

America's Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project
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Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight
Committee on Foreign Affairs
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I am delighted to have this opportunity to help this committee better understand how the United States is perceived throughout the world. I am not here to make recommendations about how to solve America's image problem, but to provide you with as much information as I can about the nature of that problem.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project is the largest ever series of multinational surveys focusing on worldwide issues. The project began in June 2001 with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to conduct an international survey on globalization and democratization. However, following the tragic events of September 11th, much of our focus shifted – we became primarily concerned with how America is perceived abroad and with global attitudes toward the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

I am here to tell you what we have learned over these years about international opinion of the U.S., including views of its policies, values, and people. Since our first poll in June 2002, we have interviewed in depth about 110,000 people in 50 countries. I believe it is fair to say we have been the first and foremost chronicler of the rise of anti-Americanism in the 21st century. Indeed, the headlines of our annual reports on America's image tell the story:

- December 2002 – America's image slips, although goodwill towards the U.S. remains
- June 2003 – U.S. image plunges in the wake of the Iraq war
- March 2004 – No improvement in U.S. image, some worsening in Europe
- June 2005 – U.S. image improves slightly, although still negative in most places; and anti-Americanism is becoming increasingly entrenched
- June 2006 – Show little further progress – in fact some back sliding. Even as the publics of the world concurred with the Americans on many global problems.

This survey highlighted the extent to which the Iraq war is a drag on perceptions of the U.S., even among publics of our oldest allies who largely agree with the U.S. on any number of threats to global stability including Iran and North Korea.

To give you some sense of the magnitude of the problem, favorable attitudes toward the U.S. declined in Germany, from 78% in 2000 to 37% currently. The numbers are similar in France, but even worse in Spain, where only 23% have a favorable view, and in Turkey, where it is 12%. Most people in these countries held positive views of the U.S. at the start of the decade.

Features of Current Anti-Americanism

Beyond the bottom line percentages I would like to describe to you what we have learned about nature of the anti-Americanism we see today.

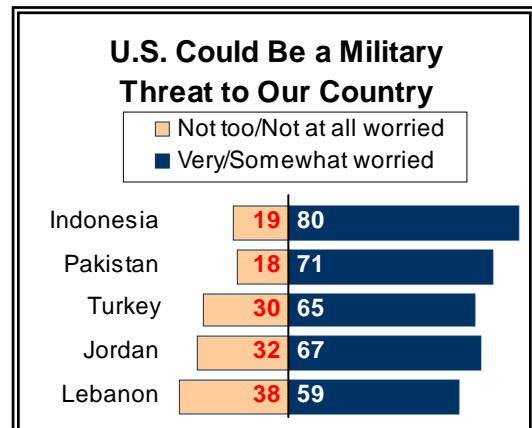
First, it is worldwide. This is not just a rift with our European allies or hatred of America in the Middle East. It is a global slide, and positive views of the U.S. have declined in other regions of the world, particularly in Latin America and Asia. Our 44-country 2002 poll found America’s image slipping in seven of the eight Latin American countries surveyed, while our 2006 survey revealed declines in Japan and India, two still relatively pro-American Asian powers. Other polls international polls, such as BBC and Gallup have confirmed the continuing world-wide nature of America’s image problem.

	1999/ 2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Great Britain	83	75	70	58	55	56
France	62	63	43	37	43	39
Germany	78	61	45	38	41	37
Spain	50	--	38	--	41	23
Russia	37	61	36	47	52	43
Indonesia	75	61	15	--	38	30
Egypt	--	--	--	--	--	30
Pakistan	23	10	13	21	23	27
Jordan	--	25	1	5	21	15
Turkey	52	30	15	30	23	12
Nigeria	46	--	61	--	--	62
Japan	77	72	--	--	--	63
India	--	54	--	--	71	56
China	--	--	--	--	42	47

1999/2000 survey trends provided by the Office of Research, U.S. Department of State

Second, while anti-Americanism is a global phenomenon, it is clearly strongest in the Muslim world. For instance, in all five predominantly Muslim countries included in our 2006 study, fewer than one-third of those surveyed had a favorable view of the U.S. Moreover, with the Iraq war, anti-Americanism spread to parts of the Muslim world where the U.S. had previously been relatively popular. In Indonesia, for example, between 2002 and 2003 America’s favorability rating dropped from 61% to only 15%. In Turkey it plunged from 52% in the late 1990s to 15% by 2003.

After Iraq, many in Muslim countries began to see the U.S. as a threat to Islam, and what had perhaps been loathing for the U.S. turned into both fear and loathing. A 2005 Pew study found that in all five majority Muslim countries surveyed, solid majorities said they worried that the U.S. might become a



military threat to their country. This includes 65% in Turkey – a longstanding NATO ally.

Third, among many people, anti-Americanism is an intensely held opinion, which makes it difficult to change. The first eye opener for me was a 2003 European Union poll that 53% of people in EU countries saw the U.S. as a threat to world peace. Strikingly, Europeans were as likely to say this about the U.S. as they were to say it about Iran and North Korea.

The 2006 Pew survey had similar findings. The British, French, and Spanish publics were all more likely to say the U.S. presence in Iraq poses a great danger to regional stability and world peace than to say this about the current governments of Iran or North Korea.

% saying 'great danger'	Iran	US in	North	Israeli-
		Iraq	Korea	Palestinian
	%	%	%	conflict
				%
U.S.	46	31	34	43
Great Britain	34	41	19	45
France	31	36	16	35
Germany	51	40	23	51
Spain	38	56	21	52
Russia	20	45	10	41
Indonesia	7	31	4	33
Egypt	14	56	14	68
Jordan	19	58	18	67
Turkey	16	60	6	42
Pakistan	4	28	8	22
Nigeria	15	25	11	27
Japan	29	29	46	40
India	8	15	6	13
China	22	31	11	27

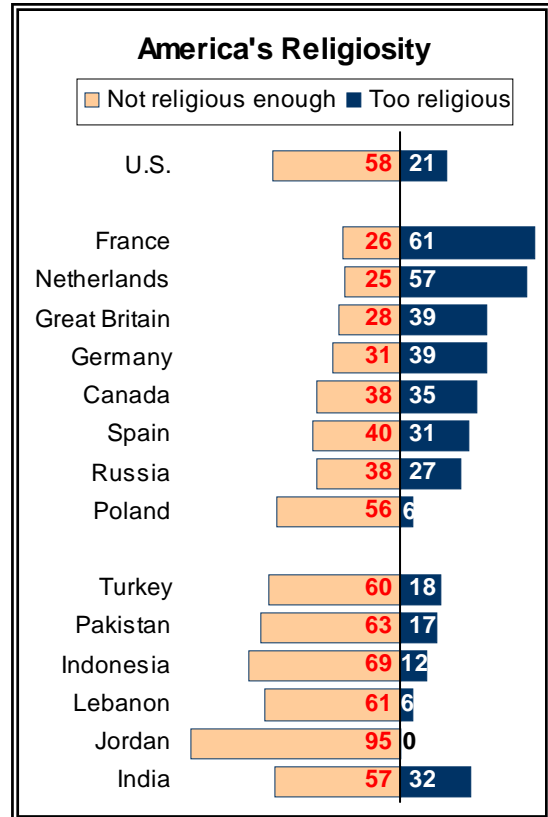
A fourth feature of contemporary anti-Americanism is that it is no longer just the U.S. as a country that is perceived negatively, but increasingly the American people as well, a sign that anti-American opinions are deepening and becoming more entrenched. In countries such as Spain, Jordan, Indonesia, and Turkey, favorable views of Americans have declined significantly in recent years.

In 2005, we asked people around the world about the kinds of characteristics they associate with the American people, and we found a somewhat mixed picture. On the positive side, we are widely seen as hardworking and inventive. On the negative side, in most of the countries surveyed, fewer than half said Americans are honest, while majorities said we are greedy and violent. Significant numbers also considered Americans rude and immoral.

	% very/somewhat favorable				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%
Great Britain	83	80	73	70	69
France	71	58	53	64	65
Germany	70	67	68	65	66
Spain	--	47	--	55	37
Russia	67	65	64	61	57
Jordan	53	18	21	34	38
Indonesia	65	56	--	46	36
Egypt	--	--	--	--	36
Pakistan	17	38	25	22	27
Turkey	31	32	32	23	17
Nigeria	--	67	--	--	56
Japan	73	--	--	--	82
India	58	--	--	71	67
China	--	--	--	43	49

One note about American greediness and our own self-image – while publics in Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere characterize Americans as greedy, we Americans are actually more likely than any other public to say we are greedy and many Americans think the description immoral fits too.

However, the biggest gap between American self-perceptions and how others perceive us is with regard to religiosity. In much of western Europe, the U.S. as a country is considered too religious – our 2005 poll found that majorities in France and the Netherlands and pluralities in Britain and Germany see the U.S. this way. By contrast, a 58% majority of Americans say their country is not religious enough. On this point, Muslims find themselves in rare agreement with the American public; majorities in Indonesia, Pakistan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan all believe the U.S. is not religious enough.



Causes of Anti-Americanism

There are a number of factors driving anti-Americanism around the world. Among Muslims, first and foremost is thinking that American policy is too supportive of Israel at the expense of Palestine. Even in Kuwait – an Arab and Muslim country that is relatively pro-American – 77% in a May 2003 poll said the U.S. favors Israel too much.

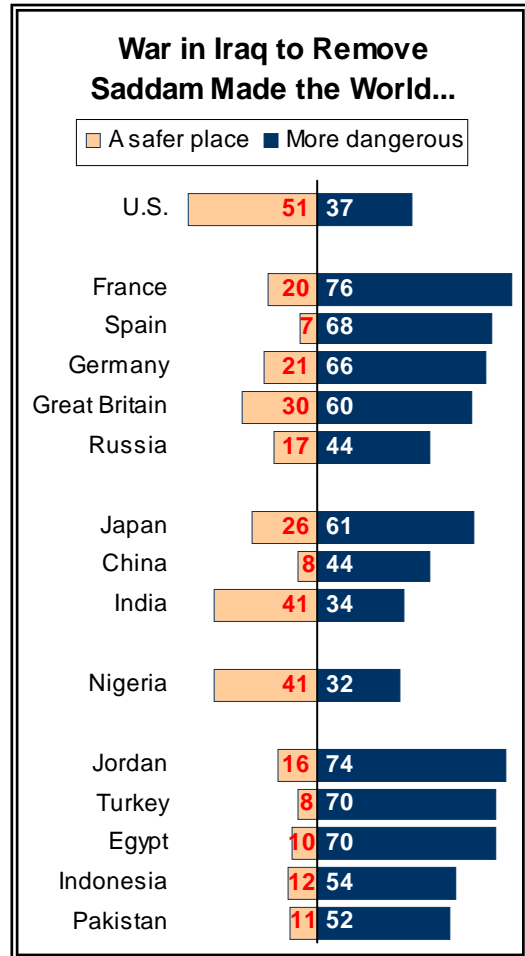
The U.S.-led war on terrorism is also perceived quite negatively throughout much of the Muslim world. Our recent polling has found declining support for America’s anti-terrorism efforts in many parts of the globe, but the war on terror has always been largely unpopular in Muslim countries, where it is seen as an American campaign specifically against unfriendly Muslim governments. For instance, a May 2004 Pew survey showed that 53% of Jordanians and 51% of Pakistanis believe the real purpose of the war

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
	%	%	%	%	%
Britain	69	63	63	51	49
France	75	60	50	51	43
Germany	70	60	55	50	47
Spain	--	63	--	26	19
Russia	73	51	73	55	52
Jordan	13	2	12	12	16
Indonesia	31	23	--	50	39
Egypt	--	--	--	--	10
Pakistan	20	16	16	22	30
Turkey	30	22	37	17	14
Nigeria	--	60	--	--	49
Japan	61	--	--	--	26
India	65	--	--	52	65
China	--	--	--	--	19

on terror is to target unfriendly Muslims governments and groups.

And of course, widespread opposition to the war in Iraq has intensified anti-American sentiments among Muslim publics. Our 2006 poll showed that majorities in Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, and Pakistan believe the war has made the world a more dangerous place.

All of this has created a situation in which anger at the U.S. is pervasive throughout much of the Muslim world. Overwhelming majorities in countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Turkey continue to dislike the United States. And dishearteningly, America's most visible enemy, Osama bin Laden, is viewed favorably by a significant number of people in many places, including nations such as Pakistan and Jordan that are key partners in America's efforts to combat al Qaeda and similar terrorist groups – the 2006 Pew poll indicated that 38% of Pakistanis and 24% of Jordanians have a lot or some confidence in bin Laden to do the right thing in world affairs.



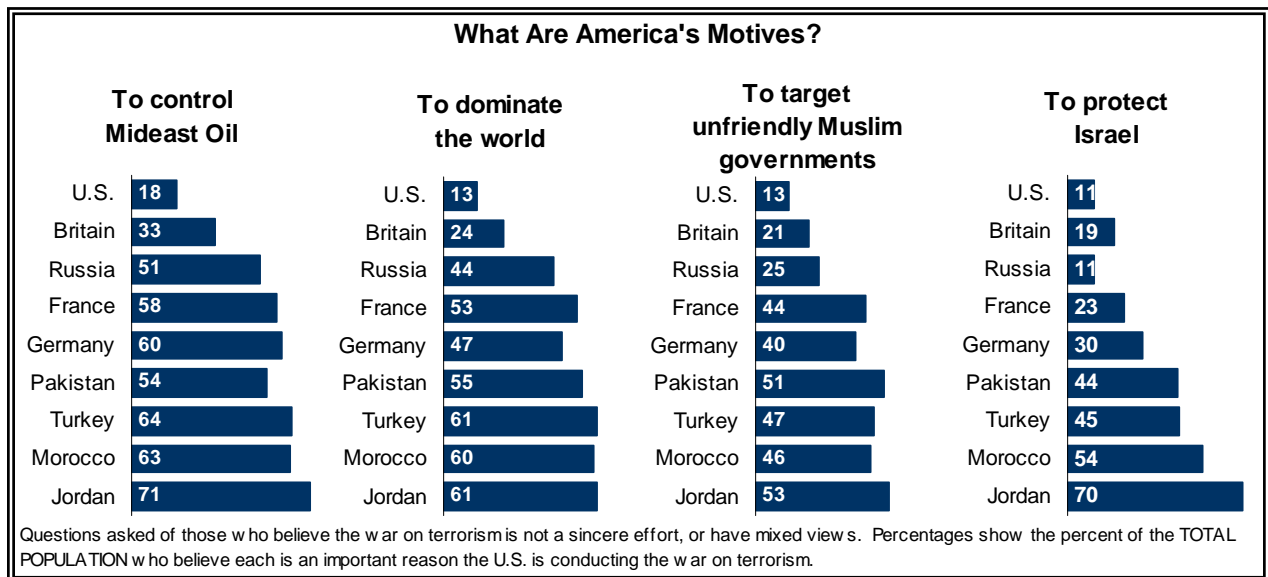
The 2005 Pew poll found that many in Muslim countries believe suicide attacks against Americans and other Westerners in Iraq are justifiable. Just over half of Moroccans (56%) and 49% of Jordanians think such attacks are justifiable. Even in Turkey, where bin Laden is unpopular and support for terrorism is generally low, about one-in-four say suicide bombings against Americans and Westerners in Iraq can be justified.

But, as we have documented, anti-Americanism is the case in much of the world, not just Muslim countries, and certain aspects of American power and American policy are central to this. First, there is a general perception that the U.S. acts unilaterally in the international arena, failing to take into account the interests of other countries when it makes foreign policy decisions. Our polling since 2001 has shown a growing perception that the U.S. acts unilaterally, and the war in Iraq has crystallized that opinion. In 2005, only 18% of the French, 19% of the Spanish, and 21% of Russians said that the U.S. takes into account the interests of countries like theirs when making policy.

In many countries there is a consensus that the United States is doing too little to help solve the world's problems. Americans however, disagree; in fact a plurality thinks we are doing too much. America's image also suffers from the perception that U.S. policies contribute to the gap between rich and poor countries. In 2002, majorities or pluralities in 38 of 43 countries, including a plurality of Americans, said U.S. policies add to the rich-poor divide.

When we ask people who have an unfavorable view of the U.S. whether this is mostly because of President Bush or a more general problem with America, in most countries they have tended to say it is President Bush – but less so since his re-election, according to our 2005 poll. Clearly, President Bush and his administration's policies have been lightning rods for U.S. criticism. At the same time, however, it is clear that this problem seems bigger than the feelings people may have about President Bush and his administration. Underlying much of the anti-Americanism we are witnessing is a broad discomfort with unrivaled American power.

Many people are resentful of American power. This came home to us well before the U.S. image plummeted in response to the war in Iraq. Shortly after the September 11th attacks we interviewed elites in 24 countries, and overwhelmingly they told us that many or most of the people in their countries were sympathetic to us over our losses, but as many said their publics “think it is good that Americans now know what it is like to be vulnerable.”



People are also suspicious of American power. In a 2004 Pew poll, majorities or pluralities in seven of the nine countries surveyed said the U.S.-led war on terrorism was not really a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism. This was true not only in Muslim countries such as Morocco and Turkey, but in France and Germany as well. The true purpose of

the war on terrorism, according to these skeptics, is American control of Middle East oil and U.S. domination of the world.

There are other factors that contribute to the rise of anti-Americanism. Looking at the divide between Europe and the U.S., it is particularly stark on questions about using military force, especially preemptive force. While Americans generally prefer containment to preemption, they nonetheless are much more willing to accept preemption than are Europeans. And our 2004 poll found sharp differences over the importance of multilateral approaches to the use of force – while majorities in Britain, France, and Germany think that when countries are faced with an international threat they should first get UN approval before using military force, a plurality of Americans disagree. Overall, Americans are more likely than Europeans to regard military action as a legitimate means of achieving international justice.

Our polling also indicates that in much of the world there is a rejection of “Americanization” – the wide diffusion of American ideas and customs fueled by globalization. On the one hand we find admiration for our science and technology and eager consumers of our popular culture, but on the other global complaints about Americanization. In 2002, majorities or pluralities in 35 of 42 nations said the spread of American ideas and customs to their countries was a bad thing. As we repeat these questions in coming months, I have little doubt that we will find a similar love-hate view of American exports.

In seeking to understand anti-Americanism, many commentators have emphasized differences between the U.S. and other countries over basic values, particularly the “values gap” between the U.S. and Europe. And it is true that Americans are different. We are more individualistic and we feel a stronger sense of personal empowerment than people in most countries. We are more likely to resist government efforts to restrict personal freedom. Consistent with our history as an immigrant nation, we have more positive attitudes about immigration than do citizens in much of the developed world. And our religiosity sets us apart – the U.S. is by far the most religious rich country in the world.

At the same time, compared to Europeans, we are more suspicious of the power of government, more nationalistic, much less supportive of a social safety net and less willing to sacrifice to improve the environment.

However, the values gap is no greater now than it was in the early 1990s when the U.S. was broadly popular. And while global publics acknowledge value differences with Americans, Europeans say their real problem with the U.S. is policy, not conflicting philosophical or ideological beliefs about politics and society.

I believe the true significance of the values gap is that it exacerbates policy differences. For instance, European reactions to President Bush’s “Axis of Evil” State of the Union speech in 2002 revealed serious foreign policy differences with the United States – differences that were intensified by a general unease among secular Europeans with the speech’s rhetorical mixture of political and religious themes.

With regard to Europe, there are few signs that Europeans want the kind of close relationship they once had with the U.S. Our 2005 survey found that the Spanish, British, Dutch, Germans, and French all wanted Europe to take a more independent approach from the U.S. on security and diplomatic affairs. And while the 2006 poll found strong agreement between Americans and Europeans about common threats such as Iran and Hamas, these shared concerns are not translating into greater trust in America among Europeans. Strikingly, China now has a better image than the U.S. in most of the European nations we surveyed last year.

Europeans Want Independence from U.S. in International Affairs

	<i>% Western Europe should be more independent</i>				
	<u>April 2002</u>	<u>March 2003</u>	<u>May 2003</u>	<u>March 2004</u>	<u>May 2005</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
France	60	67	76	75	73
Germany	51	52	57	63	59
Britain	47	48	45	56	53
Spain	--	60	62	--	50

Conclusion: A Difficult Global Environment, But Some Hopeful Signs

Our surveys have brought home to Americans and their leaders the challenges the United States faces in restoring our country’s image and its influence overseas. The U.S. continues to meet with widespread antipathy in many parts of the world, and in particular it faces strong and growing opposition to key aspects of its foreign policy. Nonetheless, our polling has also uncovered some hopeful signs, even in Muslim countries where the U.S. faces some of its most daunting challenges.

One frequently cited example of the U.S. turning around its image in a difficult environment is Indonesia, where U.S. humanitarian assistance following the horrific December 2004 tsunami helped improve America’s image in the world’s largest Muslim country. Prior to the tsunami, favorable attitudes toward the U.S. had plummeted in reaction to the Iraq war, however after the tragedy and the influx of American aid favorable views of the U.S. more

Tsunami Relief Boosts U.S. Image

<i>Feelings toward the US</i>	<i>U.S. tsunami relief effort</i>	
	<u>More favorable</u>	<u>Less favorable</u>
	%	%
Canada	69	17
Great Britain	44	24
France	51	33
Germany	66	23
Spain	46	23
Netherlands	62	23
Russia	61	6
Poland	43	8
Turkey	34	24
Pakistan	26	21
Indonesia	79	14
India	54	27

than doubled, jumping from 15% to 38%. Recently, we have seen a similar, although more limited, pattern in Pakistan where American aid following the October 2005 earthquake helped drive favorable opinions of the U.S. up slightly, from 23% in 2005 to 27% in 2006.

Of course, the impact of this humanitarian assistance should not be overstated – most of the same misgivings about America seen throughout the Muslim world can be found in Indonesia and Pakistan, and solid majorities in both countries continue to have a negative impression of the U.S. Nonetheless, these examples suggest that American policies can make a difference. Indeed, given the magnitude of negative attitudes towards the U.S. in the Muslim world and elsewhere, America’s image will only improve significantly if there are more positive international reactions to major American policies.

The real issue is the restoration of trust. The challenge is how to reverse the impact of images of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo that now shape the views of young people all around the world, as favorable depictions of America as defender of freedom in the 20th century did then.

