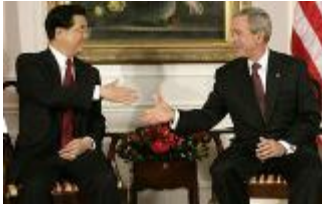


Chinese Become Sharply Negative About U.S., Americans Mildly Negative About China

April 17, 2006

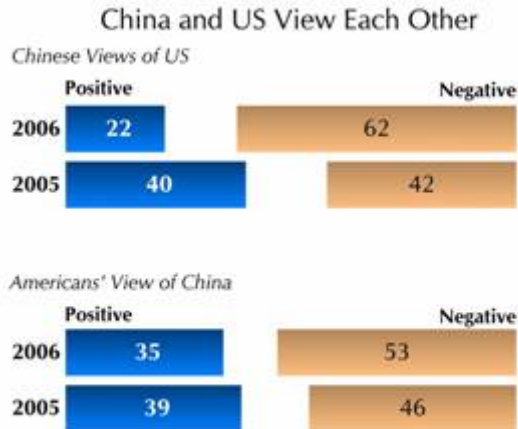
Both More Negative Than World Average



Over the last year the Chinese view of the US has gone from being slightly negative to sharply negative. Americans' views of China have also worsened a bit, but only a modest majority have a negative view. Both publics have more negative views of each other's government than the world average.

President George W. Bush and President Hu Jintao of China greet each other at the start of an earlier meeting. (Eric Draper/White House photo)

These are findings from a recent BBC World Service poll conducted by GlobeScan and PIPA, completed in January 2006 and mirrored in other polls.



BBC, 12/2005-1/2006 In the most recent BBC poll 62 percent of Chinese said that the United States is having a negative influence in the world, while just 22 percent said its influence is mostly positive. The percentage giving a negative evaluation is up 20 points from January 2005, when just 42 percent gave a negative rating and 40 percent a positive one.

In 2006, 53 percent of Americans rated Chinese influence in the world as negative while 35 percent rated it as positive. This too represented a negative shift over the last year, but of just 7 points. Last year 46 percent viewed China negatively, while 39 percent viewed it positively.

In both cases Americans and Chinese views were more negative than the average of the 33 countries polled. Chinese negative views of the United States were 21 points higher than the global average (41%) and Americans' negative views of China were 26 points higher than the global average (27%).

Chinese Views on the United States

The negative trend in Chinese thinking about the US was foreshadowed in the 2005 BBC poll, taken just after President Bush had been reelected. At that time 56 percent of Chinese said that Bush's reelection would be negative for peace and security in the world and just 27 percent said that it would be positive. China was in line with the global average in that poll (58% negative, 26% positive). A GlobeScan/PIPA poll conducted between May and August 2004 also found 72 percent of Chinese respondents saying that Bush's foreign policy has made them feel worse about the United States, significantly higher than the 53 percent average of those polled in the 35 nations polled.



The Chinese have also shown a preference for Europe over the US. The January 2005 BBC poll found 66 percent of Chinese saying that they thought it would be mainly positive if Europe were to become more influential than the United States in world affairs. Chinese ratings of Europe were also far more positive than attitudes toward the US—77 percent said that Europe is having a positive influence in the world. In 2006 Chinese views of Europe slipped a bit, but still 63 percent viewed it positively.

Not surprisingly, the United States is perceived by Chinese as China's major threat. A March 2005 poll by the South Korean newspaper Dong A Ilbo asked Chinese which country they feel is most threatening to the security of China. Seventy-three percent said the United States, followed by 19 percent saying Japan. No others got above 1 percent.

Americans' Views on China

Americans may have shifted rather recently from a lukewarm or divided view of China to today's mildly negative view. In May 2005, when Pew asked whether they have a

favorable or unfavorable view of China, 43 percent said favorable (9% very, 34% somewhat) and 35 percent said unfavorable (13% very, 22% somewhat). The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations uses a "feeling thermometer", which gives respondents a scale from 1 to 100 on which to rate countries; a score of 100 is warm and favorable, 50 is neutral, and 1 is cold and unfavorable. The mean "temperature" given for China in 2004 was 44.

Americans are also divided about how great a threat China poses. In a February 2006 Pew poll, 47 percent said that China's emergence as a world power is a threat to the well-being of the United States, while 46 percent said that it was a minor threat (34%) or not a threat (12%). In a January 2006 Public Agenda poll 29 percent said they worry a lot that "the growing power of China may be a threat to the United States," 38 percent said they worry somewhat, and 32 percent said they do not worry about this.

A strong majority of Americans see China as an economic competitor. According to a May 2005 NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, 61 percent see China as an economic competitor and another 30 percent say they believe it will be an economic competitor in the future. Sixty-four percent polled by CNN/USA Today in December 2005 said they consider China an economic threat to the United States, while one-third (33%) said it is not a threat.

However, Americans are more sanguine about whether China's economic growth is something for the United States to worry about. In the same CNN/USA Today poll that found two thirds saying that China poses an economic threat, 48 percent said that China's economic growth constitutes a positive, while just 46 percent said it is negative. Similarly in a May 2005 Pew poll found 49 percent said that China's growing economy is a good thing "for our country" (40% bad thing).

When asked in the BBC World Service poll completed in January 2005 how they felt about the prospect of China becoming significantly more powerful economically than it is today, Americans were divided. Forty-six percent said the development would be mainly positive, while 45 percent felt it would be mainly negative (the 22-nation average was 49% positive, 33% negative).

Concerns seem to center more on whether China is playing fairly in the realm of trade, than whether China is growing economically. In the 2004 poll by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 53 percent of Americans said they thought China is practicing unfair trade, while just 32 percent said it was practicing fair trade.

Americans are divided as to whether China presents a military threat now. In the December 2005 CNN/USA Today poll, respondents were asked whether China is a military threat—half (50%) said it is, 48 percent said it is not.

However, Americans do express concern about the prospect of China becoming more powerful militarily. In the January 2005 BBC poll, 75 percent of Americans polled said that if "China becomes significantly more powerful militarily than it is today," they

would see that as mainly negative (19% positive). That compares to a 59 percent average of the 22 nations polled that would see the development as negative (24% positive). In the May 2005 Pew poll, 78% of Americans said it would be a bad thing if China were to become “as powerful militarily as the U.S.”

On broader questions related to globalization and relations between rich and poor countries, a GlobeScan poll completed in February 2004 found that the Chinese and American publics showed remarkable agreement. Majorities in both countries said that globalization is mostly positive for their own interests (China 60%, U.S. 65%), that rich countries have a moral responsibility to help poor countries develop (China 82%, U.S. 84%) and that it is in the rich countries’ own economic interest to do so (China 73%, U.S. 83%). Interestingly, more Chinese expressed trust in global companies operating their country (69%) than did Americans (51%), even though most global companies are dominated by Americans.