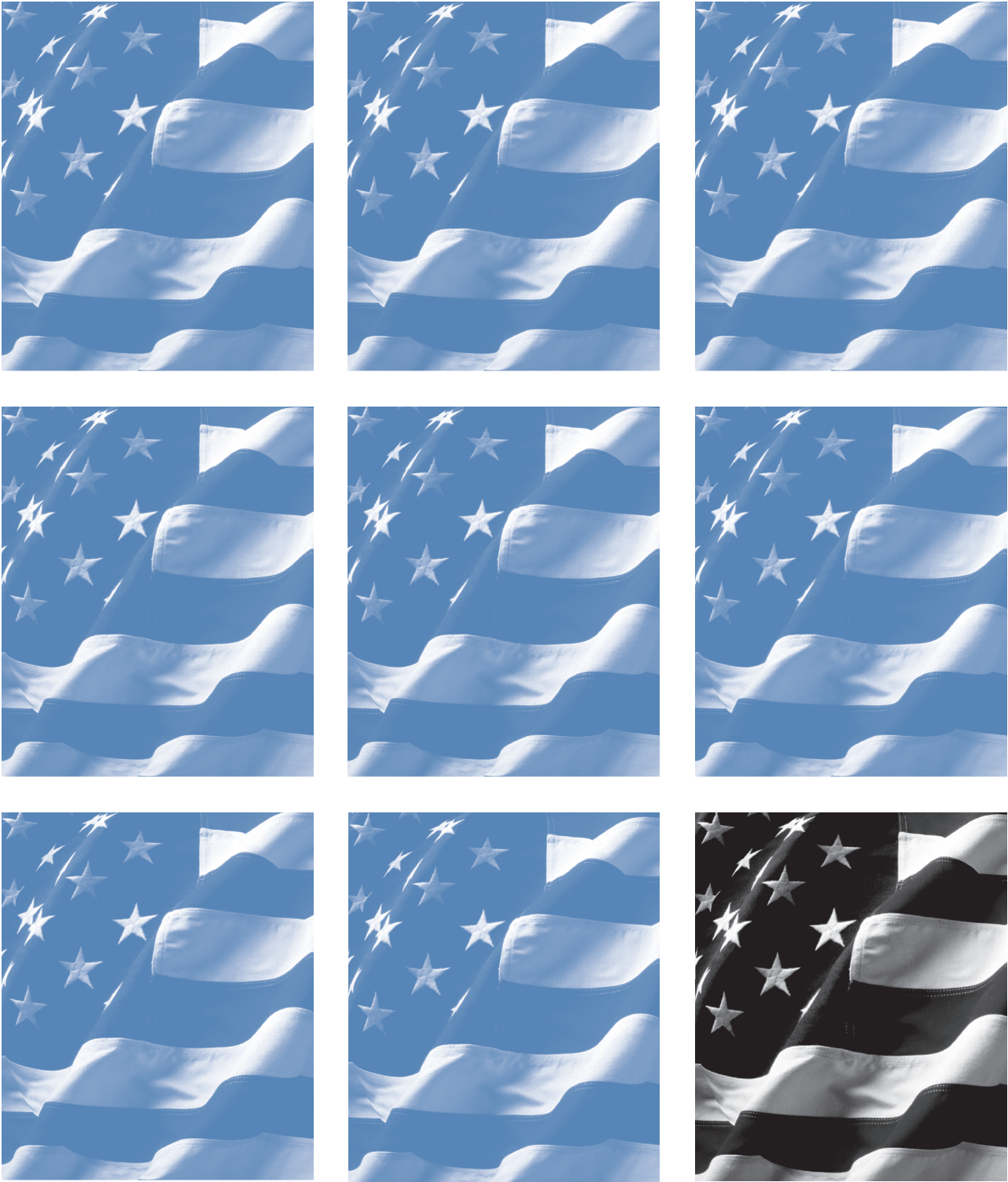


# NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT

*Results of the Foreign Policy Association's 2024 National Opinion Survey*

## GREAT DECISIONS 2024



**FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION**  
551 Fifth Avenue, 30th Floor • New York, NY 10176  
(212) 481-8100 • Fax: (212) 481-9275 • Web site: [www.fpa.org](http://www.fpa.org)

**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 BALLOTTERS...

**A. How long have you participated in the Great Decisions program (i.e., attended one or more discussion sessions)?**

This is the first year I have participated.	27%
I participated in one previous year.	20%
I participated in more than one previous year.	53%

**B. How did you learn about the Great Decisions program?**

Word of mouth	39%
Local library	26%
FPA website/brochure	2%
Other organization	33%

**C. Where does your Great Decisions group meet?**

Private home	3%
Library	43%
Community center	13%
Learning in retirement	13%
Online/Zoom	13%
Other	14%

**D. How many hours, on average, do you spend reading one Great Decisions chapter?**

Less than 1 hour	15%
1-2 hours	61%
3-4 hours	21%
More than 4 hours	2%

**E. 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	40%
Have not	30%
Not sure	30%

**F. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Although the media often reports about national and international events and developments, this news is seldom as interesting as the things that happen directly in our own community and neighborhood.**

Agree strongly	3%
Agree somewhat	9%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%
Disagree somewhat	34%
Disagree strongly	34%

**G. Generally speaking, how interested are you in politics?**

Very much interested	72%
Somewhat interested	27%
Not too interested	2%

**H. Do you think it is best for the future of the United States if the U.S. takes an active role in world affairs or stays out of world affairs?**

Takes an active role in world affairs	97%
Stays out of world affairs	3%

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

Often	20%
Sometimes	59%
Never	21%

**J. Have you been abroad during the last two years?**

Yes	63%
No	37%

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

Yes	56%
No	44%

**L. Do you have any close friends or family that live in other countries?**

Yes	66%
No	34%

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**M. Do you donate to any charities that help the poor in other countries?**

Yes	69%
No	31%

**N. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?**

Republican	11%
Democrat	58%
Independent	26%
Other	5%

**O. What is your gender?**

Male	39%
Female	60%

**P. What race do you consider yourself?**

White/Caucasian	92%
Hispanic/Latino	1%
Asian-American	2%
Other	3%
Prefer not to answer	1%

**Q. Were you born in the United States or another country?**

United States	89%
Another country	11%

**R. Are you a citizen of the United States or another country?**

United States	95%
Another country	1%
United States and another country	4%

**S. How important is religion in your life?**

Very important	25%
Somewhat important	24%
Not too important	24%
Not at all important	27%

**T. What is your age?**

29 and under	1%
30–49	1%
50–59	8%
60–69	24%
70–79	47%
80–89	21%
90 and above	3%

**U. Are you currently employed?**

Full-time employee	7%
Part-time employee	5%
Self-employed	6%
Retired	82%
Homemaker	1%

**V. Can you give us an estimate of your household income in 2022 before taxes?**

Below \$30,000	2%
\$30,000–\$50,000	7%
\$50,000–\$75,000	10%
\$75,000–\$100,000	13%
\$100,000–\$150,000	22%
Over \$150,000	30%
Not sure	1%

**W. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

Some college, but no degree (yet)	2%
2-year college degree	2%
4-year college degree	18%
Some postgraduate work, but no degree (yet)	12%
Post-graduate degree (MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, etc.)	66%



*The NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT was prepared by the Foreign Policy Association: Olivia Gross, Associate Editor and Tonya Leigh, Creative Manager.*

*(Totals may not equal 100% after rounding.)*

## BALLOT REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

This year's responses reflect opinions crafted after the study and discussion of each of the eight 2024 *Great Decisions* topics. The majority of ballot participants were middle or upper-middle class Americans over 60 and held an advanced degree. There were more female than male participants. They did not shy away from partisan politics either—most were Democrats, although Republicans and Independents were well represented.

*The ballots cast by Great Decisions participants indicate:*

### Support for:

- ✓ Accepting multipolar power dynamics in the Middle East.
- ✓ Global climate policy decisions being based on science.
- ✓ Ukraine joining NATO.
- ✓ The U.S. ratifying the High Seas Treaty.
- ✓ The U.S. helping other countries secure access to vaccines and medical supplies in the event of another global pandemic.

### Opposition to:

- ✓ Reasserting dominance in the Middle East.
- ✓ Using military force to defend a NATO-ally country that borders Russia from Russia.
- ✓ U.S. investors buying and owning Chinese defense companies.





## TOPIC I / MIDEAST REALIGNMENT

*The United States and the Middle East are at a crossroads. In spite of a reduced presence in the Middle East, the U.S. still has significant national interests there and the area is a key arena for global power politics. Can the U.S. continue to defend its interests in the Middle East and globally with a lower level of military and political involvement, or should it recommit to a leading role in the region?*

The United States has found itself in a difficult position as tensions grow within the Middle East. 70% of respondents showed that they support stable governments as opposed to democratic governments in the region. There was no clear winner of sympathy between Israelis and Palestinians, but 65% of participants thought that Israel and an independent Palestinian state could coexist peacefully.

This year, a majority of participants still support alliances that secure U.S. national interests rather than the advancement of democratic values. Most respondents did not believe that overthrowing Saddam Hussein advanced the U.S.' long term interests. Responses were split between normalizing Arab-Israeli relations and prioritizing the Palestinian issue. Almost all participants agreed that the U.S. should prioritize reasserting its dominance in the Middle East over accepting multipolar power relations in the region.

**A. In terms of the political situation in the Middle East, which is more important?**

Democratic governments, even if there is less stability in the region	30%
Stable governments, even if there is less democracy in the region	70%

**B. In the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, which side do you sympathize with more, Israel or the Palestinians?**

Israel	20%
Palestinians	22%
Both	49%
Neither	9%

**C. Do you think Israel and an independent Palestinian state could coexist peacefully with each other, or not?**

Yes	65%
No	35%

**D. In retrospect, do you believe that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein advanced the long term interests of the United States?**

Yes	16%
No	84%

**E. Should the United States prioritize alliances in the Middle East that help to secure U.S. national interests even if those allies are authoritarian or should the advancement of democratic values take priority?**

Prioritize alliances	65%
Prioritize democratic values	35%

**F. Should the United States prioritize fostering the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states with the expectation that a resolution to the Palestinian issue will follow or should addressing the Palestinian issue directly be the first priority?**

Prioritize normalizing Arab-Israeli relations	52%
Prioritize Palestinian issue	48%

**G. Should the United States prioritize reasserting its dominance in the Middle East or should it seek to manage the protection of core U.S. interests while accepting multipolar power relations in the region?**

Reassert dominance	6%
Accept multipolar power relations	94%

*“The most disadvantageous peace is better than the most just war.”*

**Desiderius Erasmus**  
*Dutch Humanist of the Renaissance*

## TOPIC 2/CLIMATE TECHNOLOGY

*Will the United States and China, with other powerful countries following suit, approach current and future climate initiatives with an increased commitment to trade protectionism and nationalism, by various measures including trade restrictions? Or could a growing spirit of international accord develop to confront the “common enemy” of climate change?*

The vast majority of ballot respondents asserted that investing in renewable energy is very important to the United States remaining competitive with other countries in the global economy. Furthermore, 70% of respondents strongly agree that the United States should fund renewable energy projects instead of “traditional” energy projects, even though the payoff takes longer.

Two-thirds of respondents think that nuclear power should be among the alternative energy sources used to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, as opposed to prioritizing renewable sources.

Interestingly, 76% of respondents appear to be optimistic about a full conversion to a net-zero carbon emissions economy. The pessimism returns, though, as most participants are concerned that a period of “natural resources nationalism” will impede access to the materials needed to fuel a move to clean electrification.

**A. How important is investing in renewable energy to the United States remaining competitive with other countries in the global economy?**

Very important	84%
Somewhat important	12%
Not too important	3%
Not important at all	1%

**B. How much do you agree or disagree that the United States should fund renewable energy projects over “traditional” energy projects, even if the payoff is not as immediately high?**

Strongly agree	70%
Somewhat agree	24%
Somewhat disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	3%

**C. In seeking to reduce dependence on fossil fuels due to the threat of climate change, should nuclear power be among the alternatives pursued or should renewable energy sources like solar and wind power be the priority?**

Prioritize renewable	33%
Include nuclear among alternatives pursued	67%

**D. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the ability to maintain economic growth while converting to a net-zero carbon emissions economy?**

Optimistic	76%
Pessimistic	24%

**E. How concerned are you that a period of “natural resources nationalism” will impede global access to rare earth minerals and metals needed to fuel a move to clean electrification?**

Very concerned	39%
Somewhat concerned	50%
Not very concerned	8%
Not concerned at all	3%

*“I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.”*

**Greta Thunberg**  
*Swedish Activist*

## TOPIC 3/SCIENCE ACROSS BORDERS

*Scientific advances benefit from collaboration between researchers, but what happens when material is controversial and important to a nation's national security? Is there a middle ground between sharing information and denying access?*

Balloters had strong opinions on the questions circling global science research. 63% said that there should not be a global moratorium on Solar Radiation Management Research. Furthermore, 76% of voters think that governments should oversee Solar Radiation Management systems through strong regulation and oversight of private industry, while 15% think that private industry should operate the systems with some government oversight. Less than 10% of participants wanted the systems to be either completely operated by governments or industry.

Even more staunchly, 94% of participants voted that global climate policy decisions should indeed be made based on science, instead of the lead decision-makers like governments and industries. For this vote, science has won.

### **A. Should there be a global moratorium on Solar Radiation Management research?**

Yes	37%
No	63%

### **B. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has placed science at the heart of global negotiations around the climate crisis. But scientists are not the lead decision-makers, and powerful actors like governments and industries don't follow the science. Should global climate policy decisions be made based on science?**

Yes	94%
No	6%

### **C. In regard to the development of Solar Radiation Management (SRM) systems, what should the role of government and private industry be?**

Government should operate all SRM systems	7%
Government should oversee SRM systems through strong regulation and oversight of private industry	76%
Private industry should operate SRM systems with some government oversight	15%
SRM systems should be left to industry	2%

*“Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world.”*

**Louis Pasteur**  
*French Chemist*



## TOPIC 4/U.S.-CHINA TRADE RIVALRY

*China's economic rise and its current policies of increasing the role of the state in the economy have led some U.S. policymakers to seek to deny China access to U.S. technology and investment. How effective can this be?*

Balloters were fairly split on how they considered China in relation to the United States, with 55% calling it a rival, 42% calling it a threat, and only 3% calling it an ally. They remained split when predicting the future of China, with 37% foreseeing China taking on the role the Soviet Union had during the Cold War as the United States' major rival, and 54% seeing them becoming one of the "poles" in a multipolar world order.

24% more voters are concerned with China's military strength than its economic strength, and 44% see it as a significant national security threat to the United States, with another 44% calling it a moderate threat.

Over three-fourths of voters think that U.S. national security should be a priority when dealing with China, but we should still explore business opportunity. In the same vein, voters were split between whether a U.S. denial strategy should attempt to slow China's military development or both its military and economic development.

Finally, 73% of voters asserted that U.S. investors should be prohibited from owning Chinese defense companies.

### A. When considering U.S.-China relations, do you consider China foremost as:

An ally	3%
A rival	55%
A threat	42%

### B. Given the rising strength and power of China in the international system, what do you expect a future China to look like?

Replacing the U.S. as the hegemon in a unipolar world order	3%
Taking on the role the Soviet Union had during the Cold War as the major rival to the U.S. in a bipolar world order	37%
Becoming one of the "poles" in a multipolar world order	54%
Domestic issues in China will prevent it from assuming a large global role	6%

### C. How worried are you, if at all, that China could become a military threat to the U.S. in the future?

Very worried	30%
Somewhat worried	55%

Not too worried	13%
Not worried at all	2%

### D. Which concerns you more about China: its economic strength or its military strength?

Its economic strength	38%
Its military strength	62%

### E. Currently, to what extent do you consider China to be a national security threat to the United States?

A significant threat	44%
A moderate threat	44%
A minor threat	10%
China is not a threat to U.S. national security	2%

### F. How should U.S. policy approach the threats and opportunities presented by China?

The focus should be exclusively on protecting U.S. national security	10%
U.S. national security should be a priority, while exploring business opportunity	77%
Business opportunities should be prioritized while being mindful of national security risks	12%
Business opportunities should be aggressively pursued	1%

### G. Given the potential national security threat, should a U.S. denial strategy attempt to slow China's overall economic development, its military development, or both?

Economic development	4%
Military development	42%
Both	47%
Neither	8%

### H. Should U.S. investors, and their asset managers, be prohibited from buying and owning Chinese defense companies?

Yes	73%
No	27%



## TOPIC 5/NATO'S FUTURE

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, NATO has come under increased scrutiny because of its role in relations between Russia and its neighbors. Will expanding membership in NATO protect countries, or will it further provoke Russia?

Given the recent election, in addition to the ongoing wars, NATO has only become more of a hot button issue. Many of the questions had a staunch divide, with voters generally in favor of the collaboration between NATO and the United States. 89% of balloters agree that the United States should use defensive military force if Russia were to get into a serious military conflict with one of its neighboring countries that is a NATO ally. With that said, 93% voted that the United States did indeed need to get involved in defending Ukraine against Russia.

A solid 90% of voters opined that NATO is still essential to American security, but were essentially split as to whether the United States should turn over its top management positions in NATO to Europeans. 80% of voters said that Ukraine should be allowed to join NATO, and a similar 83% said that expanding NATO membership should be viewed as a justifiable defense of Western security. The final question asked whether the West should have included Russia in helping design Europe's post-Cold War security structure, and 70% were in favor, while 30% opposed.

**A. If Russia got into a serious military conflict with one of its neighboring countries that is a NATO ally of the United States, do you think the United States should or should not use military force to defend that country?**

Should use military force	89%
Should not use military force	11%

**B. Some people say that NATO is still essential to U.S. security. Others say it is no longer essential. Which of these views is closest to your own?**

NATO is still essential to U.S. security	90%
NATO is no longer essential to U.S. security	10%

**C. Did the U.S. need to get involved in defending Ukraine against Russia?**

Yes	93%
No	7%

**D. Should the West have tried to include Russia in helping design a post-Cold War European security structure?**

Yes	70%
No	30%

**E. Should the United States turn over top management positions in NATO to Europeans, continuing as a NATO member, but not its leader?**

Yes	54%
No	46%

**F. Should Ukraine be allowed to join NATO?**

Yes	80%
No	20%

*"It's a victory when the weapons fall silent and people speak up."*

**Volodymyr Zelenskyy**  
*President of Ukraine*

## TOPIC 6/UNDERSTANDING INDONESIA

*Indonesia remains virtually invisible to most Americans. As one of the world's largest democracies, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation and as an economic driver of ASEAN, why does it fly below the radar?*

After reading about the place Indonesia holds in the world right now, voters voiced their opinions about the country's status. When asked about Indonesia's role in The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 85% of respondents said that they play a very important one.

The rest of the questions held more middle ground. 45% of respondents think that U.S.-Indonesia relations should focus on expanding the regional stability in Southeast Asia, and 39% think that focus should lie with trade and economic development. Another 9% turn to combating Chinese influence, and only 1% want the focus to be on global terrorism.

In looking at Indonesian politics, 26% of voters believe that Indonesian leaders should adhere to democratic principles instead of authoritarian ones. 59% thought it was somewhat important, 14% thought it was not very important, and 1% thought not important at all. Lastly, in considering President Widodo's protectionist policies around Indonesia's nickel industry, 61% of our respondents think that Indonesia has the right to protect the industry despite contradicting World Trade Organization rules.

### A. Expansion of U.S.-Indonesia relations should focus on which issue?

Trade and economic development	39%
Global terrorism	1%
Regional stability in Southeast Asia	45%
Combating China's influence	9%
Other	6%

### B. How important is Indonesia's role in ASEAN?

Very important	85%
Somewhat important	15%

### C. Despite having elections, Indonesia's political leadership is often authoritarian. How important is it for U.S. foreign policy interests that Indonesia's leaders better adhere to democratic principles?

Very important	26%
Somewhat important	59%
Not very important	14%

## TOPIC 7/HIGH SEAS TREATY

*The high seas are facing a degradation of ecosystems due to climate change and the increase in human activities, such as shipping, overfishing, pollution, and deep sea mining. The High Seas Treaty aims to address these issues, but how difficult will it be to convince nations to participate?*

The High Seas Treaty is meant to address the harmful effects of climate change on our oceans by having many nations commit to following a set of rules. 77% of respondents believe that it is very important for the Treaty to go into effect, 20% said it is somewhat important, and only 3% were less enthused. Despite this clear majority of support, only 4% of readers were very optimistic that it would actually go into effect. 64% were somewhat optimistic, 26% were somewhat pessimistic, and 5% were very pessimistic. However, all but 5% of respondents were certain that the United States should, in fact, ratify the High Seas Treaty.

There were many different opinions about which is the most pressing ocean policy issue. Just barely, with 21% of votes, the winner was the loss of biodiversity. Next up was sustainability of fish stocks with 20%, followed by rising sea levels with 18%, transit and shipping access with 17%, undersea mineral and other natural resources with 11%, and claims on the Arctic with 5%.

### A. In your opinion, which of the following is the most pressing ocean policy issue?

Undersea mineral and other natural resources	11%
Transit and shipping access	17%
Sustainability of fish stocks	20%
Rising sea levels	18%
Loss of biodiversity	21%
Claims on the Arctic	5%
Other	8%

### B. How important is it that the High Seas Treaty go into effect?

Very important	77%
Somewhat important	20%
Not that important	2%
Not important at all	1%

**C How optimistic are you that the High Seas Treaty will be effective at protecting the environment?**

Very optimistic	4%
Somewhat optimistic	64%
Somewhat pessimistic	26%
Very pessimistic	5%

**D. Do you think the U.S. should ratify the High Seas Treaty?**

Yes	95%
No	5%



**TOPIC 8/PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS**

*There are many lessons to take away from the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of domestic and international policies. Although this pandemic seems to have waned, how can we apply these lessons to future pandemics? Will countries cooperate?*

The Covid-19 pandemic was one of the worst crises of this century, but provided countless important lessons about dealing with future disasters. An astounding 98% of participants agreed that the United States should help other countries secure access to vaccines in the event of a global pandemic. However, only 55% thought that the United States should count combating global outbreaks as a top priority. 44% thought that it should be important, but not a top priority. A vast majority of participants strongly agreed that Americans would be better off if the United States were to invest in global health research.

Participants were again split on whether the United States should sacrifice national sovereignty in exchange for global solidarity in the face of a global health crisis. 53% thought that global solidarity should be prioritized while being mindful of other sacrifices, 21% thought that global solidarity should be our top priority, another 21% thought that national sovereignty should be the true top priority while gently pursuing solidarity.

**A. In terms of what the U.S. government could spend on foreign aid, do you think combating global outbreaks of diseases like Ebola or Zika should be one of the top priorities, important but not a top priority, or not that important?**

One of the top priorities	55%
Important but not a top priority	44%
Not that important	1%

**B. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Americans will be better off if the U.S. government invests in global health research?**

Strongly agree	81%
Somewhat agree	15%
Somewhat disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	0%

**C. Should the United States help other countries secure access to vaccines, medicines, and medical supplies in the event of a global pandemic?**

Yes	98%
No	2%

**D. The International Pandemic Agreement now under negotiation would promote global solidarity in the face of a global health crisis while at the same time obligating signers to a certain course of action thus reducing national sovereignty. To what extent do you believe the U.S. should sacrifice national sovereignty in exchange for global solidarity in the face of a global health crisis?**

Global solidarity should be the top priority	21%
Global solidarity should be prioritized while being mindful of sacrifices to national sovereignty	53%
Global solidarity should be pursued, but national sovereignty should always be a priority	21%
National sovereignty should not be compromised	4%



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