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Polling Data on European Opinion of American Policies, Values and People
presented to:

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Human Rights, and Oversight, and the Subcommittee on Europe
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Thank you, Mister Chairman, for inviting me to address this Committee regarding European public opinion of the United States, its people, policies and values.

Recent headlines around the globe have breathlessly declared that large majorities of Europeans have a “mostly negative” view of the United States and its policies. Before we seal the scroll on European opinion of America, it is important to consider the greater contexts within which those ratings were cast, the survey questions and methodologies that engendered such responses, and other facts and figures that would seem to soften, if not belie, the intensity of those claims.

Just as it is the case in the United States, public opinion in Europe is shaped by social, economic, cultural, historic, political and individual factors. As such, it is not advisable to certify the “opinions” of a whole class of people based on a few inquiries that ask respondents to react or pigeon-hole their feelings into a simple “yes or no,” “agree or disagree” construct. It may be wise, as is attempted below, to more deeply examine the genesis of these opinions and to consider other survey data that suggest a more nuanced, and in some cases more hopeful, outlook of European opinion of the United States.

Recent European Opinion Research

All polling data is grounded in the moment of its capture, and tempered by the circumstances attending that moment. The larger cultural, political, economic, religious and social conditions must be considered when assessing opinion data. With over 230 years of complex history filled with treaties, wars, American aid and an international exchange of commerce and ideas, it should surprise no one that Europeans have strong, even passionate, opinions regarding the United State’s policies, values and people.

The numbers of Europeans who have “positive impressions” of America have declined over the last eight years even before the Iraq War, which just this week marked its

Pew Data Favorable Opinions of the United States						
Populous	1999/2000¹	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Great Britain	83%	75%	70%	58%	55%	56%
France	62%	63%	43%	37%	43%	39%
Germany	78%	61%	45%	38%	41%	37%
Spain	50%	--	38%	--	41%	23%

¹ Department of State Data reported by the Pew Global Attitudes Project

fourth anniversary. However, the high levels of “satisfaction” Europeans reported with the United States in the 1990’s may themselves be aberrational, considering even recent 20th century history. For example, in 1983, a *Newsweek* poll found that just one-quarter of French citizens approved of U.S. polices.²

Recently, this Committee heard from Dr. Steven Kull of the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), who testified about the BBC World Service poll. That survey’s results suggested that vast majorities of citizens in Europe held “mainly

BBC 2006 Data European Views of United States Influence on the World				
Populous	Mainly Positive	Mainly Negative	Depends/ Neither, Neutral (Vol.)	Don’t Know (Vol.)
France	24%	69%	5%	1%
Germany	16%	74%	9%	1%
Great Britain	33%	57%	7%	3%
Italy	35%	47%	15%	4%
Portugal	29%	55%	14%	1%
Russia	19%	59%	16%	1%
Turkey	7%	69%	15%	9%

negative” views of the United States’ influence on the world. That question is broad and vague. It also failed to invite respondents to express ambivalence or uncertainty by not including a listed option of “neutral” or “depends.” Even with this omission, some respondents in Europe, including double-digit figures in countries like Italy and Portugal, volunteered those answer choices.

European Opinion Research Regarding the U.S. and its Policies in Context

European disapproval of American policies is not a new phenomenon. Throughout our history, American foreign policy has been questioned by our allies and enemies in Europe. It is important to remember that while the E.U. and U.S. have many similar interests we also have divergent ones, and it is naïve to assume that members of any nation outside of the U.S. would enthusiastically applaud all – or even most -- of our actions.

² “What the World Thinks of America” (July 11, 1983) *Newsweek*

For example, people in many European nations resist the United States' goal to assist free peoples in their quest to self-govern. In a 2005 Ipsos- Public Affairs poll, vast majorities of citizens in Europe were convinced that the U.S. should not "promote the establishment of democratic governments in other countries." This idea was disliked by 84% of the French public, 80% of Germans, 53% of Italians, 60% of Spanish citizens and 66% of those in Great Britain. One might wonder why nations who enjoy a degree of personal liberty and free market economies would deny the same to others around the globe.

A recent poll³ by Dr. Kull's group, though he included only in the global aggregate in his own testimony before this Committee, demonstrated that U.S. handling of the situation in Iraq was rejected with considerably intensity by citizens surveyed in seven European countries, while other aspects of U.S. foreign policy were criticized with less intensity. For example, French respondents were 22 points less likely to say they "strongly disapproved" of America's policies regarding Iran's nuclear program than those who "strongly disapproved" of America's role in Iraq (79%-57%). U.S. policy concerning Iran stood apart as an area where fewer Europeans were disapproving of U.S. actions, as was also the case with the Israeli-Hezbollah war.

Populous	BBC 2006 Data Percentage of European Citizens who "Strongly Disapproved" Of the U.S. Government's Handling of...					
	The War in Iraq	Iran's Nuclear Program	The Israeli-Hezbollah War	Detainees in Guantanamo	North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program	Global Warming or Climate Change
United States	40%	25%	26%	29%	21%	37%
France	79%	57%	63%	67%	50%	74%
Germany	66%	34%	46%	70%	31%	66%
Great Britain	57%	35%	41%	51%	25%	61%
Italy	63%	38%	47%	64%	37%	56%
Portugal	61%	34%	46%	66%	30%	65%
Turkey	62%	52%	61%	63%	48%	45%
Russia	50%	28%	29%	31%	24%	16%

This survey received considerable attention from the domestic and international press, and was championed by President George W. Bush's detractors as a measure of his foreign policy failures. Still, it is imperative to note that policies dealing with actual physical conflict or specific diplomatic disagreements were measured, rather than broader concepts that go to the heart of American values or her people.

³ BBC by Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland and GlobeScan from November 2006 to January 2007

In earlier polls, when instances of U.S. aid and diplomatic goodwill are tested, Europeans do not necessarily have a negative view. In fact, some news stories like U.S. aid to tsunami victims in Asia in 2005, and support of democracy in the Middle East caused majorities or near majorities in a variety of European countries to view the United States more positively. Responsible polling of European opinions of American policy should take into consideration the full range of United States actions throughout the world, instead of focusing on easy targets of discord.

Populous	Pew 2005 Data Percentage Lead to Have a More Favorable View of the United States after World Events		
	January Elections in Iraq	U.S. Aid to Tsunami Victims	President Bush's Calls for Democracy in Middle East
Great Britain	40%	44%	47%
France	35%	51%	43%
Germany	50%	66%	71%
Spain	23%	46%	45%
Netherlands	55%	62%	65%
Russia	11%	61%	24%

It is hardly astonishing that the United States, as the world's superpower in both military might and economic prowess, elicits negative views from competing nations. While it may be true that not all of the dissatisfaction Europeans feel towards the United States can be explained by envy or power struggles, it is a telling facet of their views that should not be so readily dismissed.

It seems that many Europeans are simply uncomfortable with the fact America is in the most powerful position, a gnawing truth that was acknowledged by majorities of citizens in five European countries when asked whether it would be "a good or a bad thing if the European Union Became as Powerful as the U.S.?" As the nearby chart demonstrates, these figures rose significantly in countries other than the chief U.S. ally Great Britain. Interestingly, of those who wanted increases in the E.U.'s power in each of those nations majorities were also in favor of Europe having to "pay the costs of taking greater responsibility for international problems" in a separate question.

Pew 2004 Data "Would it be a Good or a Bad Thing if the European Union Became as Powerful as the U.S.?"		
Populous	Good Thing	Bad Thing
France	90%	9%
Germany	70%	22%
Russia	67%	12%
Turkey	67%	21%
Britain	50%	39%
United States	33%	50%

Further, the noted anti-American sentiments of influential leaders in media and politics throughout Europe cannot be extracted from this equation. News broadcasts and articles across the European Continent negatively present the United States' foreign policy on a consistent, indeed daily, basis. Consider the tone and substance of these British headlines from major newspapers in the fall of 2006 alone, "America Finally Waking Up to its Horrific Failure in Iraq⁴," "America Will Thrive After Iraq; it is the Locals Who Will Suffer⁵," and "America Has Acted Stupidly in Iraq, Claims U.S. Diplomat."⁶ In Russia, *Defense and Security Digest*, a military strategy magazine read by public opinion leaders throughout the country ran a story titled: "America's Defeat in Iraq Will Cost Russia; Total Chaos Moving in to Replace the Mono-polar World."⁷

Just this month, the Prime Minister of France, Dominique de Villepin, was quoted in the *Agence France Presse* (France's global news agency similar to *Associated Press*) saying that although the U.S. remains the number one power in the world, "The war in Iraq marked a turning point. It shattered America's image. It undermined the image of the West as a whole." He went on to imply that the United States is trying to establish its own "world order" stating, "None can impose a new world order on their own" and by advocating "true global governance."⁸

This blatant anti-American sentiment in the press is not a European phenomenon. In China, the government's official news source Xinhua, reported that "only the occupying troops should be held responsible" for the "current chaotic stat in Iraq."⁹ These are only a few examples of how Europeans and other global citizens are exposed to a barrage of negative press regarding the United States generally, and its involvement in Iraq specifically.

Consider the extreme saturation of press regarding the alleged abuses by U.S. Soldiers in Guantanamo and at Abu Ghraib, compared to the more positive news story of American aid to Pakistan after the October 2005 Earthquake. The

Pew 2006 Data Regarding Saturation of News Stories Regarding U.S. in European Nations			
Populous	Iraq and Guantanamo Prison Abuses	U.S. Aid to Pakistan after Earthquake	Difference
United States	76%	69%	+7%
Great Britain	90%	73%	+17%
France	88%	63%	+25%
Germany	98%	66%	+32%
Spain	90%	55%	+35%

Pew Global Attitudes project found in 2006 that eye-popping majorities in every major European nation admitted familiarity with reports of prison abuses, considerably (in some cases 20 and 30 points more likely) more likely than those who stated with the story of Pakistani aid.

⁴ *The Guardian*, October 18, 2006

⁵ *The Financial Times*, November 7, 2006

⁶ *Daily Mail*, October 23, 2006

⁷ *Defense and Security Digest* December 20, 2006

⁸ *Agence France Presse*, March 16, 2007

⁹ Reprinted by the *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, December 20, 2006 "Xinhua commentary: US "most important factor" causing chaos in Iraq"

Note that even more respondents in European nations had heard about the situation in Abu Ghraib a few years ago than those in the United States. This one comparison is perhaps illustrative of the typically myopic and gloomy focus on the United States by the European media which would naturally lead to higher rates of disapproval for the subject of so much negative press.

Interestingly, Europeans are not really that satisfied with their own countries either. This month, The Financial Times and Harris released the results of a poll, finding that just 25% of those who live in Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain were convinced their life has improved since their country joined the European Union. Further, in 2005, The Pew Global Attitudes project found marked discontent among Europeans, especially in France, Germany, and Russia where 7 in 10 adults reported they were unhappy with their national conditions. Thus European unhappiness with conditions abroad is mirrored at home, perhaps exposing a more general, boundary-less pessimism that is not confined to attitudes about the U.S.

Pew 2005 Data European Satisfaction with National Conditions		
Populous	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Spain	51%	44%
Great Britain	44%	51%
Turkey	55%	41%
France	28%	71%
Russia	23%	71%
Germany	25%	73%
United States	39%	57%

And in a contemporary example of how actions speak louder than words, one might consider the millions of Europeans who visit the U.S. each year, are educated here and indeed, immigrate altogether. The U.S. hosts over half a million foreign students for post-secondary education, mostly from Asia. However, during the 2004-2005 school year, E.U. countries Germany and Turkey were among the top ten countries sending students.¹⁰ Interestingly, there are twice as many students from Europe studying in the U.S. as there are Americans pursuing education in Europe.¹¹

Further, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security reports that from 2000-2005 nearly one million (904,529) Europeans obtained legal permanent resident status. In that five-year period, more Europeans immigrated than during 1970-1979 (825,590) and 1980-1989 (668,866), and the 2000's are on track to beat the decade totals for the 1990's (1,348,612).

The undeniable enthusiasm across Europe for U.S. goods and services has increased dramatically over the past few decades, including recently, and more U.S.-based companies have established European presences and expansions that have led to direct access to these goods and employment opportunities for many Europeans. Interestingly, iconic American brands have continued to increase their reach across Europe. For example, McDonald's achieved its best European sales in 15 years in 2006; European sales account for 36% of the corporation's profit.¹² More generally, the E.U. and the

¹⁰ "Foreign Enrollment in USA Steadies" (November 12, 2006) *USA Today*

¹¹ "The learning lag." (July 7, 2006) *Wall Street Journal*.

¹² "Strongest European sales in 15 years." (February 5, 2007) *Brand Strategy*. "McDonald's has a shake-up image of Europe." (March 5, 2007) *Financial Times*.

United States remain top trading partners (in both goods and services) with our exchange equaling nearly 40% of all world trade.¹³

Further, opinion research also shows that many Europeans believe that a good life (or at least similar quality of life) awaits an immigrant to the U.S. from their country. Four-in-ten residents of Great Britain (41%) reported to the Pew Global Attitude's Project released in 2005 that UK residents who move to the US will have a "better life" and additional 35% thought their new life would be comparable to living in the UK, neither better nor worse. Only 6% said life in the U.S. would be worse as compared to that in the UK.

Iraqis Weigh In

Europeans, however, are not the only voices that should be considered when discussing external views toward American foreign policy and in this case, the effect of that policy on the Iraqis themselves. Surely, attitudes of the Iraqis themselves provide compelling if not more dispositive information about the true state of affairs there.

Earlier this month, British researchers at Opinion Research Business (a respected Market Research firm that paid for the survey) released a survey of over 5,000 Iraqi citizens. The results of this comprehensive examination belie many of the major press accounts *outside* of Iraq that claim to describe life in Iraq and in the more arrogant, presumptuous accounts, to speak on behalf of the Iraqi people. Although significant numbers have been personally touched by the sectarian violence, (38% have had a family member, friend or colleague murdered) have demonstrated a genuine level of optimism about the state or their country.

In fact, Iraqis prefer their lives under President Nouri al-Malkiki's government to Saddam Husain's rule by 23 points (49%-26%), with 16% reporting no difference. Further, the President is receiving increased support, as his favorability rating has jumped from 29% in September of 2006 to 43% in February of this year. Only 27% of Iraqis believe their country has disintegrated into civil war and one-third (33%) of the Iraqi people believed that President Bush is sending the 20,000+ troop surge to "bring security and stability back to Iraq."

¹³ European Union, European Commission Figures, accessed at www.ec.europa.eu

European Opinions of Americans and American Values

Too often, European attitudes towards America and Americans have been confused with negative assessments of the actions or personalities of its leaders. Recent and historical polling data clearly points to a divide between those two attitudes. We find that vast majorities of the public in Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia have favorable opinions of Americans. Spain stands alone as having less than a majority (37%) of its public in favor of the U.S. Admittedly; these measures are with little intensity and have declined in recent years. However, it is clear that Europeans’ unease with the leaders and policies of the U.S. at any given time do not simply extend en masse to the American people.

Pew 2006 Data Favorability Ratings of Americans v. United States in Europe		
Populous	Favorability Rating	
	The United States	Americans
United States	77%	85%
Great Britain	56%	69%
France	39%	65%
Germany	37%	66%
Spain	23%	37%
Russia	43%	57%

In fact, Europeans widely associate many positive traits and values with Americans. Although percentages between European nations varied widely, when asked about a list of seven characteristics, **large majorities identified Americans as “hardworking” and “inventive.”** To a lesser degree, pluralities saw the people of the United States as “honest,” most reflecting the number of our own citizens who agreed with the assessment. Admittedly, Americans also were seen as both “greedy” and “violent” in several countries, but again these figures were in parity with Americans’ own peek-in-the-mirror self-evaluations and with far less agreement than the positive traits. This appraisal of Americans and their values should be regarded as strong affirmation of specific views, which are superior to general measures of “favorability” that deny the survey respondent an expression of more nuanced or multidimensional views on the U.S. as a populous.

Pew 2005 Data Characteristics Europeans Associated with Americans							
Populous	Positive Characteristics			Negative Characteristics			
	Hardworking	Inventive	Honest	Greedy	Violent	Rude	Immoral
United States	85%	81%	63%	70%	49%	35%	39%
Great Britain	76%	64%	57%	64%	53%	29%	26%
France	89%	76%	57%	31%	63%	36%	37%
Germany	67%	76%	52%	49%	49%	12%	31%
Netherlands	84%	69%	46%	67%	60%	26%	38%
Spain	74%	53%	45%	58%	60%	39%	36%
Russia	72%	56%	32%	60%	54%	48%	42%
Turkey	61%	54%	16%	68%	70%	53%	57%

Europeans may respect and extol many American characteristics; however, there are areas of marked differences. As early as 2001, Pew Research Center for the People and Press found that of those who felt American and European interests had grown further apart; majorities in Great Britain, Italy, Germany, and France claimed that “increasingly different social and cultural values” were an important factor in that divide.

One of those divisions is certainly religious. In 2005, Pew Research Center found that pluralities of Europeans felt that Americans were too religious, while nearly six-in-ten (58%) of Americans believed that they were “not religious enough.” Further, in 2003, 58% of Americans reported that it was necessary to “believe in God in order to be moral,” this view was shared by only 33% of those in Germany, 27% of Italians, 25% of those in Great Britain and 13% of the French.

2005 Pew Data European Opinion of American Religiosity		
Populous	Too Religious	Not Religious Enough
United States	21%	58%
France	61%	26%
Netherlands	57%	25%
Great Britain	39%	31%
Spain	31%	40%
Russia	27%	38%

Although our mores can be different, Americans and Europeans share many of the same cultural and political values and few could legitimately deny that the U.S. has more in common with Europe than it does with less industrialized or non-Western nations. One

2005 PIPA GlobeScan Data on Economic Values				
Populous	Free Market System is Best for Future of World		Large Companies Have Too Much Influence Over our Nation	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
United States	71%	24%	85%	13%
France	36%	50%	86%	10%
Germany	65%	32%	77%	22%
Great Britain	66%	27%	80%	16%
Italy	59%	31%	76%	18%
Spain	63%	28%	84%	10%

example is the like-mindedness between citizens of Europe and the U.S. on basic values of economics. PIPA and GlobeScan found comparable numbers of Europeans and Americans agree that the free market is the “best system on which to base the future of the world.” The exception was France. Further, there was a nearly unified fear among peoples on both continents of large companies exacting too much influence on governments across the U.S. and Europe.

In closing, although the overall opinions of “America” among some Europeans, has declined recently, it is important to consider these polling results in context of their question wording and larger cultural influences and natural differences. Widespread anti-American sentiment in the global press and voiced by opinion leaders, as well as timeless resentment toward the United States as a superpower must be factored into any serious and objective consideration of such data. Survey questions that focus only or mainly on contentious situations, isolated events, or actual individuals act more as a monochrome than the necessary kaleidoscope through which such complex opinions should be evaluated.