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World Poll Finds Global Leadership Vacuum

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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College Park, MD—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.

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.

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.

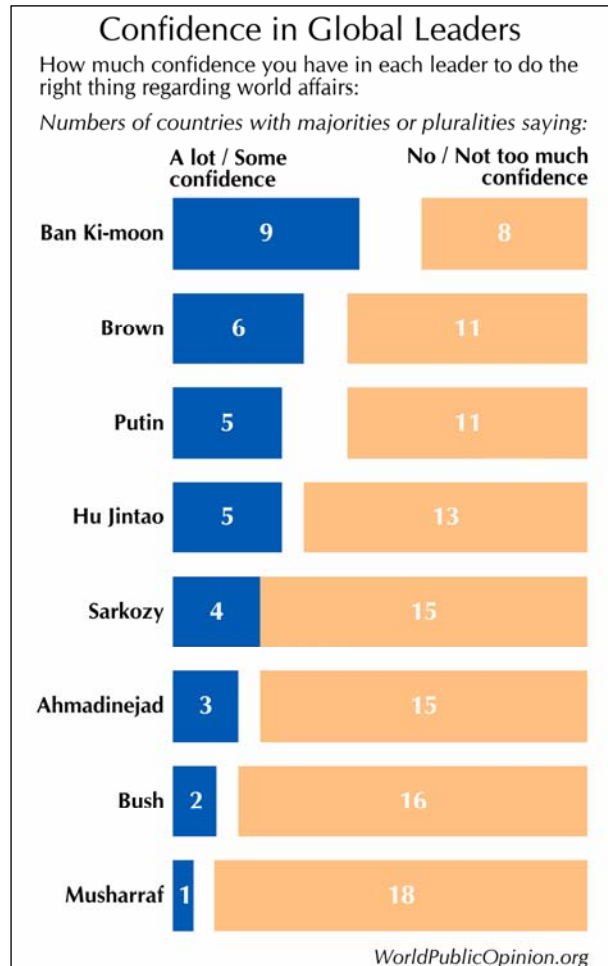
Putin appears to have become a divisive figure. Although his ratings have improved slightly since a 2007 poll by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the large positive movement in certain countries—such as China, where Putin’s ratings are up 17 points—is balanced by negative movement in others—such as 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.

For more information, visit: www.WorldPublicOpinion.org.

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