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House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

At the Hearing
“Restoring America’s Reputation in the World and Why It Matters”

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Thank you for the opportunity to help this committee address the issue of “Restoring America’s Reputation in the World.” The Pew Global Attitudes Project, the largest ever series of continuing multi-national surveys focusing on worldwide issues, has been monitoring views of the U.S. and the American people since 2002. It has conducted more than 200,000 interviews in 57 countries.

These surveys chronicled the rise of anti-Americanism around the world for much of the past decade. Favorable ratings of the U.S. plunged in many countries following the invasion of Iraq and remained low through 2008. In 2009, we began to document a revival of America’s global image in many parts of the world reflecting confidence in its new president, Barack Obama.

By mid-2009, opinions of the United States in Western Europe, as well as major countries in Asia and Latin America, were about as positive as they were at the beginning of the decade, before George W. Bush took office. The improvement of the American image was especially evident in Western Europe, where opinion of the U.S. had remained at a low ebb for many years. For example, America’s favorable rating in Germany jumped from 31% in 2008 to 64% in 2009. A comparable increase in positive opinion was apparent in France (42% to 75%). While improvements in the U.S.’s ratings were most dramatic in Western Europe, changes in a positive direction were apparent in major Asian and Latin American countries and elsewhere.

	U.S. Favorability Rating										
	1999/ 2000		2002		2003		2005		2006	2007	2008
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
U.S.	--	--	--	83	76	80	84	88			
Canada	71	72	63	59	--	55	--	68			
Britain	83	75	70	55	56	51	53	69			
France	62	62	42	43	39	39	42	75			
Germany	78	60	45	42	37	30	31	64			
Spain	50	--	38	41	23	34	33	58			
Poland	86	79	--	62	--	61	68	67			
Russia	37	61	37	52	43	41	46	44			
Turkey	52	30	15	23	12	9	12	14			
Egypt	--	--	--	--	30	21	22	27			
Jordan	--	25	1	21	15	20	19	25			
Lebanon	--	36	27	42	--	47	51	55			
Palest. ter.	--	--	*	--	--	13	--	15			
Israel	--	--	78	--	--	78	--	71			
China	--	--	--	42	47	34	41	47			
India	--	66	--	71	56	59	66	76			
Indonesia	75	61	15	38	30	29	37	63			
Japan	77	72	--	--	63	61	50	59			
Pakistan	23	10	13	23	27	15	19	16			
S. Korea	58	52	46	--	--	58	70	78			
Argentina	50	34	--	--	--	16	22	38			
Brazil	56	51	35	--	--	44	47	61			
Mexico	68	64	--	--	--	56	47	69			
Kenya	94	80	--	--	--	87	--	90			
Nigeria	46	76	61	--	62	70	64	79			

1999/2000 survey trends provided by the Office of Research, U.S. Department of State

In sharp contrast, there was little indication of a better view of the U.S. in the Muslim world. Opinions in the Middle East remained largely unfavorable, despite some positive movement in the numbers in Jordan and Egypt. Strong animosity toward the U.S. continued to run deep and unabated in Turkey, the Palestinian territories and Pakistan, new president notwithstanding. The clear exception in the Muslim world was Indonesia, where people were well aware of Obama's family ties to the country and where favorable ratings of the U.S. increased from 37% to 63% between 2008 and 2009.

Analysis of the Pew survey found that personal confidence in Barack Obama rather than opinion about his specific policies was fueling the resurgence of the U.S. image in many countries. The belief that Obama will "do the right thing in world affairs" was nearly universal in Western countries, where lack of confidence in President Bush had been almost as prevalent for much of his time in office. In France and Germany, no fewer than nine-in-ten expressed confidence in the new American president, exceeding the ratings achieved by Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel in their own countries.

In Asia, optimism about Obama was almost as extensive, with 85% of Japanese and 81% of South Koreans expressing confidence in the American president, and only somewhat lower percentages expressing that view in India (77%) and China (62%). In Latin America, 76% of Brazilians had confidence in Obama, as did most Argentines (61%), despite their generally skeptical view of the U.S., as expressed in this and earlier surveys.

Even in Muslim countries where the U.S. remained unpopular, significant percentages expressed confidence in Obama. In Egypt and Jordan, sizable numbers had confidence in him – 42% and 31% respectively. This represents a major improvement compared with opinions about President Bush in 2008. But in Pakistan and the Palestinian territories, ratings of Obama were only marginally better than the abysmal ratings accorded Bush.

Moreover, in the Middle East large majorities continued to be dubious that Obama would be fair in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. That was the view of more than six-in-ten Jordanians, Egyptians and Lebanese.

Where it could be tested, there was little indication that President Obama's June 4, 2009 Cairo speech was as transformative as it was sometimes reported to be in the news media. Among Palestinians, the view that the new American president will be fair rose marginally after the speech (25% to 31%). However, in Israel, the

Will Do Right Thing in World Affairs			
% confident	Bush 2008	Obama 2009	Diff
U.S.	37	74	+37
Canada*	28	88	+60
Britain	16	86	+70
France	13	91	+78
Germany	14	93	+79
Spain	8	72	+64
Poland	41	62	+21
Russia	22	37	+15
Turkey	2	33	+31
Egypt	11	42	+31
Jordan	7	31	+24
Lebanon	33	46	+13
Palest. ter.*	8	23	+15
Israel*	57	56	-1
China	30	62	+32
India	55	77	+22
Indonesia	23	71	+48
Japan	25	85	+60
Pakistan	7	13	+6
S. Korea	30	81	+51
Argentina	7	61	+54
Brazil	17	76	+59
Mexico	16	55	+39
Kenya*	72	94	+22
Nigeria	55	88	+33

*Bush confidence from 2007.

Samples in Brazil, China, India and Pakistan are disproportionately urban.

number thinking Obama will be fair in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was 57% prior to the Cairo speech, but just 47% after Obama's address.

More generally, the poll found approval of *most* of Obama's foreign policies and high expectations about his approach to world affairs. There was support nearly everywhere for closing Guantanamo and withdrawing troops from Iraq – but opposition almost everywhere for sending more troops to Afghanistan.

In 2009, most people surveyed around the world thought Obama would seek international approval before using military force and would take into account the interests of their country when making U.S. policy. Western Europeans and Canadians were especially positive in these regards. Global publics were also optimistic on another issue that has been a source of contention with regard to the U.S. position: climate change. Majorities or pluralities of people in almost every country surveyed believed that Obama will get the U.S. to take significant measures to control climate change.

For all this positive opinion about Obama and better overall ratings for the U.S., problematic perceptions of the U.S. persist.

- Overwhelming numbers around the world continue to see the U.S as having a big – often bad – influence on their own countries.
- The U.S. was not seen as considering the interests of other countries in the conduct of its foreign policy, expectations about Obama notwithstanding.
- Majorities or pluralities in 20 of 24 publics believe that the U.S economy is hurting their own economies.

Finally, a few things to consider with regard to the surprisingly positive findings about changing attitudes toward the U.S. evident last year. First, given that changes in opinion about the U.S. were primarily predicated on a personal confidence in the new president, these trends may be more fragile than they would be if they had been based on views of his specific policies. In fact, in a few months when we poll again, we may find some fallback in the upswing that we noted last year. Those high expectations may have been hard to fulfill.

Secondly, as the project's co-chair former Senator John Danforth pointed out, opinion of the U.S. improved at a time when Obama was not taking assertive steps. The U.S. was planning to leave Iraq and close Guantanamo. Obama had not tested world reaction to the assertion of U.S. power, which became the issue in the Bush years. And I believe it remains an issue.

There has been great wariness of American power, and you do not have to scratch too deeply to find it. Suspicion and resentment of American power has been clearly evident in polling over the years. A survey of opinion leaders taken soon after the 9/11 attacks found great sympathy for the U.S., but also the view that it was good that America knew what it is like to be vulnerable! And the belief that the U.S. really wants to run the world has been a theme of global public opinion in the past decade.

How President Obama manages and presents the assertion of U.S. power will be critical to the restoration of America's reputation around the world.

However, it is clear that America's image problems in much of the Muslim world are of an enduring nature, and years of polling suggest there will be little real progress until: 1) Muslims come to see the U.S. as being more fair-minded in its handling of Israeli-Palestinian situation – and most do not believe Obama will be fair-minded; 2) Muslims no longer view American anti-terrorism efforts as anti-Muslim; 3) No American forces are at war in Muslim countries. The U.S. will have to manage its image problems in the Muslim world. A likely cure seems far off.

I will not address the “Why it Matters” aspect of this inquiry except to say that we live in an era in which the global image of the U.S. can affect policies and actions in many, if not most nations of the world. In the past decade, we saw the extent to which opinion surveys and media are now able to tell the story of how the U.S. and its policies are regarded around the world. And we have seen how that story can, and has had consequences. Public opinion of American policies became a political issue of consequence in the 2002 German and 2004 Spanish elections. Overwhelming Turkish anti-war sentiment made it politically untenable for the parliament to allow American ground forces to invade Iraq through Turkey. Today, anti-American sentiment in Pakistan is of considerable importance to U.S. efforts in that region.