

In Search of PRO AMERICANISM

There has never been a more popular time to be anti-American. From Beijing to Berlin, from Sydney to São Paulo, America's detractors have become legion. But not everyone has chosen to get on the anti-American bandwagon. Where—and among whom—is America still admired, and why? Meet the pro-Americans. | By Anne Applebaum

I was in London on the afternoon of Sept. 11, 2001, a day when strangers in shops, hearing my American accent, offered their cell phones in case I wanted to call home. That evening, parties were cancelled. The next day, political events were called off. An American friend who lives in London received a condolence card from his neighbors, whom he'd never met—and he was not alone. Overwhelmingly, the first British reaction to the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York was deeply sympathetic, and profoundly pro-American.

But so were the reactions of many others, across Europe and around the world. Several days after September 11, I left London and returned to Poland, where I was then living. That evening I attended a concert in a provincial city. In the foyer of the symphony hall, someone had put up a large American flag and surrounded it with candles. At the start of the concert, the conductor announced that there would be a

change: Instead of the planned program, the orchestra would play only Mozart's *Requiem*, in honor of the 9/11 victims. These decisions were completely spontaneous and utterly apolitical: No one had reason to think that there would be even a single American in the audience. Within a few days, of course, a second reaction had set in. In London, a television studio audience attacked the former American ambassador on the air, accusing the United States of provoking international hatred and therefore bearing responsibility for the attacks. *The New Statesman*, an influential British left-wing magazine, ran a cover story, saying more or less the same thing. "American bond traders, you may say, are as innocent and undeserving of terror as Vietnamese or Iraqi peasants," the editors wrote. "Well, yes and no.... If America seems a greedy and overweening power, that is partly because its people have willed it. They preferred George Bush to both Al Gore and Ralph Nader." Elsewhere in Europe, then French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin had already urged the United States to be "reasonable in its response," and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder

Anne Applebaum is a columnist and member of the editorial board of the Washington Post.





Good deeds: U.S. aid to ravaged places like Banda Aceh helps its image abroad.

took it upon himself to remind the United States that “we are not at war.”

Since then, that initial trickle of post-9/11 anti-Americanism has grown to a flood. A Pew Research Center poll taken in February 2004, showed that 49 percent of French, 28 percent of Germans, and 12 percent of Britons had a “very” or “somewhat” unfavorable opinion of the United States. In January 2005, a poll published by the BBC showed that 54 percent of French, 64 percent of Germans, and 50 percent of Britons consider the United States a “negative influence” in the world. These numbers and others like them have spawned a mini-industry. Front-page news stories, television documentaries, and entire books have been devoted to the phenomenon of anti-Americanism, and there is no sign that interest is flagging. Earlier this year, *Newsweek International* once again put the subject on its cover, under the headline “America Leads ... But Is Anyone Following?”

Given all of the attention that has been lavished upon anti-Americanism in the past four years, however, it is surprising how little analysis has been applied to that first, spontaneous pro-American reaction to 9/11, and to pro-Americanism in general. After all, the population of some countries continues to show approval of the United States, of the American president, and of

U.S. foreign policy, even now. Even the most damning evidence, such as the BBC poll quoted above, also reveals that some percentage of the population of even the most anti-American countries in Europe and Latin America remains pro-American. Some 38 percent of the French, 27 percent of Germans, 40 percent of Chinese, and 42 percent of Brazilians remain convinced that the United States exerts a “positive influence on the world.” Who are they?

AMERICA’S BEST BEHAVIOR

Anecdotal, it isn’t hard to come up with examples of famous pro-Americans, even on the generally anti-American continents of Europe and Latin America. There are political reformers such as Vaclav Havel, who have spoken of how the U.S. Declaration of Independence inspired his own country’s founding fathers. There are economic reformers such as José Piñera, the man who created the Chilean pension system, who admire American economic liberty. There are thinkers, such as the Iraqi intellectual Kanan Makiya, who openly identify the United States with the spread of political freedom. At a recent event in his honor in Washington, Makiya publicly thanked the Americans who had helped his

BEAMHART/REUTERS



country defeat Saddam Hussein. (He received applause, which was made notably warmer by the palpable sense of relief: At least someone over there likes us.) All of these are people with very clear, liberal, democratic philosophies, people who either identify part of their ideology as somehow “American,” or who are grateful for American support at some point in their countries’ history.

There are also countries that contain not only individuals but whole groups of people with similar ideological or nostalgic attachments to the United States. I am thinking here of British Thatcherites—from whom Prime Minister Tony Blair is in some sense descended—and of former associates of the Polish Solidarity movement. Although Lady Thatcher (who was herself stridently pro-American) is no longer

in office, her political heirs, and those who associate her with positive economic and political changes in Britain, are still likely to think well of the United States. Their influence is reflected in the fact that the British, on the whole, are more likely to think positively of the United States than other Europeans. Polish anticommunists, who still remember the support that President Ronald Reagan gave their movement in the 1980s, have the same impact in their country, which remains more pro-American than even the rest of Central Europe.

In some countries, even larger chunks of the population have such associations. In the Philippines, for example, the BBC poll shows that 88 percent of the population has a “mainly positive” view of the United States, an unusually high number anywhere. In India, that number is 54 percent, and in South Africa, it’s 56 percent, particularly high numbers for the developing world. In the case of the first two countries, geopolitics could be part of the explanation: India and the Philippines are both fighting Islamist terrorist insurgencies, and they see the United States as an ally in their struggles. (Perhaps for this reason, both of these countries are also among the few who

perceived the reelection of U.S. President George W. Bush as “mainly positive” for the world as well.) But it is also true that all three of these countries have experienced, in the last 20 years, political or economic change that has made them richer, freer, or both. And in all three cases, it’s clear that people would have reasons to associate new prosperity and new freedom with the actions of the United States.

These associations are not just vague, general sentiments either. New polling data from the international polling firm GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland break down pro- and anti-American sentiments by age, income, and gender. Looking closely at notably pro-American countries, it emerges that this pro-Americanism can sometimes be extraordinarily concrete. It turns out, for example, that in Poland, which is generally pro-American, people between the ages of 30 and 44 years old are even more likely to support America than their compatriots. In that age group, 58.5 percent say they feel the United States has a “mainly positive” influence in the world. But perhaps that is not surprising: This is the group whose lives would have been most directly affected by the experience of the Solidarity movement and martial law—events that occurred when they were in their teens and 20s—and they would have the clearest memories of American support for the Polish underground movement.

Younger Poles, by contrast, show significantly less support: In the 15–29-year-old group, only 45.3 percent say they feel the United States has a “mainly

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positive” influence in the world—a drop of more than 13 percent. But perhaps that is not surprising either. This generation has only narrow memories of communism, and no recollection of Reagan’s support for Solidarity. The United States, to them, is best known as a country for which it is difficult to get visas—and younger Poles have a very high refusal rate. Now that Poland is a member of the European Union, by contrast, they have greater opportunities to travel and study in Europe, where they no longer need visas at all. In their growing skepticism of the United States, young Poles may also be starting to follow the more general European pattern.

Looking at age patterns in other generally anti-American countries can be equally revealing. In Canada, Britain, Italy, and Australia, for example, all countries with generally high or very high anti-American sentiments, people older than 60 have relatively much more positive feelings about the United States than their children and grandchildren. When people older than 60 are surveyed, 63.5 percent of Britons, 59.6 percent of Italians, 50.2 percent of Australians, and 46.8 percent of Canadians feel that the United States is a “mainly positive” influence on the world. For those

between the ages of 15 and 29, the numbers are far lower: 31.9 percent (Britain), 37.4 percent (Italy), 27 percent (Australia), and 19.9 percent (Canada). Again, that isn’t surprising: All of these countries had positive experiences of American cooperation during or after the Second World War. The British of that generation have direct memories, or share their parents’ memories, of Winston Churchill’s meetings with Franklin Roosevelt; the Canadians and Australians fought alongside American G.I.s; and many Italians remember that those same G.I.s evicted the Nazis from their country, too. These differences in age groups are significant, not

It’s Lonely at the Top

By Steven Kull

It’s no secret that in recent years, U.S. foreign policy has sparked widespread dissatisfaction and, in some instances, outright anger around the world. In Washington, many have assumed that with time people would simply “get over it.” People would eventually accept that the superpower you have is the superpower you get—whatever your hopes or wishes.

In fact, something more fundamental may be at work. A new poll of nearly 24,000 citizens from 23 countries, conducted by the international polling firm GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, suggests that the tectonic plates of world opinion are shifting. People around the world are not only turning away from the United States; they are starting to embrace the leadership of other major powers.

Clearly the largest beneficiary in this global power shuffle is the European Union. In 20 of the 23 countries polled, a majority or plurality welcomed Europe’s becoming more influential than the

United States. Some of the highest levels of enthusiasm for greater European influence (outside of Europe) are among U.S. neighbors—Mexico (66 percent) and Canada (63 percent). The only countries where a majority sees this prospect as a bad thing are the Philippines (54 percent) and the United States (55 percent).

Americans may be even less pleased to hear who is leading the global popularity contest. France, the clearest champion of Europe and of opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq, gets the highest marks and is

viewed positively in 20 countries. Another European power, Britain, is close behind—viewed positively in 18 countries.

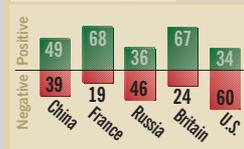
Outside of Europe, China’s influence in the world is also rated substantially better than that of the United States, with 14 countries holding it in high regard. Even more striking is the fact that, despite the country’s incredible economic clout, when asked about the prospect of China’s becoming more powerful economically, 16 countries view that as a welcome trend.

Meanwhile, the two former Cold War competitors, the United States and Russia, are in a dead heat

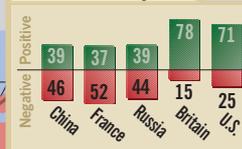
Who Do You Love?

We asked leading countries who is having a mainly positive or negative influence in the world. Here are their answers.

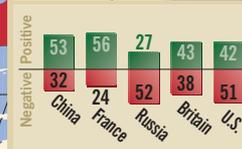
Canada says:



The U.S. says:



Brazil says:



only in themselves, but because they carry a basic but easily forgotten lesson for American foreign policy-makers: At least some of the time, U.S. foreign policy has a direct impact on foreigners' perceptions of the United States. That may sound like a rather obvious principle, but in recent years it has frequently been questioned. Because anti-Americanism is so often described as if it were mere fashion, or some sort of unavoidable, contagious virus, some commentators have made it seem as if the phenomenon bore no relationship whatsoever to the United States' actions abroad. But America's behavior overseas, whether

support for anticommunist movements or visa policy, does matter. Here, looking at the problem from the opposite perspective is proof: People feel more positive about the United States when their personal experience leads them to feel more positive.

AN INSPIRATION—TO SOME

Direct political experience is not, however, the only factor that shapes foreigners' perceptions of the United States. Around the world, there are millions of people who associate the United States not merely with

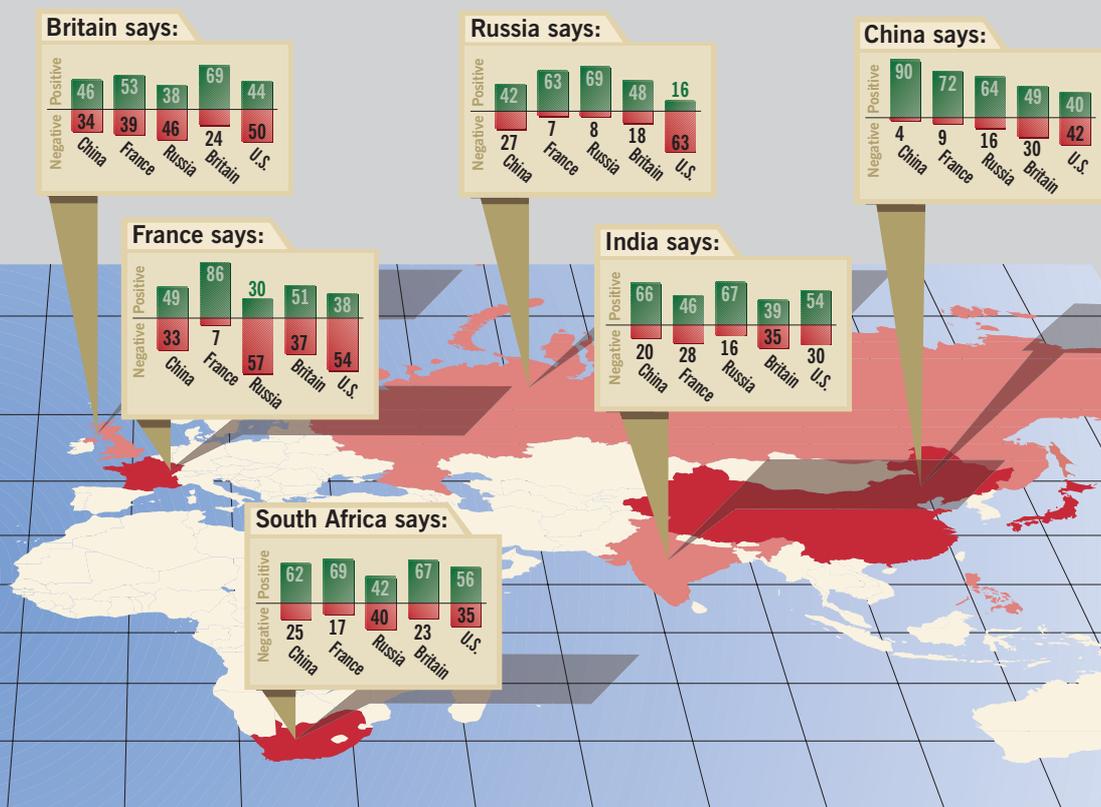
for last. (The United States is viewed positively in 6 countries and negatively in 15, and Russia is viewed positively in 5 and negatively in 14.) Both of these countries not only have large militaries but have recently demonstrated their willingness to use them—the United States in Iraq and Russia in Chechnya. Although trade may buy you love, guns clearly do not.

American leaders can brush off these findings as simple anti-

American envy. But that would be a mistake. Although negative attitudes toward the United States have spiked in recent years, world public opinion is not intrinsically anti-American. There is still a reservoir of goodwill toward the United States for its good deeds in World War II and, in its aftermath, for promoting multilateral institutions and international law. Indeed, the current upset with America comes from a bewildered

feeling that the United States (with its recent unilateral impulses) is not living up to the cooperative ideals that it promoted for so long. The world's people may not think highly of America today, but listen to their criticism closely: They are singing directly from America's own songbook.

Steven Kull is the director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland.



Sources: GlobeScan; Program on International Policy Attitudes

a concrete political ideal, or even a particular economic theory, but with more general notions of upward mobility, of economic progress, and of a classless society (not all of which exist in the United States anymore, but that's another matter). Advertising executives understand very well the phenomenon of ordinary women who read magazines filled with photographs of clothes they could not possibly afford. They call such women “aspirational.” Looking around the world, there are classes of people who are “aspirational” as well. And these aspirational classes, filled with people who are upwardly mobile or would like to be, tend to be pro-American as well.

Looking again at some relatively anti-American countries is instructional. In Britain, for example, it is absolutely clear that the greatest support for the United States comes from people in the lowest income brackets, and those with the least amount of formal

In Europe, Asia, and South America, men are far more likely than women to have positive feelings about the United States.

education. In Britain, 57.6 percent of those whose income is very low believe the United States has a mainly positive influence. Only 37.1 percent of those whose income is very high, by contrast, believe the same. Asking the same question, but breaking down the answers by education, the same pattern holds in South Korea, where 69.2 percent of those with a low education think the United States is a positive influence, and only 45.8 percent of those with a high education agree. That trend repeats itself in many developed



An American is born: Tens of thousands of immigrants earn their U.S. citizenship every year.

countries: those on their way up are pro-American, and those who have arrived are much less so.

In developing countries, by contrast, the pattern is sometimes reversed. It turns out, for example, that Indians are much more likely to be pro-American if they are not only younger but wealthier and better educated. And that too makes sense: Younger

Indians have had the experience of working with American companies and American investors, whereas their parents did not. Only in recent decades have Indians been full members of the international economy, and only in recent years was India fully open to foreign investment. The poor in India are still untouched by globalization,

but the middle and upper-middle classes—those who see for themselves a role in the English speaking, America-dominated international economy—are aspirational, and therefore pro-American. In fact, some 69 percent of Indians with very high incomes think the United States is a mainly positive influence; 43.2 percent of those with average incomes feel that way; and only 29.6 percent of those with very low incomes are likely to think of American influence as positive.



Friendly fire: America's muscular foreign policy isn't resented by everyone.

Taking a slightly different tack, it is possible to identify countries in which the country as a whole could be described as aspirational, rather than one particular class. Here it is worth looking at Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Again, none of these countries can be described as overwhelmingly pro-American as can, for example, the Philippines. Spain in particular has registered very high opposition to the American war in Iraq and even overturned a government on those grounds. But these countries are slightly different from others in Europe, not only because, unlike France and Germany, they follow the Canadian and British pattern—the less educated and the least wealthy are relatively pro-American—but also because all three have, at some point in the past several years, elected notably pro-American leaders. Former Prime Ministers José María Aznar in Spain and Pedro Santana Lopes in Portugal as well as current Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in Italy made close relations with the United States a central part of their foreign policies, and all three sent troops to fight in Iraq.

True, their support for the United States following 9/11 is more directly explained by European politics: Like Britain and Denmark, the three southern European countries dislike the increasing Franco-German dominance of Europe, and see

the American presence in Europe as an important counterweight. But it is also the case that Italy, Spain, and Portugal are Europe's nouveau riche: All have grown wealthier in the past generation, and all still have large numbers of “upwardly mobile” citizens. That too might help explain their politicians' fondness for the United States, a country that is, by older European standards, a true arriviste. This same phenomenon might also account for the persistence of a surprising degree of popular pro-Americanism in such places as Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, and, again, the Philippines: They're getting richer—like Americans—but aren't yet

so rich as to feel directly competitive.

PORTRAIT OF A PRO-AMERICAN MAN

There is, finally, one other factor that is associated almost everywhere in the world with pro-Americanism: In Europe, Asia, and South America, men are far more likely than women to have positive feelings about the United States. In some cases, the numbers are quite striking. Asking men and women how they feel about the United States produces an 11 percent gender gap in India, a 17 percent gender gap in Poland, and even a 6 percent gap in the Philippines. This pattern probably requires more psychological analysis than I can muster, but it's possible to guess at some explanations. Perhaps the United States is associated with armies and invasions, which historically appeal more to men. Perhaps it is because the United States is also associated with muscular foreign policy, and fewer women around the world are involved in, or interested in, foreign policy at all. Perhaps it's because men are more attracted to the idea of power, entrepreneurship, or capitalism. Or it may just be that the United States appeals to men in greater numbers for the same intuitive reasons that President George W. Bush appeals to men in greater numbers, whatever those are.

Although not as surprising as some of the other numbers, this gender gap does help us come up with a clearer picture of who the typical pro-American might be. We all know the stereotypes of the anti-Americans: The angry Arab radical, demonstrating in the mythical Arab street; or the left-wing newspaper editor, fulminating at Berlin dinner parties; or the French farmer, railing against McDonald's. Now, perhaps, we should add new stereotypes: The British small businessman, son of a coal miner, who once admired Thatcher and has been to Florida on holiday. Or the Polish anticommunist intellectual, who argued about Reagan with his Parisian friends in the 1980s, and disagrees with them about the Iraqi war now. Or the Indian stockbroker, the South Korean investment banker, and the Philippine manufacturer, all of whom have excellent relations with their American clients, all of whom support a U.S. military presence in their parts of the world, and all of whom probably harbor a fondness for President Bush that they wouldn't confess to their wives. These stock figures should be as firmly a part of the columnists' and commentators' repertoire as their opponents have become.

They also matter, or should matter, to the United States. These people, and their equivalents in

other countries, are America's natural constituents. They may not be a majority, either in the world or in their own countries. But neither are they insignificant. After all, pro-Americans will vote for pro-American politicians, who sometimes win, even in Europe. They can exert pressure on their governments to support U.S. foreign policy. They will also purchase American products, make deals with American companies, vacation in the United States, and watch American movies.

They are worth cultivating, in other words, because their numbers can rise or fall, depending on U.S. policies. Their opinions will change, according to how American ambassadors conduct business in their countries, according to how often the U.S. secretary of state visits their cities, and according to how their media report on American affairs. Before the United States brushes away Europe as hopelessly anti-American, Americans should therefore remember that not all Europeans dislike them. Before Americans brush off the opinion of "foreigners" as unworthy of cultivation either, they should remember that whole chunks of the world have a natural affinity for them and, if they are diligent, always will. **FP**

[Want to Know More?]

For more polling data on the world's attitude toward the United States, see the Web sites of the Program on International Policy Attitudes and the Pew Global Attitudes Project.

Anne Applebaum details Polish affection for the United States in "Yankees, Come Here" (*Washington Post*, Feb. 26, 2003). Jiri Pehe explains why East Europeans back President George W. Bush's foreign policy in "Grading the President: A View from Eastern Europe" (*FOREIGN POLICY*, July/August 2003). Vaclav Havel talks to David Remnick about his admiration for America and gratitude for its role in liberating Eastern Europe in "Exit Havel" (*New Yorker*, Feb. 17–24, 2003).

The Accidental American: Tony Blair and the Presidency (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), by James Naughtie, examines what makes the British prime minister such an ardent pro-American. In his book, *Anti-Americanism* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), Jean François Revel savages the French penchant for mocking the United States.

Afshin Molavi discovers that young Iranians love America in "A New Day in Iran" (*Smithsonian*, March 2005). In *The Islamic Paradox: Shiite Clerics, Sunni Fundamentalists, and the Coming of Arab Democracy* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2004), Reuel Marc Gerecht argues that even in the countries that claim to hate the United States most, American ideals are taking root.

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