

Global Poll Finds Iran Viewed Negatively

February 3, 2006

US Continues to Get Low Marks

Views of China, Russia, France Down Sharply

Europe and Japan Viewed Most Positively

[Click here to view a new BBC poll on this subject released 3/6/2007](#)

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

A major BBC World Service poll exploring how people in 33 countries view various countries found not a single country where a majority has a positive view of Iran's role in the world (with the exception of Iranians themselves).

Views of Iran are lower than the US, although the US continues to get low marks, as does Russia. Views of China, France, and Russia are down sharply compared to a similar BBC World Service poll conducted at the end of 2004.

Japan is the country most widely viewed as having a positive influence, and Europe as a whole gets the most positive ratings of all.

Global views of:

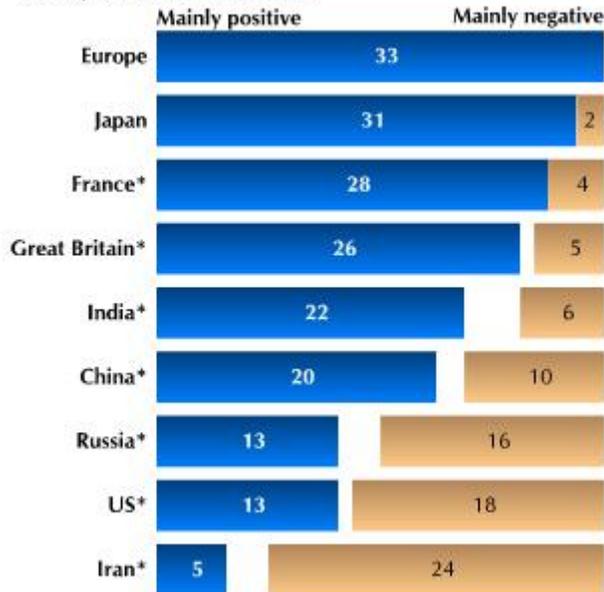
[Iran](#), [United States](#), [China](#), [Russia](#), [France](#), [Japan](#), [Europe](#), [Britain](#), [India](#)

The poll of 39,435 people was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. The 33-nation fieldwork was coordinated by GlobeScan and completed between October 2005 and January 2006.

GlobeScan President Doug Miller remarks, "In the court of public opinion, Iran is judged a mainly negative player in the world. Russia and the US continue to languish at the lower end of the league table. Europe on the other hand continues to be seen as a mainly positive player. It will be interesting to see what impact the next year of drama over the Iranian nuclear program has on these ratings."

Overview

Number of countries in which majority or plurality says country's influence in world is:



*Does not include country's self evaluation

BBC 12/2005

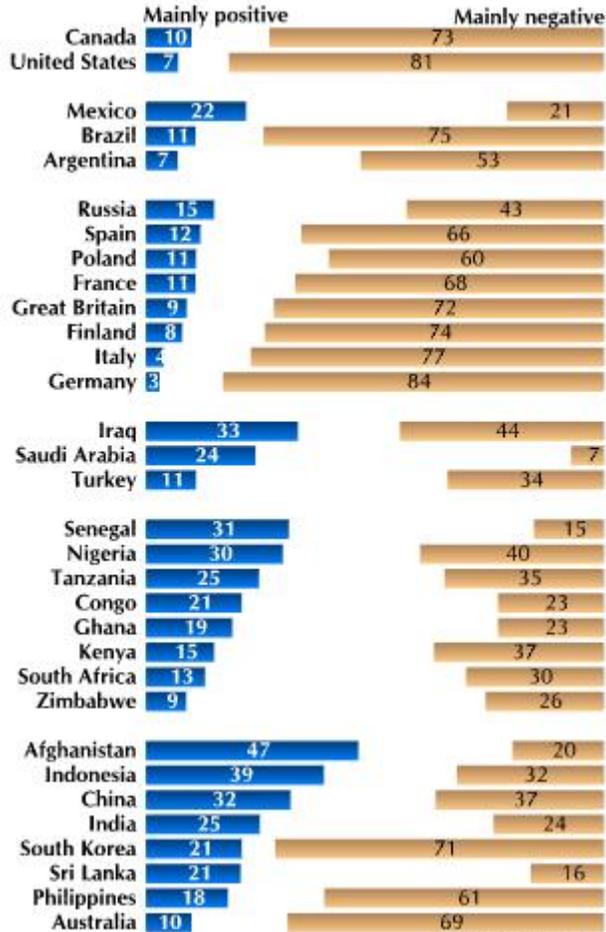
Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes, comments: "It appears that world public opinion does not look kindly on governments engaging in suspicious nuclear activities as is the case of Iran, becoming more authoritarian as in the case of China and Russia, frustrating the needs of their immigrants as in the case of France, or occupying another country without international approval as in the case of the US. On the other hand countries and regions that engage the world primarily through soft forms of power such as the case of Japan and Europe tend to get good marks."

Iran

In 24 of the 33 countries polled, majorities (in 14 countries) or pluralities (in 10) say that Iran is having a negative influence in the world. In five other countries a plurality says that Iran is having a positive influence, but in three of these the proportion who say this is less than a third. On average across the 33 countries just 18 percent say Iran is having a positive influence while 47 percent say Iran is having a negative influence.

Countries in Europe and North America have the largest majorities expressing a negative view of Iran. The most negative are Germany (84%), the US (81%), and Italy (77%); followed by Finland (74%), Great Britain (72%), Canada (73%), France (68%), Spain (66%) and Poland (60%).

Views of Iran's Influence



BBC, 12/2005 Latin America is mostly negative.

Majorities in Brazil (75%) and Argentina (53%) have a negative view of Iran's influence, but Mexicans are divided (22% positive, 21% negative) with one in three not taking a position.

The only countries with a significant plurality expressing a positive view of Iran are Afghanistan (47%) and Indonesia (39%). Three other countries had small pluralities expressing a favorable view but with most not taking a position--Senegal (31%), Saudi Arabia (24%) and Sri Lanka (21%).

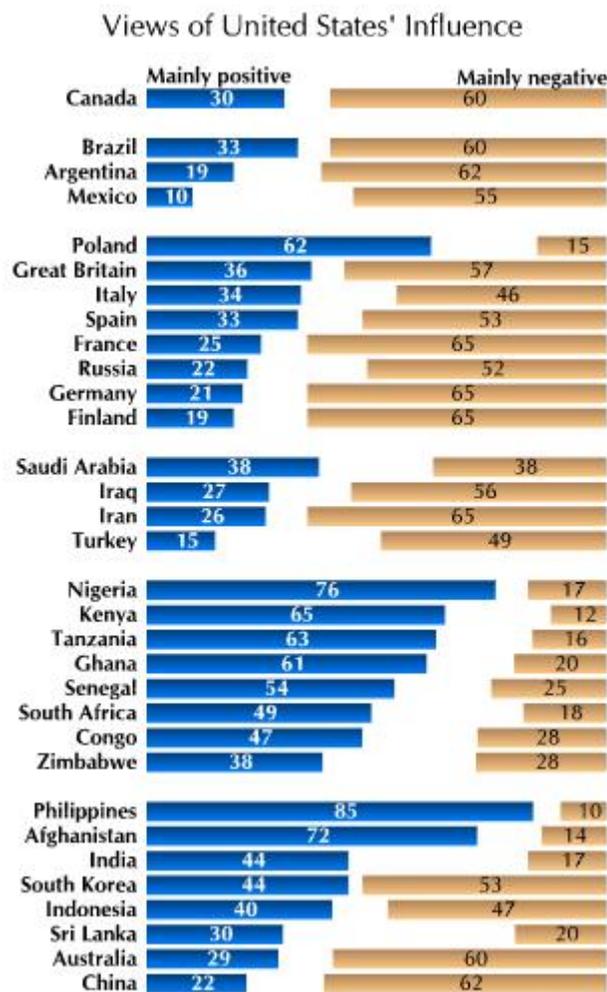
Steven Kull, director of PIPA says, "Iran may imagine that there are many people out there rooting for it as it defies the big powers with its nuclear program. But this poll suggests that the number of people behind it is quite small and swamped by much larger numbers who are worried about the direction Iran is going."

[Back to top](#)

United States

With Iran included in this year's poll, it has displaced the US as the nation with the most countries giving it a negative rating. The poll shows that the US has lost ground in some key allied countries. Among the 20 nations polled in 2004 as well as this year, on average positive ratings have dropped five points; ratings have significantly declined in 10 of these tracking countries (including the US) while significantly improving in only five.

Within Europe there has been a hardening of negative attitudes toward America compared to a year ago. Those expressing a negative view have risen in France (from 54% to 65%), and Great Britain (50% to 57%) and in Italy a plurality of 46 percent now has a negative view of the US (only 34% positive) as compared to 2004 when 49 percent had a positive view and only 40 percent had a negative view. Negative views have also increased in China (from 42% to 62%), in Australia (from 52% to 60%) and in Brazil (from 51% to 60%). Interestingly, no more Iranians were negative about the US role in the world than Germans or French (each with 65% negative).



BBC, 12/2005

But there have also been some positive trends. In Russia, negative views are down from 63 percent to 52 percent and in Turkey, from 62 percent to 49 percent. In Poland, positive attitudes expressed by 52 percent in 2004 have risen to 62 percent.

With the addition of new countries to the current poll, especially African countries that see the US positively, the total number of countries giving the US a negative rating (18) is only modestly more than the number giving it a positive rating (13), with Saudi Arabia equally divided and the US not counted. On average across all these countries, views are evenly divided with 40 percent seeing the US role as positive and 41 percent negative.

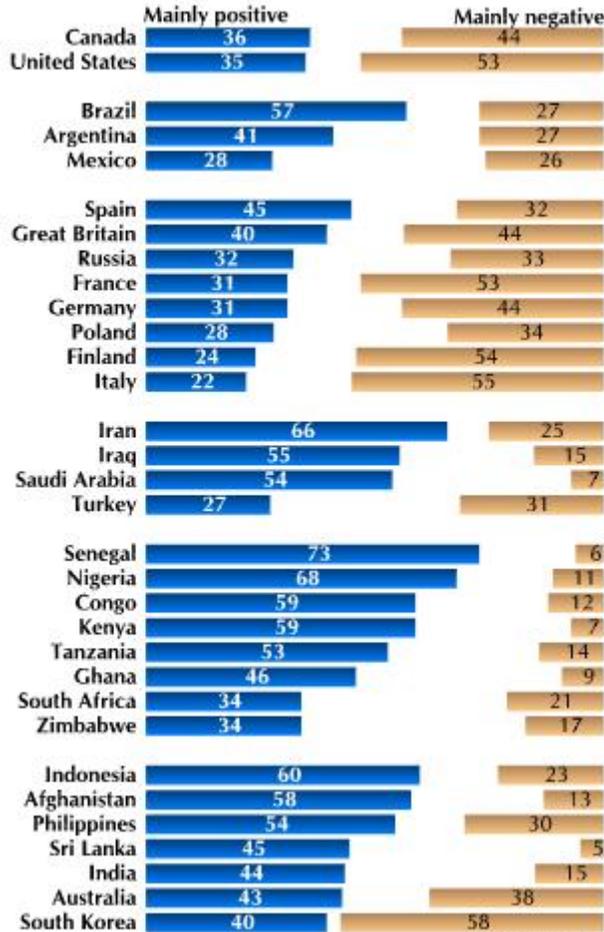
[Back to top](#)

China

Views of China have deteriorated sharply over the last year, but a plurality continues to view China positively in the world. Among the 20 countries polled both years, the number rating China mainly positively has dropped from 13 countries in 2004 to eight today, while those rating it negatively have risen from three countries to seven. On average, positive ratings of China have dropped 9 points.

What is most striking is the change that has occurred among European countries and Canada. While in 2004 four of the seven European countries polled plus Canada had a plurality with a positive view of China, today only one country--Spain--still has a plurality positive view. France's positive rating dropped from 49 percent to 31 percent while a majority of 53 percent now view China negatively. Italy's positive rating dropped from 42 percent to 22 percent, and a 55 percent majority now have a negative view. Positive views dropped in Great Britain (46% to 40%) and Canada (49% to 36%), with pluralities now having a negative view. Views in Russia also worsened--positive views dropping from a plurality positive of 42 percent to a divided 32 percent positive, 33 percent negative. Finland--polled for the first time--also came in 54 percent negative.

Views of China's Influence



BBC, 12/2005

Negative shifts also occurred in Asia, most notably in South Korea. In 2004 South Koreans had been divided on China (49% positive, 47% negative), while currently a 58 percent majority views China negatively. Drops in positive ratings have also occurred in India (66% to 44%), the Philippines (70% to 54%), Australia (56% to 43%) and Indonesia (68% to 60%), but in all of these cases a plurality or majority are still positive.

Steven Kull comments, "Recent stories of tightening of state controls appear to have hurt China's image in the world."

Nonetheless, on balance, China still has considerably more countries holding a positive than a negative view of it. Of the 33 countries polled this year, 20 have a positive view (12 majorities, 8 pluralities) and only 10 have a negative view (5 pluralities and 5 majorities). On average 45 percent gave China a positive rating and 27 percent a negative rating.

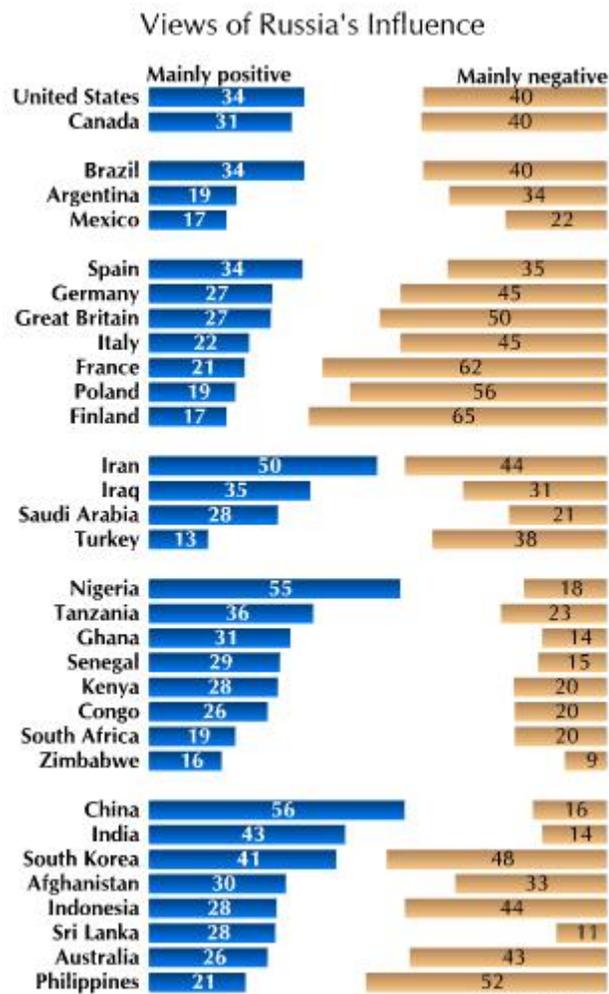
Positive views are particularly widespread in Africa--especially Senegal (73% positive), Nigeria (68%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (59%), Kenya (59%) and Tanzania (53%). Majority positive views were also found among a number of Muslim countries--

Iran (66%), Afghanistan (58%), Iraq (55%), Saudi Arabia (54%), and Indonesia (60%). Positive majorities were also found in Brazil (57%) and the Philippines (54%).

[Back to top](#)

Russia

Overall evaluations of Russia have moved in a negative direction over the last year, presumably in response to the Putin government tightening of government controls. Among the 20 nations polled both years, positive views (already a minority position) slipped on average 8 points while negative views have held steady.



BBC, 12/2005 While in 2004 European views toward

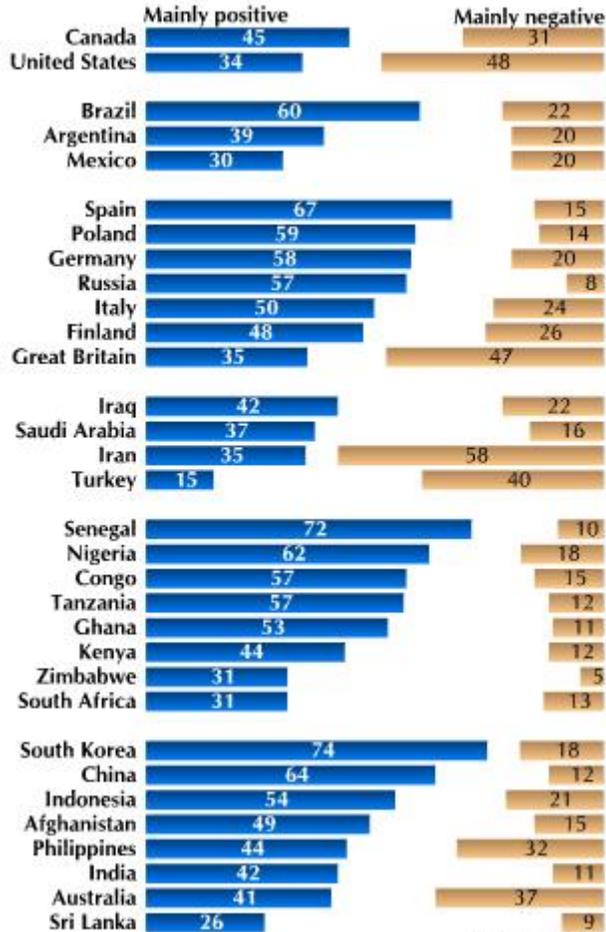
Russia already leaned negative, several European countries have become even more negative. In Britain, positive ratings dropped from 38 percent to 27 percent and negative ratings rose from 46 percent to 50 percent so that now negative ratings outweigh the positive by almost two to one. In France positive ratings dropped from 30 percent to 21 percent and negative ratings rose from 57 percent to 62 percent. In Italy, positive ratings dropped from 38 percent to 22 percent. Among Germans, though, their strongly negative

attitudes have abated a bit from 57 percent to 45 percent, but positive ratings remain low at 27 percent. It should be noted, however, that polling was completed before this winter's interruptions of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine.

Asians' assessment of Russia's influence in the world also shows a downward trend. While in 2004 Filipinos were one of the few nations that leaned positively in their views toward Russia (49% to 39%) positive ratings have dropped 28 points and a 52 percent majority now views Russia negatively. India was one of Russia's major boosters in 2004 with 67 percent rating it positively, but this number has slipped 24 points to 43 percent, though it still represents a plurality favorable. Similarly, in China the 2004 majority of 64 percent rating Russia positively has dropped 8 points to 56 percent. Indonesians have shifted from being evenly divided on Russia, to being a clear plurality of 44 percent negative with 28 percent positive.

Among all 33 countries polled the balance is 13 countries leaning positively (2 majorities, 11 pluralities), 16 countries negatively (4 majorities, 12 pluralities) and one country divided. On average, 30 percent give a positive rating, 33 percent a negative rating and a substantial 37 percent do not answer either way.

Views of France's Influence



BBC, 12/2005 These averages are a bit better than for

2004 as newly-pollled countries in Africa and the Arab world tend to lean positively. In Africa, Nigeria is the most positive with 55 percent giving a positive rating, while all the other African countries have a plurality positive except South Africa, which is divided. A modest plurality also rates Russia positively in the Arab world--Iraq (35% to 31%), Saudi Arabia (28% to 21%).

Europeans are predominantly negative, led by France (62%), Poland (56%), and Finland (65%), though Spain is the one exception, with a divided response.

Pluralities lean negatively in North and South America. However, the US only leans slightly negatively (34% positive to 40% negative).

[Back to top](#)

France

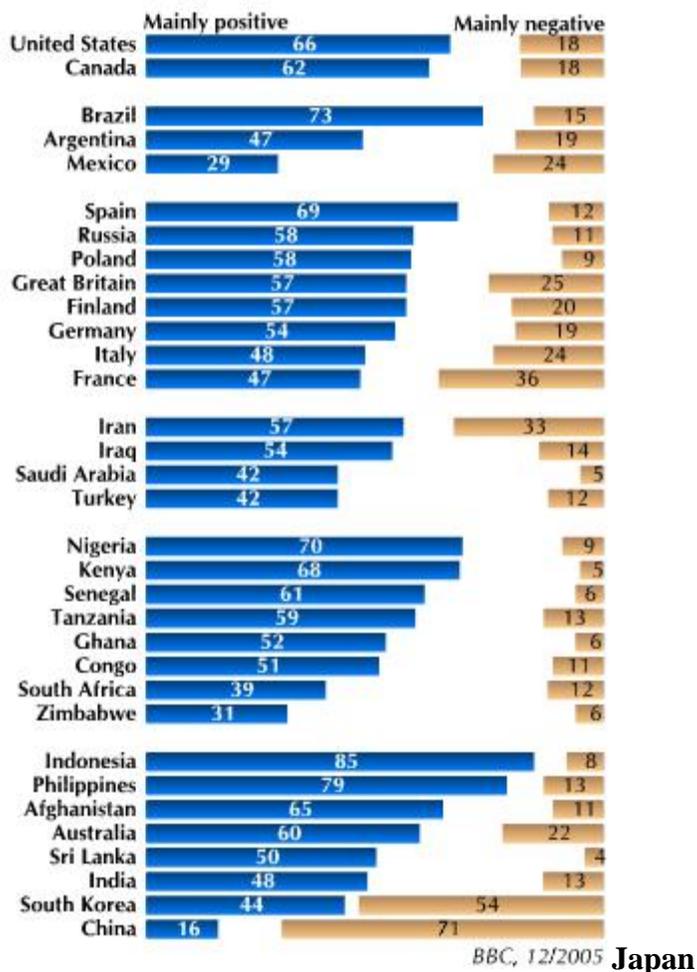
There has also been a sharp downward movement in perceptions of France, possibly prompted by the urban riots there: in most countries polling was conducted either during

or after the rioting. Among the 20 countries polled in 2004 as well as 2005 on average there has been an 11-point drop in the perception that France is having a positive influence. Most notable were South Africa (from 69% to 31%), Canada (from 68% to 45%), and the Philippines (68% to 44%); also France's European neighbors: Germany (77% to 58%), Italy (73% to 50%), and Great Britain (53% to 35%). A plurality of Britons (47%) now sees France as having a negative influence in the world.

Nonetheless France's ratings are still largely positive. Among the countries polled (excluding France), 28 have a positive view of its influence with 13 majorities and 15 pluralities. Especially positive are South Korea (74%), Spain (67%), China (64%), and Brazil (60%), and several African countries: Senegal (72%), Nigeria (62%), Democratic Republic of the Congo (57%) and Tanzania (57%). Only one country has a majority saying that France is having a negative influence--Iran with 58 percent, presumably related to the pressure France is exerting on Iran over its nuclear program. The US has continued to have a plurality with a negative view (48%) and has been joined this year by Great Britain (47%) and Turkey (40%).

[Back to top](#)

Views of Japan's Influence



Japan received very high ratings. Of the 33 countries polled, a remarkable 31 gave a positive rating and 21 of these were a majority. On average 55 percent gave a positive rating and 18 percent a negative one. Japan was not rated in the 2004 BBC World Service poll.

The two exceptions were China and South Korea, where 71 and 54 percent, respectively, said that Japan is having a negative influence. Otherwise the only countries to have more than 30 percent with a negative rating for Japan were France (36%) and Iran (33%), but both of these were still predominantly positive (France 47% positive, Iran 57%).

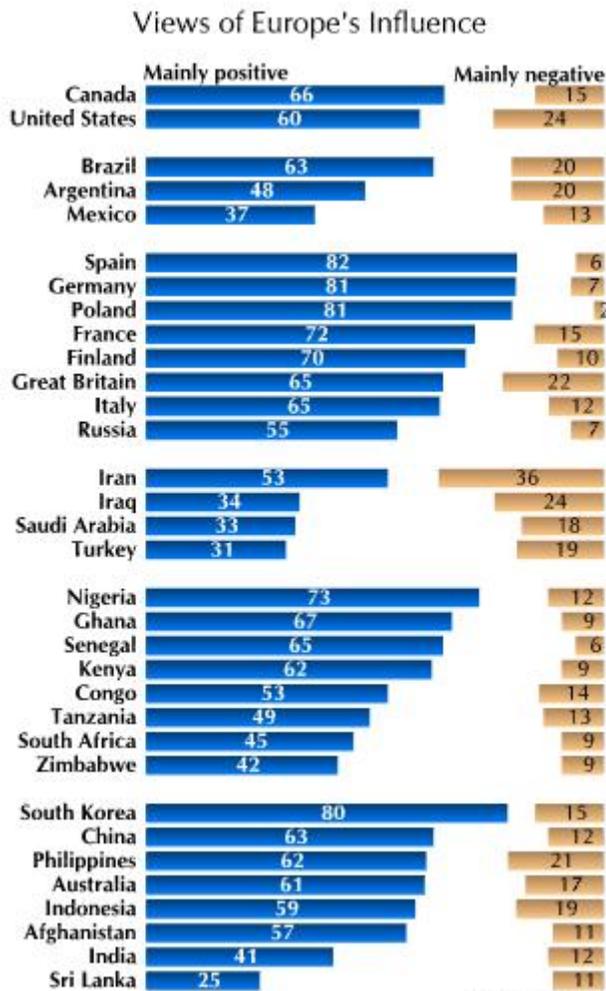
Interestingly some of the most positive countries are in Japan's region of the world. An extraordinary 85 percent of Indonesians and 79 percent of Filipinos give Japan good grades. Australians are also quite positive (60%).

Europeans are all quite positive, including Great Britain (57%), Germany (54%) and especially Spain (69%). France and Italy are more low key (47% and 48% positive, respectively). Also quite positive are Americans (66%) and Canadians (62%).

[Back to top](#)

Europe

Views of Europe as a whole are very positive, although positive views are more subdued than they were a year ago. Of 33 countries polled, not a single one had a predominantly negative view of Europe and in 23 there were majorities that were positive (though 7 of these were European countries). Overall, on average 58 percent have a positive view of Europe's influence and just 14 percent a negative view. Excluding the European countries, the average is 53 percent positive and 15 percent negative.



BBC, 12/2005 At the same time, looking at 14 non-

European countries that were polled in both years there has been a downward movement in positive ratings averaging 8 points. The biggest changes in views have been downward movements in Turkey (dropping from 54% positive to 31% positive), South Africa (from 76% to 45% positive), China (77% to 63%), the Philippines (76% to 62%), Australia (74% to 61%), Argentina (56% to 48%), Canada (79% to 66%), the US (67% to 60%) and Indonesia (71% to 59%). However, upward movements were recorded among South

Koreans (71% to 80% positive) and Indians, whose views shifted from divided (35% positive, 33% negative) to a plurality positive (41% positive, 12% negative).

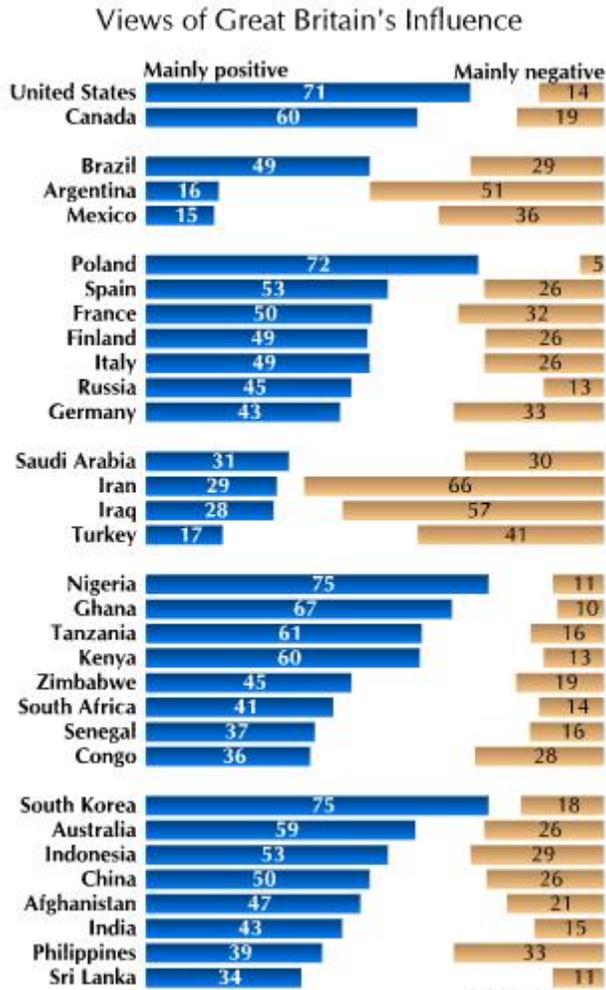
Views among Europeans have also slipped. Positive views of Europe have eroded in Italy (down 22 points), Britain (down 14 points), France (down 14 points), and Germany (down 7 points). In Poland, though positive views are up six points.

[Back to top](#)

Britain

Views of Britain were found to be quite positive, slipping only slightly from a year ago primarily due to dips in positive feelings among South Africans and Filipinos. Positive views of Britain plummeted in South Africa from 67 percent in 2004 to 41 percent, and in the Philippines from 57 percent to 39 percent.

Among all countries polled this year, 26 have a positive view of Britain's influence--11 a majority and 15 a plurality. Just five have a negative view (3 majorities, 2 pluralities). On average 47 percent have a positive view of Britain and 25 percent a negative view.



BBC, 12/2005

The most negative countries are Muslim countries--Iran (66% negative), Iraq (57%) and Turkey (41% negative, 17% positive). However, Indonesia is positive (53%) as is Afghanistan (47%) and especially Nigeria (75%). Saudi Arabia is divided.

Two Latin American countries are negative--Argentina (51%) and Mexico (36% negative, 15% positive). But Brazil leans positively (49% to 29%).

All other countries are positive on Britain's role. Especially positive are the US (71%), Poland (72%), South Korea (75%), Ghana (67%) and Nigeria (75%).

[Back to top](#)

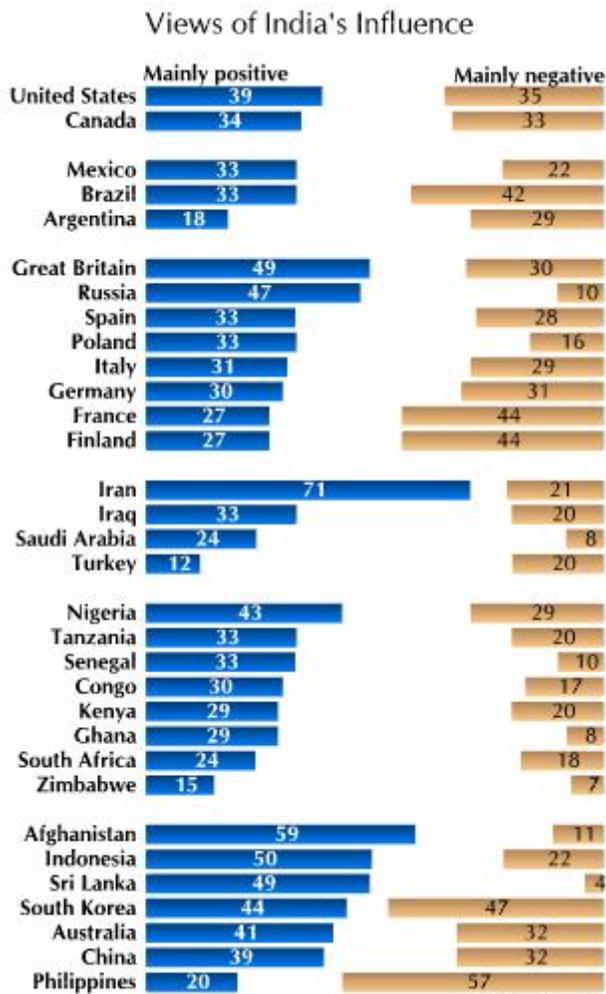
India

Though India's global profile has grown significantly over the last year, it fails to elicit strong feelings. On average 35 percent give it a positive rating, 25 percent give it a negative rating and 41 percent do not answer one way or another. Many more countries

(22) give it a net positive rating than a negative rating (6), but nearly all of these are plurality positions.

The exceptions are two Muslim countries with positive views: Iran (71% positive) and Afghanistan (59% positive). The only country with widespread negative views is the Philippines (57% negative). Notably, India's small neighbor Sri Lanka has a mere 4 percent reporting negative views and a robust 49 percent expressing a positive one.

Europeans are divided about India. At the positive end of the spectrum is Great Britain (49% positive, 30% negative) and Russia (47% positive, 10% negative), while at the other end are France and Finland--both being 27 percent positive and 44 percent negative.



BBC, 12/2005 The US leans slightly positively (39%

positive, 35% negative).

Interestingly, Indians themselves are the most tepid or modest in their self-estimates. While in most countries a large majority give their country a positive rating, among Indians only 47 percent give India a positive rating, but only 10 percent give it a negative rating.

