



OPINION BALLOTS are included in each annual Great Decisions, a 112-page briefing book prepared by the national, nonpartisan, not-for-profit Foreign Policy Association. This year, 30,464 ballots were received from people who took part in study and discussion of eight major foreign policy issues, with roughly 4,000 participants, on average, sending in ballots for a given topic. The five states whose participants submitted the largest number of ballots are California, Florida, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Illinois, in that order.

THE BALLOTS cast by participants in the Foreign Policy Association's 2003 Great Decisions study and discussion program indicate:

Support for:

- ✓ The U.S. taking the lead internationally, but not acting unilaterally
- ✓ Increasing efforts in “nation building” in Afghanistan
- ✓ Pressuring the Saudis to root out terrorist elements
- ✓ Requiring American oil companies operating in Nigeria to pay for environmental damage they have caused
- ✓ Engaging China, but at the same time maintaining U.S. security commitments to Taiwan
- ✓ Washington ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Opposition to:

- ✓ Encouraging Taiwan's independence
- ✓ Continued U.S. farm subsidies and tariffs on imported agricultural products
- ✓ Withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan in the near future

Other Views:

- ✓ A preemptive policy frightens the whole world

- ✓ Let the Afghans do the “nation building”
- ✓ Support Saudi reforms and Prince Abdullah
- ✓ The U.S. should try to facilitate a reunification between China and Taiwan. Taiwan potentially could influence the mainland toward becoming a more democratic government

Topic 1

Since becoming the globe’s sole superpower with the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has been increasingly forced to deal with redefining its leadership role in the world. Almost two years after the horrific events of 9/11, six out of ten participants in Great Decisions 2003 discussion groups feel the U.S. should be the most active of leading nations, with the number of voters sharing that belief being the greatest in Virginia and Illinois, representing two very different segments of the country. But when it came to the question of how the U.S. should determine its policies on issues such as international terrorism or weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, almost 80% indicated that the U.S. should take into account the interests of its allies.

Ballot submitters favored the U.S. signing on to the International Criminal Court without reservation by over 65%, with California leading the nation in support for joining. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization were considered by 50% of the balloters to have benefited poor nations; the other half felt the organizations had done more harm than good or that their contributions were a standoff.

ISSUE A. What kind of leadership role should the U.S. play in the world?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Single world leader | 3% |
| 2. The most active of leading nations | 63% |
| 3. About as active as other leading nations | 34% |
| 4. No leadership role | 1% |

ISSUE B. How should the U.S. determine its policies on such issues as international terrorism or weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? Should those decisions be based mostly on the national interests of the U.S., or should they strongly take into account the interests of its allies?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Mostly U.S. national interests | 20% |
|-----------------------------------|-----|

2. Interests of allies as well 80%

ISSUE C. Should the U.S. sign on to the International Criminal Court even if it does not guarantee the exemptions sought by the U.S.?

1. Yes 66%

2. No 34%

ISSUE D. Overall, have organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization done more good than harm for poor nations?

1. More good 50%

2. More harm 13%

3. Both equally 37%

ISSUE E. Do you believe that the U.S. is an exceptional and morally superior nation?

1. Yes 37%

2. No 64%

Topic 2

Although Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared “major combat activity” over in Afghanistan on May 1, violence continues to rack the nation and warlords remain in control of most of the country, with the exception of the capital city of Kabul. Almost two thirds of this year’s Great Decisions voters said the U.S. should do more in terms of “nation building” in Afghanistan, with a number commenting that the U.S. is obligated to help the nation rebuild. Over 80% of those voting opted for keeping U.S. military forces in Afghanistan for an extended period. As one balloter from Maryland put it, “If the U.S. withdraws its forces before rebuilding is complete, then all will be lost and we will have made a farce of our efforts.”

The message from more than 80% of Great Decisions participants is that the U.S. should assist the central government in extending its authority in areas controlled by Afghan warlords (known to the Pentagon as “regional leaders”).

Many are dubious about the outcome of nationwide elections scheduled for next year because they see “a long road” to be traveled from the conditions of today to anything like a stable democracy.

ISSUE A. What should the U.S. do with regard to “nation building” in Afghanistan?

1. Do more 66%

- 2. Do less 8%
- 3. Is doing the right amount 26%

ISSUE B. Should the U.S. keep military forces in Afghanistan for an extended period, or should the U.S. withdraw them soon?

- 1. Keep forces 81%
- 2. Withdraw forces 19%

ISSUE C. Should the U.S. continue to work closely with Afghan warlords, or should the U.S. help the central government extend its authority in areas controlled by those warlords?

- 1. Work closely with warlords 18%
- 2. Extend authority of central government 82%

ISSUE D. How much will elections scheduled for 2004 help Afghanistan become a stable democracy?

- 1. A great deal 11%
- 2. Somewhat 75%
- 3. Not at all 14%

ISSUE E. So far, has the war against terrorist organizations in Afghanistan been more a success or more a failure?

- 1. Success 70%
- 2. Failure 30%

Topic 3

Two years after 9/11, terrorism continues to dominate opinions of Saudi Arabia among Great Decisions 2003 respondents. One voter wrote “Do not treat Saudi Arabia with kid gloves anymore,” a view that appears largely universal, with nearly 90% of all voters supporting “strict enforcement of visa and residency requirements with regard to Saudi visitors.” There is similar support for the U.S. to be tougher in U.S.-Saudi relations, with 88% favoring the application of “relentless” pressure on the Saudi government to fight terrorism.

The availability of oil seems to be a minor issue for most voters, with three fourths of all participants saying that confronting terrorism was more important than maintaining the current oil supply. This result suggests there is a growing belief among Great Decisions readers that oil is a shackle on the U.S.; as one voter succinctly noted, “We need to wean ourselves off oil.”

Over 90% support “greater efforts to foster U.S.-Saudi understanding,” and only 7% favor the “termination of normal relations.” Although Riyadh has been difficult to deal with at times during the past two years, most voters place a premium on U.S. involvement in Saudi Arabia, since, as one participant noted, “it’s best to keep our foot in the door.”

ISSUE A. Do you support or oppose the following measures with regard to U.S.-Saudi relations?

	YES	NO
1. Strict enforcement of visa and residency requirements with regard to Saudi visitors	90%	10%
2. Removal of all U.S. military assets from Saudi soil	40%	60%
3. Relentless pressure on the Saudi government to root out elements supporting terrorism	88%	12%
4. Legal pursuit of civil damages by 9/11 survivors from Saudi individuals and institutions	48%	52%
5. Termination of normal relations with Saudi Arabia, as an “enemy nation”	7%	93%
6. Greater efforts to foster U.S.-Saudi understanding, with a view toward building a stronger relationship	92%	8%

ISSUE B. What is the most important factor to consider in approaching the U.S.-Saudi relationship?

1. Maintaining the availability of relatively cheap oil	19%
2. Preserving a staging ground for overthrowing Saddam Hussein	5%
3. Working to end Saudi support for terrorism	76%

ISSUE C. Confronting Islamic terrorism is more crucial to U.S. safety and security than:

	YES	NO
1. Ensuring current levels of petroleum supply	77%	23%
2. Sustaining support for the Israeli government	65%	35%
3. Maintaining bilateral relations with other U.S. allies	37%	63%
4. Retaining pre-9/11 civil liberties in the U.S.	36%	64%
5. Preserving U.S. forces from harm in overseas conflicts	46%	54%

Topic 4

Participants in Great Decisions 2003 favor positive action by the U.S. government to help Nigeria and its people deal with environmental damage, overwhelming debt and human-rights strife. The U.S. and Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and America's major trading partner on that continent, share an interest in helping Nigerians harness their own wealth to achieve development while building a stable democratic system.

A full 85% of all respondents said the U.S. should require all American oil companies operating in Nigeria to pay for environmental damage for which they were responsible. Three fifths favor supporting an immediate moratorium on Nigeria's foreign debt, leading to a cancellation of some of its loans, and just over three quarters voted for the U.S. to press Nigeria harder on human-rights abuses, without regard to relations with the regime in power or dependable oil supplies.

ISSUE A. Should the U.S. require American oil companies doing business in Nigeria to pay for environmental damage caused by their operations?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 85% |
| 2. No | 15% |

ISSUE B. What kind of military cooperation should the U.S. maintain with Nigeria?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Training Nigerian forces for
multilateral peacekeeping operations | 53% |
| 2. Bilateral ties with Nigeria's military | 16% |
| 3. None at all | 31% |

ISSUE C. Should the U.S. support an immediate moratorium on Nigeria's foreign debt, leading to a cancellation of some of its loans?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 59% |
| 2. No | 41% |

ISSUE D. Should the U.S. press Nigeria harder on human-rights abuses even if that jeopardizes good relations with the regime in power and reliable oil supplies?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 77% |
| 2. No | 23% |

Topic 5

It is interesting to note that the author of this piece states that “more than half of all Americans...say it is bad to scientifically alter fruits and vegetables” yet in Great Decisions 2003 polling only 27% said they thought genetically modified food products did more harm than good. In Florida, with the second-largest number of returns, the percentage dropped to 16%.

Balloters heavily shared the opinion (70%) that the U.S. should work at opening its markets to Third World farm products, even if it hurts U.S. producers. And they were virtually of a mind (90%) that U.S. farm subsidies and tariffs on imported agricultural products penalized Third World nations.

Amongst all voters, 93% saw widespread famine as still a serious prospect in many parts of the world. Commenters cited “distribution” and the “fickleness of weather” as especially threatening factors.

ISSUE A. Should the U.S. do more to open its markets to agricultural products of the Third World even if that hurts U.S. producers?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 70% |
| 2. No | 30% |

ISSUE B. Do U.S. farm subsidies and tariffs on imported farm products hurt the economic prospects of Third World countries?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 90% |
| 2. No | 10% |

ISSUE C. Do genetically modified (GM) food products do more harm than good?

- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| 1. More harm | 27% |
|--------------|-----|

2. More good 73%

ISSUE D. What is your opinion of the Slow Food Movement?

1. Favorable 54%

2. Unfavorable 13%

3. No opinion 33%

ISSUE E. Is the specter of widespread famine a thing of the past, or is it still a serious prospect in many parts of the world?

1. Thing of the past 7%

2. Still a serious prospect 93%

Topic 6

Just as U.S.-China relations have generally improved over the past several years thanks to cooperation in both the war on terror and the North Korean nuclear crisis, so too Great Decisions 2003 participants seem to be taking an increasingly positive view of China. When asked what the principal thrust of U.S. policy toward China should be, a full 86% supported engagement, compared with just 76% in 1998. However, this year, 41% of respondents support linking trade with China to that state’s human-rights record, compared to just 35% in 2001.

Opinions on the Taiwan issue have remained largely the same over the past two years, although Great Decisions voters seem to hold contradictory views in some areas. While a vast majority (72%) support the U.S. continuing to keep its security and arms commitments to Taiwan at their current level, a nearly equal number (74%) are opposed to the U.S. making an “explicit pledge to defend Taiwan against an invasion from the mainland.”

Great Decisions participants have also stressed their belief in China’s ability to help restrain North Korea, with 88% stating that they felt China can do much to put an end to the North Korean nuclear threats.

ISSUE A. What should be the principal thrust of U.S. policy toward China?

1. Engagement 86%

2. Containment 14%

ISSUE B. What should the U.S. do about its arms sales and security commitments to Taiwan?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Increase them | 4% |
| 2. Decrease them | 24% |
| 3. Keep them about the same | 72% |

ISSUE C. Should the U.S. make an explicit pledge to defend Taiwan against an invasion from the mainland?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 26% |
| 2. No | 74% |

ISSUE D. Now that Taiwan is a democracy, should the U.S. encourage Taiwan's quest for independence?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 35% |
| 2. No | 65% |

ISSUE E. Should the U.S. link trade with China to the country's human-rights record?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 41% |
| 2. No | 59% |

ISSUE F. Can China do much to defuse the nuclear threat posed by North Korea?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 88% |
| 2. No | 12% |

Topic 7

Given the fact that the first half of 2003 saw relations between the U.S. and several major nations in the European Union sour over intervention in Iraq without explicit UN authorization, it is interesting to note that over half of all Great Decisions balloters consider the U.S.-EU relationship will be best described in the near future as a partnership.

Although two thirds of the respondents felt that in the long run the admission of 10 additional countries would more likely strengthen the EU, six out of ten did not think the union would become a superpower, at least not in the foreseeable future.

But curiously, almost two thirds felt the euro has become a serious rival for the dollar (comments characterized the two as "peers" and "partners" and pointed to the fact that the implication is not necessarily negative) and a hefty 96% want the U.S. to encourage the EU to deal more effectively with foreign and security policy.

ISSUE A. Is the admission of 10 additional countries, mostly in Eastern Europe, more likely to strengthen or weaken the European Union (EU)?

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1. Strengthen the EU | 65% |
| 2. Weaken the EU | 35% |

ISSUE B. Which outcome better describes the prospect for the U.S.-EU relationship in the near future: partnership or rivalry?

- | | |
|----------------|-----|
| 1. Partnership | 52% |
| 2. Rivalry | 48% |

ISSUE C. Is the European Union going to become a new superpower, or is that not going to happen in the foreseeable future?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Yes, European Union will become a superpower | 41% |
| 2. No, not likely | 59% |

ISSUE D. Should the U.S. encourage or discourage attempts by the European Union to deal more effectively with foreign and security policy?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. U.S. should encourage such attempts | 96% |
| 2. U.S. should discourage such attempts | 4% |

ISSUE E. Has the euro become a serious rival for the U.S. dollar?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 63% |
| 2. No | 37% |

Topic 8

In the global struggle for women's rights, the U.S. has not exactly played a spearhead role in word or in deed. Participants in this year's Great Decisions program favored by a nearly 9-1 margin the U.S. ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which has been waiting since 1980 for Washington's approval. And the vote was almost the same for reinstating funding for the United Nations Population Fund, a move, as many commented, that will do more for the stabilization of world population and avoiding the

destruction of the environment that any other single step.

Balloters were almost equally divided between the U.S. funding safe, legal abortions overseas (42%) and funding only family-planning programs (46%).

Interestingly, only 54% of the ballots indicated that concerns for women’s rights around the world should influence U.S. foreign policy. The 43% with reservations cited somewhat indirect ways to effect change: focusing on “human rights” and setting a good example in this country for other nations to follow.

ISSUE A. Should the U.S. ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 88% |
| 2. No | 12% |

ISSUE B. The U.S. withheld funding for the United Nations Population Fund last year. Should this funding be reinstated?

- | | |
|--------|-----|
| 1. Yes | 84% |
| 2. No | 16% |

ISSUE C. With regard to abortions and family planning overseas, the policy of the U.S. should be:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Fund safe, legal abortions overseas | 42% |
| 2. Not pay for abortions in other countries
but fund family-planning programs | 46% |
| 3. Neither pay for abortions in other countries
nor fund programs that promote abortions | 12% |

ISSUE D. How much should concerns for women’s rights around the world influence U.S. foreign policy?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| 1. A great deal | 54% |
| 2. Somewhat | 43% |
| 3. Not at all | 4% |