

CAPITOL FORUM

NEBRASKA - 2014

The first years of the 21st century have been tumultuous. As Americans we are rethinking our role in the world. The Capitol Forum engages high school students in consideration of our nation's future at this demanding moment in history. At the heart of the Capitol Forum is an exploration of four distinct visions for the United States in the coming years.

WHAT STATEMENT DO YOU MOST AGREE WITH?

RANKED #4

OPTION 1
Lead the World to
Democracy

Although the world is changing rapidly, the United States remains the most powerful country on earth. For years, the international community has depended on us to maintain order and support the principles of democracy and free trade. Globalization has created new threats to the international system, and the United States needs to use its strong military to address these threats. The United States should seek to dictate global economic and political policy, and transform undemocratic regimes into governments based on U.S. political principles.

RANKED #3

OPTION 2
Protect U.S. Global
Interests

We live in a dangerous and unstable world. U.S. foreign policy must strive for order and security. International terrorism, change in the Middle East, poverty, and globalization have created an international minefield for U.S. leaders. We must concentrate on protecting our own security, cultivating key trade relationships, ensuring our access to crucial raw materials, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to unfriendly nations or to terrorist networks. U.S. citizens have no choice but to accept the world as it is and respond pragmatically with whatever actions are necessary to keep our country safe and strong.

RANKED #2

OPTION 3
Build a More
Cooperative World

Today's world is interdependent and interconnected. We cannot stand alone. National boundaries cannot halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, international drug trafficking, or terrorism. We must end U.S. policies that contribute to global problems, and take the initiative to bring the nations of the world together in the pursuit of global security, human rights, and equality. We should lead efforts to strengthen and reform the UN. Using the UN is the best way to maintain peace, fight terrorism, address humanitarian crises, and enforce sanctions against countries that violate the standards of the international community.

RANKED #1

OPTION 4
Protect the U.S.
Homeland

The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought a new message to U.S. citizens: we are vulnerable. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars a year defending our allies in western Europe and East Asia and distributed tens of billions more in foreign aid to countries throughout the developing world. These high-profile foreign policy programs have only bred resentment against us and even fueled terrorism. It is time to sharply scale back our foreign involvement. We must turn our national attention to the real threats facing the United States: a sagging economy, loss of jobs, decaying schools, a shaky health care system, and inadequate resources to protect us against terrorism. We have to put our own needs first.

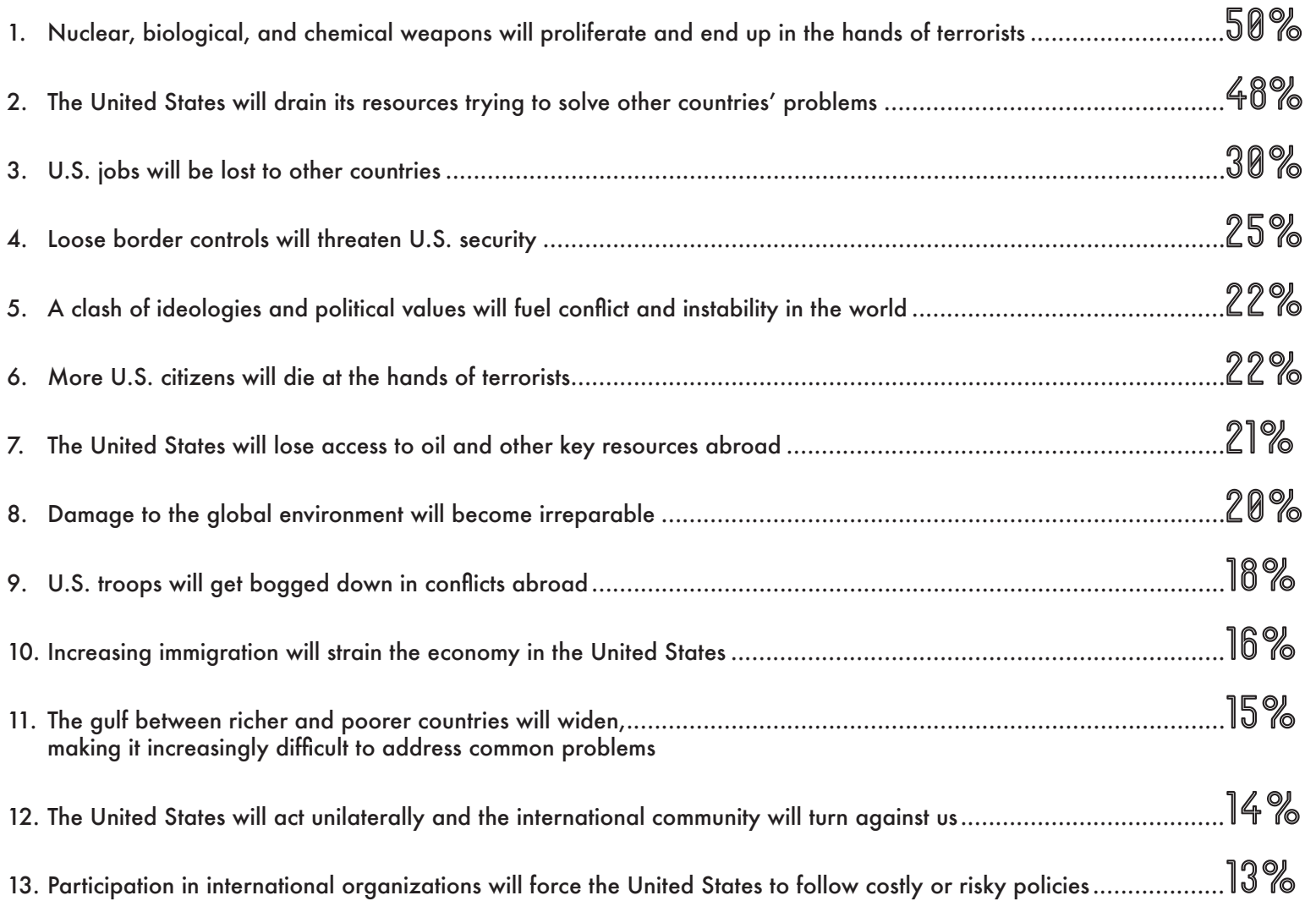
Ranking the Options [Based on 184 student ballots]

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
1st	14%	22%	27%	36%
2nd	25%	31%	26%	25%
1st/2nd	39%	53%	53%	61%
Last	34%	17%	24%	18%

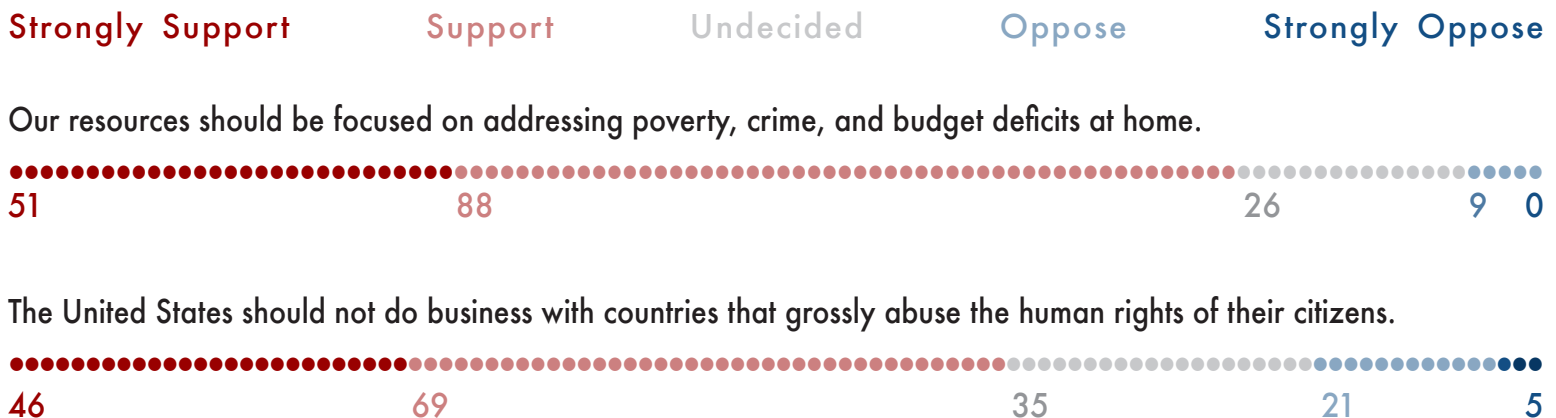


BROWN

WHAT 3 THINGS CONCERN YOU MOST?



WHAT BELIEFS DRIVE YOUR THINKING?



WHAT BELIEFS DRIVE YOUR THINKING?

Strongly Support

Support

Undecided

Oppose

Strongly Oppose

Any nation acting alone has neither the moral authority nor the capacity to right the world's wrongs.



The United States has no right to decide on its own to pressure another country to behave in a certain way.



Free trade and open economies are the best way to foster economic growth at home and around the world.



The greatest threat to our civil liberties comes from the limits we put on ourselves because of our fear of others.



Using our economic and military power around the world creates more enemies than friends.



In today's interconnected world, many serious problems can be addressed only through international cooperation.



The United States will always have to compete with other nations for power.



Trying to make deep changes in the way the world works is naive and dangerous.



The United States has a responsibility to spread democracy around the world.



What Should We Do?

Strongly Support

Support

Undecided

Oppose

Strongly Oppose

The U.S. should commit itself to the elimination of nuclear weapons even if this means that we will need to rethink our defense strategy.



The U.S. should accept fewer immigrants in addition to cracking down on illegal immigration, even if this deprives the U.S. work force of the talent and ambitions of newcomers and fuels anti-American sentiments abroad.



The U.S. should use its military—alone if necessary—to stop gross human rights violations, even if our traditional allies or the broader international community disagrees.



The U.S. should spend what is necessary to remain a military superpower, even if this means having less domestic spending, larger deficits, or higher taxes.



The U.S. should impose trade sanctions on countries that threaten their neighbors with aggression or contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, even if such sanctions harm U.S. trade relationships.



The U.S. should help negotiate strict international standards to address climate change and other environmental threats, even if compliance means paying more for cars, gasoline, and other products that contribute to pollution.



The U.S. should use military force to protect access to oil and other important raw materials, even when faced with opposition from our traditional allies and the broader international community.



The U.S. should support broadening the mandate of the UN and other international organizations, even if this means we are bound by the decisions of this community of nations and cannot act unilaterally except to defend itself.



The U.S. should increase financial aid to countries where poverty and despair are creating the breeding grounds of discontent, even if money needs to be diverted from domestic programs.

