

World Poll Finds Global Leadership Vacuum

June 16, 2008

Bush Widely Mistrusted, But No Other Leader Does Much Better

Only UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon Gets Moderately Positive Ratings

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A new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 20 nations around the world finds that none of the national leaders on the world stage inspire wide confidence. While US President George W. Bush is one of the least trusted leaders, no other leader--including China's Hu Jintao and Russia's Vladimir Putin--has gained a broad international base of support.

US President George W. Bush and former Russian President Vladimir Putin in a 2007 photo. (White House photo/Eric Draper)

Only UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon received largely positive ratings in a worldwide poll that asked respondents whether they trusted international leaders "to do the right thing regarding world affairs."

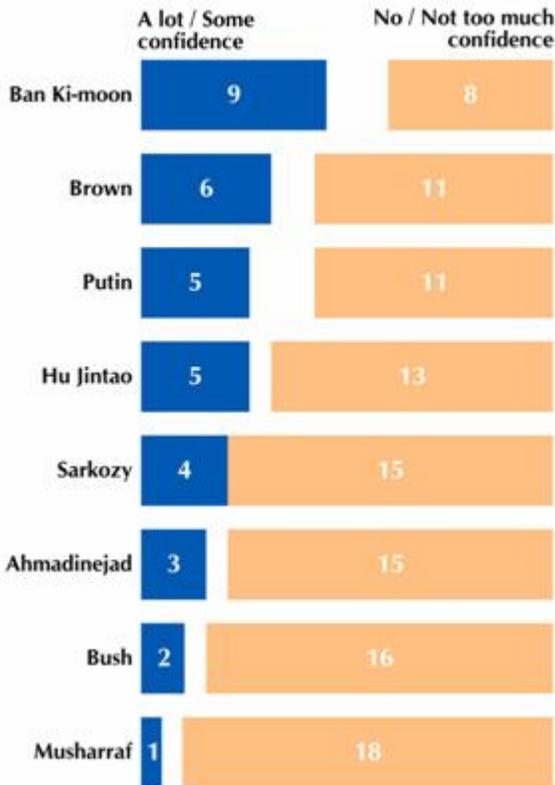
WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted the poll of 19,751 respondents in nations that comprise 60 percent of the world's population. This includes most of the largest nations--China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Russia--as well as Mexico, Argentina, Britain, France, Spain, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Turkey, the Palestinian territories, South Korea and Thailand. Fielding was conducted between January 10 and May 6. The margins of error range from +/-2 to 4 percent.

WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative research project involving research centers from around the world, is managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland.

Confidence in Global Leaders

How much confidence you have in each leader to do the right thing regarding world affairs:

Numbers of countries with majorities or pluralities saying:



WorldPublicOpinion.org

Sixteen of the 20 publics surveyed say they lack confidence in US President George W. Bush. Only Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf is rated negatively in more nations. Just two countries (Nigeria and India) give Bush positive ratings while a third (Thailand) is divided. Bush also got the highest average percentage of negative ratings (67%).

Although China is a rising world power, most publics do not express confidence in Chinese President Hu Jintao. Thirteen publics give Hu predominantly negative ratings while only five (Nigeria, South Korea, Iran, Azerbaijan and Ukraine) tend to be positive. India is divided. On average 44 percent of those surveyed around the world show little or no confidence in the Chinese leader; only 28 percent express some or a lot of confidence. (In all cases the leader's own public is excluded from the count of countries and the average rating.)

Vladimir Putin remains popular inside Russia as he makes the transition from president to prime minister but he has not emerged as an attractive world leader. Eleven publics have a negative view of Putin while just five are positive and three are divided. On average 32 percent express confidence in Putin--one of the highest positive ratings--but a larger 48 percent do not. No region has predominantly positive views on Putin's global leadership.

Putin appears to have become a divisive figure. Although his ratings have improved

slightly since a 2007 poll by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the large positive movement in certain countries--such as China, where Putin's ratings are up 17 points--is balanced by negative movement in others--such as the United States, where his ratings are down 21 points.

"While the worldwide mistrust of George Bush has created a global leadership vacuum, no alternative leader has stepped into the breach," said Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org. "Hu Jintao and Vladimir Putin are popular among some nations, but more mistrust them than trust them. Also the nations that trust them are not organized into any clusters that have the potential to be a meaningful bloc."

The only world leader to elicit largely positive views is UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. In nine nations a plurality or majority say they have some or a lot of confidence in him to do the right thing. In eight nations a plurality or majority say they have little or no confidence. Three nations are divided.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, though relatively new to the world stage, gets positive ratings in six nations, more than any other chief of state. Nonetheless, even more publics (11) say they do not trust the British leader. Two (France and Thailand) are divided.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has the poorest ratings around the world. Only in China do positive views (37%) outweigh negative ones (30%). Nigeria is divided and the other 18 nations lean negative.

In the Middle East publics are generally the most negative: Egyptians, Jordanians, Iranians and the Palestinians express little or no confidence in nearly all of the leaders rated.

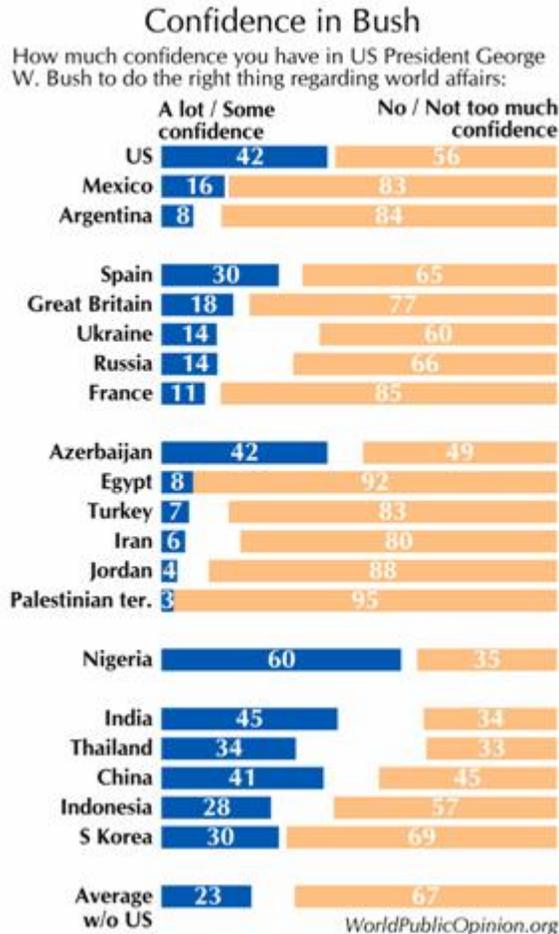
Although France gets positive ratings in other international polls, President Nicolas Sarkozy does not. Fifteen out of 19 nations rate his international leadership unfavorably. On average, 25 percent of those surveyed express confidence in Sarkozy to do right thing while 48 percent express little or no confidence.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gets negative ratings in 13 nations, the most after Bush and Musharraf. Only three nations are slightly positive while one is divided. On average across the 17 nations (excluding Iranians) asked about Ahmadinejad, only 22 percent say they have some or a lot of confidence, while 52 percent say they have little or no confidence.

Although confidence in Ahmadinejad is up slightly from polling conducted by Pew in 2007, he is still far from being viewed as a credible leader, even in the Muslim world. Majorities in all four Arab nations surveyed (Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian territories) say they lack confidence in Ahmadinejad. So does a majority in Turkey, including 54 percent who say they have "no confidence at all." Only in Indonesia does a bare plurality view Ahmadinejad favorably as an international leader.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF LEADERS WITH A GLOBAL PROFILE

US President George W. Bush



US President George W. Bush has the second largest number of nations expressing negative views of his role in international affairs. Fifteen nations give negative ratings and two give positive ratings. Thailand is divided. On average 67 percent express low confidence.

The one country with a majority expressing a positive view of Bush is Nigeria with 60 percent saying they have some or a lot of confidence. Indians also lean positive (45 to 34%). Interestingly, this year Chinese views have softened (41% positive, 45% negative)-with the number of those expressing positive views up 10 points since Pew's 2007 poll.

The most negative ratings come from the Middle East region. Despite the Bush administration's renewed efforts to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nearly all Palestinians (95%) express low confidence, with 79 percent expressing "no confidence at all." Nearly as many express a lack of confidence in Egypt (92%, 68% no confidence), Jordan (88%, 84% no confidence) and Turkey (83%, 77% no confidence). Iran,

interestingly, gives the mildest negative ratings in the region (80%, 72% no confidence). Nearby Azerbaijan, though, only leans negative (49% negative, 42% positive).

The two Latin American countries polled--Argentina and Mexico--are also intensely negative. In Argentina 84 percent express a lack of confidence (63% no confidence). In Mexico 83 percent express a lack of confidence (54% no confidence). Negative views have risen in Mexico since 2007 by 16 points.

European countries are only slightly less negative on President Bush. Most negative are the French: 85 percent express a lack of confidence (63% no confidence). Among the British, 77 percent give negative ratings (up 7 points from 2007), while 48 percent express no confidence at all.

Interestingly, Russians are relatively moderate with 66 percent saying they lack confidence in Bush to do the right thing and 36 percent saying they have "no confidence at all." Similarly six in ten Ukrainians lack confidence, and 36 percent have none at all.

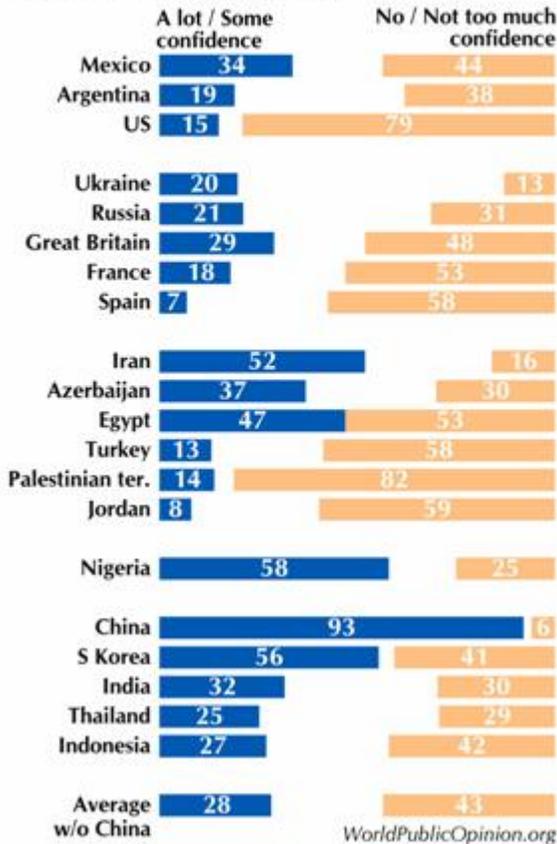
While Indian views lean positive and Thai views are divided, those of their Asian neighbors are more negative. Majorities in Indonesia and South Korea are negative and China also leans negative, though these publics' negative views are decreasing over time.

Fifty-seven percent of Indonesians express a lack of confidence in Bush, down from 79 percent in 2007. Those expressing "no confidence at all" have dropped from 35 to 19 percent. Among South Koreans, 68 percent give Bush a poor rating, but this too is down from 73 percent in 2007. The numbers of those saying they have "no confidence at all" have only inched downward from 22 to 18 percent. Among the Chinese, 45 percent lean negative, down from a majority of 51 percent. The number of those giving Bush a positive rating is up 10 points, from 31 to 41 percent.

Chinese President Hu Jintao

Confidence in Hu Jintao

How much confidence you have in China's President Hu Jintao to do the right thing regarding world affairs:



Among the eight global leaders assessed, opinion of Hu Jintao rests in the middle range. Thirteen countries give predominantly negative ratings while five give positive ratings and one is divided. On average, 43 percent express a lack of confidence while 28 percent express confidence. Compared to 2007 Pew polling, on average, negative views have increased a bit, but this movement represents a balance between sharp movements both to the positive and the negative among specific countries.

The country most positive about the Chinese President is Nigeria, where 58 percent express a positive view of Hu. Close behind is South Korea where 56 percent say they have confidence in him. This number is up sharply from 2007 when Pew found just 27 percent expressing such confidence.

However, this positive trend in South Korea does not reflect a broader regional trend. Positive views in Indonesia have dropped to 27 percent from 42 percent in 2007, while negative views are now 42 percent. India has held steady with divided views--32 percent express confidence, 30 percent little or none--unchanged from 2007. Thais are mildly negative (29% negative, 25% positive) but 45 percent give no opinion.

The most negative views of Hu, once again, come from the Middle East--and here these views seem to be worsening. Eighty-two percent of Palestinians have little confidence in

Hu with 50 percent saying they have "no confidence at all." In Jordan and Turkey, 59 and 58 percent have negative views (52 and 53% say they have no confidence at all, respectively). Egyptians are also mostly negative (53%), but only 18 percent say they have "no confidence at all."

Compared to 2007, Jordanians and Palestinians have grown more negative concerning the Chinese President, with negative ratings rising 21 and 31 points, respectively.

A Middle Eastern country that bucks this negative trend is Iran, where a majority of 52 percent has a positive view and just 16 percent a negative view. Also, in Azerbaijan, a plurality of 37 percent has a positive view as compared to 30 percent with a negative view.

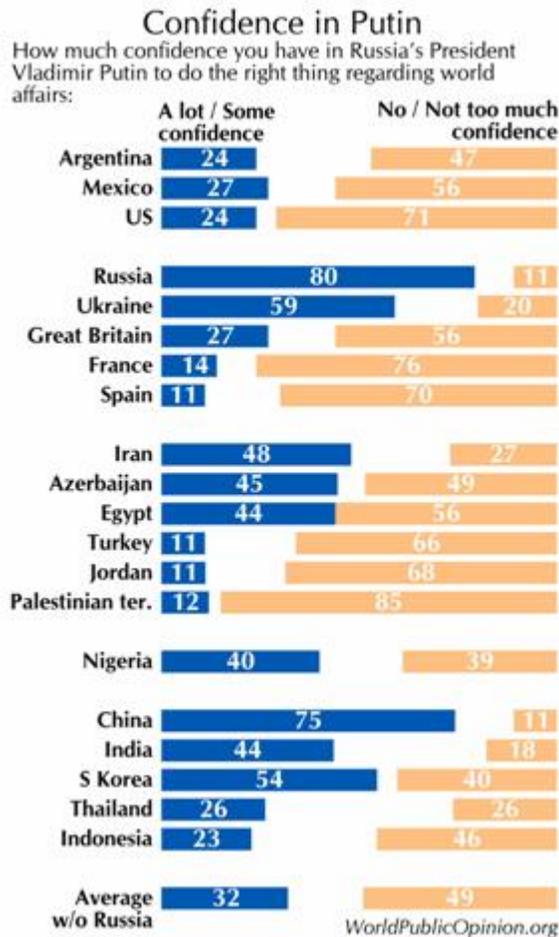
One of the most negative publics is in the United States. Seventy-nine percent lack confidence in Hu (33%, no confidence). This is up sharply from 2007 when just 46 percent had a negative view.

European views are moderately negative. Among the French 53 percent do not have confidence in Hu (18% do)--down from 70 percent in 2007. In Britain, 48 percent are negative (up from 39 percent in 2007) while 29 percent are positive.

Russians lean negative (31 to 21%), but 47 percent do not answer. In 2007 Russians leaned slightly positive with similar numbers not answering. In Ukraine an overwhelming two-thirds do not provide an answer; the few that do lean positive (20 to 13%). In 2007, similar numbers did not answer and views were more evenly divided.

Views lean negative in Mexico and Argentina. Argentines are 38 percent negative and 19 percent positive. Mexicans are 44 negative and 34 percent positive, but in Mexico positive views are up 16 points from 2007.

Russian Leader Vladimir Putin



Vladimir Putin--President at the time of the polling, now Prime Minister--receives ratings comparable to the other European leaders in the poll. Eleven countries have a negative view of Putin, five have a positive view and two are divided. On average, 32 percent express confidence, while 48 percent do not.

Among the sixteen countries also polled by Pew in 2007, Putin's overall ratings are up four points. But this upward trend is the product of a balance between countries that have had large increases in positive views--such as China, where Putin's ratings are up 17 points--and those with large increases in negative views.--such as the United States, where his ratings are down 21 points.

Some of Putin's most positive ratings are found in Asia. The most upbeat country is China, where 75 percent express some or a lot of confidence (up from 58% in 2007). Also notably positive is South Korea, where a majority now expresses confidence in Putin (54%, up from 24%)--due perhaps in part to Russia's role in negotiations with North Korea. India also leans positive (44 to 18 %). However, Indonesians lean negative: just 23 percent express confidence and 46 percent, a lack of confidence. Thais are divided (26% positive, 26% negative, 47% no opinion)

Among Russia's more immediate neighbors, Ukraine has a majority expressing confidence in Putin (59%). The minority with negative views (20%) is down 13 points from 2007. Azerbaijan is divided--45 percent positive to 49 percent negative. Russians themselves are overwhelmingly positive about Putin (80%).

The Western European picture, though, is distinctly more negative. A large majority of French express a lack of confidence (76%), with 55 percent expressing no confidence at all. Spanish views are similar, though less emphatic: 70 percent lack confidence, but only 36 percent have no confidence at all. Fifty-six percent of Britons also express a lack of confidence, up 9 points from 2007.

The Middle East is similarly negative. The Palestinians hold the most negative view of Putin (85%-up from 71% in 2007), with 55 percent expressing no confidence at all. Sixty-eight percent of Jordanians express a lack of confidence (60% no confidence) as do two-thirds of Turks (58% no confidence). Fifty-six percent of Egyptians express a lack of confidence, but this is down from 70 percent in 2007, and just one in four say they have "no confidence at all."

In sharp contrast to its neighbors, a plurality in Iran (48%) expresses "some" or "a lot of" confidence in Putin, and just 27 percent express a lack of confidence.

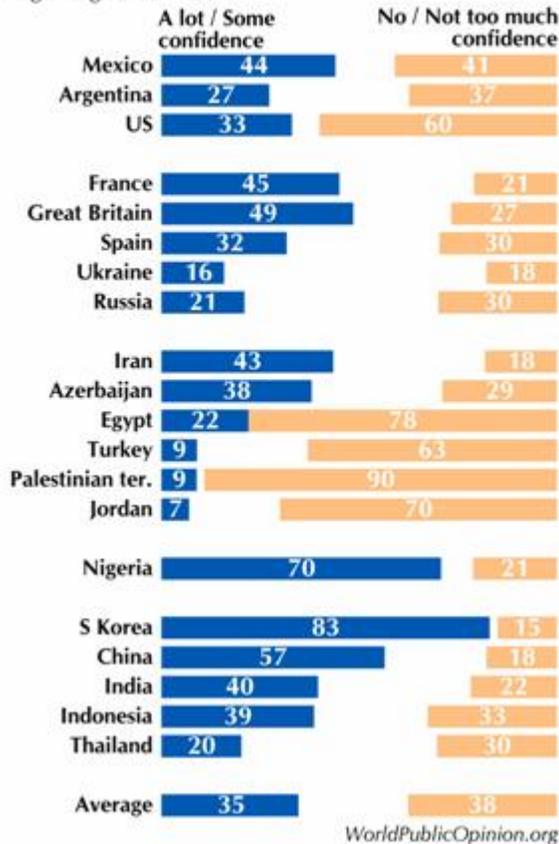
In the Americas, 71 percent in the United States express a negative view--21 points more than in 2007. In Latin America, a majority of Mexicans (56%) have a negative view, up from 48 percent. Argentines lean negative (47 to 24%).

In Africa, Nigeria is divided, with 40 percent expressing "some" or "a lot of" confidence and 38 percent expressing little or no confidence.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Confidence in Ban Ki-moon

How much confidence you have in United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to do the right thing regarding world affairs:



Ban Ki-moon is the only leader to receive moderately positive ratings. In nine nations a plurality or majority say they have "some" or "a lot of" confidence in him to do the right thing. In eight nations a plurality or majority say they have "little" or "no confidence at all". However, many do not provide an answer.

Those saying that they have confidence include majorities in South Korea (83%) [Ban's country of origin], Nigeria (70%), and China (57%). Pluralities say so in Britain (49 to 27% little or no confidence), France (45 to 21%), India (40 to 22%), Indonesia (39 to 33%), and Azerbaijan (38 to 29%). Interestingly, Iranians also give Ban a positive rating (43 to 18%), despite the sanctions that the United Nations Security Council has imposed on Iran to press it to stop its uranium enrichment program.

Five nations show strongly negative views--all in the Middle East region. Majorities say they have little or no confidence in the Palestinian territories (90%, 59% no confidence), Jordan (70%, 63% no confidence), Turkey (63%, 56% no confidence) and Egypt (78%, 38% no confidence).

Four other countries--the United States, Russia, Argentina and Thailand--predominantly express low levels of confidence in the UN leader, with relatively few saying they have "no confidence at all." In these countries the dominant answer is "not too much"

confidence, or a failure to give a response. Those saying they have "not too much" confidence may be expressing a lack of familiarity with the relatively new and low-profile Secretary General, rather than indicating that they hold a negative view of the world leader.

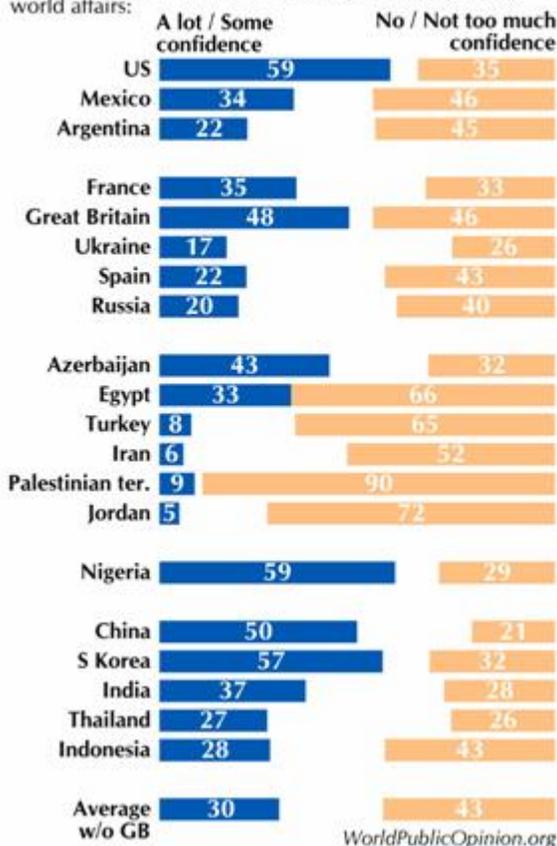
In the United States, 40 percent say they have "not too much confidence," while 20 percent say they have "no confidence at all." Most Russians choose not to answer (46%), though 20 percent say "not too much" and 10 percent say "no confidence at all." Similarly, among Argentines, 36 percent do not answer, 16 percent say "not too much" and 21 percent say they have no confidence. Finally, in Thailand 49 percent do not answer, 23 percent say "not too much" and 7 percent have no confidence.

Views are divided in Mexico, Spain and Ukraine. In Spain, 32 percent express confidence, while 30 percent lack confidence. In Mexico, 44 percent say they have confidence while 41 percent express little or no confidence (16%, no confidence). In Ukraine a remarkably high 67 percent do not answer, while 16 percent express confidence and 18 percent little or no confidence.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown

Confidence in Brown

How much confidence you have in Great Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown to do the right thing regarding world affairs:



Gordon Brown is the national leader that gets the largest number of nations giving him positive ratings. Nonetheless, more nations give him negative ratings (11) than positive ratings (6), while two are divided. On average, just 30 percent say they have confidence in Brown and 43 percent say they have little or no confidence.

The most positive evaluations of Brown can be found among Americans and Nigerians where, in both cases, 59 percent express some or a lot of confidence. Thirty-five and 30 percent, respectively, express little or no confidence.

Views are also fairly positive towards Brown among most Asian publics polled. These especially include South Korea (57% positive) and China (50%). India leans towards positive evaluations (37% positive to 28% negative), though 35 percent do not answer either way. Thais are divided (27% positive, 26% negative, 46% no answer). Only the Indonesians lean negative with 43 percent expressing little or no confidence (28% some or a lot).

Out of all regions polled, the Middle Eastern publics' evaluations of Brown are by far the most negative. Large majorities say they have "little" or "no confidence at all" in his leadership in the Palestinian territories (90%, 67% no confidence), Jordan (72%, 67% no confidence), and Turkey (65%, 60% no confidence). A large majority of Egyptians (66%)

also give negative ratings but only 27 percent say they have "no confidence at all." A more modest majority of Iranians (52%) lack confidence in Brown, but most of these (39%) say they have "no confidence at all." Azerbaijanis, however, lean positive (43 to 32% negative).

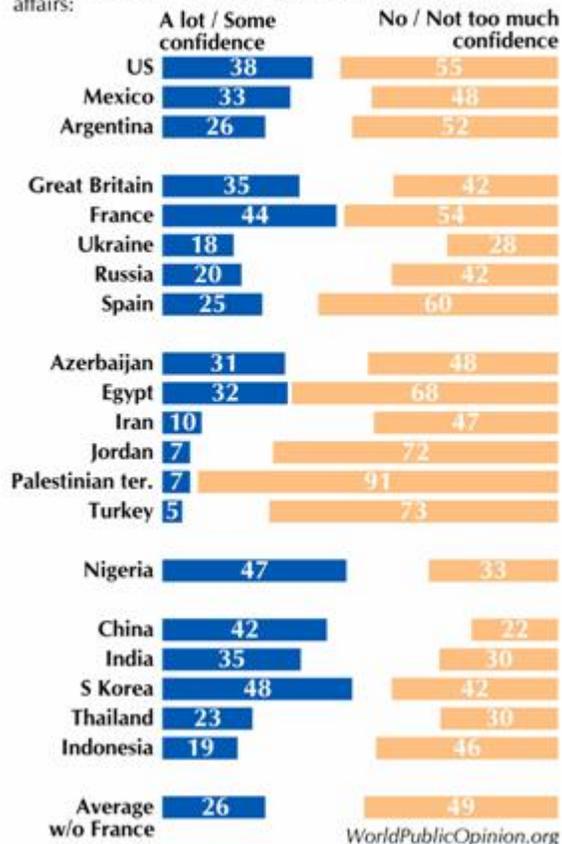
Britain's European neighbors have more moderate or unformed views of Brown. At this stage the French public is roughly equally divided between those who say they have a positive view (35%), a negative view (33%) and have no view either way (33%). Russians lean negative (40 to 19%) but 40 percent do not answer. Ukrainians also lean negative (26 to 17%), with more than half (57%) declining to offer an opinion. In Spain, 43 percent are negative, 22 percent positive, with no response from 35 percent. Britons themselves are divided on Brown (48% positive, 46% negative).

The Latin Americans polled also lean negative with many not answering. Among Mexicans, 46 percent are negative, 34 percent positive and 21 percent do not answer. Among Argentines, 45 percent are negative, 22 percent positive and 32 percent do not answer.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy

Confidence in Sarkozy

How much confidence you have in France's President Nicolas Sarkozy to do the right thing regarding world affairs:



Among the 19 nations questioned, only four rate Nicolas Sarkozy positively while 15 rate him negatively. On average, 25 percent say they have confidence in Sarkozy to do right thing in world affairs, while 48 percent say they have little or no confidence.

Most of his positive ratings come from Asian countries. South Koreans have the largest number (48%) expressing confidence in Sarkozy's ability to do the right thing regarding world affairs. Chinese lean positive (42 to 22%) though 37 percent do not take a position. Indians also lean positive (35 to 30%)--though less so--and fairly large numbers (35%) also do not express a view. Indonesians, on the other hand, lean negative (46 to 19%) with 35 percent not answering. Thais are similar (30% negative, 23% positive, 48% no view).

Nigerians are the second most positive about Sarkozy. Forty-seven percent have a positive view, 33 percent a negative view and 21 percent do not answer.

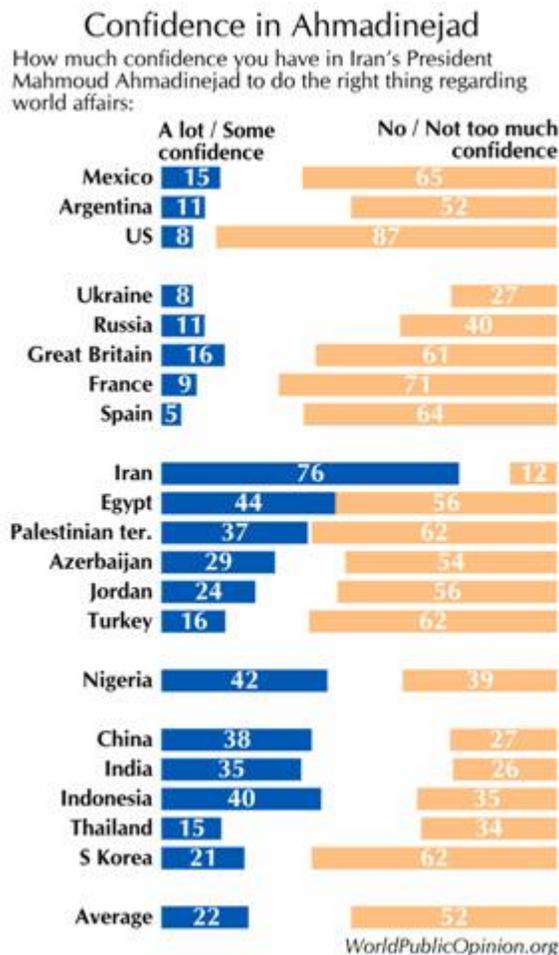
Harshly negative views are found in most Middle East publics. Low levels of confidence in Sarkozy's leadership are expressed by very large majorities in the Palestinian territories (91%, 67% no confidence), Turkey (73%, 68% no confidence), and Jordan (72%, 66% no confidence). A large majority of Egyptians (68%) also express negative views, but only 28 percent say they have "no confidence at all."

More moderate views are expressed by Iranians and Azerbaijanis. Iranians lean negative (47 to 10%) with large numbers not taking a position. Azerbaijanis also lean negative (48 to 31%).

Publics in the Americas have little confidence in Sarkozy's leadership. Fifty-five percent of Americans express a lack of confidence (as compared to 38% expressing confidence) as do 52 percent of Argentines (26% expressing confidence). Mexicans also lean negative (48 to 33%).

France's regional neighbors also lean negative toward Sarkozy, with many still withholding judgment. The British lean negative (42 to 32%), with 24 percent undecided. Russians also lean negative (42 to 20%) with more (38%) not answering. Ukrainians tilt negative (28 to 18%), with a remarkable 54 percent withholding judgment. The Spanish are Sarkozy's harshest critics, with 60 percent expressing little or no confidence and just 25 percent expressing some or a lot. French opinion of their own leader, while negative, is milder than that of the Spanish (54% negative, 44% positive).

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad



For Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, 13 nations give negative ratings, two give

mildly positive ratings and two are divided. On average, just 24 percent say they have "some" or "a lot of" confidence, while 52 percent say they have "little" or "no confidence at all" in Ahmadinejad to do the right thing in world affairs. Compared to polling conducted by Pew in 2007, positive views are up just slightly, like in the case of Putin, masking a number of sharp divergent movements in opinion among specific countries.

The most favorable views of Ahmadinejad are found in Asia. Among the Chinese, a plurality now has a positive view (38 to 27% negative)--up 16 points from 2007. Similarly, in India views now lean positive (35 to 26%)--also up 16 points. In both cases this is a reversal from 2007 when both countries had pluralities expressing a lack of confidence. In Indonesia, views are now divided, with 40 percent expressing some or a lot of confidence (down 11 points), and 36 percent expressing little or no confidence.

However, a majority of South Koreans show a lack of confidence (62%). Thais also lean negative, 34 percent to 15 percent (though 50% did not respond).

Views are quite negative among Iran's neighbors in the Middle East. The most negative are Turks with 62 percent expressing a lack of confidence (54% no confidence). Sixty-two percent of Palestinians also hold this view (36% no confidence). Fifty-six percent in Egypt and Jordan also express a lack of confidence (29% and 43%, respectively, have no confidence at all). Likewise, in Iran's immediate neighbor Azerbaijan, 54 percent are negative.

In Europe, negative views of Ahmadinejad prevail. A large majority in France (71%) expresses a lack of confidence (51% no confidence) as do 61 percent of the British. Pluralities in Russia (40 to 11%) and Ukraine (27 to 8%) lack confidence.

The most negative view is in the United States. An overwhelming 87 percent express a negative view with 56 percent saying they have "no confidence at all." The negative majority in the United States has grown 15 points over 2007, apparently due to growing awareness of Ahmadinejad (the number of respondents with no opinion is down 14 points this year).

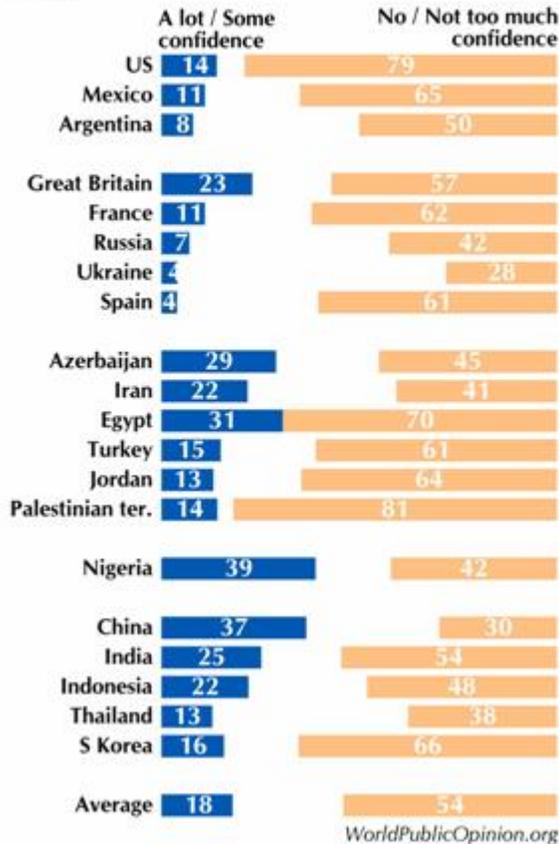
In Latin America, both Argentina and Mexico have majorities with negative views. In Argentina 52 percent are negative (33% no confidence) and in Mexico 65 percent lack confidence (40% no confidence).

Nigerian opinion is divided, with 42 percent expressing some or a lot of confidence and 39 percent expressing little or no confidence.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf

Confidence in Musharraf

How much confidence you have in Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf to do the right thing regarding world affairs:



Only one country leans toward a positive view of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, one is divided and 18 have predominantly negative views. On average across 20 publics, a majority of 54 percent say they have "little" or "no confidence at all" that Musharraf will do the right thing regarding world affairs, while just 18 percent have "a lot" or "some" confidence in him to do the right thing.

The one country that gives Musharraf a mildly positive rating is China, where 37 percent are positive and 30 percent negative. Nigerians are divided--39 percent positive, 42 percent negative.

The most negative views are found in Pakistan's Middle Eastern neighbors. Eighty-one percent of Palestinians say they do not have confidence in Musharraf (55% no confidence at all). Very negative views are also found in Jordan (64%, 56% no confidence at all), Egypt (70%, 36% no confidence at all) and Turkey (61%, 55% no confidence at all). Azerbaijan leans negative (45 to 29%).

With the exception of China, views among Asian countries are quite negative. Majorities have negative views of Musharraf in South Korea (66%) and in Pakistan's neighbor, India (54%). Views lean negative in Indonesia (48 to 22%) and Thailand (38 to 31%).

Among European publics polled, a lack of confidence is most widespread among the French (62%), Spanish (61%) and British (57%), along with a plurality of Russians (42 to 7%). Ukrainians lean negative (28 to 4%), but two-thirds do not provide an answer.

In the Americas an overwhelming majority in the US (79%) have a negative view as do a large majority of Mexicans (65%). A plurality of Argentines (50 to 8%) also has a negative view.