



## What the world thinks of Trump's America now

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America is the most powerful nation on earth. It possesses the strongest military, largest economy, and dominant culture. Nevertheless, such factors do not necessarily translate into either international respect or popularity.

Indeed, the willingness of other nations to trust the U.S. with its extraordinary power is on the wane. That, in turn undermines American influence. The better this nation's image, the more foreign governments are likely to cooperate with Washington in advancing shared goals

Of 17 nations for which Pew Research Center has numbers for both 2016 and 2017, only three—Greece, Hungary, and Nigeria—saw a popular uptick for America. All the others were down, some dramatically: Australia (60 to 48), Canada (65 to 43), France (63 to 46), Germany (57 to 35), India (56 to 49), Italy (72 to 61), Japan (72 to 57), Kenya (63 to 54), Netherlands (65 to 37), Poland (74 to 73), South Africa (60 to 53), Spain (59 to 31), Sweden (69 to 45), and United Kingdom (61 to 50).

Could this have been due to anything other than the Trump presidency? A Pew Research Center study from last June found the answer to be no. The researchers explained: "Although he has only been in office a few months, Donald Trump's presidency has had a major impact on how the world sees the United States. Trump and many of his key policies are broadly unpopular around the globe, and ratings for the U.S. have declined steeply in many nations."

And things are getting worse. A January Gallup poll taken between March and November of 2017 found that foreign approval for U.S. leadership was just 30 percent, down from 48 percent in 2016 (disapproval rose from 28 to 43 percent). That rating is below that for the Bush administration. In contrast, foreign views of Chinese, German, and Russian leadership remained generally positive and unchanged.

Overall, according to Gallup: "The weakened image of the U.S. in 2017 reflects large and widespread losses in approval and relatively few gains. Out of 134 countries, U.S. leadership

approval ratings declined substantially—by 10 percentage points or more—in 65 countries that include many longtime U.S. allies and partners—and aspiring U.S. partners."

The percentage point drop in the Americas and Europe was particularly dramatic (the biggest in the world was Portugal at 51 points; Belgium followed at 44 points.) With only small overstatement, one article on the survey was entitled "Trump's First Year: Everyone Hates Us Now."

Americans are aware that the nation's image waxes and wanes. Ironically, their opinion of how others view the country has remained relatively constant over time. The partisan differences, however, were dramatic. In one poll, eight of ten Republicans said the country was less respected under Obama.

Almost nine of ten Democrats believe the same for Trump. Seven of ten argue that it is a serious problem (the respective GOP numbers were 42 and 28 percent.) In this case, at least, the Democrats are closer to the truth.

While foreigners don't like "America," by which many think of Washington, most people overseas like Americans, as in those who live in the U.S. Pew found that from 2013 to 2017 the favorability rating of Americans rose in 11 nations, stayed the same in one, and fell in 16. The numbers remained robust in most countries, typically in the 60s through 80s.

There is broad support for U.S. culture and liberties. The global median level of support for the two were 65 percent and 54 percent, respectively. Only in Islamic states and India, which is in the midst of a Hindu nationalist revival, does support drop below a majority. Still, a plurality dislikes U.S. ideas about democracy. That skepticism may reflect the role of U.S. government policy, since Washington often purports to spread "democracy" abroad.

Very different were confidence levels in American presidents. George W. Bush had abysmal ratings when he left office, as low as two percent—two percent!—in Turkey. Barack Obama's lowest rating was 14 in Jordan. But he enjoyed two in the 90s and seven in the 80s.

The best that can be said for President Trump is that he has nowhere to go but up. In broad sweep, a majority of foreigners see Trump as a strong leader, but even more believe him to be arrogant, dangerous, and intolerant. Seven countries, most notably India and Israel, gave him majority approval last year. He is in single digits in three (lowest is five in Mexico). In another 23 countries his approval is in the teens through the 20s.

Moreover, the vast majority of people abroad oppose signature Trump policies: withdrawing from the Paris climate change convention, building the border wall with Mexico, killing the Iranian nuclear deal, dropping free trade agreements, and banning entry from some Muslim nations.

Residents of 37 nations were asked their opinion; On only one issue did opposition average below 62 percent. His approach received significant support in only four countries. In 16 nations majorities opposed all five policies.

Of course, sometimes the right action might be unpopular. So Washington officials should not pursue popularity to the exclusion of other objectives. However, support and respect by foreign populations enhances Washington's influence and encourages foreign governments to cooperate with the U.S. On these measures, at least, the Trump administration is moving America backwards, with no end in sight. To the extent that Washington is looking for foreign support, it could be another three or seven years before America's reputation recovers.

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