a peace treaty with North Korea ending the Korean War that includes some kind of security guarantee for Pyongyang in exchange for destroying all nuclear weapons and technology. 22%
- Continuing to pursue a diplomatic solution through the six-party talks and bilateral talks. 36%
- Having frank discussions with China and doing whatever is necessary to convince Beijing to enforce comprehensive sanctions on North Korea and to use its influence to support U.S. interests. 40%
- Taking military action, whether it is a targeted strike or something more. 3%

THE CAUCASUS, a fragmented region between Russia, Turkey and Iran, has experienced serious failures in governance and development since the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991. Plagued by ethnic tensions, wars, and the looming threat of their northern neighbor, the nations of the southern Caucasus—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia—and the semi-autonomous republics of the northern Caucasus have a long road ahead of them. All-out war in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008, have further destabilized the region.

GREAT DECISIONS respondents seem to attribute the Caucasus’s strategic value to its neighbors: an overwhelming 78 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that U.S. relations with Russia and Turkey are more important than relations with the other nations of the Caucasus, and 72 percent of respondents indicated that these relations are the U.S.’s highest priority. Furthermore, balloters believe that the U.S. should heed Russian objections to arming Georgia, an ally, and 35 percent of respondents believe that U.S. policy should not actively challenge Russia.

ISSUE A: U.S. relations with the regional powers, Russia and Turkey, are more important and should have priority over relations with other states in the region.

Strongly agree	19%
Agree	59%
Disagree	20%
Strongly disagree	2%

ISSUE B: Since the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, Tbilisi has been actively seeking access to U.S. arms transfers. Should the U.S. supply arms to Georgia, arguably its strongest local ally, despite Russian objections?

Yes	19%
No	82%

ISSUE C: Rank in order of priority U.S. interests in the Caucasus: (1=the highest, 4=the lowest)

	1	2	3	4
Maintaining stable and productive relations with Russia and Turkey.	72%	18%	7%	3%
Maintaining some influence over Azerbaijan for reasons of energy security (e.g., to ensure that natural gas transit routes are not monopolized by Russia).	10%	41%	35%	15%
Promoting political and economic liberalization in the region. Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and improvement in the relationship between Armenia and Turkey.	18%	28%	30%	23%
	4%	12%	26%	58%

ISSUE D: In terms of involvement in the Caucasus region, the U.S. should: (Select one)

Limit its involvement to economic and development interests and leave it to Europe to get involved politically or militarily.	47%
Continue to promote economic and governance reform throughout the region, but not do anything that actively challenges Russia.	35%
Must maintain its presence in the Caucasus for strategic and economic reasons, including constraining Russia’s attempt to assert a “sphere of influence.”	18%

MULTILATERALISM has been a foreign policy tool for grappling with challenges ranging from climate change to financial reform. The U.S. and its allies have resorted to the option of concerted action when faced with resources that the world holds in common, or with states that could threaten the world order if left unchecked.

Nuclear nonproliferation is a primary concern of GREAT DECISIONS respondents, 41 percent of whom rank this issue as the most difficult. A plurality of

respondents believe that nuclear nonproliferation is the most challenging issue to address cooperatively.

At the same time, a majority of respondents, 66 percent, disagree or strongly disagree with the claim that the U.S. should abandon multilateral agreements that are not equipped with enforcement mechanisms. Consistent with this non-isolationist view, 78 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that the U.S. should address climate change, even if it comes at an economic cost.

ISSUE A: If the international community only has the time and commitment to cooperate on one of the issues discussed, which issue do you think most critically needs to be addressed at the global level? (Rank 1=most critical/Rank 5=least critical)

	1	2	3	4	5
Nuclear nonproliferation	41%	23%	14%	10%	12%
Climate change	28%	21%	16%	14%	21%
Global economic coordination	21%	21%	22%	21%	16%
Economic development	11%	16%	22%	29%	23%
Human Rights (e.g., R2P)	12%	17%	23%	23%	25%

ISSUE B: Rank the five issues discussed based upon your perception of how difficult they are to solve cooperatively at the global level. (Rank 1=most difficult/Rank 5=least difficult)

	1	2	3	4	5
Nuclear nonproliferation	36%	24%	18%	9%	13%
Climate change	30%	25%	17%	12%	16%
Global economic coordination	11%	18%	22%	30%	19%
Economic development	4%	12%	21%	32%	31%
Human Rights (e.g., R2P)	21%	21%	21%	16%	20%

ISSUE C: The U.S. must work toward achieving a binding domestic and international agreement on climate change that includes all major carbon-emitting countries, even at the expense of short-term economic growth and jobs in the U.S.

Strongly agree	35%
Agree	43%
Disagree	16%
Strongly disagree	7%

ISSUE D: The lack of enforcement mechanisms or punitive measures in multilateral agreements such as the NPT and Kyoto Protocol make them useless. The U.S. should not waste time pursuing voluntary cooperative agreements that are ultimately up to the signatory states to implement.

Strongly agree	8%
Agree	25%
Disagree	46%
Strongly disagree	20%

GREAT DECISIONS

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