

Jan. 19, 2011

ABC News/Washington Post poll: Views of China

Hu's an Economic Threat?

Americans see more economic threat than opportunity in China, and divide almost evenly on whether they regard it as a friendly or unfriendly nation – results that underscore the challenging nature of relations between the two powers.

With President Hu Jintao visiting the United States – including a state dinner at the White House tonight – an ABC News/Washington Post poll finds that 47 percent of Americans see China as a friendly nation, while 44 percent regard it as unfriendly. Personal views tip the other way – 42 percent say their own opinion of China is favorable overall, 49 percent unfavorable.

While hardly warm, those could be worse, on two scores. One, Americans by a broad 61-29 percent in this poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), see China as more of a “threat to American jobs and economic security” than as “an opportunity for new markets and investment.” Also, China has been viewed much more negatively in the past; today’s 49 percent unfavorable rating compares to 58 percent in March 1990, a year after its crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.

Similarly, while fewer than half, 47 percent, see China as friendly, that’s up from 39 percent in 1998 during a kerfuffle over alleged Chinese political contributions to the Democratic Party; and from just 28 percent in 2001, during an imbroglio over China’s detention of the crew of a damaged U.S. spy plane.

Then again, China’s also been rated much more favorably; in a show of support at the height of its pro-democracy movement, in April 1989, positive ratings of the country soared to 80 percent. That plummeted by 41 points after the suppression that followed.

In the current economic climate, views of China as an economic threat appear to have grown; 51 percent held this view in a Transatlantic Trends survey in June, compared with 61 percent now. The past six months of continued economic difficulties in the United States – juxtaposed with ongoing reports of China’s economic boom – could be a factor.

Obama, for his part, gets a tepid rating for his handling of relations with China – 43 percent approve and 35 percent disapprove, with a substantial 23 percent expressing no opinion.

There are differences among groups in views of China. Republicans and conservatives – especially Americans who call themselves “very” conservative – are more likely than their political opposites to see it unfavorably. And China is seen much more positively by young adults than by their elders.

Some differences are starkest in views of China as an economic threat. It’s lower (though still substantial) among young adults (52 percent among those age 18 to 29) and higher among older

Americans (72 percent among seniors). It's lower among better-educated adults (46 percent among those who've done postgraduate work) compared with two-thirds among those who haven't completed college. And it's 46 percent among people who rate the U.S. economy positively – but among Americans who say the economy's in poor shape, views of China as an economic threat soar to 71 percent.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 13-16, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,053 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y, with sampling, data collection and tabulation by TNS of Horsham, Pa.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent

1-2e previously released.

2f. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling U.S. relations with China? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/16/11	43	17	26	35	15	19	23
G.W. Bush:							
4/22/01	67	NA	NA	27	NA	NA	5
Clinton:							
5/31/98*	40			39			21
Bush:							
2/4/90	55			37			8
6/19/89	60	"	"	35	"	"	5

*5/98 and previous, "is handling relations with China"

3-30 previously released.

31. On another subject: Would you say you generally have a favorable or unfavorable impression of China? Would you say VERY or SOMEWHAT favorable/unfavorable?

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Very	opinion
1/16/11	42	7	34	49	28	22	9
6/2/98	34	NA	NA	52	NA	NA	14
3/15/90	39			58			3
4/3/89	80			17			2
2/14/89	69	"	"	28	"	"	3

32. In terms of its overall relations with the United States, do you think of China as a friendly country or an unfriendly country? (ASKED IF UNFRIENDLY) Do you see China as an enemy of the United States, or just unfriendly?

	Friendly	----- NET	Unfriendly	----- Enemy	In between (vol.)	No opinion
1/16/11	47	44	33	11	4	5
4/5/01	28	58	37	20	8	6
6/2/98	39	47	35	12	9	5

33. In economic terms, some people see China as more of an opportunity for new markets and investment, while others see it as a threat to American jobs and economic security. Which view is closer to your own?

	Opportunity	Threat	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
1/16/11	29	61	5	1	4

34 held for release.

END